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OF

THE LATE

REV. JAMES HERVEY, A. M.

RECTOR OF WESTON-FAVEL, IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

A New Edition.

VOL. II. C 10

CONTAINING PART OF

*(***THERON AND ASPASIO,***)*

OR

A SERIES OF DIALOGUES AND LETTERS UPON THE MOST
IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

My mouth shall daily speak of thy righteousness and salvation, for I know
no end thereof.—Psalm lxxi. 15.

LONDON:

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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
LADY FRANCES SHIRLEY.

MADAM,

IF Christianity was inconsistent with true politeness, or prejudicial to real happiness, I should be extremely injudicious, and inexcusably ungrateful, in presenting these Essays to your Ladyship. But as the religion of Jesus is the grand ornament of our nature, and a source of the sublimest joy, the purport of the following pages cannot be unworthy the countenance and protection of the most accomplished person. Neither can there be a wish more suitable to the obligations or the dictates of a grateful heart, than that you may experience what you read, and be what you patronise.

Did religion consist in a formal round of external observances, or a forced submission to some rigorous austerities, I should not scruple to join with the infidel and the sensualist, to dread it in one view, and to despise it in another. You need not be informed, Madam, that it is as much superior to all such low and forbidding singularities, as the heavens are higher than the earth. It is described by an author, who learned its theory in the regions of Paradise, and who displayed its efficacy in his own most exemplary conversation;—it is thus described by that incomparable author: “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

To be reconciled to the omnipotent God; to be interested in the unsearchable riches of Christ; to be renewed in our hearts, and influenced in our lives, by the sanctifying operations of the Divine Spirit; this is evangelical righteousness; this is genuine religion; this, Madam, is the kingdom of God established in the soul. How benign and inviting is such an institution! How honourable and advantageous such a state! And from such privileges, what other effects can flow, but that “peace, which passeth all understanding?” that “joy, which is unspeakable and glorious?”

Is there any thing in the amusements of the gay, and pursuits of the ambitious, of greater, of equal, of comparable value? Is not all that wealth can purchase, all that grandeur can bestow, somewhat like those glittering bubbles, which, when viewed, are emptiness, when grasped, are nothing? Whereas, the comforts, the benefits, the hopes of Christianity, are at once supremely excellent, and infinitely durable: a portion, suited to the dignity of a rational soul; large as its faculties, and immortal as its being.

All these blessings are centered in Christ; were purchased by Christ; are communicated from Christ. It is for want of knowing those boundless and everlasting treasures of pardoning, justifying, saving merit, which the Lord Jesus Christ possesses, and which he freely dispenses even to sinners, that so many unthinking persons are attached to ignoble objects, and beguiled by delusory pleasures. Unhappy creatures what can they do, but catch at shadows, and stoop to trifles, while they are ignorant of the grand, the substantial, the exalted good? It is for want of duly attending to that fullness of grace, and that plenteousness of redemption, which dwell in our most adorable Saviour, that so many serious persons are strangers to the tranquillity and sweetness of religion; are subject to all its restraints, but enjoy few, if any, of its delights. Mistaken zealots! How can they avoid the gloomy situation, and the uncomfortable circumstance, so long as they withdraw themselves from the Sun of Righteousness, and his all-cheering beams?

May your Ladyship live continually under his heavenly light and healing wings! be more fully assured of his dying love, and have brighter, still brighter manifestations of his immense perfections! By these delightful views, and by that precious faith, may your heart be transformed into his holy, his amiable, his divine image! Your happiness will then be just such as is wished, but far greater than can be expressed, by,

MADAM,

Your most obliged, and

Most obedient humble servant,

JAMES HERVEY.

PREFACE.

THE reader will probably expect some account of the ensuing work ; and to gratify him in this particular, will be a real pleasure to the author.

The beauty and excellency of the Scriptures ;—the ruin and depravity of human nature ;—its happy recovery, founded on the atonement, and effected by the spirit of Christ ;—these are some of the chief points, vindicated, illustrated, and applied in the following sheets. But the grand article, that which makes the principal figure, is the **IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS** of our divine Lord ; from whence arises our justification before God, and our title to every heavenly blessing : an article which, though eminent for its importance, seems to be little understood, and less regarded ; if not much mistaken, and almost forgotten.

The importance of this great evangelical doctrine, —how worthy it is of the most attentive consideration, and of universal acceptance,—is hinted in the second dialogue. So that I need, in this place, do nothing more, than give the sense of a passage from Witsius, which is here introduced in the notes. “ The doctrine of justification,” says that excellent author, “ spreads itself through the whole system of divinity. As this is either solidly established, or superficially touched ; fully stated, or slightly dismissed ; accordingly, the whole structure of religion, either rises graceful and magnificent, superior to assault, and beyond the power of decay ; or else it appears disproportionate and defective, totters on its foundation, and threatens an opprobrious fall.”

The design is executed in the form of dialogue : those parts only excepted, in which it was not easy

carry on a conversation, and assign to each person a proper degree of significancy. Here, to avoid the common imputation, of bringing upon the stage a mute or a shadow,—one who fights without weapons, and submits without a contest,—the scene shifts. Our gentlemen separate; and, instead of conversing, enter upon an epistolary correspondence.

The dialogue form seems, on many considerations, a very eligible way of writing. Hereby the author gives an air both of dignity and of modesty to his sentiments. Of dignity; by delivering them from the mouths of persons in every respect superior to himself. Of modesty; because we no longer consider him in the raised, but invidious capacity of a teacher. Instead of calling us to his feet, and dictating his precepts, he gratifies our curiosity. He turns back a curtain, and admits us to some remarkable interviews, or interesting conferences. We overhear, by a kind of innocent or imaginary stealth, the debates which pass in the recesses of privacy; which are carried on with the most unreserved freedom of speech, and openness of heart.—A circumstance, which will apologize for some peculiarities, that might otherwise be inconsistent with humility, or offensive to delicacy. Particularly, it may obviate the disgust which generally, and indeed deservedly, attends the frequent intrusion of that ambitious and usurping little monosyllable, *I*.

The names of the persons are prefixed, each to his respective share of the discourse; in imitation of Cicero, and for the reasons which he assigns. “*Quasi enim ipsos induxi loquentes: ne inquam et inquit sæpius interponerentur. Atque id eo feci, ut tanquam præsentibus coram haberi sermo videretur.*” * This method, he very justly intimates, is removed farthest from the narrative, and makes the nearest approaches to life and reality. It quite secretes the author; and, by introducing the persons themselves, renders all that passes entirely their own. It prevents likewise the repetition of those interlocutory words,—he said, he re-

* De Amicitia.

plied. Which, unless the speeches are very long, must frequently recur, and have no pleasing effect upon the ear. And, if the speeches are long, the spirit of conversation is lost. The associates are no longer talking; but one of them, or the author, is lecturing.

Though I have so much to say in behalf of the model, I have very little to say with regard to the execution, unless it be to confess the deficiency. There is not, I am sensible, that peculiar air and distinguishing turn, which should mark and characterise each speaker. This is what the nature of finished dialogue requires, and what the author applauds in some very superior writers. But not having the ability to copy it, he has not the vanity to affect it. Nevertheless, the attentive reader will, all along, perceive a difference in the sentiment, if not in the language. The materials vary, even when they run into the same mould, and take the same form. In the diction also there must be some diversity; because several of the objections are proposed in the very words of one or two eminent writers, who have appeared on the other side of the question. These are not particularised by the mark of quotation; because the man of reading will have no occasion for the assistance of such an index, and the man of taste will probably discern them by the singularity of the style.

Some of the following pieces, it must be acknowledged, are of the controversial kind: a species of writing, least susceptible of the graces which embellish composition; or rather, most destitute of the attractives which engage attention, and create delight. Yet I have sometimes thought, that it is not absolutely impossible to make even the stern face of controversy wear a smile, and to reap some valuable fruit from the rugged furrows of disputation. Whether this is effected in the present work, the public must judge; that it has been attempted, the author may be permitted to declare.

To soften the asperities of argument, views of nature are interspersed. That if the former should

carry the appearance of a rude, entangled forest, or of a frowning gloomy recess, there may be some agreeable openings, and lightsome avenues, to admit a prospect of the country; which is always arrayed in charms, and never fails to please.

The author confesses a very peculiar fondness for the amiable scenes of creation. It is therefore not at all improbable, but his excursions, on this topic, may be of the diffusive kind, and his descriptions somewhat luxuriant. It is hoped, however, that the benevolent reader will indulge him in this favourite foible. If any should feel the same prevailing passion for the beauties of nature, it is possible these persons may be inclined, not only to excuse, but to approve the fault; and may take part with the lover, even in opposition to the critic.

Further to diversify the piece, sketches of philosophy are introduced; easy to be understood, and calculated to entertain the imagination, as well as to improve the heart; more particularly, to display the wise and beneficent design of Providence, in the various appearances and numberless productions of the material world. Neither are these remarks altogether foreign to the main point; but, as far as the wonders of creation may comport with the riches of grace, subserve the general end.

As to the choice of my subjects; some people have desired to see an invective against the fashionable and predominant vices of the age. This, I apprehend, would be like picking off the leaves, or clipping away the twigs, from some overgrown and noxious tree. Waving this tedious and ineffectual toil, I would rather lay the axe to the root. Let the knowledge and love of Christ take place in the heart, and not only a few of the branches, but the whole body of sin will fall at once.

Some would have the author insist upon the conscientious observation of the Sabbath, inculcate the daily worship of God in the family, and urge a devout attendance on the public ordinances of religion. But

when a person is convinced of sin, and made sensible of misery; when he has "tasted the good word of God," Heb. vi. 5, "and seen by faith the Lord's Christ," Luke ii. 26; he will want no solicitation or incitement to these means of grace, and exercises of godliness. He will have just the same disposition to them all, as the hungry appetite has to wholesome food, or the new-born babe * to the milk of the breast.

Others may imagine, that I have neglected the interests of morality; because here is no professed attempt to delineate its duties, or enforce its practice. Let these persons remember, that morality never makes such vigorous shoots, never produces such generous fruit, as when ingrafted on evangelical principles; And if I do not crop the pink, the rose, and the carnation—if I do not gather the peach, the nectarine, and the pine-apple—and put them into my reader's hand, for his immediate enjoyment; I am endeavouring to sow the seeds, and plant the roots in his garden, which, if cherished by the favourable influence of heaven, will yield him, not an occasional, but a constant supply of all.

As several texts of Scripture come under consideration, criticisms upon the original are frequently subjoined; in order to clear up some difficulties, to rectify some mistranslations, or point out the many delicate and masterly strokes which occur in the Bible. And glad should I be, extremely glad, if I might recommend and endear that invaluable book; if, as the divine Redeemer "rideth on in the word of truth, of meekness, and righteousness," Psal. xlv. 4, this hand

* 1 Pet. ii. 2. This comparison is, perhaps, the most exact and expressive that words can form, or fancy conceive. Babes covet nothing but the milk of the breast. They are indifferent about all other things. Give them riches, give them honours, give them whatever you please, without this rich, delicious, balmy nutriment, they will not, they cannot be satisfied. How finely does this illustrate, and how forcibly inculcate, what our Lord styles, "the single eye," and "the one thing needful!" or the salutary doctrines and delightful privileges of the gospel; together with that supreme value for them, and undivided complacency in them, which are the distinguishing character of the Christian!

might scatter a palm-branch, or this performance might lie as a floweret, to strew his way, * and solemnise his triumph.

In the course of the disputation, I dare not suppose that I have discussed all the arguments which sagacity may devise, or sophistry urge. Perhaps, I have not removed all the scruples, which may awaken prejudice, or embarrass integrity. This, however, I may venture to affirm, that I myself have met with no considerable objection, which is not either expressly answered, or virtually refuted, in these conferences. And, though I should neither satisfy nor silence the gainsayer, I shall think my endeavours happily employed, if they may throw light upon the dim apprehension, establish the wavering faith, or comfort the afflicted conscience.

If any should burlesque or ridicule these venerable truths, and exalted privileges, I shall only say with my divine Master; "O that thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid," it is evident from such a procedure, "they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix. 42. Should any, in the spirit of decency and candour, either start new, or revive old objections, I doubt not but they will receive both a due examination, and a proper reply. As these doctrines enter into the very essence of the gospel, and constitute the glory of our religion, they can never want a succession of advocates, so long as the sun and moon endure. For my own part, I must beg leave to retire from the lists, and lay down the weapons of controversy. Virgil's language is my resolution;

"Discedam, explebo numerum, reddarque tenebris."

This declaration is made, not from any the least suspicion, that my tenets are indefensible; but because I would apprise my friends, and the friends of our common Christianity, that the field is clear and open for them to advance; that I resign to others the glo-

* Alluding to Matth. xxi. 8.

rious combat; and shall content myself with wishing them success in the name of the Lord. Because it becomes a person in my declining state, to be more peculiarly intent upon encountering a different adversary; who is sure to overcome, and never allows quarter. Yet, by this "word of my testimony, and by the blood of the Lamb," Rev. xii. 11, I hope to triumph even when I fall; and to be more than conqueror, through Jehovah my righteousness.

Should any thing be urged forcible enough to overthrow my arguments, or detect a mistake in my sentiments, the world may depend upon seeing a free and undissembled retractation. I shall look upon it as a duty, which I owe to my conscience, to my readers, and to my God, publicly to acknowledge the error.— It is one thing to be silent; another to be obstinate. As I shall inflexibly adhere to the first, I would with equal steadiness renounce the last. Though I withdraw from the strife of pens and of tongues, I shall take care to preserve a mind ever accessible to truth, ever open to conviction; a mind infinitely more concerned for the purity and prosperity of the everlasting gospel, than for the prevalence of my own opinion, or the credit of my own performance.

As I have the happiness of being a member, and the honour of being a minister of the reformed established church, I cannot but reflect, with a peculiar pleasure, that every doctrine of note, maintained in these dialogues and letters, is either implied in our liturgy, asserted in our articles, or taught in our homilies. It affords me likewise some degree of satisfaction to observe, that the most material of the sentiments have been adopted by Milton, are incorporated into his *Paradise Lost*, and add dignity to the sublimest poem in the world. To have the highest human authority, and the first genius of the nation, on a writer's side, is no contemptible support. This must surely give a sanction, wherever our religious establishment is revered, or polite literature is held in repute. Yet even this sanction, compared with the oracle of

revelation, is only like a range of ciphers, connected with the initial figure: which, were they detached, would be insignificant; but, in such a subordination, are considerable.

Perhaps it should be farther acknowledged, that I have not always confined myself to the method of our systematic writers, nor followed their train of thoughts with a scrupulous regularity. I would conduct my fellow-creature to the supreme and eternal good, Christ Jesus. I have chosen the path which seemed most agreeable and inviting, rather than most beaten and frequented. If this leads, with equal certainty, to the great and desirable end, I dare promise myself an easy excuse. However, that method and order, in the doctrinal parts of the plan, are not wholly neglected, the following summary of contents may shew,

CONTENTS.

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DIALOGUE III. Walk through a meadow—Doctrine of Christ's satisfaction stated—Considered as a redemption-price, and as a sacrifice for sin—Variously typified under the Mosaic dispensation.

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DIALOGUE VII. Hay-making—Pleasures of nature freely enjoyed—Blessings of grace bestowed with equal freeness—Theron's plan of acceptance with God; consists of sincerity, repentance, and good works, recommended by the merits of Christ—This shewn to be a false foundation—No such thing as a good work, till we are accepted through the Redeemer.

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DIALOGUE IX. Curious summer-house—No relaxation of the divine law, as to the precept or the penalty—Its inflexible strictness, and principal ends.

DIALOGUE X. Theron's last effort to demolish the evangelical scheme of justification—Among other objections, more plausible and refined than the preceding, he strenuously insists that faith is our righteousness—Review of the whole.

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DIALOGUE XIII. Walk upon the terrace—Depravity of human nature laid open, and proved from experience—Uses of the doctrine, and its subserviency to the grand point.

THERON AND ASPASIO;

OR, A

SERIES OF DIALOGUES.

DIALOGUE I.

THERON was a gentleman of fine taste; of accurate rather than extensive reading; and particularly charmed with the study of nature. He traced the planets in their courses, and examined the formation of the meanest vegetable; not merely to gratify a refined curiosity, but chiefly to cultivate the nobler principles of religion and morality. Several discoveries he made, and every discovery he improved to this important end,—to raise in his mind more exalted apprehensions of the Supreme Being, and to enlarge his affections with a disinterested benevolence, conformable, in some degree, to that boundless liberality which pervades and animates the whole creation.

ASPASIO was not without his share of polite literature, and philosophical knowledge. He had taken a tour through the circle of the sciences; and, having transiently surveyed the productions of human learning, devoted his final attention to the inspired writings. These he studied with the unbiassed impartiality of a critic, yet with the reverential simplicity of a Christian. These he regarded as the unerring standard of duty—the authentic charter of salvation—and the brightest mirror of the Deity; affording the most satisfactory and sublime display of all the divine attributes.

Theron was somewhat warm in his temper; and would, upon occasion, make use of a little innocent raillery; not to expose his friend, but to enliven the conversation; sometimes disguising his real sentiments, in order to sift the subject, or discover the opinion of others.—Aspasio seldom indulges the humorous or satirical vein, but argues with “meekness of wisdom;”^{*} never puts on the appearance of guile, but always speaks the dictates of his heart.

Aspasio was on a visit at Theron’s seat. One evening, when some neighbouring gentlemen were just gone, and had left them alone, the conversation took the following turn.

Asp. I would always be ready, both to acknowledge and applaud whatever is amiable in the conduct of others. The gentlemen who gave us their company at dinner, seem to be all of a different character; yet each, in his own way, is extremely agreeable.

Lysander has lively parts, and is quick at repartee; but he never abuses his wit to create uneasiness in the honest heart, and flush the modest cheek with confusion. What solidity of judgment, and depth of penetration, appear in Crito! yet how free are his discourses from the magisterial tone, or the dictatorial solemnity! Philenor’s taste in the polite arts is remarkably correct; yet without the least tincture of vanity, or any weak fondness for applause. He never interrupts the progress, or wrests the topic of conversation, in order to shine in his particular province. Trebonius, I find, has signalised his valour in several campaigns. Though a warrior and a traveller, he gives himself no overbearing or ostentatious airs. In Trebonius, you see the brave officer, regulated by all the decency of the academic, and sweetened with all the affability of the courtier.

* ——— *Mitis sapientia Læli,* HOR.
is a most amiable character, and delicately drawn, but is, I think, expressed with greater strength and superior beauty by the sacred penman; “Let him shew out of a good conversation his works, with meekness of wisdom,” *Jam. iii. 13.*

No one affects a morose silence, or assumes an immoderate loquacity.* To engross the talk, is tyrannical; to seal up the lips, is monkish. Every one, therefore, from a fund of good sense, contributes his quota; and each speaks, not with an ambition to set off himself, but from a desire to please the company.

Ther. Indeed, Aspasio, I think myself happy in this accomplished set of acquaintance; who add all the complaisance and politeness of the gentleman, to the benevolence and fidelity of the friend.

Their conversation is as innocent, as their taste is refined. They have a noble abhorrence of slander, and detest the low, ungenerous artifices of detraction. No loose jest has either the service of their tongue, or the sanction of their smile: Was you to be with them, even in their freest moments, you would hear nothing that so much as borders upon profaneness, or is in the least injurious to purity of morals.

Asp. There is but one qualification wanting to render your friends completely valuable, and their social interviews a continual blessing.

Ther. Pray, what is that?

Asp. A turn for more serious conferences. Their literary debates are beautiful sketches of whatever is most curious in the sciences, or most delicate in the arts. From their remarks on our national affairs, and on foreign occurrences, a person may almost form a system of politics. But they never touch upon any topic of morality; never celebrate the sublime perfections of the Deity; never illustrate the beauties, nor enforce the truths——

Ther. Fie upon you, Aspasio, for your unpolite hint! Who can forbear interrupting the harangue, which pleads for such an outrageous violation of the

* Zeno being present where a person of this loquacious disposition played himself off, said, with an air of concern in his countenance, "That poor gentleman is ill, he has a violent flux upon him." The company was alarmed, and the rhetorician stopped in his career. "Yes, (added the philosopher,) the flux is so violent, that it has carried his ears into his tongue."

mode? would introduce edifying talk into our fashionable assemblies! How is it that you, who, in other instances, are a gentleman of refinement, can be so strangely inelegant in this particular?

Asp. For such a practice, Theron, we have no inconsiderable precedents. Thus Socrates,* the wisest of the Athenian sages; thus Scipio,† the most accomplished of the Roman generals, conversed. Thus Cicero,‡ the prince of orators, improved his elegant retirement at the Tusculan villa. And Horace,§ the brightest genius in the court of Augustus, formed the most agreeable hours of his conversation upon this very plan.

Were I to enumerate all the patrons of this, forgive me if I say, more honourable mode, the most illustrious names of antiquity would appear on the list.

Ther. This practice, however extolled by the philosophic gentry of ancient times, would make a very singular figure in the present age.

Asp. And should not the copy, after which the generality of mankind write, be singularly correct? Persons of exalted fortune are the pattern for general imitation; are the copy, in conformity to which the inferior world adjust their manners, and regulate their behaviour. They, therefore, are under the strongest obligations, not to give a contemptible stamp to the fashion. Benevolence to their fellow-creatures calls loudly upon them, a concern for the public good challenges it at their hands, that they signalise themselves by a pre-eminence in all that is excellent.

Ther. Away, away with these austere notions! such a strain of conversation would damp the gaiety of our spirits, and flatten the relish of society. It would turn

* Vid. Socratis Memorabilia, per Xenoph.

† See Cicero's dialogue, De Amicitia; in which we are informed, that it was a customary practice with Scipio, with his polite friend Lælius, and some of the most distinguished nobility of Rome, to discourse upon the interests of the republic, and the immortality of the soul.

‡ Vid. Tuscul. Quæst.

§ Such were the interviews of which he speaks with a kind of rapture, "O noctes cœnæque decem!"

the assembly into a conventicle, and make it Lent all the year round.

Asp. Can it then be an austere practice, to cultivate the understanding, and improve the heart? Can it damp the gaiety of our spirits, to refine them upon the plan of the highest perfection? Or, will it flatten the relish of society, to secure and anticipate everlasting delights?

Ther. Everlasting delights, *Aspasio!* To talk of such a subject would be termed, in every circle of wit and gallantry, an usurpation of the parson's office: a low method of retailing by scraps, in the parlour, what the man in black vends by wholesale from the pulpit. It would infallibly mark us out for pedants; and, for aught I know, might expose us to the suspicion of enthusiasm.

Asp. Your men of wit must excuse me, if I cannot persuade myself to admire either the delicacy of their language, or the justness of their opinion.

The first, be it ever so humane and graceful, I resign to themselves. As for the other, I would beg leave to enquire, "Are the clergy, then, the only persons who should act the becoming part, and converse like rational beings? Is solid wisdom, and sacred truth, the privilege of their order; while nothing is left for you and me, but the play of fancy, or the luxuries of sense?"

I would further ask the circles of gallantry, "Where is the impropriety of interweaving the noble doctrines displayed by the preacher, with our common discourse? or, what the inconvenience of introducing the amiable graces, recommended by his lectures, into our ordinary practice?" Will such an exercise of our speech rank us among pedants? Is this the badge of enthusiasm? A splendid and honourable badge truly! such as must add weight to any cause, and worth to any character.

Ther. This would curb the sprightly sallies of wit, and extinguish that engaging glow of good humour, which enlivens our genteel intercourses. Accordingly, you may observe, that if any formal creature takes

upon him to mention, in polite company, a religious truth, or a text of scripture; the pretty chat, though ever so profusely flowing, stagnates in an instant. Each voluble and facetious tongue seems to be struck with a sudden palsy. Every one wonders at the strange man's face; and they all conclude him either mad, or a methodist.

Asp. Agreeable strokes of wit are by no means incompatible with useful conversation, unless we mistake an insipid vivacity, or fantastic levity, for wit and facetiousness. Neither have I heard, that, among all our acts of parliament, any one has passed to divorce good sense and good humour. Why may they not both reside on the same lips, and both circulate through the same assembly? For my own part, I would neither have our discourse soured with austerity, nor evaporate into impertinence; but unite (as a judicious ancient advises) the benefits of improvement, with the blandishments of pleasantry.* And as to your polite people, if they can find more music in the magpie's voice, than in the nightingale's note, I must own myself as much surprised at their ears, as they are at the strange man's face.

Ther. With all your grey-headed authorities, I fancy you will find very few proselytes among the professors of modern refinement. Fashion is, with the world, the standard of morals, as well as of clothes; and he must be of a very peculiar turn indeed, who would chuse to be ridiculous in either.

Asp. Rather, Theron, he must be of a very pliant turn, who tamely delivers up his conduct to be moulded by a fashion, which has neither true elegance to dignify it, nor the least usefulness to recommend it.

And which, I beseech you, is most ridiculous? He who servilely imitates every idle fashion, and is the very ape of corrupt custom? Or he who asserts his native liberty, and resolutely follows where wisdom and truth lead the way?

* "Cum quadam illecebra ac voluptate utiles."

Ther. Would you then obtrude religious discourse upon every company? Consider, Aspasio, what a motley figure this would make. A wedding, and a sermon! quadrille, and St Paul! the last new play, and primitive Christianity!

Asp. You know the rule, Theron, which is given by the great Master of our assemblies; "Cast not your pearls before swine," Matt. vii. 6. Some there are so immersed in sensuality, that they can relish nothing but the coarsest husks of conversation. To these, neither offer your pearls, nor prostitute your intimacy.

But, when persons of a liberal education, and elevated sentiments, when these meet together, why should not their discourse be suitable to the eminence of their rank, and the superiority of their genius? raised far above the level of that trite and effeminate strain, "Upon my honour, the actress topt her part! Heavens! how charmingly she sung! how gracefully she trod the stage!"

Ther. Indeed, my Aspasio, I am entirely in your way of thinking, however I have hitherto put on the mask. The gift of speech is one great prerogative of our rational nature: and it is a pity that such a superior faculty should be debased to the meanest purposes.

Suppose all our stately vessels, that pass and re-pass the ocean, were to carry out nothing but tinsel, and theatrical decorations; were to import nothing but glittering baubles, and nicely-fancied toys; would such a method of trading be well-judged in itself, or beneficial in its consequences? Articulate speech is the instrument of a much nobler commerce, intended to transmit and diffuse the treasures of the mind. And will not the practice be altogether as injudicious, must not the issue be infinitely more detrimental, if this vehicle of intellectual wealth is freighted only with pleasing fopperies?

Asp. Such folly and extravagance would be hissed out of the commercial world. Why then are they admitted and cherished in the social?

Ther. Why indeed? He must be far more acute

than your Theron, who can assign a single reason to countenance them. To explode them, ten thousand arguments occur. A continual round of gay and trifling conversation,* of visits quite modish, and entertainments not moral, must give an indolent turn to the mind; such as will enervate its powers, indispose it for generous action, and gradually sap the very foundation of virtue. Whereas, a frequent conference on the glories of the Godhead, or the wonders of creation, would invigorate and ennoble the soul; would enlarge her faculties, and elevate her desires.

Asp. "Did not our hearts burn within us," said the travellers at Emmaus, "while he talked with us by the way?" Luke xxiv. 32. Those discourses, it is true, were conducted with a spirit, and enforced with an energy, absolutely unequalled; yet the same happy effects would, in some degree, result from our friendly conferences, if they turned upon the same important points. We also should feel our hearts warmed with holy zeal, and glowing with heavenly love.

Ther. Such conferences would not only be productive of present advantage, but yield a renewed pleasure in the retrospect. We might reflect, with real complacency, on hours spent in so rational a manner. And who would not prefer the silent applause of the heart, to all those tumultuous joys which wanton jests create, or the circling glass inspires?

Asp. One,† who thoroughly knew mankind, and had tried the merits of the jovial board, very pertinently compares such flashes of mirth to the "crackling of thorns under a pot," Eccl. vii. 6. The transient blaze of the one, and the senseless noise of the other, continue but for a moment; and then expire, that in smoke and darkness, this in spleen and melancholy.

* The significancy and importance of such conversation was smartly represented by the philosopher; who being asked, How he left the company employed? made answer, Some in milking the ram, others in holding the pail.

† King Solomon.

I said, spleen and melancholy. For however jauntie and alert the various methods of modish trifling may seem; whatever ease and grace they are supposed to give the conversation; sure am I, it will be afflictive to look back upon interviews squandered away in very vanity; and shocking, to look forward upon the account which we must all shortly render. What figure will such an article make in the final reckoning, and at the decisive bar! "Our social hours, which might have promoted our mutual edification, and been subservient to our Creator's glory, all lost in merriment and whim; or worse than lost, in flattery and detraction. A blank, or a blot."

Ther. Venus, we find, has her zealous knight-errants, and Bacchus his professed votaries, in almost every company. And is it not truly deplorable, that the God of nature alone has none to assert his honour, none to celebrate his perfections? though he is the original of all beauty, and the Parent of all good.

When I have taken my morning walk amidst dews and flowers, with the sun shedding lustre round him, and unveiling the happy landscape; how has my eye been charmed with the lovely prospect! how has my ear been ravished with the music of the grove! Methought every note was a tribute of harmony; and all nature seemed one grand chorus, swelling with the Creator's praise. But how has the scene been reversed, when, leaving my rural elysium, I entered the haunts of men! where I saw faculties divine, meanly engaged in trifles; where I heard the tongue, prompt to utter, and fluent to express, every thing but its Maker's glory.

I assure you, I have often been chagrined on this occasion; and sometimes said within myself, "What! shall trifles be regarded, and the Majesty of heaven neglected? Shall every friend, and every visitant, receive his share of respect, and no acknowledgments be paid to that exalted Being, who is worthy, more than worthy, of all our veneration?"

Asp. This will be still more afflictive to an ingenu-

ous mind, if we consider, that the infinite and glorious God is present at all our interviews; vouchsafes to express his satisfaction, and acknowledges himself magnified, when, with admiration and love, we talk of his transcendent excellencies. Nay, we are assured, that the Lord of all lords not only hearkens, but keeps a book of remembrance; and will distinguish such persons at the day of universal retribution. When the loose train of licentious talkers are driven away as the despicable chaff; these shall be selected for his peculiar treasure, and numbered among the jewels of Jehovah.*

Ther. If the gentlemen who make high pretensions to reason, think themselves discharged from these doctrines of revelation, they should not forget their own Scriptures. A philosopher will tell them the duty of employing their time, as in the awful presence, and under the immediate inspection of the Supreme Being.† An orator will shew them the egregious impropriety of wasting their friendly interviews in the fumes of drollery, or the froth of impertinence.‡

Asp. Who then, that is wise, would not habituate himself to a practice, which comes recommended by the voice of reason, and is enforced by the authority of God? A practice, which will administer present good, will afford pleasing reviews, and terminate in everlasting honour?

Ther. It is strange, that subjects which deserve to be received as the universal topic, are almost universally banished from our discourse. Was this cabinet

* Mal. iii. 16, 17. This is a passage much to be observed. A most emphatical recommendation of religious discourse! perhaps the most emphatical that ever was used, and the most endearing that can possibly be conceived.

† “Sic certe vivendum est, tanquam in conspectu vivamus: sic cogitandum, tanquam aliquis in pectus intimum inspicere possit: et potest. Quid enim profit ab homine aliquid esse secretum? Nihil Deo clausium est. Interest animis nostris, et cogitationibus mediis, intervenit.” *Senec. epist. 83.*

‡ Cicero says, with an air of graceful indignation, “Quasi vero clamorum virorum aut tacitos congressus esse oporteat, aut ludicros sermones, aut rerum colloquia leviorum.” *Academ. Quest. lib. iv.*

enriched with a series of antique medals, or a collection of the finest gems, my friends would naturally expect to be entertained with a sight of those rarities, and an explanation of their meaning. Why should we not as naturally expect, and as constantly agree, to entertain each other with remarks on those admirable curiosities, which are deposited in the boundless museum * of the universe?

When a general has won some important victory, or an admiral has destroyed the enemy's fleet; every company resounds with their achievements, every tongue is the trumpet of their fame. And why should we not celebrate, with equal delight and ardour, that almighty hand, which formed the structure, and furnished the regions, of this stupendous system?

Asp. Especially, if to his immensely glorious, we add his supremely amiable perfections. When the victorious commander is our most cordial friend; when he has professed the tenderest love, done us the most signal good, and promised us a perpetual enjoyment of his favours; it will be impossible to neglect such an illustrious and generous person. His name must be engraven upon our hearts; must slide insensibly into our tongues; and be as music to our ears.

Is not all this true, and in the most supereminent degree, with regard to the blessed God? Can greater kindness be exercised, or greater love be conceived, than to deliver up his own Son to torments and death for the expiation of our sins? Can benefits more desirable be granted, than to adopt us for his children, and sanctify us by his Spirit? Can promises more invaluable be made, than those which insure to us the preferments of heaven, and the riches of eternity?

All this is attested, concerning the Almighty Majesty, in the Scriptures of truth. What a fund, therefore, for pleasing and delicate conversation, are the Scriptures?

* *Museum*—alluding to a remarkable edifice in the city of Oxford, distinguished by this name; and appropriated to the reception of curiosities, both natural and artificial; and to the British Museum in London.

Ther. Here also I have the pleasure of concurring with my Aspasio; though I believe he suspects me to be somewhat wavering or defective in my veneration for the Scriptures.

Asp. No, Theron; I have a better opinion of your taste and discernment, than to harbour any such suspicion.

Ther. The Scriptures are certainly an inexhaustible fund of materials for the most delightful and ennobling discourse. When we consider the Author of those sacred books, that they came originally from heaven, were dictated by divine wisdom, have the same consummate excellence as the works of creation; it is really surprising that we are not always searching, by study, by meditation, or converse, into one or other of these grand volumes.

Asp. When Secker preaches, or Murray pleads, the church is crowded, and the bar thronged. When Spence produces the refinements of criticism, or Young displays the graces of poetry; the press toils, yet is scarce able to supply the demands of the public. Are we eager to hear, and impatient to purchase, what proceeds from such eloquent tongues, and masterly pens? And can we be coldly indifferent, when, not the most accomplished of mankind, not the most exalted of creatures, but the adorable Author of all wisdom, speaks in his revealed word? Strange! that our attention does not hang* upon the venerable accents, and our talk dwell upon the incomparable truths!

Ther. I admire, I must confess, the very language of the Bible. In this, methinks, I discern a conformity between the book of nature, and the book of Scripture.

In the book of nature, the divine Teacher speaks, not barely to our ears, but to all our senses. And it

* St Luke, in his evangelical history, uses this beautiful image, "The people hung upon the lips of their all-wise Teacher," Luke xix. 48. Which implies two very strong ideas; an attention that nothing could interrupt, and an eagerness scarce ever to be satisfied.

—————"Pendetque loquentis ab ore."

is very remarkable how he varies his address ! Observe his grand and august works. In these he uses the style of majesty. We may call it the true sublime. It strikes with awe, and transports the mind. View his ordinary operations. Here he descends to a plainer dialect. This may be termed the familiar style. We comprehend it with ease, and attend to it with pleasure. In the more ornamented parts of the creation, he clothes his meaning with elegance. All is rich and brilliant. We are delighted ; we are charmed. And what is this but the florid style ?

A variety, somewhat similar, runs through the Scriptures. Would you see history in all her simplicity, and all her force ; most beautifully easy, yet irresistibly striking ? See her, or rather feel her energy, touching the nicest movements of the soul, and triumphing over our passions, in the inimitable narrative of Joseph's life. The representation of Esau's bitter distress, Gen. xxvii. 30, &c. ; the conversation-pieces of Jonathan and his gallant friend, 1 Sam. xviii. xix. xx. ; the memorable journal of the disciples going to Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 13, &c. ; are finished models of the impassioned and affecting. Here is nothing studied ; no flights of fancy ; no embellishments of oratory. Yet how inferior is the episode of Nisus and Euryalus, though worked up by the most masterly hand in the world, to the undissembled artless fervency of these scriptural sketches !*

Are we pleased with the elevation and dignity of an heroic poem, or the tenderness and perplexity of a dramatic performance ? In the book of Job they are both united, and both unequalled. Conformably to

* Let a person of true taste peruse, in a critical view, the two first chapters of St Luke. He will there find a series of the most surprising incidents, related with the greatest simplicity, yet with the utmost majesty. All which, extremely affecting in themselves, are heightened and illuminated by a judicious intermixture of the sublimest pieces of poetry. For my own part, I know not how to characterise them more properly than by Solomon's elegant comparison : " They are as gold rings set with the beryl, or as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires." Cant. v. 14.

the exactest rules of art, as the action advances, the incidents are more alarming, and the images more magnificent. The language glows, and the pathos swells; till, at last, the Deity himself makes his entrance. He speaks from the whirlwind, and summons the creation: summons heaven, and all its shining host; the elements, and their most wonderful productions; to vouch for the wisdom of his providential dispensations. His word strikes terror, and flashes conviction; decides the momentous controversy, and closes the august drama, with all possible solemnity and grandeur.

If we sometimes choose a plaintive strain; such as softens the mind, and sooths an agreeable melancholy; are any of the ancient tragedies superior, in the eloquence of mourning, to David's pathetic elegy on his beloved Jonathan, 2 Sam. i. 19, &c.; to his most passionate and inconsolable moan* over the lovely but unhappy Absalom; or to that melodious woe, which warbles and bleeds, in every line of Jeremiah's Lamentations.

Would we be entertained with the daring sublimity

* 2 Sam. xviii. 33. "The king was vehemently affected, and went up to the chamber and wept; and as he went, he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would to God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!"—Such a picture, and so much pathos; so artless both, and both so exquisite; I must acknowledge, I never met with, among all the representations of dignity in distress. The king's troops had gained a signal victory. His crown and his life were rescued from the most imminent danger. Yet all the honours and all the joys of this successful day, were swallowed up and lost in the news of Absalom's death. The news of Absalom's death struck, like a dagger, the afflicted father. He starts from his seat, he hastens into retirement, there to pour out his soul in copious lamentation. But his anguish is too impetuous to bear a moment's restraint. He bursts immediately into a flood of tears, and cries as he goes, "O Absalom," &c.

What says Mezentius, when his son is slain? when, to sharpen his sorrow, the pale corpse, the miserable spectacle, is before his eyes, and within his arms! The most pathetic word he utters, is,

———"Heu! nunc misero mihi demum

Exilium infelix, nunc alte vulnus adactum."

How languid is Virgil? how inexpressive the prince of Latin poetry? compared with the royal mourner in Israel? Most evident, from this and many other instances, is the superiority of the Scriptures, in copying nature, and painting the passions.

of Homer, or the correct majesty of Virgil? with the expressive delicacy of Horace, or the rapid excursions of Pindar? Behold them joined, behold them excelled, in the odes of Moses, and the eucharistic hymn of Deborah; in the exalted devotion of the psalms, and the glorious enthusiasm of the prophets.

Asp. Only with this difference, that the former are tuneful triflers,* and amuse the fancy with empty fiction; the latter are teachers sent from God, and make the soul wise unto salvation. The Bible is not only the brightest ornament, but the most invaluable depositum. On a right, a practical knowledge of these lively oracles, depends the present comfort, and the endless felicity of mankind. Whatever, therefore, in study or conversation, has no connection with their divine contents, may be reckoned among the toys of literature, or the ciphers of discourse.

Ther. Here again the book of Scripture is somewhat like the magazine of nature. What can we desire for our accommodation and delight, which this store-house of conveniences does not afford? What can we wish for our edification and improvement, which that fund of knowledge does not supply? Of these we may truly affirm, each, in its respective kind, is "profitable unto all things."

Are we admirers of antiquity?—Here we are led back beyond the universal deluge, and far beyond the date of any other annals. We are introduced among the earliest inhabitants of the earth. We take a view of mankind in their undisguised primitive plainness, when the days of their life were but little short of a thousand years. We are brought acquainted with the original of nations; with the creation of the world; and with the birth of time itself.

Are we delighted with vast achievements? Where is any thing comparable to the miracles in Egypt, and the wonders in the field of Zoan? to the memoirs of the Israelites, passing through the depths of the sea,

* Ludit amabiliter.

sojourning amidst the inhospitable deserts, and conquering the kingdoms of Canaan? Where shall we meet with instances of martial bravery, equal to the prodigious exploits of the judges; or the adventurous deeds of Jesse's valiant son, and his matchless band of worthies.* Here we behold the fundamental laws of the universe, sometimes suspended, sometimes reversed; and not only the current of Jordan, but the course of nature controlled. In short, when we enter the field of Scripture, we tread, on enchanted, shall I say? rather, on consecrated ground; where astonishment and awe are awakened at every turn; where is all, more than all, the marvellous of romance,† connected with all the precision and sanctity of truth.

If we want maxims of wisdom, or have a taste for the laconic style, how copiously may our wants be supplied, and how delicately our taste gratified! especially in the book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and some of the minor prophets. Here are the most sage lessons of instruction, adapted to every circumstance of life, formed upon the experience of all preceding ages, and perfected by the unerring spirit of inspiration. These delivered with such remarkable conciseness, that one might venture to say, every word is a sentence.‡ At least, every sentence may be called an apophthegm, sparkling with brightness of thought, or weighty with solidity of sense. The whole, like a profusion of pearls, each containing, in a very small compass, a value almost immense, all heaped up (as an ingenious critic speaks) with a confused magnificence, above the little niceties of order.

If we look for the strength of reasoning, and the warmth of exhortation; the insinuating arts of gentle

* See 2 Sam. xxiii. 8, &c. 1 Chron. xi. 10, &c.

† ——— "Heroum fabula veris
Vincitur historiis."

‡ What Cicero said of Thucydides is more eminently true concerning our royal moralist, and his rich collection of ethics; concerning our evangelical historians, and their copious variety of facts. "Eum adeo esse rebus plenum refertumque, ut prope verborum numerum numerorum sequet."

address, or the manly boldness of impartial reproof; all the thunder of the orator, without any of his ostentation; all the politeness of the courtier, without any of his flattery: let us have recourse to the Acts of the Apostles, and to the Epistles of St Paul.* These are a specimen, or rather these are the standard, of them all.

I do not wonder, therefore, that a taste so refined, and a judgment so correct as Milton's, should discern higher attractives in the volume of inspiration, than in the most celebrated authors of Greece and Rome.

—————“ Yet not the more
Cease I to wander, where the muses haunt,
Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,
Smit with the love of sacred song; but chief
Thee, Sion, and the flowery banks beneath,
That wash thy hallow'd feet, and warbling flow,
Nightly I visit.” †

Asp. Another recommendation of the Scriptures is, that they afford the most awful and most amiable manifestations of the Godhead. His glory shines, and his goodness smiles, in those divine pages, with unparalleled lustre. Here we have a satisfactory explanation of our own state. The origin of evil is traced; the cause of all our misery discovered; and the remedy,

* Another very remarkable instance of propriety in St Paul's writings is, that though diffuse in the doctrinal, they are concise in the preceptive parts. On the former, it was absolutely necessary to enlarge. On the latter, it is always judicious to be short. The celebrated rule of Horace,

“ Quicquid præcipies, esto brevis,”

was never more exactly observed, nor more finely exemplified, than by our apostolic author. See that noble string of precepts, 1 Thess. v. 16, 17, &c. See another choice collection of the same kind, Rom. xii. 9, 10, &c. In which the energy of the diction is no less admirable than the conciseness of the sentence. Αποσυγυνητις—κολλωμισιον—φιλοσοργιοι—ζιοντις—τροσκαρτιζωντις—διακοντις—are some of the most vigorous words that language can furnish, and form the most animated meaning that imagination can conceive.

† That is, “ He still was pleased to study the beauties of the ancient poets; but his highest delight was in the songs of Sion, in the holy Scriptures, and in these he meditated day and night.” See Dr Newton's edit.

the infallible remedy, both clearly shown, and freely offered. The merits of the bleeding Jesus lay a firm foundation for all our hopes; while gratitude for his dying love suggests the most winning incitements to every duty. Morality, Theron, your (and let me add, my) admired morality, is delineated in all its branches, is placed upon its proper basis, and raised to its highest elevation. The Spirit of God is promised to enlighten the darkness of our understandings, and strengthen the imbecility of our wills. What an ample—Can you indulge me on this favourite topic?

Ther. It is, I assure you, equally pleasing to myself. Your enlargements, therefore, need no apology.

Asp. What ample provision is made, by these blessed books, for all our spiritual wants! And, in this respect, how indisputable is their superiority to all other compositions!

Is any one convinced of guilt, as provoking heaven, and ruining the soul? Let him ask reason to point out a means of reconciliation, and a refuge of safety. Reason hesitates as she replies, “The Deity may, perhaps, accept our supplications, and grant forgiveness.” But the Scriptures leave us not to the sad uncertainty of conjecture. They speak the language of clear assurance. “God has set forth a propitiation,” Rom. iii. 25: “He does forgive our iniquities,” Psal. ciii. 3: “He will remember our sins no more,” Heb. viii. 12.

Are we assaulted by temptation, or averse to duty? Philosophy may attempt to parry the thrust, or to stir up the reluctant mind, by disclosing the deformity of vice, and urging the fitness of things. Feeble expedients! Just as well calculated to accomplish the ends proposed, as the flimsy fortification of a cobweb to defend us from the ball of a cannon; or, as the gentle vibrations of a lady’s fan to make a wind-bound navy sail. The Bible recommends no such incompetent succours. “My grace,” says its almighty Author, “is sufficient for thee,” 2 Cor. xii. 9. “Sin shall not have dominion over you,” Rom. vi. 14. The great Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength, “he worketh

in us both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure,"
Phil. ii. 13.

Should we be visited with sickness, or overtaken by any calamity, the consolation which Plato offers is, That such dispensations coincide with the universal plan of divine government. Virgil will tell us, for our relief, That afflictive visitations are, more or less, the unavoidable lot of all men. Another moralist whispers in the dejected sufferer's ear, "Impatience adds to the load; whereas a calm submission renders it more supportable." Does the word of revelation dispense such spiritless and fugitive cordials? No: those sacred pages inform us, that tribulations are fatherly chastisements; tokens of our Maker's love, and fruits of his care; that they are intended to work in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and to work out for us an eternal weight of glory.*

Should we, under the summons of death, have recourse to the most celebrated comforters in the Heathen world; they would increase our apprehensions, rather than mitigate our dread. Death is represented, by the great master of their schools," as "the most formidable of all evils." They were not able positively to determine whether the soul survived; and never so much as dreamed of the resurrection of the body. Whereas, the book of God strips the monster of his horrors, or turns him into a messenger of peace; gives him an angel's face, and a deliverer's hand; ascertaining to the souls of the righteous, an immediate translation into the regions of bliss; and insuring to their bodies a

* 2 Cor. iv. 17. What are all the consolatory expedients prescribed in all the volumes of Heathen morality, compared with this one receipt of revelation? They are; in point of cheering efficacy, somewhat like the froth on the conflux of a thousand rapid streams, compared with a single draught of Homer's Nephenthe; which, he tells us, was

"Temper'd with drugs of sovereign use, t'assuage

The boiling bosom of tumultuous rage:

To clear the cloudy front of wrinkled care,

And dry the tearful sluices of despair.

Charm'd with that virtuous draught, th' exalted mind

All sense of woe delivers to the wind."

Odys. iv.

most advantageous revival, at the restoration of all things.

Inestimable book ! It heals the maladies of life, and subdues the fear of death. It strikes a lightsome vista through the gloom of the grave, and opens a charming, a glorious prospect of immortality in the heavens.

These, with many other excellencies peculiar to the Scriptures, one would imagine more than sufficient to engage every sensible heart in their favour, and introduce them, with the highest esteem, into every improved conversation. They had such an effect upon the finest genius, and most accomplished * person that former or latter ages can boast. Insomuch, that he made, while living, this public declaration ; and left it, when he died, upon everlasting record : “ How sweet are thy words unto my taste ! yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth,” Psal. cxix. 103. “ O how love I thy law ! it is my meditation all the day,” Psal. cxix. 97. “ Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I may be occupied in thy precepts ; and I will speak of thy testimonies even before kings,” Psal. cxix. 46. If David tasted so much sweetness in a small, and that the least valuable part of the divine word ; how much richer is the feast to us ? since the Gospel is added to

* If we consider David in the great variety of his fine qualifications ; the ornaments of his person, and the far more illustrious endowments of his mind ; the surprising revolutions in his fortune, sometimes reduced to the lowest ebb of adversity, sometimes riding upon the highest tide of prosperity ; his singular dexterity in extricating himself from difficulties, and peculiar felicity in accommodating himself to all circumstances ; the prizes he won as a youthful champion, and the victories he gained as an experienced general ; his masterly hand upon the harp, and his inimitable talent for poetry ; the admirable regulations of his royal government, and the incomparable usefulness of his public writings ; the depth of his repentance, and the height of his devotion ; the vigour of his faith in the divine promises, and the ardour of his love to the divine Majesty :—If we consider these, with several other marks of honour and grace, which ennoble the history of his life, we shall see such an assemblage of shining qualities, as perhaps were never united in any other merely human character.

This observation was expunged ; but, upon maturer thoughts, it is offered to the public, in order to convince a polite reader, that the love of the Scriptures, and the exercise of devotion, are by no means the low peculiarities of a vulgar mind.

the law, and the canon of Scripture completed ! since (to borrow the words of 'a prophet) the Lord God "has sealed up the sum ;" has put the last hand to his work ; and rendered it "full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty," Ezek. xxviii. 12.

Ther. Another very distinguishing peculiarity of the sacred writings just occurs to my mind. The method of communicating advice, or administering reproof, by parables. A method which levels itself to the lowest apprehension, without giving offence to the most supercilious temper ; yet is as much superior to plain ornamented precept, as the enlivened scenes of a well-wrought tragedy are more impressive and affecting than a simple narration of the plot.

Our Lord was asked by a student of the Jewish law, "Who is my neighbour ?" which implied another question, "How is he to be loved ?" The inquirer was conceited of himself ; yet ignorant of the truth, and deficient in his duty. Had the wise Instructor of mankind abruptly declared, "You neither know the former, nor fulfil the latter," probably the querist would have reddened with indignation, and departed in a rage. Therefore, to teach, and not disgust ; to convince the man of his error, and not exasperate his mind ; the blessed Jesus frames a reply, as amiable in the manner, as it was pertinent to the purpose.

A certain person going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves, Luke x. 30, &c. Not content to rob him of his treasure, they strip him of his garments, wound him with great barbarity, and leave him half dead. Soon after this calamitous accident, a traveller happens to come along that very road. And what renders him more likely to administer relief, he is one of the sacred order ; one who taught others the lovely lessons of humanity and charity, and was, therefore, under the strongest obligations to exemplify them in his own practice. He just glances an eye upon the deplorable object ; sees him stretched on the cold ground, and weltering in his blood ; but takes no further notice ; nay, to avoid the trouble of an inquiry.

passes on the other side. Scarce was he departed, when a Levite approaches. This man comes nearer, and looks on the miserable spectacle; takes a leisurely and attentive survey* of the case. And though every gash in the bleeding flesh cried and pleaded for compassion, this minister of the sanctuary neither speaks a word to comfort, nor moves a hand to help. Last comes a Samaritan;† one of the abhorred nation, whom the Jew hated with the most implacable malignity. Though the Levite had neglected an expiring brother; though the priest had withheld his pity from

* This seems to be the import of *εὐθὺς καὶ ἰδὼν*. Luke x. 32. This diversifies the idea, and heightens the description, of Jewish inhumanity.

† If this was a parable, we cannot but admire the accuracy of our Lord, both in laying the scene, and selecting the circumstances. It is the maxim of a great critic,

“*Ficta voluptatis causa sint proxima veris.*”

And how very apparent is the air of probability in this sacred apologue! The way from Jerusalem to Jericho, lying through a desert, was much infested by thieves, and too commodious for their purposes of violence. What could be more likely to happen, than the passage of a priest and Levite along that road? since Jericho was a city appropriated to the Levitical order, and contained no less than twelve thousand attendants on the service of the temple.

How judiciously is the principal figure circumstanced! Had the calamity befallen a Samaritan, it would have made but feeble impressions of pity; and those, perhaps, immediately effaced by stronger emotions of hate. But, when it was a Jew that lay bleeding to death, the representation was sure to interest the hearer in the distress, and awaken a tender concern. Had the relief been administered by a Jew, the benevolence would have shone, but in a much fainter light. Whereas, when it came from the hands of a Samaritan, whom all the Jews had agreed to execrate, and rank with the very fiends of hell, how bright, how charmingly and irresistibly bright, was the lustre of such charity!

Let the reader consider the temper expressed in that rancorous reflection; “*Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil,*” John viii. 48. Let him compare that inveterate malevolence with the benign and compassionate spirit of our amiable traveller. Then let him say, whether he ever beheld a finer or a bolder contrast? whether, upon the whole, he ever saw the ordonnance of descriptive painting more justly designed, or more happily executed?

I would beg leave to observe further, that the virulent animosity of the Jew discovers itself even in the lawyer’s reply; “*He that shewed mercy on him.*” He will not so much as name the Samaritan; especially in a case, where he could not be named without an honourable distinction. So strongly marked, and so exactly preserved, are the *εἰδη*, the manners or distinguishing qualities of each person, in the sacred narrations!

one of the Lord's peculiar people; the very moment the Samaritan sees the unhappy sufferer, he melts into commiseration. He forgets the embittered foe, and considers only the distressed fellow-creature. He springs from his horse, and resolves to intermit his journey. The oil and wine, intended for his own refreshment, he freely converts into healing unguents. He binds up the wounds; sets the disabled stranger upon his own beast; and, with all the assiduity of a servant, with all the tenderness of a brother, conducts him to an inn. There he deposits money for his present use; charges the host to omit nothing that might conduce to the recovery or comfort of his guest; and promises to defray the whole expence of his lodging, his maintenance, and his cure.

What a lively picture this of the most disinterested and active benevolence! A benevolence which excludes no persons, not even strangers or enemies, from its tender regards; which disdains no condescension, grudges no cost, in its labours of love. Could any method of conviction have been more forcible, and at the same time more pleasing, than the interrogatory proposed by our Lord, and deduced from the story? "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" Or can there be an advice more suitable to the occasion, more important in its nature, or expressed with a more sententious energy, than "Go thou, and do likewise?" In this case, the learner instructs, the delinquent condemns, himself. Bigotry bears away its prejudice; and pride, (when the moral so sweetly, so imperceptibly insinuates,) even pride itself lends a willing ear to admonition.

Asp. It has been very justly remarked, That this eloquence of similitudes is equally affecting to the wise, and intelligible to the ignorant. It shews, * rather than relates, the point to be illustrated. It has been admired by the best judges in all ages; but never

* "Discentem," says Seneca upon the subject, "et audientem in rem presentem adducunt." Epist. lix.

was carried to its highest perfection, till our Lord spoke the parable of the prodigal: * which has a beauty, that no paraphrase can heighten; a perspicuity, that renders all interpretation needless; and a force, which every reader, not totally insensible, must feel.

Ther. The condescension and goodness of God are every where conspicuous.—In the productions of nature, he conveys to us the most valuable fruits, by the intervention of the loveliest blossoms. Though the present is in itself extremely acceptable, he has given it an additional endearment, by the beauties which array it, or the perfumes which surround it.—In the pages of revelation likewise, he has communicated to us the most glorious truths, adorned with all the graces of composition: such as may polish the man of genius, and improve the man of worth; such as highly delight our imagination, even while they cultivate and refine our morals.—So that they really are, as one of their divine authors very elegantly speaks, “like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” †

Asp. Who then would not gladly receive that gracious exhortation, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly?” ‡ Who would not willingly obey that benign command, “Thou shalt talk of it, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up?” Deut. vi. 7.

* Luke xv. 11, &c.

† Prov. xxv. 11.—Theron follows the received translation. I should prefer the exposition of Glassius, who supposes מַשְׁבִּיתוֹ בְּסֵף to signify, “Reticula argentea, in quibus oculi sunt minutissimi, penetrabiles tamen visu.” According to this interpretation, the passage will present us with apples of gold in net-work, or lattice-work, of silver; where the fine fruit receives a new charm, by showing itself through the elegant apertures of the silver.

‡ Col. iii. 16; “The word of Christ;” so the Apostle calls the whole inspired writings, and thereby asserts the divinity of his Master—“Dwell;” not make a short stay, or an occasional visit; but take up a fixed and stated residence—“Richly;” in the largest measure, and with the greatest efficacy; so as to fill the memory, sway the will, and actuate all the affections,

When I consider the language of the Scriptures, and sometimes experience their energy on my soul, I am inclined to say, "Other writings, though polished with the nicest touches of art, only tinkle on the ear, or affect us like the shepherd's reed. But these, even amidst all their noble negligence, strike, alarm, transport us, somewhat like the voice of thunder, or the archangel's trumpet."

When I consider the contents of the Scriptures, and believe myself interested in the promises they make, and the privileges they confer, I am induced to cry out, "What are all the other books in the world, compared with these invaluable volumes? No more than an entertaining novel, or a few prudential rules for domestic economy, compared with a parent's will; a royal charter; or an imperial grant of titles and manors."

All these circumstances remind me of an encomium most deservedly given to the Bible; which, though quite artless, is, I think, abundantly more expressive than the most elaborate efforts of rhetoric. It came from the lips of a martyr; who, being condemned to die, for his inviolable adherence to the doctrines of Scripture; when he arrived at the stake, and had composed himself for execution, took his final leave in these affecting words: "Farewell sun and moon! farewell all the beauties of creation, and comforts of life! farewell my honoured friends! farewell my beloved relations! and farewell, thou precious, precious Book of God!"

Aspasio had scarce uttered the last sentence, when a servant came to let them know, "Supper was upon the table."—Very opportunely, said Theron, has our repast waited till our conference is ended. We have shewed what a large field of delightful speculation the Scriptures open; and what ample materials for the most refined discourse * they afford. As nothing can

* Should the serious reader want any further persuasives to this most beneficial practice, he may see how particularly our divine Master ob-

be more ungraceful, than to neglect in our own conduct, what we recommend to the practice of others; let us, this very night, begin to ennoble our interviews with these improving subjects. Let us endeavour to make religious conversation, which is in all respects desirable, in some degree fashionable.

DIALOGUE II.

THE next morning, when breakfast was over, Theron and Aspasio took a walk into the garden;—their spirits cheered, and their imaginations lively;—gratitude glowing in their hearts, and the whole creation smiling around them.

The spot adjoining to the house, was appropriated to the cultivation of flowers. In a variety of handsome compartments, were assembled the choicest beauties of blooming nature. Here the hyacinth hung her silken bells, or the lilies reared their silver pyramids. There stood the neat narcissus, loosely * attired in a mantle of snowy lustre; or the splendid ranunculus wore a full-trimmed suit of radiant scarlet. Pinks were rising to enamel the borders; roses were opening to dress the walls; surrounded, on all sides, with a profusion of beauteous forms, either latent in the stalk, or bursting the buds, or blown into full expansion.

This was bounded by a slight partition; a sort of verdant parapet; through which they descend by an easy flight of steps, and are presented with the elegant simplicity of the kitchen garden. In one place, you might see the marigold flowering, or the beans in

serves the strain of our conversation, Luke xxiv. 17; how strictly he has commanded such social communications, as may tend to the “use of edifying,” Eph. iv. 29; and what an evidence will arise from this article, either for our acquittal or condemnation, at the day of everlasting judgment, Matth. xii. 36, 37.

* *Hiantem flore decoro Narcissum.*”

blossom. In another, the endive curled her leaves, or the lettuce thickened her tufts: cauliflowers sheltered their fair complexion under a green umbrella: while the burrage dishevelled * her locks, and braided them with blooming jewels, of a finer azure than the finest sapphires. On the sunny slopes, the cucumber and melon lay basking in the collected beams. On the raised beds, the artichoke seemed to be erecting a standard, while the asparagus shot † into ranks of spears. The level ground produced all manner of cooling salads and nourishing esculents. Nothing was wanting to furnish out the wholesome luxury of an antediluvian banquet.

Soon, a high wall intervenes, through which a wicket opens, and transmits them into the regular and equidistant rows of an orchard. This plantation is so nicely adjusted, that it looks like an arrangement of rural piazzas, or a collection of diversified vistas. The eye is every where entertained with the exactest uniformity, and darts, with unobstructed ease, from one end of the branching files to the other. On all the boughs lay a lovely evolution of blossoms, arrayed in milky white, or tinged with the softest red. Crowding into one general cluster, without relinquishing any vacant space for leaves, they formed the fairest, the gayest, the grandest alcove, that fancy itself can imagine. It is really like the court of the Graces. None can approach it, without finding his ideas brightened, and feeling his temper exhilarated.

Contiguous to this correct disposition of things, nature had thrown a wilderness, hoary, grotesque, and magnificently confused. It stretched itself, with a large circular sweep, to the north; and secured both the olitory and the orchard from incommoding winds. Copses of hazel, and flowering shrubs, filled the lower spaces; while poplars quivered aloft in air, and pines

* Referring to the loose irregular manner of its foliation.

† Alluding, not only to the shape, but also to the growth of this plant, which is so unusually quick, that it may almost be said to start, rather than to rise out of the earth.

pierced the clouds with their leafy spears. Here grew clumps of fir, clad in everlasting green: there stood groves of oak, that had weathered for ages the wintry storm. Amidst this woody theatre ran a winding walk, lined with elms of insuperable height, whose branches, uniting at the top, reared a stately arch, and projected a solemn shade. It was impossible to enter this lofty labyrinth, without being struck with a pleasing dread. As they proceed, every inflection diffuses a deeper gloom, and awakens a more pensive attention.

Having strolled in this darksome avenue, without a speck of sunshine, without a glimpse of the heavens; on a sudden, they step into open day.—Surprising! cries Aspasio, What a change is this! What delightful enchantment is here!—One instant, whelmed in Trophonius's cave; * where horror frowns, and darkness lowers, and solitude reigns: transported the next into the romantic scenes of Arcadia, where all is populous, all is lightsome, and all is gay.—Quick as thought, † the arches of heaven expand their azure. Turrets and spires shoot into the skies. Towns, with their spacious edifices, spread themselves to the admiring view. Those lawns, green with freshest herbage; those fields, rich with undulating corn; where were they all a moment ago?—It brings to my mind that remarkable situation of the Jewish lawgiver, when, elevated on the summit of Pisgah, he surveyed the

* The reader may find a curious account of this cave, together with a very humorous, and (which should always accompany humour, or else it will be like a sting without the honey) an improving description of its effects, in the *Spectator*, Vol. viii. No. 598, 599.

† Such a sudden alteration of the prospect, is beautifully described by Milton:—

————— “ As when a scout,
Through dark and desert ways, with peril gone
All night, at last, by break of chearful dawn,
Obtains the brow of some high-climbing hill,
Which to his eye discovers unaware
The goodly prospect of some foreign land,
First seen: or some renown'd metropolis,
With glistening spires and pinnacles adorn'd,
Which now the rising sun gilds with his beams.” Book III,

goodly land of promise; surveyed "the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter;" surveyed "the mountains dropping with wine, and the hills flowing with milk;"* surveyed all with those eyes, which, for forty tedious years, had been confined to dry sands, ragged rocks, and the irksome wastes of a desolate howling wilderness.

Here they seated themselves on the first mossy † hillock which offered its couch. The rising sun had visited the spot, to dry up the dews, and exhale the damps, that might endanger health; to open the violets, and expand the primroses, that decked the green. The whole shade of the wood was collected behind them; and a beautiful, extensive, diversified landscape spread itself before them.

Theron, according to his usual manner, made many improving remarks on the prospect, and its furniture. He traced the footsteps of an all-comprehending contrivance, and pointed out the strokes of inimitable skill. He observed the grand exertions of power, and the rich exuberance of goodness, most signally, most charmingly conspicuous through the whole.—Upon one circumstance he enlarged, with a particular satisfaction.

Ther. See, Aspasio, how all is calculated to administer the highest delight to mankind. Those trees and hedges, which skirt the extremities of the landscape, stealing away from their real bulk, and lessening by gentle diminutions, appear like elegant pictures in miniature. Those which occupy the nearer situations, are a set of noble images; swelling upon the eye, in full proportion, and in a variety of graceful

* This is the language of the book of Job, and the prophecy of Joel;—a language, like the scene it describes, not beautiful only, but beautiful and rich even to luxuriancy, Job xx. 17, Joel iii. 18. One would almost suspect, the Lyric poet had read these passages, and attempted an imitation of their delicacies.

“ Vinique fontem, lactis et uberes
Cantare rivos, atque truncis
Lapsa cavis iterare mella.”

Lib. II. Ode xix.

† Horace would have called it, *cespes fortuitus*.

attitudes;—both of them ornamenting the several apartments of our common abode, with a mixture of delicacy and grandeur.

The blossoms that array the branches, the flowers that embroider the mead, address and entertain our eyes with every charm of beauty; * whereas, to other creatures, they are destitute of all those attractives, which result from a combination of the loveliest colours and most alluring forms. Yonder streams, that glide, with smooth serenity, along the valleys; glittering to the distant view, like sheets of polished crystal; or soothing the attentive ear, with the softness of aquatic murmurs; are no less exhilarating to the fancy, than to the soil through which they pass. The huge enormous mountain, the steep and dizzy precipice, the pendant horrors of the craggy promontory, wild and tremendous as they are, furnish out an agreeable entertainment to the human mind, and please, even while they terrify; whereas the beasts take no other notice of those majestic deformities, than only to avoid the dangers they threaten.

Asp. How wonderfully do such considerations exalt our idea of the Creator's goodness; his very distinguishing goodness to mankind! And should they not proportionably endear that eternal Benefactor to our affections? His ever-bountiful hand has scattered blessings, and with profuse liberality, among all the

* Therefore, when the prophet describes the Christian church, adorned with all the "beauties of holiness," he borrows his imagery from these amiable objects. "Israel shall bud and blossom," Isa. xxvii. 6.—Nay, the very "wilderness," even the Gentile nations, being converted unto Christ, "shall blossom as a rose," Isa. xxxv. 1.—"I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon," Hos. xiv. 5. What an elegant picture! and what a comfortable promise! Here is the queen of flowers, and the prince of trees;—nothing fairer than the full-blown lily, nothing firmer than the deep-rooted cedars. Yet these are a representation (and but a faint representation) of the comeliness which the all-glorious Redeemer puts upon his people, and of the stability which they derive from his inviolable faithfulness.

N. B. The fourteenth of Hosea is one of those chapters, which, for their peculiar importance and excellency, deserve not only to have a turn in our reading, but a place in our memory.

anks of animated existence. But to us he exercises a beneficence of a very superior kind. We are treated as his peculiar favourites. We are admitted to scenes of delight, which none but ourselves are capable of relishing.

Ther. Another remark, though very obvious, is equally important. The destination of all these external things is no less advantageous, than their formation is beautiful. The bloom, which engages the eye with its delicate hues, is cherishing the embryo fruit; and forming, within its silken folds, the rudiments of a future desert. Those streams, which shine from afar, like fluid silver, are much more valuable in their productions, and beneficial in their services, than they are amiable in their appearance. They distribute, as they roll along their winding banks, cleanliness to our houses, and fruitfulness to our lands. They nourish, and at their own expence, a never-failing supply of the finest fish. They visit our cities, and attend our wharfs, as so many public vehicles; ready to set out at all hours.

Those sheep, which give their udders to be drained by the busy frisking lambs, are fattening their flesh for our support; and while they fill their own fleeces, are providing for our comfortable clothing. Yonder kine, some of which are browsing upon the tender herb; others, satiated with pasturage, ruminate under the shady covert; though conscious of no such design, are concocting, for our use, one of the softest, purest, healthiest liquors in the world. The bees that fly humming about our seat, and pursue their work on the fragrant blossoms, are collecting balm and sweetness, to compose the richest of syrups; which, though the produce of their toil, is intended for our good.

Nature, and her whole family, are our obsequious servants, our ever-active labourers. They bring the fruits of their united industry, and pour them into our lap, or deposit them in our store-rooms.

Asp. Who can ever sufficiently admire this immense benignity?—The supreme Disposer of events

commanded-delight and profit to walk hand in hand, through his ample creation; making all things so perfectly pleasing, as if beauty was their only end; yet all things so eminently serviceable, * as if usefulness had been their sole design. And, as a most winning invitation to our gratitude, he has rendered man the centre, in which all the emanations of his beneficence, diffused through this terrestrial system, finally terminate.

But, my dear Theron, is not this apparent, in a much more wonderful manner, throughout the whole œconomy of redemption? It were a small thing for this inferior class of unintelligent creatures, to be continually employing themselves for our benefit. Even the Son of the most high God, through all his incarnate state, acted the very same part. He took flesh, and bore the infirmities of human nature, not for himself, but for us men, and our salvation. He suffered want, and endured misery in all its forms; that we might possess the fulness of joy, and abound in pleasures for evermore. When he poured out his soul in agonies, under the curse of an avenging law, was it not with a compassionate view to make us partakers of eternal blessedness? When he fulfilled, perfectly fulfilled the whole commanding law; was it not for this gracious purpose, that his merits might be imputed to us; that we by his obedience might be made righteous? Yes;

———“ For us he liv'd,
Toil'd for our ease, and for our safety bled.”

Nothing in the whole course——

Ther. Pardon me for interrupting you, Aspasio. I have no objection to the general drift of your discourse. But that particular notion of imputed righteousness has always appeared to me in a very ridiculous light. And I must say, that such a puritanical

* “ Omnes mundi partes ita constitutæ sunt, ut neque ad usum meliores esse poterint, neque ad speciem pulchriores.”

Cic. de. Nat. Deor. lib. ii.

nostrum makes a very unbecoming figure amongst your other manly and correct sentiments of religion.

Asp. You know, Theron, I have long ago disavowed that ignoble prejudice, which rejects doctrines, or despises persons, because they happen to be branded with contemptible names. It is true, the writers styled Puritans, are remarkable for their attachment to this peculiarity of the gospel. It runs through all their theological works; and very eminently distinguishes them from the generality of our modern treatises. But must it therefore be wrong, because maintained by that particular set of people? Or, are they the only advocates for this important truth?

Ther. Aye; it is as I suspected. I have lately conjectured, from several hints in my Aspasio's discourse, that he has been warping to the low ungentleman-like peculiarities of those whimsical fanatics.

Asp. I cannot conceive, why you should call them whimsical. To settle faith on its proper basis, the meritorious righteousness of the Redeemer; and to deduce obedience from its true origin, the love of God shed abroad in the heart;—to search the conscience, and convince the judgment;—to awaken the lethargic, and comfort the afflicted soul;—and all from a thorough knowledge, joined to a masterly application, of the divine word; these, sure, are not whimsical talents, but real excellencies. Yet these, if we may credit history, entered into the preaching; these, if we will examine impartially, are to be found in the writings of the Puritans.—And a pearl, you will please to remember, is a pearl still, though it should hang in the Ethiopian's ear.

Ther. Ethiopian indeed! You have truly characterised that demure and gloomy generation. I hope, you do not intend to introduce their affected solemnity and forbidden reserve, into your own easy and engaging conversation. Though, for aught I can judge, this would be no more ungraceful, than to patch such antiquated notions on the refined scheme of Christianity.

Asp. My dear friend, you are too ludicrous; and I begin to catch the infection. We had better return to our first topic. Let us contemplate the wonders of creation; and as we admire the works, learn to adore the Maker.

Ther. None of your evasions, good Aspasio. You must not think to put me off at this rate. I have wanted an opportunity, to rally you upon this head; and to argue or laugh you out of these religious oddities.

Asp. If you will not agree to terms of peace, I hope you will allow some cessation of arms. At least, till I can muster my forces, and prepare for the vindication of my principles.

Ther. No; upon the spot, and out of hand, you are required to answer for yourself, and these same queer opinions.—I shall serve you as the Roman consul served the procrastinating monarch. When he demurred about his reply to the demands of the senate, and said, “he would consider of the matter;” the resolute ambassador drew a circle round him with his cane, and insisted upon a positive answer, before he stepped over those limits.

Asp. This, however, you will give me leave to observe, that the affair is of a very serious nature. Upon condition that you will dismiss your flourishes of wit, and strokes of satire, I will acquaint you with the reasons which have made me a thorough convert to this doctrine. Once, I held it in the utmost contempt, and pitied the simplicity of (as I then styled them) its deluded admirers. But I am now become such a fool, that I may be truly wise, and substantially happy. I have seen my ruined state, and I bless God for this sovereign restorative. It is the source of my strongest consolations, and the very foundation of my eternal hopes.

Ther. Excuse me, Aspasio, if the vivacity of my temper, and the seemingly uncouth tenet, kindled me into a more humorous gaiety, than became the occasion. You speak of the point with so much serious-

ness, and in such weighty terms, as check my levity, and command my respect. Be pleased to execute what you have promised; and the most engaged attention of my mind shall atone for the petulant sallies of my tongue.

Asp. To conceive a dislike of any doctrine, only because persons of a particular denomination have been very officious to promote its reception; this is hardly consistent with an impartial inquiry after truth.

Ther. I grant it, *Aspasio*. And I should be ashamed of my opposition, if it was founded on so slight a bottom. But, abstracted from all party considerations, I can see nothing in this supposed article of our faith that may recommend it to the unprejudiced inquirer. What can be more awkward than the term, or more irrational than the sentiment?

Asp. The word imputed, when used in this connection, may possibly convey a disagreeable sound to the ears of some people: because they look upon it as the peculiar phraseology of a few superstitious sectarists; and reject it, merely on the foot of that unreasonable surmise.—But how can you be disgusted at the expression, *Theron*, who have so often read it in the most approved and judicious writers? *St Paul*, who might affirm with relation to his epistles, much more truly than the painter concerning his portraits, “I write for eternity;”^{*} scruples not to use this awkward language, several times in the same chapter †. *Milton*, the correctness of whose taste, and the propriety of whose style, no person of genius will ever question, delights to copy, in various parts of his incomparable poem, the *Apostle’s* diction. Authorised by such precedents, it is superior to cavil, and warranted beyond all exception.

As to the sentiment, I take it to be the very funda-

* Alluding to the painter, who, apologising for the slow procedure and scrupulously nice touches of his pencil, said, *Æternitati pigo*, “I paint for eternity.” And those strokes had need be correct, which are intended to survive so long as time itself shall last.

† See *Rom. iv.* in which single chapter, some branch of the word *ἀποδοῦναι*, “to be imputed,” occurs no less than ten or eleven times.

mental article of the gospel: and I believe, whoever is acquainted with ecclesiastical history, will allow, that it bore the principal sway in extricating us from popish darkness, and introducing the Reformation.—What says our Lord, with regard to the love of God, and the love of our neighbour? “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Much the same would I venture to say concerning the imputation of our sins to Christ, and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us: On these two doctrines hang all the privileges and the whole glory of the gospel.

Ther. In our last conversation, I must own, I saw a strong resemblance between the works and the word of God. But I never observed any thing in nature, that bore the least analogy to imputed sin, or imputed righteousness.—To me your two doctrines seem very unaccountable and irrational.

Asp. That our sins should be charged upon the only begotten Son of God, and that his righteousness should be made over to sinful worms, is strange, exceeding strange. The Psalmist calls it, “marvellous loving kindness,” Psal. xvii. 7. The Apostle styles it, “love that passeth knowledge,” Eph. iii. 19. And it has sometimes, I must freely confess, been almost ready to stagger my belief. However, I have found myself relieved in this perplexity, not only by the testimonies of Scripture, but even from the contemplation of nature. All nature is full of strange and mysterious effects; consequently, is a voucher for the mysterious truths of Christianity.

How surprising are the experiments of electricity, and the occult qualities of the loadstone! How surprising those countless legions of effluvia, which transpire from a small odoriferous body! and those infinite myriads of luminous particles, which issue from a smaller flaming substance!* There’s not a blade of grass,

* Dr Nieuwentyt has computed, that, from a lighted candle, about the size of six to the pound, there issues, in the second of a minute, an effusion of particles, vastly more than ten hundred thousand millions

but surpasses the comprehension of all mankind; and not a single atom, but is big with wonders; insomuch, that the intelligent observer can no where fix his thoughts, without being astonished, transported, and even lost in admiration.

Since the procedure of Providence in this visible system, is a continued series of stupendous and unsearchable operations; need we be alarmed, can we reasonably be offended, if the scheme of redemption is equally stupendous, is far more amazing? Yet, though amazing, I hope it will not appear, what you was pleased to insinuate, irrational.

Suppose we state the signification of the terms, and adjust the boundaries of our subject, before we enter upon a survey of its contents?

Ther. Such a caution would have prevented, at least have shortened, many a vehement and tedious controversy.—You see, on yonder heath, the preparations for an approaching race. There stand the posts, which are to mark out the limits of the course. Without this previous restrictive care, how irregular would be the excursions of the contending steeds! How difficult, rather how impossible, to declare the conqueror, and award the prize!—A clear definition of terms seems equally necessary for candid disputants. Without it, they may wrangle for ages, and never come to a determination.

Asp. Justification is an act of God Almighty's grace; whereby he acquits his people from guilt, and accounts them righteous, * for the sake of Christ's righteousness, which was wrought out for them, and is imputed to them.

Ther. Two of your terms want some further expli-

times the number of sands, which the whole globe of the earth contains.—To call this a very great multitude, would be saying little; it nonplusses our thoughts, and exceeds the utmost stretch of imagination!

* Should any reader object to the definition, apprehending, that justification implies no more than the pardon of sins; I would desire him to suspend his judgment, till he has perused Dialogue X. where this point is more circumstantially considered.

cation. What do you understand by Christ's righteousness? And what is the meaning of imputed?

Asp. By Christ's *righteousness*, I understand the whole of his active and passive obedience; springing from the perfect holiness of his heart; continued through the whole progress of his life; and extending to the very last pang of his death.—By the word *imputed*, I would signify, that this righteousness, though performed by our Lord, is placed to our account; is reckoned or adjudged by God as our own. Insomuch, that we may plead it, and rely on it, for the pardon of our sins; for adoption into his family; and for the enjoyment of life eternal.—Shall I illustrate my meaning by a well-attested fact?

Ther. Nothing gives us so easy a conception of any difficult point, as this method of explaining, by parallel facts, or proper similitudes.

Asp. I dont say the case is parallel. I only produce it, to aid our conceptions.—Onesimus, you know, was Philemon's slave. * He had perfidiously deserted his master's service, and still more perfidiously stole his goods. The fugitive, in his guilty rambles, providentially meets with St Paul. He is charmed and captivated with that gracious gospel, which proclaims mercy even for the vilest of sinners: He becomes a thorough convert to the religion of Jesus, and is received into the spiritual patronage of the apostle. Who, learning his dishonest conduct, and obnoxious state, undertakes to bring about a reconciliation with his offended master; despatches him, for this purpose, with a letter to Philemon; and, amongst other persuasives, writes thus in the poor criminal's behalf: "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. I Paul have written it with mine own hand; I will repay it."

That which the zealous preacher of Christianity offered, the adored Author of Christianity executed.—We had revolted from the Lord of all lords, and broke his holy commandments. The Son of God, infinitely

* See the Epistle to Philemon.

compassionate, vouchsafes to become our Mediator. That nothing might be wanting to render his mediation successful, he places himself in our stead. The punishment, which we deserved, He endures. The obedience, which we owed, He fulfils.—Both which, being imputed to us, and accepted for us, are the foundation of our pardon, are the procuring cause of our justification.

Ther. Is this the exact signification of the original word, which we translate *imputed*?

Asp. In the book of Numbers, we meet with this phrase; and in such a connection, as clears up its meaning. Jehovah enacts a decree concerning the Levites, who had no vintages to gather, nor any harvests to reap. He directs them to present the tenth part of their tythes, in the form of a heave-offering; adding, “And this your heave-offering” shall be reckoned* unto you, “as though it were the corn of the threshing-floor, and as the fulness of the wine-press;” as satisfactory to me, and as beneficial to you, as if it was the tenth of your own labours, and the tythe of your own increase. So the expiatory sufferings which Christ endured, the complete obedience which he performed, are reckoned to true believers. And are altogether as effectual for obtaining their salvation, as if they were their own personal qualifications.

* Num. xviii. 27. **וַתִּשָּׂא** exactly answers to St Paul's *λογισθη*, Rom. iv. 9.—The same phrase is used, and the same doctrine taught, Lev. xvii. 3, 4. “What man soever there be of the house of Israel that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp; and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer unto the Lord an offering before the tabernacle of the Lord, blood shall be imputed to that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people.”—Here was no murder committed by the offender, yet the crime of murder is charged, or, as the Scripture speaks, “blood is imputed to him.” Lest any should mistake the meaning of this expression, or not understand it in its due latitude, the divine Lawgiver is his own interpreter; “he hath” in the eye of my justice “shed blood;” he shall pass for a murderer, and be punished as a murderer; he shall “be cut off from among his people.”—Thus also saith the eternal Judge concerning the believers in Christ: “The righteousness of my Son is imputed to them; they are, in the eye of my justice, righteous; they shall be dealt with as righteous persons; and made partakers of the kingdom of heaven.”

Ther. The imputation mentioned in your passage, is the imputation of something done by the Levites themselves, not of something done by another. This, I apprehend, is the true import of the word, when it occurs affirmatively in Scripture.

Asp. This is always the import,—should have been said, in order to make the objection forcible. But you could not soon forget the instance just now alleged. St Paul, speaking of the crimes which Onesimus had committed, and of the injuries which Philemon had sustained, says, “Charge them all on me; I will be responsible for the one and for the other, as much as if the whole guilt had been of my own contracting.”—Here is supposed, not the imputation of something done by the apostle himself, but of another’s criminal behaviour.

Under the law, Aaron is commanded to “put the iniquities” of Israel upon the scape-goat, Lev. xv. 21.—The same sentiment is re-inculcated, when the goat is said to “bear the iniquities” of the people, Lev. xvi. 22. This was plainly an imputation; yet could not possibly be the imputation of any thing done by the devoted animal. The effects which took place upon the execution of this ordinance, indicate a translation of guilt. For the congregation was cleansed, but the goat polluted. The congregation so cleansed, that their iniquities were conveyed away, and to be found no more: the goat so polluted, that it communicated defilement to the person who conducted it into the land not inhabited. All this was God’s own appointment; and designed, like the whole system of Mosaic ceremonies, to instruct his church in the knowledge of the great Mediator; in whose person and office that was done really, which elsewhere could be accomplished no otherwise than typically.

Ther. If this is your meaning, Aspasio, I am apt to think, it will be a difficult matter to make me a proselyte. I must be content to pass for one of the stiff-necked generation; since I can see neither wisdom nor equity, in ascribing to a person what he has not, imputing to him what he does not.

Asp. It was not Aspasio, but his friend, who set out with a view of making proselytes. If I can maintain my ground, and vindicate my own belief, it will be no inconsiderable acquisition. However, I shall not despair of seeing the partner of my heart become a sharer of my faith. When we are convinced of our numberless sins; when we feel the depravity of our nature, and begin to discern the inconceivable sanctity of our Judge; then, perhaps, this exploded article may be found worthy of acceptance; its constitution admired, as the wisdom of God; and its privilege coveted, as the consolation of our souls.

Ther. I shall wave, at present, an examination of each particular; and only make some remote observations, which seem, nevertheless, pretty nearly to affect your scheme. Some persons, I dare be positive, have not so much as heard of your terms; many persons have no manner of acquaintance with your doctrine. Will you strike off all these from the list of Christians? Will you condemn all these as desperate infidels?

Asp. Not heard of them! in a Protestant nation! where the Gospel is publicly preached, and the Bible in every one's hand! This, if true, is much to be lamented.

In answer to your question;—it is not my custom, much less is it my prerogative, to condemn others. Has God committed all judgment unto me, that I should presume to anticipate the decisive sentence, or launch the thunderbolts of eternal vengeance? Neither do I affirm the condition of such persons to be desperate. There may be those, who have no explicit knowledge of the doctrine, who are even prejudiced against the expressions; yet live under the belief of the truth, and in the exercise of the duty. “They are never diverted, by the splendour of any thing that is great, or by the conceit of any thing that is good in them, from looking upon themselves as sinful dust and ashes.” Their whole dependence is upon that just One, who expired on the cross, and whom the

heavens have received. They seek the sanctifying Spirit, in consequence of their Saviour's death ; and give all diligence to "add to their faith, virtue," 2 Pet. 1. 5.

Ther. If people may be safe, and their eternal interests secure, without any knowledge of these particularities, why should you offer to puzzle their heads about a few unnecessary scholastic terms ?

Asp. Scriptural terms, you should have said, Theron. However, we are not very solicitous as to the credit, or the use, of any particular set of phrases. Only let men be humbled, as repenting criminals, at the Redeemer's feet ; let them rely, as devoted pensioners, on his precious merits ; and they are undoubtedly in the way to a blissful immortality. Yet will their way be less clear, and their steps more embarrassed, by not distinctly understanding the benign genius of the Gospel. A proper information in this important point would shed light upon their paths, and encourage them in their journey ; would further their progress in vital holiness, and increase their joy in the Lord.

Ther. The followers of your opinion, I have observed, are perpetually dwelling upon this one favourite topic ; to the exclusion of that grand and truly-essential part of Christianity, sanctification.

Asp. If you have ever taken notice of such a conduct, you are unquestionably right in withholding your approbation. It is a manifest incongruity, and deserves your censure. But, assure yourself, it proceeds from a misapprehension in the persons, and has no connection with the nature of the doctrine.

I am far, very far, from reducing the various parts of Christianity (which, when connected, make up so well-proportioned a system) to this single, however distinguished branch. Sanctification is equally necessary, both to our present peace, and to our final felicity. Indeed they are as reciprocally necessary for the purposes of intellectual and eternal happiness, as the heart and the lungs are to the subsistence of the animal œconomy. The former must transmit, the

latter must refine, the vital fluid ; or else disease will take place, and death will ensue. My intention is, that those fundamental truths of the Gospel, like these master organs in the body, may have each its proper office assigned ; each concur to support the better health, and to promote the spiritual growth of the Christian.

Ther. Other of your zealous folks I have known, who are all for the sanctifying influence of the Spirit ; and reckon this affiance on the Saviour's merits among the beggarly elements of religion. They scarce ever mention what Christ has done for us, but insist wholly upon what he does in us. When the religious people are so divided among themselves,* how can a stranger act ? which opinion shall he chuse ?

Asp. Which, Theron ! Let him discard neither, but associate both. If the all-gracious Redeemer has poured out his blood on the cross, that my guilt may be expiated ; and presents his intercession in heaven, that I may be endued with the Spirit ; if he will be the meritorious cause of my justification, and the operative principle of my sanctification, why should I scruple to receive him in either, in both capacities ? Who would lop off the right hand, in order to impart the higher dignity or the greater importance to the left ? I would be no partialist in Christianity ; neither diminish her dowry, nor mutilate her privileges.

Ther. You seem, if not to mutilate, yet to split the merits of Christ, and parcel out the efficacy of his mediatorial undertaking ; ascribing so much to his active, and so much to his passive righteousness ; pardon to this, and life to that.

* Theron's inquiry concerning these two particulars is sometimes made an objection against all religion. But have the gentlemen who adopt this objection never seen the naturalists divided in their judgment, with relation to the design and use of several appearances in the material, the vegetable, the animal creation ? while one decries as a nuisance, what another admires as a beauty. Yet no one, I believe, ever took it into his head, from such a diversity of opinions, to doubt whether the frame of nature is a just, a regular, and a finished system ; or to deny, that power, goodness, and wisdom, support, pervade, and direct the whole.

Asp. Some, perhaps, may be pleased with this way of stating the matter. But it is a method which I neither attempt to defend, nor wish to imitate. To distinguish between the active and passive righteousness, I think is not amiss; because this sets the fulness of our Lord's merit in the clearest light, and gives the completest honour to God's holy law. But to divide them into detached portions, independent on each other, seems to be fanciful, rather than judicious. For, had either part of the mediatorial obedience been wanting, I apprehend, neither pardon, nor acceptance, nor any spiritual blessing, could have been vouchsafed to fallen man.

The two parts are inseparable; making, in their connection, a necessary and noble whole for the accomplishment of our salvation; just as the light and the heat of yonder sun blend their operation, to produce this delightful day, and this fruitful weather. However, therefore, I may happen to express myself, I never consider them as acting in the exclusive sense; but would always have them understood, as a grand and glorious aggregate: looking upon our Saviour's universal obedience, which commenced at his incarnation, was carried on through his life, and terminated in his death; looking upon all this, in its collective form, as the object of my faith, and the foundation of my hopes.*

Ther. I think, you lay too much stress upon this controverted, and perhaps merely speculative point.

* In this opinion, Aspasio has Milton's archangel for his precedent. Michael, speaking of his Lord and our Lord, says,

The law of God exact he shall fulfil,
Both by obedience and by love: though love
Alone fulfil the law: thy punishment
He shall endure, by coming in the flesh
To a reproachful life and cursed death;
Proclaiming life to all who shall believe
In his redemption.

B. xii. l. 402.

According to the tenor of these very valuable lines, our Lord's fulfilling the law, and enduring the punishment, are the concurring causes, or the one compound cause, of life and redemption to sinners.

Asp. Merely speculative? Say not thus, my dear friend. "How I may be justified before God, my Maker, my Governor, and my Judge," is an inquiry, of all others, the most interesting and important. It is the main hinge, on which every instance of practical religion turns.* True comfort, willing obedience; holy communion with the divine Majesty, all depend upon this capital point.

Far from being a merely speculative point, it ascribes the most undivided glory to the ever-blessed God, and his free grace. It administers the most serene and substantial satisfactions to frail, but believing men. It cherishes, with the most kindly influence, that pure and undefiled religion, which has its seat in the heart; has its birth from love; and is a real antepast, both of the business and the bliss of saints in light.

Can we, then, lay too much stress upon a doctrine so greatly momentous, upon a privilege so extensively beneficial?

Ther. When all this is proved, then for my reply, *Aspasio.* Nay, then you shall have more than a reply; I promise you my cordial assent.

Asp. And if all this be incapable of proof, I assure you, *Theron*, I will not solicit your assent. Nay, more, I will revoke and renounce my own.

Ther. At present, I believe, we must go in, and prepare for our visitants. Some other interview will give us an opportunity to canvass this question more minutely.

Asp. Though I have never much inclination, even when there is the most leisure, for controversy; yet, if you insist upon it, I shall not absolutely refuse to engage in a debate with my *Theron*; because he will come to the amicable rencounter, without bringing an-

* "Diffundit se," says the judicious *Witsius*, "justificationis doctrina per totum theologiæ corpus: et prout fundamenta hic vel bene, vel male, jacta sunt, eo universum ædificium vel solidius augustiusque ascendit, vel male statuminatum fœdam minitatur ruinam."—*De Econ.*
See above, p. iii.

gry passions for his second. My reasons will be impartially weighed, not artfully eluded, much less answered with invective. If some inadvertent expression should drop from my lips, he will not rigorously prosecute the slip; nor aggravate an unguarded sentence into the crime of heresy. Candour will form his judgment, and good-nature dictate his expressions.

Ther. I thank you, my dear Aspasio, for your gentle admonition. What I am in the language of complaisance, means what I should be. Well; I will endeavour to take your hint, and check this my impetuosity of spirit. I have admired, O that I could imitate! the beautiful example of St Paul. When Festus, forgetting the dignity of the governor, and the politeness of the gentleman, uttered that indecent reflection, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad:" did the great preacher of Christianity kindle into resentment? The charge was unjust and abusive. But the apostle, with the most perfect command of himself, returned the softest, yet the most spirited answer imaginable. "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak the words of truth and soberness."* Inexpressibly graceful was this calm and obliging reply. Though short, infinitely more convincing than a whole torrent of bitter or recriminating words. It disarmed the judge of his rising displeasure; it conciliated the favour of his royal assessor; and brought honour to the Christian cause.

This amiable self-regimen, and moderation of temper, I shall be sure to see exemplified in my friend's conversation; however I may fail of it myself, or be proof against all his arguments.

* See Acts xxvi. where we have an apology, the most delicate and masterly, perhaps, that ever was made; eminent for fine address, clear reasoning, and important truth. Which, notwithstanding all these very superior recommendations, is deemed madness; and that by a nobleman from Rome; the seat of science, and fountain-head of polite literature. A proof this, no less demonstrative than deplorable, of the Apostle's assertion: "The natural man," however ingenious or accomplished, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him." 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Asp. Ah! Theron, we want no monitor, to remind us of our supposed excellencies. And if you begin with your compliments, it is time to put an end to our discourse.

Only let me just observe, that divine truths cannot be properly discerned, but by the enlightening influences of the divine Spirit. We must address ourselves to this inquiry, not only with unprejudiced minds, but likewise with praying hearts. We must bring to this dispute, not barely the quiver of logic, but that "unction from the Holy One, which may teach us all things," 1 John ii. 20, 27. Let us then adopt the poet's aspiration;

Thou celestial Light,
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate; there plant eyes; all mist from thence
Purge and disperse!

MILTON, B. iii. l. 51.

DIALOGUE III.

Ther. WE are now, Aspasio, about two miles distant from my house. The horse-road lies through a narrow, dusty lane. The foot-path leads along a spacious pleasant meadow. Suppose we deliver our horses to the servant, and walk the remainder of the way?

Asp. You could not make a proposal more agreeable to my inclination; especially, as the air is become cool, and the walk is so inviting.

What a magnificent and charming scene! hills on either side, gently rising, and widely spreading; their summits crowned with scattered villages, and clustering trees; their slopes divided into a beauteous chequer-work; consisting partly of tillage, with its waving crops; partly of pasturage, with its grazing herds. Before us, the trefoil, the clover, and a variety of grassy plants, differently bladed, and differently branched, weave themselves into a carpet of living green. Can any of the manufactures formed in the looms, or extended in

the palaces of Persia, vie with the covering of this ample area? vie with it, in grandeur of size, or delicacy of decoration?

What a profusion of the gayest flowers, fringing the banks, and embroidering the plain!

Nature here
 Wantons, as in her prime, and plays at will
 Her virgin-fancies, pouring forth more sweet,
 Wild above rule or art, enormous bliss!

MILTON, B. v.

Nothing can be brighter than the lustre of those silver daisies; nothing deeper than the tinge of those golden crowfoots. Yet both seem to acquire additional beauty, by succeeding to the deformity of winter, and flourishing amidst so much surrounding verdure.

Ther. Nature is truly in her prime. The vegetable tribes are putting on their richest attire. Those chestnuts, on our right hand, begin to rear their flowering pyramids; those willows, on our left, are tipt with tassels of grey; and yonder poplars, which overlook the river, and seem to command the meadows, are pointed with rolls of silver.

The hawthorn, in every hedge, is partly turgid with silken gems, partly dissolved into a milk-white bloom: Not a straggling furze, nor a solitary thicket, but wears a rural nosegay. All is a delightful display of present fertility, and a joyous pledge of future plenty. Now we experience what the royal poet, in very delicate imagery, describes; "The winter is past: the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come; and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs; and the vine, with the tender grapes, give a good smell." Cant. ii. 11, 12, 13.

Asp. Your quotation and the scene remind me of a remark, which should have taken place in our last night's discourse. When we were enumerating the excellencies of the sacred writings, methinks we might have added,—Are you fond of pastoral, in all its flowery graces, and blooming honours? Never have we seen

such exquisite touches of rural painting, or such sweet images of endeared affection, as in the "Song of songs, which is Solomon's." All the brilliant and amiable appearances in nature are employed, to delineate the tenderness of his heart, who is love itself; to pourtray the beauty of his person, who is the chiefest among ten thousand; and describe the happiness of those souls, whose "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John i. 3.

See, Theron, what the cheering warmth and the genial showers of spring have done! Such a change, so pleasing and so ennobling, the Gospel of Christ introduces into the soul. Not a day, scarce an hour passes, but this season of universal fecundity produces something new. And is there any state, or any circumstance of life, on which the faith of Christ does not exert a similar efficacy, and bring forth fruit unto God?

This is supposed to be the spiritual meaning of that fine descriptive picture, which you have borrowed from the Canticles. It displays the benign agency of grace and its doctrines, especially of our Lord's satisfaction for sin, and of his righteousness imputed to sinners. These operate with much the same favourable and happy energy, both on our morals and our comforts, as the sweet influences of the vernal sun operate on the sprouting herbs and opening flowers.

Ther. If such were the effects of your doctrine, it would stand the fairer chance for general acceptation. But there are several weighty scruples to be removed, before persons of a liberal and enlarged way of thinking can acquiesce in your opinion. Who, for instance, can persuade himself, that what you call the satisfaction of Christ, is consistent with the dictates of reason, or with the perfections of the Deity?

Asp. Let gentlemen be candid in their inquiries, and truly liberal in their way of thinking; then, I flatter myself, these scruples may be removed without much difficulty.

God, the almighty Creator and supreme Governor

of the world, having made man, gave him a law, with a penalty annexed, in case of disobedience. This sacred law our forefather Adam presumptuously broke; and we, his posterity, were involved in his guilt. Or, should that point be controverted, we have undeniably made, by many personal transgressions, his apostacy our own. Insomuch, that all have sinned, have forfeited their happiness, and rendered themselves obnoxious to punishment.

Man being thus ruined, none could recover him, except his injured Maker. But shall he be recovered, shall he be restored, without suffering the punishment due to his crime, and threatened by his Creator? What then will become of the justice of the divine Lawgiver? And how shall the honour of his holy law be maintained? At this rate, who would reverence its authority, or fear to violate its precepts?

Sinners might be emboldened to multiply their transgressions; and tempted to think, that the God of immaculate holiness, the God of unchangeable veracity, is "altogether such an one as themselves."*

Does it not appear needful, that some expedient be devised, in order to prevent these dishonourable and horrid consequences?

Ther. Proceed to inform us, what the expedient is.

Asp. To ascertain the dignity of the supreme administration, yet rescue mankind from utter destruction, this admirable purpose was formed, and in the fulness of time executed. The second person of the ever-blessed Trinity unites the human nature to the divine, submits himself to the obligations of his people, and becomes responsible for all their guilt. In this capacity, he performs a perfect obedience, and undergoes the sentence of death; makes a full expiation of their sins, and establishes their title to life. By

* This was actually the case, as we are informed by the Searcher of hearts, when, on a particular occasion, punishment was only retarded. How much more would such impious opinions have prevailed, if, on this grand act of disobedience, punishment had been entirely forborne? Psal. l. 21.

which means, the law is satisfied, justice is magnified, and the richest grace exercised. Man enjoys a great salvation, not to the discredit of any, but to the unspeakable glory of all, the divine attributes.

This is what we mean by Christ's satisfaction. And this, I should imagine, wants no recommendation to our unprejudiced reason; as, I am sure, it is most delightfully accommodated to our distressed condition. It is also confirmed by many express passages of Scripture, and illustrated by a variety of very significant images.

Ther. Pray, let me be favoured with some of your scriptural images. After which, we may inquire, whether your doctrine will stand the test of reason.

Asp. What is your notion of a ransom? When Priam redeemed the dead body of Hector from the victorious Achilles, how was it done?

Ther. By paying a price.* Thus Fabius recovered the captives which were taken by Hannibal. He transmitted the sum required, and they were discharged from their confinement.

Asp. Such is the redemption procured for sinners by our Lord Jesus Christ. Of such a nature, (though incomparably more grand and august in all its circumstances,) and expressed by the very same word, † "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give his life a ransom for many."

Christ also paid a price, a real price, a most satis-

* βίβιον τ' ἀπειρησι ἀποινα,
an infinitely rich price. Hyperbolical this, as applied by Homer; strictly true, when referred to Christ.

† Λύτρον ἀπολύτρωσιν, are used in this precise signification, by the most approved authors of Greece.—Ἀπειρησιμψιτα λυτρε Λυβια. και τος αιχμαλωτης απιλαβε, says Plutarch. Ο υιος του ανθρωπου ηλθε δυναμι την ψυχην αυτου λυτρον αντι πολλων, says our blessed Saviour, Matth. xx. 28.—Ἀπιδυτρωσι ταλαντων ενια, is the language of Demosthenes. Εν αιχομιν την απολυτρωσιν δια του αιματος αυτου. are the words of St Paul, Eph. i. 7. To establish this important point, and to familiarise the comfortable idea to our minds, the sacred writers abound in this phraseology. See Luke i. 68. ii. 38. xxiv. 21. Rom. iii. 24. Tit. ii. 14. Heb. ix. 12.

factory price. In consideration of which, our freedom from every penal evil is granted. "Ye are redeemed,"* says the Apostle, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." Let me add one text more, which, in the same style of commutative justice, asserts the same truth: "Christ has redeemed us;† hath bought us off, "from the curse of the law." Yes, my friend,

"The ransom was paid down. The fund of heav'n,
Heav'n's inexhaustible exhausted fund,
Amazing and amaz'd, pour'd forth the price,
All price beyond. 'T'ho' curious to compute,
Archangels fail'd to cast the mighty sum."

Night Thoughts, No. IV.

Ther. Hold a little, good Aspasio. Consider the consequence of what you maintain. If there was a ransom in the case, to whom was it paid? The devil had led sinners captive. They are said to be the slaves of Satan. And shall the blessed Jesus pay his life to that accurs'd fiend? Shocking to imagine! Yet, shocking as it is, it must follow, from your own, and your poet's assertion.

Asp. You misapprehend the case, Theron. The ransom was paid to God. "Thou hast redeemed us to God," Rev. v. 9, is the confession of the saints in light. Satisfaction was made to the divine law, and to the divine justice; the one of which was offended, the other violated, and both concurred to denounce the transgressor's doom; of which doom Satan was only the destined executioner, whose malignity, and implacable rage, God is pleased to make the instrument of inflicting his vengeance, as he formerly used the idolatrous kings of Assyria and Babylon, to chastise the disobedient Israelites.

"When we were without strength," Rom. v. 6, ut-

* 1 Pet. i. 18. We have an equivalent expression, used in the same signification, by one of the correctest writers in the world,

"Et fratrem Pollux alterna morte redemit." VIRG.

† Gal. iii. 13. We are said to be *bought*, 1 Cor. vi. 20, not in a metaphorical sense, but really and properly. For here the price is mentioned; and by St Peter the price is specified, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

terly ruined, yet absolutely helpless; when none, in heaven or earth, could afford us any succour; then our Lord Jesus Christ most graciously and most seasonably interposed. He said, as it is very emphatically represented by Elihu, "Deliver them from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24. He did what is very beautifully described by our English classic:

— "So man, as is most just,
Shall satisfy for man, be judg'd and die;
And dying rise, and rising with him raise
His brethren, ransom'd with his own dear life."

MILTON, B. iii. l. 224.

Ther. But pray, do not you allow, that Christ is truly and properly God?

Asp. We not only allow it, but we insist upon it, and make our boast of it. This is the very foundation of his merit, and the support of our hope.

Ther. This may aggrandise the merit of Christ, but it will increase the difficulty of your task. For, according to this opinion, Christ must make satisfaction to himself. And is not this a practice quite unprecedented? a notion perfectly absurd?

Asp. It is quite unprecedented, you say. On this point I shall not vehemently contend. Only let me mention one instance. Zaleucus, you know, the prince of the Locrians, made a decree,—That whoever was convicted of adultery, should be punished with the loss of both his eyes. Soon after this establishment, the legislator's own son was apprehended in the very fact, and brought to a public trial. How could the father acquit himself, in so tender and delicate a conjuncture? Should he execute the law in all its rigour, this would be worse than death to the unhappy youth. Should he pardon so notorious a delinquent, this would defeat the design of his salutary institution. To avoid both these inconveniences, he ordered one of his own eyes to be pulled out, and one of his son's, by which means, the rights of justice were preserved inviolate, yet the tenderness of a parent was remarkably indulged; and may we not venture to say, that in this

case Zaleucus both received and made the satisfaction received it as a magistrate, even while he made it as a father?

Ther. I cannot see how this suffering of the father was in any degree satisfactory to the law, since the father and the son could not be considered as one and the same person. It may pass for an extraordinary instance of parental indulgence; it may strike the benevolent and compassionate hearer: but, if tried at the bar of equity and reason, it will hardly be admitted as any legal satisfaction; it will probably be condemned, as a breach of nature's first and fundamental law, self-preservation.

Asp. What you observe, Theron, I must confess, has weight. It will oblige me to give up my illustration. Nevertheless, what you urge against the propriety of the comparison, tends to establish the certainty of the doctrine. For Christ and his people are actually considered as one and the same person. They are one mystical body; he the head, they the members; so intimately united to him, that they are "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh," Eph. v. 30, Col. i. 20: by virtue of which union, their sins were punished in him, "and by his stripes they are healed," Isa. liii. 5, they obtain impunity and life.

Though there may be nothing in the procedure of men which bears any resemblance to this miracle of heavenly goodness, it receives a sufficient confirmation from the language of Scripture. He who wrote as an amanuensis to the unerring Spirit has declared, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world," unto whom? unto some third party? No; but reconciling it, by the death and obedience of Christ, "unto himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. And I can very readily grant, that this divine exertion of benignity and wisdom should be without a precedent, and without a parallel.*

* Fancy, in the person of Horace, said of Jupiter and his fabulous exploits,

"Cui nihil viget simile aut secundum."

Much more will Reason, in the character of a believer, say the same of Jehovah and his marvellous grace.

Difficulties, I own, may attend the explication of this article, or be interwoven with its consequences. At the same time I must affirm, that our apprehensions of heavenly things are so obscure, and our ideas of the divine benevolence so scanty, that we may very possibly mistake, and fancy that to be absurd, which is only great, wonderful, and incomprehensible.* Nor shall I be thought presumptuous in adding, that it will be impossible, for all the sagacity in the world, to prove this doctrine an absurdity, though it should ever remain an inexplicable mystery. How many phenomena, in the constitution of external nature, are confessedly mysterious and inexplicable! They challenge, they command our assent; yet baffle all our researches, and defy our utmost penetration. If, then, we find this truth fully and incontestably revealed in the Bible, we must renounce the philosopher, before we can consistently act the sceptic.

Ther. Let us see, then, whether it be so fully and incontestably revealed in the Bible. You have given me, as yet, but one of your scriptural images.

Asp. I have another at your service. Christ is called an High Priest. What do you take to be the nature of the priestly office?

Ther. The business of the priest was, I apprehend, to offer sacrifices, and to make intercession for the people.

Asp. Very true; and Christ could not, with any propriety, receive this appellation, if he had been de-

* Its unparalleled, nay, its incomprehensible nature, is no objection to its truth and reality. This is rather a circumstance, which perfectly agrees with the testimony of the inspired writers, and affords, in my opinion, an unanswerable argument for the divine origin of Christianity.

It agrees with the testimony of the inspired writers, who call it, not only "God's wisdom," by way of supereminent distinction, but "his wisdom in a mystery, even his hidden wisdom;" which could not possibly have been conceived by any finite mind, however enlarged or sagacious. Affords an unanswerable argument for the divine origin of Christianity; since it was infinitely too deep for the contrivance of men, and absolutely undiscoverable by the penetration of angels; how could it be known, but by manifestation from above? whence could it take its rise, but from an especial revelation?

fective in performing either of the sacerdotal functions. Now, that he offered no such victim as slain beasts, is universally acknowledged. We might presume, therefore, even though we had not the authority of an apostle to assure us, that "he offered himself, through the eternal Spirit, to God," Heb. ix. 14.

The cross, shall I say? * rather his divine nature, was the altar. His soul and body, each immaculately pure, were the holocaust. These he resigned; the one to deadly wounds, the other to inexpressible anguish, and both to be instead of all whole burnt-offerings. On this invaluable oblation, his intercession at the right hand of his Father is founded; from this it derives that prevailing efficacy, which is the security of his standing, and the recovery of his fallen disciples.

Give me leave to ask farther, What is your idea of a sacrifice? When Iphigenia was slain at the altar, what was the import of that memorable action?

Ther. It was intended, if we may credit Virgil's account, † to appease the indignation of the superior powers, and to obtain a propitious gale for the wind-bound fleet and confederate forces of Greece. But, I hope, you would not make that solemn butchery of the royal virgin, a pattern for the supreme goodness; nor the practice of gross idolaters, a model for the religion of the holy Jesus.

Asp. By no means, Theron. Only I would observe, that the custom of offering sacrifices obtained among the most cultivated nations of the heathen world; that these sacrifices were frequently of the vi-

* The cross is, by some authors, styled the altar; but, I think, improperly. This notion seems to have sprung from, or given rise to, the Popish practice of idolizing the crucifix; at least, it countenances such a kind of foppish or sacrilegious devotion, more than a Protestant writer could wish. It was the property of the altar, to sanctify the gift. This, therefore, when referred to our Lord's sacrifice, is a far more exalted office than we dare ascribe to the instrument of his suffering. This must be the honour and prerogative of his divine nature, which did indeed sanctify the great oblation; gave it a dignity, a merit, an efficacy, unspeakable and everlasting.

† Sanguine placasti ventos, et virginæ cæsa.

arious* kind, in which the victim was substituted instead of the offerer; and the former being cut off, the latter was discharged from punishment; consequently that the classic authors would (in case there was any need of such auxiliaries) join with the sacred writers, to declare the expediency, and explain the nature of sacrifices. This also you will permit me to add, that if the heathens talk sensibly on any part of religious worship, it is on the subject of sacrifices. Their sentiments concerning expiatory oblations seem to be the faint and distant echo of revelation; and I have usually considered them, not as the institutions of mere reason, but as the remains of some broken tradition.

However, the truest and most authentic signification of a sacrifice is to be learned from the Jewish ritual, explained by the gospel-comment. Do you remember the Mosaic account of that ordinance?

Ther. You are much better acquainted, *Aspasio*, with those sacred antiquities; and can give the most satisfactory information with regard to this particular. Only let me remind you, that alms are styled offerings; and praises, both in the prophetic and evangelical writings, come under the denomination of sacrifices.

* Seneca says, alluding to the custom of sacrifices, and the prevailing opinion concerning them, "Fuerim tantum nunquam amplius doliturae domus piaculum." What we are to understand by "piaculum," our author himself explains in the preceding clause: "Quicquid matri dolendum fuerit, in me transierit: quicquid aviæ, in me." To which his judicious commentator, *Lipsius*, from an extensive knowledge of antiquity, adds, *καταρσιμα* "sive piacularis victima." *Sen. ad Helv.*

The same writer, in the same consolatory epistle, has another sentence still more to our purpose: "Nobilitatur omnium carminibus, quæ se pro conjuge vicariam dedit." *Juvenal*, speaking of this very fact, expresses himself in very remarkable language; such as shews us, with the utmost clearness and precision, what the ancients meant, when they affirmed of a suffering or dying person, that he gave himself for another:

—————"Spectat subeuntem fata mariti

Alcestim, et similis si permutatio detur."

Sat. 6.

There is a passage in *Livy*, which most of all deserves our notice; as it seems to imply a popular belief of the dignity, the more than human dignity, of the sacrifice which was necessary to appease the wrath of heaven. It relates to *Decius* devoting himself for the public good: "Conspectus ab utraque acie, aliquanto augustior humano visu, sicuti cælo missus, piaculum omnis deorum iræ." *Lib. 8. cap. 9.*

Asp. Though praises and alms are styled sacrifices, they are not of the propitiatory, but eucharistic kind. They are never said to expiate transgressions, only are represented as acceptable to God through Jesus Christ; that divinely precious victim, whose merits both cancel our guilt, and commend our services! According to—

Ther. Stay a moment, Aspasio. Let me recollect myself. This may be the meaning of sacrifices, as ordained by Moses, and solemnized among the Jews. "Sacrifices were a symbolical address to God; intended to express before him the devotion, affections, dispositions, and desires of the heart, by significative and emblematical actions." Or thus; "The priest made atonement for sin, by sacrificing a beast, only as that was a sign and testimony of the sacrificer's pure and upright heart."

Asp. Sacrifices, I acknowledge, were a symbolical address to God. But would you confine their efficacy, only to the death of the animal, and the purity of the offerer? No, Theron: they always had a reference to the great sacrifice, ordained in the eternal counsels of Jehovah; prepared, when the co-eternal Son was made flesh; offered, when the blessed Jesus surrendered himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter. They were so far from being independent of this divine oblation, that they acted in perpetual subserviency to it, and derived all their virtue from it. They were the shadow, but the body was Christ.

"They expressed," you say, "the devotion, affections, dispositions, and desires of the heart." But I rather think, they expressed the guilt and the faith of the offerer. His guilt; for this seems to be intimated by the very names of the propitiatory sacrifices; the sin and the sacrifice, the offending action and the expiatory rite, being signified by one and the same word.* It is somewhat more than intimated, by the occasion of the offering, and the state of the offerer. Since it was only

* **חַטָּאת** denotes a sin, and sin-offering, Lev. iv. 3, 24. **עֲוֹן** signifies the trespass, and the trespass-offering, Lev. v. 16, 19.

On account of guilt contracted, that piacular oblations were made; and only from a guilty person that they were required. His faith; or firm belief, that ceremonial guilt, which shut him out from the communion of the visible church, and subjected him to the infliction of temporal judgments, was removed by these; but that moral guilt, which defiles the soul, and excludes from heaven, should be purged by some better sacrifice than these.* In the exercise of this faith, Abel offered up a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; and without this faith, exercised in some degree, it was impossible to please God.

If sacrifices were intended to bespeak integrity of heart, methinks, the state of innocence had been the properest period for their institution and oblation. But we never hear of this awful ceremony till man is fallen, and sin committed. If intended to denote purity of heart, why should they be particularly enjoined on that solemn day, when confession was made of all the sins of the whole congregation? Lev. xvi. 21. An oddly concerted device this! in which the tongue must contradict what the ceremony would recognise. Or, how could it be proper, after the violation of some law, or the neglect of some ordinance, immediately to go and offer a sacrifice? What would be the language of such a practice? "I have done wickedly, but my heart is pure and upright." Is this consistent with the spirit of humility, of modesty, or of common ingenuity? Is this the way of giving glory to God, or of taking shame to ourselves? Whereas, let the sacrifice be a typical expiation, and this is the significancy of the action, "Lord, I confess myself guilty. Punishment and death are my due. Let them fall, I beseech thee, on my victim; † that thy justice being glorified, and thy

* They "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh," Heb. ix. 13. "but could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience," Heb. ix. 9.

† What says that prodigy of oriental learning, Bochart? "Hoc eodem ritu iram Dei peccator deprecabatur, eamque immitti petebat in illius victimæ caput, quam suo loco ponebat." *Hierozoic.* tom. 1. lib. 2. cap. 64.

law satisfied, thy mercy may be honourably displayed in my forgiveness."

Besides, Theron, what likeness, what agreement is there, between the profession of integrity, and an animal mortally wounded, wallowing in its own blood, and struggling in the agonies of death? Whereas, between these dying pangs, and the punishment due to sin, or the sorrows sustained by the crucified Saviour, there is an apparent, a striking, and in various respects, an edifying resemblance.

Ther. They declared, perhaps, the sacrificer's readiness and resolution to slay the brute in himself, and to lay down his life in adherence to God.

Asp. I don't remember any assertion of this kind in the Bible, or any hint to countenance such an interpretation. It seems, in some cases, to be incompatible with the very nature of things, and contrary to the express declarations of Scripture. Doves, you know, lambs, and sheep, were offered in sacrifice. But shall we slay the lamb, the dove, the sheep in ourselves? So far from it, that Christ's disciples are either described by these creatures, or commanded to imitate their properties. "Be ye harmless as doves," Matth. x. 16. "Peter, feed my lambs," John xxi. 15. "My sheep, hear my voice." John x. 27.

Supposing, however, that this might be a subordinate design, or a valuable improvement of the sacrificial acts; yet their primary intention, and ultimate end, were widely different; were much more significant of the divine compassions, and much better adapted to the comfort of mankind. They were an awful indication, that death was the wages of sin; at the same time, a cheering declaration that God was pleased to accept the death of the animal, instead of the sinner's; a figurative representation * also of that illus-

* What says Milton upon this subject of sacrifices, and with reference to their principal design? He calls them

Religious rites
Of sacrifice; informing men by types
And shadows, of that destin'd seed to bruise
The serpent, by what means he shall achieve
Mankind's deliverance.

trious Person, who was to bear the sin of many, and pour out his soul for transgressors.

Ther. Since sacrifices were of a religious nature, they should not only be instructive and beneficial in their tendency; but have their due effects with regard to God, to sin, and to the person who brought them.

Asp. They had their effects with regard to God; that his justice might be magnified, and his anger appeased:—to sin; that its demerit might be displayed, yet its guilt be done away:—to the person who brought them; that he might obtain pardon, be exempted from punishment, and exercise his faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ther. There are so many sorts of sacrifice appointed in the Jewish rubric, that I am at a loss for a distinct idea; unless some one be singled out and separately considered.

Asp. Among all the sacrifices instituted by Moses, none more circumstantially typified the blessed Jesus, or more appositely expressed the benefits of his oblation, than the paschal lamb, and the sin-offering, on the day of atonement.

An expositor, who cannot be mistaken, has given us this interpretation of the paschal lamb; “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:”^{*} declaring hereby, that Christ is a real sacrifice; that he was prefigured, in this capacity, by the paschal lamb; that the circumstances which distinguished it, met in him; and

^{*} I Cor. v. 7. Would any one venture to say, “Paul our passover is sacrificed for us?” Yet this, I think, may be, or rather is in effect said, by the account which some persons give of Christ’s satisfaction. The very thought of such a blasphemous absurdity is too painful and offensive for the serious Christian to dwell upon. I would therefore divert his attention to a more pleasing object. Let him observe the exquisite skill, which here and every where conducts the zeal of our inspired writer. The odes of Pindar are celebrated for their fine transitions, which, though bold and surprising, are perfectly natural. We have, in this place, a very masterly stroke of the same beautiful kind. The apostle, speaking of the incestuous criminal, passes, by a most artful digression, to his darling topic, a crucified Saviour. Who would have expected it on such an occasion? Yet, when thus admitted, who does not see and admire both the propriety of the subject, and the delicacy of its introduction?

the advantages which resulted from it, were procured by him: those, in their truest import; these, in their largest extent. The words of the apostle speak this sense, to the plainest, simplest reader. Whereas, to extort any other signification from them, what subtilty of wit, and what refinement, or rather violence of criticism, must be used!

The paschal lamb was without blemish. Such was the Lamb of God; free from all taint of original sin, and from every spot of actual transgression. A lamb of the first year, in all the sprightliness and floridity of youth. Christ also laid down his life, not when worn with age, or debilitated with sickness; but in the very prime of his days; amidst all the bloom of health, and all the vigour of manhood. The lamb was to be slain in such a manner, as might occasion the most copious effusion of its blood. And was not this very exactly fulfilled in our suffering Saviour? His blood flowed out, in vast abundance, by the amazing sweat in the garden; by the rending lashes of the scourge; by the lacerating points of the thorns; by the dreadful nails, which cleft his hands and his feet; by the deadly spear which ripped open his side, and cut its way to his heart. Though the blood was to be so liberally spilt, a bone of the lamb was not to be broken. And you cannot but recollect, you cannot but admire, the wonderful interposition of Providence, to accomplish this emblematical prediction. When the soldiers had received a command to break the legs of the three crucified persons; when they had actually broke the legs of each malefactor, which hung on the right side of our Lord and on the left; their minds were over-ruled (by a divine influence, no doubt) to spare the blessed Jesus, and to leave all his bones unhurt, untouched.

The lamb was to be killed before the whole assembly; in the presence, either of the whole congregation of Israel, or else of that particular society, which concurred in eating the flesh. And did not the whole multitude of the Jews conspire against our Redeemer,

to put him to death? Did they not all cry out, as with one voice, *Crucify him! Crucify him!* Was he not executed, at one of their grand festivals, and in the sight of the whole assembled nation? The blood was not to be poured heedlessly upon the ground, but received carefully into a bason; and sprinkled, with the utmost punctuality, upon the door-posts. In like manner, the blood of the heavenly Lamb is not to be trampled under foot, by a contemptuous disregard. It is the treasure of the church, and the medicine of life; to be received, therefore, by an humble faith, and devoutly applied to our consciences. The sprinkling of that blood secured every Israelitish family from the destroying angel's sword. So the merits of the slaughtered Saviour* screen every believing sinner from the stroke of offended justice, and from the pains of eternal death. What must have become of the Israelite, who, trusting to the uprightness of his heart, should neglect to make use of this divinely-appointed safeguard? He must inevitably have been punished with the death of his first-born. Equally certain, but infinitely more dreadful, will be his condemnation, who, before the omniscient Judge, shall presume to plead his own integrity, or confide in his own repentance, and reject the atonement of the dying Jesus.

Ther. Now, if you please, for the sin-offering, † which seems to have been the most eminent sacrifice of them all.

Asp. It was the most comprehensive, because it

* Both St Peter and St Paul speak of the blood of sprinkling, 1 Pet. i. 2, Heb. xii. 24; intimating, by this remarkable form of speech, that the death of Christ will be of no advantage to the sinner, unless it be applied to his heart; as the blood of the paschal lamb was no protection to an Israelite, till it had tinged the posts of his door. Isaiah, using the same phrase, and alluding to the same custom, says of our Lord Jesus Christ, "he shall sprinkle many nations," lii. 15; not only initiate them into his church by baptism; but also, by the application of his blood, shall cleanse them from their guilt, and deliver them from the wrath to come.

† For the circumstances relating to the sin-offering, the reader will consult Lev. xvi. For those which concern the paschal lamb, he will have recourse to Exod. xii.

shadowed forth not only the death of Christ, but his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven. As the various actions of some illustrious personage, which cannot be exhibited by the painter in a single draught, are displayed in several compartments; yet all constitute one and the same grand historical picture: so, these glorious events, incapable of being represented by any single animal, were typified by two kids of the goats; which nevertheless were reputed but as one * offering.

These goats were brought to the door of the tabernacle, and there presented before the Lord. Christ also presented himself before God, when "he went up to Jerusalem, that all things written by the prophets concerning him might be accomplished," Luke xviii. 31. The goat, on which the Lord's lot fell, was devoted to death. "Christ also being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," Acts ii. 23, "was crucified and slain." The body was burnt without the camp; which pointed at the very place, and pictured out the very nature of our Lord's sufferings. "For he suffered without the

* How runs the divine command? "He (the high priest) shall take of the congregation two kids of the goats for a sin-offering," Lev. xvi. 5. Are not these two kids styled, in the singular number and collective sense, an offering? That we might not mistake, God is pleased to add, "and one ram for a burnt-offering." Here he names one, to prevent a misapprehension of his meaning, when he had before said two. To render his meaning still more apparent, and that we may regard this goat as joined in the same offering with the other; the Lord, contrary to his own rule in all other cases, orders the high priest to lay his hands upon the head of the scape goat, not upon the head of the goat devoted to death. He divides the necessary circumstances of a sacrifice between them both, to intimate, in the clearest manner, that neither the one nor the other separate, but both taken together, were the one sacrificial oblation, appointed for this distinguished solemnity.

If this be true, I think the passage is a pretty considerable proof, that atonement was made by suffering vicarious punishment; notwithstanding what has been urged against it, from the tenth verse of the chapter. Should we require human authority for the support of this interpretation, one of the greatest human authorities may be seen in the celebrated Witsius: "Utorque hircus pertinebat ad unum sacrificium pro peccato, hostiæ unius loco. Uterque erat pecus piacularis, vicaria Israeli peccatori, ejusque peccatum ferens." *De Oecon.* lib. iv. cap. 6.

gate," Heb. xiii. 12; was there exposed to the rage of men and the wrath of God, under the most exquisite pains of body, and the most insupportable agonies of soul; all significantly typified by the flame of a devouring fire; than which nothing is more fierce, more penetrating, or more severely tormenting.

As the animal which was slaughtered, shewed forth the Redeemer dying for our sins; that which escaped, prefigured the same Saviour rising again for our justification. The high priest put his hands upon the head of the scape-goat, and, with great solemnity, confessed the sins of the whole congregation. The import of this ceremony is expressly declared in the sacred canon: "The goat shall bear upon him their iniquity."* It is charmingly explained by the prophet, "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all," Isa. liii. 6; and most delightfully confirmed by the Apostle, "He himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree," 1 Pet. ii. 24.

This done, the goat was dismissed into a land not inhabited; a place separated from all resort of men, where he was never likely to be found any more; to teach us, that our offences, having been expiated by the bleeding Jesus, are entirely done away, shall never rise up in judgment against us; but, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, "When the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, they shall not be found," Jer. l. 20. It is further enjoined, that "Aaron shall confess all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, in all their sins." Iniquities, transgressions, sins, are particularised; and to this cluster of expressions, the word *all* is added, to inform us, that the least sins need the atonement of Christ's death; to assure us, that the greatest sins are not beyond the compass of its efficacy; and that all sins, be they ever

* It is observable, that whereas the scape-goat is said to bear **נשי** the sins of Israel, Lev. xvi. 22; the very same phrase is applied to Christ, Isa. liii. 12.

so heinous, or ever so numerous, are forgiven to the true believer.

The high priest carried the blood of the victim into the second tabernacle, even within the veil. So Christ entered with his own blood, not into the holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself, Heb. ix. 14. The blood was sprinkled before the mercy-seat, sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, and left in the holy of holies, that it might always remain before the Lord. And does not Christ always appear in the presence of God for us? does he not ever live to make intercession for us? to plead his all-sufficient propitiation in our behalf; that the benefits procured thereby, may be communicated, ratified, and perpetuated to his people?

Ther. These benefits, Aspasio, are ascribed, in Scripture, to repentance and reformation of life, qualifications of our own; not to any such cause as a vicarious sacrifice, where the merit must necessarily subsist in another. What says the Apostle Peter, when he had just received his instructions from the Holy Ghost? "Repent and be converted;" not look unto an atonement, or depend upon a propitiation, "that your sins may be blotted out," Acts iii. 19.

Asp. It is true, the benefits of the new covenant are promised to penitents, as their happy portion; but never assigned to their repentance, as the procuring cause; never to their repentance, but to the blood of the great High Priest, called therefore "the blood of the everlasting covenant," Heb. xiii. 20; being the condition stipulated in it, required by it, and in consequence of which, all its unspeakable privileges are bestowed.

Besides, the qualifications you suppose, are the gift of the Lord. We are not able to exercise them, till Christ, who is exalted for this very purpose, gives repentance, Acts v. 31. A conversion to God, and a newness of life, are not the effect of human abilities, but the work of the divine Spirit, and the fruit of the Redeemer's death. Indeed, this death is the purchase of every heavenly blessing. This opens the heaven of heavens,

and all its inexhaustible stores. By this we have the enjoyment of grace, and by this the hope of glory.

Ther. You begin to be in raptures, *Aspassio!*

Asp. Excuse me, *Theron*. It is not easy to repress the sallies of delight and devotion, when we muse upon such amazing loving-kindness, and are touched with a sense of such immensely rich benefits. A great High Priest! who is "higher than the heavens," Heb. vii. 26, yet humbled himself to death, even the death of the cross! who is "consecrated for evermore," Heb. vii. 28, and pleads all his merit, improves all his influence, for our consummate felicity!

"What heart of stone but glows at thoughts like these?

Such contemplations mount us, and should mount

The mind still higher; nor ever glance on man

Unraptur'd, uninflam'd."

Night Thoughts, No. iv.

But I check myself; and will either reply to your objections, or listen to your sentiments; listen as attentively as you yourself attend to the music of that shrill-tongued thrush.

Ther. Its sweetly-modulated lays, eminent even in the symphony of spring, have indeed attracted my ears. But my mind is disengaged, and free for your conversation.

Asp. I can repeat a song, sweeter far than this, or all the melody of the woodland choirs;—a song, which has harmony enough, to make the brow of melancholy wear a smile, or to sooth away the sorrows of death itself: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us," Rom. viii. 33, 34. According to my friend's principles, the strain of this triumphant exclamation was ill-judged, and should have run in the following manner: "Who shall lay any thing to our charge? We have endeavoured to preserve a rectitude of disposition, and to persist in a laudable course of action. Wherever we failed, we have been sorry for the fault, and have

implored pardon from the divine Majesty. What then shall dismay us? or who shall condemn us." Your topics of consolation would be complete, without having recourse to the death of Christ, as an atonement for sin; or to the resurrection of Christ, as an evidence that the atonement is accepted; or to the intercession of Christ, as the cause of our interest in that transcendent blessing.

Ther. Since you so frequently mention, and so earnestly insist upon atonement, I should be glad to know the precise signification of the word. I am told the original phrase has nothing to do with the idea of making satisfaction.

Asp. We may learn the precise signification of atonement, by considering the means, the effect, and the manner whereby the means accomplish the effect. The effect of atonement, is pardon. The means of obtaining it, are the death of Christ. The way or manner, whereby the death of Christ becomes efficacious for this blessed purpose, is the sovereign appointment of his Father; the infinite dignity of his person; and especially, the vicarious nature of his sufferings, or their being undergone in the stead of sinners.

Ther. It has been supposed, and is affirmed too, that our Saviour's obedience and death were conducive to our redemption, only in virtue of his Father's will and appointment.

Asp. I am glad it is some other, and not my Theron, who espouses this opinion; which is highly injurious to the dignity of our Redeemer's person, and to the merit of his obedience. Neither is it very honourable to the wisdom of the Father, unless we suppose him therefore to have appointed the death of Christ, because he knew it was fully sufficient for the glorious purpose.

And why should we use that weak inadequate expression, conducive to our redemption? Would any one say, of Solomon's elegant and sumptuous temple, that it was conducive to the accomplishment of what Moses foretold? Exod. xv. 17. David's provision of

stones, of timber, and of gold, was, if you please, conducive to it. But Solomon's act was perfective of it; was the very execution of the thing itself. Such are the obedience and death of Christ, with respect to our redemption.

Ther. But we forget the original word, and neglect to inquire into its genuine import.

Asp. The word, which we translate atonement, implies, in its primary acceptation, the notion of covering. Thus the ark was covered, * "was overlaid with pitch, within and without:" that all its chinks might be secured against the insinuating attempts of the water; and all its timber defended from the injuries of the liquid element. When an object, in this or any other manner, is covered over for safety, the covering receives every shock, and sustains all damages which would otherwise fall upon the thing covered. The image, therefore, is very pertinently used, to express the true evangelical nature of atonement; and the word is used, with equal propriety, to describe the mercy-seat; † which was a costly covering for the ark, made of pure gold, and exactly commensurate to that sacred repository. In this were lodged the tables of the law; whose precepts we have violated, and to whose curse we were subject. Consequently the mercy-seat, both by its situation, its extent, and its office, prefigured the Redeemer; who interposes between the law and the offender; fulfils the commands, and sustains the curse of the former; merits pardon, and procures salvation for the latter.

As some fine flower, having entertained our eye with one beautiful colour, suddenly breaks, or gradually softens into another, and gives us a renewed pleasure; such, methinks, is the nature of this delightful word. It is expressive of the hoar-frost, ‡ which, in a serene

* כִּפֶּרֶת, Thou shalt "besmear, cover, or overlay," Gen. vi. 14. This is the first place in which our word occurs. It is supposed to give us the genuine and native sense of the phrase. Perhaps the English expression "cover," may be derived from the participle כִּפֶּר "copher."

† כִּפֶּרֶת, Exod. xxv. 17.

‡ כִּפֶּד, Psal. cxlvii. 16. The idea deduced from hoar frost, is not

but sharp wintry morning, covers the houses, covers the trees, covers the whole face of nature. So, the blood of Jesus, according to the Psalmist's representation, covers all our guilt, and hides every offence, Psal. xxxiii. 1. Insomuch that, when this blood is applied by the divine Spirit, the Lord "sees no iniquity in Jacob," Numb. xxiii. 21. He acts, as if he saw none; neither punishes the guilty, nor abhors the polluted sinner.

The same expression is used with reference to a covenant, and signifies the abolition of the contract; * which was done by cancelling the deed, or expunging the articles of stipulation. By the covenant of works, all mankind became obnoxious to condemnation; were bound over to death. By the grace of Christ, our obligation to punishment is disannulled, and the handwriting of condemnation is blotted out. Should you ask, How this is effected? By paying a ransom, and offering a sacrifice. Should you further inquire, Of what this ransom and this sacrifice consisted? Of nothing less than the precious blood, † the inestimable life, ‡ the divinely magnificent person of Christ. §

Ther. These then are the capital ideas included in the original word, a covering by way of defence, and a covering by way of concealment.

so exact and striking, in our northern clime, as in the more southern regions. There, the exhalations and dews being more copious, the hoar-frost must fall thicker, lie deeper, and more fully correspond with the notion of covering.

* Isa. xxviii. 18. יָבֵשׁוּ וְיִמְחָאוּ abolebitur. "Proprie sonat, oblietur, obliterabitur, est enim יָבֵשׁוּ Hebræis proprie quid obducere, at que inde (cum obducta et oblita dispareant) delere, abolere." (Thus, I apprehend, the words should be pointed. According to the present punctuation, at least in my edition, I can make out neither syntax nor sense.) "Alluditur hoc loco ad fœdera scripto comprehensa, quæ abolentur et irrita fiunt, si scriptura inducatur, cancelletur, antiquetur, obliteretur."—*Vitring. in loc.*

† "Not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood," Heb. ix. 12.

‡ "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many," Mark x. 45.

§ "Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God," Heb. ix. 14.

Asp. They are, Theron.—As the brain, in the animal body, is the source of sensation; sends out various detachments of nerves, to animate and actuate the parts of the vital system; so, these two capital ideas branch themselves into a variety of subordinate, yet similar significations; which run through the whole oconomy of the gospel, to enliven and quicken the spirit of a believer. Let me instance in a few particulars. This richly-significant word denotes—the exercise of divine mercy, Deut. xxxii. 43; the pardon of sin, Deut. xxi. 8. 2 Chron. xxx. 18; a cleansing from guilt, Numb. xxxv. 33; purging from transgression, Psal. lxxv. 3; reconciliation for iniquity, Dan. ix. 24; the pacifying of wrath, Ezek. xvi. 63. Do not these passages (which are expressed by some branch of the verb, that conveys to us the idea of atoning) plainly intimate, that the atonement of Christ is the meritorious cause of all these desirable effects; is the foundation of every act of divine goodness; and the origin of every blessing vouchsafed to sinners?

Ther. After all, this is the consideration which principally offends and perplexes me: God is a spirit, an absolutely perfect and infinitely pure being; remote, inconceivably remote; from whatever is gross or corporeal. How then can he take pleasure in the effusion of blood, or the burning of flesh? How can any such low carnal inducements make him merciful to sinners; or appease; what you call, his wrath?

Asp. Rather, what the Scriptures call his wrath. You mistake our doctrine, my dear Theron. We never maintain, that any sacrifice whatever, not even the propitiation of Christ's death, was intended to make God merciful; only to make way for his eternal purposes of mercy, without any prejudice either to the demands of his law, or the rights of his justice. Our sentiments on this head, are exactly consonant to his own declaration, and his own procedure, in the case of Job's friends; (see Job xlii. 7, 8.) Though displeased with their conduct, he was merciful to their persons. Nevertheless, he would not exercise that mercy till they had first

offered a sacrifice, and acted faith in a dying Saviour.

Neither is it ever supposed, that the infinitely wise and pure God can take pleasure in the effusion of blood, or the burning of flesh, simply considered; only as they had a reference to that noble and inestimable sacrifice, which brings the highest honour to his name; which those slaughtered animals exhibited in a figure; and to which every true Israelite had a believing regard.

I say, had a believing regard. For it is affirmed by the author of the Hebrews, that the gospel was preached to the Israelites in the wilderness, Heb. iv. 2. What does he mean by the gospel? The very essence of this benevolent scheme, according to the apostle's own definition, is, that "Christ died for our sins," 1 Cor. xv. 3. How was this gospel preached to our fathers in the wilderness? By significant emblems; especially by slaughtered animals, and bleeding victims, by which Christ was almost continually, though not so evidently as in these latter times, "set forth crucified for sinners," Gal. iii. 1.

In this sense alone, those carnal usages were worthy the wisdom of God to appoint, and the majesty of God to accept. This gave them a peculiar dignity and importance; and set them far above all the similar observances used in the heathen worship. They were also, when thus explained, thus improved, extremely profitable to believers; as they directed their contemplation to the future sufferings of a Saviour, and ratified to their faith the benefits of his ever-operating sacrifice; which, we were assured by an infallible voice, was effectual "for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant." *

* Heb. ix. 15. When I reflect on these words, I wonder how any one can assert, That all the Jews died under the curse of the law. Died under the curse of the law! Even though the Apostle has warranted it for a truth, that "all these" (meaning Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, &c.) "died in faith," Heb. xi. 13. Even though he has elsewhere laid it down as a maxim, "So then they which are of faith," (in whatever period of time they live, or under whatever dispensation of religion they worship,) "are blessed with faithful Abraham," Gal. iii. 9. Even

Ther. So you apprehend, that, in those usages practised by the ancient Jews, the gospel was emblematically preached, and Christ in a figure exhibited?

Asp. Most certainly, Theron. And for this cause, under the law, almost all things were purged with blood, Heb. ix. 22. The multiplicity, the variety, the constancy of their sacrifices, were all designed to impress upon their minds, and familiarize to their thoughts, this great evangelical truth. Was any one overtaken by a fault? He must present a victim, and the priest must slay it, by way of trespass-offering; to signify, that the guilt which was contracted, could be done away only by the atoning death of Christ. Had any one received a signal blessing? A beast was slain by way of peace-offering; as a public expression of gratitude for the mercy, and also as an emphatical declaration, that all good, vouchsafed to fallen man, is owing to the Redeemer's ransom. Was any one to be invested with the priestly office, or admitted to minister in the sanctuary? A ram or a bullock must bleed, by way of atonement, and for the purpose of consecration, Lev. viii. 22. Numb. viii. 12; in order to testify, that no man can officiate with acceptance in the worship of God; that no service, though of a religious kind, can be pleasing in his sight, till the former is interested in the merits, unless the latter is recommended by the death of the great High Priest.

though the Psalmist in one place affirms, "Blessed are they whose unrighteousnesses are forgiven, and whose sin is covered;" and, in another place, declares concerning himself and his pious contemporaries, "Look how wide the east is from the west! So far hath he set our sins from us," Psal. xxxii. 1. Psal. ciii. 12.

From these, and many other texts, I think it is evident, that the faithful Jews no more died under the curse of the law, than the faithful Christians. The death of Christ procured the pardon and acceptance of believers, even before he came in the flesh. From the beginning, he had covenanted with the Father, as their Mediator; and God, to whom all things are present, saw the certain accomplishment of his undertaking. He was therefore, by virtue of the divine decree, and in point of saving efficacy, "a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Though he laid down his life in the reign of Tiberius, he was a real Redeemer in all ages.

And not only by their solemn sacrificial acts, but even by their ordinary meals, this grand lesson was inculcated. They were forbidden to eat the blood, in order to awaken and preserve in their consciences, a reverential and fiducial regard to the precious blood of Christ. The Holy Ghost assigning a reason for this sacred prohibition, says expressly, "Because the blood maketh an atonement for your souls," Lev. xvii. 11; the blood of beasts typically, the blood of Christ effectually. O! that Christians would, in this particular, learn of Jews; learn, at least, from Jewish ordinances, to have their attention incessantly fixed on that divine High Priest; who, by one offering, hath perfected for ever,—not barely conduced or contributed to the work, but hath fully accomplished it, and obtained complete remission for—them that are sanctified, Heb. x. 14.

Ther. Some offerings were made without any effusion of blood. What could those mean? Or how could they typify the sacrifice of Christ?

Asp. Perhaps the Apostle might foresee such an objection when he used that guarded expression, *almost* all things were purged with blood. If, in these cases, there was no effusion of blood, yet there was a destruction of the substance. The meat-offerings were consumed by fire; which is much the same to inanimate things, as shedding of the blood is to living creatures. The same effect is ascribed to these oblations, as to those of the sanguinary kind. It is expressly declared of the poor man's trespass-offering, which consisted of fine flour, and was burnt upon the altar, "It shall make an atonement for him," Lev. v. 11, 12, 13. So that here also was, what we may truly call, a visible prediction of Christ. The offerings which flamed, as well as the victims which bled, shewed forth our dying Lord: whose one "oblation of himself once offered," comprised all the qualities, and realised the whole efficacy, represented by every other sacrifice.

Ther. Another odd circumstance has often given me disgust, and been apt to prejudice me against the

institutions of the Old Testament. Many of them appear mean, contemptible, and perfectly puerile. "Can these," I have said within myself, "be ordained by a God of infinite wisdom, and transcendant glory? Can we reasonably imagine, that a mandate should be issued from the court of heaven, on purpose to forbid the boiling, and enjoin the roasting, Exod. xii. 9. of some particular piece of meat? Will the Great Ruler of the skies concern himself about the precise manner of killing one bird, and releasing another? Lev. xiv. 4, 5, 6, 7. Will He, who claims the worship of the heart, have such an especial regard to a drop or two of despicable blood, put upon the tip of the right ear, or the thumb of the right hand? Exod. xxix. 20. Surely, such childish ceremonies are too minute and trivial for the notice, much more for the solemn appointment, of the supreme Majesty!"

Asp. You will please to remember, that, when those ceremonies were ordained, it was the infancy,* at least the minority of the church. If we advert to this circumstance, we shall have reason to admire, both the all-comprehending wisdom, and the no less condescending goodness, of Jehovah. His all-comprehending wisdom, in conforming so accurately and so minutely, the type to the event; though the former was established, long, long before the latter existed. Many ages before the Desire of Nations appeared, his picture was drawn; was presented to public view; and is now found to correspond in every feature, with the illustrious Original. What hand could be equal to such a task, but only the hand of an omniscient Limner? His condescending goodness, in adapting the tenor of his revelation to the state of his people; "speaking unto them, even as unto babes," 1 Cor. iii. 1, not by naked precepts, or abstracted truths, but by earthly similitudes,† and (if I may so express myself) by embodied

* St Paul calls the church of those times *νηπιος*, an infant, or babe, Gal iv. 1. 3. And the ceremonial institutions have been styled, with as much truth as ingenuity, "*Evangelium elementare et praeliminare.*"

† This seems to be our Lord's meaning, when he says to Nicode-

instructions; such as were level to their low capacities, and calculated to affect their dull apprehensions.

The institutions, to which you hint, were undoubtedly mean and trifling, if considered in themselves. Accordingly, their wise and majestic Author cautions his people against such erroneous and unworthy notions. "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices," Jer. vii. 22. "It was not my design, that they should acquiesce in the shadow, and neglect the substance. I never intended, that they should rest in the porch, but pass through these ordinances, to much sublimer things. Christ and spiritual blessings were principally in my view; to which all the Mosaical usages were relative, subservient, and one continual introduction." Considered in this light, as bearing a reference to the ever-blessed Mediator; as emblems of his person, and pledges of his grace; they acquire a real magnificence, and convey the most salutary lessons.

The blood upon the tip of the ear, and thumb of the hand, denotes our personal application of the death of Christ; without which all its virtue, though boundless and inconceivable, will profit us nothing. Those particular parts of the body, may signify the perceptive and executive faculties; in both which we offend, and for both which we need the great propitiation. Of the two birds you mention, one was to be killed, the other was to fly away, after it had been dipped in the

mus, "If I have told you earthly things." He had been treating of that internal spiritual renovation, which is the root and spring of all holiness. He had been speaking of that Divine Spirit, whose gracious and almighty agency produces this desirable change. The nature of the former was represented under the similitude of a birth, by which we enter upon a new state, form new ideas, and habituate ourselves to new practices, pleasures, pursuits. The operations of the latter were described, by the common and well known properties of the wind—This he mentions as a plain and familiar method of teaching: this he opposes to telling him of heavenly things; or delivering refined and exalted truths, not accommodated to the capacity, not brought within the compass of an infantile understanding, by any assimilation to sensible objects. John iii. 12.

blood of its fellow. Thus the Lord Jesus was crucified for our sins; and we being washed in his blood, being interested in the atonement of our holy victim and elder brother, are acquitted from guilt, and escape condemnation. Concerning the paschal lamb, it was particularly enjoined, That the flesh should not be eaten raw, nor sodden with water, but roasted with fire; and of every offering from the herd, or from the flock, the fat and the inwards were, by an express command of God, delivered up to the devouring flame. All this was an emblem of that tremendous indignation, which "is poured out like fire," Nah. i. 6; which seized our immaculate Sacrifice, that it might spare polluted sinners; and which must have consumed utterly any mediator, who was less than infinite, or other than divine.

Had you beheld our renowned Newton blowing up, with great assiduity and attention, his little watery vesicles into the air, you would, perhaps, have despised the venerable philosopher, and have thought him little better than a hoary idiot. But when you was told, that, in every one of these volatile soapy bubbles, he discovered the beauteous colours of the rainbow; and, from this seemingly childish experiment, he explained the nature of that wonderful arch; you would then entertain a different notion, both of the man, and of his employ. So, when you discern the blessed Jesus looking forth at these windows, and shewing himself through the lattices* of the Jewish œconomy; you will, I hope, conceive a higher opinion of them, and derive richer advantage from them.

Ther. There are several persons, as well as ritual observances, of a very singular character, mentioned in the Mosaic law. The leper for instance, the Na-

* Cant. ii. 7. The word, in the first edition, is "flourishing through." It was taken from the Hebrew, without consulting the English Bible, and is a literary translation of פָּרִיחַ ; which signifies more than barely shewing himself; shewing himself with lustre and beauty; like a delicate flower, in its blooming state and glossy colours; yet flourishing through lattices; manifesting himself, not completely, but in part; concealing some, while he reveals much, of his mediatorial glory.

zarite, with others of the same antiquated and grotesque stamp: which seem, to me at least, so many unmeaning narratives, that convey no manner of edification to readers in the present age. I have frequently had an inclination, and now I have a proper opportunity, to ask your opinion upon these points.

Asp. I thank you, Theron, for giving me the hint. What you propose is by no means foreign to the topic of our discourse. Those persons were truly remarkable; neither are the peculiarities of their case recorded in vain. They picture out, in dismal and delightful colours, the sinner and the Saviour. To know ourselves, and to know Christ, is true wisdom; is indeed the consummation of all knowledge. Here we have a lecture of hieroglyphical instruction, on both those important subjects.

The leper was an emblem of a sinner; see Levit. chap. xiii. xiv. His disease extremely afflictive to himself, and intolerably loathsome to others. Sin likewise is the sorest of all miseries, to the wretch who commits it; and most detestably odious to the God who forbids it. The leper was secluded from the benefits of society, and all communication with his fellow-citizens. The sinner also, while impenitent and unpardoned, is an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, Eph. ii. 12; without any enjoyment of the comforts, or any interest in the privileges of the gospel. If he dies in this condition, he must be for ever shut out from the kingdom of heaven; for ever cut off from the presence of the Lord.

The contagion was sometimes so pestilent, that it not only tainted the clothes of the diseased, but spread itself over the walls of his house, and infected the timber of the beams. It was sometimes so inveterate, that it could be eradicated no other way, but by burning the garment, and demolishing the building. Does not this give us a clear, but melancholy view, of original corruption? which has transfused its poison through all the faculties of the soul, and all the members of the body; nor will ever be entirely expelled.

ill death releases the former, and consigns the latter to the dust.

What could cure this terrible distemper, even in its mildest state? Not all the balm of Gilead; not all the drugs on a thousand hills; nothing but the consecrated oil, and sacrificial blood, duly applied by the high priest. And what can heal the disorders of our fallen souls? so far heal them, as to purge away their guilt, and subdue the prevalence of their iniquities? No acts of mortification, no vigilance, nor any efforts of our own; nothing but the atoning death, and sanctifying Spirit of the blessed Jesus. The malignity and virulence of this plague of the heart, are absolutely incorrigible by any other expedient. But, blessed be divine grace, this remedy, provided by our great High Priest, and administered by our great Physician, is sovereign, and never fails.

The case of the Nazarites, (see Numb. chap. vi.) was the very reverse of the state of the lepers. "Her Nazarites," Jeremiah says, "were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk; they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphires," Lam. iv. 7. A faint representation of the only begotten Son, who is the fairest among ten thousand; the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; both God and man in one sacred, wonderful, adorable Saviour. They, during the time of their separation, abstained from wine; withdrew from secular business; avoided every kind of pollution; and dedicated themselves, in an especial manner, to the service of God. A type of that glorious Nazarite, who was separated, for a season, from the fruitions of heaven; who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, both in his nature and all his conversation; who sanctified himself, and devoted his life and labours, his soul and body, to the glory of his Father, and the redemption of his people. The Nazarites, even when they had discharged their vow, and were ceremonially clean, yet were obliged to offer a sin-offering, a burnt-offering, and a peace-offering. So the great Redeemer, though

he had perfectly obeyed all the preceptive parts of the divine law, yet was required to offer up a sacrifice—even the incomparably precious sacrifice of himself—in order to consummate the work of our salvation.

Ther. Have you a sufficient warrant for this strain of interpretation? Is it sound, is it rational, or conformable to any authentic standard of Scriptural exposition? Methinks it looks more like the child of fancy, than the offspring of judgment; more like the sally of a sportive imagination, than the result of a sober disquisition.

You cannot be ignorant, Aspasio, how the ruling passion tinctures the whole conduct. Hence it is I apprehend, that your religious enamouratoes find heavenly beauties, where Scripture intended no more than natural truths. Hence it is that they turn plain facts into profound figures, and allegorise common sense into pious absurdity. Have you never seen the mystic interpretations of some ancient, and, I may add, some modern divines? The honesty of their design is transparent, and the piety of their lives is unquestionable; otherwise we should be tempted to suspect, that they meant to burlesque the Scriptures, and disgrace their Author.

Who can ever persuade himself, that the supremely-wise God would send us to search for a body of divinity in a bundle of rods? or set us to spin all the mysteries of Christianity from a few fleeces of wool, ring-streaked, speckled, and spotted? Gen. xxxi. Thus to expound the Scriptures, is, not to open them clearly, and apply them judiciously, but rather to whip them into froth.*

Asp. We have the authority of our Lord himself; who has informed us,—that the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness, John iii. 14, was figurative of his own suspension and death on the cross: that the temple built on mount Sion, was typical of his immaculate body, in which dwelt all the fulness of the God.

* Luther used to call such far-fetched and unnatural allegories, “*spumam scripturæ.*”

read, John ii. 19. 21. Col. ii. 9: that the prophet Jonah, lodged in the belly of the whale, and discharged from that strange confinement on the third day, Matt. xii. 39, 40, was an emblem of his own descending into the grave, and rising again before his flesh saw corruption.

We have also the testimony and the practice of the chiefest of the apostles, for our warrant. He assures us, that the rock smitten by Moses had a reference to Christ, 1 Cor. x. 4; who was wounded for our sins, and is the foundation of our hopes: that the waters, issuing at the stroke, were significative of those spiritual blessings which flow from a crucified Saviour: that, as the former followed the sons of Jacob through all the circumvolutions of their tedious journey; the latter accompanied the disciples of Jesus, in every stage of their earthly pilgrimage. Let the great teacher of the Gentiles be our expositor, and we shall see the veil of the temple dignified with a significancy, richer far than its costly materials and curious workmanship. Its silk and embroidery exhibit to the eye of faith, the pure and spotless flesh of Christ, Heb. x. 20. As, by rending the material veil, the holy of holies became visible and accessible; so, by piercing the body, and spilling the blood of Christ, the God of heaven was manifested, and the way to heaven opened.

Every reader must admire those divided waves; which, instead of overwhelming the Israelites with a resistless deluge, stood like a wall of defence on their right hand, and on their left, as they marched through the depths of the sea. Every reader must admire that suspended cloud, which spread itself like a spacious canopy over the hosts of Israel; and screened them from the annoying sunbeams, as they passed through the sultry desert. Our admiration must be heightened, when we find that which was a cloud by day, becoming a pillar of fire by night; and illuminating their camp with the most amazing, as well as the most cheering splendour. But St Paul discerned a greater glory, and a deeper design, in those unparalleled events. The people, he says, "were baptised unto Moses, in

the cloud and in the sea," 1 Cor. x. 2. These symbolically represented the baptism of water and of fire: or the application of Christ's blood to our souls, and the efficacy of his Spirit on our hearts. In the former of which, consists our justification; from the latter of which, proceeds our sanctification.

I fear, you will think my discourse somewhat like the journey just now mentioned; but I must not wholly omit the Epistle to the Hebrews; which is the most unexceptionable vindication, as well as the faultless model, of allegorical exposition. It is delightful to observe what propriety of address the inspired writer uses. He speaks to the Jews, in their own way; alludes to their own usages, ordinances, and ceremonies; proves them to be types of, and guides to, a more clear, a more benign, and in all respects, a more excellent œconomy.* More particularly he displays the transcendent superiority of Christ and his gifts, even to those persons and privileges which they held in the highest esteem. These, like the morning star, were introductory to, yet totally eclipsed by, the rising sun.

They had exalted apprehensions of the angelic excellencies. The apostle therefore celebrates the Redeemer, as the Lord whom angels obey, as the God whom angels adore. They always reckoned Moses to be the first favourite of Heaven, and chief among the children of men. He lets them know, that Moses, with all his extraordinary endowments, was but a servant in the house of Jesus. It was his greatest honour, to mi-

* He styles the legal oblations, and indeed the whole service of the Jewish sanctuary, "the example and shadow of heavenly things;" or of Christ Jesus, and evangelical worship, and spiritual blessings, Heb. viii. 5.—*Τροπίσμα*, "the pattern;" somewhat like the strokes penciled out upon a piece of fine linen; which present you with the figure of sprigs, of leaves, and of flowers; but have not yet received their splendid colour, their curious shades, and beautiful enrichments, from the labours of the needle.—*Σαῖμα*, "a shadowy representation;" which gives you some dim and imperfect idea of the body; but not the fine features, not the distinguishing air, none of those living graces, which adorn the real person. Yet both the pattern and the shadow lead our minds to something nobler than themselves. The pattern, to that which completes it; the shadow, to that which occasions it.

minister unto this Prince of Peace. As the priesthood and sacrifices were some of their distinguishing privileges, he shows the pre-eminence of Christ's office to all the Aaronic orders. He demonstrates the extensive and everlasting efficacy of his one atonement, in reference to every form, and the whole series of Levitical oblations.

Ther. Thus interpreted, I must acknowledge, the book of Levitical ceremonies is significant and edifying. Whereas, abstracted from this evangelical improvement, nothing can be more empty and jejune. I once thought, that, to peruse those obsolete canons, was like sitting down to an entertainment of dry bones. But, if such be their import, they may yield marrow and fatness to the attentive mind.

Due care, however, should be taken, not to suppose a type, where there is no apparent foundation of analogy in the thing itself, or no hint of this nature given us by the unerring Spirit; lest, instead of being guided by truth, we are bewildered by fancy. And, when either or both these handles present themselves, I think, we should beware of straining the subject beyond the bounds of a just and reasonable comparison; lest, instead of following the clue, we stretch it till it breaks. If the first caution is not observed, the sense of Scripture will lie so deep, or be removed to such a distance, that none but persons of the most acute discernment can find it, or none but persons of the most excursive imagination can reach it. If the second is not regarded, the meaning of those divine volumes will become so vague and volatile, that there will hardly remain any possibility of ascertaining or fixing it.

Asp. As to the expedience and necessity of these cautionary limitations, I have the pleasure of agreeing entirely with my friend. Let our fancy submit to the reins of judgment, otherwise her excursions will be wild and lawless. Let our zeal borrow the eyes of discretion, otherwise her efforts will be blind and extravagant. And let all, thus tempered, thus regulated, be under the influence of enlightened grace. Then to

spiritualise the ancient Scriptures, will be to convert the stones of the sanctuary into the jewels of a crown ; and to fetch, not water only, but milk and honey, from the flinty rock.

Then, how pleasing must it be, as well as instructive, to discover the blessed Jesus, in all the institutions of the Mosaic law ! To see his incarnation prefigured by the feast of tabernacles, when the Israelites were to relinquish their houses, and lodge in booths, Lev. xxiii. 34. 40. 42. Even as the Son of God left the bosom of his Father, and the seats of bliss, to inhabit a cottage of clay, and sojourn in a vale of tears. To see our spotless and divine Victim, typically slain at the joyful solemnity of the passover, and the anniversary fast of expiation. To see his death, that inestimable ransom for our souls, presented to our faith, in every morning and evening sacrifice, Exod. xxix. 38, 39 ; his intercession, that prevailing recommendation of our prayers, most sweetly expressed by the rich incense, which attended the sacred rite. To see the various methods of purification ; some pointing at the fountain for sin and for uncleanness, opened in our Redeemer's bleeding heart, Exod. xxix. 4. Psal. li. 7 ; others referring to those sanctifying operations of the Spirit, which act as a refiner's fire, or as fuller's soap, Numb. xxxi. 23. Isa. iv. 4. To see in the city of refuge, that perfect security, which Christ's meritorious sufferings in our stead, afford to every penitent and believing sinner, Numb. xxxv. 11, 12.

Was it so very affecting and so very encouraging to Æneas, when he beheld the story of the Trojan heroes pictured upon the walls of the Carthaginian temple ? (*Virg. Æn.* 1.) How much greater encouragement and joy must arise in the Christian's breast, when he perceives the amiable lineaments of his everlasting friend, pourtrayed in all the peculiarities of the Jewish worship, and in the most distinguishing events of the Jewish history ! This must highly ennoble the Bible, and inexpressibly endear it to our affections. This spreads lustre, life, and glory, through every page of

that blessed book. And though I would forbear indulging what might be called a pious wantonness of imagination; yet I should much rather choose, in expounding the Scriptures, to ramble with Augustine, than err with Grotius; see, or think I see, my Saviour, even where it may not, perhaps, be easy to make out the traces of his dignity, to the satisfaction of a rigorous inquirer; rather than shut my eyes upon the display of his perfections, when they beam forth with the most inviting beauty.

Ther. How soon is this walk finished! How imperceptibly has the time stole away! These garden-gates I always used to approach with a particular complacency. They seemed to afford me a welcome retreat, from the impertinence and vanity of the world. Now, methinks, I enter them with reluctance, because they are likely to put a period to this agreeable conversation. However, as my *Aspasio* enters with me, I am reconciled, I am satisfied. It will be in his power to restore the pleasure, which must now be interrupted. And this is what I shall ere long request; because I have not spoke my whole mind upon the present subject.

Asp. Whenever you think proper, *Theron*. This is, to me, a favourite subject; and not to me only, but to incomparably better judges. The man, who had been caught up into the third heavens, and seen the visions of God, "determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2. At the grandest assembly that ever was convened on earth, this furnished the principal, if not the only topic of conversation. And in that world, where the voice of joy and thanksgiving is perpetually heard, this constitutes the burden of the song, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood," Rev. v. 9.

DIALOGUE IV.

Ther. I MUST now desire my Aspasio to inform me, what that grand assembly was, (which he mentioned in the close of our last discourse,) and where convened?

Asp. Can't you guess, Theron?—Was it in the plains of Thessaly, when Xerxes drew together the forces of more than half the known world, and appeared at the head of all the potentates of the east? Was it in the Roman forum, when the senators were assembled in their robes, and the barbarians took them for a synod of gods? No: it was on the mount of transfiguration; where the Son of the true God, the Lord of eternal glory, shone forth in some of his celestial and native splendour: with garments white as the snow,* and a countenance bright as the sun: where he conversed with two of his most distinguished saints, just come down from the regions of bliss and immortality; with Moses the great deliverer of the law, and with Elijah the resolute restorer of its honours; where he was attended by three of his principal ambassadors, who were to be the reformers of mankind, and the lights of the world.

This, I think, is the most venerable and august assembly, that the annals of history have recorded.—And what was the topic of conversation among these illustrious personages? Not the affairs of state, nor the revolutions of empires; not the curious refinements of literature, nor the wonderful discoveries of philosophy; but the ignominious and bloody exit,† which the divine

* Mark ix. 3. The evangelist's description is, like the scene, remarkably bright: and the gradation of his images is almost as worthy of observation, as the memorable fact. The garments were white—exceeding white—white as the snow—whiter than any fuller on earth could make them; surpassing all the works of art, equalling the first and finest productions of nature. Nay, so great was the lustre, that it glistered (σγαινο ειλβουτα) like the lightning, and even dazzled the sight.

† Does not this very delicately, yet very strongly intimate, that the sufferings and death of Christ were the principal end of the Mosaic in-

Jesus was soon to make at Jerusalem. This circumstance, methinks, should recommend the subject to our frequent discourse, even though it was less eminent, for intrinsic dignity and comfortable import.

Talking in this manner, they arrive at the park ; which, the moment you enter, fills the view with its bold, enlarged, and magnificent sweep. It was diversified with level and rising ground. Here scooped into mimic amphitheatres ; with the deer pendant on the little summit, or shooting down the easy precipice : here raised into gentle hillocks ; some of which were canopied with a large, spreading, solitary oak ; others were tufted with a cluster of tapering and verdant elms. Two or three cascades, gleaming from afar, as they poured along the slanting rock, or the grassy slope, gave a pleasing variation to the prospect ; while they startled the timorous unexperienced fawns, with their foaming current, and watery roar. Grandeur and simplicity seemed to be the genius of the place. Every thing breathed an air of noble negligence, and artless majesty.

In the centre of all, rose a curious romantic mount. Its form was exactly round ; somewhat like a sugar-loaf, lopt off a little below the point. Not coeval with nature, but the work of human industry. Thrown up, it is supposed, in those perilous times, when Britain was alarmed by foreign invasions, or bled with intestine wounds. It was covered, all around, with alder shrubs : whose ranks, gradually arising, and spreading, shade above shade, composed a kind of woody theatre ; through which were struck two or three spiral walks ; leading, by a gentle ascent, and under embowering verdure, to the summit. At proper intervals, and on every side of the hill, were formed little arborets ; with apertures, cut through the bows, to admit a prospect of the country. In one or other of these leafy boxes

stitutions, and the principal subject of the prophetic teachings ? For is it not natural to suppose, that Moses and Elijah intended, when ministering on earth, that very thing, which their conversation dwelt upon, when they descended from heaven ?

you command, at every hour of the day, either the enlivening sun, or the refreshing shade. All along the circling avenues, and all around the beauteous rests, sprung daffodils, primroses, and violets; which, mingling with hyacinths and cowslips, composed many a charming piece of natural mosaic.

How agreeable, as they climb and wind themselves round the hill, to reflect on the happy change which has now taken place! Where steely helmets gleamed, or brazen shields clashed, the goldfinches twitter their loves, and display their painted plumes. The dens of rapine, or the horrid haunts of bloodshed, are become the retreats of calm contemplation, and friendly converse. In yonder lower spaces, where the armed troops were wont to patrol; from whence they made excursions, to ravage the villages, or terrify the swains; the fallow-deer trip lightly, or the full-headed stags stand at bay.

From a small eminence, but at a considerable distance, gushed a couple of springs; which, rambling through a grove, lost one another in the shady labyrinth. Emerging, at length, from the gloom, they approached nearer and nearer, and fell into embrace at the foot of this hill. They rolled, in amicable conjunction, along the pebbly channel, which encircles its basis; and added their sober melody to the sprightly warbling of the birds. Flowing off in one common stream, they formed the fine pieces of water, which beautified the park. From thence, they stole into the meadow, and widened into a river. These, enamoured as it were with each other, they glide by wealthy towns, and sweep through flowery vales; regardless of the blooming toys which deck the one, and of the noisy crowds which throng the other.

So, said Aspasio, may Theron and his Selina, pleasing and pleased with each other; pass through the busy and the amusing scenes of life; neither captivated by the one, nor anxious for the other. With such harmonious agreement, and indissoluble union, may they pursue the course, marked out by Providence:

their happiness increasing, and their usefulness enlarging, as they draw nearer the ocean of all good ! Then, parted by a gentle stroke of fate, like the waters of some ample stream severed by the piers of an intervening bridge, may they speedily reunite ! reunite in consummate bliss, and never be separated more !

Ther. I thank you, Aspasio, for your affectionate compliment. Nor can I wish you, by way of return, a greater recompense, than the continual exercise of such a benevolent temper. For to exercise benevolence, is to enjoy the most refined and exalted pleasure ; such as makes the nearest approaches to the felicity of the eternal mind ; who, as the Scripture most beautifully speaks, “ has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants.”

But while we are seated on this mount, our situation reminds us of (what you just now mentioned) the grand conference relating to the death of Christ :—A business for which you have indeed accounted, but in a manner that may be thought not the most honourable to the divine attributes.

Asp. I have represented it as a ransom for our souls, and a sacrifice for our sins. If you disapprove my account, be pleased to favour me with your own. For what purpose, according to your opinion, did that ever-blessed person die ?

Ther. To confirm the truth of his doctrine, and leave us a pattern of the most perfect resignation.

Asp. And is this all ? Shall we thus impoverish the riches of grace ? Was this notion defensible, it could never be desirable. But it has as little to support it as it has to recommend it. For, upon such a supposition, where is the difference between the death of Christ and the death of the martyrs ? They confirmed the truth of the gospel. In their sufferings was obedience and resignation, the same in quality, though not in degree. Upon such a supposition, what benefit could the ancient patriarchs receive from the Redeemer ? since none could be improved by the example of his patience, or the pattern of his obedience, till they

were actually exhibited ; or how could Christ be styled, “ the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world ? ” Rev. xiii. 8. the advantages of whose death commenced from the very beginning, as they will be prolonged even to the end of time.

Not to depend on consequential arguments, let us hear the express declaration of our divine Master himself : “ This is my blood, which is shed ”—for what ? To give credibility to my gospel, or yield an example of entire resignation ? Rather—“ for the remission of sins,” Matth. xxvi. 28. Will any one attempt to make the remission of sins, and the proposal of a pattern, or the ratification of a doctrine, synonymous terms ? They who can torture and transmute the genuine sense of words, at this extraordinary rate, may metamorphose any expression into any meaning.

If, then, we would consider our Lord’s death in its due amplitude, we must consider it, both as a pattern of piety, and as a ransom for sinners ; we must neither separate nor confound these very distinct, yet very consistent effects.

Ther. Is it not inconsistent with the acknowledged principles of justice, that the innocent should be punished instead of the offender ?

Asp. If the innocent person has an absolute power over his own life ; willingly substitutes himself in the place of the guilty ; and, by his vicarious sufferings, fully answers all the purposes of a righteous government ;—in this case, which was the case with our Lord, I see not the least repugnancy to the rules of justice.

The Bible, that authentic transcript of the counsels of heaven, avows, and, by avowing, vindicates the practice, “ The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” * When all we like sheep had gone astray,

* Isa. liii. 6, **הִפְנִיעַ בִּי** made to meet, or fall upon, in an hostile vindictive manner ; with a design to take vengeance, or inflict death ; as an armed man falls upon his enemy, or a fierce lion on the helpless lamb. This is by far the most usual signification of the phrase.

I could not observe, without surprise and sorrow, the late attempt of

and were exposed to the stroke of vengeance, as those wandering creatures to the ravenous beasts; the good Shepherd interposed, and the just God made that vengeance to fall upon him, which must otherwise have been executed upon us. "He suffered," says another inspired writer, "the just for the unjust," 1 Pet. iii. 18, that, by expiating our guilt, "he might bring us to God," now to his gracious favour, hereafter to his blissful presence.

You will permit me to add a passage, from our common favourite Milton; because it is no less beautiful in itself, than it is pertinent to the occasion; must please the critic, and may expound the Apostle. Mes-

a learned writer, to interpret away the force and spirit of this text. He says, "The word we translate *hath laid*, is the same that we render *meet*, Exod. xxiii. 4." "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring him back to him again." And the meaning is, "By him the Lord hath caused to meet, and stop the iniquities of us all, wherein we have wandered from him."

To this I might object, that though the verb is the same, the construction is by no means parallel. The prefix J occurs in one case, is omitted in the other. I might farther inquire, whether the language be conformable to the laws of grammar, and such as sufficiently expresses what I suppose is intended, "The Lord caused our iniquities to be met, and to be stopped." But these particulars I wave, and shall only examine, whether the sense is suitable to Scripture. According to this gentleman's idea, the prophet's doctrine is as follows: "Our sins were running away, like a stray sheep, or like a wandering ox. But they were met by Christ, who graciously turned them back, and restored them to their rightful owner." To avoid this glaring impropriety, our author has added a kind of salvo: "To turn us back to himself, who is the Shepherd of souls." But this is to depart from the prophet's subject, who is speaking not of us, but of our iniquities. This is to depart from the tenor of his own explication. If he adheres to the clue which he borrows from the book of Exodus, what I have represented is the unavoidable consequence.

See to what wretched shifts, dishonourable to the word of God, and even to the art of criticism, they must have recourse, who refuse to acknowledge the real substitution of Christ in our stead, and the proper atonement made by his death! How much more like a true critic, and like a true Christian, has Vitringa explained the passage! "*Cum nos instar ovium dispersarum essemus in erroribus, et pœna criminum nostrorum, instar lupi aut bestię voracis, nos persequeretur ad exitum: intervenit servus Jehovę justus, qui illam pœnam in se suscepit; in quem irruit ad necem usque; quique adeo medius inter pœnam et nos, eandem pœnam tulit, et nos ab exitio vindicavit.*"

siah, pleading in behalf of fallen man, thus addresses his Almighty Father :

—————“ Man, dead in sins and lost,
Atonement for himself, or offering meet,
(Indebted and undone !) hath none to bring.
Behold me then ! me for him ! life for life
I offer. On me let thine anger fall.
Account me man : I for his sake will leave
Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
Freely put off ; and for him lastly die
Well-pleas'd : on me let death wreak all his rage.”

MILTON, B. iii. l. 233.

Ther. The fine imagination of a poet, will hardly pass for a decisive argument. When we are searching after truths, we must attend to the dictates of reason, not follow the vagaries of fancy. And reason, Aspasio, remonstrates against your notion of a vicarious sacrifice : Reason, that primary guide, and final test, both in discovering and determining the sense of Scripture.

Asp. Suppose you, then, my dear Theron, that none are in possession of reason, but the pupils of Socinus, and the zealots for Deism ? or that none make use of reason, in their religious inquiries, but men of this mould ?

“ Wrong not the Christian, think not reason yours ;
'Tis reason our great Master holds so dear :
'Tis reason's injur'd rights his wrath resents ;
'Tis reason's voice obey'd his glorious crown ;
Through reason's wounds alone thy faith can die.”

Night Thoughts, No. IV.

Poets, you see, are far from disclaiming reason. Equally far is Christianity from discarding the sober, the sanctified use of this noble faculty. When reason is under the influence and direction of the divine Spirit, we have the same high opinion of her excellence as yourself. And, when thus regulated, we have, I am persuaded, the sanction of her authority for all our sentiments.

Reason, as she operated in the sages of the heathen world, instead of rejecting, improved and adopted this

very scheme; approved it even under the disadvantage of a mutilated and defective, or rather of a perverted and dead form. The current language of the classic authors, and almost every historian of Greece and Rome, are vouchers for the truth of this observation.* As the Gentiles were unanimous in the custom of offering sacrifices, and equally unanimous in supposing their vicarious nature, so also are the Jewish writers.

Ther. What man of sense pays any regard to the Jewish writers? Legendary they are, and extravagant to the last degree. Dotards I might call them, rather than writers.

Asp. They are, I believe, extravagant enough in their comments upon Scripture. But they relate, with sufficient exactness and fidelity, the prevailing belief of their nation. In this case, their testimony is as unexceptionable, as, in the other, their notions are chimerical. Now, had it been a mistaken belief, surely our blessed Lord, that infallible Judge, and impartial Reprover, would have testified his disapprobation of it. Surely his disciples, who were actuated by the unerring and undaunted spirit of their Master, would have entered their protest against it. Surely St Paul, in his epistle to that very people, and in his treatise on that very subject, would have set himself to rectify such an error; and have weeded out the tares, before he sowed the good seed. . But there is not the least hint of this kind, in all the discourses of our Saviour, or in all the writings of his apostles.

They speak to a people, who were accustomed to look upon their sacrifices as piacular oblations,† and a typical expiation of guilt. They speak of our Redeemer's crucifixion, and the benefits of his death, in the sacrificial terms that were of current use, and established signification. If, therefore, the popular opinion was improper, their manner of expression and address must be calculated rather to authenticate error, than to pro-

* See the note in Dialogue III. p. 66.

† This, I think, is incontestably proved by Outram, in his treatise *De Sacrificiis*.

pagate truth. So that, I think, even the silence of the inspired penman on this occasion, is but little inferior to a loud attestation. Did they only say nothing against the doctrine of satisfaction by sacrifice, it would in effect, and circumstances considered, be saying abundance for it. But they are very copious and explicit upon the point.

Ther. Where are they so copious? If you have such a heap of their allegations, it will be easy to pick out a few, and give us a specimen.

Asp. It is as easy, Theron, as it is delightful. "Messiah shall be cut off," says the prophet Daniel, "but not for himself," Dan. ix. 26. For whom then, and for what? Isaiah informs us concerning both. "For the transgression of my people was he stricken," Isa. liii. 8. Because this is an article of the last importance, it is repeated, it is confirmed, it is explained, with the most remarkable particularity; "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed," Isa. liii. 5. Our Lord himself asserts the same truth in the very same style; "I am the good shepherd, and lay down my life for the sheep," John x. 15. St Paul, in a multitude of passages, sets his seal to this momentous doctrine. St Peter maintains it in very forcible words; "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." *

The sacred writers not only assert this capital article, but use every diversity of speech, in order to give it the fullest evidence, and the strongest establishment, "He made reconciliation for the sins of the people," Heb. ii. 17: "Jesus Christ the righteous is the propitiation for our sins," 1 John ii. 2: "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev.

* 1 Pet. ii. 24. Very forcible words indeed. Ος—αυτο—αμωρτια ημων—εν τη σωματι αυτου—He bare—himself bare—our sins—in his own body; intended, one would imagine, to make the article of our Lord's vicarious sufferings clear beyond all misapprehension, and sure beyond all doubt.

i. 5: "He was made sin for us, though he knew no sin," 2 Cor. v. 21.

Ther. Nobody makes any objection to these texts; but the sense, the true sense of such phrases, is the thing in question.

Asp. What you call the question, to me appears so plain, as not to want a decision, or admit of a doubt. However, since you seem to demand a critical scrutiny, it will not be thought pedantic, if I make an observation or two upon the original languages; or rather, as you are not acquainted with the Hebrew, on that language of which you yourself are a judge and a master.

If one died for all, then were all dead. The preposition *υπερ*, in this connection, must necessarily signify more than "on our account, or for our advantage." Because, if it be taken in this unsettled rambling sense, the apostle's argument is vague and inconclusive. In case our Lord had suffered, only "to free us from some evil, and procure us some benefit;" this would by no means imply that *all were dead*, under the sentence of condemnation, obnoxious, and doomed to death.* The utmost you can infer from such premises, is, that all stood in need of a deliverance from some evil, or wanted the procurement of some good. Whereas, suppose the sacred writer to intend, that our Lord's death was truly vicarious, and undergone in our stead; that he suffered what was our due and our doom; then the reasoning is just, and the inference undeniable.

"He gave himself, *αντιλυτρον υπερ* † a ransom for all." If this does not imply the notion of vicarious, I very much question whether language itself can express it. *Λυτρον*, is a ransom, which conveys a vicarious sense, in its most common and authorised acceptation. *Αντι*, which is equivalent to instead, † still more fully ascer-

* 2 Cor. v. 14.

† 1 Tim. ii. 6.

‡ *Αντι*, Matth. ii. 22. By this word the Septuagint translate the Hebrew *תחת*. And that *תחת* denotes the substitution of one instead of another, no student of the sacred language will venture to deny. See Gen. xxii. 13. 2 Sam. xviii. 33. 2 Kings x. 24.

tains and strengthens the idea. *Υπερ*, which is translated *for*, and denotes a substitution of one in the place of another; * this added to all, renders the expression as determinate and emphatical for the purpose, as words can possibly be.

Shall I argue from a more obvious topic, which has no such dependence on the precise significancy of the original? "Surely," says the prophet, he speaks with vehemence, as of an affair which is very weighty; he speaks with confidence, as of a fact which is very certain; "he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," Isa. liii. 4. What can this mean, but he hath taken upon himself that affliction and those miseries, which properly belonged to us? Let us read on, and this meaning will present itself in the clearest view. "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted:" we took him for a real malefactor, and thought that he was punished for his own misconduct. In opposition to which injurious and false surmise, it

* *Δεσμεθα υπερ Χριστου*, "We beseech you in Christ's stead," 2 Cor. v. 20. *Ισα υπερ, ου διανοη μου*, "that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me," Phil. ver. 13. As I was considering the force of this argument, a certain sour-looking, gloomy mortal came in my way; and desired I would introduce him to Theron and Aspasio as an evidence for fixing the signification of the preposition *υπερ*, when relative to the death of Christ. I must confess I did not like either his character or his aspect; and cannot certainly tell, whether any person has made use of him, on this occasion. But St John stood by, and said, "Introduce him. He prophesies in this instance." Perhaps the reader is at a loss to guess whom I mean. To keep him no longer in suspense, I mean Caiaphas, the high-priest. He bears the following testimony: "It is expedient for us that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." Now, as to perish, signifies, not only to die, but to die miserably; if one man dies for the people, that the people may not die miserably, he saves them from death, by dying himself; and what is this but to die in their stead? See John xi. 50.

To this testimony from the mouth of an enemy, let me add an attestation under the hand of our friends, and then leave the impartial reader to determine concerning the validity of all. Thus writes Clemens Romanus; *Το αιμα αυτου ιδω. εν υπερ ημων Ιησους Χριστος ο Κυριος ημων, & την σαρκα υπερ της σαρκος ημων, & την ψυχην υπερ των ψυχων ημων.* Epist. l. ad Corinth. Exactly to the same purpose Justin the Martyr expresses himself: *Αυτος τον ιδιον υιον αποδοτο λυτρον υπερ ημων, τον αγιον υπερ ανομων, τον ακαλον υπερ των καλων, τον δικαιον υπερ των εδικων, τον αφλαστον υπερ των βητων.* Epist. ad Diogn.

is added, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." May I not here borrow the prophet's language, and say, with an air of certainty, Surely this is the plainest proof in the world, that our sins were the meritorious cause of Christ's sufferings: And if our sins were the meritorious cause of his sufferings, our guilt must be charged upon him, and punished in him.

St Paul affirms, that "Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law," Gal. iii. 13. How? By taking our place, and enduring what we deserved; or, as the Apostle himself speaks, to the same effect, but in a much more emphatical manner, "by being made a curse for us." Does not this evidently denote both a commutation of persons, and a translation of punishment? He suffered, who was innocent; not we, who are guilty.—He also suffered that very sentence which the law denounced on us; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things," Deut. xxvii. 26: to this we were obnoxious. It is written again, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," Gal. iii. 13: to this Christ submitted. And if Christ endured that very curse which we deserved; if, by this means, he delivered us from all malediction; either this must be suffering in our stead,* or else nothing can be called by that name.

Shall I descend lower still, and refer our point to

* "This (says Dr South, in his smart manner) is spoke so plain and loud by the universal voice of the whole book of God, that Scripture must be crucified as well as Christ, to give any other tolerable sense of the expressions;" and not Scripture only, but the common import of language. What says Mezentius, when his son, interposing in his behalf, is slain by Æneas:

— "Pro me hostili paterer succedere dextræ
Quem genui! tuane hæc, genitor, per vulnera servor?
Morte tua vivens?"

Here, the father is saved by his son's wounds; lives by his son's death. How, and in what manner?—By a substitution of one instead of the other; by the son's suffering what must otherwise have fallen upon the father. Should the Socinian interpreters try the same experiment on these lines of Virgil, which they make upon passages of a parallel signification in Scripture; is there a critic in the whole world, that could approve, that could endure such flagrant violations of grammar, sense,

the determination of illiterate men? Ask any of your serious tenants, what ideas arise in their minds upon the perusal of the afore-mentioned texts? I dare venture to foretel, that, artless and unimproved as their understandings are, they will not hesitate for an answer. They will neither complain of obscurity, nor ask the assistance of learning; but will immediately discern, in all these passages, a gracious Redeemer suffering in their stead; and, by his bitter, but expiatory passion, procuring the pardon of their sins. Nay farther, as they are not accustomed to the finesses of criticism, I apprehend they will be at a loss to conceive how it is possible to understand such passages in any other sense.

Say not, this is an improper appeal, or these are incompetent judges. The Scriptures were written for their edification; not to exercise the ingenuity of subtile disputants, but to instruct the meanest of mankind in the way of salvation. Therefore, on fundamental articles, we may assuredly conclude, the expression will be easy, and the doctrine perspicuous: so that "he who runs may read, and the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."* And, though I am far from undervaluing the aids of literature, yet, upon those momentous subjects, which are inseparably connected with our eternal felicity, I cannot but regard the common sense of plain, honest, humble Christians, as the very best of critics.

Ther. It has been said by a learned critic, That vicarious punishment or suffering gives us too low ideas of the Son of God, as it sinks them to the pain

and taste? Yet, I believe, there is no sincere Christian, but would readily and gratefully say,

———— "Pro me ultrici succedere dextræ

Dignasti. Tua, Christe Deus, per vulnera servor;

Morte tua vivens.

* Isa. xxxv. 8. The word *fools* seems to denote persons of slow understanding and dull apprehension, as Luke xxiv. 25; or else it signifies those who, for want of a cultivated education and the improvements of literature, are accounted fools by the sons of science, as 1 Cor. i. 27.

and suffering of a malefactor, the very meanest idea we can have of them.

Asp. The idea is plainly suggested by the word of prophecy, and supported by the attestation of sacred history. In that it was foretold, and in this it is recorded, "that he was numbered with transgressors," Isa. liii. 12, Luke xxii. 37. To this purpose speaks St Paul, though somewhat more cautiously than your critic. He was made, not indeed sinful flesh, but in the likeness of sinful flesh; and though perfectly innocent, was left to endure the vengeance due to the vilest miscreants.

Yes, my dear Theron; that glorious Person, whom the highest angel adores, "suffered, as if he had been the criminal, the pain and punishment which we, or equivalent to that which we, the real criminals, should have suffered." If to consider this, gives us a low idea; if to suffer this, was a deep abasement; how exceedingly high, and how immensely grand, is the goodness and the grace manifested therein! The lower you draw the arrow on the string, the loftier flight it makes in the sky; and the greater our Lord's humiliation for us, the more wonderful and adorable his love to us.

Ther. As there cannot be a vicarious guilt, or as no one can be guilty in the stead of another; so there cannot be a vicarious punishment, or no one can be punished instead of another; because punishment, in its very nature, connotes guilt in the person who bears it.

Asp. If you mean by guilt, the consciousness of having committed a sin, and the internal defilement consequent upon it, we never suppose such a vicarious guilt. It is not so much as intimated, that Christ was stung with the remorse, or stained with the pollution of the adulterous David, the perfidious Peter, and the persecuting Saul; but that he was treated by the righteous God, as if he had perpetrated these, and all the crimes of all believers, either in the past or succeeding ages.

If by guilt you mean, the charge of a criminal action, and the obligation to suffer penalty, your assertion is nothing more than begging the question. It nakedly affirms the very thing in debate. And bare affirmations, unsupported by evidence, are seldom admitted as decisive proofs. We, on the other hand, are inclined to believe, that all our criminal actions were charged upon Christ, and that he suffered the punishment which they deserved. The former of these is not so properly called vicarious guilt, as real guilt, contracted by one, imputed to another. The latter we readily allow to be vicarious punishment, sustained in their stead, whose guilt was imputed. For both these points we have the authority of truth itself, speaking in the Scriptures. "The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all:" here is the imputation. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:" here is the vicarious punishment. And you know to what casuists we submit the interpretation of these texts; common sense, and an honest heart.

Ther. Is not this shocking to suppose? horrid to affirm? If guilt was really imputed to Christ, then punishment was his due. Justice might insist upon it, and he could not escape it.

Asp. To suppose this, is so far from shocking my apprehension, that it appears, even on your own principles, right and necessary. Right, because punishment, as you yourself have declared, always connotes guilt; I would add, either contracted, or at least imputed. And indeed the sufferings of Christ could not be of a penal nature, unless he endured them as under a charge of guilt. It is necessary to suppose this, otherwise how will you vindicate the justice of God! He bids his sword awake, and smite the blessed Jesus, Zech. xiii. 7. But shall the Judge of all the earth do wrong? Shall he smite, where there is nothing but innocence? no guilt, either personal or imputed? That be far from him! The thought be far from us!

Whereas, upon this supposition, it becomes a just and righteous thing, that God should inflict, and that Christ should sustain, the most rigorous punishment. And I do not know; but this might be the cause of our Lord's silence, when he was accused at Pilate's bar, and at Herod's judgment-seat. It is probable, he considered himself as standing before a higher tribunal; and responsible to eternal justice, for the criminal actions of all his people. In this situation, and in this capacity, clear himself of personal demerit he could; clear himself of imputed guilt he could not. Therefore he was dumb; he opened not his mouth. For though as the Son of the most high God, glory and immortality were his undoubted right; yet, as the Surety for sinful men, tribulation and death were his condign portion.

And why should this be thought shocking? It is not the least derogation to the transcendent excellency of Christ. It casts not the least stain on the unspotted sanctity either of his nature or his life. To bear sin as a voluntary surety, is infinitely different from committing it, as an actual transgressor. To say that Christ was punished for an irregularity of his own, would be false, impious, and horrid. To say, that he was charged with our guilt, and endured the punishment due, in the plain and full sense of the word, due to our sins, is so far from being injurious to his dignity, that it pays the proper honour to his mediatorial undertaking. It pays him the honour of the highest obedience to his Father's will, the deepest humiliation of his own illustrious person, and the most boundless benevolence to mankind.

Ther. God is love, Aspasio, all love. Whereas, you would——

Asp. Not often interrupt a friend's discourse. But I cannot forbear interposing a query on this occasion. Is there, then, no just displeasure in the Deity? What meaneth that solemn denunciation of the supreme Law-giver, "The anger of the Lord shall smoke against that man?" Deut. xxix. 20. What meaneth that aw-

ful declaration of the apostle, "The wrath of God revealed from heaven, upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men?" Rom. i. 18. Or in what sense are we to explain that alarming interrogatory of the prophet, "Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?" Nah. i. 6. Whence could those avenging visitations proceed, which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with a tenth pest of fire? Gen. xix. 24; which swept away so many thousands of the polluted Israelites with a raging pestilence? Numb. xxv. 9; and consigned over so many millions* of rebellious angels to chains of darkness?

Surely, Theron, if there be any determinate signification in language; if any lesson to be learned from the most tremendous judgments; it is, that the Lord, though free from all the discomposure of passion, is nevertheless angry with the wicked, Psal. vii. 11. Deu. ix. 8; and will make impenitent offenders feel the effects of his wise and holy indignation.

Ther. Does not your doctrine represent the all merciful God as a rigorous being, who, when once displeased, will hardly be pacified? Whereas, the Lord himself declares by his prophet, "Fury is not in me." Men of satirical wit would be apt to insinuate, that you had mistaken Jehovah for Moloch, and was erecting a Christian church in the valley of the son of Hinnom.

Asp. We take our representations of God, not from the vain conjectures of men, but from the records of infallible truth. There he is described as a

* *Millions.*—The number of the fallen angels is no where specified, and the veil sits deep upon the spiritual world; so that we can see no farther than revelation has discovered. Yet, I think, there is sufficient room to ground a conjecture upon the reply which one of these execrable apostates made to our Lord. "My name is legion," (a word signifying a great multitude, five or six thousand;) "for we are many." If so many were employed in tempting and tormenting a single person, what armies, what myriads of those invisible enemies, must exist through universal nature? It is an alarming thought! should make us fly to our divine Protector, and almighty Deliverer. See Mark v. 9. and 2 Pet. ii. 4.

of God, a jealous God, Exod. xx. 5; and, to
 s and corrigible sinners, a consuming fire, Heb. xii. 29;
 what sough wonderfully condescending, yet transcendently
 ory of majestic; insomuch that none of the fallen race are
 tion? permitted to approach his throne, but only through
 ?" Na the intervention of a great Mediator, John xiv. 6; and
 s proc without shedding of blood, even the blood of a person
 th a higher than the heavens, there is no remission of any
 y so offences, Heb. ix. 22. vii. 26.

When the Lord says, "Fury is not in me," Isa.
 xvii. 4, the words have a peculiar reference to his
 church, which, in a preceding verse, he had styled,
 a vineyard of red wine." The connection seems to
 enote, that his fierce anger was turned away from his
 he L people, on account of the satisfaction made by their
 avour. Though his own people are the objects, not
 11. Def his indignation, but of his love, let no ungodly
 el the stretches audaciously presume. It is not so with them.

They are "the briars and thorns"* mentioned in the
 the text clause; cumberers of the ground, unprofitable and
 en o noxious. Them he warns, them he challenges; "Who
 eas, will set them in battle against me?" Let them come
 ry is in; they shall find it a fearful thing to fall into the
 insin hands of the living God.

Nay, he will not stay for their approach; "I will
 of march against them," is his threatening; "I will pass
 through them; I will burn them together." This will
 certainly be the case, if not in the present, yet in a
 the future world. When once the master of the house is
 ed arisen up, and has shut to the door, mercy is gone for
 ever. Then nothing must be expected, nothing will
 then be experienced, but "vengeance and fiery indig-
 nation, to devour the adversaries of the gospel." God
 will then "execute judgments in anger, and in fury,
 and in furious rebukes," Ezek. v. 15, with such awful

* There is a fine contrast between the vineyard and the thorns, at
 the same time a regular continuation of the metaphor. As nothing is
 more common than to see the latter shooting up amidst the former; so
 nothing is more common, than to have hypocrites intermingle them-
 selves with believers.

severity and immense glory, as will cause heaven to adore, and hell to tremble.

Yet in all this there is not the least tincture of that outrageous temper, which in man we properly call fury. In man, fury implies an immoderate degree of resentment, which will hearken to no reasoning, and accede to no terms. The gospel account proves, even to a demonstration, that this has no place in the divine nature. So far from it, that God, though highly provoked, has provided an atonement, has made overtures of reconciliation to his disobedient creatures—has even besought* a guilty world, to accept of forgiveness. This is the purport of that gracious invitation, which follows in the prophet: "Let him, let the wicked man, forsake his way, and "take hold of my strength;" let him fly to my crucified Son, who is the power of God, for the salvation of sinners; cleaving to his merits by faith, as some poor delinquent to the horns of the altar.† Thus he shall make peace; all his iniquities shall be forgiven, and all my displeasure shall be pacified. So that the insinuations of our satirical gentlemen are as egregiously mistaken as they are shockingly worded.

You are a man of sense, Theron; and esteem that character far above the idle reputation of a wit. As such, let me ask you seriously, Is it not for the honour of the divine Majesty, to exercise justice, as well as mercy? Always to pardon, and never to punish, would be tameness, rather than benignity; a renun-

* 2 Cor. v. 20. It was an instance of singular compassion in the blessed God, that though offended with Job's friends, he admitted of a sacrifice, and directed them to an intercessor; both typical of Christ Jesus. But what unparalleled condescension, and divinely tender mercies, are displayed in this verse! "As though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Did the judge ever beseech a condemned criminal, to accept of pardon? Does the creditor beseech a ruined debtor, to receive an acquittance in full? yet our almighty Lord, and our eternal Judge, not only vouchsafes to offer these blessings, but invites us—entreats us—with the most tender and repeated importunity, solicits us—not to reject them?

† This is the precise idea included in the original *פית* and the idea is as charming as the image is expressive. Isa. xxvii. 5. 1 Kings i. 50.

iation of holiness, rather than a display of goodness. Or can it be right in us, so extravagantly to magnify the amiable, as to depreciate, nay even annihilate, the awful attributes of the Deity? This, says a poet, is the theology, not of Christians, but of infidels :

“ Who set at odds heaven’s jarring attributes,
And with one excellence another wound ;
Maim heaven’s perfection, break its equal beams,
Bid mercy triumph over—God himself,
Undeified by their opprobrious praise :
A God all mercy is a God unjust.” *Night Thoughts*, No. 4.

Ther. But we have lately been told, that the pardoning grace of the Lawgiver is not obstructed by any demands of law and justice ; for he can set them aside.

Asp. What ! Set aside a law, which is holy, righteous, and good ! set aside a justice, which is eternal, inflexible, and infinite !—St Paul gives a very different solution of this difficulty. He tells us, not that God set aside his law and his justice, “ but that he set forth the blessed Jesus for a propitiation, through faith in his blood,” with this express design, “ that he might declare his righteousness,” Rom. iii. 25, might demonstrate, not only his clemency, but his justice, even that vindictive justice, whose essential character and principal office is to punish sin.

This seems to be the import of the word *righteousness* in the present connection, and, I think, more than seems, if we consult the following verse: “ To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness ; that he might be just,”* evidence himself to be strictly and inviolably righteous, in the administration of his government ; even while he is the all-forgiving, gracious Justifier of the sinner that believeth in Jesus. According to this plan, “ mercy and truth meet together ; righteousness and peace kiss each other,” Psal.

* Rom. iii. 26. The attribute of justice must be preserved inviolate ; and inviolate it is preserved, if there was a real infliction of punishment on our Saviour. Nothing else can thoroughly clear up this great evangelical paradox—“ Just, yet Justifier of the ungodly.”

lxxxv. 10 ; all the attributes harmonize ; every attribute is glorified ; and not one superseded ; no, nor so much as clouded.

Ther. If some are verging to one extreme, are not you inclining to the other ? Our ears tingle, and our blood runs chill, at the very thoughts of so severe a vengeance, executed on an object so worthy and illustrious. Besides, how can we suppose, that the beneficent Creator and Preserver of men should take pleasure in the sufferings of the most unblameable person that ever existed ? especially since he himself has made this tender declaration, “ I will have mercy and not sacrifice,” Mat. ix. 13.

Asp. A tender declaration indeed it is ; signifying, that God is better pleased with the duties of humanity and charity, than with the most costly and pompous train of sacrifices ; nay, that he will even dispense with the observance of his own ceremonial institutions, when they interfere with our exercise of beneficence one to another : thus resigning (so admirable is his goodness !) the services due to himself, for the benefit and comfort of his creatures. But all this has no sort of relation to the sacrifice of Christ, which was the most noble, and the most acceptable oblation, ever made to the King of heaven.

We are assured by a prophet, that “ it pleased the Lord to bruise his holy child Jesus.” God not only gave up his Son to sufferings, but gave him up with a divine complacency. * In like manner, the blessed Jesus addressed himself to the dreadful task, not only without reluctance, but with the utmost alacrity. † “ I

* *Divine complacency.*—This is the idea included in the original word עָפַח, Isa. liii. 10 ; which is but poorly and faintly represented by the Βυλιται of the Septuagint. It corresponds with the vigorous phrase used by the voice from heaven, εὐδοκῆσα, Matth. iii. 17 ; or it may be very exactly translated by St Paul’s beautiful expression, συμπρωτῆρας, Heb. xiii. 16. In conformity to this sentiment, the great Jehovah is said to smell a sweet savour, or a savour of rest, רִיחַ נִיחֻחַ, in those sacrifices which prefigured the crucified Jesus, Gen. viii. 21.

† *Utmost alacrity.*—There is no inconsistency between this assertion and our Lord’s supplication, “ Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.” Such

delight to do thy will," was the language of his soul. Should you ask, How could the Son take pleasure in undergoing, or the Father in inflicting, such amazing sorrows? No otherwise, than upon account of those grand and everlasting advantages which were to result from them.

"A severe vengeance," you say, "such as makes our ears to tingle." This is the very thing intended, to awaken and alarm presumptuous offenders; that they "may hear and fear, and do no more wickedly." It is such a method of dispensing grace, as is calculated to strike the deepest terror, even while it cherishes the brightest hope; strike the deepest terror on every persevering sinner—while it cherishes the brightest hope on every penitent transgressor.

Ther. If one of my servants had affronted or injured me; I should, upon his submissive acknowledgement, forgive his fault, and not insist upon satisfaction for the wrong. Will you make the Father of compassions more inexorable in his nature, more rigid in his demands, than a human master?

Asp. When you have a servant, that owes his being to your power; that has received innumerable benefits from your bounty; yet has offered you innumerable affronts, all attended with the most aggravating circumstances, and all in defiance of the most righteous threatenings; when you are possessed of infinite majesty, and unblemished sanctity; when truth inviolable, and justice inflexible, are essential to your character; then, Theron, the parallel will hold good, and your conduct shall be a pattern for the procedure of Jehovah.

deprecatory request, put up with so much earnestness, yet with so much submission, only shews the extreme severity of our Redeemer's anguish, and the prodigious weight of his woes. And this indeed it shews beyond the power of description. His ardent love to mankind, and his fervent zeal for his Father's glory, prompted him to desire these sufferings. His invincible resolution, and unequalled magnanimity, emboldened him not to decline, but to meet them. Yet they were so great, so terrible, that his nature, being human, could not but recoil a little, and be startled at their approach; and had it not been divine also, must inevitably have sunk under the load.

Till then, you and I must be willing to forgive, because God has made it our bounden duty; and because we have incomparably more to be forgiven by the Judge of the world, than we can possibly remit to our fellow-creatures. In the mean time, you will allow the great God, who is glorious in holiness, to communicate his heavenly favours in a manner becoming himself; on such august and honourable terms, as shall maintain the rights of his universal government, and manifest the glory of his adorable attributes.

Ther. Might not God have cancelled our transgressions, and received fallen man into his favour, without any propitiation? To deny this, would be to limit the Holy One of Israel; and impose conditions on that uncontrollable Sovereign, "who giveth no account of any of his matters."

Asp. We need not embarrass ourselves, by entering upon inquiries, which may seem to lie beyond the limits of human understanding. Enough for us to know, that this propitiation was absolutely necessary, with regard to the first covenant. For as God had solemnly declared, "In the day thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt die;" his truth and justice stood engaged to execute the threatening. And no second Adam could restore the first, but by taking this curse upon himself.

Die man, or justice must; unless for him,
Some other able, and as willing, pay
The rigid satisfaction, death for death.

MILTON, B. iii. l. 210.

Therefore the divine Jesus, who lay in the bosom of the Father, and knew the counsels of heaven, says, "The Son of man must be lifted up"* on the cross.

* John iii. 14. *Ats rov, &c.* The same expression is used, Luke xxiv. 26. Perfectly conformable to this leading truth, is the current language both of the law and the gospel. Under the law, God himself says, "I have sworn, that the iniquity of the house of Eli shall not be purged **סבה זבכונה** with slaughtered offering, or with meat-offering for ever;" that is, no kind of oblation shall be accepted; the guilt shall never be expiated, 1 Sam. iii. 14. Under the Gospel, the

There was a necessity for his crucifixion; because this was stipulated in the covenant of peace, made between the Father and the Son; because it was expressly foretold by the ancient prophets, (and the Scripture cannot be broken,) that the Messiah should be cut off out of the land of the living; because a variety of types, and a multitude of sacrifices, prefigured his death: one of the types pointed out the very manner of his suffering; and all the sacrifices, detached from their dependency on this great oblation, would have been beggarly elements—mere unavailing empty ceremonies.

I apprehend, it is no limitation of the great God, to suppose him incapable of acting otherwise than in perfect and perpetual consistency with himself. Neither is it any infringement on his absolute sovereignty, that he cannot but order all affairs for the honour of his justice, his fidelity, and each of his exalted perfections. This is the very thing which the sacred writers express in their plain but strong language, "God who cannot lie," Tit. i. 2: "He cannot deny himself," 2 Tim. ii. 13.

Ther. God is often said to forgive our sins; particularly in that sublime passage, where he proclaims his name to Moses: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." Now, pardon is a free thing. Freeness is implied in the very nature of forgiveness. Take away the former, and you destroy the latter. If an equivalent be given, pardon is no longer pardon, but a purchase. Forgiveness ceases to be an act of grace, and becomes the payment of a debt.

apostle declares, "If we sin wilfully," by a final apostacy from Christ, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins;" they are, to such persons, and in such circumstances, absolutely irremissible, Heb. x. 26. Which phrases are evidently connected with, and founded on, this grand doctrine, That the appointed, the only way of obtaining pardon from the righteous God, is by the intervention of an expiatory sacrifice.

Asp. The text you quote is truly sublime, and equally comfortable. But you forget to mention one article of very great moment, which closes and completes the glorious character, which seems added on purpose to prevent any wrong apprehensions of the Deity, and to guard against all abuse of the doctrine: "He will in no wise clear the guilty." *—God will not, on any consideration whatever, absolve the obstinate, persevering, irreclaimable offender; neither will he acquit any of the guilty race, absolutely, unconditionally, or without such a satisfaction as may repair the honour of his injured law.

"We have redemption through his blood," says the Apostle, "even the forgiveness of our sins," Eph. i. 7. It is forgiveness, you see, though bought with a price. It is remission, though procured by blood. It is free, with regard to that Sovereign Being, who pardons. For he was under no obligation to admit of a propitiatory sacrifice; but might, without any diminution of his dignity, have left all mankind to perish in their sins. It is free with regard to the obnoxious creatures who are pardoned; for it is vouchsafed, without any satisfaction demanded at their hands, or any penalty inflicted on their persons. It is in this respect also free, that an interest in the great

* "He will in no wise clear the guilty," Exod. xxxiv. 7. This text is not without its difficulty, especially in the original. Steuchus interprets the words, *Et innocens non erit sine piaculo*, "He shall not be acquitted without a piacular sacrifice." I think, they may be translated, with a little more propriety and exactness, thus: "Pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin," וְנִקְּוָה לֹא וְנִקְּוָה though not with impunity; or rather, "though he will by no means let it go unpunished," meaning sin; which is the immediate antecedent; is expressed in the three preceding words; and may very properly be referred to in this clause. Then the sense will be as follows: "Though God pardons sin, yet it shall not go unpunished. He will certainly inflict his righteous vengeance, and exercise his punitive justice, though not on the sinner, whom he spares; yet on the Surety, whom he has provided." In the same manner, Cocceus renders the passage, "et non exercens impunitatem;" and expounds it much to the same purpose. We have this very word in the same remarkable construction, Jer. xxx. 11, וְנִקְּוָה לֹא וְנִקְּוָה which is translated, and with sufficient fidelity, "I will not leave thee altogether unpunished."

atonement is granted to us, without the least merit, or any deserving qualifications of our own.

In all this, God is not only merciful, but most tenderly and immensely merciful. And will any one calumniate this adorable method of exercising mercy, because provision is also made for the glory of God's truth, God's holiness, and supreme authority?

Ther. Does not your notion of a propitiatory sacrifice derogate from the goodness of the Almighty Father, and transfer all our obligations to the incarnate Son?

Asp. Is there not goodness in allowing a substitute to suffer in our stead?—Is there not still greater goodness in providing a substitute for us, without any solicitation on our part?—Is there not the very highest exertion of goodness, in appointing a dear, an only, an incomparably excellent Son for the purpose? This marvellous scheme, far, very far from obscuring, most illustriously displays the superabundant loving-kindness of the Father.

“God so loved the world,” apostate and polluted as it was—How did he love it? To a degree unutterable by any tongue; inconceivable by any imagination; and only to be expressed by the infinitely precious effects:—Loved it so, “that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” John iii. 16. And does this derogate from the goodness of the Almighty Father, to give not barely pardon and life, but give them through the hands, nay, through the wounds, the agonies, the death of his divinest, dearest Son?

Such privileges, vouchsafed on any terms, must challenge the devoutest acknowledgments. But when attended with this additional demonstration of favour, they are enough to inflame us with gratitude, and transport us with admiration. They not only manifest, but commend * the divine love; shew it to the

* Rom. v. 8, *Συνίησις*. It seems to be an image taken from the practice of tradesmen, who, in shewing their goods, point out their ex-

greatest advantage, in the highest perfection, with every circumstance of recommendation and endearment. By this means, blessed God, thou hast unspeakably enhanced thy benefits! thou hast rendered them, though invaluable in themselves, exceedingly more so, by the manner of conferring them!

Ther. Again in your elevations, Aspasio? The world, you know, is grown very rational and inquisitive; will admit nothing but upon clear evidence and full conviction. We expect, in all religious inquiries, not the flights of fancy, or the sallies of zeal, but a sobriety of reason, and solidity of argument.

Asp. The world, rational as it is, seems, by the taste of the present age, no enemy to works of fancy. The world, therefore, may not be displeased with an affecting story. And a story, suitable to the occasion, just occurs to my mind; such as may serve to shadow forth, though very faintly, the surpassing benignity and grace of our crucified Lord.

An Asiatic queen, departing this life, left behind her three accomplished sons, all arrived to years of maturity. The young princes were at strife, who should pay the highest respect to their royal mother's memory. To give scope for their generous contention, they agreed to meet at the place of her interment; and there present the most honourable gift they knew how to devise, or were able to procure.—The eldest came and exhibited a sumptuous monument, consisting of the richest materials, and ornamented with the most exquisite workmanship. The second ransacked all the beauties of the blooming creation; and offered a garland of such admirable colours, and delightful odours, as had never been seen before. The youngest appeared, without any pompous prepar-

cellencies, and set, in the clearest light, whatever may bespeak their worth, or recommend them to the purchaser. Perhaps, it may allude to the custom of sending, with some favourite and worthy person, commendatory letters, in which his good qualities are described, and every thing is mentioned that may embellish his character, and render his presence respectable. In this sense, St Paul uses those nearly related words, *συμβουλευτικῶν ἐπιστολῶν*, 2 Cor. iii. 1.

ation; having only a crystal bason in one hand, and a silver bodkin in the other. As soon as he approached the tomb, he threw open his breast; pierced a vein, that lay opposite to his heart; received the blood in the transparent vase; and, with an air of affectionate reverence, placed it on the beloved parent's monument. The spectators, struck with the sight, burst into a shout of general applause, and immediately gave the preference to this last oblation.

If it was reckoned such a singular expression of love, to expend a few of those precious drops for the honour of a parent; O how matchless! how ineffable was the love of J esus, in pouring out all his vital blood for the salvation of enemies!

Ther. My greatest objection is still to come. If Christ suffered in our stead, he must suffer that very punishment which was due to our iniquities. This your orthodox divines affirm to be incomparably worse than bodily death; to be nothing less than the everlasting displeasure of God.

Asp. The punishment due to our iniquities, was shame, death, and the divine wrath.

As for shame—Was ever shame like that shame which our despised Redeemer bore? Though Prince of the kings of the earth, yet born in a stable, and laid in a manger. When an infant, exiled from his own country, and a vagabond in a foreign land. When engaged in the discharge of his ministry, accused of the most flagitious crimes, and branded with the blackest names. When brought to his exit, apprehended as a thief; condemned as a malefactor, nay, the vilest of malefactors, a robber and a murderer is preferred before him. His executioners poured contempt upon all his venerable offices. As a king, they ridiculed him, by putting a mock sceptre into his hand, and crowning him with ragged thorns,* instead of a royal

* To have crowned the blessed Jesus with straw, would have been a vile insult, and treating him like an ambitious madman. But to crown him with keen, pungent, lacerating thorns, was adding cruelty to their insults; unheard of barbarity to the most contemptuous mockery, Matth. xxvii. 29.

diadem. They vilified his prophetic character, by hood-winking his eyes; striking his blessed head; and then asking, in cruel derision, "who it was that smote him." * They cast reproach upon his priestly undertaking, when they sharpened their tongues with malicious irony, and shot out those bitter words, "He saved others, himself he cannot save," Matth. xxvii. 42. To render his infamy as public as it was shocking, they hung him on a tree; and exposed him, defiled as he was with spitting, and disfigured with wounds, to the gazing eyes and contumelious scoffs of numberless spectators.

If you doubt whether Christ sustained the wrath of God, let us follow him to the garden of Gethsemene—A scene, which I would always recollect when I walk along the fertile vale, or ex-patiate amidst the flowery garden, † or enjoy the delights of any rural retirement.—He had no remorse to alarm his spotless conscience; yet fearfulness and trembling came upon him. No violence was offered to his sacred person; yet a horrible dread overwhelmed him.—'Twas night, cold night; and though our divine Master lay prostrate upon the earth, amidst the fall of chilling dews, he sweat—sweat blood—sweat great drops of blood, running down in reeking streams to the ground!—"He was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows," Psal. xlv. 7; yet so insupportable was his affliction, that he could not forbear crying out, "My soul is sorrowful—exceeding sorrowful—sorrowful even unto death!" Matth. xxvi. 38. What cause, what adequate cause, can be assigned for this amazing anguish? None but the wrath of his Almighty Father; who was now become an inexorable Judge; treated him no longer as the Son of his love, but as the Surety for unnumbered millions of guilty creatures.

* Scornfully insinuating, that his sacred prophetic office was fit for nothing, but to serve such despicable purposes, Matth. xxvi. 68.

† Alluding to the evangelist's description of Gethsemene, who represents it as a garden; and to the etymology of the word, which signifies a fat or fruitful valley, **גֵּתְשֶׁמֶנֶה** John xviii. 1. Matth. xxvi. 36.

Ther. Was it possible, that the innocent and holy Jesus, the dearly beloved Son of God, should be an object of his Father's wrath?

Asp. It was not only possible, but unavoidable and necessary; unavoidable, with respect to the divine holiness; necessary, for the procurement of our redemption. Sin was charged upon Christ; all the sins of all believers, in all ages, and places of the world. And could the infinitely righteous God behold such a deluge of iniquities, (those abominable things, which he hateth,) without expressing his displeasure? Or could the blessed Jesus be punished, truly punished for them, without any painful sensation of their horrid evil, and of that tremendous indignation which they deserved?

If this was not the case, who can maintain the dignity of his conduct during the agony in the garden? Was there no pouring out of the divine displeasure? Then his behaviour in that hour of trial did not equal the intrepidity of the three Hebrew youths, who continued calm, and without the least perturbation, while the furnace was heated into seven-fold rage, Dan. iii. 16, 17, 18. But if this was the time, in which, no created arm being strong enough to give the blow, "it pleased the Lord to bruise him," Isa. liii. 10; if the most high God "bent his bow like an enemy, and stood with his right hand as an adversary," Lam. ii. 4;—it is easy to account for the prodigious consternation of our Redeemer. It is not to be wondered, that his heart, though endued with otherwise invincible fortitude, should become like melting wax. For who knoweth the power of that wrath, at which "the pillars of heaven tremble?" Job xxvi. 11.

Ah! Theron, the vinegar and the gall which they gave him to drink, were not half so bitter as the cup of his Father's wrath; yet, for our sake, he drank it off to the very dregs. The nails that pierced his hands, and the spear that cleft his heart, were not half so sharp as the frowns of his eternal Father's countenance; which, for our consolation, he patiently sub-

mitted to bear.—He was rent with wounds, and racked with pain; his bones were dislocated, and his nerves convulsed; a thousand thorny daggers were planted in his temples, and life flowed out at ten thousand gushing veins. Yet this, all this was gentle, was lenient, in comparison of those inexpressible agonies which penetrated his very soul. The former fetched not a single complaint from his mouth; the latter wrung from his breaking heart that passionate exclamation, “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?”—Astonishing words! Surely, a distress, beyond all imagination grievous,* uttered them. Surely, the vengeance, not of men, but of heaven itself, extorted them.. Every syllable of which speaks what the mourning prophet describes, “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger?” Lam. i. 12.

Here now is our whole punishment endured; the shame of the cross, and the sorrows of death; the suspension of the Almighty’s favour, and the terrible sensations of his wrath.

Ther. Be it so. Yet all this amounts to no more than part of payment. For these sufferings were transient; temporary only, not eternal. Therefore

* To heighten our idea of this distress, the evangelists make use of the most forcible words—*ηξαστα ενδαμβυθισαι*, he was seized with the most alarming astonishment—*αδημονειν*, he was overwhelmed with insupportable dejection—*σπιλωσες*, he was besieged on all sides, as it were, with an army of invading sorrows—He wrestled, amidst strong cries and tears, not only with the malice of men and rage of devils, but with the infinitely more dreaded indignation of God; he wrestled even unto an agony of spirit, *α αγωνια*. All these circumstances of horror and anguish, constitute what a celebrated poet very justly styles,

“A weight of woe more than ten worlds could bear!”

The critic, probably, will admire the propriety and beauty of this line; which, composed of nothing but monosyllables, and clogged with the frequent repetition of a cumbrous consonant, makes the sound remarkably apposite to the sense. May we all be sacred critics! have, not only a refined taste, to relish such elegancies of composition, but an awakened heart, to feel the energy of such important truths.

the main circumstance, the most bitter ingredient was wanting.

Asp. In the estimate of divine justice, and in point of penal satisfaction, they were equivalent to our endless punishment; especially if we consider the severity of the sufferings, and the dignity of the sufferer.

The severity of the sufferings.—At the last day, all those fierce eruptive flames, which have raged in *Ætna*, in *Vesuvius*, and in every other burning mountain throughout the world; all those confined subterranean fires, which have so terribly shaken the foundations of *Jamaica*, *Sicily*, and *Constantinople*—in a word, the whole element of fire, however employed through all the revolutions of time, wherever diffused through all the regions of the globe, will then be collected from all quarters, and burst forth in one vast, resistless, general conflagration. In some such manner, all that wrath, which was due to the innumerable multitude of sinners, redeemed from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; which, if executed on the offending creatures, had been prolonged to eternal ages; all that wrath was contracted into one inconceivably dreadful blaze, and at once poured out upon the interposing Surety, at once flamed forth on our heavenly victim. This will appear more than probable, if, among other particulars, we contemplate the unequalled magnanimity of our Lord, who is styled “the Lion of the tribe of Judah,” *Rev. vi. 5*; and compare it with his bloody sweat in the garden, and his exceeding bitter cry on the cross.*

The dignity of the Sufferer.—Had our Saviour’s sufferings been the sufferings of a mere man, or of the most exalted angel, I acknowledge, they could have bore no proportion to our demerit. It were impossible for a finite being, to sustain the wrath, or discharge the debt. But they were the sufferings of the

* I think, the language of the Greek liturgy, is the language of strict propriety, as well as of fervent devotion, *Δι’ ἁγίων καὶ παθμάτων.* The sufferings of our Lord are, in their measure and weight, to us unknown; absolutely beyond the reach of human imagination.

Prince of Heaven, and the Lord of Glory; before whom all men are as dust, and all angels as worms. — Was an infinite Majesty offended? An infinite Mediator atoned. Weigh the dignity, the immense dignity of the Redeemer's person, against the everlasting duration of our punishment, and it will not only counterbalance, but preponderate. Finite creatures can never make an infinite satisfaction; no, not through the most unlimited revolution of ages. Whereas, when our divine Lord undertook the work, being truly and properly infinite, he finished it at once. So that his sufferings, though temporary, have an all-sufficiency of merit and efficacy. They are, in this respect, parallel; nay, on account of the infinitude of his nature, they are more than parallel to an eternity of our punishment.

It was Emmanuel, it was the incarnate God, who purchased the church, and redeemed sinners, with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. The essential grandeur of our Saviour communicated its ennobling influence to every tear he shed, to every sigh he heaved, and every pang he felt.

This renders his sufferings a perfect, as their vicarious nature renders them a proper, satisfaction. And though "the wood of Lebanon was not sufficient to burn, nor all the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering," Isa. xl. 16, this sacrifice fully answers the exigence of the case. This sacrifice sends up an ever-acceptable odour to the skies, and diffuses its sweet perfume through all generations; such as appeases heaven, and revives the world.

Yes, Theron, you must give me leave to repeat the delightful truth: It was "the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us," Tit. ii. 13, 14. His sacrifice, therefore, must be inconceivably meritorious. O that sinners, the vilest of sinners, knew its all-sufficient efficacy! they would no longer be holden in the bonds of iniquity, by that destructive suggestion of the devil, "There is no hope," Jer. ii. 25.

Ther. What valuable end could such vicarious sufferings accomplish? Suppose God absolutely inexorable, and they cannot avail. Suppose him divinely merciful, and they are needless.

Asp. The difficulty you propose, I think, has been obviated already; so that I have no occasion to solve your dilemma, but only to answer your query. These sufferings, as a punishment, gave ample satisfaction to the divine violated law; as a sacrifice, they perfectly reconciled us to our offended God; as a price, they redeemed us from every evil, and purchased for us a title to all good.

This is a subject of the most distinguished importance. Let not my Theron imagine, I would abuse his patience, if I dwell a moment longer on the favourite topic. I might enumerate many ends, all magnificent and gracious, accomplished by this wonderful expedient. I content myself with specifying a few; but those, such as bring the highest glory to God, administer the most solid comfort to man, and most effectually promote the interests of piety.

In this we have a manifestation of the most awful justice, and at the same time a display of unbounded goodness. Awful justice; in that the great and terrible God, though determined to exercise mercy, would exercise it only in such a manner, as might vindicate the authority of his law; might testify the purity of his nature; and declare the inviolable faithfulness of his word. Unbounded goodness; in that he withheld not his Son, his only Son, but freely gave him up for us all; gave up "the brightness of his glory," to be covered with infamy; gave up "the beloved of his soul," to expire in agonies; on purpose to obtain honour and immortality for apostate men. The torments inflicted on all the damned in hell, are not so fearful a monument of God's justice, as those dying agonies of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor could a thousand worlds, conferred on mankind, have been such an act of superabundant munificence, as that gift of his ever-blessed Son,

Look we for power and wisdom? To uphold the humanity of Christ, under all the studied cruelties of men, under the insatiate rage of devils, and the far more tremendous curse of the divine law; * to conquer sin, and death, and hell, by a person bound with fetters, nailed to a tree, and crucified in weakness; to expiate, by one offering, the innumerable millions of crimes committed by all his people, from the beginning to the end of time; was not this power! matchless power! astonishing power! And as for wisdom, how admirable was the contrivance, which could harmonize the seemingly opposite claims of mercy and of justice! and not only satisfy each, but magnify both! Had punishment been executed, in all its rigour, on the sinner's person, mercy had lost her amiable honours. Had the sinner been restored to favour, without any penalties sustained either by himself or his Surety, justice had been set aside as an insignificant attribute. Whereas, by our Lord's vicarious and expiatory sufferings, both are manifested, and both are exalted. Therefore the Scripture affirms, that God hath not only exercised, but abounded in wisdom and prudence; nay, hath abounded in all wisdom and prudence, Eph. i. 8. By this combination of righteous vengeance and triumphant grace; which is, at once, so honourable to himself, and so advantageous to his people.

Ther. "Advantageous to his people."—I am glad you are come to this point. This is what I want to have cleared up. I am for those doctrines, which glorify God by doing good to man. Give me the religion, whose aspect is benign, and whose agency is beneficial. Not like a meteor, to dazzle us with a vain

* Isa. xliii. 6, "I the Lord will hold thine hand, and will keep thee." This is spoken of the Messiah. It gives him assurance of effectual support, when the vengeance of heaven, the fury of hell, and the sins of the world, should fall upon him with united violence. To support the Mediator under these circumstances, is mentioned as a very distinguished act of that omnipotent arm, which "created the heavens, and spread forth the earth, and giveth spirit to them that walk therein," verse 5.

glitter; or like a comet, to terrify us with a formidable glare; but like yonder sun, whose beams shed light, and life, and joy all around.

Asp. If this be what you seek, and what you prize, the Christian religion, this doctrine in particular will answer your warmest expectations, and challenge your highest esteem. For it is rich with benefits of the most needful, the most desirable, and most exalted kind.—The first and grand blessing is pardon of sins; pardon, not of small sins only, but of the most aggravated, the most horrid, the most enormous. Be they flaming as scarlet, be they foul as the dunghill, be they black as hell itself; yet they shall be as the spotless wool, or as the virgin snows, Isa. i. 18. They shall “be as though they had never been.” Pardon, not of a few, but of all sins. Be they numerous as the hairs of our head, numerous as the stars of heaven, numerous as the sand upon the sea-shore, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from them all, 1 John i. 7.

Hereby we have victory over death, and admittance into eternal life. For thus saith the holy apostle, concerning the poor sojourners in clay, “Seeing therefore the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also partook of the same; that, by undergoing death, he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver those, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage,” Heb. ii. 14, 15. And thus saith the venerable elder, concerning the glorified saints in light, “These are they who came out of great tribulation; and they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne,” Rev. vii. 14.

The Philistines rejoiced, when Samson, the destroyer of their country, was delivered into their hands. How much greater reason have we to rejoice, since the blessed Jesus has vanquished our last enemy! has made death the minister of endless life, and the grave a gate to eternal glory! Joseph had cause to be glad!

when he put off his prison-garments, and was clothed with change of raiment; when he was brought from the dungeon to the palace, and honoured with a seat at the right hand of the king. But is it not an incomparably richer blessing, to have our robes washed in redeeming blood, and our souls cleansed from all guilt? Is it not an incomparably higher advancement, to be admitted into the blissful presence, and to possess the everlasting kingdom of God?

To comprehend all in a word.—Hereby are procured, even for the most unworthy creatures, all the benefits of the new covenant. Therefore the blood of Christ is styled by a prophet, “the blood of thy covenant,” Zech. ix. 11; by an apostle, “the blood of the everlasting covenant,” Heb. xiii. 20; and our Lord himself says, “this is the new covenant in my blood.”* Is it a privilege, to know God, the infinitely amiable centre and source of all perfection? Is it a most valuable endowment, to have his laws put into our minds, and written on our hearts? Is it a branch of real felicity, to have our numberless sins forgiven, and not one of our iniquities remembered any more? Is it the compendium of all happiness, to have God for our portion, and our exceeding great reward? to be his peculiar treasure, his loving and beloved people? Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12. Of all these we may say—They are the purchase of Emmanuel’s blood; and whoever is truly interested in the one, is unquestionably entitled to the other.

Who, then, would refuse so comfortable——

Ther. Too comfortable, we might imagine, to be either true in itself, or safe in its consequences. Must it not tend to embolden the sinner in the prosecution of his vices? Who need scruple to transgress, or be very solicitous to repent, if an all-atoning sacrifice has been offered for every kind and every degree of wickedness?

Asp. Would you have sinners intimidated? No—

* Luke xxii. 20. The original word *διαθηκη* signifies either a testament, or a covenant.

thing speaks such terror to the children of disobedience, as the bitter passion and accursed death of Christ. All the rhetorical aggravations of sin, with regard to its loathsome nature, and execrable vileness; all the severity of vengeance, executed upon rebellious angels, or wicked men; all, all are weak and inexpressive, compared with the dreadful emphasis of this great transaction. For, if the Lord Almighty spared not his own Son, when guilt was not found in him, but only imputed to him; how much less shall he spare incorrigible offenders, who both habitually commit, and obstinately persist in, their daring impieties?

If, by repentance, you mean an ingenuous sorrow for our transgressions; nothing is so likely to break the stony, or melt the icy heart, as these doleful effects of sin. Let us imagine ourselves present at Calvary, and standing by the cross. See! the innocent, the amiable, the illustrious Saviour, hangs on a tree; a tree, torturous as the rack, and ignominious as the gibbet! See! his face is foul with spitting, and his sides are tore with the scourge. His veins stream with blood, and his heart is wounded with anguish. There he hangs, abandoned by his friends, reviled by his enemies, and forsaken even by his God. Can we reflect, that we, even we, were the cause of this inconsolable misery; and not feel remorse in our consciences, or sorrow in our minds? Can we reflect, that for us, for us, he bore this amazing torment; and not smite our breasts, or be pained at our very souls?

If, by repentance, you mean a thorough renunciation of all iniquity, no motive is so effectual, to divorce the heart from every abominable idol, and divert the feet from every evil way, as an attentive consideration of our Redeemer's death. Whose indignation does not rise against the infamous wretch, that betrayed the blessed Jesus? Who is not ready to detest those envenomed tongues which accused him, and those barbarous hands which crucified him? How then can we cherish those horrid lusts, which were the principal actors in this deepest of tragedies? How can we ca-

ress, how can we entertain, how can we endure those execrable iniquities, which were the betrayers and murderers of the Prince of Life? "He bore our sins in his own" bleeding, agonizing "body on the tree;" not that we should be emboldened to repeat them, but incited to abhor them, and induced to forsake them; that, in our practice and our affections, we should not only be averse, but even "dead to sin," 1 Pet. ii. 24.

If you would have benevolence, your favourite principle, take place and operate, it is impossible to urge so endearing a persuasive to universal good will, as this "kindness and love of God our Saviour," Tit. iii. 4. How can we indulge the sallies of resentment, or harbour the seeds of animosity, when the meek, the merciful, the infinitely gracious Redeemer, laid down his life for his bitterest enemies? How can we treat with contempt or indifference even the meanest of mankind, since our divine Master gave his all-glorious person for vile wretches and miserable sinners? Never was there so winning a call to disinterested charity, as the amiable example of Christ; never so binding a cement of brotherly love, as the blood of the crucified Jesus.

In short, would you have people possessed of every heavenly virtue, and animated to the practice of every good work? Nothing administers so powerful an incitement to them all, as a lively and appropriating sense of this wondrous grace. Set home by the Holy Ghost,* it produces such a warm gratitude, and such a heartfelt joy, as are far more operative than the most awful threatenings, or the most cogent reasonings. So that, quite contrary to your suspicions, the native ten-

* The reader will give me leave, on this occasion, to subjoin the noble doxology of our church; which, when thus applied, may be an excellent means, both of expressing our gratitude, and of quickening our devotion. "Glory be to the Father," for providing this all-sufficient atonement, and giving his Son to save a ruined world. "Glory be to the Son," for humbling himself to the death of the cross, and obtaining eternal redemption for sinners. "Glory be to the Holy Ghost," for testifying of Christ in our hearts, and appropriating this great salvation to our souls.

endency of this excellent doctrine is, to suppress ungodliness, and promote piety.

Observe, how the present calm evening, yonder mild declining sun, and these soft balmy breezes, have unlocked the flowery prisons, and detached a profusion of odours through the air; have inspirited the little songsters of the grove, and fetched lavish harmony from their throats. So sweetly will a true belief in Jesus Christ and him crucified, draw forth all the powers of the soul, in acts of ready and chearful obedience. He is therefore said, not only to justify, but also to "sanctify the people with his blood," Heb. xiii. 12.

Let us consider the death of Christ, in this its full grandeur and extensive efficacy; and we shall discern the admirable propriety of the apostle's remark, "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," Heb. ii. 10. It became; as an act of sovereignty in God, it comported with the dignity, and emblazoned (if I may so speak) the incomprehensible majesty of his perfections. As an execution of impartial vengeance on our Surety, it asserted the rights of divine government, and secured the utmost veneration to the divine law. As an emanation of rich indulgence to us, it redressed all our misery, and retrieves our whole happiness. In each, in every respect, it is worthy of the most grateful and adoring acceptance from sinful man, and such as will be had in everlasting honour by the choirs of saints, and the host of angels.

Ther. I thank you, Aspasio. Your arguments have not indeed converted me, but they have strengthened my faith. I never was so unhappily mistaken, as to disbelieve the satisfaction made by our Lord Jesus Christ; made to divine justice; made for the sins of the world. But I now see more clearly its reasonableness and importance; its cheering aspect on the

guilty conscience, and its benign influence on the moral conduct.

Asp. I congratulate you, dear Theron, from my inmost soul, on your thorough conviction of this important truth. May you have still more extensive and generous views of the glorious article! and may every renewed view be more and more influential on your heart!

Reviving, ravishing thought! to have Him for our bleeding victim! Him for our great propitiation! at whose feet the armies of heaven bow, and the saints in light adore! Reviving, ravishing thought! to have all our punishment sustained, and the whole curse of the law exhausted; so that justice itself can demand no more! Nay, to have so perfect a ransom paid for our redemption, that it is not barely an act of favourable indulgence, but of the highest righteousness* also, to pardon, accept, and glorify the believer. In such a method of reconciliation, how fully does the judgment acquiesce, and how securely the conscience rest!

Excuse me, Theron. My affections are again upon the soar. But I clip their wings.—Only let me ask, Is not this doctrine the grand peculiarity of the gospel, by which it stands distinguished from every other religion professed in the world? Is it not the central point, in which all the lines of duty unite, and from which all the rays of consolation proceed? Strike this article from the creed, and you reduce the mystery of godliness to a system of ethics; you degrade the Christian church into a school of philosophy. To deny the expiation made by our Redeemer's sacrifice, is to obscure the brightest manifestation of divine benignity,

* Therefore the apostle says, "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," 1 John i. 9. Faithful; because he had promised this blessing, by the unanimous voice of all his prophets. Just; surely, then, he will punish! No; for this very reason he will pardon. This may seem strange; but, upon the evangelical principles of atonement and redemption, it is apparently true: because, when the debt is paid, or the purchase made, it is the part of equity to cancel the bond, and consign over the purchased possession.

to undermine the principal pillar of practical religion; is to make a desperate shipwreck of our everlasting interests, and to dash (such, I fear, it will be found in the final issue of things) ourselves to death on the very rock of salvation.

Ther. Now, I believe it is time to repair homewards. And I hope it will be no disagreeable exchange, if we resign our seat on the mount for a place in the dining-room.

Asp. Pray let me inquire, as we walk along, (for I am unwilling to interrupt our discourse, merely to satisfy my curiosity,) what may be the design of your edifice, which rises on a small eminence, near the public road? it is neither a tower, nor a dwelling-house; but looks like a stately column, erected on purpose to beautify the prospect.

Ther. It is a sort of monumental pile, erected, as the story goes, on a very memorable occasion. Queen Eleanor accompanied King Edward the First to (what was called) the holy war; in which he gained signal advantages over the infidels, and acquired a large share of renown to himself. After many gallant exploits performed in the field, a treacherous and desperate Saracen, demanding admittance into his chamber, under pretence of private business, wounded him with an empoisoned dagger; the consequence of which, his physicians declared, must be inevitable and speedy death, unless the poison was sucked out by some human mouth. This might possibly preserve the royal patient, but would be extremely dangerous to the operator.

Dangerous as it was, his Queen claimed the office; insisted upon it, as the consort's right; and executed it so faithfully, that she saved the king's life—so happily, that she lost not her own. After this, she returned to England, lived many years, and bore several children. But, sooner or later, royalty itself must pay the debt to nature. Dying on a journey to Scotland, she was brought back to the last and long home.

of our English monarchs.* Wherever her corpse rested, in the way to its interment, a structure † (such as you now behold) was raised, in order to perpetuate the memory of her conjugal affection.

Asp. And should not our hearts be a monument of gratitude to the blessed Jesus, who drew the deadly venom, not from our veins, but from the immortal part of our nature; and not at the hazard, but at the loss, the certain and unavoidable loss of his precious life? He opened his breast, opened his very soul, to the keenest arrows of vindictive justice; that, transfixing him, they might drop short of us; “the poison whereof drank up his spirits,” Job vi. 4, that the balm of peace might refresh ours.

O, my Theron! let our memories be the tablet, to record this unexampled instance of compassion and goodness. Let our affections dwell upon the tragical and the delightful history; till they melt into contrition and are inflamed with love. If we want an inscription, let us make use of those noble lines, which, in the finest climax imaginable, describe the magnificence and grace of this astonishing transaction:

———“Survey the wondrous cure,
And at each step let higher wonder rise.
Pardon for infinite offence! and pardon
Through means that speak its value infinite!
A pardon bought with blood! with blood divine!
With blood divine of Him I made my foe!
Persisted to provoke! Though woo'd and aw'd,
Bless'd and chastis'd, a flagrant rebel still!
Nor I alone! A rebel universe!
My species up in arms! Not one exempt!
Yet for the foulest of the foul, he dies!”

Night Thoughts, No. 4

* Westminster Abbey.

† One of these structures stands on the high road, near Northampton. It is surrounded with a large flight of steps at the bottom; and ornamented, towards the top, with four female statues, in full proportion. A Latin inscription informs the traveller concerning its occasion and design:—

“In perpetuam Reginæ Eleanoræ
Conjugalis amoris memoriam.”

DIALOGUE V.

ASPASIO having some letters of importance to answer, as soon as the cloth was taken away, retired from table. His epistolary engagements being despatched, he inquired for Theron. The servants informed him, that their master walked into the garden. A very little search found him seated on an airy mount, and sheltered by an elegant arbour.

Strong and substantial plants of liburnum formed the shell, while the slender and flexile shoots of syringa filled up the interstices. Was it to compliment, as well as to accommodate their worthy guests, that they interwove the luxuriant foliage? Was it to represent those tender but close attachments, which had united their affections, and blended their interests? I will not too positively ascribe such a design to the disposition of the branches. They composed, however, by their twining embraces, no inexpressive emblem of the endearments and the advantages of friendship. They composed a canopy of the freshest verdure, and of the thickest texture; so thick, that it entirely excluded the sultry ray, and shed both a cool refreshment, and an amusive gloom; while every unsheltered tract glared with light, or fainted with heat.

You enter by an easy ascent of steps, lined with turf, and fenced with a balustrade of sloping bay-trees. The roof was a fine concave, peculiarly elevated and stately. Not embossed with sculpture; not mantled over with fret-work; not incrustated with splendid fresco: but far more delicately adorned with the syringa's silver tufts, and the liburnum's flowering gold; whose large and lovely clusters, gracefully pendent from the leafy dome, disclosing their sweets to the delighted bee, and gently waving to the balmy breath of spring, gave the utmost enrichment to the charming bower.

Facing the entrance, lay a spacious grassy walk, terminated by an octangular bason with a curious *jet d'eau*

playing in the centre. The waters, spinning from the lower orifices, were attenuated into innumerable little threads, which dispersed themselves in an horizontal direction, and returned to the reservoir in a drizzling shower. Those which issued from the higher tube and larger apertures, either sprung perpendicular or spouted obliquely, and formed, as they fell, several lofty arches of liquid crystal, all glittering to the eye and cooling to the air.

Parallel to the walk ran a parterre, planted with an assemblage of flowers, which advanced, one above another, in regular gradations of height, of dignity, and of beauty. First, a row of daisies, gay as the smiles of youth, and fair as the virgin snows. Next, a range of crocuses, like a long stripe of yellow satin, quilted with threads, or diversified with sprigs of green. A superior order of ranunculuses, each resembling the cap of an earl's coronet, replenished the third stage with full blown tufts of glossy scarlet. Beyond this a more elevated line of tulips* raised their flourish

* Here is, it must be confessed, some little deviation from the general laws of the season; some anachronism in the annals of the party. The flowers united in this representation, do not, according to the usual process of nature, make their appearance together. However, as the oeconomy of a skilful gardener, they may be thus associated, I hope the possibility of the thing will screen my flowery productions from the blasts of censure. Or, may I not shelter my blooming assembly under the remark of a masterly critic; which is as pertinent to the case as if it had been written on purpose for our vindication, and in all respects so elegant, that it must adorn every work which quotes it, and cheer every person who reads it?

“A painter of Nature is not obliged to attend her in her slow advances, which she makes from one season to another; or to observe her conduct in the successive productions of plants and flowers. He may draw into his description all the beauties of the spring and autumn, and make the whole year contribute something to render it more agreeable. His rose-trees, woodbines, and jessamines, may flourish together; and his beds be covered at the same time with lilies, violets, and amaranthus. His soil is not restrained to any particular set of plants, but proper either for oaks or myrtles, and adapts itself to the product of every climate.—Oranges may grow wild in it; myrrh may be met with in every hedge; and if he thinks it proper to have a grove of spices, he can quickly command sun enough to raise it. His concerts of birds may be as full and harmonious, and his woods as thick and gloomy, as he pleases. He is at no more expense in a long vista than a short

heads, and opened their enamelled cups; not bedecked with a single tint only, but glowing with an intermingled variety of almost every radiant hue. Above all, arose that noble ornament of a royal escutcheon, the *fleur-de-luce*, bright with ethereal blue, and grand with imperial purple; which formed, by its graceful projections, a cornish or a capital of more than Corinthian richness, and imparted the most consummate beauty to the blooming colonnade.

The whole, viewed from the arbour, looked like a rainbow painted upon the ground, and wanted nothing to rival that resplendent arch, only the boldness of its sweep, and the advantage of its ornamental curve.

To this agreeable recess Theron had withdrawn himself. Here he sat musing and thoughtful, with his eye fixed upon a picture representing some magnificent ruins. Wholly intent upon his speculation, he never perceived the approach of Aspasio, till he had reached the summit of the mount, and was ready to take a seat by his side.

Asp. Lost, Theron! quite lost in thought! and unaffected with all these amiable objects; insensible amidst this profusion of beauties, which, from every quarter, make their court to your senses! Methinks, the snarling cynic in his tub, could hardly put on a greater severity of aspect, than my polite philosopher in his blooming Eden.

Ther. Ah! my dear friend, these flowery toys, which embellish the garden, are familiar to my eye, and therefore cheap in my esteem. I behold them frequently; and, for that reason, feel but little of the pleasing surprise which they may possibly awaken in a stranger. Something like this we all experience

me; and can as easily throw his cascades from a precipice of half a mile high, as from one of twenty yards. He has his choice of the winds, and can turn the course of his rivers in all the variety of manners, that are most delightful to the reader's imagination. In a word, he has the modelling of Nature in his own hands, and may give her what charms he pleases, provided he does not reform her too much, and run into absurdities by endeavouring to excel."—*Spectator*, Vol. VI. No. 418.

with regard to events infinitely more worthy our admiring notice. Else, why are we not struck with a mixture of amazement, veneration, and delight, at the grand machinery and magnificent productions of nature?

That the hand of the Almighty should wheel round the vast terrestrial globe, with such prodigious rapidity and exact punctuality, on purpose to produce the regular vicissitudes of day and night; on purpose to bring on the orderly succession of seed-time and harvest! We wonder when we read of the Israelites sojourning forty years in the desert, marching backward and forward over its burning sands, and find neither their clothes waxing old, Deut. viii. 4. by so long a use, nor their feet swelling with such painful journeys, Neh. ix. 21. - Yet we are neither impressed with wonder, nor affected with gratitude, when we enjoy the benefits of the air, which clothes the earth, as it were, with a garment; which has neither contracted any noxious taint through the extensive revolution of almost six thousand years, nor suffered any diminution of its natural force, though exercised in a series of unremitted activity, ever since the elementary operations began.

This draught in my hand, shews us the instability of the grandest, most laboured monuments of human art. They are soon swept away among the other feeble attempts of mortality; or remain only, as you see here, in shattered ruins, memorials of the vain and powerless ambition of the builders. How strange then, that a structure, incomparably more tender and delicate, should be preserved to old age and hoary hairs! That the bodily machine, which is so exquisite in its frame, so complicated in its parts, and performs so many thousands* of motions every moment, should

* *Thousands.*—Not to mention the spontaneous, if we consider only the mechanical motions which are continually performed in the animal system; the digestive action of the stomach; the vermicular agitation of the bowels; the progress of the chyle through the lacteal vessels; the many, many operations of the secreting glands; the compression of

continue unimpaired, yet act without intermission, so many days and weeks, and months and years! How strange all this; yet, because common, how seldom does it excite our praise, or so much as engage our notice!

Asp. Your remarks are as just, as the neglect of them is customary.—Unaccountable supineness! Though “God doth great things,” worthy of all observation, “yea, and wonders without number;” we are awn with indolence, instead of being animated with devotion, or transported with delight. “Lo! he goeth before us,” in evident manifestations of wisdom and power, “yet we see him not; he passeth on always,” and scatters unnumbered blessings from his providential hand, “but we perceive him not,” Job ix. 11.

This, though greatly culpable, is to be reckoned among the smallest instances of our ungrateful insensibility. Are we not inattentive even to the work of redemption? That work, which, according to the emphatical declaration of Scripture, “exceeds in glory,” Cor. iii. 9, is by far the greatest, the most marvelous of all sublunary, perhaps of all divine transactions. Are we not shamefully unaffected, even with the appearance of God in human flesh? Though the King of kings vouchsafes to exchange his throne for the humiliation of a servant, and the death of a malefactor; though he is pleased, by the imputation of sins active, as well as passive obedience, to become “the Lord our righteousness;” yet——

Ther. You are taking an effectual way, Aspasio, to rouse me from my reverie, and make me indeed cease the snarling philosopher. “Imputed righteous-

ness, and all their little cellular lodgments, by every act of respiration; above all, that grand impetus, the systole of the heart, which, every constriction, darts the crimson current through an innumerable multitude of arteries; and drives, at the same instant of time, the recent blood through an innumerable multitude of corresponding veins. Such a view will oblige us to acknowledge, that Theron's account is far from being extravagant; that it rather diminishes than exaggerates the real fact.

ness is a scheme grossly frivolous and absurd, utterly insufficient to answer the end proposed; and, one would think, could never be depended on, where there is the least degree of understanding, and capacity for reasoning."*

Asp. Who is warm now, Theron? May I not remind my friend, that the resentful is no more fitted for work conviction than the rapturous? Perhaps you have not duly considered this subject, nor seen it in the proper point of view. I have sometimes beheld a ship of war several leagues off at sea. It seemed to be a dim, cloudy something, hovering on the skirts of the horizon, contemptibly mean, and not worthy of a moment's regard. But, as the floating citadel approached, the masts arose; the sails swelled out; its stately form and curious proportions struck the sight. It was no longer a shapeless mass, or a blot in the prospect, but the master-piece of human contrivance, and the noblest spectacle in the world of art. The eye is never wearied

* The reader will probably be disgusted at this heat of temper, asperity of diction, and both so abruptly introduced. I have no apology to make for my Theron. The reader has reason to be disgusted, has reason to be chagrined. Only let me desire him to remember, that this is the very spirit, nay, these are the very words, of a celebrated opposer of our doctrine; not added when he has fully approved the absurdity of the scheme, but assumed even upon the entrance to his discourse.

I have often wondered, that disputants, especially on religious subjects, should choose to deal in such acrimonious and reproachful language. "Does the wrath of man work the righteousness of God? Or is a passionate invective the proper means either to conciliate affections, or convince our judgment? Why should we not write in the same genteel and obliging strain in which we converse? Were we to meet our antagonist in a friend's parlour, and have a personal conference on the subject, our speech would be kind, and our remonstrances calm. "I am sorry, Sir, that you have espoused such notions. They seem to me extremely wrong, and equally dangerous. I am apt to think you have not duly considered either the little ground they have to support them, or the pernicious consequences that may attend them."

Why should not our controversies from the press be carried on in such a candid and amicable strife? This would certainly render the more pleasing to the reader, more profitable to the public, and more likely to have their desired effect upon our opponent. For my part, I admire the humanity and tenderness of the poet's resolution, more than the boldness of his figures, or the beauty of his expressions.

"Tu lapides loqueris, ego byssina verba reponam."

of viewing its structure, nor the mind in contemplating its uses.

Who knows, Theron, but this sacred scheme likewise, which you now look upon as a confused heap of errors, may very much improve, when more closely examined; may at length appear a wise and benign plan, admirably fitted to the condition of our fallen nature, and perfectly worthy of all acceptance?

Ther. I know not what may happen, Aspasio; but there seems to be very little probability of such a change. For, though my last opposition was a mock-fight, in my present objections I am very sincere, and to this doctrine I am a determined enemy. The notion of a substituted and vicarious righteousness, is absurd even to common sense, and to the most natural and easy reflections of men.

Asp. It may not, my dear friend, agree with our natural apprehensions, nor fall in with the method which we might have devised for the salvation of mankind. But this is the voice of Scripture, and a maxim never to be forgotten; "God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways," Isa. lv. 8. "His righteousness is like the strong mountains, and his judgments are like the great deep," Psal. xxxvi. 6; the former immoveable, the latter unsearchable.

Ther. The mention of mountains puts me in mind of what I was reading yesterday; the keen irony with which Abimelech's principal officer chastised the blustering Gaal; "thou seest the shadow of the mountains, as if they were men," Judg. ix. 36. He, it is sarcastically intimated, was afraid, and my Aspasio seems to be fond, of shadows.

Asp. Happy for your Aspasio, that irony is no argument. If a jury was impannelled to try me and my doctrine, I should certainly except against irony. Generally speaking, he is neither a good man, nor a true. And, if I remember right, you yourself consented to set him aside in this debate. I shall therefore adapt my reply rather to what is solid, than what is smart. "This notion," you say, "is absurd even to common

sense." A saying, on which I must beg leave to put a query. It was, I own, absolutely beyond the power of common sense, unassisted by divine revelation, to discover this truth. I will grant farther, that this blessing infinitely transcends whatever common sense has observed in all her converse with finite things. But, if I have any, the least, acquaintance with common sense, I am very sure she will not, she cannot pronounce it an absurdity. To this judge I refer the cause.

And, to open the cause a little, let me just observe, that God imputed our sins to his Son. How else could the immaculate Jesus be punished, as the most inexcusable transgressor? "Awake, O sword, against the Man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts," Zech. xiii. 7. Is not this the voice of a judge, pronouncing the sentence, and authorising the execution? Or rather, does it not describe the action of justice, turning the sword from us, and sheathing it in Christ? who, if he was our substitute with regard to penal suffering, why may he not stand in the same relation with regard to justifying obedience? There is the same reason for the one, as for the other; every argument, in favour of the former, is equally conclusive in behalf of the latter.

Ther. I very freely grant, that Christ Jesus was punished in our stead; that his death is the expiation of our sin, and the cause of our security from penal suffering. But this——

Asp. Will undeniably prove, that sin was imputed to him; otherwise He could not truly suffer in our stead, nor be justly punished at all. "And imputation is as reasonable and justifiable in one case as in the other; for they both stand upon one and the same foot; and, for that reason, he who throws down one, throws down both." I should not have interrupted my Theron, only to introduce this answer from an eminent divine, who adds what should be very seriously considered: "And therefore, whoever rejects the doctrine of the imputation of our Saviour's righteous-

ness to man, does, by so doing, reject the imputation of man's sin to our Saviour, and all the consequences of it. Or, in other words, he who rejects the doctrine of the imputation, does, by so doing, reject the doctrine of the expiation likewise.*

Ther. I know nothing of this divine; and, eminent as he is, can hardly take his *ipse dixit* for a decision.

Asp. I was in hopes you would pay the greater regard to his opinion, because he is not in the number of the whimsical fanatics.

Give me leave to observe farther, that the imputation of Christ's righteousness bears an evident analogy to another great truth of Christianity. We did not personally commit Adam's sin, yet are we chargeable with guilt, and liable to condemnation, on that——

Ther. How! we chargeable with guilt, and liable to condemnation, on account of Adam's transgression! This position I must deny; I had almost said, I must abhor. None other could, in the eye of justice and equity, be blameable for any offence of our first parents, but they only.

Asp. So says Theron; but what says St Paul? This may be the voice of natural reason; but what is the language of divine revelation? "In whom," that is in Adam, "all have sinned."

Ther. The words, if I remember right, are—"For that all have sinned."

Asp. In the margin, they are translated as I have repeated them. For this interpretation I might contend, as not in the least incompatible with the original phrase, † and as the most precisely suitable to the sacred argument. But I wave this advantage. Let

* Staynoe upon "Salvation by Jesus Christ alone," vol. i. p. 334; where the reader may find several weighty considerations, clearly proposed, and strongly urged, for the explanation and establishment of this capital doctrine.

† Εφ' ὃ πάντες ἡμαρτον, Rom. v. 12. Not to mention the famous distinction of Epictetus, τα εφ' ἡμῶν, nor the well-known adage of Hesiod, μίτρον δ' ἐστὶ πᾶσιν ἀρίστον. See chap. iv. 18, v. 2. of this very epistle, where the preposition ἐστὶ is used in Aspasio's sense.

the words run into your mould, and the translation take your form. They are equally decisive of the point in debate. They assign the reason why death came upon all men, infants themselves not excepted: "For that," or inasmuch as, "all have sinned." How? Not in their own person; this was utterly impossible. But in that first grand transgression of their federal head; which, as it could not be actually committed by them, must, according to the tenor of the apostle's arguing, be imputed to them.

Ther. Pray, what do you mean by that stiff, and to me unintelligible phrase, *federal head*?

Asp. I mean what Milton celebrates, when he represents the Almighty Father thus addressing his eternal Son:

—————"Be Thou in Adam's room
The Head of all mankind, though Adam's son.
As in him perish all men, so in Thee,
As from a second root, shall be restor'd
As many as are restor'd; without Thee, none." B. iii. l. 235.

I mean what the apostle teaches, when he calls Christ "the second man," 1 Cor. xv. 47, and "the last Adam," 1 Cor. xv. 45. The second! the last! How? Not in a numerical sense; not in order of time; but in this respect: That as Adam was a public person, and acted in the stead of all mankind; so Christ was a public person, and acted in behalf of all his people: That, as Adam was the first general representative of this kind, Christ was the second and the last; there never was, and there never will be, any other: That what they severally did, in this capacity, was not intended to terminate in themselves, but to affect as many as they respectively represented. This is St Paul's meaning, and this is the foundation of the doctrine of imputation.

Ther. If you build it on no other foundation than your own particular sense of the apostle's words, perhaps your ground may prove sandy, and treacherous to its trust.

Asp. I build it upon mine, and I deduce it from

ours, Theron. But I am far from resting the whole weight of the cause upon a single text. It is established, again and again, in this same chapter. Neither do I wonder at the prejudices which you and others may entertain against the doctrine. It lies quite out of the road of reason's researches; it is among the wonderful things of God's law. This the inspired penman foresaw, and modelled his discourse accordingly. Like some skilful engineer, who, though he makes the whole compass of his fortification strong, yet bestows peculiar and additional strength on those parts which he apprehends will be exposed to the fiercest attack; so the wise, the divinely wise apostle, was inculcated, and re-inculcated, this momentous point; has enforced it with all the assiduity of zeal, and confirmed it by all the energy of expression. "If, through the offence of one, many be dead—The judgment was by one to condemnation—By one man's offence, death reigned by one—By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation," Rom. v. 15, 16, 17, 18. That there may remain no possibility of mistaking his meaning, or of eluding his argument, he adds, "By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners," Rom. v. 19.

Ther. Sin, I am told by a celebrated expositor, sometimes signifies punishment. He farther informs me, that we may be said to sin in Adam, not by the imputation of his disobedience to us, but by becoming obnoxious to those sufferings which were due to his sin.

Asp. Then the apostle's reasoning will stand in this form: "Death came upon all men, for that all have sinned;" that is, "Death came upon all men, because all have been punished, or an obnoxiousness to punishment came upon men, because all are become obnoxious to punishment." A goodly strain of argumentation for an unerring writer to use! But surely Gamaliel's pupil would disclaim, much more would Christ's ambassador scorn, such weak and unmeaning chicanery. He mentions sin and its punishment; but

never hints, that they are intended to signify one and the same thing. He all along maintains a distinction between them; represents the former as the cause of the latter. Judgment, condemnation, death, are owing to sin, offence, and disobedience. It is by the imputation of these, that we become obnoxious to those.

This account is clear, is natural, and wants no strained criticisms to support it. This account demonstrates the equity of that providential government, which executes the sentence of death even on those descendants of Adam who have not sinned in their own persons. It also illustrates the procedure of that sovereign grace, which treats as righteous, and entitles to life, even those believers in Jesus, who have not obeyed in their own persons.—What says our church? You have a great veneration for the church of England, Theron.

Ther. I have. But, I fear, my Aspasio has neither so honourable an opinion of her worship, nor so steady an adherence to her constitution; otherwise he would not so highly extol those ambitious and canting hypocrites, the Puritans; who were the most inveterate enemies of our excellent establishment, and would have rejoiced in its utter subversion.

Asp. As to the Puritans, you will do me the justice to acknowledge, that I speak only of their evangelical tenets, abstracted from all political principles. As to myself, your fears are friendly, but I trust they are groundless. I would only ask, Who are to be deemed the most affectionate and faithful sons of their sacred mother? Those, I presume, who most cordially embrace her doctrines, and most dutifully submit to her precepts. By this touchstone let my fidelity be tried; and, for an immediate trial, be pleased to repeat her ninth article.

Ther. I cannot say that I remember the particular words of any, though I have often read, and very much approve them all.

Asp. I wish you would commit to your memory

four or five of the most distinguished. * They are a valuable treasure, and contain the quintessence of the gospel.

These are the words of the ninth article: "Original sin is the fault and corruption of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam." It is the fault, says the pious Bishop Beveridge, and therefore we are guilty of it; it is the corruption also, and therefore we are defiled with it. Our homilies have recourse to no such palliatives, and qualifying interpretations, as my Theron's expositor uses. One of them affirms point blank, that "in Adam all men sinned universally." This seems to be a paraphrase on the text, whose translation you lately controverted. In what sense our great poetical divine understood the sacred writer, is apparent from the following words, which are supposed to have been spoken by Jehovah himself;

—————"Adam's crime
Makes guilty all his sons." MILTON, B. iii. l. 290.

And from another passage, where our rebellious progenitor, bewailing his aggravated misery, and the extensive malignity of his sin, declares,

—————"In me all
Posterity stands curs'd." B. x. l. 817.

For my own part, I must confess, that, if the transmission of original depravity be granted, I know not how the imputation of Adam's destructive apostacy can be denied. If we had no concern in the one, how could we be justly punished with the other? I say punished; for to lose the primitive integrity of our nature, and inherit a depraved disposition, is at once a most deplorable calamity, and a most terrible punishment. Corruption transmitted, and guilt imputed, seem to be doctrines indissolubly connected. To allow the former, and reject the latter, is, in my apprehension, to acknowledge the effect without admitting the cause.

* Especially Articles IX. X. XI. XII. XIII.

Ther. To make us parties in a covenant, which we did not agree to, can this be equitable? To ruin us for a crime, which we never committed, can this be merciful? Surely this is a flagrant injustice, never to be ascribed to the all-gracious God; a diabolical barbarity, add some, never to be mentioned without the utmost detestation.

Asp. I see no cause for such a tragical outcry of barbarity, nor indeed for any complaint of injustice. Not to insist upon the sovereignty of an all-creating God, and his unquestionable right to "do what he will with his own," Matth. xx. 15, I would only ask, Did he not condescend to transact with man, not on the foot of absolute uncontrollable authority, but in the honourable and delightful way of a covenant? Were not the terms of this covenant perfectly easy, and wonderfully gracious? Wonderfully gracious; for they proposed a state of inconceivable and everlasting felicity to creatures who were entitled to no happiness, Luke x. 28; had not the least claim to any good; no, not so much as to the privilege of existence. Perfectly easy; for what was the condition on man's part? Not any rigorous act of duty, nor severe course of self-denial; but the free enjoyment of millions of blessings and pleasures, with only the prohibition of one pernicious indulgence. Here, then, is made on one hand, a promise of the most glorious reward that God himself could give; and nothing required on the other, but the smallest expression of allegiance that man himself could wish. And is this injustice? is this barbarity?

Ther. All this was equitable enough with regard to Adam; but why should we be condemned for his violation of the covenant? Or how was such a constitution of things gracious with respect to us?

Asp. "Why condemned?" Because we should have been partakers of the benefit and the glory, if he had persevered in his duty. To this, I presume, none would object. And if they would not to the one, they ought not to the other.

You ask farther, "How was such a constitution of things gracious with respect to us?" I answer, Because it was the most likely means to secure the happiness of us and all mankind. Was not Adam, of all persons, by far the best qualified to act as a general head? He had a perfection of knowledge, to discern his true interest; a perfection of holiness, to capacitate him for obedience; and a perfection of happiness, disposing him to perseverance. As none could have more eminent qualifications, none could have so many obligations. His own welfare, both bodily and spiritual, was at stake; the eternal interests of his rising family, and of his remotest posterity, were depending; the lives, the souls, the everlasting all of the whole human race, were embarked on the single bottom of his fidelity. Therefore the felicity of every individual that should spring from his loins, was a fresh motive to vigilance, an additional engagement to duty.* As his love to his offspring was more refined, more exalted, more godlike than ours, all these considerations and inducements must operate upon him in their fullest scope, and with the strongest energy. What an entrenchment was here to keep out disobedience, and ward off ruin! An entrenchment deep as hell, high as heaven, wide as the whole extent of the human species.

Here, then, I may venture to throw the gauntlet, and challenge the whole world. Let the most penetrating mind devise a scheme, so wisely and graciously calculated to ascertain the success of a probationary state. If this be impracticable, then must every mouth be stopped; no tongue can have the least reason to

* Should any person imagine himself more capable of standing than Adam, who was endowed with all the perfections of an innocent, holy, god-like nature, I think, by this very imagination, he begins to fall, fall into pride. Should any person suppose, that, from a view to his own particular salvation, he would continue faithful, when Adam was not engaged to fidelity, from a regard to his own, and the final happiness of all his posterity—he seems to be just as wise as the mariner, who persuades himself, that though a thousand anchors could not secure the ship in a storm, yet one might have done it effectually.

complain : I, for my part, shall think myself obliged to admire the benignity of my Creator's conduct ; and God may justly demand of all intelligent creatures, " What could have been done more " for the preservation and felicity of mankind, " that I have not done ? " Isa. v. 4.

Especially, when to all this we add, that the same Almighty Being, who appointed Adam to be our representative in the first covenant, without asking our actual consent, appointed also Christ to be our representative in the second covenant, without staying for our actual solicitation. When we take this into the account, there remains not the least shadow of injustice ; but goodness, transcendent goodness, shines forth with the brightest lustre.

Ther. Goodness, Aspasio ! This is surprising indeed ! Why, if Adam's transgression be laid to our charge, we are damnable creatures the very moment we exist ; and are liable to the torments of hell, even on account of his disobedience. To term this goodness, is the greatest of paradoxes ! to affirm it of the Deity, is little less than blasphemy !

Asp. Let us be calm, my dear friend, and consider the case impartially. If it is not a real truth, I shall be as willing to relinquish it as yourself.

Is not death, eternal death, the wages of every sin ? And if of every sin, then doubtless of original, which is the fountain from whence all the streams of actual iniquity flow, or rather the abyss from whence all the torrents pour. That which could not be pardoned but by the humiliation and agonies of God's adorable Son, may reasonably be supposed to deserve the most dreadful vengeance. And it is affirmed, by an authority which you will not dispute, that, " for original as well as actual sin, the offering of Christ is a propitiation and satisfaction. " *

Does not St Paul deliver it as a maxim in divinity, That, " by the offence of one," Adam he undoubtedly means, " judgment came upon all men to condem-

* Article XXXI.

nation?" Rom. v. 18. The import of the words, together with the connection of the passage, leads us to understand this of a condemnation to eternal misery. The import of the words; for they are doubled,* to make them peculiarly strong in their signification; and each word, within the compass of this very epistle, is used in that awful latitude of meaning, Rom. ii. 3. iii. 8. viii. 1. The connection of the passage; because it stands opposed to that justification which is unto life. This, we are sure, includes the idea of an everlasting duration. And why should its tremendous counterpart be less extensive?

This sense is evidently patronized, and this doctrine most peremptorily asserted, by our established church. What says the book of Homilies, when treating of the miseries consequent upon the fall? "This so great and miserable a plague, if it had only rested on Adam, who first offended, it had been much easier, and might the better have been borne. But it fell not only on him, but also on his posterity and children for ever; so that the whole brood of Adam's race should sustain the self-same fall and punishment, which their forefather by his offence most justly had deserved."† Lest any should misapprehend the design of our reformers, and suppose the punishment to consist only of some bodily suffering, or the loss of immortality, it is added in the same alarming discourse, "Neither Adam, nor any of his, had any right or interest at all in the kingdom of heaven; but were become plain reprobates and cast-aways, being perpetually damned to the everlasting pains of hell."

Lest you should imagine this might be written under a sally of hasty zeal, or that it is to be reckoned among the doting opinions of a credulous antiquity, let me remind my friend, that it is ingrafted into the articles; those articles, which were approved by the archbishops and bishops of both provinces; were ratified by the general consent of the clergy; and are, to this day, the national standard of our belief. The

* *Κριμα εις το πατακριμ.* † Homily on the nativity of Christ.

ninth article, beginning with a description of our depraved nature, subjoins an account of its proper desert: "In every person born into the world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation."*

Ther. How miserable then is man!

Asp. In himself he is miserable beyond expression. But a conviction of this misery is the beginning of all happiness. The valley of Achor is a door of hope.†

Ther. Explain yourself, Aspasio. You seem to deal very much in the incomprehensibles.

Asp. Such a conviction would demonstrate the absolute insufficiency of all human attainments, and all human endeavours, to procure life and salvation. For, in case we could perform every jot and tittle of the divine law, offend in no instance, fall short in no degree, persevere to the very end; yet this would be no more than our present bounden duty. Not the least pittance of merit could arise from all this. Much less could this be sufficient to expiate original guilt, or remove the dreadful entail of the primitive all-destroying sin.

This, therefore, would most effectually preclude every false confidence, and sweep away, at one stroke, every "refuge of lies," Isa. xxviii. 17. It would lay us under an immediate, indispensable, and happy necessity, of betaking ourselves to Christ. I say happy necessity; because then we should know, by experience, what each part of our Lord's awful yet tender declaration meaneth: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed

* I am surprised to see a learned author attempting to sheath the sting of this awful denunciation; attempting to prove that the words "do not signify God's eternal wrath, and the damnation of hell." I shall take no pains to confute what he is pleased to advance. I leave the question in the reader's own breast. Let him discover, if he can, a different meaning in the sentence. Unless he has a pretty shrewd knack at sophistry, I am persuaded he will find it a difficult matter to give any other tolerable turn to the passage. Surely it must be a reproach to our venerable mother, if she delivers her doctrine in language so fallacious, as must necessarily mislead the generality of her sons; or in terms so abstruse, as even a good understanding cannot develop, without some proficiency in critical legerdemain.

† Hos. ii. 15. Achor signifies trouble.

myself, but in me is thy help," Hos. xiii. 9. We should then find, that as sin and misery have abounded through the first Adam, mercy and grace have much more abounded through the second. For, if we were ruined by a crime which we committed not, we are recovered by a righteousness which we performed not; a righteousness infinitely surpassing whatever we could have acquired, even though our nature had been transmitted to us free from any depravity, and exempt from all guilt.

Ther. In your opinion, then, and according to your scheme, *salve* and a *regimen* are better than a sound constitution.

Asp. No, Theron. My opinion is, that none can think himself aggrieved, or have any reason to complain, at that grand and beneficent regulation, which suffers the glimmering taper to be obscured or extinguished, but sheds abroad the boundless and majestic beams of day. And if any comparison be made between the most perfect human obedience, and the everlasting divine righteousness of Christ, it should be taken from the glimmering taper and the meridian sun.

Ther. I cannot persuade myself to admire such mysterious and unaccountable notions. They must puzzle some, will offend others; but cannot edify any.

Asp. This point, That "we all died in Adam," were undone by his apostacy, cannot puzzle the simplest, if unprejudiced, mind. Nor will it offend any but the proud philosopher, or the self-righteous moralist. And I assure you, I should not mention it, much less insist upon it, did it not subserve, and in a very singular manner, the purposes of edification. The doctrine of a Redeemer obeying and dying in our stead, is the very hinge and centre of all evangelical revelations—is the very life and soul of all evangelical blessings. This doctrine is not a little illustrated, and comes greatly recommended, by the imputation of Adam's sin.

Contraries, you know, cast light upon, and set off each other. Winter and its severe cold, make spring and its cheering warmth more sensibly perceived, and more highly pleasing. Such an influence has the present subject, with respect to the vicarious obedience of our Mediator. The more clearly we see the reality of the first, the more thoroughly we shall discern the expediency, the excellency, the glory of the last. The more we are humbled under a conviction of the former, the more we shall covet, or the more we shall triumph in, the enjoyment of the latter. The apostle draws a long parallel, or rather forms a strong contrast between them, in the fifth chapter to the Romans. He speaks copiously of Adam's guilt, imputed to all mankind for condemnation and death; that he may speak the more acceptably, the more charmingly of Christ's righteousness, imputed to all believers for justification and life. In that dark ground, he well knew, this fairest, loveliest flower of Christianity appears with peculiar beauty; indeed with all the beauty of consummate wisdom and adorable benignity.

Ther. It really seems to me a thing impossible, that one man's righteousness should be made another's. Can one man live by the soul of another? or be learned by the learning of another?—Good Aspasio, never attempt to maintain such palpable absurdities. They will expose Christianity to the scorn of infidels.

Asp. If infidels scoff at this comfortable truth, their scoffing will be, like all their other cavils, not the voice of reason, but the clamour of prejudice.

My friend's objection insinuates, that we never assert, that the essence of this righteousness is transfused into believers; which would doubtless be in fact impossible, as it is in theory absurd. But this we disavow as strenuously as you can oppose. The Redeemer's righteousness is made ours, not by infusion, but by imputation. The very terms we use may acquit us from such a ridiculous charge; as imputation signifies a placing to the account of one what is done by another. Accordingly we believe, that the essence

of this righteousness abides in Christ, but is placed to our account; that Christ, and Christ alone, actually performed it; that Christ, and Christ alone, personally possesses it; but that performing it in our stead, and possessing it as our covenant-head, God imputes it to us, God accepts us for it, accepts us as much as if we had, on our own behalf and in our own persons, severally fulfilled it.

Though one man cannot live, be actuated with a principle of life, by the soul of another; yet you must allow, that one man, nay, that many men may live, be continued in the possession of life, for the righteousness of another. Or else you must do, what I am sure you abhor; you must charge with absurdity and impossibility, even the declaration of the Deity: "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then will I spare all the place for their sakes," Gen. xviii. 26.

Ther. Not all your refinements can reconcile me to this uncouth notion. The practice is unexampled, and absolutely inconsistent with the rules of distributive justice.

Asp. Ah! my Theron, if we seek an example of God's unbounded goodness amongst the puny proceedings of men, we shall be led into the most egregious misapprehensions. To measure one of the sparks on your ring, and fancy we have taken the dimensions of the Alps or the Andes, would be, in comparison of this error, a small mistake. Since between a brilliant speck, and a range of mountains, there is some proportion; but between human beneficence, and this heavenly bounty, there cannot possibly be any. However, the all-condescending Creator has been pleased so to dispense his infinitely rich grace, that we may find, though nothing parallel, nothing correspondent, yet some faint shadow of its manner among the affairs of mankind; something that may perhaps give us such an idea of the stupendous subject, as a glow-worm would give of the sun's splendour, in case a person had never beheld that magnificent luminary. This remark I must intreat you to recollect, whenever I at-

tempt to elucidate the mysteries of the gospel by the occurrences of common life.

When your worthy minister was disabled, by a rheumatic disorder, from attending on the business of his function, several of the neighbouring clergy gave him their assistance. Was he not, by this vicarious performance of his office, entitled to all the profits of his living? It seems, therefore, not so unexampled a thing, for one person to act in another's stead. And when a service is thus discharged by the proxy, the benefit may, according to the received maxims of mankind, accrue to the principal. Did not Jehu's descendants, even to the fourth generation, reap the advantage of their great grandfather's zeal? 2 Kings x. 30. Does not the Duke of **** enjoy the honours and rewards won by the sword of a victorious ancestor? And may not the whole world of believers, with equal, with far greater justice, receive life and salvation, on account of their all-deserving Saviour; especially since he and they are one mystical body, represented as such in Scripture, and considered as such by God.

No, say you; this is contrary to the rules of distributive justice. What is your idea of a Surety? How was the affair stated, and how were matters negotiated, with relation to your generous acquaintance Philander? He, you know, was bound for an unfortunate brother, who lately stepped aside.

Ther. The debt, by his brother's absconding, devolved upon Philander. He was responsible for all, and obliged to pay the whole sum.

Asp. Was not his payment as satisfactory to the creditor, as if it had been paid in the debtor's own person, by the debtor's own hand?

Ther. Certainly.

Asp. Was not the debtor, by this vicarious payment, released from all fear of prosecution, and acquitted from any future demand on this score?

Ther. He was.

Asp. Apply this instance to the redemption of sin-

ers by Jesus Christ, who is in the sacred writings expressly styled a Surety, Heb. vi. 22. If Philan-
 r's act was deemed, in the estimation of law, the act
 his brother; if the deed of the former was imputed,
 point of advantage, entirely to the latter; why
 ould not the same effects take place, with regard to
 e divine Bondsman, and poor insolvent sinners?
 Why should that be exploded in our systems of divi-
 ty, which is universally admitted in our courts of
 stice?

Ther. Obedience and righteousness are, in the na-
 re of the things themselves, personal qualities, and
 ily so. Every man is that only (and can be nothing
 se) which he is in himself.

Asp. Righteousness, as dwelling in us, is undoubt-
 lly a personal quality; and obedience, as performed
 y us, comes under the same denomination. But
 oes this supersede the necessity, or destroy the ex-
 tence of imputed righteousness? Your first proposi-
 on is ambiguous. Let it speak distinctly; add in-
 erent to your righteousness, and the sense becomes
 eterminate, but the argument falls to the ground.

“Every man is that only (and can be nothing else)
 which he is in himself.” If I had never seen the
 Bible, I should have yielded my ready assent to this
 proposition. But, when I open the Old Testament,
 and find it written by the prophet, “In the Lord
 shall all the house of Israel be justified,” Isa. xlv. 25;
 when I turn to the New Testament, and hear the
 apostle saying, “Ye are complete in him, who is the
 head of all principalities and powers,” Col. ii. 10; I
 cannot concur with Theron, without contradicting re-
 velation. Israel, or the true believer, is said to be
 justified; and the foundation of this blessing is decla-
 red to be, not in himself, but in the Lord. The Co-
 lossians are said to be complete; which, we are very
 certain, they were not in themselves; and are express-
 ly assured, they were so in Christ. Hence it appears
 quite contrary to my friend's assertion, that sinners
 both have and are that in Christ, which they neither

have nor are in themselves. They have, by imputation, a righteousness in Christ; they are, by this imputed righteousness, complete before God.

I believe, your mistake proceeds from neglecting to distinguish between inherent and imputed. We never suppose, that a profane person is devout, or an intemperate person sober. This is inherent righteousness. But we maintain, that the profane and intemperate, being convinced of their iniquity, and betaking themselves to the all-sufficient Saviour, for redemption, are interested in the merit, both of his life and of his death. This is imputed righteousness. We farther affirm, that though really abominable in themselves, they are fully accepted by God, for his beloved Son's sake. This is justification through imputed righteousness.

However strange this may seem, it is no precarious or unwarrantable opinion, but the clear and positive declaration of Scripture. He justifieth, he absolves from guilt, he treats as righteous—Whom? Upright, obedient, sinless creatures? This were nothing extraordinary.—No; but “he justifieth the ungodly, that believe in the Lord Jesus,” Rom. iv. 5; imputing, as the ground of this justification, their trespasses to him, and his righteousness to them.

Ther. I see no occasion for such nice distinctions and metaphysical subtilties, in plain popular divinity. Hard terms and abstruse notions may perplex the head, but seldom improve the heart.

Asp. Why then do you oblige us to make use of them? If some people twist and entangle the reins, it behoves others to clear them of the embarrassment, and replace them in their due order. Many writers, either from an artful design, or through a strange inadvertence, have jumbled and confounded these two very different ideas. Hence they have started objections to our doctrine, which, the moment you introduce this obvious distinction, vanish into air. They fall into a mistake of their own, and then charge the absurdity upon others.

I am no more fond of hard terms, and abstruse notions, than my Theron. Neither can I think the innocence before us so abstruse a notion. I am very certain, you are capable of comprehending much higher and nicer refinements. Therefore, I must once again treat you to remember the very material difference between inherent and imputed righteousness. The former is the essence of sanctification; the latter is the ground of justification. By this, we are restored to the favour of God; by that, we are made meet for his heavenly kingdom. Let this distinction, which is easy, which is scriptural, which is important, take place; and we may for the future dismiss what you call the metaphysical subtleties; our disagreement will cease, and our opinions tally.

Ther. I question that, *Aspasio*. There are other difficulties to be got over, before I can digest so crude an opinion. If we are justified by the righteousness of Christ, then the righteousness which justifies mankind is already wrought out.

Asp. And this you take to be a most enormous falsehood; whereas I look upon it as a most delightful truth. The righteousness which justifies sinful man was set on foot, when God sent forth his Son from the habitation of his holiness and glory, to be born of a woman, and made subject to the law. It was carried on through the whole course of our Saviour's life, in which he always did such things as were pleasing to his heavenly Father. It was completed at that ever memorable, that grand period of time, when the blessed Emanuel bowed his dying head, and cried, with a strong triumphant voice, "It is finished!"

If the justifying righteousness was to be wrought by ourselves, we could never be truly and fully justified till death; till our warfare is accomplished, and our last act of obedience exerted. But how uncomfortable is such a notion! How miserable would it render our lives! And how directly does it run coun-

ter to the determination of the apostle, "Ye are justified," 1 Cor. vi. 11.

Ther. Soothed, then, with this pleasing surmise, may not the libertine say to his soul, "Soul, take thine ease in the most indolent security. All my carnal appetites, indulge yourselves without restraint. Conscience, be under no solicitude to live soberly, righteously, and godly. For the work is done, all done to my hands. I am like some fortunate heir, whose parents have been successfully industrious, and have left nothing to exercise the diligence of their surviving son, but only to possess the inheritance, and live on labours not his own."

Asp. The libertine, who only speculates or disputes, may indeed abuse the doctrine of grace. But the believer, who feels the power of grace, will improve it to better purposes. Where the former only fluctuates in the understanding, such detestable consequences may ensue. Where the latter operates on the heart, it will always produce very different effects. Such a person, from such a faith, will be no more inclined to inactivity or licentiousness, than our busy humming companions are inclined, by this bright sunshine, and all those expanded blossoms, to sleep away their hours in the hive. And you may as soon expect to see these colonies of the spring swarming in December, clinging to an icicle, or dispersing themselves to gather honey on the snow, as to see a truly gracious man, "who is dead to sin, living any longer therein," Rom. vi. 2. Whoever, therefore, so shamefully perverts so sweet and glorious a doctrine, is a witness against himself, that he has neither lot nor portion in the inestimable privilege. If an animal suck poison from the most wholesome herbs, we are sure, from that infallible indication, it is the vile spider, or some envenomed insect, not the valuable and industrious bee.

Ther. Truly, Aspasio, I know not how to call that doctrine sweet, much less can I recommend it as wholesome, which renders repentance, personal reformation, and inherent rectitude, needless. And if your tenet

is once received, all these duties may fairly be dismissed. So that if the thing was possible, yet it would be pernicious.

Asp. The prophet was of another mind: "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn," Zech. xi. 10. Sinners shall look, by faith, to their crucified Lord; shall see him fastened with nails to the cursed tree; see him stabbed to the heart by the bloody spear. And remembering, that this was the punishment due to their provocations; believing, that by this punishment they are freed from all penal sufferings, and entitled to all spiritual blessings;—they shall not be tempted to transgress, but incited to mourn; not play the profligate, but act the penitent. The apostle exactly agrees with the prophet; and both are diametrically opposite to my friend: "The goodness," the transcendent and amazing goodness of God our Saviour, instead of diverting from, "leadeth to repentance," Rom. ii. 4.

Far from obstructing, it powerfully promotes, personal reformation. For thus saith that all-wise Being, who intimately knows our frame, and discerns what is most effectual to work upon our minds: "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared; teaching us, that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world," Tit. ii. 11, 12. Grace, you observe, even that gloriously free grace, which bringeth salvation to unworthy creatures, is a dissuasive of all vice, and an encouragement to every virtue.

As to inherent rectitude, how can that be rendered needless by imputed righteousness? Is health rendered insignificant, by the abundance of our riches? Does ease become superfluous, through the beauty of our apparel? Holiness is the health of our souls, and the ease of our minds; whereas, ungovernable passions create keener anguish, than a brood of vipers gnawing our bosoms. Inordinate desires are a more intolerable nuisance, than swarms of locusts infesting our

abodes. To regulate those, and to restrain these, can never be needless, till comfort and sorrow change their properties; till the diabolical nature becomes equally desirable with the divine.

Ther. The believer, indeed, out of mere generosity, may, if he please, add works of righteousness of his own. But his main interest is secure without them.

Asp. Rather, Theron, he must out of duty, he will out of gratitude; and, from the new disposition of his nature, he cannot but add to his faith works of righteousness.

How runs the heavenly edict, in this case made and provided? "I will, that they who have believed in God, be careful to maintain good works." *—How beats the pulse of a believing soul? You may feel it in that truly generous demand made by the Psalmist: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits that he hath done unto me?" Psalm cxvi. 12. A grateful heart wants not the goad, but is a spur to itself. How leans the bias of his nature? He is new born; "created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph. ii. 10; "his delight is in the law of the Lord," Psalm i. 2. And whatever is our supreme delight, we are sure to prosecute, and prosecute with ardour. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," † was the profession of the apostles; and, if applied to practical godliness, is the experience of the Christian.

Nor can his main interest be secure, without a holy obedience. Because the Judge of the world, at the

* Tit. iii. 8. The original word *κατασκευα* has a beauty and an energy, which, I believe, it is impossible for our language to preserve by any literal translation. It implies, that a believer should not only be exercised in, but eminent for, all good works; should shew others the way, and outstrip them in the honourable race; be both a pattern and a patron of universal godliness.

† *Cannot but.*—This is an expression used by the apostles, Acts iv. 20. It describes the genuine and habitual propensity of their new nature. As the compassionate bowels cannot but yearn at spectacles of misery; as the benevolent heart cannot but dilate with pleasure at the sight of a brother's happiness; so the new creature in Christ cannot but desire to glorify, and delight to obey, the ever blessed God.

day of eternal retribution, will declare to the workers of iniquity, "I never knew you; depart from me," Matth. vii. 23. Because holiness, though not the cause of our admittance to the beatific vision, is so necessary a qualification, that "without it no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. Without it, there is no access to heaven, neither could there be any enjoyment in heaven.

Ther. Pray recollect yourself, Aspasio. According to the tenor of your own illustration, the necessity of personal obedience is evidently vacated. For how can the law demand a debt of the principal, which has been fully discharged by the surety?

Asp. The debt of penal suffering, and the debt of perfect obedience, are fully discharged by our divine Surety; so that we are no longer under a necessity of obeying, in order to obtain an exemption from punishment, or to lay the foundation for our final acceptance. We are nevertheless engaged, by many other obligations, to walk in all dutiful and conscientious regard to the law. Because—this is the most authentic proof of our love to the gracious Redeemer: "If ye love me, keep my commandments," John xiv. 15. This is a comfortable evidence of our union with that exalted head: "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit," John xv. 5. This is also the most effectual method of adorning our profession, of magnifying its Author, and of winning our neighbours to embrace the gospel: "Let your light," the light of your exemplary conversation, not only appear, but "shine before men, that they, seeing your good works," may think honourably of your religion; * "may glorify your Father which is in heaven;" and say, with those proselytes mentioned by the prophet, "We will go with you."

"Do we then make void the law," through the imputed righteousness of our Lord? No, verily; but—

* Matth. v. 16. Therefore, by our Lord in this place, and by St Paul in his Epistle to Titus, good works are called καλὰ ἔργα, graceful, beautiful, beauteous, ornamental.

if gratitude to our dying Saviour have any constraining influence; if a concern for our own comfort have any persuasive energy; if there be any thing inviting, any thing desirable, in the prospect of honouring God, and edifying man—"we establish the law." By all these generous, manly, endearing motives, we enforce its precepts, and provide for its observance.

Ther. Should we admit this doctrine, mankind could no longer be considered as in themselves, and solely in themselves, accountable creatures. Nor would the future judgment be an equitable distribution of rewards and punishments; but only God's awful and uncontrollable execution of his own arbitrary and irreversible decrees.

Asp. I have never been accustomed to consider mankind, under the gospel dispensation, as accountable solely in themselves; because, in this comfortable and benign scheme, a Mediator intervenes; undertakes to answer for his people; and bears the chastisement of their peace. Were we accountable solely in ourselves, Christ, as our great High Priest, would be set aside; and his sacrifice, as a propitiation for sin, be of none effect.

Why may not the future judgment be an equitable distribution of rewards and punishments? If those who reject the atonement of the dying Jesus, and refuse to depend on his consummate righteousness, are left to stand or fall according to the issue of their own obedience; if believers, on the other hand, are accepted through their most meritorious Redeemer, but rewarded with higher or inferior degrees of felicity, in proportion to the sanctity of their nature, and usefulness of their lives—I see nothing arbitrary in this procedure; but an admirable mixture of just severity and free goodness; on those who reject the atonement, just severity; to those who rely on their Saviour, free goodness.

Ther. The obedience of Christ was wholly due for himself; and therefore could not merit for another.

Asp. A bold assertion this! Whoever can make it

good, will infallibly overthrow my opinion; and, at the same time, destroy all my hopes. But surely, Theron, it is not your real sentiment.

Could it then be matter of duty in the eternal Son, to be born of a woman; and in the Lord of lords, to become the servant of all? Could it be matter of duty in the King of glory, to embrace the infamy of the cross; and in the Prince of life, to pour out his soul unto death? If all this was matter of duty, the ever-blessed Jesus (how shall I speak it! who can believe it!) was no better than an unprofitable servant. For such is the acknowledged character of every one who does no more than is his duty to do, Luke xvii. 10.

Ther. Not so fast, not quite so vehement, my friend. Remember what the Scripture affirms. Christ is said to receive a commandment, and be subject to the law, both which expressions evidently imply duty.

Asp. In order to accomplish our redemption, the Son of God submitted himself to the authority of the law, and became obedient to its precepts. But this was his own spontaneous act; the matter of his free choice; to which he lay under no manner of obligation, till he engaged to be our Surety.

“Being in the form of God,” he was Lord of the law; and no more subject to its commands, than obnoxious to its curse. Nevertheless, “he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made under the law.” Wherefore? That he might obtain everlasting life and glory for himself? No; but that he might “redeem those who were under the law,” Gal. iv. 5. From which it appears, that both his engagement and his obedience were, not for himself, but for his people. Therefore the prophet cries out, with holy exultation, “To us a Child is born; to us a Son is given!”* His incarnate state and human nature, together with all that he did and suffered in both, were

* Isa. ix. 6. “Est præterea emphasis singularis in voce nobis. Significat id, quod omnes sentiunt, nostro bonno et commodo natum esse hunc Puerum Imperatorem.”—VITRING. *in loc.*

for us; those assumed on our account, these referred to our advantage.

Let us consider this, and be amazed, and be charmed. The great universal Lord vouchsafes to pay universal obedience! What condescension was here? He vouchsafes to pay it, for us men, and for our redemption! What goodness was this?

Ther. Before we indulge the devotional strain, we should take care that our devotion is founded on rational principles; otherwise it may prove, like the flash of a sky-rocket, transient and momentary.

Asp. For this, I think, there is a solid foundation in reason, as well as Scripture. As soon as the man Christ Jesus was united to the second person of the Trinity, he must have, by virtue of that union, an unquestionable right to everlasting life and glory. Therefore he could be under no necessity of obeying, in order to procure either honour or happiness for himself. But all that he performed in conformity to the preceptive part of the law, he performed under the character of a public person, in the place, and for the benefit of his spiritual seed, that they might be interested in it, and justified by it.

Ther. Be it so: the believer is interested in Christ's righteousness. Pray, is he interested in all, or only in part? If in all, then every believer is equally righteous, and equally to be rewarded; which is contrary to an allowed maxim, that there will be different allotments of happiness in the heavenly world. If in part only, how will you ascertain the degree—what proportion belongs to this person, and what to the other? Either way, your scheme is inextricably embarrassed.

Asp. The reply to my Theron's inquiry is easy; and the embarrassment he mentions is but imaginary. Every true believer is interested in all Christ's righteousness; in the whole merit of his spotless nature, of his perfect obedience, and expiatory death.

Less than the whole would be unavailable. Whereas the whole renders us completely justified.

You are a great admirer of anatomy, Theron, and must undoubtedly remember the very peculiar structure of the ear. Other parts of the body are progressive in their growth. Their bulk is proportioned to the infantile, or manly age. But the organs of hearing, I have been informed, are precisely of the same size in the feeble infant and the confirmed adult. Justification likewise, being absolutely necessary to a state of acceptance with God, is, in every stage of the Christian course, and even in the first dawn of sincere faith, complete. With regard to the existence of the privilege, there is no difference in * the babes, the young men, the fathers in Christ. The perception, the assurance, the comfortable enjoyment of the mercy, may increase; but the mercy itself is incapable of augmentation.

The various advances in sanctification account for the various degrees of future glory; and not account for them only, but render them entirely reasonable, and, according to our apprehension of things, unavoidable. As to the settling the proportion, we may safely leave that to the supreme Arbitrator. He, "who meteth out the heavens with a span, and setteth a compass upon the face of the deep," cannot be at a loss to adjust this particular.

Ther. The organs of hearing, though not precisely, are very nearly, of the same bulk in the babe and the man. They acquire, from advancing years, scarce any thing more than an increase of solidity. So that I make no objection to your illustration, but to your doctrine.

If Christ has done all, and we are entitled to his whole merits only by believing, to be saved must be the easiest thing in the world. Whereas the Bible

* To the same purpose speaks one of our most celebrated divines, as great an adept in sacred literature as ages have produced: "All are justified alike; the truth of faith justifying, not the measure. Justification, therefore, is the same in all that believe; though their belief be in different degrees. So, once in the wilderness, all gathered not manna in the same measure; yet, when all came to measure, they had all alike; none above an omer, none under."—LIGHTFOOT, vol. ii. p. 1052.

represents Christianity as a race and a warfare, a state of conflict and a course of striving. In good truth, Aspasio, you prophecy pleasing things. Divinity is not your profession; or else I should number you among "the smooth, emollient, downy doctors." For, according to the articles of your creed, there is no more difficulty in securing heaven, than in rising from our seat.

Asp. A speculative assent to all the principles of religion, is, I acknowledge, a very easy matter. It may, it must exist, wherever there is a tolerable capacity for reasoning, and a due attention to evidence. This notional faith forced its way into the breast of Simon the sorcerer, Acts viii. 13; and extorted a confession from the dying lips of Julian * the apostate. Irresistible as the stroke of lightning, terrible also as its fiery glare, it flashes conviction into the very devils. Even those execrable spirits "believe and tremble," James ii. 19.

But the faith which, far from resting in speculation, exalts the desires, regulates the passions, and refines the whole conversation; the faith which, according to the expressive language of Scripture, "purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and sets the affections on things above;"—this truly noble and triumphant faith is no such easy acquisition. This is the gift of an infinite Benefactor; the work of a divine Agent; called therefore, by way of supereminent distinction, "faith of the operation of God," Col. ii. 12; because God himself, by the effectual working of his mighty power, produces it in the human soul.

* It is related in ecclesiastical history, that when the Emperor Julian was setting out upon his Parthian expedition, he threatened to persecute the Christians with the utmost severity, as soon as he returned victorious. Upon this occasion, Libanius the rhetorician asked one of them, with an insulting air, "What the carpenter's son was doing, while such a storm hung over his followers?" "The carpenter's son," (replied the Christian,) "is making a coffin for your Emperor." The event proved to be prophetic: for, in an engagement with the enemy, that royal but wretched apostate was mortally wounded; and cried, with his expiring breath, "Vicisti, O Galilæe!—I am vanquished, O Galilean! thy right hand hath the pre-eminence!"

The exercise of this faith, I would not compare to an active gentleman, rising from his seat ; but rather to a shipwrecked mariner, labouring to gain some place of safety. He espies a large rock, which rears its head above the boisterous flood. To this he bears away, and to this he approaches ; but whirling winds, and dashing waves, drive him back to an unhappy distance. Exerting all his strength, he advances nearer still ; and attempts to climb the desirable eminence, when a sweeping surge interposes, and drenches him again in the rolling deep. By determined efforts, he recovers the space he had lost. Now he fastens on the cliff, and has almost escaped the danger. But there is such a numbness in his limbs, that he cannot maintain his hold ; and such an impetuous swell in the ocean, that he is once more dislodged, and plunged afresh into the raging billows. What can he do ? His life, his precious life is at stake. He must renew, still renew, and never intermit his endeavours. Neither let him abandon himself to despair. The Master sees him, amidst all his fruitless toil. Let him cry earnestly, " Lord, save me, I perish ! " and He, who commandeth the winds and the waves, will be sure to put forth his beneficent hand, and rescue him from the devouring sea.

Such, my friend, so painful, so assiduous are the struggles of faith, before it can rest, in peaceful security, on the " Rock of Ages, Christ Jesus ! " Of this you may, some time or other, be assured, not only from my lips, but from your own experience.

Ther. What may happen in some future period of time, is beyond my power to foresee. At present, I am apt to think, we must put a stop to the theological lecture. Don't you remember our engagement with Altinous ? and you will own, that punctuality in performing our promises is at least a moral virtue, if it be not a Christian grace.

DIALOGUE VI.

ASPASIO'S affairs called him to London. He staid in town a few days; but as soon as business was finished, he quitted the city, and hastened to his friend's country seat. Upon his arrival, he found some agreeable company, that came to spend the evening with the family. This incident prevented the immediate prosecution of their subject. As the next morning proved misty, and unfit for walking abroad, Theron invited Aspasio to pass an hour in his study.

It was situated at the extremity of a large gallery; which, while it conducted the feet to a repository of learning, interposed between the ear and all the disturbance of domestic affairs; so that you are accommodated with every thing that may regale a studious mind, and incommoded with nothing that may interrupt a sedate attention. Aspasio readily consented to the proposal; but desired first to take a turn in this beautiful oblong, and divert himself with the decorations of the place.

Asp. A very short survey, Theron, is sufficient to discover the correctness of your judgment, and the true delicacy of your taste. Here are no impertinent and frivolous exhibitions of romantic tales, or poetic stories. Here are no indecent pieces of imagery, that tend to corrupt a chaste, or inflame a wanton fancy. On the contrary, I am presented with a collection of maps, accurately drawn by the most able hands; and with several remarkable transactions of antiquity, most eloquently told in the language of the pencil. You have happily hit that grand point, which the gentleman of refinement, as well as the author of genius, should ever keep in view—the union of the beneficial with the delightful.*

Ther. Indeed, my Aspasio, I have often been disappointed, sometimes even shocked, in the gardens, the porticoes, and the walks of some modern virtuosi.

* “Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci.”—HOR.

Their portraits and statues are little else but an assemblage of elaborate trifles. Ixion stretched upon the wheel; or Phaeton precipitated from the chariot. Apollo stringing his lyre; or Jupiter (I beg his supreme highness' pardon, for not giving him the precedence in my catalogue) bestriding his eagle, and balancing his bolts. Pray, where is the advantage of being introduced to this fabulous tribe of gentry? What noble idea can they awaken, or what valuable impression leave upon the mind? The best we can say of such performances is, that they are limning and sculpture expensively thrown away.

This celebrated trumpery one can bear with, however. But when the painting and sculpture, instead of cultivating virtue, and improving our morals, are calculated to be the very bane of both—will you call this an elegant entertainment? No: it is a nuisance; it is a pest. In the statues, I grant, every dimple sinks, and every muscle swells, with the exactest propriety. The countenance is animated with life, and the limbs are ready to start into motion. The picture, I am sensible, is as highly finished as the effigy; the distributions of light and shade most artfully adjusted; the diminutions of the perspective true to a nicety; nor can any thing exceed the easy flow of the robe, unless it be the graceful attitude, and almost speaking aspect, of the principal figure. But is this masterly execution an equivalent for the most malignant effects? for sullyng the purity of my fancy, and poisoning the powers of my imagination?

Is it an indication of the owner's judicious taste, to prefer regularity of features in the hammered block, before orderly and harmonious affections in his own breast? Does it bespeak a refined disposition, or a benevolent temper, to be so extravagantly enamoured with the touches of a lascivious pencil, as to expose them in the most frequented passages, and obtrude them on every unwary guest? Surely, this can create no very advantageous opinion of a gentleman's intellectual discernment; much less can it raise an amiable

idea of his moral character. * On such occasions, I am strongly tempted to suspect, that real honour is a stranger, where common decency † is wanting.

As for the artist, one can hardly forbear execrating his hateful folly, who could prostitute such fine talents to such infamous purposes. Detested be the chisel, that teaches, though with inimitable dexterity, the cold obdurate marble to enkindle dissolute affections! Abhorred be the pencil, that makes no other use of the most lovely colours, than to pollute the canvas, and ensnare the spectator.

It is argued, I know, that many of those pieces are the completest models extant. An everlasting reproach this to the art; but no apology for the performances. Since the more nicely they are executed, the more mischievous ‡ is their influence. It strikes the surer, and sinks the deeper. It dresses destruction gay, and paves with beauty the way to ruin.

* 'Tis pity, but the advice of Cicero, that great master of elegant taste and polite manners, was received as a standard of regulation by all our connoisseurs in the fine arts: "In primis provideat, ne ornamentaedium atque hortorum vitium aliquod indicent inesse moribus."—*De Offic.*

† A gentleman, observing some gross indelicacies of this kind at the seat of a person of distinction, very acutely (and, I believe, too justly) said,

"His paintings are the gibbet of his name."

‡ I hope it will not be thought improper, I wish it was entirely needless, to animadvert upon a practice, which is not only a reproach to our Christian profession, but an insult upon national decorum—the practice of exposing to public view, and offering to public sale, such shameful prints, as are fitted only to awaken licentious desires, and cherish the most profligate dispositions.

Such spectacles are a species of the rankest poison. And can the poison be less pernicious, because it is received at the eye, instead of passing through the lips? Because it tends more immediately to debauch the morals, and but remotely to destroy the constitution? No wonder, so many of our youths are corrupted, and so many robberies committed, while such scenes of pictured lewdness are suffered to inflame them with lust, and habituate them to impudence.

Another very indecent custom has unaccountably stole its way into several performances of genius and elegance. The custom, I mean, of representing the muses, the graces, and other romantic personages, in the form of beautiful ladies, partly, if not entirely, naked. 'Tis true, here are no loose adventures; no immodest gestures; nay more, the artist expresses his own, and consults your modesty, by preventing you

It is my chief ambition, Aspasio, to have all my decorations so circumstanced, that the beholder may learn some valuable lesson in morality, or be reminded of some important event in history; may find, even in the scenes of his amusement, something to establish his virtue, or enlarge his knowledge.

I frequently entertain my eldest son, who is reading the Greek and Latin historians, with an explanation of my principal drawings; that he may behold in colouring, what he has perused in narrative. At this instant, the youth happened to make his appearance; paying his respects to Aspasio, and dutifully saluting his father. It just recurs to my memory, said Theron, that some necessary affairs of the family require my attendance for a few minutes. Will you excuse my absence, good Aspasio, and permit my son to supply my place?

You will very much oblige me, by leaving me such a companion.—And come, my dear Sir, addressing himself to Eugenio, as I know you are a lover of learning, what think you of diverting ourselves with these agreeable books? which give us their instructive lessons, not in puzzling languages, but in pleasing colours. Eugenio spoke his consent, and expressed his modesty, by a becoming blush, while Aspasio proceeded—

Asp. This is a striking picture indeed! Hills piled on hills form a most astonishing prospect. What horrible magnificence reigns amidst those wild and shaggy rocks! Nature seems to have designed them for the boundaries of the world. Yet those daring troops are

with a position in profile, by the intervention of a foliage, or the lappet of a robe. But let me ask the ingenious operator, if he would choose to introduce his wife or his daughter, in such a manner, to public company? Is he startled at the question? is he shocked at the thought? Then let him reflect, and let others consider, whether that can be graceful or allowable in a picture, which would be brutal and unsufferable in common life.

Socrates (who, before his application to philosophy, practised as a statuary) could not but blush at this abuse of his art; and, being to form a representation of the graces, he represented them properly habited.

attempting to pass the prodigious barrier. Who are they, Eugenio; and whom shall we call their leader?

Eug. This, Sir, is the famous Hannibal, heading and encouraging his army in the passage of the Alps. The sons of Africa seem to shiver with cold, as they traverse those frozen regions, and march among the clouds.

Asp. It is the very same. Some, you observe, climb, with excessive toil, the steep and craggy cliffs. Others, with far greater difficulty, descend through dreadful declivities of ice; exposed, all the while, to the arrows of the mountaineers. Some, endeavouring to avoid the showers of steel, slip with their feet, and tumble headlong down the vast projecting promontories. See from what a height they are falling! carriages and their drivers, the horse and his rider, and at what a distance still from the stony abyss below! Some lie with closed eyelids, and ghastly features, dashed to death at the very bottom. Others, writhing with the torture of mangled limbs and broken bones, lift up an agonizing look to their comrades. Their comrades, insensible of a brother's misery, and wholly intent upon their own preservation, hang frightfully suspended on the edges of the precipice. The precipice seems to totter as they cling; and the alarmed spectator expects, every moment, a hideous downfall. Are you not startled at the view, Eugenio, and in pain for the hardy adventurers?

Eug. I am, Sir; and I wonder how they will extricate themselves from these perilous circumstances. I have read in Livy, that they cut their way through the rocks, after they had softened them with vinegar. But is this probable? how could they procure a sufficient quantity, amidst those desolate mountains?

Asp. I believe their resolution and their perseverance were the vinegar. These open a road through rocks. These, under the conduct of prudence, and the favour of heaven,* surmount all obstacles. In-

* "Under the favour of heaven."—I cannot but wish, that the reporter of Lord Anson's voyage round the world had anticipated Aspa-

influenced by these, the survivors press boldly on; and are determined to vanquish the horrors of nature, as prelude to their victory over the forces of Rome. Let these, resolution and perseverance I mean, be the companions of my Eugenio's youthful studies, and they will enable him also to conquer difficulties—even all the difficulties which lie in his way.

What is our next draught? At each end we have a group of living figures. All the intermediate space is an extensive tract of land, diversified only by rapid rivers, horrid deserts, and mountainous ridges; with here and there a few savage natives, in uncouth dresses, and formidable arms. It is more like a map than a picture: And the most remarkable beauty is, the aerial perspective; which puts a very agreeable cheat upon our eyes, causing us to behold on an ell of canvas the space of many hundreds of miles.

Eug. This represents the retreat of the ten thousand Greeks. First we behold them in the plains of Media; at an immense distance from their native country; without guides; without provision; and; what is the most desperate calamity of all, deprived of their ablest officers by treachery and murder. Well may they look dejected. How have I pitied them as

sio's remark; had made some grateful acknowledgments to an interposing Providence, in that masculine, nervous, noble narrative: A narrative of such signal deliverances, so critically timed, and so surprisingly circumstanced, as, in the course of one expedition, are scarcely to be paralleled.

I am persuaded, it would have been no disparagement of the great commander, and his gallant officers, to have it thankfully recognized, on some very unexpected, yet most advantageous turn of affairs, "This hath God done!" Neither could it have detracted from the merit of the brave sailors, to have confessed, on many hazardous emergencies, that all their resolution, all their address, and the exertion of their utmost abilities, had been only lost labour, without the remarkable co-operation of divine goodness. And I am apprehensive, that it must considerably diminish the delight of many readers, to observe the blessed Author of all these mercies passed by unnoticed, unacknowledged, and without any share of the praise.

The sarcasm on Pope Adrian and his exploits, I fear, would be too proper on this occasion, "Hic Deus nihil fecit."

I read their story ; abhorred the perfidy of their enemies ; and wished them all success in their hazardous enterprise !

Asp. Don't you perceive their drooping spirits begin to revive, and some gleam of hope diffuses itself through their countenances, while they listen to the eloquent Xenophon, who stands conspicuous in the midst, haranguing his soldiers, and rousing their courage ? But, ah ! what a vast extent of unknown climes must they traverse, with a numerous and victorious army harassing them in flank, or hanging upon their rear ! What fatigues must they sustain, what hardships endure, before they arrive at their wished-for home ! Home ! Fired by the enchanting name, and animated by their brave philosophic leader, they resolve to push their way through all the extremes of peril and of pain. To scatter, with their little band, the encircling millions of barbarians, is the smallest of their achievements. They cross rivers, they scale rocks, whose slippery banks, and craggy summits, are lined with opposing nations. They wade through deserts of snow ; and pass over inhospitable mountains, the far more dreaded abodes of desolation, drought, and famine. They encounter the keenness of the northern storm, and all the rigour of the most malignant seasons. As some of these articles are incapable of being expressed by the pencil, the artist remits us to the historian ; and has contented himself with marking out the most distinguished stages of this memorable expedition. Only we view the courageous itinerants, once again, on a pretty lofty eminence. There they appear, not with their former dejection, but in all the transports of joy.

Eug. This, Sir, is the mountain Tecqua ; from whence they had the first view of the sea, and the first dawn of safety. There they embrace one another, and extol their commanders, especially the noble Xenophon, whose history gives me great delight, and his manly yet benign aspect strangely attracts my esteem. Methinks, under such a general, I could have been

willing to take my share in all the toil and all the hazards of the expedition.

Asp. Would my Eugenio? Then I will list him under a Captain, unspeakably more accomplished and beneficent. Young as you are, you shall, from this hour, commence a soldier and a traveller—a soldier, to fight against sin, and every temptation—a traveller, to pass through the wilderness of this world, unto the land of everlasting rest. Though your enemies may be numerous, and your journey tedious, yet faint not, neither be discouraged. The Lord of heaven is your guide, and heaven itself shall be your exceeding great reward. When you arrive at those happy abodes, your delight will infinitely surpass all that the Grecians felt on Tecqua, when their ravished eyes beheld, and their tongues with ecstasy shouted, “The sea! the sea!”

The scene of yonder picture, I would venture to affirm, lies among the ancient Jews.

Eug. How can you tell this, Sir, at such a distance?

Asp. By “the fringes in the borders of their garments, and on each fringe a ribband of blue.” God Almighty commanded all the Jews to observe this peculiarity in their habit; * that their very clothes, being different from the apparel of their heathen neighbours, might admonish them not to be conformed to their idolatrous worship and licentious manners. This, as well as every other divine command, our Lord Je-

* One would wonder how the Jews can so tenaciously adhere to their law, and yet so apparently neglect its precepts. Where are the sons of Abraham, who observe this express and positive command of Jehovah? Though this indeed might be obeyed, yet many of the Mosaic injunctions are rendered, and by nothing less than the dispensations of Providence, absolutely impracticable. Is not this, therefore, a most incontestible proof—a proof, not invented by the arts of sophistry, but written by the finger of the Almighty himself—that the legal ordinances are abolished, in order to make way for a better dispensation? When the avenues are become inaccessible, the house untenable, and the principal apartments irreparably decayed, is not this the most cogent admonition to the inhabitants, that they betake themselves to some new and more commodious residence? See Numb. xv. 38.

sus Christ most exactly obeyed. Therefore we are told by the evangelical historian, that the diseased woman, "who touched but the hem of his garment, was restored to health." *Hem* it is in our English Bibles. But, if you consult that most excellent of all books, the Greek Testament, you will find, that the original word might more properly be rendered *fringe*.* However, let us pass from the drapery to the design.

Eug. Here we see David in one of the most threatening exigencies of his whole life. Saul, more like a bloodhound than a king, pursues the best of sons, and the most valuable of subjects. He has extended the wings of his very superior army, in order to surround† the injured hero, and his handful of associates.

Asp. This is the most animated and, I think, the most masterly performance, that has hitherto come under our notice. Consternation and doubt agitate their looks. Shall they surrender themselves, as so many tame victims, to a tyrant's fury; or shall they cut their way to safety, through the hearts of countrymen, friends, and brothers? Dreadful dilemma! While they

* Matth. ix. 20. *Κεραυίδος*.

† To this, or some such incident, may be applied a passage of the Psalms, which, in our translation, is very obscure; has scarce any sense, or if any, a very unjustifiable one: "Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the wickedness of my heels compasseth me round about?" Psalm xlix. 5. Wherefore! The reason is very apparent: When wickedness cleaves to a person's heels, or habitually attends his goings, it raises an army of terrors; it unsheaths the sword of divine vengeance, and levels at his guilty head every threatening in the book of God.

Surely, then, another translation should be given to the words, and a different turn to the sense! And another translation the words will bear; a different sense the connection demands: "Wherefore should I fear, when wickedness compasseth me about at my heels?" This is a fine spirited interrogation. This implies a great and edifying truth. From this also the verse appears, not only with propriety, but with beauty. When wickedness, or the malicious attempts of wicked men, compass me about, surround me, threaten me on every side—nay, when they are at my very heels, just upon the point to seize, overwhelm, and crush me; so that the danger seems both inevitable and imminent—yet even then, having God's almighty power and inviolable faithfulness for my protection, wherefore should I be alarmed? Alarmed! No; confiding in such a safeguard, I will bid defiance to my enemies, and bid adieu to my fears.

are debating, the pursuers are closing upon them. A few, a few minutes more, must decide their fate. But who is the person that intervenes, just at this critical juncture?

Eug. It is a messenger from the principal inhabitants of Judea. He comes breathless and trembling, amazement in his face, and dust upon his head. "An invasion!" he cries, "An invasion! The Philistines have poured themselves upon our frontiers! The Philistines are over-running the land!" *

Asp. Upon the receipt of this news, see what vexation reddens in the disappointed monarch's aspect! What anger lightens in his eye! At the same time, what pale reflections on his country's danger, mingle themselves with the fiery passions, and almost quench the flame enkindling in his cheeks. Shall the vulture relinquish his prey, even when it lies fluttering under his talons? Galling thought! But his kingdom is at stake. If he does not immediately advance to repel the enemy, his all, his all is lost. Burning therefore with indignation, yet chilled with fear, he turns, hasty though reluctant, away. † Are you not charmed, Eugenio, with this description of tumultuous and contrary passions, which afford the finest subject for historic painting, and are so happily expressed in this piece?

Eug. Indeed, Sir, I am shocked, rather than charmed. The very looks of that revengeful monarch fill me with horror. What must he suffer in his mind, who discovers such rage and anguish in his features! I would not have his furious temper, for all his royal power.

Asp. Then, my dear Eugenio, you must endeavour to suppress every emotion of envy and malevolence.

* This event is related 1 Sam. xxiii. 25, &c. And it is one of the most extraordinary instances of a divine interposal, at the very crisis of need, that any history has recorded.

† ————— *Εξεν ανωνριγς θυμοι.*

Thus Homer expresses the contrariety of passions that frequently operate, at the same time, in the same breast.

You must cherish a cordial good-will to all men ; and learn to rejoice in their excellencies and happiness, as well as in your own. Envy is the worm that gnaws, envy is the fury that embroils his wretched heart. And an author, with whom you will ere long be acquainted, has assured us,

Invidia Siculi non invenerere tyranni
Tormentum majus. HOR.

The next is a kind of night-piece. Stars are in the sky, and the new moon rides on the skirts of the hemisphere ; which affords just light enough to distinguish objects. This is a perfect contrast to the foregoing. We see no conflict of jarring passions. But the principal person appears sedate and composed, as the night that surrounds him. He stands on the bank of a river, thoughtful, and attentive ; as though he was pondering, or executing, some important project.

Eug. This is Cyrus the Great. He stands upon the banks of the Euphrates ; not far from Babylon. He points with his sceptre, and is giving directions to his army. The directions are, to pass through the channel of the river, (which is drained of its water,) in order to surprise the city.

Asp. This is a prince of very superior dignity ; the honoured instrument of executing Jehovah's counsels. He was foretold by the prophet Isaiah, and even mentioned by name, more than two hundred years before his birth, Isa. xlv. 28., xlv. 1. Let us wish him prosperity. For he goes to humble the pride of Babylon, and release the captivity of Israel. See with what regular movements, and what calm alacrity, his troops advance ! Silence seems to escort them ; while, under covert of the shades, and with Providence at their head, they march along a road, never before trodden by the foot of man. The soldiers of the garrison have abandoned their station on the wall, to join in the dissolute indulgence of this fatal night. The inhabitants, like many a heedless sinner, are lulled in

idolence, and dreaming of pleasures, even on the very brink of ruin.

Eug. Why are those brazen gates which lead to the river, placed in such a distinguished point of view? They strike my eye more, I think, than all the monuments of art and grandeur, which adorn that superbiety. And let me farther ask, whether the painter was not offended against probability, in suffering them to stand wide open? On the approach of so formidable an adversary, I should expect to have found them shut with all possible security.

Asp. In this particular, the painter has shewed his judgment, and not forgotten his piety. God had devoted that haughty and oppressive metropolis to destruction. And you will perceive, from this circumstance, how wonderfully he over-rules all events, for the accomplishment of his sacred purpose. Had those ponderous gates been shut, * the city had continued impregnable, and the whole enterprise been defeated. But, through some accidental forgetfulness, occasioned by the disorders of this riotous solemnity, or ra-

* See this very momentous, though seemingly inconsiderable circumstance, finely illustrated by M. Rollin, and compared with a remarkable prophecy in Isaiah, *Ancient History*, vol. ii. p. 144, &c. A work in which the most entertaining and instructive events of antiquity are regularly digested, elegantly related, and stripped of those minuter incidents which make the story move slow, and are apt to fatigue the attention. Concise but judicious observations are interspersed, which may teach young minds to form a right judgment of things, and not be misled by the plausibility of popular notions, or the partiality of prejudiced historians. Many very distinguished predictions of Scripture, are explained and confirmed by correspondent facts, from the most authentic memoirs of classical literature. Indeed, a perpetual regard to the elucidation and honour of the sacred oracles, runs through and ennobles the whole performance. Which method, if not strictly conformable to the rules of historical composition, is a transgression of them greatly to their advantage. It may be said to resemble the golden branch, celebrated by Virgil, and plucked by his hero; whose growth, though a departure from the usual laws of vegetation, was far from depreciating the value of the tree.

Though I admire the whole, I am charmed with the conclusion. It is, I think, peculiarly pertinent, and inimitably grand; has a dignity, an elevation, a majesty, which, somewhat like the kingdom it describes, is quite unequalled, and little less than stupendous;

Παρθενον αργυριος, χρυσου δ' εκεινης κορωνη.

ther by a very signal interposition of divine vengeance, they are left open, and afford an easy entrance to slaughter and death, which rush upon the unhappy creatures all sunk in sleep, or overcharged with wine, as a concealed snare in some dreadful unexpected moment springs up, and inextricably entangles the unwary bird. Was I to inscribe this picture with a motto, I would chuse the apostle's admonition, "Be sober; be vigilant."

Who is this, with his length of hair * flowing upon his shoulders; with such amplitude of personage, such magnificence of mien, and noble plainness of habit?

Eug. This is my favourite piece. My father sometimes shows me the heads of the philosophers; but there is something so uninviting and severe in Socrates and Diogenes, that I could never much admire them. But this, Sir, is Scipio; the thunderbolt of war, as Virgil calls him. Here is something so lovely and engaging, as well as grand and majestic, that I am never weary of looking on him.

Asp. He appears with a lady of distinguished beauty in his hand.

Eug. This is the captive princess, who had been taken in war, who was set apart for the general's prize, but whom he is now restoring to her espoused husband.

Asp. You are right, Eugenio. He has just led in his lovely captive, attended by her husband and parents, amidst a full assembly of Romans and Celtiberians, the victors and the vanquished. His modest eyes, you observe, are rather turned from, than gazing upon the blooming virgin. Cannot you suppose, how the spectators must be affected, upon the open-

* I believe it was not customary with the Romans, especially their warriors, to have long flowing hair. This, therefore, might seem an offence against what the Italians call *il costume*, if the painter was not supported by the authority of Livy; who, in his descriptive picture of Scipio, gives us the following touches: "Species corporis ampla ac magnifica. Præterquam quod suapte natura multa majestas inerat, adornabat promissa Cæsaries, habitusque corporis, non cultus munditiis, sed virilis vere ac militaris." Lib. xxviii. c. 35.

ing of this extraordinary scene? Every one beholds the hero with admiration, the lady with delight. Every bosom is big with expectation, or in pain for the event. After a short pause, he addresses himself to the lover, in words to this effect: "I am no stranger to your interest in this fine woman. The fortune of war has put her entirely into my power. The circumstances of my youth cannot render me insensible to so engaging a person. But with us Romans, honour and generosity have a more prevailing influence than transitory gratifications. Take your bride; be happy in each other; and when you look upon this gift, admire the Romans, be a friend to Rome." Upon this he delivers her (as you behold the action here represented) to the enamoured prince.

See how the crowds, that cluster and hang around, are struck with the beneficent deed! In the Celtiberians, we behold a mixture of veneration and surprise. Their looks are full of meaning. Methinks they are going to cry out, "Excellent man!" In the Romans, we discern a conscious superiority, and exultation of mind. Triumph is in their features; as though they would say, "This wonderful man is ours." In the lady, we admire the accomplished and modest fair, uniting all the dignity of her birth with all the delicacy of her sex. What soft confusion, and what tender joy, appear in her countenance! She is lost in wonder, and at a loss for words: she speaks the acknowledgments of her heart, by the silent eloquence of a tear which steals down her glowing cheek, to bedew the kind hand, that has protected her innocence, and is delivering her to her lord. Her lord is under an apparent and a graceful struggle of love and gratitude. He dotes upon his charming princess, and he almost adores his generous benefactor. We can hardly tell, whether he is going to clasp the former in his arms, or throw himself at the feet of the latter. The aged parents express their transport in a different manner. Their knees are bent to the earth; their eyes are lifted up to heaven; they implore for their

noble guardian, every blessing that the gods can bestow. Scipio himself displays all the magnanimity of the conqueror, tempered with the sedateness of the philosopher, and softened with the gentleness of the friend. He gives happiness; but he enjoys a greater. His eyes sparkle with a sublime delight; and he seems to anticipate the applause, which this truly heroic act will gain, in all countries and in all ages.

Eug. Is not this a greater victory than any that he had won in the field of battle; and a nobler triumph than any that could be voted him by the applauding senate? Amiable Scipio! Might I be a Roman, I would be no other than Scipio.

Asp. I wish you, my dear Sir, the temperance and generosity of Scipio; but from a better motive than his. He, I fear, was too much swayed by a spirit of ambition, which you must endeavour to suppress, rather than cherish. A spirit of ambition which pants after distinction, and thirsts for applause, is diametrically opposite to the genius of the gospel, Gal. v. 26. It is a lesson which must infallibly be unlearned, if ever we become possessors of faith, or partakers of Christ, John v. 44. It is a root of bitterness, which naturally produces envy, Gal. v. 26; that most odious, and (as you have just now seen) most self-tormenting of all tempers. It is a habit of mind, which generally renders men incendiaries in the church, and disturbers of its tranquillity, 3 John 9, 10. It is, therefore, more like an enchanted potion which inebriates, than a genuine cordial which animates.

Eug. From what motive then would you encourage me, to be diligent in the pursuit of learning, and in the cultivation of every virtue?

Asp. Not, that you may acquire the poor, contemptible, perishing honour, which cometh from men:—but that you may please God, your Almighty Creator; that you may glorify Christ, your infinitely condescending Redeemer; that you may yourself attain what is the true dignity and only felicity of your nature; and may be serviceable to the best interests of

your fellow-creatures—even their present holiness and their eternal happiness.

These are the grand and endearing encouragements which our holy religion proposes. These will operate, I am bold to aver, with a much sweeter and a far more sovereign efficacy, than all the glittering enticements which ambition can devise. And, what is above all other considerations weighty, these will be more likely, or rather these will be very certain, to receive the divine blessing.

You told me you was never weary of contemplating Scipio. For which reason, I promise myself, you will not be fatigued or displeas'd, though I have so long confin'd your attention to this portrait. But have we no hero of Britain, fit to join this illustrious triumvirate from Rome, Persia, and Judea?

Eug. The very next we meet is one of our English kings. But I cannot say, that I remember either his name, or his story.

Asp. How, my young gentleman! Do you read the annals of other nations, and not acquaint yourself with the affairs of your own country? If I was in your place, I would apply myself to the classical writers by way of study, and to some valuable English historian by way of amusement. Such an amusement is infinitely preferable to novels or romances: and will not only relax your attention, but enrich your mind.

Eug. I thank you, good Sir, for your admonition. And, if you please, I will now begin the study you recommend. Your explanation of these drawings shall be the rudiments of my knowledge; and I shall think it a happiness, to receive my first instructions from so able a master.

Asp. It is honour enough for me, Eugenio, to have given you the hint. I only point out your game, or spring the covey; you shall be taught by a more expert proficient, to make it your own. Yet, though others may direct you with greater skill, none will rejoice in your successful pursuit more sincerely than myself.

This is our renowned Henry the Fifth, as he appeared after the victory of Agincourt. You see the gallant conqueror clad in steel, and recent from the slaughter of the insulting foe. He seems to breathe an heroic ardour, which is irradiated and exalted by a lively devotion. If courage can be expressed by the pencil, that is its genuine likeness; keen, yet composed; grasping the sword, yet looking up to heaven. He that, a little while ago, drove the battle, like a whirlwind, on the legions of France, now bends a suppliant knee, and offers the eucharistic hymn, to the Lord God of Hosts. No turbulent or disorderly joy riots among the soldiery. They express not the triumph of their hearts, in frantic exultations, or drunken revels, but in acts of thanksgiving to Jehovah; in an attitude, which speaks the devout acknowledgment of the prophet, "Thou art our battle-axe and weapons of war," Jer. li. 20. Or the grateful declaration of the Psalmist, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory," Psal. cxv. 1.

This last instance informs my Eugenio, that prayer is an honourable employ—has been practised by persons of the most admired endowments; is the surest method of obtaining success, in whatever business we undertake; and of enjoying prosperity, in whatever circumstances we are placed.

The next piece is different from all the preceding. In those, armies with their banners displayed, ships of war riding at anchor, battering engines, and instruments of death, form the perspective. In this, we have, all around, a lovely and rural landscape; expressive of peace, and enriched with plenty. Corn and cattle in the valleys; fruitful vineyards on the hills; and beautiful gardens surrounding the houses. But who is that graceful and august personage, seated on a stately throne of ivory and gold?

Eug. This is Solomon, having an interview with the Queen of Sheba. A large train of her attendants throng the avenues of the palace: some leading foreign animals; some bearing vases and caskets; all

arrayed in strange apparel. The Israelities stare upon their outlandish visitants, their costly presents, and peculiar habits. Their visitants are as much surprised at the walls, the towers, and especially the temple of Jerusalem. But you, Sir, I apprehend, are most pleased with the venerable person who fills the throne?

Asp. Indeed I am; and so is his royal guest. You observe, in her robe, her retinue, her deportment, an unpolished kind of grandeur. But all in Solomon is so splendid, and at the same time so elegant; displays such a delicacy of taste, and such a magnificence of spirit, that the Sabeen princess is perfectly in raptures. See how she stands fixed and gazing with speechless admiration, * like one lost in astonishment, and transported with delight! Her looks speak, what, when she recovers the power of utterance, her tongue expresses; "It was a true report, that I heard in my own land, of thy acts, and of thy wisdom. Howbeit, I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen; and behold, the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame which I heard."

Eug. This is a great compliment. Is it right, Sir, to praise a man in such plain terms and such high strains, to his very face? I think, I have heard Philenor blame such a practice, as inconsistent with refined manners; and I have heard my father say, No one is a better judge of fine breeding than Philenor. And if the most agreeable behaviour, added to the most winning conversation, are what you call fine breeding, I am sure, Philenor is master of it to a very great degree. I love to be in his company, and am never better pleased than to hear him talk.

Asp. The compliment is high, but it is just. It is strictly conformable to truth, and proceeds from the most unaffected sincerity. If we take what follows into consideration, we shall have a pattern of true politeness; a propriety, and a refinement of address, far

* This I apprehend is the meaning of that remarkably strong expression used by the sacred historian, "There was no more spirit in her," 1 Kings x. 5.

surpassing her majesty's external state. "Happy are thy men; happy are these thy servants; which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom." Instead of envying, she congratulates the domestics of Solomon, and rejoices in their superior felicity. This is benevolence. "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel. Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice."—Here she ascribes all his royal virtues, and matchless accomplishments, to the bounty of heaven. Though they are applauded in the person of Solomon, they are recognised as the free gift of God. This is piety. When the endowments we celebrate, lead us to magnify, not their possessor, but their author; then the poison is corrected, and turned into medicine. Praise, thus circumstanced, loses its malignity, and is rendered salubrious.

It pleases me to perceive, that you take so much notice of the conversation, which passes between your worthy father and his ingenious friends. I promise myself, you will also remember the maxim, which we have now learned from a queen: a queen, whom not only the sacred historian, but our Lord Jesus Christ himself vouchsafes to mention, and with marks of approbation. Whose name therefore will be had in honour, when Semiramis and Cleopatra, the heroines and the beauties, are consigned over to oblivion. The maxim which I mean is this: There must be an union of sincerity, of benevolence, and of piety, in order to constitute true politeness. Whoever pretends to fine breeding, and is destitute of these qualities, is nothing more than a pretender. He bears just the same proportion to this ornamental character, as the ape and the monkey bear to the man.

But we have not sufficiently examined our picture. The dome is of cedar; supported by pillars of marble; to which are annexed curtains of silk and embroidery. The pillars shine with the most glossy polish, and swell upon the eye with the boldest projections. The curtains, pendent in large and easy folds,

seem not adhesive to the canvas, but waving in the air. The throne is exquisitely contrived, richly ornamented, and highly finished. It is evident, the painter had in his eye that remarkable observation of scripture, "There was not the like made in any kingdom;" and he has really done all which art could devise, or colours execute, in order to exemplify the great encomium.

If the monarch was absent, we should desire no better entertainment, than to view the beauties of the apartment; but can hardly allow any attention to the edifice, when so graceful and so grand a presence speaks our regard. For I must own there appears to me something peculiarly excellent in this figure: a serenity and dignity, without any of that martial air, which adds a tincture of ferocity to the warrior; a sagacity and penetration, not to be equalled by the wrinkles of age, yet transparent through all the bloom of youth. Piety and wisdom, the love of God, and the grace of his Spirit, give an elevation to the mind, a secret charm to the countenance, and something more than mortal to the whole man. I am apt to suspect, Eugenio, that you yourself are ready to adopt a new favourite: that you now prefer Solomon even to Scipio; and had rather be like the "beloved of the Lord," than the darling of Rome.

Eug. Every thing in Solomon is so venerable and heavenly, that I am filled with awe, rather than fired with emulation. It is not for a boy to think of imitating such high perfection!

Asp. Why not, my dear Sir? It was God who gave Solomon his superior wisdom, and exalted accomplishments. And God is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" as willing to hear, and as able to help you, as he was to hear and bless his servant Solomon.—Neither let your youth be a discouragement. "Out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings, he ordaineth strength, and perfects praise," *Psalm*. viii. 2. Samuel ministered in the temple when he was but a child, *1 Sam.* ii. 18. Josiah, while he was yet young, began to seek after the God of his fathers, *2 Chron.* xxxiv. 3. Timothy was acquainted with the holy scriptures

from his earliest years, 2 Tim. iii. 15. And Solomon himself was none of the oldest, when he was favoured with that extraordinary vision, and made that admirable choice, at Gibeon, 1 Kings iii. 5, 6, &c. A passage of scripture, which I dare say you have read; which I would recommend to your attentive consideration; and which I hope you will take for the model of your conduct.—And if you, like that illustrious young prince, desire a wise and understanding heart, more than the affluence of wealth, or the distinctions of honour; if you “seek wisdom as silver, and search for her as for hid treasure; then shall you also understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God,” Prov. ii. 4, 5.

The next that occurs, presents us with a view of the sea; and a most tremendous view it is.

Eug. This is the voyage related by the evangelist, when our Lord sailed with his disciples, and bid the storm be still, and made the ocean calm.

Asp. Then we may truly say, “A greater than Solomon is here!” Give me leave to hint, upon this occasion, that every picture of Christ must necessarily depreciate his glorious person. Therefore you will never think, that a few rays beaming round his sacred head, can properly distinguish the Son of God, or express the grace of his offices, and the divinity of his nature. It is not to display the perfections of the Lord Jesus himself, but only to give us an idea of one of his works, that the pencil has been employed on this grand subject.

You will also remember, that it was not the main ocean, but the lake of Tiberias, on which they sailed. However, the painter is at liberty to make his sea as large as he pleases, and his storm as terrible as he can. Accordingly, he has collected all the horrors of a tempest. Lightnings fire the arch above; and thunders, could thunders have been painted, would have rocked the ground below. Those flaming bolts, have smitten a huge promontory, and tore its rugged brow. See how the rocky fragment is tumbling;

with impetuous bound, from cliff to cliff! The waters, lashed by furious winds, heave and toss their tumultuous billows: Here they rise in rolling ridges; there they rage in devouring whirls. Amidst these horrible commotions, you behold a vessel in all the extremity of distress: Straining under the blast, battered and half overwhelmed by the surge, she can no longer maintain the unequal conflict; she yields to the resistless flood; and begins, evidently begins to sink. Perplexed, amazed, and at their wits end, the disciples run to and fro. They shift the tackling; lighten the stowage; try every expedient; and find, to their inexpressible affliction, every expedient ineffectual.

We cast our eye forward, and their divine Master appears, sedately rising from a gentle slumber. He sees the perplexity and horror of his companions, without the least emotion of alarm. He sees destruction approaching, heaven and earth mingling; and instead of being dismayed, enjoys the elemental war. What composure in his mien! what dignity in his attitude! what majesty, sweetened with compassion, in his aspect! such as could arise from no other cause, but a conscious and undoubted certainty that not one of the company should perish; not a hair of their head be injured; and that all this mighty uproar of nature should end in a demonstration of his mightier power, and a confirmation of his disciples' faith. He looks abroad into the mutinous sky, and the turbulent deep; He waves, with an authoritative air, his sacred hand; and adds the great commanding word, *Peace; be still*. Do you inquire after the effect? Let Milton declare it:

“ Confusion heard his voice, and wild uproar
Stood rul'd.”

This is expressed in another draught. Where all is hushed, the tremendous agitations cease, and the most profound tranquillity takes place. The water is smooth as glass; we have the picture of a perfect

calm; and view those very persons, who, a little while ago, were in the wildest distraction, and in the jaws of ruin, surrounding their Lord as men alive from the dead. * Their consternation is turned into wonder; and their pangs of fear into ecstasies of joy. They acknowledge the omnipotence, and adore the goodness of Jesus.

Eug. Well may they acknowledge his omnipotence, since winds and waves obey him. Great reason have they to adore his goodness, since he rescued them from the very jaws of death; that worst of deaths, perishing in the stormy deep.

Asp. If Jesus Christ had vouchsafed such a deliverance to my Eugenio, what would he have thought, or how would he have been affected?

Eug. I should have thought myself inexpressibly obliged; and that I could never shew sufficient gratitude to so great a Benefactor.

* The circumstances of this miracle, as related by the Evangelists, are truly wonderful, and to the last degree picturesque.

“Master! Master! we perish!” How concise, how abrupt, and how ardent is this exclamation! Therefore, how strongly significant of imminent danger, and of the utmost distress? They have no time to be explicit. A moment’s delay may be fatal. What they utter is conciseness itself, and all rapidity, Luke viii. 24. This is nature; this is the genuine language of the heart; this is true historic painting. Every impartial reader must admire this exquisitely just and fine stroke, far beyond the diffuse and (I had almost said, impertinently) florid speech which Virgil puts into the mouth of his hero on a like occasion.—*Æn.* I. 98.

Σιωπα, σιφίμωσο. What a majesty in this command! It is admirable; it is inimitable: it is worthy of God. I think we may observe a peculiarly proper word, addressed and adapted to each element; the first enjoining a cessation of the winds, the second a quiescence of the waves. Silence in all that roared; composure in all that raged. As though (to give a short paraphrase on the grand injunction) it had been said, “Winds, be hushed; waves, be calm,” Mark iv. 39.

The effect on the disciples is described, with all the force of imagination, and all the energy of diction. To represent in colours, what the evangelical historian has left upon record, would be a subject fit for the immortal Raphael; and perhaps not to be equalled even by his masterly pencil. *Διαν εν περιεσση εν αυτων εξετασσε & θαυμαζον—θαυμαζον,* they were amazed; *εξετασσε,* they were transported with amazement; *λιαν,* to the very greatest degree; *εν περιεσση,* exceeding all that language can express. Mark vi. 51.

Asp. Assure yourself, then, my dear Sir, that He has done infinitely more for you: That He has delivered you, not indeed from being swallowed up by the raging billows, but from sinking into the pit of everlasting perdition: That He has not only rescued you from endless destruction, but obtained eternal life and heavenly happiness for you.—This He has done, not by speaking a word, or issuing a command; but by bearing your guilt, suffering your punishment, and dying the death, the most ignominious and tormenting death, in your stead. Should you not then unfeignedly love Him? study to please Him? and make it the reigning endeavour of your life to glorify Him?

Here Theron returned, and the young student withdrew, after receiving some affectionate and encouraging compliments from Aspasio, who was going to enlarge upon the excellent taste of his friend, the instructive style of his pictures, the good sense and great proficiency of his son: But Theron, far from coveting the praise, and fully satisfied with the consciousness of acting the becoming part, prevented his discourse, by stepping to a pair of glass folding doors, which, thrown open, admitted them into the study.

A chimney-piece of grey marble, with plain, but bold and protuberant mouldings, formed a very handsome appearance. In various little niches were fixed elegant busts; and on the several interstices hung beautiful prints, representing many of the most eminently learned men, who were the ornaments and blessings both of ancient and modern times. The shelves, all around, were accommodated, not encumbered, with books. Aspasio, running over the lettered backs, observed a collection of the most valuable authors, in history and natural philosophy, in poetry and divinity.

You will easily perceive, said Theron, that I am somewhat singular in furnishing my study, as well as in ornamenting the avenue. My books are not for show, but use; and claim a regard, rather on account of their worth, than their number. An immense mul-

itude of volumes, I have always thought, is more likely to embarrass the attention, than to improve the understanding. A huge library seems to resemble a perplexing labyrinth; and often bewilders the mind, instead of leading it expeditiously to the acquisition of truth.

When people are eager to peruse a multiplicity of writings, it frequently happens, that in reading all, they digest none.* They taste some empty and transient amusement, but collect no solid or lasting advantage. Their minds are somewhat like those capacious looking-glasses, which we have seen exposed in the most frequented and populace streets of London. They receive all manner of shadowy images, but no substantial impression. A thousand figures pass through them, not one abides in them.

Our books, replied Aspasio, as well as our friends, should rather be select, than numerous. For my part, I would desire no more than two or three of the most correct and masterly writers in any science. These a person of moderate capacity may be able to comprehend; and not comprehend only, but enrich his memory with the choicest sentiments, and make the substance of their works his own. He will, by repetition and familiar converse, enter into their spirit, and acquire their manner. While a rambler in reading does little more than gratify his fancy, without refining his taste, or amending his heart.

Upon this Aspasio turned himself; and espied, in one corner of the apartment, the celestial and terrestrial globes; in another, a large reflecting telescope; and on the top of a bureau, one or two of the best microscopes.

* The author of *Night Thoughts* has touched this subject with great judgment, and equal sprightliness:

“Voracious learning, often over-fed,
 Digests not into sense the motley meal.
 This forager on other’s wisdom, leaves
 Her native farm, her reason, quite untill’d.
 With mix’d manure she surfeits the rank soil,
 Dung’d, but not dress’d; and rich to beggary.”

These instruments, resumed Theron, have opened **an** inexhaustible fund of the finest entertainments. * **They** have furnished us with new eyes; and brought **up**, I may venture to say, a new world into our view. **They** give us a sight of wonders, which may seem **incredible** to the incurious vulgar, and were utterly **unknown** to the most inquisitive sages of antiquity. **They** charm the eye with a display of inimitable beauties, where nothing worthy of notice was expected. **They** throw the mind into a pleasing transport of admiration; and from the meanest, lowest objects, raise the most amiable and exalted ideas of the all-glorious Creator.

I have often regretted, that such rational and manly gratifications should be almost universally supplanted by the fantastical and childish amusements in vogue. Why should not the contemplation of nature's surprising novelties be as acceptable an entertainment as the stale diversion of quadrille? be as refined an employ for a leisure hour, as to count the spots on a pack of cards? The ladies, I am very sure, might find brighter colours, and more delicate ornaments, in the robes and head-dress of a common fly, than ever they found amidst the trinkets of a toy-shop. And was the fair circle of females once acquainted with the radiant var-

* Gentlemen of taste and seriousness cannot, I think, have a nobler piece of furniture for their studies, than the microscope and the telescope, the orrery and the air-pump. This apparatus would afford them a most delightful and improving amusement in a solitary hour. It would also give them an opportunity of entertaining their company, in a truly elegant and very instructive manner. It would open a fine and ample field, for displaying the glories of God the Creator, and of God the Redeemer. As the discoveries made by these instruments are so surprising in themselves, and new to the generality of mankind, every edifying hint, deduced from such observations, would come with a peculiar recommendation. This, I am sure, would be a method of reducing to practice, what the polite historian has recorded of the politer Scipio: "Elegantissimo intervalla negotiorum otio dispunxit."—*Vell. Paterc.* And, I believe, it might be a happy means of turning the soul, to bear a part in that immortal hymn: "Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they now exist, and were at first created," Rev. iv. 11.

nish and rich studs which enamel the cover of a beetle's wing, I am apt to think, they would view with less rapture, with more indifference, perhaps with a becoming disdain, all the pretty fancies of a beau's wardrobe.

A few days ago, when the accomplished Manilia favoured us with a visit, I shewed her, through a magnifying-glass, the sting of a bee, the scale of a soal, the wing of a gnat, and some other beautiful minims of nature, together with the powder which adheres to our finger when we touch the body of a moth. "Amazing!" cried the young lady. "What elegant figures! What enchanting finery!"

—————' Smallest lineaments exact,
In all the liveries deck'd of summer's pride,
With spots of gold and purple, azure and green.'

MILTON, Book vii.

"How perfect the polish, and how high the finishing, of that little weapon! This piece of defensive armour, how skilfully contrived, and how curiously wrought! Here rising into little ridges, like the bosses of a buckler, fitted to repel injuries: There scooped into little cavities, designed, I suppose, to diminish its weight; that the coat of mail may not encumber, even while it defends, the puny wearer. What I took to be a whitish despicable rag, is the neatest fan I ever beheld; mounted on sticks* inimitably tapering and slender, tinged with all the soft and lovely colours of the most glossy mother-of-pearl. But what astonishes me more than all, is the view of that coloured dust, which your instrument has turned into a cluster of feathers; every one wrought off with a regularity and a delicacy, that are beyond the power of description. The finest stroke drawn by the Italian pen, compared with the extreme minuteness of the shaft, is broad and bulky as an admiral's mast. A speck of leaf-gold, could it be weighed against the exquisite attenuations

* These sticks are the little ribs, which support, at proper intervals, the fine transparent membrane of the wing.

Of the vane,* would seem more substantial and ponderous than yonder marble slab.

“How nice, even to a prodigy, must be the mechanism of the animalcule race! I see globules, I see tides of blood, rolling through meanders inexpressibly finer than the finest hair.—Stranger still! I see whole shoals of active creatures expatiating in a single drop of water; † taking their pastime amidst such a scanty canal, as unstrained, and as much at large, as leviathan in the abysses of the ocean. A whole kingdom of those creatures, though collected into a body, are quite undiscernible by the naked eye. What then must be the size of every individual? Yet, in every individual, there is a complete system of limbs; each endowed with spontaneous motion; all assembled, though not crowded, in a living atom. To reflect upon the texture of vessels, and the operation of organs, so complex, so numerous, yet so inconceivably minute; how it awakens admiration, fills me with reverence of the Almighty Maker, and yields a pleasure infinitely superior to all the modish amusements of our sex! Your discoveries of life in miniature have given me a disgust of what is called high life, and its solemn fopperies. You have spoiled me, Theron, for a fashionable trifle. I shall no longer relish the dull economy of the fan, or the poor parade of the snuff-box.”

Asp. Have you nothing to say of the telescope?—

* Vane is the feathery part of a quill.

† In a single drop of water, Dr Hook is said to have discovered, with his microscope, eight millions two hundred and eighty thousand animalcules. This is mentioned, because it is the prevailing philosophy of the age: though I must confess, that Mr Gautier seems to have gone a considerable way towards giving it another turn; as he has proved, before a learned assembly at Paris, that the vermiculares of *Lewenhoeck*, and the living moleculeæ of *M. de Buffon*, were only balls of air agitated by the fermenting of the seed. If so, it is not impossible, but Dr Hook's animalcula may be nothing more than balls of air, agitated by the fermenting of the pepper.

Be this as it will, the young lady's remarks on the wonders of mechanism in the animalcule creation, I believe, will never be controverted.

I believe it must be my province to celebrate this admirable invention; and I wish I could do it with Manilia's brilliant imagination. If the microscope leads us downward, to the curious secrets of the animalcule creation; the telescope bears us upward, to the grand peculiarities of the starry regions. The eye, conducted by this wonderful guide, visits a variety of majestic orbs, which would otherwise be lost in unmeasurable tracts of æther. This, far more surprising than the discoveries of Columbus, has found out new colonies of worlds in every quarter of the nocturnal skies. This has placed a glittering crescent on the brow of one* of the planets; and has given others a most stately train of attendants. †

Tell me, Theron, could you discern the full choir of the constellations, or distinguish the variegated face of the moon, without the aid of your telescopic tube? Could you, with your unassisted eye, get a sight of Jupiter's satellites, or procure a glimpse of Saturn's ring? Without that supplementary aid to our sight, they are quite imperceptible; though the satellites of the former are incomparably more magnificent than the retinue of all the monarchs in the world; and, compared with the ring of the latter, all the bridges on ten thousand rivers are less than the ferule of your cane.

As the telescope to the eye, so is revelation to the understanding. It discovers truths, which, exclusive of such a discovery, had been for ever hid from the most sagacious minds. 'Tis strange to the unlearned observer, that this ponderous globe of earth and seas should wheel its rapid circuit round the sun. But the telescope has rendered this fact clear to a demonstration. 'Tis strange likewise to our natural apprehensions, that we should die in Adam, and be undone by our first parent's disobedience; nor less so, that we should be made alive in Christ, and derive our recovery from his imputed righteousness. But revela-

* The planet Venus.

† The satellites of Jupiter and Saturn.

tion makes this doctrine as certain as it is comfortable.

Ther. Does revelation make it certain?—This is a point not yet established, but taken for granted. I rather apprehend, that revelation in no place maintains it—in many places disavows it. Since your absence, Aspasio, I have spent some time in searching the Scriptures, with a particular view to this tenet; and I can find no such expression in the whole Bible, as the imputation of Christ's righteousness. If it was so leading an article as you represent, surely it could not have been entirely forgotten by the inspired writers, nor utterly excluded from their body of divinity.

Asp. The very identical expression may not occur, and yet the doctrine be abundantly taught. I believe you never met with the word *resurrection* in any part of the Pentateuch, nor ever read the phrase *satisfaction* in all the New Testament. Yet our Lord fully proved the truth of the former from the writings of Moses; and you yourself have acknowledged the latter to be the unanimous sense of the apostles and evangelists.

In the Epistle to the Romans, we have express and repeated mention of a righteousness imputed. What or whose righteousness can be the subject of this assertion? Not the righteousness of angels: They are a superior class of beings, and have no such intimate connection with our nature.—Not the righteousness of eminent saints; This is the exploded error of Popery; and furnishes the Romish zealots with that chimera of arrogance and folly, works of supererogation.—Not any righteousness of our own: for it is positively declared to be without works, Rom. iv. 6. in which no works of our own have any concurrence, or the least share.—What other righteousness then can be meant, but the righteousness of our great Substitute, Surety, and Saviour, who took our nature, discharged our debt, and is therefore styled, “Jehovah our righteousness?” Jer. xxiii. 6.

Ther. This seems contrary to the whole tenor of the sacred instructions. What says the prophet? "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive," Ezek. xviii. 27. Here that greatest of blessings, the salvation of the soul, is ascribed to a departure from evil, and a perseverance in good; to a real alteration in a man's own temper and conduct, not to any fanciful application of some transmissive righteousness from another.

Asp. Let me ask my Theron, Is there no wickedness, but riot and debauchery, profaneness and injustice? Unbelief, though it may pass without censure or notice in a system of morality, is, in the volume of revelation, declared a capital crime. Our Lord, speaking of the Holy Spirit, mentions it as a signal part of his office, that "He shall convince the world of sin." Of what sin? Scandalous violations of moral rectitude? This were a needless employ. The light of reason is sufficient to evince such a charge, and the court of conscience is erected to pass the deserved sentence. Of sin, adds the heavenly Teacher, "because they believe not on me," John xvi. 9; on my death, as the cause of their forgiveness; on my righteousness, as the ground of their acceptance; on my Spirit, as the powerful principle of their holiness.

Unbelief treats God as a liar, 1 John v. 10; because it rejects the testimony which he has bore concerning his beloved Son. Unbelief tramples on the blood of Christ, and is a most contemptuous affront to all his saving offices. Unbelief would counteract the operations of the Holy Ghost; whose peculiar work it is, to testify of Christ, and make manifest his righteousness. Unbelief instigates (could we have thought it possible?) a child of dust, a slave of sin, to idolize himself and his own performances. To say all in a word, unbelief is that great, that comprehensive iniquity, which scornfully rejects, or impiously renoun-

ces, the most glorious method of salvation which Omniscience itself could devise.

The wicked man, therefore, never turns from his wickedness, till he turns, by a true faith, to Jesus Christ. Till then, he is a rebel against the gospel, however he may pay some specious and partial regard to the law. So flagrant a rebel, that he stands particularly excepted in the act of evangelical indemnity. For as "he that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; so he that believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him."*

Ther. What are the Psalmist's sentiments on this subject? Does not he represent the matter in a very different light? "Thou, Lord, art merciful; for thou rewardeth every man according to his," not another's, "works," Psal. lxii. 12.

Asp. Weighty saying! May it impress our very hearts! God is merciful, and therefore rewardeth. From whence it appears, that what we call a reward, is really an act of mercy rather than of justice. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift," (says the apostle, altering his style, and making a most important distinction,) the gift "of God is eternal life," Rom. vi. 23. The inspired penman subjoins, not *for*, but *according to*, every man's works. His works are the measure, not the meritorious cause. To merit, is the sole prerogative of the Saviour. To him it is owing, that our imperfect services are honoured with any acceptance; much more that they are recompensed with any reward.

Ther. Does not this exposition of yours clash with that truly generous acknowledgment of St Peter?

* John iii. 18, 36. The words are exceedingly emphatical, and no less awful. Not barely, he shall come into condemnation, but he (that believeth not) is condemned already. Though ever so civilized or refined in his outward conversation, he lies under a sentence of death, and is the object of divine wrath; which not only will visit him, but abideth on him. So that, wherever he may be, whatever he may do, the displeasure of the tremendous Jehovah hangs over him, like a dreadful destructive sword, which, if he dies in such a condition, will inevitably fall upon him, and cut him in pieces eternally.

“ In every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him,” Acts x. 35. Here it is undeniably evident, that acceptance with our Creator is founded on a man’s own piety and personal integrity.

Asp. Rightly to understand this text, we should inquire into the circumstances of the history. The apostle had been strongly and most unreasonably prejudiced in favour of the Jews; imagining, that the salvation of Christ, like the dispensation of Moses, must be confined to his countrymen. But now, having considered the purport of his late heavenly vision; having compared it with the angelic message delivered to Cornelius; and being made acquainted with the character of that valuable man; he breaks out into this truly catholic declaration: “ My prejudices are vanished. My sentiments are enlarged. From the instance before me, it is demonstrably certain, that God does not appropriate the blessings of his covenant to any particular person, family, or people. “ But, in every nation, he that feareth him, and,” from a principle of religion in the heart, “ worketh righteousness” in the life, “ is accepted;” so accepted, as to be an object of the divine favour, and an inheritor of eternal happiness.”

This, I think, is the exact meaning of the place. And let it be recollected, that no one truly fears, or can possibly please God, without faith, Heb. xi. 6. For which reason, it is necessary to suppose, that Cornelius, though a heathen by birth, had believed through grace. Nay, it is evident from the context, that he had heard of Jesus Christ; had some acquaintance with the design of his coming, and the execution of his office; * enough to be the ground of a real, though perhaps an infantile faith. The busi-

* See verses 36, 37. Indeed it could hardly be otherwise, since Cornelius was settled at Cæsarea, the residence of the lord lieutenant, and seat of the civil, as Jerusalem was of the ecclesiastical government. In a place of such general resort, so very remarkable an event could not be unknown, especially as Philip the evangelist had fixed his abode in that city. See Acts viii. 40.

ness of the apostle was, to lead this convert into the clear light and full privileges of the gospel; to ratify and confirm his title to them, by the sacred seal of baptism; and introduce him, as the first fruits of the Gentiles, into the Christian church.

So that nothing can be concluded from this passage, but that the glad tidings of Christianity are for Jews, for Gentiles, for all people; that faith, even when weak, is productive of good works; and when sincerely improved, will certainly be increased—"will go from strength to strength."

Ther. Does not our Saviour, in describing the process, and foretelling the issue of the last decisive trial, assign a kingdom to the righteous? assign it in this precise view, as a proper remuneration of their own good works; saying, in the most express terms, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat;" *for, &c. for, &c.* Matth. xxv. 30.

Asp. Be pleased to take notice of the expression. They are bidden to inherit; and what is freer than an inheritance? Observe also the reason alleged, and compare it with the rule of judicature. "He that believeth," saith the supreme Judge, "shall be saved." This is the avowed, the invariable standard, by which he proceeds in administering everlasting judgment. Accordingly, he confers eternal life on the righteous, as persons entitled to this great felicity, on the foot of his own gracious appointment.

For denotes, not the foundation, but the evidence of their right. "I acquit such a person," says the arbitrator in a judicial claim, "for the witnesses depose, that the debt is paid." The deposition, which answers to these righteous acts, is the proof; payment of the debt, which corresponds with Christ's perfect obedience, is the cause* of the discharge.

* The spring is come, says the countryman; for the orchard blooms, and the blackbird sings. The blooming of the trees, and the melody of the birds, were never supposed to create, only to characterise, the de-

“For ye have given, ye have abounded in all instances of duty to me, and love to your brethren; and thereby have manifested yourselves true believers.”

It may be further observed, that our Lord says not, ye have done it to your fellow creatures, but to “these my brethren,” Matth. xxv. 40. He commends not every random act of good nature or generosity; but such kinds of beneficence only, as carry the Christian stamp; were exercised to a disciple, “in the name of a disciple.” And these most evidently spring from faith; these undeniably attest its sincerity.

Ther. Are not these distinctions more subtile than solid?

Asp. To me they appear in no such light. If you think otherwise, let us appeal to those excellent persons themselves. The turn, the very remarkable turn of their sentiments, will fully decide our question. Do they lay any stress upon their own religious duties and beneficent deeds? Far from relying on them, farther still from pleading them, they bestow not a single thought upon them. Having fixed their hopes on the Rock of Ages, they forget these transient bubbles.* Nay, they wonder, that their exalted Master should condescend to make any honourable mention of such imperfect services.—O that we may be enabled, through the whole course of our lives, to follow the example of their piety! and, when we stand before the tremendous tribunal, to imitate their humility and wisdom! Their humility, in renouncing themselves, and disclaiming all desert of their own: Their wisdom, in reposing their whole confidence on the merits and righteousness of their Redeemer.

Ther. Our Lord makes no mention of this doctrine

lightful season. They are not its cause, but the proof of its taking place.

* Bubbles they are, compared with the all-glorious obedience of Christ, or considered in reference to the grand affair of justification before God. But as bubbles, or watery vesicles inflated with air, are the means of exhibiting the beautiful colours of the rainbow; so these services, though poor and defective, bear testimony to the existence of that precious grace—faith.

in his sermon on the mount. Whereas, if it had been so very material, he would at least have touched upon it in that comprehensive summary of true religion.

Asp. Our Lord says not a word concerning the sacrifice of his death. Neither is there a syllable relating to his intercession for transgressors. But are these articles of our faith to be deemed fictitious or superfluous, because they are not expressly inculcated in that admirable treatise of practical divinity?

However, upon a more attentive examination, perhaps, we shall find the point most strongly implied, though not distinctly specified; its necessity demonstrated, though its nature be not explained. The illustrious Teacher opened his mouth, and, with a peculiar solemnity, said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Matth. v. 3. But who are they? Not the persons who soothe themselves with the flattering conceit of the Laodicean church, "I am rich in obedience, and increased in spiritual goods," Rev. iii. 17. Those rather, who see their indigence, bewail their guilt, and hunger and thirst after the justifying merit of a Redeemer; who, from the very bottom of an humbled heart, confess, "Lord, I am no more able to conform all my conduct to thy most holy law, than I am capable of atoning for my innumerable sins. Christ must be my righteousness, as well as my propitiation, or else I am irrecoverably undone."

The inimitable preacher farther assures his hearers, that, "unless their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matth. v. 20. How must Christians exceed the Pharisees? Not only in being sincere, in having respect unto all God's commandments; but also in possessing a complete righteousness, such as the divine holiness can with complacency accept, and in which the divine justice may with honour acquiesce. Nor can this be any thing less than the perfect obedience of the great Mediator. St Paul's memorable testimony, concerning his attainments in the Pharisaical, and his hopes in the Christian state,

afford the very best comment upon this important declaration of our Lord. Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9.

Ther. The Oracle of heaven, you know, was once consulted upon that most momentous of all questions, How a person may ascertain his title to life and immortality? and what is the tenor of the sacred rescript? We are referred to the ten commandments; and, in the most explicit terms, with the most peremptory air, told, "This do, and thou shalt live," Matth. xix. 17, Luke x. 28.

Asp. That particular person, if you please, was referred to the ten commandments; not we, and mankind in general. Our Lord, in the preceding verses, had been informing his disciples, that they must receive the kingdom of God, or the grace of the gospel, and the blessings it proposes, as a little child. And this can hardly signify, in consequence of their own doings

Ther. "That particular person referred to! Not we, and mankind in general!" I do not understand your meaning, Aspasio.

Asp. You will observe then, that our Lord's reply was not an universal direction, but an answer, *ad hominem*, peculiarly adapted * to the young gentleman's application; which, however it may be admired, was none of the wisest. Instead of asking, "How shall a poor guilty mortal, who is every day offending, obtain forgiveness from the righteous God?" instead of saying, "How shall I, who am not able to think a good thought, make sure my title to an eternal weight of glory?" our querist demands, "What good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" The re-

* It is delightful to observe the *πολυποικιλες σοφιας*, the curious variety, yet the consummate propriety, of our Lord's conduct; how exactly this divine casuist suits his counsel to the different states and characters of mankind. The secure and presumptuous he sends to the law, that they may be humbled. To the contrite and penitent he preaches the gospel, that they may be comforted. When the Pharisee, full of self-conceit, stands up and says, "What shall I do?" the answer is, "Do all that is commanded." When the sinful woman falls at his feet, and speaks in tears the guilt of her life, "Thy sins are forgiven," is the gracious reply.

ly proceeds upon the inquirer's own principles ; " If you expect salvation upon such legal terms, know, that your obedience must be nothing less than a perfect conformity to the divine law. Perform all its precepts, in their utmost extent, and with an unre-mitted perseverance, then"—But, alas ! such perfection is too high for fallen creatures ; they cannot attain unto it. Necessarily, therefore, must they drop all such pretensions, and have recourse to some other method of justification.

Ther. Why did that " wonderful Counsellor," if such was the purport of his answer, express himself so obscurely ? Why did he not divert his promising scholar from this fruitless attempt, and put him in the right, the practicable way of obtaining salvation ?

Asp. This He did with the finest address, and in the most skilful manner. Had our Lord affirmed, " You are worldly ; you are covetous ; your riches are your god ;" such a charge would, in all probability, have been as confidently denied as it was plainly urged. Therefore He brings this specious hypocrite to a test,* which could not be evaded, and which was sure to discover the truth ; a test, which laid open the palpable and enormous defects of his so much boasted obedience ; which made it appear, that, instead of keeping all the commandments, this vain self-justiciary had not obeyed the very first ! but, amidst all his towering imaginations of himself, had been, and at that very instant was, a sordid grovelling idolater ; who preferred his transitory possessions on earth, to an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. Could any expedient be more suitable to the case ? or better calculated to reduce him, intoxicated as he was with pride, to a sober humble mind ; to beat him off

* *Math. xix. 21,* " If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor." This direction seems to be much of the same nature with that other part of our Lord's reply, " If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Both were personal ; both occasional ; both adapted to particular circumstances. The latter is no more the stated evangelical way to heaven, than the former is indispensably obligatory on all Christians.

from his false foundation, "the righteousness which is of the law;" and lead him to a reliance on the promised, the expected, the present Messiah?

It puts me in mind of my friend Sagacio's conduct, which seems to have some conformity with our Lord's procedure, and may possibly tend to illustrate its propriety.—Visiting one of his unlearned neighbours, he found him in company with a certain talkative stranger, who was haranguing, at an extravagant rate, on the wonders of astronomy. Sagacio soon perceived, that the chief furniture of this extraordinary adept, lay in a little acquaintance with the technical terms, and somewhat more than a little share of assurance. How should he bring the self-plumed sciolist to a little modesty of sentiment, and decorum of conversation? He took leave to ask, "What the word *astronomy* might signify?" The orator was struck dumb in a moment. He had never informed himself, it seems, that astronomy related to the order and regulation of the stars. This single question taught our minute philosopher more effectually than twenty lectures on the subject. It taught him his own ignorance; and that he had the very rudiments of his so much admired science still to learn.

Ther. What will you say to those famous passages in the epistle of St James; "By works a man is justified;" "Was not Abraham our father justified by works?" Jam. ii. 21, 24. Can any words be plainer in their meaning? Or, can any meaning be more directly opposite to the whole scope of your argumentation?

Asp. This I would say, Theron: The passages you quote, when detached from the context, may seem inconsistent with the declarations of another apostle. As a limb, when wrenched from its natural situation, appears with an air of disproportion. Whereas, reduce the dislocated part, and it will recover the symmetry of its shape; it will harmonise exactly with the animal system. Replace likewise these assertions; consider them in connection with the whole paragraph; and

they will be found, if not unisons, yet perfect concords with the strain of St Paul's teaching.

What is the point which St James undertakes to illustrate; to distinguish a genuine from an insincere faith? "If a man say, he hath faith," James ii. 14; this is mentioned as the boast of some hypocritical professor. So that the apostle is evidently dealing with a pretender to the precious gift; and therefore replies, "Shew me thy faith;" prove the reality of thy claim; prove it to me and to the church, to thy fellow-creatures and fellow-christians. If unproductive of righteous and godly works, we must pronounce it spurious, worthless, dead.

Having detected the counterfeit, he proceeds to describe the sterling. The grand characteristic of which is, a frame of mind, and a course of action, corresponding with the doctrine believed. By this touchstone, the faith of our renowned progenitor was tried; and, being tried, was "found unto praise, and honour, and glory." "Was not Abraham our father justified by works?" Justified! How? As to acceptance with the supreme Judge? No: this was effected long before the Patriarch offered up Isaac. But when he exercised that heroic act of self-denial, resignation and obedience, then his justification was evidenced to all his contemporaries, and to all generations. "His faith was made perfect;"* answered its proper end; and appeared to be of the true, the triumphant, the scriptural kind; since it overcame the world, overcame self, and regarded God as all in all.

Upon the whole, St Paul speaks concerning the justification of our persons; St James concerning the justification of our faith. † St Paul describes the

* *Evilumbr.* In this sense, I suppose, we are to understand St John's aphorism: "He that doth righteousness, is righteous;" manifests the truth of his conversion, and justifies his profession from the charge, and from the suspicion of insincerity, 1 John iii. 7.

† That the expression used by St James signifies this declarative justification, is plain from 1 Tim. iii. 16, where the apostle, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, says, *Jesus Christus*, He was justified in or by the Spirit; declared to be the true Son of God; manifested on earth, and recognised from heaven, as the undoubted Saviour of the world.

manner of being justified before the all-seeing God ; St James points out the proof* of a justified state, as it is visible to men. The former proceeds from the immaculate righteousness of Christ, placed to our account ; the latter consists in the fruits of righteousness adorning our life. Rightly understood, therefore, these passages are not in the least contradictory to the epistles of St Paul, or to the scope of my argumentation. But are a seasonable caveat, and a proper preservative, against misunderstanding those, or perverting this.

Ther. I wish you would read that concise, but judicious, abridgment of true religion, comprised in the fifteenth psalm. The sacred penman, for his own, and for the information of all mankind, asks, " Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon thy holy hill ?" To this most interesting inquiry, the following verses are a full and satisfactory answer. The whole of which turns upon the discharge of moral duties ; " walking uprightly, and working righteousness." Without a syllable, or a single hint, concerning the very superior excellence of faith, or the extreme necessity of a vicarious obedience.

Asp. I have often read, and I well remember, that beautiful, that instructive Psalm. And I beg leave to observe, once for all, with relation to such passages of the Old Testament, that they suppose the persons, whom they describe, to be convinced of their natural corruption, to be humbled under a sense of their actual guilt, and to live in a conscientious observance of the expiatory sacrifices : all which had an invariable reference to Christ, and derived their whole virtue from his mediation.

* A very little reflection, I should imagine, must convince every unprejudiced reader, that St James cannot possibly be stating the method of justification before the infinitely righteous God ; because he never so much as mentions the death of Christ, " who made his soul an offering for sin ; to whom give all the prophets witness, that whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins ; and besides whom there is no other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved." Could an apostle so absolutely forget his Lord ; and in a case, where every other inspired writer acknowledges him, nay, acknowledges him to be ALL IN ALL !

Would any of the Jewish saints, think you, have dared to advance a plea for eternal blessedness, upon the foot of their own conformity to such moral directions; neglecting, at the same time, the sacrifices of the three great festivals, or a believing improvement of the daily oblation? By no means. They were, and they would acknowledge themselves, deplorably defective: They would plead the promise of free grace, and fly to the blood which God himself had appointed to make an atonement for their souls. By such sentiments, and such a conduct, they reduced to practice the very essence of our doctrine; disavowing their own deeds, however virtuous or religious; and trusting in the strength of Israel, "the Lord our righteousness," who alone fulfilled all the precepts contained in this excellent formulary of duty; who was also the substance of every purifying and of every propitiatory rite.

Ther. Has not the sacred writer expressly said, at the close of the Psalm, "Whoso doth these things, shall never fall?"

Asp. He has; and this, I apprehend, is his meaning: "Persons of such a temper, and such a practice, bear the marks of God's children, and are meet for his glory. Accordingly, they shall never fall either into total apostacy here, or final condemnation hereafter. They are now heirs, and in due time shall be possessors, of his eternal kingdom."

But you will take notice, that all these duties and qualifications only characterise, not constitute, the inheritor of heaven. You will likewise advert to another very remarkable circumstance in the description: "He setteth not by himself, but is lowly in his own eyes."* Or, as the more expressive original speaks,

* Psal. xv. 4. בְּכַדְעוֹשׁ יִכְתָּאֵם. I cannot say that I admire the Bible translation of this clause: "In whose eyes the vile person is contemptible." Methinks, it does not savour of the tender and benign spirit of our religion, which teaches us to honour all men, to despise no one's person, but only to detest the wickedness of the wicked.

Should the sense I have opposed have its weight, the sense I have preferred is incomparably weightier. If, to despise the vile, is a reli-

he is despicable and vile in his own sight. So far from aspiring to self-justification, that he even condemns and abhors himself; and falls down, as a most unworthy wretch, at the foot of infinitely free grace.

Ther. I cannot but think it is the current doctrine of Scripture, and I am sure it is one of the first principles which the light of nature teaches,—That the most high God must necessarily love righteousness, and take pleasure in the righteous.

Asp. If the light of nature was to publish a gospel, I believe it would be formed upon your plan: it would bestow favour only on the innocent, the virtuous, and the holy. But the gospel of Christ runs in a very different strain: This brings pardon for the condemned, and blessings for the accursed: This is health to the sick, and recovery to the ruined. “The Lord hath anointed me,” saith its divine Author, “to preach good tidings to the meek,” who are humbled under a sense of their sinfulness. “He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,” who are wounded with conviction of their undone state—“to proclaim liberty to the captives,” the wretched captives of Satan; “and the opening of the prison to them that are bound,” bound in the chains of ignorance, impotence, and misery. *

gious act; to think meanly of ourselves, is a much more advanced, and a far more difficult instance of true religion. This is to copy the highest pattern of human excellence, who, notwithstanding his very superior attainments, accounted himself less than the least of all saints, nay, the very chiefest of sinners.

* Isa. lxi. 1. Upon this passage of Isaiah, I would beg leave to observe, that the word *meek* seems not to answer or convey the prophet's idea. By *the meek*, we are inclined to think of persons endued with that placid and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. This might discourage many people, who know themselves to be destitute of such a gracious habit. This might lead others to suspect, that some amiable disposition is previously necessary, in order to receive the benefits of redeeming grace; which is a very mistaken, and will prove a most uncomfortable, forbidding notion.

The original מַעֲבֹרִים signifies, in this place, the afflicted; not so much those who are beautified with meekness, as those who are oppressed with misery, spiritual misery especially; not excepting even those who are slaves to their own unruly passions. The Lord Jesus never finds, but

As I am myself a most unworthy sinner, you must not be displeased, if I espouse the cause of those unhappy creatures. Yet, though a friend of sinners, I am no enemy to the righteous. I entirely agree with my Theron, in allowing, that the most high God necessarily loves righteousness. Only I want to be informed, where this admirable and lovely quality is to be found? Not among the Gentiles: They have swerved from the dictates of natural conscience. Not among the Jews: They have broke the holy commandment delivered on mount Sinai. Not among Christians: For, if God should enter into judgment with us, we could not answer him one of a thousand. In the kingdom of Ethiopia, or in the country of the Moors, where will you find the native whites?

The Son of God found none among the race of Adam, that were entitled to the character of righteous. He who gave himself a ransom for all, makes no application to such persons.* Why? Because he sullenly disesteemed personal goodness, or was unable to distinguish the excellency of inherent virtue? No; but because he knew, that, amiable as these qualifications are, they have no existence in the human heart, till the sinner, reconciled by his death, be sanctified also by his Spirit.

You remember, perhaps, that remarkable answer, which the Spartans once returned to a threatening embassy from some of the neighbouring states. Nothing could be more concise; and, I think, nothing was ever more spirited and significant.

Ther. Those neighbours gave them to understand, makes people meek. Meekness is one of the fruits of his Spirit; one of the blessings which he bestows on the unworthy.

The whole paragraph is a description of extreme wretchedness. What can be more distressed than the man, whose outward circumstances are impoverished and ruined; whose spirit is broken under the weight of his calamities; who is taken captive by the enemy, is thrown into a dungeon, and loaded with irons? This is the prophet's representation, this is the picture of unconverted sinners; and to these, to these Christ Jesus is a ransom, a deliverer, a portion.

* *Math. ix. 13,* "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

by their ambassadors, "That, if they entered their territories, they would burn their towns; make the inhabitants prisoners; and spread destruction wherever they advanced." To which insolent menace, the brave Lacedemonians made no other reply than—*If*.

Is this the story to which you refer?

Asp. The very same. And when you are speaking of human righteousness, as the cause of our acceptance with the eternal God, I would borrow the language of a Spartan. *If*, shall be my reply.—*If*, seclusive of the obedience, and independent on the Spirit of Christ, you can furnish yourself with this endowment; or *if* you can carry your righteousness to that perfection, which may equal the purity of the law, and comport with the majesty of the Lawgiver, then trust in it; let it be the ground of your confidence, and seek no better foundation.

But whoever shall, in this manner, seek for his recommendation to the favour of God, will act like the mistaken countryman in Horace; who, being unable to ford the river, took up a resolution to wait till the stream was all run by:

" At ille
Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis ævum." *

Ther. Here, I fancy, we must take leave of your countryman. If he adheres to his resolution, we shall find him in the very same situation, when breakfast is over; and may resume our subject, just where it is discontinued.

* Vain man, desist; such flatt'ring hopes forego:
It flows, and flows, and will for ever flow.

DIALOGUE VII.

Ther. To me, who have spent the greatest part of the winter in town, these scenes of the country are inexpressibly pleasing. Take who will the gilded saloon, and the silken settee; so long as I can shelter myself under the canopy of such a spreading beech, and use one of its coarse, mis-shapen roots for my seat.

'Tis true, we see no longer those splendid brocades, and elegant toupees, which distinguish the Park and the Mall. But we have, full in our view, a multitude of honest rustics, pursuing their cheerful labours in yonder meadow; some mowing the luxuriant herbage; some raising it into regular cocks; others loading their waggons with the hay, or clearing the ground with their rakes. The ground, cleared of its soft incumbrance, appears fresh and green, like another spring. While the exhalations of the tedded grass, floating in the air, give a rural perfume to the gale. And which, my *Aspasio*, which are the most valuable objects? The little labourers of the hive, that enrich themselves, and regale their masters? or the gay flutterers of the garden, whose whole life is nothing but sport; and their highest character is, to be insignificantly pretty?

Asp. In this retirement, we hear none of the wanton and corrupting airs of the opera; no, nor the majestic and ennobling melody of the oratorio.* But we have a band of music stationed in the grove, and a concert of native harmony warbling from the boughs. We are entertained with the music which charmed

* "Majestic and ennobling:"—This, I think, is the true character, and expresses the real tendency, of the oratorio. Nevertheless, it may not be improper to observe, that if we carry a trifling or irreligious spirit to the entertainment; if we attend to the musical airs, but disregard those sacred truths, which enter into the composition; such a behaviour will be little better than a profanation of holy things. I fear it will be a species of taking God's adorable and glorious name in vain.

the human ear long before Jubal found out his instruments, Gen. iv. 21, and thousands of years before Handel composed his notes. The bulfinch, and a multitude of little tuneful throats, strike the key. The thrush below, and the sky-lark responsive from above, diversify and exalt the strain. The blackbird, somewhat like the solemn organ, with notes perfectly mellow, and gracefully sonorous, crowns the choir; while the turtle's melancholy voice, and the murmuring water's plaintive tone, deepen and complete the universal symphony.

This is the music, which constituted the first song of thanksgiving, and formed the first vocal praise, that the all-gracious Creator received from his new-made world. This is neither the parent of effeminacy, nor a pander for vice; but refines the affections, even while it amuses the imagination.

Ther. All the entertainments of nature are calculated to secure our innocence, as well as to gratify our fancy. And what is another very agreeable circumstance, those gratifications which afford the sublimest pleasure are exhibited gratis; while those which enervate the mind, and debauch the affections, must be dearly purchased. Every one cannot gain admittance into the boxes or the pit, when some celebrated tragedy is brought upon the stage: But every one may behold the beauteous exhibitions of spring, and the finished productions of autumn. All may contemplate the machinery of nature, and the wonders of creation; thereby enjoying a far more exquisite amusement, without any of the guilt, or any of the danger.

The inhabitants of yonder villages have never beheld the splendid procession, which solemnizes the coronation of a monarch; nor the gaudy illuminations, which distinguish the anniversary of his birth. But they see, almost every morning, a much nobler spectacle displayed in the east. They see the great ruler of the day, or rather the envoy from day's eternal Sovereign, making his entry amidst the spaces of the sky. The heavens are strewed with colours, which

outvie the pinks and carnations. The grass is decked with dew drops, and every plant is strung, as it were, with pearls. All around, the darkness retires, and sweet refreshing gales arise. At length the magnificent luminary appears. And what is all the ostentatious pomp of kings? what is all the glitter of the most brilliant court? compared with his transcendent lustre? This spectacle we may behold, without loss of time, or prejudice to health. Nay, we cannot behold it, without improving one, and redeeming the other. So beneficial are even the pleasures which nature yields; so serviceable the very diversions to which she invites!

Asp. Thus gracious is the Almighty Maker, in the constitution of material things. The substantial and the valuable are open to every one, are accessible by all. Only the tinsel and the trappings are the property of a few, the poor prerogative of wealth.

No less gracious is God, in the disposal of spiritual favours. These are infinitely more excellent, and yet are equally free. We are invited to buy them, "without money and without price," Isa. lv. 1. What do you give for the benefits of the rising sun, or the delights of this rural melody? The case is much the same, with regard to the righteousness by which we are justified, and all the blessings of salvation.

Ther. This brings to our remembrance the countryman whom we left on the banks of the river. And, for aught I can see, Theron and the rustic are pretty much upon a footing: the first as far from acceding to your notions, as the last is from gaining his point.

Asp. Have you any objection, Theron, to these gifts of nature, because they are neither purchased by your money, nor produced by your own toil?

Ther. But who can ever expect to obtain pardon, and acceptance, and eternal salvation, at so cheap a rate? It seems to be all delusion, Aspasio.

Asp. So cheap! Then you would pay somewhat, I perceive, by way of price. But give me leave to ask, What price did you pay to God your Maker, for

fashioning you in your mother's womb? what price have you paid to God your Preserver, for upholding you ever since you was born? or what price do you think of paying to God the supreme Proprietor, for the ground on which you tread, for the air in which you breathe, for the light by which you see? Just the same price must you advance to God your Saviour, for all his justifying merits.

Both these and those proceed from the same Benefactor. They are all absolutely necessary, either for the welfare of the body, or the happiness of the soul. And they are all vouchsafed on the same free terms. For thus saith the prophet: "His going forth," in the dispensation of the gospel, "is prepared as the morning." Christ, with all his precious privileges, "shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth," Hos. vi. 3. However, if you are acquainted with a different, or a better way, be so good as to communicate your knowledge.

Ther. Some, you may observe, depend upon their inoffensive behaviour. They live peaceably. They do no harm to their neighbours. They are guilty of no gross offence against God. And why should they not hope to obtain his favour? They apprehend the prophet Samuel establishes their hope, when he makes this solemn appeal: "Whose ass have I taken? whose ox have I taken? or whom have I defrauded?" 1 Sam. xii. 3. Nay, they imagine, that our Lord himself has authorised their expectation, by giving this character of Nathaniel: "An Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," John i. 47. A freedom from outward injustice and inward hypocrisy, is all the qualification, applauded in the one case, avowed in the other.

Asp. This negative goodness (if it deserves to be called goodness) was a plea for the empty Pharisee. But none, I presume, would choose to be associated with such a companion, either in character here, or in condition hereafter.

Samuel, in the place you mention, is vindicating himself only to his fellow creatures, and only in the

capacity of a magistrate. He speaks not of his justification before the Judge of quick and dead. This, he well knew, must be derived from another source, and must rest upon a firmer bottom.

The "Israelite without guile," was a person who not only abstained from every sin, but performed every duty; and without any wilful neglect of the one, or any allowed indulgence of the other. This instance, therefore, will by no means prove the sufficiency of your negative righteousness, which seems to have just the same degree of excellency, as a fountain that never issues in water, or as a cloud that never descends in rain.*

Ther. In this particular, *Aspasio*, your sentiments are mine. But I would add morality to civility; the virtuous to the inoffensive conversation. And if we not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well; if we use temperance, exercise charity, and keep all the commandments to the best of our power, is not this a sufficient foundation for our hope?

Asp. Yes, *Theron*; if, as you add morality to your civility, you add perfection to both. Otherwise you must be ranked, not among the claimants, but among the delinquents. You have no title to a reward, but stand in need of pardon.

It is a principle of justice, founded on the unalterable constitution of things, that the debtor be acquitted when he has paid the debt. But supposing him, instead of gold, to bring iron; instead of talents, to return pence; instead of defraying, to increase the score daily; can he then reasonably expect, or legally claim a discharge?

With respect to such an obedience, we may pass our verdict in the figurative, but very expressive language of *Isaiah*: "The bed is shorter, than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower, than that he can wrap himself in it," *Isa.* xxviii. 20. It can neither give rest to the alarmed conscience,

* "Vel lyra quæ reticet, vel qui non tenditur arcus."

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nor afford protection to the guilty soul. If we have nothing better to plead, we shall not be able to lift up our heads in the last decisive judgment; but "must enter into the rock, and hide ourselves in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty," Isa. ii. 10.

Ther. We will go a step farther, and take in the exercise of devotion. We will read God's word, pray to his divine Majesty, and regularly attend on his public worship. Here now are social accomplishments and moral virtues, completed by the performance of religious duties.

Asp. Completed! I fear that expression will scarcely abide the test of a single query. Have you then performed all your duties, with that ardent love of God, and undivided view to his glory; with that adoring gratitude to the blessed Jesus, and that child-like dependence on his Spirit, which the nature of things requires, and the Scriptures of truth enjoin? If not, your duties, be they moral or religious, or both, are far from being complete; nay, they are utterly defective, and, for that reason, absolutely insufficient for your justification. They are clipped or sophisticated coin; and will that be current in the world of glory?

Ther. Allowing them to be defective, they are at least sincere. And though not free from all alloy, yet if they bear the image and superscription of integrity, why should they be rejected as "reprobate silver?" Jer. vi. 30; why should they not obtain the currency you mention?

Asp. "Alas!" says a judicious and admired writer, "the imperfections of our best services daily forfeit the blessings of time. How impossible then is it, that the sincerity of them, amidst so many frailties and defects, should purchase the glories of eternity!"

Ther. Be your writer ever so judicious, I can confront him with others, equally capable of judging, and diametrically opposite in opinion. What says that wise and brave man, the successor of Moses, and ge-

neralissimo of the armies of Israel? Joshua, I am sure, declares himself on my side: "Fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity," is his last solemn charge to the people, Josh. xxiv. 14. Even the great apostle, on a review of his ministry, makes it matter of self-gratulation, that he "had his conversation in godly sincerity," 2 Cor. i. 12.

Asp. You have quoted the charge delivered by the servant; be pleased to recollect the protestation made by the master: "Not for thy righteousness," says Moses, "or for the uprightness of thy heart, dost thou go to possess their land," Deut. ix. 5. Even an earthly Canaan was not given to the Israelites, as the reward of their own, either outward obedience, or inward sincerity. Much less can we expect the kingdom of immortality, on account of any uprightness of our intentions, or piety of our actions.

However, as the doctrine of sincerity is the favourite and the fashionable tenet, I will conform a little to the taste in vogue. You shall have no reason to complain, that I am either a cynic or a stoic.* Let it suffice us to be sincere. Only let us refer ourselves to the apostle, for a description of this darling qualification: "That ye may be sincere, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God," Phil. i. 10, 11.

Here are three properties of acceptable sincerity.—It must bear fruits, "the fruits of righteousness;" and bear them abundantly, so that we may be filled with them. The branch and the fruits must derive,—that its vigour, these their flavour, and both of them their very being, from the all-supporting, all-supplying root Christ Jesus. Then, instead of terminating in self-justification, they must redound to the honour of God. It is not said, these shall justify you, but "these shall glorify your Father which is in heaven."

This kind of sincerity can never be too highly esteemed, nor too zealously encouraged. But this, you will observe, flows from the grace of Christ, and

* The cynic had no complaisance; the stoic was quite inflexible.

issues in the glory of God ; therefore does but very poorly attest, either the sufficiency of human ability to perform good works, or the sufficiency of human works to win the prize of our high calling.

Ther. Do you then exclude all works ? Will you make a mere nothing, both of our moral endowments, and of your evangelical obedience ?

Asp. They are excluded, both the one and the other, from all share in justifying us ; yet not by me, but by an authority, to which there can be objection, and from which there lies no appeal. Speaking of salvation, thus saith the wisdom of God, “ Not of works.”

Ther. Works of the ceremonial law, I suppose. These, we all acknowledge, are, under the Christian dispensation, as a bond cancelled, or an act repealed. But sure you will allow a better office, and a nobler character, to that course of obedience which is regulated by the commands of Christ.

Asp. St Paul will allow it no such office, as that for which my Theron is pleading. “ Ye are saved,” says the apostle. Ye are delivered from wrath, reconciled to God, and made heirs of his kingdom. How ? “ By grace, through faith,” Eph. ii. 8. Grace, like a magnificent sovereign, from the riches of his own bounty, and without any respect to human worthiness, confers the glorious gift. Faith, like an indigent petitioner, with an empty hand, and without any pretence to personal desert, receives the heavenly blessing.

Both grace and faith stand in direct opposition to works, all works whatever : whether they be works of the law, or works of the gospel ; exercises of the heart, or actions of the life ; done in a state of nature, or done under the influences of grace ; they are, all and every of them, equally set aside in this great affair.

That the bill of exclusion is thus extensive, or rather quite unlimited, appears from the reason assigned : “ Lest any man should boast,” Eph. ii. 9 ; that all

pretence of glorying may be cut off from fallen creatures; that the whole honour of obtaining salvation may be appropriated to him, "who hid not his face from shame and spitting."—And is he not worthy, unspeakably and infinitely worthy, to receive this unrivalled honour, as a recompense for his unparalleled humiliation?

Ther. All our good works, we allow, are recommended by Christ. They prevail for our justification only through his merits. So that we still depend upon the Redeemer; and, by this means, pay him the highest honour.

Asp. Depend upon the Redeemer! No, my dear friend; you rely upon your own pious acts and moral qualifications. They, they are your grand recommendation. The office consigned over to the divine Jesus, is nothing more than to be (as it were) master of the ceremonies. He may have the credit of introducing your fine accomplishments, with a kind of graceful air. But is this an office suited to his incomparable dignity? Was it for this that he bowed the heavens, and partook of our nature? Was it for this that he became subject to the law, and obedient unto death? Only for this, that he might usher in our own endowments with a plume and a scarf? Surely, Theron, you can never entertain such low thoughts of the incarnate God, and of Christ's mediatorial undertaking.

Ther. Neither can I entertain such low and vilifying thoughts of our own virtuous attainments. They distinguish persons of eminence and worth from the sordid wretch and execrable villain, just as the noble faculty of reason distinguishes the man from the brute.

Asp. To deny good works the merit of justifying us, is very different from vilifying them.—You are going to build a new house, Theron. Pray, do you intend to hew your timber from the flimsy tendrils of the vine?

Ther. No, certainly. *

Asp. Because you don't think its feeble shoots proper to form the beams, and support the roof, of your intended edifice; do you therefore affront them, depreciate them, or disallow their usefulness? By no means. They may beautify your walls with their ornamental spread, and enrich the desert with their delicious fruit. This is an office suitable to the nature of the plant; and from this it receives sufficient estimation, without pretending to the honours of the oak.

Virtuous attainments, I own, are a considerable distinction in the present state of things. And, what is a higher encomium, (I shall now outshoot you in your own bow,) they will distinguish the true believer from the hypocritical professor, even at the great tribunal. But let them be content with their province, and not intrude upon the Saviour's prerogative. To effect justification, be his; to discriminate the justified, theirs. Neither let them elate their possessors with a vain conceit of themselves; who, though they were meek as Moses, holy as Samuel, and wise as Daniel, must confide in nothing, but the boundless mercies of the Lord; must plead nothing, but the infinite merits of his Christ.

This is the theology, both of the Psalmist, and of St Paul. They derive the blessedness promised in Scripture, not from the shallow stream of human accomplishments, but from the inexhaustible ocean of divine grace. "Blessed is he whose unrighteousnesses are forgiven, and whose sins are covered," Psalm xxxii. 1.

Ther. Will Aspasio, then, like many of our modern disputants, mutilate the holy word? industriously display what seems to strengthen his argument, but artfully secrete what tends to overthrow his scheme? How could you forget, or why should you suppress, the following clause, "And in whose spirit there is

* *No, certainly.*—Perhaps it may be worth our while to observe, that this is the meaning of a very obsolete expression, which occurs in our translation of (*εὐκ αἰδᾶ*) Luke xvii. 9, *I trow not.*

no guile?" Was you afraid it would demolish your opinion; and point out an upright, honest mind as the cause of this blessedness?

Asp. Far was I, my dear Theron, from any such groundless apprehensions; and equally far from all such delusory designs. "Shall I talk deceitfully for God?" Job xiii. 7. His sacred cause does not need it, and his exalted Majesty would disdain it. No; I would condemn my tongue to eternal silence, rather than speak a syllable, either to conceal or disguise the truth.

Most readily we will admit the sentence you mention, "In whose spirit there is no guile." It is evident from the context, that these words are not descriptive of a person, in whose heart and conversation there is no iniquity; but of a penitent sinner, whose mouth freely confesses the iniquity of them both; confesses without any reserve, or the least attempt to palliate: which, instead of invalidating, corroborates my argument; since, according to your own allegation, the highest merit consists in a free acknowledgment of sin, or a total renunciation of all worthiness.

Ther. When, therefore, we join repentance to all our other works; lament our deficiencies, and implore forgiveness; surely this must be available with a merciful God, and cannot but entitle us to the happiness of heaven.

Asp. How strange does it sound, at least in my ears, for poor, miserable, guilty creatures, to talk of entitling themselves to the happiness of heaven, by any deeds of their own! when it is owing wholly to God's rich forbearing mercy, that they are not transmitted to hell; owing wholly to God's free preventing grace, that they are enabled to think a good thought.

But not to enlarge upon this consideration, I would ask, whether those penitential exercises were attended with a hearty detestation of sin, and an utter abhorrence of the sinner? Ezek. xxxvi. 31. If they were, you would then renounce yourself universally. You would never think of placing the least dependence on

any thing of your own; nay, you would even loath yourself. If they were not, then your very repentance falls short, and is to be repented of. It is as if "one came to the press-fat for to draw out fifty vessels, and there were but twenty," Hag. ii. 16. It is, if I may continue the prophet's metaphor, and the prophet's language, "the scant measure, which," in this your spiritual traffic, as well as in the affairs of secular commerce, "is abominable," Mic. vi. 10.

Or, should your repentance be without a failure and without a flaw, I must still say to my friend, as our Lord replied to the young ruler, "One thing thou lackest." In all these acts of humiliation, you have only taken shame to yourself; whereas a righteousness is wanting, which may magnify the law, and make it honourable. Should God, without insisting upon this, pardon and reward, he would not act according to his glorious character; nor be, at once, "a just God, and a Saviour," Isa. xlv. 21. And if you can find this righteousness, "either in the depth, or in the height above;" in any person or any object, save only in the imputed obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ; I retract whatever I have advanced.

Ther. A preacher and an author has lately assured us, that we are to be "accepted of God, and saved by our own obedience." If so, I need not scruple to repeat my assertion, that our own duties, especially when accompanied with repentance, are a real and proper foundation for life eternal.

Asp. Then the apostle was under a great mistake, when, treating of Christ and his merits, he ventured to assert, "Other foundation can no man lay, save that which is laid, even Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11.

Ther. If you will not credit a modern preacher, I can produce a decision, made by one of the most ancient and authoritative synods: "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life," Acts xi. 18. Repentance unto life is their unanimous voice, and my unexceptionable voucher.

Asp. I can easily guess the assembly to which you

refer. But I can hardly grant it the venerable name of a synod. It consisted of some Judaizing converts, who adhered, with a tenacious and bigotted zeal, to the Mosaic rites. However, though I might scruple my Theron's appellation, I readily acquiesce in their determination.

It is not said, those Gentiles were penitent, and therefore God granted them life. This should have been the language of the assembly, in order to establish my friend's way of thinking. - On the contrary, they were dead in sin. God, of his free goodness, granted them repentance; which is both the beginning, and a substantial part of true life; even of that life, which is founded on justification, is carried on by sanctification, and completed in glory.

I would farther observe, that repentance is a turning of the heart. And when it is repentance unto life, it is a turning of the heart from every other object, to the great and sole fountain of good, Christ Jesus, Acts xix. 4. Were men slaves to sensuality? When they repent, they are turned to Christ, for refined and heavenly affections. Were they wont to confide in themselves, and their own works? As soon as they truly repent, they turn to Christ for a better righteousness; and, thereby, for everlasting acceptance with God. In short, they turn from every false stay, and fly only to Christ; depend only on Christ; looking, not to their own tears of humiliation, not to their own duties or graces, but "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," Jude 21.

Ther. Suppose it should be wrong to expect such a vast reward, as the inconceivable glories of heaven, on account of our own duties; yet to set them wholly aside, to allow them no influence at all, not so much as the least co-operation, in turning the scale; this is an excess on the other hand. If the former is presumption, the latter is fanaticism.

Asp. I must confess, I do not thoroughly understand what you mean by fanaticism. Neither is it of

much significancy, to enter upon the disquisition of an obnoxious term. I would only maintain, that on us unworthy sinners, whatever is bestowed by the righteous God, is bestowed, not as a debt * to our works, but as the donation of pure grace.

Ther. I think, it is sufficiently of grace, if we acknowledge good works to be wrought by the assistance of the divine Spirit; and then admitted, together with our Saviour's merits, as a recommendation to the divine favour.

Asp. The Pharisee could make his acknowledgments for the assistance of grace: "God, I thank thee," was his language. Yet this did not exempt him from the charge of pride, nor secure him from the sin of boasting. Besides, if good works are wrought by the operation of the divine Spirit, they draw a bill upon our gratitude, not upon the bank of heaven; they render us the obliged, not the deserving party. To think or teach otherwise, is errant Popery, † however it may lurk under a veil of Protestantism.

You bring to my mind a memorable story.—Two persons were travelling through the deserts of Arabia; the one utterly unarmed, the other wore a sword, and carried a musket. As the place was exceedingly dangerous, the latter, solicitous for the safety of his companion, makes him a present of his fire-arms; which was no sooner done, than a lion espies them, and advances fiercely towards them. The foremost discharges his piece, and wounds their horrid aggressor. The wound neither killing nor disabling, only enrages the monster. He seizes the unfortunate marksman, and is upon the point to tear him limb from limb. His

* Bestowed as a debt, is, I must allow, somewhat like jargon. But perhaps jargon and inconsistency may not be without their propriety in this place, as they tend to shew the genius of that doctrine which would connect such contradictory ideas.

† Good works, says a champion for the church of Rome, are "*mercatura regni cœlestis*,—the price we pay, or the commodity we barter, for the kingdom of heaven." Another zealot of that communion declares, "*Cœlum gratis non accipiam*: It shall never be said, that I receive heaven merely as a matter of alms." So speaks he! but, blessed be God, we have not so learned Christ.

Fellow traveller flies to his succour, snatches up the carabine which dropt from the other's hand, and fells the ravenous beast to the ground; then, drawing his sword, stabs him to the heart, and rescues his friend.

The lion thus slain, they take off the skin, which he who slew the lordly savage claims as his own. "No," says his grateful friend, "as you did part of the execution with my weapon, I insist upon half of the shaggy spoil. I expect satisfaction likewise for the loss of my piece, which you broke in the encounter." To obtain both, he commences a law-suit against that generous associate, who not only gave him the weapon, but saved the prosecutor from the very jaws of destruction.

Ther. If I had been judge, I should, without much hesitation, have determined such a cause. Instead of costs and damages for my plaintiff, I should have transmitted the wretch to the pillory.

Asp. I believe all the world would applaud your sentence. Only be pleased to remember, that the procedure, on which you so justly animadvert, is the very picture of our excessive unreasonableness, if we presume to write ourselves creditors, and the divine Being debtor; because he has delivered us from the bondage of corruption, and enabled us to perform the duties of godliness.

Theron paused, as somewhat struck by the representation. After a short interval, Aspasio resumed the discourse.

Believe me, my dear friend, salvation, both in the root and all its branches, is entirely of grace. Or else believe me, for the many cogent testimonies of Scripture, which most circumstantially ascertain this great truth. Election is of grace; "Having predestinated us into the adoption of children," not on account of human worthiness, but "according to the good pleasure of his will," Eph. i. 5. Equally gratuitous is our effectual vocation; "God hath called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace," 2 Tim. i. 9. Faith, with all

its precious fruits, is owing to the same cause: "By grace ye are saved through faith," Eph. ii. 8. From hence springs justification, together with all its attendant privileges: "Being justified freely by his grace."* This is the origin of regeneration, and every living principle of godliness: "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth," Jam. i. 18. The consummation of bliss flows from the same all-supplying source: "The gift of God is eternal life." † It is, in every respect, a gift, not only without, but contrary to, all desert of ours.—So that the foundation is laid in the riches of grace; the superstructure is reared by the hand of grace; and when the top-stone is brought forth, when our felicity is completed in the kingdom of heaven, the everlasting acclamation will be, "Grace, grace unto it!" Zech. iv. 7.

This is that glorious gospel, which human learning could never have discovered; which carnal reason cannot understand; which the wisdom of this world accounteth foolishness; which the envy of the devil, and the pride of man, will always oppose.

Ther. What say you to the opinion which Ouranius so strenuously maintains? That we are justified, not by the merits of Christ imputed to us, but by Christ himself formed in our hearts. And Ouranius is none of your proud or carnal people. His writings are remarkable for their strict piety, and his life is as exemplary as his principles.

Asp. You know, Theron, I have nothing to do

* Rom. iii. 24. *Δωσαν τη αυτη χαριτι.* One of these words might have served to convey the apostle's meaning. But he doubles his assertion, in order to give us the fullest conviction of the truth, and to impress us with a sense of its peculiar importance: "Freely by his grace."—Is it possible to find out a form of speech, that should more absolutely exclude all consideration of our own works and obedience? or that should more emphatically ascribe the whole of our justification to free, uninfluenced, sovereign goodness?—To find an expression more forcible for the purpose, will puzzle invention itself. But this expression we find used, again and again, by the sacred writer: *Η δωρεα η χαριτι,* Rom. v. 15. *της χαριτος & της δωρεας,* Rom. v. 17.

† Rom. vi. 23, *Χαρισμα,* which is a more expressive word than *δωρημα,* and conveys the idea of freest favour.

with the persons of men, but with the truths of the gospel. Ouranium, though eminently devout, may be mistaken : And, if this is his way of thinking, he quite misapprehends the doctrine of grace.

What is written in the oracles of scripture? "The Lord justifieth the ungodly," Rom. iv. 5. What is implied in the maxim of Ouranium? He justifieth the holy, the heavenly, the Christ-like. "A man is justified by faith," Rom. v. 1, says the secretary of heaven. He is justified by works, says the pen of Ouranium: only let them be works of a superior order; such as are internal, spiritual, and wrought by the operation of Christ on the soul. According to this notion, every one is justified by his own love, his own purity, his own zeal. Whereas, an unerring writer has most solemnly declared, "That by one man's obedience," many myriads of sinners, even all the redeemed world, "shall be made righteous," Romans v. 19.

This notion, I think, is legalism in its greatest subtilty, or highest refinement. It disannuls the merit of Christ; it vacates all imputation; and makes our salvation to consist wholly in the work of sanctification. Against which, if you remember, I entered my protest, in one of our first * conferences. And now, having ventured to animadvert on the tenets of others, it may reasonably be expected, that I should give an account of my own faith. "I am justified; my soul is accepted; not because Christ has put his laws in my mind, but shed his blood for my sins; not because I myself am enabled to walk in all godly conversation, but because the Lord Jesus has fulfilled all righteousness as my surety."

Ther. I am for neither of the extremes. The middle way is most eligible. This is what sound sense approves, and the sacred system authorises. "Whoso believeth on me," says our Lord, "shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life," John iii. 15. "Blessed," adds the beloved disciple, "are they who do his

* See Dialogue II. p. 55.

commandments; that they may have a right to the tree of life; and may enter in, through the gates, into the city," Rev. xxii. 14.

Conformably to these texts of scripture, I would neither reject our Redeemer's merits, nor repudiate good works. As this shady tree, and these cooling breezes, unite their properties, to render our situation agreeable; so those two causes, acting in conjunction, exalt us to the favour of God, and constitute us heirs of heaven. God himself has joined them. And I must urge my remonstrance in our Lord's own words, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Asp. Would you then make impotence itself a co-adjutor with omnipotence? Does this humble the sinner? Does this exalt the Saviour? No: it is a most injurious infringement of his mediatorial dignity. Instead of excluding, it evidently introduces boasting. In consequence of such a scheme, it would be said by the inhabitants of the heavenly world, "Thanks to our blessed Redeemer for this happiness! yet not to him only, but to our own righteousness also."

Can you imagine, that the obedience of Christ is insufficient to accomplish our justification? Must its efficacy be reinforced by the accession of our works? And what are these works of ours, that they should enhance the value, the immense value, of our Redeemer's! Maimed, tarnished, worm-eaten things; eaten by the worms of self-seeking, self-admiring, self-love; tarnished by a thousand vanities; maimed by ten thousand negligencies. To join these in commission with our divine Master's righteousness, would be infinitely more disgraceful, than to tack the beggar's rag on the monarch's robe; would be altogether as needless; as to dream of augmenting the sea, by the drops of our bucket.

Ther. Worm-eaten! What reason have you to represent our acts of obedience under this sordid and shameful image?

Asp. I thought you could hardly brook this dis-

paraging expression. It is somewhat like petty treason against the dignity of man. My reasons I would postpone to some other opportunity; when, if you please, we will give the cause a full hearing.

At present, to make amends for this vile slander, I will suppose your works to have no defect; nay, to have all the perfection which you yourself could wish. Will you glory on this account? You are too modest, I am sure, to avow or patronise such a practice: Yet, if we say or think concerning any attainments of our own, "This is the ground on which I expect to escape condemnation, and inherit life; we do, in the most offensive, though not in the most explicit manner, glory.*

Or, will you reckon, that these services, because faultless, are, in any degree, meritorious? Let us hear our Lord's decision in the case. "When ye have done," not only some, but "all those things which are commanded you." And where is the man, or what is his name, who, in any nation, or in any age, has done all that is commanded.

Where shall I find him? Angels, tell me where?
 Shall I see glories beaming from his brow?
 Or trace his footsteps by the rising flowers?

Yet even in such a case, if all this were performed, what shall we say? We are no better than unprofitable servants: we have done nothing more than what was our indispensable duty to do, Luke xvii. 10. And have, on this footing, just the same claim to honours and rewards, as the negro slave, after the despatch of his daily business, has upon the estate or the wealth of an American planter.

Ther. But what say you to those passages of Scripture which I have quoted? You have given them a

* "Omnis causa justitiæ et salutis est materia et objectum *καυχνησιως*. Unde apostolus: Nam si Abraham ex operibus justificatus est, *καυνησιν καὶ χριστιανισμῶ*, i. e. Whatever is the cause of righteousness and salvation, is a real and proper foundation for glorying. Therefore the apostle acknowledges, "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory," Rom. iv. 2.

hearing, but no answer. They, I do insist upon it, expressly assert, therefore incontestably prove, an union of Christ's merit and our own works in the business of salvation.

Asp. It is written in the book of Revelation, "Blessed are they that do his commandments." And wherefore? Because the obedience of faith is attended with a real blessedness on earth, and demonstrates our title to eternal blessedness in heaven. It is though not the purchase, yet the evidence of our right to the tree of life.

All this I acknowledge. But where, I beseech you, does the Scripture join the obedience of Christ and the obedience of man, as mutually conducive to the justification of a sinner; the Scripture utterly disavows such a copartnership, and asserts what our homily expresses; "Surely, there can be no work of any mortal man (be he ever so holy) that shall be coupled in merit with Christ's most holy act."* The Scripture steadily declares, that, in this greatest of transactions, Christ is not an accessory, but the principal; nay, that he is *all*. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that, through this" illustrious and exalted "Person,† is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things." Through this Person, without any partner or coadjutor. - By him; not by him and our works jointly, but by him solely; without the concurrence of any other action, or any other agent. This was typified by the high-priest, when, on the solemn day of expiation, he went into the tabernacle *alone*, and made the figurative atonement without any associate, Lev. xvi. 17. From all things; by him they are wholly, as well as solely, justified; freed from every charge, whether of omission or commission;

* Homily on Good-Friday.

† Acts xiii. 38. *Δια τούτου*, the word *man* is not in the original. So that I think, "this illustrious and exalted Person," is the fullest and most exact translation.

and rendered, not in part only, but completely acceptable.

I hope, therefore, you will no longer consider the supremely excellent Jesus, as a partial cause of our justification. What would be the consequence, if a person should fix one foot on the bank of yonder river, and rest another on the fluid stream?

Ther. He must unavoidably fall.

Asp. And what says our divine instructor to those double-minded Galatians, who could not believe themselves safe and complete in the merits of Christ alone, but must be seeking some other foundation, on which to repose a share at least of their confidence? He says, and they are awful words; they call for my Theron's most serious regard; "Ye are fallen from grace," Gal. v. 4.

Let me intreat my friend to beware of this error. I think it is the prevailing error of our times; and so much the more dangerous, because it is somewhat specious. To pour contempt upon the blessed Jesus, with the libertines and deists, would be shocking to a mind that retains the least reverence for sacred things. Entirely to set aside the meritorious efficacy of his undertaking, with the Arians and Socinians, would be afflictive to a conscience that is impressed with the least sense of sin. Whereas, to erect our merits on the foundation of Christ's; to be found in his, yet not renounce our own righteousness; this is both plausible to our reason, and pleasing to our vanity; this seems to honour the divine Saviour, even while it gratifies human pride. But this is an egregious falsehood, and cannot stand: this is an abominable idol, and must be laid in the dust. Christ, like the real mother of the child, will have the whole, or none, 1 Kings iii. 26; the whole—unshared—unrivalled, undiminished glory of our salvation.

Let me once again entreat my dear Theron, to beware of this error. It is the main pillar in the Roman heresy, and the master-policy of the Popish Machiavilians. "Christ hath merited, that we may merit," is

their grand maxim, and their grand delusion. Hence come their penances and their pilgrimages; hence the hypocritical mortifications of some, and the extravagant austerities of others; this enriches their shrines, and fills their cloysters. And to those seminaries of superstition, let it be banished, let it be confined. There let them raise their scaffolding, and try to enlarge the dimensions of the sky; there let them kindle their flambeaux, and attempt to increase the lustre of the sun. And when they have affected this easier task, then will we Protestants follow their example, and adopt their system; then will we also think of adding our own righteousness, by way of supplement, to the dignity and efficacy of our Lord's.

Ther. If we are justified wholly by our Lord's righteousness; if nothing need be added, if nothing can be added to its all-comprehending fulness; what becomes of the generally received opinion,—that Christ obtained for us only a possibility of being saved, or put us into a capacity of acquiring salvation?

Asp. It will be discountenanced and overthrown, as extremely dishonourable to the Redeemer, and no less uncomfortable to the redeemed. When Christ procured our pardon, and recovered our title to life, it was all his own doing. "Of the people there was none with him," Isa. lxiii. 6. In both cases his work was perfect. Hear his own testimony; "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," John xvii. 4. Should you want an explication of these words, I refer you to the comment of an apostle; "He," that is, Jesus Christ, "has obtained eternal redemption for us," Heb. ix. 12. This was his work, and it is fully executed. He has, he has obtained eternal redemption; and left nothing for his people, but to accept the glorious purchase, and live as becomes the redeemed of the Lord. •

This truth is written, as with a sun-beam, in the pages of the gospel; and sounds, as with a voice of thunder, in the songs of heaven. "Salvation to our God," they cry, "that sitteth upon the throne, and

to the Lamb," Rev. vii. 10. Those saints in glory ascribe the whole—the whole of their salvation they ascribe to the grace of God, and to the blood of the Lamb.

Ther. Have not many of our ablest divines represented faith, obedience, and repentance, as the terms of acceptance? Christ, according to this account, procured not the blessing itself, but only the grant of easier conditions, on which it may be enjoyed.

Asp. What says that sublime Being, who gives the ablest divines all their wisdom? "My righteous servant shall justify many," Isa. liii. 11; not pave the way, or adjust the preliminaries, but despatch the very business; "shall justify." The terms of acceptance, for fallen and rebellious man, were, a full satisfaction to the Divine justice, and a complete conformity to the divine law. These, impracticable by us, were consigned over to Christ. By him they were thoroughly accomplished; and by this accomplishment of them, he purchased for us all blessings. Among others, he purchased the gift of faith, the grace of repentance, and ability to yield thankful, dutiful, evangelical obedience. These, therefore, are very improperly called, the terms, which are really constituent parts of our salvation.

To sum up all in a word—the whole tenor of revelation shews, that there are but two methods, whereby any of the human race can be justified. Either by a perfect obedience to the law, in *their own persons*; and then the reward is of debt: * Or else, because the Surety of a better covenant has satisfied all demands in their stead; and then the reward is of grace—There is no trimming or reconciling expedient.—You may chuse either of the two; but no third is proposed or allowed.

Ther. Was there not a different method for the ancient people of God?

Asp. None, Theron. In the state of primitive in-

* Rom. iv. 4. Pactional debt; founded on the promise of the covenant, not springing from any worth in the obedience.

nocency, a perfect and persevering observance of the divine command, was the condition of life and immortality. When, by the first grand apostacy, this became impossible; a free pardon, and gracious acceptance, through the blessed Jesus, were substituted in its stead. Which œconomy, like a fountain of life, was opened, when God promised "the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head," Gen. iii. 15. It ran like a salutary rivulet, through the antediluvian world;—continued its progress along the patriarchal age;—flowed in broader streams, under the Mosaic dispensation;—is derived down to us, abundantly enlarged by the coming of Christ, and the ministry of his apostles;—will be transmitted with an increasing spread, to the latest posterity;—nor ever cease to amplify and extend its influence, till, as the fountain is become a river, the river is augmented into an ocean; and "the knowledge of the Lord" our righteousness "fill the earth, as the waters cover the" abysses of the "sea." Isa. xi. 9.

There was, I confess, a diversity in the administration, but no difference in the nature, of the blessing. Jesus Christ, however variously manifested, was the "same yesterday," is the same "to-day," will be the same "for ever," Heb. xiii. 8. As it is the very same sun, which gleams at early dawn, which shines in the advancing day, and glows at height of noon.

My simile reminds us of the time, and leaves a most important doctrine upon our memories. Suppose we take the admonition, and begin to move homeward.

Ther. We need be in no hurry, Aspasio. My watch tells me, that we have half an hour good. Besides, I have something farther to allége, and from a very great authority, which seems directly contrary to your notion.

Asp. Just as you please, Thereon. If you chuse to stay, I am all compliance with your inclination; and, would truth permit, I should be all conformity to your opinion.

Ther. You know who it is that asks, "What doth the Lord require of thee!" And neither of us need be informed what it is that the prophet replies; "Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God," Mic. vi. 8. But I want to know, what you think of his passage?

Asp. I think it is absolutely inconsistent with your scheme. This passage inculcates humility. But your scheme is the very reverse of that amiable virtue. A self-justiciary walking humbly with God, is little better than a contradiction in terms.

The Lord has said, "Ye shall be saved by grace."* Your system replies, "No, but by our own works."—It is declared in scripture, "that the gift of God is eternal life." It is implied in my friend's doctrine, that this happiness is the wages of our own deeds.—"My Son shall have all the glory of a sinner's salvation," is the unalterable decree of the Most High. "We will have a share in the honour," is the language of your opinion.—Look, how wide therefore the east is from the west! so remote is such a strain of teaching from the practice of walking humbly with our God.

Ther. But consider, good Aspasio; have I not the prophet's authority for my opinion? Are not his words expressly on my side? Does he not mention those duties of morality and piety, as the appointed method of obtaining the divine favour?

Asp. He mentions, I apprehend, a solicitous inquiry. To which he gives a satisfactory answer; then subjoins a practical improvement of the whole. The inquiry is expressed in these words; "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be

* Eph. ii. 5. This text lays the axe to the very root of spiritual pride, and all self-glorying whatever. Therefore the inspired writer, foreseeing the backwardness of mankind to receive it, yet knowing the absolute necessity of its reception, again asserts (ver. 8.) the very same truth, in the very same words.

pleased with thousands of rams; with ten thousand of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Mic. vi. 7, 8. To which it is replied, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good" for this important purpose; namely, the Messiah; pointed out by all thy sacrifices, and described in the preceding chapter. Atonement for sin, and peace with God, are to be made by a better hand, and in a better way, than thou proposest. He, "whose outgoings have been from of old, from everlasting," Mic. v. 2; He, who is the Son of the Highest, and yet the seed of "her that travaileth," Mic. v. 3; He has undertaken, and will fully execute, this great office.

"And what doth the Lord thy God require of thee?" What temper, what conduct, what expressions of gratitude, from his people? who are reconciled through the blood of Christ, and admitted to the blessings of the new covenant.*—They are to testify their thankfulness, by the alacrity, uniformity, and constancy of their obedience; or by the conscientious discharge of every moral, social, and religious duty.

If this be a true interpretation of the text, instead of establishing, it overturns your cause.—But I have another objection to your method, perhaps more weighty than the foregoing.

Ther. Pray, let me hear it.—I am not so enamoured with my notions, but I can bear to have them censured; nor so attached to my scheme, but I can relinquish it for a better.

Asp. I would illustrate my meaning, by a common experiment in optics. When objects are viewed in a *concave speculum*, or in the hollow of a polished spoon, how do they appear?

Ther. Inverted.

* "Thy God," is the phrase. Which denotes an interest; implies an appropriation; and if the peculiar language of the covenant. "Thy God;" not made so by thy humble walking, but by an act of his own grace, previous to any obedience of thine. According to Theron's principles, the prophet should rather have said, Walk humbly (not with thy God, but) that he may be thy God.

Asp. Such is my friend's system of religion. He inverts the order of the gospel. He turns the beautiful building upside down; and lays that for the foundation, which should only be part of the superstructure.—Not so the apostle Paul. He, like a wise mason-builder, places Christ as the foundation-stone; and rears his edifice of practical godliness on that all-supporting basis.—Examine his epistle to the Romans; which is unquestionably the completest model of doctrine, and the noblest body of divinity, extant in the world.

He first discovers the depravity of our nature, and the misery of our condition. He, then, displays the method of our recovery by Christ, and the blessings freely vouchsafed in his gospel:—After which, he delineates the offices of morality, and enforces them by the most engaging motives; motives, drawn from the free, unbounded, loving-kindness of God our Saviour, and from the rich invaluable benefits of his grace.*—Privilege he plants as the root: from which, duty blooms, as the flower; godliness grows, as the fruit.

The same order is observed by St Peter, in his very concise, but very accurate map, of the way to heaven: “Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Christ,” 1 Pet. i. 2. First, the everlasting and electing love of the Father; then, the enlightening and renewing agency of the Spirit, who testifies of Christ, and applies his death to the soul, purifying the heart by faith; from

* This, I think, is the best platform for an evangelical catechism. The ruin of man, occasioned by sin; his recovery, effected by Christ; his gratitude, to be expressed by way of obedience. This plan is carried into execution by the palatinate divines; who have formed upon it a summary of catechetical instruction, than which I have met with nothing of the kind more clear and satisfactory; more edifying and animating; more exactly consonant to the benign spirit of the gospel, or better calculated to make mankind both holy and happy. This piece the reader may see, together with a judicious and very valuable exposition of it, in the Latin works of Henricus Altingius, vol. i. quarto; which, I believe, may be bought for a trifle, yet are more precious than gold.

whence, as from a fountain of living water, flows true sanctification, and every act of filial obedience, every species of real holiness;—all which, being partly defective, and partly polluted, must be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, and made acceptable by his dying oblation.

Ther. Is this the constant method in which the sacred writers represent the gospel salvation? Do they always observe this particular order, in arranging its doctrines and its duties? Or, is it not an insignificant circumstance, which goes first, provided we take in both?

Asp. To observe this order, I am persuaded, is no insignificant circumstance. It is of great consequence, both to our establishment and to our growth in grace. Is it a matter of indifference to the archer, whether he send the point, or the feather of his arrow foremost? Can he, in either case, hit the mark with equal ease and equal certainty?

I believe you will find, that the sacred writers, in all their evangelical discourses, invariably adhere to this order. Nay, it took place even under the legal dispensation.—When the Lord God published his law from mount Sinai; when he wrote it, with his own finger, on tables of stone; how did he introduce the precepts? how enforce their observance?—Let us attend to the preamble, which is the language of love, and the very spirit of the gospel: “I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,” Exod. xx. 2. “I have already delivered thee, with a mighty hand, from the most sordid and insupportable slavery. I have promised thee, for thy possession, the delightful country of Canaan, ‘a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations,’ Jer. iii. 19. Nay, I myself am thy portion; a God in covenant with thee; engaged, by an inviolable contract, and with the exertion of all my attributes, to do thee good. Therefore keep the statutes, the judgments, and ordinances, which I am now going to esta-

blish.”—Could there be a more winning inducement, or a more endearing obligation to obedience?

I might point out the same strain, running through the exhortations of Moses, and the songs of David; the sermons of the prophets, and the writings of the apostles. But this I wave, not through an apprehension of its difficulty, only from a fear of prolixity.—However, you will not think me tedious, if I produce one more instance from the great master of our schools: “For we ourselves were some time foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another,” Tit. iii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Here he sets before us a dismal but exact picture of our depraved and undone condition. Then he presents us with a delightful view of our redemption, both in its gracious cause and precious effects: “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared; not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he hath shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Having thus provided for our happiness, he then promotes our holiness: “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men.”

I make no comment * upon the passage; because

* Perhaps the reader will give me leave, though Aspasio has declined the office, to add a short expository stricture upon the most distinguished parts of this very important paragraph. I. We have the cause of our redemption; “not works of righteousness which we have done, but the kindness, the love, the mercy of God our Saviour.” II. The effects; which are, 1st, Justification—being justified, having our sins forgiven, and Christ’s righteousness imputed: all this, without any the least deserving quality in us; solely by his grace, and most unmerited goodness. 2d, Sanctification—expressed by the “washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;” whose influences purify the soul, as the washing of water cleanses the body; and introduce an improve-

I hope you will commit it, as a noble depositum, to your memory. Your own diligent meditation, accompanied with humble prayer, will furnish out the best exposition.—Only I would just remark, that the apostle, always consistent, always uniform, marshals his thoughts with his usual exactness. Good works are not disbanded, nor yet suffered to lead the van, but made to bring up the rear.* When he mentions these fruits of the Spirit, he mentions them, not slightly, as matters of small moment; but earnestly, as affairs of great importance. It is his desire and his charge, that all believers should be careful; † have their hearts upon the business; should use their best contrivance, and exert their utmost endeavours, not barely to practise, but to maintain; ‡ to be exemplary, distinguished, and pre-eminent in the exercise of every virtue, because this virtue, and those works, though not the ground of a reconciliation with God, are amiable in the eyes of all, and honourable § to the Christian pro-

ment into all the faculties of the mind, somewhat like that annual renovation and general smile of nature, which the return of spring diffuses over the face of the earth. III. The end and consummation of all; “that we should be made heirs of the heavenly kingdom; and live, now in the assured hope, hereafter in the full enjoyment, of eternal life.”

* The same order is observed by St John, Rev. xiv. 13, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.” Not go before, to open the everlasting doors, and give them admittance into the mansions of joy. But they follow them, when admitted: As the robe, which, on a king’s coronation day, flows from his shoulders, cannot but accompany him where-soever he goes. It may be pertinent, on the mention of this illustration, just to hint, that as it is not the robe of state which makes the king, so neither is it the external practice of holiness which makes the Christian. An union with Christ, an interest in his merits, and the indwelling presence of his Spirit; these, and nothing short of these, constitute the true Christian. Yet, as the royal robe is an attendant on majesty, and distinguishes the monarch; so practical godliness is inseparable from faith, and adorns the believer.

† *φρονιζουσι*. This is somewhat like that emphatical expression, which so often occurs in the Old Testament, *השמדו לעשות* “Ye shall observe to do;” ye shall be very diligent to fulfil; ye shall be very exact in performing.

‡ *Προεσθαι*. The reader may see this word more critically explained, page 168, in the note.

§ *Καλα*.

fession. They are also a necessary ingredient in personal happiness, and the apparent means of social usefulness.*

Ther. This view of the evangelical plan is, I must confess, new to me; and particularly your ordonnance of the epistle to the Romans.

Asp. If this be new, perhaps what I am going to advance may be strange.—We have been talking about acceptance with God; and debating, whether our own good works are the cause of this inestimable blessing. What will you say, if we can perform no good work, till we are interested in Christ, and accepted by God?

Ther. Say!—That this is razing foundations.

Asp. It is razing the wrong, the foundation falsely so called; which will certainly deceive as many as make it their trust. And is it not prudent, when we are building for eternity, carefully to examine the ground? Is it not friendly, to divert a man from the treacherous sand, and lead him to the unshaken rock? For this cause I said it once, and for this cause I say it again, That we can perform no good work till we are interested in Christ, and accepted of God.

Ther. Produce your reasons, Aspasio. And strong reasons they must be, which are forcible enough to support such an opinion.

Asp. The case seems to speak for itself. How can a man that is evil do works that are good? Would you expect to “gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” But let us hear what our unerring Teacher says: “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me,” John xv. 4. Nothing can be more express and full to our purpose. But that which follows is far more awful and alarming to our consciences: “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned,” John xv. 6. From which it appears, that the human heart is never actuated by good tempers, that the human life can never

be productive of good works, until a man is **ingrafted** into Christ; no more than a branch can bear **valuable** fruit, while it continues in a state of separation from the tree.* It appears also, that persons **alienated** from Christ are, and all their performances **too**, like broken, withered, rotten boughs; fit for nothing, but to be committed to the flames, and consumed from the earth. Both they and their services, far from being meritorious, are, in the estimate of heaven, worthless and despicably mean.

Ther. What! Are all the noble deeds, performed by the advocates for morality and lovers of virtue, worthless in themselves, and despicable before the Supreme Being? Worthless and despicable, (**grating** words!) only because they are not attended with the peculiarities of your faith? Can the want of this little circumstance change their nature, and turn their gold into dross?

Asp. My dear Theron, call not the circumstance little. It is sufficient, were your works more precious than gold, to debase them into tin, into lead, into dross. When the poor shepherd brought you, yesterday morning, a present of some wood-strawberries; bringing them, as an humble expression of his gratitude, they were kindly received. But if he had offered them as a price for your house, or as the purchase of your estate, how should you have regarded them in such a connection? No words can express the disdain you would have conceived. When Barnabas presented a sum of money to the apostles, for the supply of their necessities, and the relief of indigent believers, Acts iv. 37, it was welcome to them, and pleasing to their God. But when Simon the sorcerer offered his gold to Peter and John; offering it, not from

* This discovers an error, which is often committed, in our attempts to instruct little children. What is more common than to tell them, "If they will be good, God Almighty will love and bless them?"—Whereas they should rather be informed, "That they are sinners, but that God Almighty has given his Son to die for sinners; and, if they pray to him, he will forgive their sins, will make them holy, make them happy, and bless them with all spiritual blessings in Christ."

a principle of faith, but as an equivalent for the Holy Spirit; not in order to testify his thankfulness, but rather to play the huckster with heaven; it was rejected with the utmost indignation, Acts viii. 20.

I leave my friend to apply the preceding instances. Only let me beg of him to believe, that, if my words are grating, they are extorted by the force of truth. If I am obliged to blame what he calls good works, it is, as the great critic blames eloquence, "with the tenderness of a lover."—But my censure falls only on their faulty origin, and unbecoming aim. Let them spring from the grace of Christ, as their source; let them propose the glory of Christ, as their end; then, instead of putting a slight upon them, or giving them a bill of divorce, I would court, caress, and wed them. Whereas, if neither this end be kept in the view, nor that principle operate in the heart, I must persist in questioning the genuineness of their character, nay, in denying the very possibility of their existence. There may be a mimicry of holy actions. But it is mimicry only; as empty as the combs * made by those wasps, and no better than a flame that is painted.

I have an authority for this doctrine, which I think you will not offer to controvert.

Ther. What authority?

Asp. That of our church; who declares, in her 13th Article, "Works done before the grace of Christ, and inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasing to God; forasmuch as they spring not out of faith in Christ." Faith in Jesus Christ purifies the heart. Till this be done, we have neither disposition nor capacity for holy obedience. Nay, without faith in Christ, our persons are abominable; † our state is damnable; and how can any of our works be acceptable?

Such a one, you say, is honest in his dealings, tem-

* "Faciunt et vespæ favos."

† "To the defiled and unbelieving is nothing clean," Tit. i. 15. The apostle joins *defiled* and *unbelieving*, to intimate, that without a true belief, nothing is clean. The understanding and the conscience are polluted. Both the man and his doings are impure.

perate in his enjoyments, charitable to the poor. I allow it all. But unless these seeming virtues are referred to the glory of the supreme Jehovah; unless they flow from faith in the crucified Jesus; they may be acts of worldly policy, of selfish prudence, or Pharisical pride. They are by no means a pleasing oblation to the Lord Almighty. * Nay, instead of being acts of duty, and objects of approbation, they stand condemned in the Scripture, and are breaches of the commandment. They stand condemned in that Scripture; which declares, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. xi. 6. They are breaches of that commandment, which requires, "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 32.

Upon the whole, if we will submit to the determination of our established church, or acquiesce in the decision of our divine Master, we must acknowledge, that there is no such thing as a good work, till we are reconciled to God, and our persons accepted in his sight. Therefore to represent our own works as the means of reconciliation and acceptance, is both chimerical and absurd. Chimerical, because it builds upon a phantom, and takes for a reality what has no existence. Absurd, because it inverts the natural order of things, and would make the effect antecedent to the cause.

Ther. Before we quit this agreeable retreat, let me ask my Aspasio, what he proposes, by running down

* Might not this observation be made, with great propriety, in our infirmary and other charitable sermons? Should not the audience be exhorted to abound in acts of benevolence, from a grateful regard to the infinitely merciful and condescending Jesus? 2 Cor. viii. 9. Should they not, before all things, be directed to make sure their interest in the Redeemer's merits, that their persons may find favour, and their alms acceptance? Eph. i. 6. Should they not be admonished, that without this believing application to Christ, whatever they do, whatever they give, is worthless in the eye of their Maker, and will be fruitless to their own souls? Heb. xi. 6. In this respect our Saviour was eminently typified by the Jewish altar; on which every sacrifice, by whomsoever brought, was to be offered; and separate from which no sacrifice, however costly, could be accepted. Exod. xx. 24. Levit. xvii. 3; 4.

all those works, which are the produce of inward religion, and essential to true holiness ; whose excellency is displayed in the clearest, and whose necessity is urged in the strongest terms, throughout the whole Bible ?

Asp. I am far from running down works, which are the produce of inward religion, and therefore may be justly styled, “ works of faith, and labours of love.”* But I would caution my Theron and myself to take care, that our works be accompanied with those circumstances which alone can render them truly good. Let them arise from faith, and bear witness to love ; or else we shall have “ thistles instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley,” Job xxxi. 40.

I would also persuade my friend, and I would habituate myself, not to repose our confidence in any works whatsoever ; lest they prove a bruised reed, that breaks under our weight ; or a pointed spear, that pierces us to the heart. We shall never be like the church, “ who comes up out of the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved,” Cant. viii. 5, so long as we bolster up ourselves with a conceit of personal righteousness. This was the error, the fatal error of the Pharisees ; this the film which blinded the eyes of their mind, and sealed them up under the darkness of final unbelief.

Besides, my dear Theron, if you expect to be saved by your own duties, you will be loath to see the worst of your condition. To see the worst of your condition, will be a dagger to your hopes, and as death to your soul. You will therefore be inclined to “ daub with untempered mortar,” Ezek. xiii. 10. Instead of

* “ Works of faith, and labours of love,” 1 Thess. i. 3. How finely are good works characterized in this place ! though it be only *en passant*, transiently, or by the bye. And how judiciously are the true distinguished from the counterfeit ! Works which are done in faith, works which proceed from love ; these, and these only, the apostle signifies, are really good. As some noble river, though pressing forward to the ocean, nourishes many a fair plant, and suckles many a sweet flower by the way ; so the sacred writers, though principally intent (as here) upon some different point, yet drop incidentally such valuable truths, as cheer the believer’s heart, and make glad the city of our God.

acknowledging the deep depravity of your nature, and the numberless iniquities of your life, you will invent a thousand excuses to palliate your guilt; and, by this means, erect a wall of partition between your soul and the merits of your Redeemer; which will be a greater inconvenience, a more destructive evil, than to cut off all supply of provision from an army, or even to intercept the sun-beams from visiting the earth.

Ther. Now you talk of armies, I must observe, that though I have scarce been able to keep my ground in this argumentative action, I cannot allow you the honour of a victory, as a retreat is very different from a rout.

Asp. I would also remark, that my friend has changed the intended plan of our operations; has almost continually acted upon the offensive; while my part has been only to sustain the shock. At our next encounter, you may expect to have the order of battle reversed. I shall direct my forces to begin the charge. Put yourself therefore in readiness for a brisk attack.

Ther. You act the fair enemy, Aspasio, I must confess, in thus giving the alarm, before you make the assault.

Asp. This hostility may appear fairer still, when I assure you, that my weapons aim not at the destruction of your comfort, or the demolition of any valuable interest. Only they would be "mighty through God, to pull down the strong holds" of unbelief, and bring every self-exalting, every rebellious thought, "captive unto Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; captive, in a professed submission to his righteousness, as well as a dutiful subjection to his commands. And, when such is the tendency of the campaign, it will be your greatest advantage, to lose the victory; it will be better than a triumph, to acknowledge yourself vanquished.

DIALOGUE VIII.

Ther. OUR last conversation ended with a challenge. To decline or delay the acceptance of it, would look like cowardice in me, and be a piece of injustice to you, *Aspasio*. Therefore I am now ready to give you all the satisfaction which a gentleman can demand. Only, as the weather continues hazy, I believe my study must be the place of action.

Asp. A challenge, *Theron*!

Ther. What, Sir! do you boggle? would you eat your words, and play the poltroon?

Asp. Perhaps I may have an inclination to follow the example of a brother hero, who ran away from the field of battle, just as his comrades were advancing to charge the enemy; and when called to an account for his behaviour, right worthily alleged, that his retreat proceeded, not from any timidity of mind, no, but from a concern for the public good; "for," quoth he, "if I had been knocked on the head to-day, how should I have been able to fight for my country to-morrow?"

You smile, *Theron*, at my doughty warrior, and his sage maxim. But, since you have glanced at a certain modish custom, give me leave very seriously to assure you, that, if the affair was to be determined by sword and pistol, I should reckon such a conduct a resolute refusal at least, not at all unmanly, but the truly wise and gallant behaviour. For surely it can never be an instance of wisdom, to hazard my life, at the mere caprice of a turbulent ruffian, who is a stranger to all the principles of humanity and generosity, but a slave, an abandoned slave, to his own ungovernable passions. Surely it can never be an act of real bravery, to expose my person, because some fool-hardy practitioner in the fencing-school is desperate enough to risk his. The gentleman, the true gentleman, should exert a becoming dignity of spirit, and scorn to set his

welfare on a level with that of an inconsiderate and barbarous bully. *

Ther. But honour, my Aspasio, honour is at stake. Better to lose our life, than forfeit our reputation. Better to be in a grave, than to be the jest of every coffee-house; and perhaps pointed at, as we pass the streets, for mean-spirited, sneaking, or, as the gentlemen of the sword so elegantly speak, white-livered animals.

Asp. Forfeit our reputation! Amongst whom, I beseech you?—A few rash and precipitate creatures; the pupils of La Mancha's knight; the sons of chimera † and cruelty; whose applause is infamy, and their detraction the highest praise they can bestow. From every judicious and worthy person, your conduct will be sure to gain approbation, and your character esteem. When Cæsar received a challenge from Antony, to engage him in single combat, he very calmly answered the bearer of the message: "If Antony is weary of life, tell him, there are other ways to death, besides the point of my sword." Who ever deemed this an instance of cowardice? All ages have admired it as the act of a discreet and gallant man, who was sensible of his own importance, and knew how to treat the petulant and revengeful humour of a discontented adversary with its deserved contempt.

Barely to lose our life, is the smallest of those evils which attend this mischievous practice. It is pregnant with a long, an almost endless train of disastrous

* Aspasio calls the person who gives the challenge a bully. And such, notwithstanding all the maxims of fantastical and false honour, he will certainly be found, when tried at the bar of reason or justice. For, if the most impetuous, irrational, and brutal barbarity is allowed to constitute a bully, he has an indisputable title to the character, who, on account of a mere punctilio, or some slight affront, would destroy a life that might be of service to society, might be a blessing to various relatives, and is intimately connected with a blissful or miserable immortality.

† This kind of gentry are styled, in a Book with which they have little or no acquaintance, but whose maxims will be had in reverence when their names are lost in oblivion, כְּנוֹשְׁתָּי "the sons of bluster," or "the children of noise," Jer. xlviii. 45.

consequences to parents, wives, children, friends, associates, and the community. It is an infallible expedient, to be deprived of the favour of the infinite God, and to be excluded from the joys of his eternal kingdom. It is the sure way to become an object of abhorrence to the angels of light, and be made the laughing-stock of devils in their dungeons of darkness.* Shame, everlasting shame, shall be the reward of such gallantry, "the promotion of such fools," Prov. iii. 35.

Ther. With regard to this point, I am entirely of your opinion, Aspasio, however I may differ in other particulars.

Asp. Say you so, Theron! Would you then tamely submit to affronts, insults, and injuries?

Ther. As to the trifling affronts of a peevish, incontinent tongue, I would treat them with a superior scorn. And when thus treated, they are sure to recoil, with the keenest edge, and severest weight, upon the impotent malice which offers them. The wretch should see, that I could pity his misery, and smile at his folly. But as to injuries, the case is otherwise. Should any one assault my person, it is at his peril. He would find, and perhaps to his smart,

Et nos tela manu, ferrumque haud debile dextra
Spargimus, et nostris sequitur de vulnere sanguis.—VIRG.

Here the fundamental and everlasting law of self-preservation calls upon us to play the man. And I am sure, Christianity does not require us to yield our

* "Let me tell you with confidence," (says an excellent person, addressing himself to one of these unhappy desperadoes,) "that all duels, or single combats, are murderous; blanch them over (how you list) with names of honour and honest pretences, their use is sinful, and their nature devilish." See the select works of Bishop Hall, in one volume folio, p. 526; where the reader will find a happy mixture of true oratory and sound divinity; a rich vein of fancy, and a sweet spirit of piety; contemplations upon the histories of Scripture, (which, I think, are our prelate's masterpiece) almost as entertaining and instructive, as the subjects illustrated are important and wonderful. Notwithstanding a few stiff or antique phrases, I cannot but esteem the works of this author among the most valuable compositions extant in our language.

throats to the knife, or open our breasts to the dagger.

But to retire, to deliberate, to sit down, and indite a formal challenge, seems to me altogether as savage and iniquitous, as to assault on the highway. He that demands my money on the road, or extorts it by an incendiary letter, or decoys me into the snare by a forged and counterfeit note, is stigmatised for a villain; is abhorred by every person of integrity; and, when detected, is rewarded with a halter. Why should we reckon the headstrong bravo less injurious, who makes his attempt upon my very life, and thirsts, with insatiable fury, for my blood?

Asp. He allows you a fair chance, it is said.

Ther. A chance! Of what? Either of falling a sacrifice to his rage, or of imbruing my hands in his blood. Which is neither more nor less, than reducing me to a necessity of launching into damnation myself, or of transmitting a fellow-creature to eternal vengeance. And is this an extenuation? this a mitigating circumstance? It really proves the practice so inexcusably wicked, that nothing can be pleaded in its defence. The very argument used to justify the horrid deed, inflames its guilt, and aggravates its malignity.

'Tis pity, but the legislative authority would interpose for the suppression of such a flagrant wrong to society, and such a notorious violation of our benign religion. Why should not the laws declare it felony, to make the first overture for a duel? Since it is always more heinous, and frequently more pernicious; is always murder in the intention, and frequently issues in double destruction; the one inflicted by the stab of violence, the other executed by the sword of justice.

Might it not at least be branded with some mark of public infamy, or subjected to a severe pecuniary mulct? so that a gentleman of spirit and temper might have it in his power to return the compliment of a challenging letter with some such answer:—

“ SIR,

“ However meanly you may think of your life, I set too high a value upon mine, to expose it as a mark for undisciplined and outrageous passions. Neither have I so totally renounced all that is humane, benevolent, or amiable, as to draw my sword for your destruction, because you have first been overcome by precipitate and unreasonable resentment. You have given me an opportunity of acting the gentleman and the Christian. And this challenge I accept, as a note under your hand for five hundred pounds; * which will very soon be demanded according to law, by, Sir, Yours, &c.”

Asp. But to resume the proper subject—the nature of our engagement: which I now recollect, and which was explained, when I ventured to give, what you call the challenge. As it is not my Theron, but the obstacles of his faith, and the enemies of his felicity, that I am to encounter, perhaps I shall have courage to stand my ground. And, instead of violating all the obligations of equity, honour, and conscience, I shall certainly evidence my love to my friend; may possibly promote his truest good.

Ther. I do not see, how this can be effected by your late attempt. You undertook to run down all works of righteousness, as absolutely unable to find acceptance with God, and equally insufficient to commend us to his favour. It is for the credit of

* Might not the refuser of a challenge be dignified with some honorary distinction, resembling the civic crown amongst the ancient Romans; since, by his cool and temperate bravery, he saves one life from the sword, another from the halter?—Was some honorary distinction, on the one hand, united to a pecuniary forfeiture on the other, I cannot but think, they would prove an effectual method to check the progress of this destructive evil. It would break the teeth of malice with her own weapons, and turn the artillery of revenge upon herself. Those detestable passions would be loth to indulge themselves in this horrid manner, if it was made the sure way to ennoble and enrich the object of their rage.

N. B. The civic crown was an ornament assigned to those soldiers, who had in battle rescued a fellow-citizen from impending death.

these, which Aspasio has depreciated, that I enter the lists.

Asp. Pray, what is the standard, to which these works of righteousness must be conformed, and by which their sufficiency may be determined?

Ther. The moral law, doubtless; I know no other standard of righteousness, nor any other way of becoming righteous.

Asp. You will, I hope, ere long be acquainted with another way. At present, I agree to your proposal. We will join issue on this footing; and try the merits of our cause, before this tribunal. Yourself shall be the judge. I will only ask your opinion, and refer myself to your decision. You see, I am soon weary of the military style. I had obtruded myself on a part which I was not qualified to act; and now resume a more becoming character.

Ther. If you place me on the bench, I shall allow of no such digressions; but shall keep you close to the subject.

Asp. Has your lordship then considered the nature of the divine law, and the extent of its obligations?

Ther. It obliges all persons, and comprises the whole duty of man. It forbids all immorality, and enjoins every virtue.—Are not these your sentiments?

Asp. They are, when somewhat enlarged.—The empire of the law, as prohibitory of evil, extends both to the outward and inward man. It takes cognizance of the actions; it judges every word. All the operations, and all the dispositions of the soul, come under its sacred jurisdiction. It is indeed, a discernor, not only of the working thoughts, but also of the dawning intentions; and arraigns them both at its awful bar. “It pierces even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit,” Heb. iv. 12. Not the inmost recesses of the breast are too deep for its penetration; nor all the artifices of the deceitful heart too subtle for its detection. Other laws forbid the unclean act; this condemns the wanton eye, and irregular desire. Other laws punish the injurious deed; this passes sentence

the unguarded sallies of passion, and the most secret notions of resentment. So eminently true is that remark of the Psalmist, "Thy commandments are exceeding broad," Psalm cxix. 96. Tell me now, Then, has your obedience been commensurate to this extensive platform of duty?

Ther. If the law be so very extensive—

Asp. Nay, my friend, you cannot suspect, that I have stretched, to an undue extent, the obligations of the divine law. Since this interpretation is established by an authority too great to be controverted; too clear to be misunderstood; even by the authority of Christ himself; whose sermon upon the mount is a professed exposition of the commandments, and maintains, in the most explicit manner, all that I have advanced. So that, if our Lord's exposition is just, I think it will be neither rash, nor uncharitable to say, There is not a man upon earth, but has broke them all.

Ther. Are we all idolaters then? all adulterers? all murderers? Shocking to imagine!

Asp. It is shocking, I confess. But how much more so, if such delinquents expect justification by their own deeds?

Ther. This is no proof of your assertion, my good friend.

Asp. To be fond of gold; to be enamoured with the world; to love any creature more than the ever-blessed Creator; are instances of idolatry, Col. iii. 5. Phil. iii. 19, not quite so gross, but altogether as real, as to set up idols in our temples, or pay acts of adoration to senseless images. Have you always been free from this apostasy of the affections?

Our infallible Teacher has informed us, that unreasonable anger, contemptuous language, and malevolent wishes, Matth. v. 22, are each a species of murder, and not many removes from the assassin's deadly stab. Have you been always meek, always benevolent, and never chargeable with this mental homicide?

We are farther assured, that the indulgence of inordinate desire is, in the impartial estimate of heaven, as the commission of the impure deed, Matth. v. 28. And evil concupiscence of every kind violates that sacred precept, "Thou shalt not covet."* Has your will been invariably upright, and warped with no irregular inclination? Are you wholly unpolluted with this adultery of the heart?

I wait not for a reply. I have often heard you plead guilty to all—yes, to all and every of these charges respectively.

Ther. Where, and when, Aspasio?

Asp. In the most sacred place, and on the most solemn occasion. And not you only, but a whole multitude

* Rom. vii. 7. Aspasio's observation brings to my remembrance a remarkable incident; which, as it is quite pertinent to our purpose, the reader will allow me to relate. It passed between a friend of mine and a certain ingenious stranger, into whose company he happened to fall. The gentleman was extolling, at an extravagant rate, the virtue of honesty; what a dignity it imparted to our nature! how it recommended us to the Supreme Being! He confirmed all by a celebrated line from Mr Pope,—

"An honest man's the noblest work of God."

"Sir," replied my friend, "however excellent the virtue of honesty may be, I fear, there are very few men in the world that really possess it." "You surprise me!" said the stranger. "Ignorant as I am of your character, Sir, I fancy it would be no difficult matter to prove even you a dishonest man." "I defy you." "Will you give me leave, then, to ask you a question or two, and promise not to be offended?" "Ask your questions, and welcome." "Have you never met with an opportunity of getting gain by some unfair means?" The gentleman paused. "I don't ask, whether you made use of, but whether you have met with, such opportunity? I, for my part, have, and I believe every body else has." "Very probably I may." "How did you feel your mind affected on such an occasion? Had you no secret desire, not the least inclination, to seize the advantage which offered? Tell me, without any evasion, and consistently with the character you admire?" "I must acknowledge I have not always been absolutely free from every irregular inclination, but—" "Hold, Sir; none of your salvos. You have confessed enough. If you had the desire, though you never proceeded to the action, this shows you was dishonest in heart."—This is what the Scripture calls concupiscence. It defiles the soul. It is a breach of that law which requireth truth in the inner parts; and unless you are pardoned through the blood of Christ, will be a just ground of your condemnation, when God shall judge the secrets of men.

of self-condemned criminals. Our church, you know, has ingrafted the decalogue into her public service; and taught all her members to answer, after the repetition of each commandment; "Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." Is there any sense in these words? Or, have we any meaning, when we utter them? If we have, surely they must imply an acknowledgment of disobedience in every particular. The criminal arraigned at the bar, never falls on his knees, and craves forgiveness, till he either confesses or is convicted. This then must be the purport of our response. "We are verily guilty concerning this thing. And we humbly implore, both pardoning mercy for the past, and strengthening grace for the future."

Give me leave to urge my question a little farther. Is there a single day, in which you have not transgressed, some way or other, this sacred rule?

Ther. If the law of God will dispense with no deviation, not even in the first starts of thought, or the least wanderings of desire:—But surely to affirm this, is to extend the law beyond all reasonable bounds. The motions of evil desire, if indulged, are undoubtedly criminal. But are they also, when restrained, breaches of duty? I should rather imagine, that such temptations are thrown in our way, for the trial of our obedience: which, had they no power over our affections, would not be trials; and when they are resolutely withstood, cannot be faults.

Asp. What was the judgment of our reformers? and what is the voice of our church? We may find both in the ninth article. "Although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin." It is not said, concupiscence hath then only the nature of sin, when it is ripened into action; but of itself, and before it breaks out into the commission of iniquity. Of itself it is contrary to the pure nature, and therefore cannot but be condemned by the perfect law of God.

Ther. This I can truly plead in my own behalf: that it has not been customary with me to offend; at least, not presumptuously, or of deliberate wickedness.

Asp. My dear Theron, do not offer to palliate your guilt. Such an opiate may stupify, but will not cure; or rather, like opiates ill prepared, it will intoxicate the mind, and counteract the operation of every healing medicine. Besides, it is not only pernicious, but false and unreasonable. You know the use of that solar microscope, and are able to inform me of its effects.

Ther. I ought to be pretty well acquainted with these experiments; since it has long been my favourite diversion, to employ a few spare hours in such agreeable speculations.

Asp. You have seen the body of an insect, accommodated to the surprising instrument. When, in this situation, the animal was pricked by a very fine needle; your eye, your naked eye, just perceived the puncture; and discovered, perhaps, a speck of moisture oozing from the orifice. But in what manner were they represented by the magnifying instrument?

Ther. The puncture was widened into a frightful gash. The speck of moisture swelled into a copious stream; and flowed, like a torrent, from the gaping wound. An ox, under the sacrificing knife, scarce looks more bulky, or bleeds more largely.

Asp. Don't you apprehend my design?—If we, short-sighted mortals, and almost blinded with self-love; if we cannot but be sensible of our faults; how flagrant must they appear, in what enormous magnitudes, and with what aggravating circumstances, to an eye, perfectly pure, and infinitely penetrating?

Instead of attempting to extenuate our offences, let us make some such improving reflections. “If this holy law, which prohibits the minutest failure, form the indictment; if this all-discerning God, who sifts our conduct even to the smallest defect, be the judge; if our personal goodness, which abounds with imperfections, be our plea; what can we expect at that decisive hour, when the Lord shall “lay judgment to the

line, and righteousness to the plummet?" Isa. xxviii. 17. Surely, this consideration should incline us to adopt the wise and ardent wish of the apostle; "That we may" now, in this our day, "win Christ, and," at the last tremendous audit, "be found in him; not having our own righteousness, which is of the law," for the foundation of our hopes, "but the righteousness which is of God, by faith in Jesus Christ," Phil. iii. 8, 9.

Consider the law in its nobler capacity, as enjoining whatever is excellent. Can you hope, Theron, to be justified by it, if you fall short of its demands, not barely in a few instances, but in every action of your life, and every temper of your heart?

Ther. Such a hope, cherished amidst such circumstances, would be fallacious and absurd. But I trust, I am not so very faulty, or rather so entirely abandoned, as your interrogatory supposes.

Asp. Have you duly weighed the perfection and spirituality of the divine law? It is a transcript of the unspotted purity, and absolute rectitude of the divine nature. It requires an unreserved obedience to all God's commands, and a most unfeigned submission to all his dispensations; without regretting the former as a grievous yoke, or repining at the latter as rigorous treatment. It calls, not only for external duty, but also for the most upright imaginations, and devout affections. Nay, it insists upon the exercise of every virtue, and that in the highest degree: love to God, without the least lukewarmness, and love to all our neighbours without any unkindness; a sanctity of desire, that knows no stain; and a humility of mind, that is free from all elatement. In a word, it requires us to be perfect, "even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect."*

Do any of your actions come up to this exalted standard? Are any of your graces thus refined?

* Matth. v. 48. Our Lord, having explained several commandments of the law, sums up the whole, and gives us the spirit of them all, in this most refined precept: "Be ye perfect, even," &c. If the reader pleases to take this passage into consideration, he will have a more satisfactory answer to Theron's objection concerning the first mo-

Ther. Am I then absolutely an insolvent before the great Lord of the universe? Have I no lamb in my fold without a blemish? nothing in my life, nothing in my heart, but what is defective and defiled?

Asp. Indeed, my friend, this is not your condition alone, but the condition of the most irreproachable person on earth. There is none perfect, in any character, or in any work, no not one. None that obeys the divine law, uniformly, invariably, and completely.

Cast your eye upon the names which are subjoined to those beautiful prints. How elegant is the engraving! How accurate are the letters! The strokes most delicately fine. Their shape most exactly true! Let me ask you to transcribe them with your pen; and make the copy equal to the original. Preserve all the noble boldness of the Roman stamp, and all the graceful softness of the Italian touch. What? could you not execute this task, even in your present unimpaired health, and with the exertion of all your skill? How shamefully then must you fall short, if your eyes were dim with age; if your hands shook with a paralytic disorder; and your understanding was oppressed with a lethargic dulness? Such is really the case with regard to all the children of men. Our nature is depraved; our moral abilities are enervated; and our intellectual faculties clouded. And can we, in such a state of impotence, transcribe that sacred system, which is the very image of God—transcribe it into our tempers, and render it legible in our lives, without diminishing one jot or tittle of its perfect purity.

Ther. Though I fall short, there are Christians of a much higher class; Christians, I don't doubt, who have these laws written on their hearts; all whose tempers are cast into this heavenly mould. Nor am

tions of evil desire; more satisfactory, I mean, than was suggested in the preceding pages. There the reply turned upon human testimony; here it rests upon divine authority.

I hope, the candid reader will, on other occasions, remember this observation. And if, at any time, the strongest reasons are not assigned, let him suppose it probable, that they are omitted in one place, only to be introduced and urged, perhaps with greater advantage, in another.

I myself without hopes of making more considerable advances in holiness.

Asp. May your hopes be quickened into vigorous endeavours, and your endeavours be crowned with abundant success ! What you suppose concerning very eminent Christians, I cannot wholly admit, neither do I wholly deny. They may have all their tempers cast into the heavenly mould ; but then they are conformed to the sacred pattern only in part. There is a resemblance ; yet not such as that clear and steady mirror (pointing to a fine glass over the chimney-piece) exhibits ; but such as some turbulent and muddy stream reflects. If the breasts of these eminent Christians were formed on the model of Drusus's* house, I verily think you would have a lower opinion of their acquisitions in virtue.

David, whom God himself dignifies with the most exalted of all characters, and styles " a man after his own heart ;" † who, to a most inflamed love, added a most accurate knowledge, of the divine testimonies ; was deeply sensible of the truth I would inculcate. After an attentive contemplation of the sublimity, the extent, the sanctity of those heavenly institutes, he breaks out into this humbling exclamation, " Who can tell how oft he offendeth ?" Psal. xix. 12. " Was the most vigilant conduct, or the most purified soul, examined by this consummate rule, innumerable would be found the slips of the former, and glaring would the failures of the latter appear."

Ther. I cannot see the reason for degrading human nature to such an extravagant degree, and ranking human works among the refuse of things.

Asp. Do you ask the reason of this remonstrance ?

* When Drusus, a noble Roman, was deliberating upon a model for his new house, the architect offered to build it in such a taste, that no eye should overlook any of his rooms. " You quite mistake my inclination," said Drusus. " I am for the very reverse of your plan. I would have my house so contrived, that every passenger may see whatever is transacted within."

† For the propriety of this character, and its correspondence with the person, let me refer the reader to a Note in Dialogue I, p. 32.

It is to preserve us from the mischievous error of the Pharisee; who, measuring himself, not by the true, sublime, and extensive sense of the law, but by a false, debased, and mutilated interpretation, became haughty in his own conceit, and abominable in the sight of God. Hear him trumpeting his own praise: "I am no extortioner, no adulterer," Luke xviii. 11. This, the poor vain creature fancied, was a sufficient obedience paid to the second table. See him still strutting in his own imaginary plumes: * "I fast twice in the week; I give tythes of all that I possess," Luke xviii. 12. This, he foolishly dreamed, was a due compliance with the demands of the first table. The young ruler seems to have been under the same delusion, when he had the assurance to declare, "All these things," which are prescribed by the divine law, "have I kept from my youth up," Matth. xix. 20.

A more pestilent opinion, it is scarce possible for the mind of man to entertain. And nothing can appear more egregiously mistaken, if we consider the vast comprehensive scope of the sacred precepts, and are convinced, that they require a most exact conformity, in every particular, and every punctilio.

Ther. Is there nothing valuable, then, in regularity of conduct, and integrity of heart? nothing valuable

* This seems to give the genuine signification of *το υψηλον εν αυτημωις*, Luke xvi. 15. Not "that which is highly esteemed;" *εντιμωιν ενδοξων*. The proposition, taken in this sense, is neither necessarily nor universally true. The meekness of Moses, the fortitude of Joshua, the wisdom of Solomon, were highly esteemed among those very men to whom our Lord addressed his discourse. Yet none can suppose, that the endowments of those illustrious personages were "an abomination in the sight of God."

Whereas, whatever is high and lifted up, haughty and conceited; every sentiment of self-admiration, and all the fruits which spring from that bitter root; these are certainly and invariably objects of the divine abhorrence. This interpretation, I think, is most suitable, not only to fact in general, but to the import of this word in particular: See Rom. xi. 20, where it occurs in a similar acceptation, *μη υψηλοφρονει*, "Be not high-minded." It seems also best to quadrate with the tenor of our Saviour's reproof: "Ye are they that justify yourselves before men;" but all such arrogant attempts, and every such elated air, the most holy God beholds with detestation.

in our acts of charity, and habits of virtue? nothing whatsoever that may recommend us to our Maker?

Asp. From our fellow-creatures they stand entitled to respect, imitation, and gratitude. But before infinite perfection they must drop their claim, and lie prostrate in the dust; imploring forgiveness, not challenging a reward. We all discern a beauty and a twinkling lustre in the stars, when viewed under the shades of night. But, when the magnificent source of day arises, their beauty vanishes, their lustre is darkness. Such are human accomplishments, when compared with the perfect law, or beheld by the piercing eye, of the supremely glorious God.

Ther. Methinks, this notion confounds the difference of good and evil; and, by rendering all our actions blameable, would render them all alike. This is levelling with a witness!

Asp. It only shews, that there are blemishes in all; whereas some are flaw and blemish all over. Is there no difference between the leopard's spots and the raven's foot? If I maintain, that neither of those animals are perfectly white, does this imply, that both are equally black?

All we perform, however specious it may seem, is very far short of our elevated rule; therefore cannot procure the divine favour, or entitle us to the kingdom of heaven. Nay, if God should enter into judgment with us, on the foot of our own performances, he would discover such defects, even in the choicest instances of our obedience, as must render them matter of condemnation,* not meritorious of applause.

Be pleased to observe this penknife.—What can be more exquisitely keen than the edge, or more nicely polished than the blade? but how do they appear, when beheld through one of those microscopes?

* To this assertion St Cyril, in concert with several other fathers, bears a very express testimony: *Αυτο ημων ε το ερθως εργασθαι δοκουν, μεμψης ε αιτιας αμωρεσιων αν η τι τε περιεργαζομενου τι και βασανιζοντες ηου.* "Even those of our actions, which seem to be performed in a right manner, could not escape censure and blame, if God should examine, and bring them to the test."

Ther. The edge less sharp than the woodman's axe, or rather more blunt than his iron wedge. The polish resembles a mass of coarse metal, rudely hammered on the anvil.

Asp. How very delicate is the cambric, which forms your ruffles, and gives such an ornamental air to your whole dress! nothing can be finer than the threads, or more exact than the texture. But what is their appearance in a microscopic view?

Ther. You would take the fine threads for hempen cords; and would almost be positive, that they had been wattled together by the clumsy hands of the hurdle-maker, rather than curiously wove in the artist's loom.

Asp. That lovely piece of enamel, which makes a part of your lady's pensile equipage, quite charms the spectator, with the justness of its figure, and the radiancy of its colours. But——

Ther. Under the scrutiny of this searching instrument, it loses all its elegance; and instead of winning our admiration, provokes our contempt. It looks like a heap of mortar, plastered on by the mason's trowel.

Asp. You see then, Theron, what gross indelicacies, what bungling inequalities, this supplementary aid to our sight discovers, even in the most finished works of human art. So, and abundantly more, does the immaculate purity of God discern imperfections in our most upright deeds, and most guarded hours.

I said immaculate; and I ought to have said more. For God is not only unerringly wise to detect, but infinitely pure to abhor, all contamination. Angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, are endowed with immaculate, but the Lord is possessed of infinite purity. Have you considered this attribute of the Godhead, Theron?

Ther. I have; and not without amazement at the charming, the awful descriptions of it, which occur in the sacred writings. God is not only holy, but, as the lawgiver of the Jews very sublimely expresses himself, "glorious in holiness," Exod. xv. 11. The sacred

penman, treating of this illustrious perfection, seems to labour the important point. They indulge the loftiest flights of imagination; they employ the boldest figures of speech; and add the most glowing colours of eloquence; not without frequent acknowledgments, that all the force of language is abundantly too feeble for the unutterable subject.

One of the prophets, addressing the King eternal, immortal, invisible, breaks out into this ecstatic exclamation: "O Lord, my God, my Holy One, thou art of purer eyes, than" (to allow, shall I say? This is an ascription of praise, unspeakably too mean for thy surpassing excellency. Thou art of purer eyes, than) "to look upon evil, and canst not behold iniquity," Hab. i. 13. Another, wrapt into a prophetic vision, sees the seraphim veiling their faces, in token of profound humiliation; hears those sons of ardour and love crying in loud responsive strains, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Sabaoth!" * Nay, so

* Isa. vi. 3. The poets, and writers of a bold imagination, are particularly fond of machinery; of introducing celestial beings, in order to give some peculiar dignity to their plan, or some additional strength to their sentiments. With inimitable propriety, and surprising emphasis, is this species of fine writing used in Scripture, especially in the passage quoted above.

Let us only consider—The personages. These are the seraphim; pure and active spirits; likened, by the Psalmist, to flames of fire; styled, by the apostle, dominions and principalities of heaven; who excel in strength and wisdom, in every high and bright accomplishment.—Their attitude. They wait around the King immortal, seated on his exalted throne. They stand; are in a posture of service; with their wings outstretched, ready to fly at the first signal. They stand, not with their eyes reverently cast down; but with their faces covered, to denote the deepest self-abasement; as creatures, that are conscious and ashamed of their own meanness, or as overcome with the insupportable glories which beam from uncreated majesty.—Their action. They celebrate, not in cold conversation, but with rapturous songs, not with single voices, but in a grand choir, (יהוה אל יהוה) see Psal. lxxxvii. 5, 6.) the amiable yet tremendous sanctity of the Lord Almighty.—Their manner of expression. Though filled and penetrated with the prodigious theme, they attempt not to describe it. Impracticable that even by the tongues of angels! They express themselves, therefore, in the language of profound admiration; in repeated, in reiterated acclamations to the wonderful attribute: "Holy! holy! holy!"—The effects of this august appearance. The posts of the door shake at the voice:

transcendently holy, says another devout worshipper, that all created glory is totally eclipsed in his presence: "He looketh to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight," Job xxv. 5. And "his very angels," those refined and exalted intelligencies, "he chargeth with folly," Job iv. 18.

Asp. Very majestic descriptions! And pray let us observe the impressions which such beamings of the divine effulgence made upon the saints of old. Moses, drawing near the cloudy pavilion, the presence-chamber of the Holy One of Israel, says, with emotions of uncommon dread, "I exceedingly fear and quake!" Heb. xii. 21. When Job is favoured with some peculiar manifestations of the omnipotent God, see his posture! hear his words! "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," Job xlii. 6. How strong is the language! how deep the abasement! When Isaiah saw the incomprehensible Jehovah sitting upon his throne, and the princes of heaven adoring at his footstool, seized with a pang of reverential fear, he cried out, "Woe is me! I am undone! for I am a man of unclean lips!" Isa. vi. 5. When Ezekiel be-

the ponderous and magnificent pillars of brass (see 2 Chron. iii. 17.) tremble like a leaf. The spacious and beautiful house is filled with tokens of the divine indignation; is involved in clouds of smoke; and joins with the trembling columns, and adoring seraphs, to tell the thoughtless world, "What a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!" The prophet himself is struck with astonishment; is overwhelmed with awe; and cries out "as a woman in her pangs." Can any thing be more enlivened, impressive, and alarming?

If I shall not trespass upon the reader's patience, I would beg leave to add a remark concerning the word *Sabaoth*, which, though a Hebrew expression, is retained in that excellent hymn, entitled *Te Deum*; and which some people, I am inclined to believe, inadvertently confound with *Sabbath*. The latter signifies the rest of the seventh day; and, in this connection, yields a sense not very apposite, and comparatively mean. Whereas the former denotes armies or hosts; and furnishes us with an image truly grand and majestic, worthy to be admitted into the songs of seraphs. It glorifies God, as the great, universal, uncontrollable Sovereign, who exercises a supreme dominion over all the orders of being. from the loftiest archangel that shines in heaven, to the lowest reptile that crawls in dust; who says to a legion of cherubs, *Go*, and they go; to a swarm of insects, *Come*, and they come; to any, to every creature. *Do this*, and they do it. See Matth. viii. 9.

held an emblematical representation of Him, who dwelleth in light inaccessible; when the Ancient of days, veiled under a human shape, appeared to Daniel; though one was a devout priest, and each was an eminent prophet; yet, overwhelmed with a mixture of veneration and terror, they both "fell down at his feet as dead," Ezek. i. 28. Dan. x. 8, 9; and this, not before a full display, but only before a glimpse of the Godhead, which, though partial and transient, was too dazzlingly bright for an eye of flesh to bear.

O my friend! my Theron! what figure must our mean performances, our low attainments, make before this immensely glorious God? Let us examine the behaviour and spirit of Job a little more particularly. He is one of your favourite examples; and indeed very deservedly; for in piety he had no superior, and no equal; "there was none like him in the earth;" yet, when he has to do with the Maker of all things, and the Judge of all men, he pours out his abashed soul in these very remarkable professions: "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse."— See Job ix. 20, 21, 30, 31, 32. He declares yet farther, "If I wash myself in snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou," O righteous and eternal God, "plunge me in the ditch;" manifest me, notwithstanding all this care and circumspection, to be a guilty and filthy creature; yea, so very guilty and filthy, that my "own clothes," were they sensible of the pollution, "could not but abhor me."

This he confesses, not because he was an habitual sinner, or chargeable with any scandalous immorality, but because his mind was filled with the most affecting sense of God's inconceivable holiness and infinite glory. "For," adds the venerable Sufferer, "he is not a man as I am;" but a Being of such extensive knowledge, that nothing can escape his discernment; of such exalted purity, that every spot of defilement is loathsome in his sight. For which reason, it is absolutely impossible, "that I should answer him," with reference

to my own personal righteousness; "or that we should come together in judgment," on any such footing, without confusion to myself, and ruin to my cause.

To all this he subjoins, what is still more memorable and exemplary, "Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul, I would despise my life." He supposes himself in a higher state than your most advanced Christian; "though I were perfect." Yet even in such a state, were it attainable and attained, "I would not know my soul;" not dwell upon, not plead, no, nor so much as cherish a thought of, my own accomplishments and acquirements. In the important business of justification, they should stand for ciphers; they should be thrown into shades; they should entirely disappear. Nay more, "I would despise my life;" my life, with all its most shining actions and most distinguished virtues, should be reckoned insignificant and despicable; just as insignificant and despicable, with respect to this great transaction, as a wandering spark would be, if appointed to diffuse day amidst the darkness of night, or produce spring amidst the depths of winter.

Ther. These are alarming hints, Aspasio, I must confess. A law, which requires an exact and universal obedience, both in heart and life!—A God of such majesty, purity, and glory, that men of the most approved integrity are overwhelmed with confusion in his presence! I shall consider them, at my leisure, with the attention they deserve. At present, I believe, opportunity is giving us the slip. Yonder coach seems to be moving this way, and the livery looks like Philander's.

Aspasio, desirous to fix those convictions—which are of the last consequence to our faith and salvation—very desirous to fix them on his friend's mind, replied:

Asp. As your visitants are at a distance, give me leave to observe, That the wisest of men, attending to the first of these particulars, has poured contempt upon all human excellency: "There is not a just man

upon earth, that doth good and sinneth not," Eccl. vii. 20. The apostle of Christ takes shame to himself, on the same account; and teaches all mankind to strike the sail of self-conceit: "In many things we offend all," Jam. iii. 2. David, considering the latter of these points, prays with the utmost earnestness, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord!" and assigns this humbling reason for his petition, "for, in thy sight, shall no man living be justified," Psal. cxliii. 2. This induced Nehemiah, who had been so nobly zealous for the honour of his God, not to confide in his own valuable services, but make application to forgiving goodness: "Spare me, O Lord, according to thy great mercy," Neh. xiii. 22.

Had I set before you the example of the poor publican, who smote upon his breast; durst not lift up his eyes to heaven; but cried, from the bottom of a polluted heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Luke xviii. 13: Self-love might possibly have whispered, "Surely, I am not to be ranked with that abominable wretch. I stand upon some better footing than such an infamous offender." With respect to the enjoyment of eternal life, we stand upon no better, upon no other. And when low as that obnoxious despised creature, we are upon the very same ground with the most exalted saints. They all appear before the Majesty of Heaven, in the same attitude of unfeigned humiliation, and with the same acknowledgments of utter unworthiness. For it is a certain truth, and admits of no exception, that to justify sinners is not the privilege of human obedience, but the sole prerogative of "the Lord our righteousness."

Ther. Is not the practice of Hezekiah an exception to your rule? These, if I recollect aright, are the words of that holy king: "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." You see, he puts the issue of his trial before the everlasting God, upon his own integrity and his own obedience.

Asp. These are his words, but they are not used with this view. He humbly represents before the great Sovereign of the world, how beneficial his former life had been, and how serviceable his prolonged life might be, to the best interests of the Jewish nation. He recurs to his obedience, not that he may establish his hope of eternal happiness in heaven, but that he may obtain a reprieve from the grave, and a lengthening of his tranquillity on earth. Neither is this obedience gloried in by way of merit, but only pleaded by way of argument; as though he had said, "Remember, gracious God, how I have exerted my royal authority, to suppress idolatry, to extirpate vice, and to promote thy true religion. Consider how greatly thy people stand in need of such a vigilant and zealous governor; and to what a miserable condition both church and state may be reduced, if thou takest away thy servant by this threatened but untimely stroke. And, for the welfare of Judah, for the honour of thy name, for the support of thy own worship, *O spare me a little!*"

Aspasio paused, expecting a reply. As Theron continued silent and musing, Aspasio, with a smile of benevolence, proceeded.—Come, my Theron; why so deep in thought? Have you any objection to the evidences I have produced? They are some of the most dignified characters, and illustrious personages, that could be selected from all ages: kings, princes, and patriots; priests, saints, and martyrs. Should these be deemed insufficient, I can exhibit a larger and nobler cloud of witnesses;—larger, for they are a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues; nobler, for they stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. Ask those shining armies, Who they are, and whence they came? Their answer is comprised in one of my favourite portions of Scripture; one of those delightful texts, from which I hope to derive consolation even in my last moments. For which reason, you will al-

low me to repeat it, though it may perhaps be mentioned in a former conversation: "We are they who came out of great tribulation; and have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are we before the throne," Rev. vii. 14, 15.

Some of them laid down their lives for the sake of Christ; many of them were eminent for works of righteousness; all of them were endued with real holiness. Yet none of these qualifications constituted their passport into the regions of endless felicity. They had "washed their robes," had fled to the atonement, and pleaded the merits of Jesus their Saviour. Hereby they had "made them white;" this was the cause of their acquittance from guilt, and their complete justification: and therefore, on this account, their persons were accepted; they were presented without spot before the throne; and admitted to that fulness of joy, which is at God's right hand for evermore.

Ther. I have no objection to your witnesses. But, methinks, your doctrine is strangely debasing to human nature.

Asp. A sign, Theron, that it is agreeable to the genius of the gospel; which is calculated, as the eloquent Isaiah foretold, to humble the sinner, and exalt the Saviour: * "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day," Isa. ii. 11. "Man, though naturally vain, shall be made sensible of his numberless offences; shall see the defects which attend his highest attainments; shall confess the impossibility of being justified by the deeds of

* This corresponds with a very valuable maxim, which an eminent divine once recommended to his people, as a touchstone to distinguish evangelical truth. "That doctrine," he said, "which tends

To humble the sinner,
To exalt the Saviour,
To promote holiness;

That doctrine which tends to accomplish all these designs, you may embrace as sound. That which is defective in its influence on any one of them, you should reject as corrupt.

the law ; and place all his hope upon the propitiatory death, and meritorious obedience, of the Lord Jesus Christ."

DIALOGUE IX.

THERON, impressed with the last conversation, was very desirous to resume the subject, and renew the important debate. With this view, he conducted his friend into a retirement, commodious for the purpose.

They enter a spacious lawn, which lay opposite to the house, and stretched itself in the form of an expanded fan. The mounds, on either side, were dressed in verdure, and ran out in a slanting direction. The whole, to an eye placed at a distance, bore the resemblance of a magnificent vista ; contracting, by slow degrees, its dimensions ; and lessening, at last, into a point, which the regular and graceful seat, with all imaginable dignity, supplied.

Nature had sunk the lawn into a gentle decline, on whose ample sides, were oxen browsing, and lambs frisking. The lusty droves lowed as they passed, and the thriving flocks bleated welcome music in their master's ear. Along the midst of this verdant slope, ran a spacious and extensive walk ; which, coated with gravel, and fenced with pallisadoes, looked like a plain stripe of brown, intersecting a carpet of the brightest green. At the bottom, two handsome canals, copiously stocked with fish, floated to the breeze : whose waters, beheld from every front room in the house, had a fine effect upon the sight, not without a refreshing influence on the imagination. At the extremity of one, stood a stately colonnade. The roof was elevated on pillars of the Ionic order ; and the area slabbed with stones, neatly ranged in the diamond fashion. Several forest chairs accommodated the anglers with a seat, while the bending dome supplied them with a shade.

Corresponding, and on the margin of the other

anal, was erected a summer-house, of a very singular ind.—The lower part had an opening towards the north. It was cool; it was gloomy; and had never seen the sun. It carried the romantic air of a grotto, or rather the pensive appearance of a hermit's cell. The outside was coarse and rugged with protuberant stones: Partly overspread with ivy, partly covered with moss, it seemed to be the work of ancient years. You descend, by steps of turf, through a low and narrow door. A scanty iron grate, instead of a large sweeping sash, transmits a glimmering light; just sufficient to discover the inner structure, which appeared like one continued piece of rock-work; a cavern cut, you would imagine, from the surrounding quarry. Above, hung an irregular arch, with an aspect rather threatening than inviting. Below, lay a paving of homely pebbles; in some places, a little furrowed, as though it had been worn by the frequent tread of solitary feet. All around, were rusticity and solemnity; solemnity never more visibly seen than through a gloom. The furniture of the same grotesque fashion with the apartment. A bench hewed, you would suspect, by nature's chisel, out of the solid stone; a sort of couch, composed of swelling moss, and small fibrous roots. From one corner, trickled a pure spring, which crept with a bubbling moan, along the channelled floor, till its healthy current was collected into a bason, rudely scooped from the ground. On the edge of this little receptacle, lay chained a rusty bowl, and over it stood an antique worm-eaten table. On the least obscure part of the wall, you discern, dimly discern, a parchment scroll, inscribed with that sage, but mortifying admonition, "Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!"

Over this recess, so pleasingly horrid, and adapted to solemn musings, arose an open and airy Belvidere. You ascend by winding stairs; and coming from the uncouth abode below, are sweetly surprised with an elegant hexagon. The ceiling lofty, and decorated with the softest, richest, almost-flowing fret-work. The wainscot, in large pannels of oak, retained its native auburn; so beautifully plain, that, like an amir

ble countenance, it would have been disfigured, rather than improved, by the most costly paint. On this were disposed, in gilded frames, and to great advantage, a variety of entertaining landscapes. But none surpassed, none equalled, all were a foil to, the noble, lovely views which the windows commanded. The chimney-piece, of white shining marble, streaked with veins of vivid red. Over it was carved a fine festoon of artificial, in it was ranged a choice collection of natural flowers. On a table of glossy walnut, lay a portable telescope, attended with Thomson's Seasons, and *Vanierii Prædium Rusticum*. *

The whole was fitted up in the highest taste, and furnished with every pleasurable ornament, on purpose to harmonize with that lavish gaiety, which seemed to smile over all the face of nature; on purpose to correspond with that vernal delight, which came breathing on the wings of every fragrant gale. I may add, on purpose to remind the beholder of those immortal mansions, which are decorated with images infinitely more splendid, with objects, unspeakably more glorious: where holy beings will spend, not a few vacant hours in refined amusement, but a boundless eternity in the consummation of joy. For, to a well-turned mind, nature is a preceptor; and these are her instructive lessons: To the pure in heart, even sense is edifying; and these are its delicate moralities.

The redundant waters of the canal rolled off in a spreading cascade; which, tumbling from many a little precipice, soothed the air with a symphony of soft and gurgling sounds; nor ever intermitted the obliging office,

“ From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve.”

* “*Vanierii Prædium Rusticum* :” A most elegant Latin poem; which treats of every remarkable peculiarity, relating to the business of a country life, or the furniture of a country seat. It entertains us with a description of the most agreeable objects, in an easy flow of the purest language, and most musical numbers.

It is, I think, one continued beauty: superior to every thing of the kind I have met with among the moderns; and scarcely, if at all, unworthy the first genius of the Augustan age, “*Uni Virgile secundus, et pæne par.*”

ut, when the fanning breezes dropt their wings, when the feathered choir were hushed in sleep, when not so much as a chirping grasshopper was heard throughout the meads, this liquid instrument still played its solo; still pursued its busy way, and warbled, as it flowed, melodious murmurs.

Asp. Such, Theron, so uniform, uninterrupted, and invariable, should be our conformity to the divine law. But alas! those sacred precepts are so exceeding broad, that the most enlarged human obedience is far from being commensurate to their extent; so absolutely holy, that our highest attainments fall vastly short of their exalted perfection. How then can we expect justification from such a consummate rule? How dare we place our dependence upon such imperfect duties? especially before a God of unerring discernment, and immaculate purity.

Ther. Because mankind are incapable of pleasing their Maker, by yielding an absolute and invariable obedience to the moral law; does it follow from thence, that they cannot render themselves acceptable to him, by an universal course of sincere obedience?

Asp. I think it follows, from what has been already observed. If you desire new arguments, they are at hand.

The law, says the teacher of the Gentiles, is the ministration of condemnation.* How can this be true, if it requires no more than a sincere obedience; such as is proportioned to our infirm state? If this be sufficient to justify, and entitle us to our Creator's favour, the law ceases to be the ministration of condemnation. It becomes (which is flatly contradictory to the apostle's doctrine) the ministration of righteousness.

The law is styled, by the same inspired teacher,

* 2 Cor. iii. 7. - In this place, I apprehend, the apostle means the moral law, and that principally; as that alone was written and engraven on stones. Elsewhere, I believe, he uses the word in a larger sense; and intends to exclude all law whatever, from bearing any share in our justification.

“a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.”* How can it, upon your supposition, be qualified for such an office? If a sincere obedience be the whole of its demands, it can no longer direct us to Christ; it will no longer deliver us over to a Redeemer’s merit; but must draw and attach us to itself; teaching us to look upon its precepts, and our own conscientious observance of them, as the tenure of eternal life.

Do you insist upon a third proof? A third presents itself; not so much founded on argumentation, as deduced from example. How was Abraham,† the friend of God, and father of the faithful, justified? By a course of sincere obedience! No; but by faith in the promised Messiah. “Abraham worked not,” with a view to obtain justification; “but believed on him, who justifieth the ungodly.” How was David,† the man after God’s own heart, justified? By his zeal for the Lord, and by his eminent services? No; but by a righteousness imputed: even that righteousness of the blessed Redeemer, through which “iniquity is forgiven, and sin pardoned.” And can we be said to

* Gal. iii. 24. *Παιδαγωγός*, “a schoolmaster;” who pretends not to finish the education of youth, but directs them to, and prepares them for, higher studies, or nobler employs. The law, in like manner, aims not at furnishing us with a title to happiness; but fits, disposes, and disciplines us, for the all-sufficient Redeemer.

Some have thought, that *ως χρονον* signifies, “until the coming of Christ.” But this will hardly consist with the genius of the language, or with the import of the following clause, “That we might be justified by faith.” Besides, this would confine the efficacy of the law to that period of time which preceded our Lord’s incarnation. Whereas, it still does, and always will act (until this corruptible shall put on incorruption), in a way of subserviency to its merits.

† These two examples are, with the truest judgment, selected, and with the utmost propriety applied, Rom. iv. 1, &c. Rom. iv. 6, &c.—Abraham was the most illustrious pattern of piety among the Jewish patriarchs. “In glory there was none like him,” Eccles. xlv. 19. David was the most zealous and seraphic of their kings; “a man after God’s own heart,” 1 Sam. xiii. 14. If neither of these was justified by his own obedience, but each by an imputed righteousness; if they both obtained acceptance with God, not as upright beings, who might claim it; but as sinful creatures, who must implore it; the consequence is glaring. It is such, as must strike every attentive understanding, and must affect every individual person.

alk humbly, or can we be thought to walk surely, if, using to tread in the steps of these exemplary saints, divert into a path of our own devising?

Ther. "Of our own devising!" No, my friend: ere is a milder law introduced by the gospel, condescending and merciful to our infirmities, which accepts of sincerity instead of perfect obedience.

Asp. When was this milder law introduced, and the stricter abrogated? Not upon the entrance of sin, I presume. At this rate, the original law must be the creature of a few days, perhaps of a few hours only. But can we imagine, that the all-wise and unchangeable God would ordain a system of precepts to be disannulled as soon as enacted? Not in our Lord's time, I am very certain. That holy commandment, which requires supreme love to God, and perfect charity to men, he assures us, was still in force, Matth. xxii. 37, 38, 39. Nay, it is evident from the nature of the Deity, and from our relation to one another, that it always will be in force; that it never can cease; but is necessary and everlasting.

"A milder law, condescending to our infirmities." What can be the purport of such an institution? It must be supposed to speak the following language: "Be it known unto you, O children of Adam, that you are no longer enjoined to love the Lord with all your strength, nor to love your neighbour as yourselves. Once, indeed, I insisted upon absolute purity of heart: now I can dispense with some degree of evil concupiscence. Since Christ is come, and his gospel preached, you need not always be clothed with humility; but may feel some little emotions of pride. In short, because you are weak, I will connive, or even accommodate my demands to your enfeebled and depraved condition."

Not to urge (what must be shocking to every ear) that such a doctrine would make the Holy One of God a minister of sin; and the gospel of our salvation, a patent for licentiousness. Let me only ask, Does this agree with our Lord's declaration, "One

jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till it be fulfilled?" Mat. v. 18. Is this suitable to the perfections of the divine Legislator, "with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning?" James i. 17. Will this consist with the avowed resolution of the Almighty Jehovah, "He will magnify the law, and make it honourable?" Isa. xlii. 21.

Ther. However you may decry what I call the middle law, St Paul asserts it to be the Christian scheme. This he strenuously argues for as the only scheme by which any man can be justified in the sight of God.

Asp. Does he, Theron? in what epistle? what chapter? what verse? He says, addressing himself to the Galatian converts, "I do not frustrate the grace of God; for, if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain," Gal. ii. 21. From which passage, we learn two very momentous truths: That were we to derive a justifying righteousness from the law, this would not only be derogatory to the honour of grace, but subversive of its very being: That, by seeking justification through our own conscientious behaviour, we make, as far as in us lies, the death of Christ a vain thing; for which there was no occasion, and of which there is no use.

To the same purpose it is written in that invaluable epistle to the Romans, "If they which are of the law be heirs," if they who trust to their own performance of the law, are thereby entitled to the heavenly inheritance; "faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect," Rom. iv. 14.—See now, my friend, the tendency of your opinion! It is not a mere speculative mistake; an error of inconsiderable consequence; but such as strikes at the fundamentals of the gospel. Instead of being the only Christian scheme, it totally overthrows Christianity itself.* For it would render

* St Paul says of those preachers, who taught justification by the works of the law, "they would pervert," or (as the original word *παρέρχωνται* may be translated) subvert and overthrow "the gospel of Christ." To pervert, give a wrong turn, or a false colour, seems not to express fully the apostle's idea, nor to preserve the native energy of

the promise abortive, and supersede the necessity of faith. It would destroy the very existence of grace, and make even the death of Christ a superfluous transaction.

Ther. This I see, Aspasio, that the method of obtaining acceptance on account of our own sincerity, is benign expedient; such as corresponds with the compassionate nature of the Deity; and is, what the apostle styles, "being justified by faith, without the deeds of the law."

Asp. How! To be justified by faith, and justified by sincerity, the same thing? Is it possible that these would be equivalent terms? Let me illustrate my query by a similitude, which our present situation suggests. Sometimes an easy comparison is more convincing, than a laboured argument.

From this pleasing eminence, we command an extensive view of the country. Our eye connects the artless grandeur of nature, with the elegant embellishments of the summer-house. Nor is the public road the least entertaining part of the scene; because it presents us with a moving picture; with a perpetual succession of new objects. How many travellers have passed in review, since we took our seat in this agreeable elevation! Just at this instant, a stage-coach bolts out of the lane; filled, I presume, with passengers, that reside in the neighbourhood, or are to lodge in the next market-town. We will suppose them set down at their journey's end. An acquaintance visits them, congratulates them on their arrival, and asks that customary question, "How they came?" "We came," say they, "without walking a step ourselves; yet, by walking, as well, and as far, as we were able."

his argument. The Greek word is equivalent to the Hebrew כח which we generally render *evertere*. Gal. i. 7.

It may be worth our while to transcribe Beza's descant upon the passage; which is no less pertinent, than it is important. "Quid enim magis contrarium est fidei, sive gratiæ justificationi, quam justificatio ex lege, sive meritis, non Christi sed nostris? Itaque qui volunt ista duo conciliare, magis etiam sunt inepti, quam si quis conetur lucem cum tenebris, mortem cum vita conjungere."

Is this answer intelligible? Are these methods of travelling consistent? So intelligible is my friend's doctrine; so consistent is justification, vouchsafed without the deeds of the law; and justification obtained, by performing the deeds of the law as well as we are able.

Ther. Without the law, signifies without the necessity, of an exact and unerring conformity to it.

Asp. This is not without, but by the law, qualified in the rigour of its demands, and departing somewhat from the perfection of its precepts. Could you affirm, with any propriety, that this part of the hemisphere is without the sun, because an intervening cloud has moderated its fervour, and abated its glare?

What says the apostle? His words in another place will determine his meaning in this. If a state of acceptance with God be of works; be referable to our own obedience, whether sincere or perfect; "it is not more of grace."* Works and grace, in point of justification, are irreconcilable opposites.† On this pinnacle they cannot stand together. One must supplant and overthrow the other.

But why do I speak of grace? If my friend's opinion prevail, grace is at an end. What we took to be the gospel, turns out a covenant of works. Salvation ceases to be a free gift, and becomes a necessary payment. For "to him that worketh," that performeth what the law requires, "is the reward not reckoned of grace;" but he may claim it as his due; it must be paid him, as matter of debt, Rom. iv. 4.

Ther. You take no notice of what I urged concerning the benignity of this scheme, and how much it magnifies the clemency of the great Legislator.

* Rom. xi. 6. The passage produced by Aspasio, refers immediately to the doctrine of election, and but remotely to the privilege of justification. However, as the former includes the latter, if that be perfectly free, this cannot be the consequence of works. The argument, therefore, I apprehend, is conclusive, though the proof is not so direct.

† "E diametro inter se opponuntur, Moses et Jesu Christus; lex et promissio; facere et credere; opera et fides; merces et donum."—BENGEI.

Asp. But why should clemency erect its throne, on the ruins of almost every other attribute? This method would dishonour the veracity of God, which has denounced a curse upon every deviation from his revealed will. It would depreciate the administration of his justice, which cannot but punish whatever violates his sacred precepts. It would greatly derogate from the dignity of his law, and make it a mere thing of wax; to bend, and truckle, and take its form from the sin and weakness of human nature.

Ther. Will the divine law then make no favourable allowances for human infirmities, for constitutional faults, and strength of passion?

Asp. Far be it from me to represent the law of the Most High, either more strict, or more yielding, than it really is. To avoid all possibility of such a mistake, let us hear the declaration of the law itself: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, that are written in the book of the law, to do them," Gal. iii. 10.

"Every one;" without any exception of persons; without any regard to pleas, either of human weakness, or violent temptation. "That continueth not;" it is not enough to observe these holy commandments, in the general tenor of our conversation. Our course of obedience must be without any intermission; from the earliest dawn of reason, to the latest period of life. "In all things;" we must refrain from all the sins that are forbidden, and from every approach towards them. We must practise all the virtues that are enjoined, and in their full extent of perfection.

In a word, the law insists upon obedience, perfect in its principle; perfect in all its parts; perfect in every degree; and in each of these respects perpetual.* The least deficiency in any one particular, renders us liable to vengeance; and, notwithstanding

* That the law insists upon an obedience absolutely perfect, will be farther evident to the attentive reader, if he considers the tenor of St Paul's argumentation, in his epistle to the Romans, and to the Galatians; particularly Rom. iii. 23; iv. 15; Gal. iii. 21.

any repentance for transgressions, notwithstanding pretensions to sincerity of heart, subjects us to the curse.

Theron paused.—He seemed to be struck with surprise.—But rallying his thoughts, replied, If this be the sense of the passage, who of all flesh can be saved?

Asp. Say rather, If the extent of the divine law be so enlarged, if its demands be so high, and its sanction so awfully rigorous, then must “every mouth be stopped: then is all the world become guilty before God; and by the works of the law shall no man living be justified.”

Ther. Will not such excessively severe doctrine drive people into despondency, or even drown them in despair?

Asp. No, Theron, unless it be such a despair, as is the parent of heavenly hope; and productive of those amiable twins—peace and joy: A despair, I mean, of being reconciled to our offended God, and of obtaining eternal happiness, by any satisfaction or any duties of our own.

Ther. Surely, you forget the gracious manifesto published by the condescending King of heaven: “If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to what a man hath, not according to what he hath not,” 2 Cor. viii. 12. Is it not plain from this text, that infinite goodness will admit our honest, though imperfect endeavours; and, since we are not able to pay an unsinning, will mercifully accept our best obedience?

Asp. I do not forget, but possibly my friend may misapply the gracious manifesto. To whom was the word of this consolation sent? To true believers, who had “given their own selves to the Lord,” 2 Cor. viii. 5; who “were established in Christ,” 2 Cor. i. 21; “and abounded in faith,” 2 Cor. viii. 7. If you likewise, any dear Theron, acknowledge yourself a vile sinner in your worst, and an unprofitable servant in your best estate: if, in consequence of this acknowledgment,

you fly for refuge to the wounds of a crucified Saviour, and rely for salvation, only on his obedience unto death; then you imitate those Corinthian converts; when you may apply that indulgent declaration to yourself; and then would I venture to address you, in the elegant and cheering language of the royal preacher; "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth"* both thy person and thy performances.

But if you overlook the righteousness of the blessed Jesus; if you depend upon yourself and your own attainments; you are (how shall I speak it!) not accepted, but accursed. In such a case, you have already heard your doom denounced by the leader of the Jews, and may hear it ratified by the apostle of the Gentiles; "As many as are of the works of the law," who seek justification by their own observance of its commands, "are under the curse," Gal. iii. 10.

Ther. Under the curse! Because our attempts to obey, though faithfully exerted, are attended with defects! Is not this unreasonable and shocking? Unreasonable, that the God of justice should establish a law of such consummate perfection, as no child of Adam can, even with his utmost assiduity and care, fulfil? Shocking, that the God of mercy should thunder out so severe a denunciation on the least inadvertent breach, on every unavoidable failure? This exceeds the relentless rigour of Draco, or the tyrannical impositions of the Egyptian task-masters. Draco is said to have written his laws in blood: Yet he never enacted such institutions, as were absolutely too strict and

* Eccl. ix. 7. Aspasio's remark discovers an ambiguity in the word *accepted*. If people mean, that sincere obedience shall be accepted, as their justifying righteousness, as that which constitutes their title to everlasting felicity; the proposition is extremely false. If they mean, that the sincere obedience of believers, though very imperfect in itself, shall be graciously regarded in Christ, and find favour through his all recommending merit; the sentiment is unquestionably true. Is sincerity the effect of faith? Then we may rejoice in it, with the happy apostle, 2 Cor. i. 12. Would sincerity be the condition of our justification? Then we must renounce it, with holy Job, chap. ix. 15.

difficult to be observed. And though the Egyptian task-masters insisted upon the full tale of bricks, without allowing the necessary proportion of straw; yet the punishment they inflicted, was incomparably less than everlasting destruction.

Asp. If God Almighty, in delivering his law to fallen mankind, intended to propose the means of their justification; your argument would be valid, and your inference undeniable. But the Supreme Legislator had a very different, a far more mysterious design. However, before I proceed to touch upon this point, let me desire to know your opinion.

For what reasons, think you, was the law ordained?

Ther. For what reasons? To deter men from the commission of vice, and excite them to the practice of virtue. To set before them a rule for their conduct, which, if they diligently observe, they shall be rewarded with eternal happiness; which, if they presumptuously transgress, they shall be punished with eternal misery.

Asp. If man had never fallen, this doctrine had been sound divinity, and this method a practicable scheme. But, ever since the fall, such a way of salvation is somewhat like the north-east passage. As mountains of ice, and the severest rigours of winter, block up this; so extreme impotence in man, and the utmost perfection in the law, bar up that. "The law," saith the apostle, "is weak;" is incapable of furnishing us with a title to the heavenly felicity; * not through any defect in its precepts, but "through the flesh;" through the inability of our degenerate nature.

Yet I must confess, you are not alone in your opinion. Multitudes have unwarily entertained the same notion; not apprehensive, that they frustrate hereby the grace of God, and render it of none effect with re-

* Rom. viii. 3. Therefore he says in another place, "If there had been a law given, which could have given life," Gal. iii. 21. It is the same way of speaking, and intended to denote the very same impossibility, which is implied in that speech of Jehovah to Abraham; "If a man can number the dust of the earth," Gen. xiii. 16.

ard to themselves. If you examine the scriptural account, you will find it quite of another strain.

Ther. Pray let me hear the scriptural account. For, whenever those divine oracles speak, I am all attention; wherever they interpose their authority, I am all submission.

Asp. "By the law is the knowledge of sin," Rom. vi. 20. Far from being our justifier, it is our accuser. It arraigns and proves us guilty. It demonstrates, beyond all possibility of contradiction, that the very best among us have failed and come short of our duty; nay, that the very best among us have done amiss, and dealt wickedly.

"I was alive without the law once," says the apostle, Rom. vii. 9. I thought myself upright and holy; and entitled, by virtue of these qualifications, to life eternal. "But when the commandment came," shining in its purity, and operating with power, "sin revived;" a clear and lively sense of guilt shot, like a piercing ray, through all my soul. I saw myself chargeable with many past provocations. I felt myself subject to much remaining corruption. In consequence of which, "I died;" my vain conceits were blasted; my presumptuous hopes expired; I could not but acknowledge myself justly liable to condemnation and death.

Ther. It had this effect on Saul, when he was a malignant and barbarous persecutor. But, when people are virtuous and benevolent, what purpose does it then serve?

Asp. A very important one; yet such as may probably, at the first hearing, affect you with a little surprise. "The law entered," says the apostle, "that the offence might"—

Ther. Be restrained, no doubt.

Asp. "That the offence might abound," Rom. v. 20, is the assertion.

Ther. Surprising indeed! Is it possible that God's law should give countenance to sin? nay, add spurs to the sinner?

Asp. Let us beware of mistaking our sacred casuist. The law entered, not that the commission of sin might be authorised, but that the abundance of our sins might be manifested; that all mankind, even your virtuous persons, may perceive the great multitude of their iniquities, the greater impurity of their hearts,* together with the utter imperfection of their highest attainments and best services.

This end could not be answered by a law, relaxed in its demands, or warping to our weakness; only by a system of precepts, every way exact, and in all degrees perfect. Whoever would represent to his neighbour, the spots that sully, or the scars that disfigure his countenance, must effect the design, not by a stained, but by a pure mirror.

Ther. "The knowledge of sin, and a conviction of our exceeding sinfulness:" these are intentions which I should not have suspected.

Asp. These are not all. There is another intention of the law, equally necessary, and no less awful: "It reveals the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," Rom. i. 18. Having set before the sinner his innumerable offences and enormous guilt, it denounces the doom which he deserves; it unsheathes the sword of justice, and threatens the offender with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.

Ther. A modern writer supposes, that God may set aside the law, in favour of frail men. I might far more reasonably suppose, that he would mitigate the law, on the same consideration. But what you urge, makes me afraid to lean on so precarious a prop.

Asp. To look for comfort and salvation from this quarter, would be to lean, as the Arabian proverb speaks, "on a wave of the sea," which will not only fail to support, but will certainly swallow up the unadvised and rash dependers.

* "And therefore was law given them, to evince Their natural pravity."

MILTON, B. xii. l. 267.

No, Theron; rather than the divine law should lose its honours, Sodom and Gomorrah were laid in ashes; the ancient world was destroyed with a deluge; the present frame of nature is destined to the flames, and all its unholy inhabitants will be condemned to hell. **Nay,** rather than the least tittle should pass unaccomplished, its curse has been executed, on God's own Son, and all its injunctions have been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Ther. As I dare not confide in the modern visionary *salvo*, so neither can I accede to your severe and terrifying notions. The laws of a wise and beneficent governor are calculated for the good of his subjects.—What good, what advantage can accrue to us, from receiving such a sentence, and possessing such convictions?

Asp. Though I might mention many advantages, I shall content myself with selecting one, which is not only valuable in itself, but the introduction to every spiritual blessing. When, by the instrumentality of the law, and the illumination of the Spirit, we are brought under such convictions, then we are taught to see our danger; then we are made to feel our misery; and then we shall no longer sleep in security, but solicitously look out for deliverance, and gladly accept the sovereign remedy.

Ther. The law, according to your representation, is intended to accuse me—to convict me—to condemn me. So it becomes, instead of a salutary, a killing system.

Asp. “The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life,” 2 Cor. iii. 6. If we adhere to the literal sense, without attending to the spiritual design; if we regard only the precept and the sanction, as they stand in themselves, and neither consider nor improve them, as acting in subserviency to the Mediator's righteousness; they are doubtless a killing ordinance, and bind us down under a sentence of death. But rightly improved—Hold! let me proceed no farther with the argument.

You are a sportsman, Theron, and delight in the manly recreations of the field; you must therefore have read that fine poem, which so elegantly describes your favourite diversion.

Ther. *The Chace*, I suppose you mean.

Asp. The same. Do you remember the large description of the royal stag-chace?

Ther. Perfectly well. It is not a week since I perused the whole passage, and with as much pleasure as if it had been entirely new.

Asp. Then you can give me a summary of the agreeable narrative.

Ther. I can. But will not this chace lead us away very far from our subject?

Asp. Perhaps not so far as you imagine. I have a reason for my request.

Ther. What reason, I beseech you?

Asp. You shall soon know. Only favour me with the account.

Ther. I protest, I cannot discern the least connection between these rural sports and the grand topic of our conversation. However, since you command, I will implicitly obey.

The stag, roused from his lair, shakes his dappled sides; tosses his beamy head; and, conscious of superior agility, seems to defy the gathering storm. You see, speaking of poetry, I have caught something of the poetical strain.

Asp. This enlivened manner excites my eagerness, and makes me more desirous to hear the sequel.

Ther. First, he has recourse to stratagem, and evasive shifts. He plunges into the copse, darts across the glade, and wheels about in doubling mazes, as though he would pursue even the foe he avoids. The full-mouthed pack unravel all his winding, and drive him from his wily arts.

Now he betakes himself to flight, and confides in his speed. He bursts through the woods, bounds over the lawns, and leaves the lagging beagles far behind. The beagles, slow but sure, trace his steps, through

woods, through lawns, through half the extended forest. Unwearied, still unwearied, they urge their ardent way, and gain upon the alarmed object of their pursuit.

Again he flies, flies with redoubled swiftness; shoots down the steep; strains up the hill; and takes shelter in the inmost recess of some sequestered grove. The sagacious hounds hang, with greedy nostrils, on the scent. They recover, by indefatigable assiduity, the ground they had lost. Up they come a third time; and, joining in a general peal of vengeance, hurry the affrighted animal from his short concealment.

Perplexed, and in the utmost distress, he seeks the numerous herd. He would lose himself, and elude his pursuers, amidst the multitudes of his fellows. But they, unconcerned for a brother's woe, shun the miserable creature, or expel him from the selfish circle. Abandoned by his associates, and haunted with apprehensions of approaching ruin, he trembles at every leaf that shakes. He starts; he springs; and, wild and swift as the wind, flies he knows not where, yet pours all his soul in flight. Vain, vain are his efforts! The horrid cry, lately lessened, thickens upon the gale, and thunders in his ear. Now, the poor breathless victim is full in view: His sprightliness forsakes him: His agility is spent. See how he toils in yonder valley, with faltering limbs, and a hobbling gait. The sight of their game quickens the pace, and whets the ardour of the impetuous hounds. With tumultuous violence they rush in, and, with clamorous joy, demand their prey.

What can he do, surrounded as he is with insulting tongues and ravenous jaw? Despair is capable of inspiring even the timorous breast. Having nothing to hope, he forgets to fear. He faces about, and makes a resolute stand. The trunk of a sturdy tree covers his rear, and his own branching horns defend him in front. He rushes upon his adversaries, goars some,

lays others grovelling on the turf, and makes the whole coward pack give way.

Encouraged by this unexpected success, his hopes revive. He rallies once again his drooping spirits; exerts the little remainder of his strength; and springs through the midst of the retiring rout. It is his last, last chance. He stretches every nerve; once more loses sight of the rabble from the kennel; and, finding no security on the land, takes to the water! He throws his burning sides into the river; sails down the cooling stream; and slinks away to the verge of some little shelving island. There, finding a resting-place for his feet, he sculks close to the shady margin. All immersed in the wave, excepting only his nostrils, he baffles, for a while, the prying eye of man, and the keener smell of brute.

Discovered at length, and forced to quit this unavailing refuge, he climbs the slippery bank. Unable to fly any longer, he stands at bay against an aged willow; stands, all faint with toil, and sobbing with anguish. The crowds that gather round him, with merciless and outrageous transport, triumph in his misery. A multitude of blood-thirsty throats, joined with the sonorous horn, ring his funeral knell. The tears, till this fatal instant unknown, gush from his languishing eyes, and roll down his reeking cheeks. He casts one more look on the woods, the lawns, the pleasing scenes of his former delights; and, determined to die, prepares to sell his life as dear as possible.

At this most critical juncture, the royal sportsman comes up. He sees the distressed creature; and, as soon as he sees, he pities! The clemency which attends the throne accompanies even the diversions of majesty. He issues the high command. The prohibitory signal is given. The pack, though raving for blood, are checked in a moment; and not checked only, but called off from the prey. Disappointed and grumbling, they retire; and leave the intended victim

their fury, to enjoy his liberty, his safety, and his ease again.

I have now followed the stag, till I have tired your patience. Why did you suffer me to run on at this extravagant rate? You know I am, on these favourite topics, an everlasting talker.

Asp. Why this apology, Theron? I am sure you did not see my mouth yawn, or my head nod, while you was pursuing your subject. Besides, I intend to make reprisals, and put your attention to the same trial.

Thus the strictness of the law pursues the soul; dislodges it from every refuge of lies; and never remits its terrifying menaces, till the poor delinquent ceases from self-confidence, and fixes on Christ for his whole salvation.*

The man, perhaps, is awakened into a serious concern for his eternal state. In consequence of which, he relinquishes his profane and iniquitous practices; breaks the Sabbath, and defrauds his neighbour no more. But the law quickly represents, and in a glaring light, that a negative obedience is by no means sufficient.

Upon this he betakes himself to a course of positive holiness; gets acquainted with religious people, and performs religious duties; prays in secret, and attends public ordinances; conscientiously observes the Lord's day, and regulates his behaviour by the rule of God's commandments. Now, he is ready to congratulate himself on his remarkable and hopeful reformation.

Soon he perceives, that all his proficiency is but skin-deep; a mere outside varnish, which has not penetrated the inner man. He begins, therefore, to

* "Lex hominem urget, donec is ad Christum confugit. Tum ipsa dicit, Asylum es nactus; decino te persequi; sapio, salvus es." That is—The law urges and pursues the sinner, till he flies for refuge to Jesus Christ. Then the law speaks to this effect: "You are entered into the strong hold; my demands are satisfied; my curses are silenced; I remit the pursuit. You are wise; you are safe; you are happy."—BENGEI.

watch over the motions, and bewail the evils of his heart. He labours to subdue pride, and curb passion; to purge out filthy lusts, and to banish spiritual wickedness. Notwithstanding all his vigilance, conscience flies in his face, either for the neglect of some virtue, or the commission of some sin. The law rings in his ear that dreadful denunciation, "Cursed is he that performeth not all things."

Struck by this conviction, his wounds bleed afresh. He is obliged to seek some new balm for his sore. In order to appease an offended God, and atone for his sinful relapses, he makes many sorrowful confessions, possibly submits to voluntary sufferings. He denies himself, and bestows liberally on the poor. He sighs deeply, and mourns bitterly.—But can waters that are muddy, cleanse the garment that is filthy? Wilt thou satisfy, O vain man, wilt thou satisfy for one sin, by committing another? In these penitential exercises, were thy thoughts steadily devout? In those acts of beneficence, was thy heart warmly affectionate? If not, such fancied reparations of past faults only aggravate the heavy score.

What shall he do? He cannot pay. To beg he is ashamed. Fain would he enter into life, yet not be too much indebted to grace. He attempts, therefore, to compound with heaven. He binds himself by solemn, perhaps by sacramental engagements, to use greater circumspection for the future; then turns his eye to the divine Mediator, not with a view of relying wholly on his righteousness, but only to obtain such a supply as may make up the deficiencies of his own. Somewhat like this was the mistake of the Galatian converts; against which St Paul, in his epistle to that people, so solidly disputes, and so sharply inveighs.*

For a while, he holds fast his purposed integrity.

* Sharply indeed! for, instead of saluting them, under the honourable title of saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, he stigmatizes them with that severe appellation, "O foolish Galatians!" And as to their practice, which was a departure from justification by Christ alone, he styles it, not merely an error, but an error of the most mischievous and horrid kind—an infatuation, a bewitchery, *Tis esnanan*, Gal. iii. 1.

At length, falling notoriously short in executing his part, a startling voice sounds in his ear that dreadful alarm, "Cursed is he that continueth not." His heart sinks with discouragement, and all his resolutions hang their enfeebled heads. He has tried every method that he can devise, and has found every method ineffectual. All his expedients are a spider's web, and his hope is as the giving up of the ghost.

His soul, pursued by the law, and hunted by terror, is brought to the gates of death, or the very brink of despair. And now the King of kings, now the Lord our righteousness, appears for his rescue. Now is accomplished that gracious declaration, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help," Hos. xiii. 9. Driven from every false refuge, and drawn by the blessed Spirit, he comes weary and heavy laden to Christ. Convinced of the sin of his nature, the sin of his life, and the sin of his best duties, he renounces himself in every view. This is all his salvation, and all his desire, that he may win Christ, and be found in him. Did that poor afflicted woman say, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole?"—With equal ardour does this enlightened sinner cry, "If I may but have fellowship with the glorious Immanuel, in his merits, and in his benefits, I am alive from the dead, I am happy for ever."

Having seen a glimpse of the transcendent excellency of the Redeemer's person; having received a taste from the inexhaustible fulness of his grace; O how he longs for brighter manifestations! how he thirsts after more plentiful draughts!—None that come to Christ are cast out. He that awakens these ardent desires, in his due time gives the desired blessings. After various conflicts, a comfortable and established faith is wrought in the penitent's soul. He believes, that the Son of the Most High died in his stead, and was obedient for his justification; believes, that all the unsearchable riches of the adored Mediator's life and death are his portion. *

* See this work of grace, and procedure of conversion, more copiously displayed, in a valuable little piece, entitled, *Human Nature in its*

By this faith, his heart is purified; his heart is quickened; he is fitted for every good work. Though temptations assault him, he derives strength from his Saviour; "resists the devil; and is faithful unto death." Though corruptions defile him, he flies to the "fountain opened for uncleanness," Zech. xiii. 1; makes daily, hourly application of the blood of sprinkling; and goes on his way, rejoicing in God his Saviour.

Ther. Your discourse puts me in mind of Absalom's procedure, when Joab refused to make him a visit. The prince ordered his servants to set on fire the general's standing corn, 2 Sam. xiv. 30. This stratagem had its intended effect. The apprehension of danger drove him, when the respectful invitation would not lead him, to a personal interview. You seem to suppose, that the law was delivered with such a design; to lay us under a necessity of flying to the atonement of Christ.

Asp. I do, Theron. And for this opinion I have a far better authority than my own supposition. We are assured by unerring wisdom, that "Christ is the end of the law," Rom. x. 4. It points invariably to him; it terminates wholly in him; and then obtains its first, its principal purpose, when sinners are brought to their divine Redeemer for righteousness and strength; for that righteousness, which entitles to heaven; that strength, which capacitates for obedience.

"The law hath concluded all mankind under sin,"²⁴ yet not with an intention, that any should be discou-

Fourfold State, by Mr Thomas Boston, page 227, which, in my opinion, is one of our best books for common readers. The sentences are short, and the comparisons striking; the language is easy, and the doctrine evangelical; the method proper, the plan comprehensive; the manner searching, yet consolatory. If another celebrated treatise is styled *The Whole Duty of Man*, I would call this *The Whole of Man*; as it comprises—what he was originally—what he is by transgression—what he should be through grace—and then, what he will be in glory.

* Gal. iii. 10. The sacred original is somewhat more comprehensive than Aspasio's interpretation. It is not *works*, but *vars*, which denotes things, as well as persons; and implies, that nothing we have, nothing we do, is free from sin, till the merits of Christ intervene, and the blood of Christ be sprinkled.

aged* now, or perish for ever; but that every one may see his inexpressible need of a Saviour's death, and a Saviour's obedience; * that, being thus prepared both to value and receive so precious a blessing, the promise of justification "by faith in Jesus Christ may be given to them that believe."

Let us advert to this grand aim of the law. Then we shall see goodness, unquestionable and sovereign goodness, in forming its constitution so sublimely perfect, and making its threatenings so inflexibly severe. Exclusive of this wholesome severity, we should suitably disesteem, perhaps wantonly reject, the grace of the gospel. The prodigal son would never have returned to his father, in that humble, submissive, supplicating posture, if he had not found his circumstances utterly ruined, and felt himself perishing with hunger. No more would the conceited sons of Adam, disclaiming all pretence to any merit of their own, and with nothing but the halter † of self-condemna-

* Witsius, speaking of the law delivered at Sinai, says, "Facta est ista fœderis operum commemoratio, ad Israclitas peccatorum et miseris sue convincendos, ex seipsis expellendos, de necessitate satisfactionis eddicendos, et ad Christum compellendos; et sic inservit fœderi gratiæ."—*Animadv. Iren.* p. 99.

The genius and design of the law were, I think, emblematically taught by the circumstances attending its delivery.—The mountain, not to be trodden by any Israelite, or touched by any beast, on pain of death; the voice of thunder, and the glare of lightning; the sound of the trumpet, and the clouds of smoke; the vast range of hills and rocks trembling to their centre; six hundred thousand men struck with inexpressible consternation; and Moses, even Moses himself, the favourite of heaven, terrified exceedingly;—all these indicated the righteous, the rigorous, and the awful import of the word spoken.

Nor was the effect of these astonishing incidents without a spiritual meaning.—The people durst not adventure upon a personal approach, but had recourse to a mediator. They requested that Moses might interpose, and transact affairs between the terrible Jehovah and the guilty congregation. Such an impression the purity and the rigour of the law should make on our hearts; should drive us from self to a Saviour, deter us from confiding in our legal, and prompt us to seek an evangelical righteousness.

† Alluding to those remarkable words of Benhadad's servants: "Let us put sackcloth upon our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to meet the king of Israel; peradventure he will save thy life," 1 Kings xx. 31.

tion about their necks, fall down at the feet of a merciful Redeemer, if they were not instigated by the sharp goad, or rather driven by the flaming sword of the law.

Ther. Has the law, then, nothing to do with our temper and conversation? Is it no longer to be considered as a system of duties? no longer to be regarded as a rule of life?

Asp. When it has forced the lines of self-righteousness, and driven us to Jesus Christ, that only citadel of safety, for acceptance and salvation, then it serves as a rule for our conduct; then it shews us, like a friend and a guide, how to order our conversation, and adorn our profession; how to glorify God, and express our gratitude to Christ. But, till it has accomplished the fore-mentioned end, it thunders vengeance; it flashes terror; it is, as Moses speaks, a "fiery law."*

And is it, my dear Theron, a fiery law? Then let it constrain us to take shelter in that meritorious obedience, which will be, to our guilty souls, "as the cold of snow in the time of harvest," Prov. xxv. 13. Is it a law which "worketh wrath?" Let it endear to our affections that inestimably precious gospel, which "preacheth peace by Jesus Christ," Acts x. 36. Is it "the ministration of condemnation?" 2 Cor. iii. 19. O let it quicken our flight to that all-gracious Surety, who was condemned at Pilate's bar, that we may be acquitted at God's tribunal!

To all this agrees our celebrated Milton, whose divinity is as faultless as his poetry is matchless. You will give me leave to quote a few of his beautiful lines, which recapitulate, as it were, the whole preceding conversation; and, while they recapitulate the con-

* "Fiery law," Deut. xxxiii. 2. I dare not affirm, that this is the exact import of the original, nor do I presume to determine the precise signification of a phrase so remarkably difficult. But as this is our received version; as it suggests a very useful truth; and a truth which, in the present age, is peculiarly needful to be inculcated; I am inclined to acquiesce in the common rendering.

ersation, confirm the doctrine. This will make you
 some amends for my late tedious harangue. This
 will tip the lead with gold.

“ So law appears imperfect ; and but giv'n
 With purpose to resign them, in full time,
 Up to a better cov'nant ; disciplin'd
 From shadowy types to truth ; from flesh to spirit ;
 From imposition of strict laws to free
 Acceptance of large grace ; from servile fear
 To filial ; works of law to works of faith.”—B. xii. l. 300.

DIALOGUE X.

Asp. AGAIN, Theron ! must we never lay aside the
 weapons of controversy ?—You put me in mind of the
 resolute Athenian, who, having fought with distin-
 guished bravery on the field of Marathon, pursued the
 vanquished Persians to their fleet. At that very in-
 stant, a galley, full of the enemy's troops, was putting
 off to sea. Determined, if possible, to prevent their
 escape, he laid hold on the vessel with his right hand,
 which was no sooner fixed, than chopped off by the
 sailors. The warrior, not at all discouraged, seized it
 with his left. When that also was cut away, he fas-
 tened his teeth in its side ; and never quitted his gripe
 till he resigned his breath.*

Ther. I have been considering the case of imputed
 righteousness ; and am by no means satisfied, as to
 the propriety of the phrase, or the truth of the doc-
 trine, especially in the sense which you espouse. Ob-
 jections arise, more substantial and weighty than any
 that have hitherto been urged ; and which, if I mis-
 take not, you will find it a more difficult task to an-
 swer.

* The Athenian's name was Cynægryrus. The author who relates
 this extraordinary story is Justin. If the reader should think it a rho-
 domontade, I believe he will not judge amiss. And I promise myself,
 the same good sense will enable him to distinguish between what is
 hinted by way of pleasantry, and what is urged by way of argument.

Asp. I must do my best. And if my best attempt prove unsuccessful, I shall say, with the gallant Iphicrates, when overpowered by the eloquence of his antagonist, "My adversary is the better actor, but mine is the better play."

I say better; for to you, Theron, I will freely own, what to another person I should not be so willing to disclose,—That I receive no comfort, but from the habitual belief, and daily application, of this precious doctrine. Whenever I read the most correct and beautiful writings, that proceed in the contrary strain, I feel my spirits heavy; I find my prospects gloomy; and not one ray of consolation gleams upon my mind. Whereas, much meaner compositions, which breathe the savour of this evangelical unction, seldom fail to quicken my hopes; to brighten my views; and put into my mouth that piously alert profession of the Psalmist, "I will run the way of thy commandments, now thou hast set my heart at liberty," Psalm cxix. 32. Though I am far from laying any considerable stress upon this observation; farther still from advancing it into the place of an argument; yet I may be permitted to mention it, in the confidence and familiarity of friendship.

Ther. An opinion proposed with so much modesty, and so nearly connected with my Aspasio's comfort, has doubtless a claim to my serious attention. Otherwise, it might possibly provoke my railery. For, you must know, I am no great admirer of inward feelings. I cannot think them a very solid method of demonstrating your point. It must be enforced by better reasons, if you would gain it access to my heart.

We must place, you say, a dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ, in all that he has done and suffered. What he has done and suffered, you add, is our only justifying righteousness; and to place our dependence on it, is the only method to obtain pardon of our sins, and life eternal.

Asp. I have said it, Theron, and I abide by it. This being the righteousness of God, is——

Ther. Give me leave, before you proceed farther, propose a query. Does the righteousness of God signify the active and passive obedience of Christ?

Asp. Righteousness is a conformity to the law in art and in life. As the Son of God voluntarily made himself subject to the law; perfectly fulfilled its precepts; and suffered to the utmost its penalty; this, I would imagine, furnishes us with the truest and most significant signification of the phrase.

Ther. What, if I or others should imagine quite the reverse?

Asp. I thank my friend for his admonition. It is indeed unreasonable, that my bare imagination should pass for orthodoxy and truth. Let us then inquire for better proof.

When the divine name, in the sacred phraseology, is added to a substantive, it expresses some very extraordinary property. "The trees of the Lord," Psal. iv. 16, denote those stately and magnificent forests which the hand of the Most High planted. "The mountains of God,"* are those prodigiously large elevations of the earth, which none but an almighty arm could establish. The righteousness of God likewise means the righteousness of the most supereminent dignity; such as is worthy to be called by his name, and may justly challenge his acceptance. And where shall we find this, but in the conduct and person of his blessed Son? This has a most unexceptionable claim to the exalted title; being, as a masterly critic explains the phrase, "a righteousness devised by God the Father, from all eternity; wrought out by God the Son, in the person of Jesus Christ; applied by God the Holy Ghost to the sinner's soul."

Ther. This doctrine of yours, if I rightly understand it, would make remission of sins but one half of our justification; and something else necessary, in order to obtain eternal life; which is just as rational, as to suppose, that though one cause may expel dark-

* This is the import of the original, יהו אלהים Psalm xxxvi. verse 7, Hebrew; verse 6, English.

ness, another must supervene, in order to introduce light.

Asp. The nature of justification, and the nature of condemnation, are two opposites, which will mutually illustrate each other. What is implied in the condemnation of a sinner? He forfeits eternal life, and is doomed to eternal death. What is included in the justification of a sinner? It supersedes his obligation to punishment, and invests him with a title to happiness. In order to the first, there must be a remission of sins; in order to the second, an imputation of righteousness. Both which are derived from Christ's mediation in our behalf; and both take place when we are united to that divine head: So that we do not derive them from two different sources, but ascribe them to one and the same great all-sufficient Cause.

Your comparison, though intended to overthrow, I think, fully establishes the sentiment. When yonder bright orb makes his first appearance in the east, what effects are produced? The shades of night are dispersed, and the light of day is diffused. To what are they owing—each to a separate, or both to the same origin? Every one's experience will answer the question. Thus, when the "Sun of righteousness" arises in the soul, he brings at once pardon and acceptance. Remission and salvation are under his wings. Both which constitute the "healing of the nations," Mal. iv. 2; and both owe their being to Christ's obedience, embraced as active, and not rejected as passive.

Ther. This, I know, is the fine-spun theory of your systematic divines. But where is their warrant from Scripture? By what authority do they introduce such subtle distinctions?

Asp. I cannot think the distinction so subtle, or the theory so finely spun. To be released from the damnable sentence, is one thing; to be treated as a righteous person, is evidently another. Absalom was pardoned, when he received a permission to remove from Geshur; and dwell at Jerusalem. But this was very different from the recommencement of filial duty and

rental endearment, 2 Sam. xiv. 24. A rebel may be exempted from the capital punishment which his iniquitous practices deserve, without being restored to the dignity of his former state, or the rights of a loyal subject. In Christianity likewise, to be freed from the charge of guilt, and to be regarded as a righteous person, are two several blessings really distinct in themselves, and often distinguished in Scripture.

Ther. Where are they distinguished? in what texts of Scripture? This is what I called for—your scriptural warrant.

Asp. What think you of Job's reply to his censorious friends? "God forbid that I should justify our!"* That he forgave them, there is no doubt. Yet he could not justify them; could not allow their reflections to be equitable, or their behaviour charitable.

What think you of Solomon's supplication? "Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants; condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness," 1 Kings viii. 32. To condemn, in this passage, evidently signifies, to pronounce guilty, and obnoxious to punishment. By parity of reason, to justify, must denote, to pronounce righteous, and entitle to happiness.

What says Solomon's father? "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord! for, in thy sight, shall no man living be justified!" Psalm cxliii. 2. A man might be pardoned, if judged according to the tenor of his own obedience. But no man could be declared righteous, in consequence of such a trial: this were absolutely and universally impossible.

From all which passages I conclude, that to be justified is different from, is superior to, the bare remission of sin.

Ther. All these instances are derived from the Old

* Job xxvii. 5. "Vos justos in causa vestra adversus me pronunciem."—SCHULT.

Testament; the New, if I mistake not, speaks another language. Consider the case of the penitent publican. What does he request? "God be merciful to me a sinner!" What does he obtain? "He went down to his house justified," Luke xviii. 13, 14. If, then, the petition and the grant may be deemed correspondent, pardon and justification must be reckoned equivalent.

Asp. The Old and New Testament are, in their style and contents, exactly correspondent. Echo, in yonder cloysters, does not more punctually reverberate the speaker's voice, than those divine books harmonize with each other.

Yet it will not follow, from the publican's request and the publican's blessing, that pardon and justification are the same. Only, that God's bounty frequently exceeds our prayers, and is larger than our expectations; or, that the blessing which was implored, and the blessing which was vouchsafed, are inseparably connected, and always accompany each other.

St Paul mentions "a justification of life;" not barely an exemption from the sentence of death, but such a justification, as gives a title* to the reward of life. The words are very emphatical. We shall injure the dignity of their meaning, if we understand them in a more contracted sense. Towards the close of the same chapter, we have another passage rich with consolation, and full to our purpose: "Grace reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life," Rom. v. 21. Here is pointed out the prime source of all our blessings, infinitely free and triumphant grace—the meritorious cause; not any works of man, not any qualifications of our own, but the perfect righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ—the effect or end of all; which is, not barely an absolution from guilt, but an instatement in life; a life of holy communion with God in this world,

* Rom. v. 18. "Δικαιωσις ζωης est declaratio divina illa, qua peccator, mortis reus, vite adjudicatur, idque jure."—BENGEI. *in loc.*

o be crowned with an eternal fruition of him in another. *

Let me produce one text more, which, just at this instant, occurs to my memory. You will find it in the apostle's defence of himself before Festus and Agrippa. He opens, as it were, his apostolical commission, and repeats the words of his royal Master: "I send thee" to ignorant and enslaved, guilty and ruined creatures; "to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among all them which are sanctified by faith that is in me," Acts xxvi. 18. The great Preacher of the Gentiles, or rather the supreme Lord of all preachers, has distinguished between remission of sins, and the inheritance of saints; between the pardon that delivers from hell, and the justification that entitles to heaven. So that the former does by no means constitute the latter; but is connected with it, as a link in the same sacred chain; or included in it, as part of the same glorious whole.

Ther. Admitting your distinction to be proper—is not the satisfaction made by the death of Christ sufficient of itself to obtain both our full pardon and our final happiness?

Asp. Since my friend has started the question, I may venture, with all reverence to the divine counsels, to answer in the negative; it being necessary, that the Redeemer of men should obey, as well as suffer, in their stead: For this we have the testimony of our Lord himself. "This commandment," says he, "I have received of my Father, that I should lay down my life," John x. 18. "Thus it becometh us," adds he in another place, "to fulfil all righteousness," Matth. iii. 15. To which his apostle subjoins, that, if we "reign in life," it must be not only through

* Accordingly, eternal life is called the hope, not of forgiveness, but of righteousness, Gal. v. 5. And it is bestowed, not barely because of absolution, but because of righteousness, Rom. viii. 10.

those sufferings which expiate, but also through that righteousness which merits, Rom. v. 17.

Ther. Our Lord's testimony relates only to a positive institution, and is quite foreign to our purpose. I have often been disgusted at such strained applications of Scripture. The partizans of a system wrest the sacred book. They deal with divine truth, as the tyrant Procrustes served those unhappy creatures who fell into his merciless hands. Is a text too short, to suit their design? Our Procrustean expositors can stretch it on the rack, and lengthen its sense. Is it too full, to consist with their scheme? They can lop off a limb, secrete a sentence, or contract the meaning. Is this to reverence the great God? Is this to treat respectfully his holy word?

Asp. I have been grieved, I assure you, and disgusted at this practice, as well as yourself; a practice, not only very irreverent, but very injudicious also. It really prejudices the cause it would unfairly recommend. Such a support is like "a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint," Prov. xxv. 19; not only unserviceable, but hurtful; an obstruction, rather than a furtherance. However, I am not conscious of committing any violence on this passage, or of forcing it into my service. The circumstance you object, rather strengthens than invalidates the conclusion. If it was so requisite for our blessed Mediator to observe a positive institution, how much more necessary to fulfil those moral precepts, whose obligation is unalterable and everlasting?

Besides, it should be considered, whether Christ's sufferings were a complete satisfaction to the law? Complete they were, with regard to the penalty, not with regard to the precept: A distinction obvious and important: From whence arises the following argument, which, for once, you will allow me to propose in the logical form.

By what alone the law was not satisfied, by that alone sinners could not be justified:

By Christ's sufferings alone, the law was not satisfied:

Therefore, by Christ's sufferings alone, sinners could not be justified.

But when we join the active with the passive obedience of our Lord, the efficacy of the one with the perfection of the other, how does our justification stand firm, in the fullest sense of the word! We have all that the law demands, both for our exemption from the curse, and as a title to the blessing.

Ther. Does not the Scripture ascribe the whole of our salvation to the death of Christ? delivering it, as a never-to-be-forgotten maxim in Christianity, That "we have redemption through his blood," Eph. i. 7; "are brought near through the blood of Christ," Eph. ii. 13; nay, that "we are justified" (the very point under debate) "through his blood," Rom. v. 9. Would the inspired writer have assigned these various blessings to this one cause, if it had been a price inadequate to the purchase, or a means insufficient to accomplish the end?

Asp. This part of our Lord's meritorious humiliation is, by a very usual figure, put for the whole. The death of Christ includes, not only his sufferings, but his obedience. The shedding of his precious blood was at once the grand instance of his suffering, and the finishing act of his obedience. In this view it is considered, and thus it is interpreted, by his own ambassador; who, speaking of his divine Master, says, "He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. ii. 8.

By the same figure, faith is sometimes said to be a lively, influential persuasion, "that Christ died for our sins," 1 Cor. xv. 3. At other times, it is represented as a firm practical belief, that "God hath raised him from the dead," Rom. x. 9. Neither of which can, without the utmost contrariety to the analogy of Scripture, be taken in the exclusive sense. Each act must be understood, not separately, but jointly; each as implying both, or reciprocally inferring one another.

In like manner, when the Scripture ascribes our

justification to the death of Christ, we are not to think that it would set aside, but imply his obedience. It is not because his active obedience has no concern in procuring the blessing; but because his bitter passion was the most conspicuous, and the completing stage of his ever-glorious undertaking. Then, and not till then, he could truly say, "Father, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do," John xvii. 4.

Ther. According to your account then, it should be possible for a man to have all his sins done away, yet not attain to complete justification. Which is as contrary to sound sense, and true divinity, as to imagine, that crookedness may be removed, and the object not become straight.

Asp. No, Theron. According to my account, it is impossible that the active and passive obedience of our Redeemer should be disjoined. To whomsoever the one is imputed, from him the other is not withheld. They were undivided in Christ the illustrious head, and they are undivided in their application to his mystical body. As Christ, in suffering, obeyed, and, in obeying, suffered; so, whoever receives Christ as an atonement, receives him also as a righteousness.

This has been observed before; and if this be real fact, what an inestimably precious gift is the gift of Christ! Never was the most sovereign remedy so admirably suited to any malady, as this is adapted to all our wants. In him may we be found, living and dying! How safe, how happy then! Let me not weary your patience, if I repeat a passage from our excellent Dr Lightfoot; which, though artless and remarkably simple, has very much affected my mind; and, I hope, will leave some valuable impression on my friend's. "Justification," says that judicious divine, "is a man's being interested in all Christ's righteousness. And if any thing is to be longed for, sure that is, to be interested in all Christ's righteousness."

Ther. You don't weary my patience, neither do you satisfy my doubts. For you take no notice of the absurdity objected, and the comparison that enforces it.

Asp. Your comparison, my dear friend, is not founded on a parallel case. Neither sense nor philosophy find a medium between the removal of crookedness, and the succession of straightness. But reason discerns an apparent, and revelation maintains an important difference, between the pardon of guilt, and a title to life. This has already been proved from Scripture; and is, to me at least, evident from the very nature of things. For, if a king, in favour of some condemned malefactor, revoke the sentence of death; this is one very considerable act of clemency. But, if he pleases to make the pardoned criminal a partaker of his kingdom, or an heir of his crown; this surely is a new, and a much higher instance of royal bounty.

If you insist upon a similitude, the word of God, which always speaks with consummate propriety, will furnish us with one. Zechariah illustrates the doctrine of justification. He represents the sinner, by a person arrayed in filthy garments. His pardon is described by taking away this sordid apparel. By which benefit he ceases to be defiled; yet is he not hereby clothed; yet is he not hereby justified: This is an additional blessing; signified by putting on "change of raiment," Zech. iii. 4, 5. and wearing beautiful robes. Here the circumstances tally. The two constituent parts of justification, are severally displayed, and strongly marked. Here we have the removal of filth, and the robe of righteousness; that which frees us from being abhorred, and that which renders us accepted: which, though distinguishable in themselves, and distinguished by the sacred writer, are always united in the divine donation.

Ther. This notion is founded on a chimerical covenant, that Christ would take upon him the obedience due from man, of which there is not the least intimation in holy Scripture.

Asp. That Christ undertook every thing necessary to redeem lost sinners from guilt and condemnation, every thing necessary to procure for attainted rebels a fresh title to life and glory; this cannot be reckoned

chimerical. This must be as real, as that lost sinners are redeemed, or attainted rebels restored: Every proof of the one proves and establishes the other. This is what we call a covenant; and, from its benign nature, the covenant of grace.

Without undertaking this, I see not how our Lord could sustain the character of a surety; nor without fulfilling it, how he could execute the office of a Redeemer. And, I believe, you yourself will be at a loss to show, with what kind of justice the eternal Father could "lay our iniquities," Isa. liii. 6. on the innocent Jesus, unless he had consented to be answerable for our guilt.

Ther. This is no answer to my objection. I said, and it has been asserted by a very eminent and able pen—that there is no intimation of any such covenant in the whole Scriptures.

Asp. What then can be the meaning of those remarkable words in the prophecy of Zechariah? "The counsel of peace shall be between them both."* Here

* Zech. iv. 12, 13. These two verses contain a brief, but very full description of the Redeemer: of his person, his office, and his glory, together with the all-gracious cause, and ever-blessed fruit of our redemption.

His person: He is the man; or, as the Hebrew imports, the "real," but at the same time, the "illustrious man;" whose name is the Branch, being the new origin of a new race; the father of a spiritual seed, who are children, not of the flesh, but of the promise. A branch that shall spring, not from a common root, not from any human planting, but "from under himself;" being born of a pure virgin, and by the power of his own Spirit, he shall be both stock and stem to himself.

His office: It is to build the temple, the church of the elect, which is the house of the living God, in which he dwells, and by whom he is worshipped, laying the foundation of this spiritual edifice in his cross, and cementing it with his blood. Which he shall rule as a king, after having redeemed it as a priest; uniting the sacerdotal censer with the regal diadem, and being a priest upon his throne. Hence proceeds his glory; for he stands not, like other priests, offering daily the same oblations; but having, by one sacrifice, obtained eternal redemption for us, is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

What is the cause of these great events? What, but that most sacred and august convention, the council of peace? which was settled between them both; between the Lord Jehovah on one hand, and the man whose name is the Branch on the other. Called a council, from the entire consent which actuated each party; and the transcendent wisdom, dis-

I think, the covenant is mentioned, and the parties are specified.—“The council of peace,” if I mistake not, signifies the mysterious and unsearchable contrivance, formed for the recovery of ruined man—formed and carried into execution by the Lord Almighty, or God the Father; and that illustrious person, who is to “build the temple and bear the glory.” A character which none can claim; a task, to which none is equal, but the blessed Jesus only.

In Psalm the 40th, the conditions of the covenant are circumstantially recorded; which were, the incarnation and obedience of the eternal Son: “A body hast thou prepared me. Lo! I come to do thy will,” Heb. x. 5, 7. The accomplishment of these conditions, is alleged and pleaded by our great Mediator, in the introduction to his last solemn prayer, John xvii. What he implores, in the process of his supplications, may be looked upon as the recompense* decreed him by the Father, and stipulated in this magnificent treaty. Implores, did I say? It is very observable, that our Lord makes a demand, rather than a request. The expression is not *ερωτω*, but *βελω*;† a word of authority, not of supplication. He claims what by the Father’s engagement, and by his own obedience, was become his unquestionable right.

Here are the parties of the covenant; the conditions of the covenant; the performance of the covenant; and the reward, which, by virtue of such performance, is merited, is claimable, is due. All this, I should imagine, amounts to an intimation, and somewhat more than an intimation of the covenant.

Ther. This you call the covenant of grace: but if we are justified by Christ’s fulfilling of the law, we are justified by works. So that, before you can strike out

played in the whole scheme. “The council of peace,” because of its sovereign efficacy to make peace with an offended God, peace in the accusing conscience, peace among people of jarring tempers, and discordant principles.

* This recompense is specified and promised in another authentic copy of the same grand treaty, recorded Isa. xlix. 1—6.

† Not I beg, but I will, John xvii. 24. *Sic volo, sic jubeo.*

such a way of salvation, you must contradict yourself, and, what is more adventurous, you must abolish the fundamental principle of the Gospel, "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Asp. We are, I grant it, justified by works. But whose? The works of Christ, not our own. This is very far from contradicting ourselves, equally far is it from abolishing what you call the gospel-principle, which, though an undeniable truth, is not an evangelical doctrine: because it only shews us our miserable state, and the utter impossibility of relieving ourselves. Whereas, nothing is genuine Gospel, but what speaks comfort, and administers recovery.

Between the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace, this, I apprehend, is the difference:—By the former, man was indispensably bound to obey, in his own person: By the latter, the obedience of his surety is accepted; instead of his own. The righteousness required by both, is not sincere, but complete; not proportioned to the abilities of fallen man, but to the purity of the law, and the majesty of the Lawgiver. By this means, the glory of God, as an awful sovereign, and the glory of his law, as an inviolable system, are entirely preserved, and illustriously displayed. The salvation of sinners, neither clashes with the truth, nor interferes with the justice of the Supreme Legislator. On the contrary, it becomes a faithful and just procedure of the most high God, to justify "him that believeth on Jesus," 1 John i. 9.

Ther. When you make this difference between the two covenants, where is your authority from Scripture? Which of the sacred writers have taught us, that though one demanded personal, the other is content with vicarious obedience?

Asp. Which?—The first three. The most eminent historian; the most enraptured poet; and the most zealous preacher. I need not inform you, that I mean Moses, David, and Paul.

The testimony of David has been already recited.—Moses gives us a concise, but very instructive account

the second covenant. With whom, according to his presentation, was it made? Not with Adam, or any his posterity; but with the Lord Jesus Christ, in the room and stead of both. None of the articles are proposed to a poor, impotent, ruined creature; but the whole is consigned over to the interposing Saviour, significantly described by "the seed of the woman." It is not said, "Thy best endeavours, O Adam, thy true repentance and sincere obedience, shall retrieve his fatal miscarriage; but, 'the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head; Gen. iii. 15. the Son of the Most High, by taking thy nature, submitting to thy obligations, and suffering death for thy sins, shall fully repair thy loss.'"

Christ, we see, undertook to execute the conditions. Christ was our representative in this great transaction. For which reason he is styled by St Paul, "the second man," 1 Cor. xv. 48, and "the surety of a better covenant," Heb. vii. 22. Our help being laid upon one that is so mighty; upon one that is so faithful; the covenant is said to be "in all things well ordered and sure," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, admirably well ordered indeed, for the comfort of the Christian, and the security of his salvation. "'Tis true," may he argue, "I cannot fulfil the conditions; and 'tis equally true, that this is not required at my hands. The Lord Jesus Christ, of his adorably rich goodness, has performed all that was conditional; * and has established for me and for his people, a valid title to the promises, the privileges, and"—

Ther. "Has thereby released me from all obliga-

* Witsius, instead of representing the covenant of grace as a chimerical thing, most affectionately and charmingly displays its excellency:—"Si quicquam ergo attentissima consideratione dignum censi debeat, sane id fœdus gratiæ est. Hic via ostenditur ad meliorem terrestri paradiso, et ad certiore[m] stabilioremque felicitatem, ea quia Adamus excidit. Hic nova spes perditis mortalibus allucet, quæ eo gratior esse debet, quo inexpectatior obvenit. Hic conditiones offeruntur, quibus æterna salus annexa est; conditiones non o nobis rursus præstandæ, quod animus despondere faceret; sed ab eo, qui vita non excederet, antequam vere dixerit, consummatum est." *De Oecon. lib. ii. cap. 1.*

tion to duty." Farewell then to our own obedience. No more occasion for any holiness of life. Nay, the sluice is opened for inundation of ungodliness. Fine divinity truly! Should I not rather say, downright Antinomianism?

Asp. No, my friend, "Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil," Matth. v. 17. He has fulfilled it, to the very uttermost, in his own person. He has also merited for us those supplies of the Spirit, which alone can enable weak corrupt creatures to yield faithful and acceptable obedience. Though our Lord Jesus died, and was obedient "for the ungodly;" though he finds us ungodly when he justifies us; yet he never leaves his people in this abominable state. On the contrary, he "teaches them to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts," Tit. ii. 12.

Pray, let us consider the tenor of this covenant, since you are so very apprehensive of its consequences. "I will put my laws into their minds, and on their hearts will I write them," Heb. viii. 10. "They shall discern such a beauty and glory in my precepts, as will engage their desires, and win their affections; so that it shall be no longer their burden, but their delight, even their meat and drink, to do the will of their Father in heaven."—This, this is one of the privileges purchased by our great Mediator. And it seems wondrous strange, that the purchase of an estate for you or me, should be reckoned the sure means to deprive us of the possession, or debar us from the enjoyment.

How often is this weak surmise urged as an argument? All whose plausibility is owing to a palpable mistake, or an egregious fallacy; to a supposed separation of things which are absolutely inseparable; I mean our justification and our sanctification.* You are a philosopher, Theron. Try if you can separate gravity from the stone, or heat from the fire. If these bodies and their essential properties are indissolubly

* See Isa. xlv. 24. 1 Cor. i. 30. 1 Cor. vi. 11, where these blessings walk hand in hand, and never were, never will, never can be parted.

connected, so are a genuine faith and a conscientious obedience. To suppose them disunited, is as contrary to sound divinity, as it would be contrary to true philosophy, if you should talk of a burning substance that has no warmth, or of a solid substance that has no weight. Never, therefore, my dear friend, repeat this idle objection; never propagate this ungrounded* amour; nor adopt a cavil, which is altogether as unphilosophical, as it is anti-evangelical.

Ther. We digress from the point. My principal objection is not satisfied. I was observing, that, according to your manner of stating the affair, salvation is no longer free, but founded upon works. They are the works of the law, though Christ performs them. To maintain that we are justified by these works, is to confound the difference between the law and the Gospel.

Asp. Though we should admit your premises, we cannot acquiesce in your conclusion. The same righteousness, by which we are justified, is both legal, and evangelical: Legal, in respect to Christ, who was made under the law, that he might obey all its

* This puts me in mind of what Theodorus replied to Philocles, who was often insinuating, that he preached licentious doctrine; because he enlarged with peculiar assiduity upon faith in Jesus Christ; and frequently chose such texts as, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved."

"I preach salvation by Jesus Christ; and give me leave to ask, whether you know what salvation by Christ means?"—Philocles paused. He began to blush; would have eluded the question, and declined an answer. "No," said Theodorus; "you must permit me to insist upon a reply. Because, if it be a right one, it will justify me and my conduct; if it be a wrong one, it will prove that you blame you know not what, and have more reason to inform yourself, than to censure others."

This disconcerted him still more. Upon which Theodorus proceeded, "Salvation by Christ means, not only a deliverance from the guilt, but also from the power of sin. 'He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; redeem us from our vain conversation,' as well as deliver us from the wrath to come. Go now, Philocles, and tell the world, that by teaching these doctrines, I promote the cause of licentiousness. And you will be just as rational, just as candid, just as true, as if you should affirm, that the fireman, by playing the engine and pouring in water, burnt your house to the ground, and laid your furniture in ashes."

commands: Evangelical, in respect to us, who work not ourselves, but believe in the great Fulfiller of all righteousness. This is much of the same nature, with that other momentous distinction in divinity, salvation is freely given, yet dearly bought. Freely given, with regard to us; dearly bought, with regard to Christ. So we are justified by works, if you look forward to our Surety; we are justified without works, if you cast a retrospective view on ourselves.

Theron was silent.—Aspasio, after a short interval, renewed the discourse. I know not, whether my friend is yielding to my arguments, or searching after objections; deliberating upon a capitulation, or mustering his forces for a fresh sally. However, let me take this opportunity of dropping a hint, and suggesting a caution.

The grand reason, which inclines some people to reject this comfortable doctrine, lies concealed, if not in an absolute disbelief of our Lord's eternal glory and Godhead, yet in unsettled apprehensions of it, or an habitual inattention to it. If our Saviour was not really God, as some writers, unhappily mistaking themselves, endeavour to persuade the world, it would be a reasonable practice, and entirely consistent with their scheme, to disavow the imputation of his righteousness: Because, upon such a supposition, his obedience was no more than bounden duty; in which there could not be the least pretence to merit, and which could be profitable to none but himself. Whereas, if we verily believe him to be the incarnate God, his submission to the law, becomes an act of voluntary humiliation. Which circumstance, together with the transcendent dignity of his person, render his obedience, not meritorious only, but inexpressibly and infinitely meritorious.

As the blood of Christ is called God's "own blood," Acts xx. 28. so the obedience of Christ was performed in the person of that adorable Mediator, "who is God over all," Rom. ix. 5. He acted through the whole course of his life, and suffered death at the last,

not merely as man, but as God-man; as Jehovah Jesus; Emmanuel. Let me entreat you to remember, nay let me entreat you never to forget this all-important article of our faith. And may the Spirit of wisdom give us an understanding, to know the weighty, the extensive influence of so glorious a truth!

Ther. Far be it from me, to derogate from the dignity of our Saviour's person, or to depreciate the merits of his mediatorial office. Place them as high as words can reach; exalt them as far as thought can soar; I stedfastly believe, you will still fall short, unmeasurably short, of their real worth. But this consideration seems to increase the absurdity of your notion: For, if Christ's righteousness, his very righteousness be imputed; then the true believers are all together as righteous as Christ himself. Whereas, if you maintain, that his righteousness is imputed only as to its effects, you will keep clear of this rock.

Asp. This, I apprehend, will be like keeping clear of Scylla, only to fall foul upon Charybdis. What are the effects of the Mediator's righteousness? Pardon of sin, justification of our persons, and the sanctification of our nature. Shall we say, these effects, these benefits are imputed? To talk of their imputation, I think, is an affront to sound sense; as, I am sure, to be put off with their imputation would be a fatal disappointment of our hopes. All these benefits are, not imputed, but imparted; they are not reckoned to us, but are really enjoyed by us: ours they are, not barely in the divine estimation, but by proper and personal possession.

Yet it does by no means follow, that believers are altogether as righteous as Christ himself, unless you can prove, that to be the receiver is, in all respects, the same as to be the author and finisher, Heb. xii. 2. The righteousness of Christ arises wholly from himself, the source of ours subsists in another. Christ's righteousness is originally and absolutely his own; whereas it is made ours in a way of favour and gra-

cious imputation. Circumstances these, which create a material difference, which yield room for a vast pre-eminence.

Ther. But if Christ's perfect obedience be accounted ours, methinks, we should have no more need of pardoning mercy, than Christ himself.

Asp. Yes; because, before this imputation, we were sunk in guilt, and dead in sins; because after it, we are defective in our duty, and in many things offend.

Ther. Does not this doctrine render the intercession of our Saviour superfluous! What occasion have they for an advocate with the Father, whose righteousness has neither blemish nor imperfection?

Asp. They stand in need of an advocate; first, that they may be brought home to "the Repairer of their breaches," Isa. lviii. 12. and made partakers of his righteousness by a living faith. Next, that their faith may be preserved, notwithstanding all opposition, steadfast and immoveable; or rather, may be carried on victorious and triumphant, even to the end.

Ther. You say, "Christ performed all that was conditional;" then he repented for us, and believed for us. This must be admitted in pursuance of your principles; But this is so wild a notion, so contrary to reason and Scripture, that to mention it, is to refute it.

Asp. Christ performed whatever was required by the covenant of works, both before it was violated, and after it had been transgressed. But neither repentance nor faith were comprehended in this institution. It knew nothing of the one, and it would not admit of the other. It was not therefore necessary, neither indeed was it possible, for our spotless and divine Lord, to repent of sin, or believe in a Saviour. But he did unspeakably more, "He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Heb. ix. 26. He is himself the Saviour of all the ends of the earth: and he has power to bestow that blessed Spirit, which worketh faith, and produceth repentance.

Ther. However, from what you have advanced, this

will unavoidably follow,—That a man is to be justified, under the character of a notorious transgressor of the law ; and justified under the character of a sinless observer of the law. And what is this, but a glaring inconsistency ?

Asp. Not at all inconsistent, but absolutely needful, if we consider those distinct branches of the divine law, the preceptive and the penal. Both which, in case of guilt already contracted, must necessarily be satisfied. Not at all inconsistent, but perfectly harmonious, if we take in the two constituent parts of justification, the acquittance from guilt, and a title to life. The former supposes us to be transgressors of the law ; and such the highest saints in the world are. The latter requires us to be observers of the law ; and such must the inheritors of heaven be. Much less is this inconsistent, if we consider believers in their personal and relative capacity ; as they are in themselves, and as they are in their Surety. Notorious transgressors in themselves, they have a sinless obedience in Christ. The consciousness of that, will be an everlasting motive to humility ; the belief of this, an inexhaustible source of joy.

All this is no more inconsistent, than the union of a gloomy contexture, and a lightsome splendour in those detached clouds, which float amidst the firmament. In themselves, they are a lowering and dark collection of vapours ; by the impression of the sun-beams, they are fair and bright as the polished silver.

Ther. After all, the imputation taught in Scripture, is not the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but of our own faith. Agreeably to the apostle's express declaration, "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness," Rom. iv. 3.

Asp. This objection admits the thing in dispute, though it controverts the way and manner of obtaining it ; admits the necessity of some active, positive righteousness, in order to our justification. In this particular, I am glad to agree with my Theron : and in this particular, I believe the generality of serious people

agree with us both. Whenever their consciences are awakened, and seek to establish the hope of eternal life, they constantly turn their eyes to some righteousness; which, they apprehend, may, either in whole or in part, answer the demands of the law. Some look to their own sincere obedience: Others call into their succour, works of supererogation. My friend would assign this office to his faith.

Ther. Is this a proper answer to my objection, Aspasio? The text is point-blank against your tenet. You do wisely therefore not to confront, but to elude the evidence.

Asp. I did not intend it for an answer; only as an occasional observation, which nevertheless has a pretty close connection with the subject. Neither would I use so mean a subterfuge, as to elude an argument, which I could not confute. If my friend had allowed me leisure to explain myself, this should have been my reply.

That a man is not justified by works, is a position most clearly demonstrated, and a doctrine most zealously inculcated by St Paul. That faith is a work* exerted by the human mind, is equally certain. Unless, therefore, we would render the apostle inconsistent with himself, we must understand the passage in a qualified sense. Why should we not suffer him to be his own interpreter? Why should we not take the narrative of his experience, for a comment on his doctrine? He declares, that the ground of his own comfort, the cause of his own justification, was not the grace of faith, but the "righteousness which is of God by faith, Phil. iii. 19. Not the act of believing, but that grand and glorious object of a sinner's belief, "the Lord our righteousness.

Besides, what was that faith of Abraham, to which the apostle refers; and which he proposes, as the invariable model of our justification?—It was faith in

* So it is called by Him, who knew what was in man, and what were the differences of things; "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." John vi. 29.

the "promised seed ; in Jesus Christ the righteous.* It was a firm persuasion, that this illustrious Person should spring from his loins ; and be the author of forgiveness, acceptance, and salvation to himself, and to a multitude of believers, numberless as the stars of heaven. Let us tread in these steps of the holy patriarch, and we shall ascribe little, ascribe nothing to our faith, but all to the infinitely-excellent obedience of our Redeemer.

Ther. Sure, Aspasio, you will not presume to correct inspiration ! The inspired writer makes no mention of a Redeemer's obedience. He says expressly and positively, "It," that Abraham's faith, and not any thing else, "was counted unto him for righteousness."

Asp. True, Theron ; as those windows are reckoned, are counted the lights of your house. Why ? Because they illuminate ? No ; but because they afford a passage to the illuminating rays. Through them, the first and best of elements is diffused into all your habitation.—So "we are saved by grace through faith ;" by grace imputing, through faith accepting, the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Grace is the magnificent source of this nobler light, faith is the means of transmitting it into all the faculties of the soul.

When our Lord declares to the diseased woman, "Thy faith hath made thee whole," Matth. ix. 22. how are we to understand his words ? that the patient's belief, and not the agency of Christ, wrought the cure ? To suppose this, would be extremely derogatory to the power of our great Physician. And if we ascribe justification to the act of believing, this will be equally derogatory to the obedience of our great Mediator. In the former case, Christ and his omnipotent operation were all in all. In the latter case, Christ and his infinite merit are all in all. In both cases, faith is only the eye to discern, or the hand to receive, the sovereign good.

I would farther observe, that faith is very particularly distinguished from the righteousness which justi-

* Compare Gen. xv. 5, 6. with Gal. iii. 16.

fies. We read of the righteousness which is by faith, which is of faith.* This form of expression puts an apparent difference between the evangelical faith, and the evangelical righteousness. Since whatever is by another, and of another, cannot, without the greatest violence to reason and language, be reckoned that other.—If faith was the cause of our acceptance with God, then we should be justified by a righteousness which is confessedly imperfect. For who has ever attained to the highest degree of this virtue? Or whose faith is not mixed with an alloy of unbelief? If faith itself was the matter of our justification, I see not how boasting could be excluded; how the law could be magnified; or what reason the apostle could have to account all things but the righteousness of Christ, meaner than dross.†

Say not, that we presume to correct inspiration. We only interpret the inspired word in an harmonious consistency with itself. This sense is agreeable to the prevailing doctrine, and to the current language of Scripture. To the prevailing doctrine; which is “a believing in Him who justifieth the ungodly.” Sift and examine this expression, “him who justifieth.” You will find that the work is Christ’s; Christ’s and no other’s. The holy Ghost assigns not the least share, not so much as a co-efficiency, to any other cause. Faith therefore, if it presumes to arrogate this exalted prerogative, or if it pretends to the least part in this important business, is a sacrilegious usurper. To the current language; as when God is called our fear,

* Rom. ix. 30. Phil. iii. 9. The apostles, I believe, never make use of this phrase, *δικαιοσύνης υπερ πίστεως*, or *δια την πίστην*, but, *εκ πίστεως* or *διε την πίστιν*. Not for, or on account of our faith, but by or through faith; making this grace, not the procuring cause, but only the instrument of application. Such language as the former seems contrary to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, if Theron’s sense of the text were admitted, the doctrine contained in this unscriptural and offensive style, were the unavoidable consequence.

† Phil. iii. 8. The original is *σκουβαλα*—a word of the most contemptible meaning; it signifies the worthless scraps, and sordid offals, that are cast to the dogs. The reader may see this passage more fully explained in Letter V.

en. xxxi. 42, 53; our hope, Psalm lxxi. 5. Jer. xiv. our joy, Psalm xliii. 4. In these places the act is undoubtedly put for the object: So, in the passage before us, the act must denote the object of faith. It is to be understood, not absolutely, but as some divines speak, objectively, instrumentally, relatively.

Ther. In the name of wonder, what can you mean by this heap of harsh and obscure expressions! Let me intreat you, *Aspasio*, to speak in your own style, not in the dialect of *Aquinas*. I have an irreconcilable aversion to these scholastic terms. They are the barbarians of divinity: I know but one use they are fitted to serve; that is, to perplex and puzzle a cause you cannot maintain. Somewhat like the liquor, which certain fish, when closely pursued, is said to emit, by which the water is darkened, and the foe eluded.

Asp. This, *Theron*, is the meaning of our uncouth phrases; It is not faith itself, which justifies; but that righteousness, which faith continually views; which faith delightfully apprehends; and on which it finally terminates.

To be plainer still; we are justified by faith, in the same manner as we are fed by the hand, or as we are said to drink of a cup. Neither the hand nor the cup are the cause of our sustenance, but the instruments; one of conveying it, the other of receiving it.* If an apostle affirms, "We are justified by faith;" faith itself declares, "in the Lord I have righteousness." Put these passages together, and you will have the true

* Though I am entirely of *Theron's* mind, and can by no means admire our scholastic divines, or their logical terms: yet, a remark from *Paræus*, couched in this style, is so pertinent to the purpose, and so full an explication of the point, that it would be an injury to the cause, not to make it a part of my notes. And some readers, I apprehend, not much acquainted with this old-fashioned dialect, may be well enough pleased to view a specimen; may like it, as they do the rust of a medal, merely for its uncouthness and antiquity.

"Faith justifies," says my author, "not effectively, as working an habitual righteousness in us, not materially, as though it were itself the constituent cause of our justification; but it justifieth objectively, as it apprehendeth Christ; and instrumentally, as it applieth his righteousness."

sense of our doctrine, and the true doctrine of the gospel.

When Themistocles fled from the malice of his countrymen, what recommended him to the protection of King Admetus?—Not his name; that was obnoxious.—Not his actions; they had been hostile.—But the person of the young prince, whom the distressed refugee caught up in his arms; and charged with these credentials, presented himself to the royal parent.* So faith recommends to God, and justifies the soul, not for itself or its own worth; but on account of what it presents, and what it pleads.

Ther. Is not this a fanciful distinction, and an excessive refinement? Has it any foundation in Scripture?

Asp. It is implied in almost all the representations of Christ, and all the descriptions of faith, which occur in the sacred writings.

Christ is likened to clothing; and believers are said to “have put on Christ,” Gal. iii. 27. Now it cannot be the act of putting on, that covers our bodies, or keeps them warm; but the commodious garment which is wore.—He is compared to bread: “I am the bread of life,” John vi. 35. Shall we say, it is the act of eating which strengthens the constitution, and recruits our spirits? No surely; but the food eaten and digested. Christ was typified by the “cities of refuge,” Numb. xxxv. 13. and sinners, by the obnoxious manslayer; who, if he fled to one of those privileged abodes, and there remained, was safe. No prosecution against him could be valid. He had nothing to fear from the avenger of blood. In this case, was it the bare act of flying that screened the criminal? By no means. This conveyed him to a place of security. But the place itself was his sanctuary, his asylum, his safeguard.

* This, says Plutarch, was a custom peculiar to that country; was reckoned the most solemn method of supplicating favour, and seldom met with a repulse. To which I may add, it is a custom that Christians should imitate, in all their addresses to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When thus used, thus improved, it will never fail of success.

Faith is styled a receiving of Christ: * “As many as received him, to them gave he power,” or granted the privilege, “to become the sons of God.” The office of faith is, according to this definition, not to contribute its quota, much less to deposit the whole sum, but to take and use the inestimable gift.—Faith is called, “a looking unto Jesus,” Heb. xii. 2. in illusion, I suppose, to the famous expedient provided for the wounded Israelites, Numb. xxi. 8. Our crucified Lord was prefigured by the brazen serpent; our guilt, by the stings of the fiery serpent; and our faith by looking to the miraculous remedy. Did the healing power, I would ask, reside in the mere act of viewing? No: but in the emblem of a dying Saviour, elevated on the pole, and ordained for the recovery of the people. Here all the efficacy was lodged. From hence it was all derived. The action of the eye, like the office of faith, was only to fetch home, and apply the sanative virtue.

Once more; faith is represented, as “laying hold” on God our Saviour, Isa. xxvii. 5. “leaning” upon our Beloved, Cant. viii. 5. “cleaving” to the Lord, Acts xi. 23. Please to take notice of yonder vine. Its shoots are weak, and its branches flimsy. Being absolutely unable to support themselves, they are furnished with a very remarkable set of clasps: which, like so many fingers, lay hold on the pegs of the wall, or fasten themselves to the poles within their reach. Without such a provision, the bows must lie prostrate on the ground, and be exposed to the insults of every foot: Whereas, by this kind contrivance of nature, so creeping a plant will climb into the air, and enjoy the

* John i. 12. See also Röm. v. 17; where a critic of accurate judgment, and delicate taste (though little known in England) makes this remark on the word *λαμβάνοντες*, “Non justificat actus sumendi, quatenus est actus; sed illud quod sumitur aut apprehenditur.” BENGEL. *in loc.*—His annotations on the New Testament are comprised in a small quarto volume. They present the reader with many refined observations on the elegancies of the style, and sublimity of the doctrines. They are a pattern of the concise manner; and, which is perhaps the crowning excellency, they all along indicate a heart warm and glowing with the love of its subject.

breeze; so feeble a plant will stand out the winter and defy the storms.—An instructive admonition to sinners! and no contemptible illustration of faith, especially in its principal and most distinguishing employ. Thus let us apprehend the blessed Jesus; hold us fast by our adored Redeemer; cleave to his ineffable weakness, as those twining tendrils, by repeated circulations, adhere to their substantial supporters. Thus shall we rise, by merits “not our own,” from the most abject and miserable condition, to a state of everlasting honour and joy.

Ther. Some people, I believe, would hardly forbear smiling at the peculiarity of your diction; and might be inclined to call your discourse canting, rather than reasoning. For my own part, I must acknowledge, that as all your peculiar phrases are derived from the Scriptures, I hear them with reverence, rather than any disposition to sneer. Was my friend delivering a Latin oration, it would be a sufficient warrant for any of his expressions, to prove that they came from the Ciceronian mint. And will it not be, at least, an equally sufficient authority for any modes of speech used in a theological essay, to allege that they bear the stamp of the Bible?

Though I make no objection to your language, I have yet another scruple with regard to your doctrine.—Do the ancient fathers adopt or inculcate this imputed righteousness? If it was so important an article of our faith, surely it could not be unknown in those early ages, which were so near the apostolical fountain. It would not have been omitted by those zealous preachers, who chose to endure all the rigours of persecution, rather than renounce their holy profession.

Asp. I think it were sufficient to answer this question, by asking another. Do the apostles, does the Holy Spirit of God speaking in Scripture, inculcate this doctrine, or display this privilege? If so, we need not be very solicitous for any farther authority. “To the law and to the testimony,” Isa. viii. 20. is our grand, our final appeal. Amidst all the darkness and uncer-

tainty, which evidently run through the writings of the best of men, this is our unspeakable happiness, that "we have a more sure word of prophecy; to which we do well to take heed, 2 Pet. i. 19.

However, to be a little more particular:—It cannot be expected that we should find many passages in those pious authors, very strong and very explicit, upon the point. Because, in their days, it was not so professedly opposed; and therefore could not be so exactly discussed, as in latter ages. Nevertheless, they have left enough behind them, to avouch the substance of what we assert, "That a man is not justified by any works, duties, or righteousness of his own, but only by faith in Jesus Christ." I cannot say, that I have charged my memory with their very words; and, for that reason, must not attempt at present to make any citation. But, when a proper opportunity offers, and their works are before me, I may possibly produce a few of their testimonies.

In the mean time, I can mention a set of writers, whose attestation will, I imagine, carry as much weight with my friend, as the united voice of the Greek and Latin fathers.

Ther. Who are they?

Asp. Our venerable reformers. The homilies composed by those excellent divines, are as express to my purpose, as they are unexceptionable in their evidence. This is their language: "The true understanding of this doctrine, We be justified freely by faith without works, is not, that this our act to believe, or this our faith in Christ, doth justify us: for that were to count ourselves to be justified by some act or virtue that is within ourselves. But the true meaning thereof is, that although we hear God's word, and believe it; although we have hope and faith, charity and repentance, and do never so many good works: yet we must renounce the merit of all our virtues and good deeds, as things that be far too weak and insufficient, to deserve remission of sin, and our justification. We must trust only in God's mercy, and that sacrifice which our

High Priest and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, offered for us upon the cross."

The homily subjoins a very apposite illustration: which may conclude our discourse with perfect propriety, and I hope with equal efficacy. "So that as St John Baptist, although he were never so virtuous and godly a man, yet in the matter of forgiving sin, he did put the people from him, and appoint them unto Christ, saying thus unto them, "Behold!" yonder is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world;" even so, as great and as godly a virtue, as the lively faith is, yet it putteth us from itself, and remitteth us unto Christ, for to have only by him remission of sins or justification. So that our faith in Christ, as it were, saith unto us, It is not I that take away your sins, but it is Christ only; and to him only I send you for that purpose, forsaking therein all your good words, thoughts, and works. And only putting your trust in Christ."*

Ther. If there be any tolerable sense of the notion under debate, I think it must be understood as follows:—Christ's performance of the law of his mediation, or, in other words, his unsinning obedience to the moral law, and the spotless sacrifice of himself to the vindictive justice of God; these are the only valuable considerations on account of which the gracious God restores guilty creatures to a state of acceptance with his divine Majesty.

Asp. I am far from denying your proposition: I rejoice in the propriety of my Theron's sentiments. May his faith, which is thus far advanced, be carried on by grace, till it is completed in glory! That unsinning obedience, and that spotless sacrifice, are indeed the only valuable, they are also the truly, or rather the infinitely valuable consideration, which has fully merited for us the remission of sins, and the enjoyment of life; and this not only from the gracious, but even from the just, the faithful, the righteous God.

* See the second part of the Homily on Salvation.

But then, they must be imputed, in order to furnish us with a claim, and invest us with a right, to the purchased privileges. Suppose them not imputed; and what becomes of our interest in them? They are like a medicine prepared, but not applied. Suppose them imputed; and they lay a firm, an apparent, a rational foundation, for every pleasing hope, and for every heavenly blessing.

Ther. I fear, I have acknowledged too much.—My thoughts fluctuate. My mind is unsettled. I would not withstand the truth, I would not disbelieve any doctrine of the Gospel. Yet—what shall I say? While I listen to your reasoning, I am half a convert. When I recollect the objections, I revert to my first opinion.

Of this, however, I am convinced—That human righteousness is insufficient for our justification. Here your arguments have carried their point. I shall henceforth place my hopes of everlasting happiness, not upon any works of my own, but upon the free goodness, and unbounded beneficence, of the Supreme Being; pursuant to that maxim of Scripture, “The gift of God is eternal life.”

Asp. You do right, Theron, to expect eternal life, as the gift of God, not as the wages of your own obedient service. But be pleased to remember, that all the gifts of grace, though perfectly free to sinners, are founded upon a grand and inestimable price, paid by their Saviour.—Are they entirely absolved from guilt? It is because Christ gave his life for their ransom. Are they heard with acceptance when they pray? It is because their exalted High Priest intercedes in their behalf.—Are they completely justified, and instated in endless bliss? It is because their Redeemer’s consummate obedience is the glorious equivalent for this and every other blessing. Therefore, when you mention eternal life as the gift of God, you should not forget to add with the holy apostle, “through Jesus Christ our Lord,” Rom. vi. 20.—Well, my Theron, what say you farther? Is your quiver emptied? Are your

scruples satisfied? May I interpret this silence as an act of assent?

Ther. Observe how the ranunculuses, on yonder gay parterre, have contracted their spreading tufts, and the tulips have closed their expanded cups; while all the neighbouring flowers have shut their ivory doors, or drawn their velvet curtains. Such is the state of my thoughts. They are all bent inwards; collected in-themselves; and pondering upon your discourse, which has inclined me, before I was aware, to contemplate, rather than talk. You will excuse my thoughtfulness, Aspasio; or, if it wants an apology, you must blame yourself: for, had your reasons been less cogent, my attention had been more disengaged.

Asp. My dear Theron, I shall only wish, in allusion to your own simile, and in the language of the best of books, that these truths may "distil as the dew," upon your mind, Deut. xxxii. 2, and "lie all night upon your branches," Job xxix. 19. This, I am persuaded, is the only way to have all your comforts "green before the sun," and all your virtues "flourish as an herb:" Whereas, under the influence of any other faith, I am afraid, they will be as the garden that is visited with a drought, or as the leaves that are smitten with a blast.

Ther. I shall attentively consider, both your doctrine and your arguments; which, that I may execute with more ease, and to better purpose, be pleased to sum up, in a few words, the substance of what has passed. This done, it will be time to withdraw. The flowers, you see, are our monitors. They have folded up their robes, and veiled their beauties. A custom which they seldom use, till the rising damps render it unsafe for their master to be among them, and the surrounding gloom renders it difficult for his eye to distinguish them.

Asp. You could not oblige me more, than by giving me such a command. We trust for salvation,

Not on our own external duties. This were to build our house upon the sand; which, when the rains de-

scend, when the torrents pour, when the winds blow with tempestuous violence, will certainly fall; and bury the builder, with all his vain hopes, in irretrievable ruin.

Not on the sincerity of our hearts. This, if opposed to Christ, and made the rival of his merits, will be a "despised broken idol." Despised by the infinitely sublime and majestic Ruler of the world. Broken, with regard to the stress we lay, or the confidence we repose, on so deceitful a prop. No more able to stand in the judgment of the great day, than Dagon was able to maintain his station before the ark of the Lord God of hosts, 1 Sam. v. 3, 4.

Not upon our faith. This is often weak, as the rickety child; sometimes quite faint, like a person in a deep swoon; always imperfect, like every other performance of ours. Alas! to what afflicting fears, to what grievous despondency should I, for my part, be perpetually liable, if my own faith was the ground of my justification? Blessed be the Father of mercies! we have a surer support. Not upon faith, not upon faith, but upon its gracious Author, and glorious Object, is the hope of Israel founded. Yet,

Not upon our Lord's righteousness considered only as passive; but upon his active and passive obedience united: all that he did in conformity to the commands of the law, and all that he suffered, in submission to its penalty. Both which, immensely dignified by his divine nature, are a basis for our faith, which nothing can shake; are a foundation for our affiance, which can never be removed. Nothing else, in any creature, or in all worlds, could expiate the least sin. This not only expiates all sin, but gives a title to every blessing—to the blessings of grace, and of glory; of evangelical holiness, and everlasting happiness.

DIALOGUE XI.

Asp. I HAVE often purposed, and as often forgot, to ask my Theron, what picture he was so attentively surveying, when I stole unperceived upon him, in his favourite arbour?*

Ther. I was indulging a pensive pleasure, in viewing the ruins, and contemplating the fate of Babylon—that renowned and opulent city! once the residence of the Assyrian monarchs, and capital of one of the greatest empires in the world. The draught I held in my hand represented some of its remains. And indeed this was the very last subject which employed my thoughts. In the morning my son brought me his observations upon the scene, which I have just now been revising.

For I frequently set him to exercise his judgment, or display his fancy, on remarkable passages which occur in history. He was lately commissioned to determine a controversy between the illustrious Leonidas, and the less celebrated Pædaretus. The point was in debate,—Which of them discovered the truest generosity of spirit, and the most heroic love of their country? The former, who willingly sacrificed his life in its defence? or the latter, who, when he was candidate for a seat among the three hundred, and lost his election, instead of being chagrined or dissatisfied, went home, unfeignedly rejoicing, “that there were found in Sparta, three hundred men, more worthy than himself?” The task of this day was, to give a descriptive picture of those wonderful ruins.

Asp. Pray let me have the pleasure of hearing the young gentleman's performance.

Ther. It will be too long, and too puerile; tire your patience, and offend your taste.

Asp. I don't use to make either of these complaints, when I am entertained with Theron's compositions.—

* See Dialogue V.

And, as the son has so much of his father's genius, I am not at all apprehensive of any such disappointment. We have a most agreeable situation, and more than an hour's leisure. I must therefore repeat my request.

Ther. 'Tis true, I have retouched the sketch, which may render it somewhat more tolerable. And since you persist in your demand, I will read the paper. Only desiring some allowance for a little luxuriancy of imagination, which in young writers it may be advisable to indulge, rather than repress, as age and judgment will, probably, come with the pruning-knife, and make the proper retrenchments. I must farther observe, that, contrary to the custom which prevails in our schools, I generally chuse to have him express his sentiments in English: because it is in this language he must communicate his own, and become acquainted with the ideas of others: because, to acquire some good degree of propriety and fluency in this his native tongue, will be incomparably more serviceable, than to speak Latin with the Tarentine elegance, or to write it with the Ciceronian copiousness.

Is this Babylon? the glory of kingdoms! the beauty of the Chaldean excellency!

Where once the gorgeous east, with richest hand,
Shower'd on her kings barbaric pearl and gold!

How is she fallen! fallen from the height of magnificence, into the abyss of confusion! What was once the object of universal admiration, is now a spectacle of astonishment and horror.

The palace, where majesty sat enthroned, like some terrestrial deity, is a heap of rubbish; no longer distinguished by an air of superior elegance, but by stronger and more melancholy marks of departed dignity.* Where the nobles of that sumptuous court trailed

* Benjamin, a Jew of Tudela, in his Itinerary, written about the year of our Lord 1170, tells us, "That he was upon the place where this city formerly stood, and found it wholly desolated and destroyed. Only some ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's palace were still remaining; but men were afraid to go near them, by reason of the many serpents and scorpions that were then in the place."

along the marble pavements their robes of purple and embroidery, there the crested snake hisses, or the fiercer envenomed adder glides.

How changed is the hospitable hall, and how disgraced the room of state! The first afforded a constant and cordial reception to the welcome guests; in the last the great king gave audience to his cringing, his adulating vassals. Now, thorns over-run the circumference, and "desolation sits in the threshold of them both." Where are the roofs of ivory, painted with vermilion and adorned with sculpture? the radiant roofs, whose lamps of burnished silver, pendent in many a blazing row, yielded light, as from another sky? Swept from their foundation, they lie clotted with defiling dirt, and clasped with tangling briars. Music no longer pours her harmony through the spacious and extended apartment; but the night-owl, nestling in some clefts of the ruins, screams her harsh and portentous dissonance. Joy no longer leads up the sprightly dance, amidst the lustre of that artificial day; but the solitary bat flies in silent circles, or flaps her sooty wings. All those gay delights,—let the sons of sensuality hear the tale, and take warning from the catastrophe!—all those gay delights are extinguished, like one of their feeblest tapers, which, having illuminated for a while the festive assembly, shone itself to the edges of the exhausted socket, and, in a moment, flashed into stench and darkness.

The walls, though cemented with bitumen,* and consolidated into the firmness of a flint, are become like the broken bubble. There was a time, when the inhabitants, confiding in the strength of their bulwarks,

* The walls were built of brick, and cemented with a glutinous kind of slime, which binds more firmly than any mortar, and soon grows harder than the bricks or stones themselves. These fortifications were, according to the account given by Herodotus, in breadth eighty-seven feet, in height three hundred and fifty feet, and reckoned to be absolutely impregnable; insomuch that the inhabitants, when besieged by Cyrus, insulted him from the walls, and laughed at his attempt, as a vain impracticable project—Οἱ δὲ ἐν τῷ κατιγίλῳ τῶν πολιορκιῶν. ΞΕΝΟΦ. *Inst. Cyr.* lib. 7.

and the multitude of their towers, looked down with fearless disdain on the army of besiegers. But now the prophet's threatening is most terribly fulfilled: "The fortresses of the high fort of thy walls hath he brought down, laid low, and brought to the ground, even to the dust," Isa. xxv. 12.—Where are the gates, the grand and glittering gates,* which admitted the triumphant hosts, or poured forth their numerous legions against the day of battle? Not one trace remains, to tell the inquisitive stranger, "Here the spacious avenues opened; here the massy portals rose." Commodious walks, in which the clustering merchants raised the busy hum, and planned the schemes of commerce; ample streets, in which industry drove the toiling car, or smote the sounding anvil; are shrouded with matted grass, or buried beneath the rankest weeds. Silence, in both places, a sullen silence reigns; and inactivity, a death-like inactivity, slumbers.

What is become of those hanging-gardens, which, for curious contrivance and stupendous workmanship, were never equalled in any nation under heaven? Terraces that overlooked the tallest houses! Partarres exalted to the clouds, and opening their flowery beauties in that strange region! Groves, whose very roots were higher than the tops of the loftiest trees! †—They are now smitten by a dreadful blast. Their beauty is decayed, like a withered leaf. Their very being is gone, "like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, which the wind carrieth away, and its place is no where found," Dan. ii. 35. What was once the favourite retreat of a queen, and the admiration of the whole world, is now a nest for poisonous reptiles, and a kennel for ravenous beasts.—The traveller, instead of expatiating with delight where this pensile paradise flourished, is struck with horror, keeps at a trembling distance, and,

* There was no less than a hundred gates all of solid brass. Hence it is, that when Jehovah promises to make Cyrus master of Babylon, he speaks in this very remarkable and particularizing manner, "I will break in pieces before thee the gates of brass." Isa. xlv. 2.

† "Pensiles horti sunt, summam murorum altitudinem sequantes, saltarumque arborum umbra et proceritate amœni." CURT. lib. v.

surveying the rueful spot, cries out, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and true are thy judgments!"

Here stands an obelisk, maimed by the stroke of revolving years, like a mountain-oak shattered by the flaming bolt. Another, all unhinged and quite disjointed, seems to tremble before every blast that blows. There the pyramid,* firm as the solid rock, and stable, one would have thought, as the everlasting hills, wrenched from its mighty base, is tumbled headlong in enormous ruin, and has crushed many a structure by its fall.—See yonder the triumphal arch, which exhibited, through its extensive and beautiful bend, an advantageous view of the firmament. It was once the graceful memorial of some celebrated victory; it is now converted into a trophy of a very different kind. Just retaining two uneven, battered, ragged stumps, it serves to recognise the destructive ravages of time. Spires that pierced the clouds, and shot into the skies, are levelled with the trodden soil. On pinnacles, to which the strong-winged bird could hardly soar, the groveling worm crawls, and the sordid snail leaves her slimy track. Baths that contained the translucent wave, and were so often perfumed with odoriferous unguents, are choked with filth; the grand colonnade, that surrounded them, is shivered to pieces, and the elevated dome, that covered them, is dashed to the ground. The public aqueducts, which conveyed cleanliness and health along their crystal currents, are degenerated into a stagnating lake; while croaking vermin swarm among the weeds, and noisome exhalations steam from the mire.

August and stately temples, that seemed to affect the neighbourhood of heaven, † are sunk to the very

* Strabo calls the temple of Belus a pyramid, lib. 15. But if the critics in history should question or deny the existence of pyramids among the Babylonians, for this, and other liberties used by our young declaimer, Horace shall make an apology :

“ ——— Pictoribus atque poetis
Quidlibet audenai semper fuit æqua potestas.”

† A tower in the temple of Belus, and dedicated to his worship, was

dust.—Who can point the spot where the consecrated victim bled, or the sacred fire glowed? where the sceptred image lifted its majestic head, or the veneration crowds bowed the suppliant knee? * Degrading are those splendid vanities, and cast (according to the denunciation of the sacred oracles) “to the bats and to the moles,” Isa. ii. 20. All is low; low as the spurious dignity of the idols they complimented; low “as the straw that is trodden down for the dunghill,” Isa. xxv. 10.

Sepulchres, the once venerable repositories of the dead, awful mansions, destined to everlasting concealment, are cleft and rent asunder. They disclose the horrid secrets of the pit, and frightfully yawn upon the blasted day. Possibly some ravenous creature lurks within, that has already rifled the tomb of its hero, given the putrid bones a new grave, and waits only for the approach of night to repeat his funeral dirge in yells. Inscriptions, designed to perpetuate some illustrious character, or eternize some heroic deed, are blended in the promiscuous mass. In vain would the prying antiquary search for a legible or consistent sentence; in vain attempt to find the memorable names of a Nebuchadnezzar or a Nimrod. These, though engraven on plates of brass, or cut in blocks of marble, are lost amidst the stupendous lumber, as prints on the unsteady sand are effaced, when returning tides smooth the furrowed beach.

Here and there a straggling cypress rises, as it were,

most amazingly high. It consisted of eight piles of building erected one above another. It arose to the elevation of six hundred feet perpendicular, and is thought, by the learned Bochart, to have been part of that superb work which was begun when the whole earth was of one language; but miscarried, or rather was providentially defeated, by the confusion of tongues. In this structure, there were doubtless very strong traces of that arrogant boast, “Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach to heaven,” Gen. xi. 4.

* Alluding to that prodigious instance of profuseness, ostentation, and idolatrous madness, “The golden image set up in the plain of Dura, whose height (that is, the height of the statue and pedestal taken together) was threescore cubits,” Dan. iii. 1. See PRIDEAUX'S *Con-
nection*, vol. 1. p. 95, &c. p. 567, &c.

with funeral solemnity amidst the waste.* Somewhat like the black plumes, nodding over the mournful hearse, they augment the sadness of the scene, and throw a deeper horror on all below. No human voice is heard, nor human face seen, amidst these desolated heaps: Too dreary even for the roam of hoary hermit, or the cell of gloomy monk. Abandoned they are, totally abandoned, to the dominion of solitude; or else to the unmolested resort of shaggy monsters, and feathered hags, which stun the midnight hours; these with their importunate shrieks, those with their execrable howls.

See, to what a despicable, what an abhorred state, the proudest monuments of earthly grandeur, and the most costly apparatus for earthly felicity, may be reduced! A pregnant and alarming proof, that, for lasting honour, or real happiness,

“ They build too low, who build beneath the skies.”

Asp. I very much approve the choice of your subject. The ruins of Persepolis would have given us a view of magnificence in abasement. The ruins of Palmyra might have shewed us elegance in the dust. But the ruins of Babylon display, at once, magnificence and elegance under an eclipse; Scripture and revelation in their glory.—The utter destruction of this city, which was absolutely unequalled † in every instance of dignity, and seemingly invincible by any enemy, must certainly have been looked upon as the most improbable of events. Nevertheless, its utter destruction was decreed by Jehovah, and denounced by his prophet, several ages before the execution took place. The

* Rauwolf, a German traveller, who passed that way in the year of our Lord 1574, says, “ This country is so dry and barren, that it cannot be tilled, and so bare, that I should have doubted whether the potent Babylon did stand there, if I had not known it by several ancient and delicate antiquities that are still standing thereabout in great desolation.”

† *Unequalled*—represented, therefore, by the golden head in Nebuchadnezzar’s prophetic dream and emblematic image, Dan. ii. 38;—and described by an ancient author, as “ omnium quas unquam sol sapexit urbium maxima.” PAUSAN. in *Arcad.*

awful sentence was not only denounced, but recorded, and is still remaining, in the public archives of our religion.

Ther. Where is this sentence recorded, and remaining?

Asp. In the prophecy of Isaiah; and not only recorded, but in the most circumstantial manner, and with a minute detail of the horrible desolations. These are the words of the inspired writer: "Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there, and the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces," Isa. xiii. 19—22.

In the two first sentences is comprised the most finished picture of prosperity and grandeur. "The glory of kingdoms;" beyond every other royal seat, spacious, ornamented, and wealthy; revered by many conquered and tributary dominions, as their mistress, and their sovereign. "The beauty of the Chaldees' excellency;" the Chaldeans, who excelled all the nations of the earth in riches, in splendour, and in power, even they gloried in this wonderful city. This was the highest honour of the most illustrious, and chief strength of the most victorious people; fairest, where all was conspicuously fair; noblest, where all was supereminently noble. Yet this distinguished, this crowning city, shall, at the blasting of the breath of Jehovah, be totally, totally destroyed, even "as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah."

In describing the overthrow, the prophet is equally admirable, and rises, by a most judicious gradation, into all the pomp of horror, *q. d.* "Now, indeed, it is thronged with citizens; but the hour is coming, when

it shall be entirely depopulated, and not so much as a single inhabitant left. Lest you should think that, in process of time, it may be re-edified, and again abound with joyful multitudes, 'it shall never be inhabited more; no, never be dwelt in any more, from generation to generation;' but shall continue a dismal waste through all succeeding ages. A waste so dismal, that none of the neighbouring shepherds shall make their fold, or find so much as an occasional shelter for their flocks, where kings, grandees, and crowds of affluent citizens, reposed themselves in profound tranquillity. Even the rude and roving Arabian shall not venture to pitch his tent, nor be able to procure for himself the poor accommodation of a night's lodging, where millions of polite people basked in the sunshine of profuse prosperity. In short, it shall neither be habitable nor accessible, but 'a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment and a hissing,' Jer. li. 37. What was once the golden city, Isa. xiv. 4, and the metropolis of the world, shall be an everlasting scene of desolation and horror; a fearful monument of divine vengeance, and an awful admonition to human pride."

All this is foretold in Scripture; and, though to human appearance impossible, though to human apprehension incredible, was, in the appointed time, most minutely accomplished. The memorials and evidences of the accomplishment remain to this very day.* They

* It is said by a very learned author, "*Babylonem usque eo concidisse, ut nemo cum fiducia illius locum amplius demonstrare quest,*" i. e. Babylon is now so totally destroyed, that the most skilful geographers cannot, with certainty, determine the place on which it stood.

Should any of my readers prefer this account, I shall neither litigate the point, nor be anxious for the consequence. It may, indeed, rank Eugenio's composition among the works of fancy; but it will realize Aspasio's assertion, and corroborate his argument. If we find no memorials of the city, we have the most evident verification, and the fullest accomplishment of the prophecy.

If this be the case, it gives an amazing emphasis to that just, but terrible decree issued from the supreme tribunal; "I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of Hosts."—"I will not only lay it in ruins, but extirpate it from the earth. I will efface the very footsteps of its existence, and not leave so much as a fragment or a trace of the magnificent, but wicked Babylon," Isa. xiv. 23.

so authentic, that the most inquisitive curiosity cannot doubt; and so incontestible, that the most bigotted incredulity will not deny. And should not this teach us to reverence the authority, to admire the wisdom, and confide in the promises, of that heavenly volume?

I know you are not fond of compliments, Theron. Therefore, instead of speaking my opinion of your son's performance, I will endeavour to return your favour. You have entertained me with an account of the most memorable ruins extant in the material world. Let me present my friend with a picture of ruins no less remarkable, far more deplorable, and unspeakably interesting to us all. I shall give it in the colouring of a great master, whose works, this very day, I happened to be perusing.

The passage displays a doctrine of the utmost importance in the Christian scheme, and by one of the finest pieces of imagery to be met with in elegant writing. I think it may be looked upon as a practical improvement of Eugenio's declamation. It pleased me so much that I transcribed it; and I make no apology for reading it, because I shall expect your thanks. Only let me hint, that it considers the human soul as originally an habitation of God through the Spirit; and then, speaking of its fallen condition, proceeds:

“That he hath withdrawn himself, and left this his temple desolate, we have many sad and plain proofs before us. The stately ruins are visible to every eye, that bear in their front (yet extant) this doleful inscription—**HERE GOD ONCE DWELT.** Enough appears of the admirable frame and structure of the soul of man, to shew the divine presence did some time reside in it: more than enough of vicious deformity, to proclaim he is now retired and gone. The lamps are extinct, the altar overturned; the light and love are now vanished, which made the one shine with so heavenly brightness, the other burn with so pious fervour. The “golden candlestick” is displaced, and thrown away as an useless thing, to make room for the throne

of the prince of darkness. The sacred incense, which sent, rolling up in clouds, its rich perfumes, is exchanged for a poisonous, hellish vapour; and here is, "instead of a sweet savour, a stench." The comely order of this house is turned all into confusion; the "beauties of holiness" into "noisome impurities;" the "house of prayer to a den of thieves," and that of the worst and most horrid kind; for every lust is a thief, and every theft is sacrilege. Continual rapine and robbery is committed upon holy things. The noble powers which were designed and dedicated to divine contemplation and delight, are alienated to the service of the most despicable idols, and employed into the vilest intuitions and embraces; to behold and admire lying vanities; to indulge and cherish lust and wickedness.

"There is not now a system, an entire table of coherent truths to be found, or a frame of holiness, but some shivered parcels. How many attempts have been made, since that fearful fall and ruin of this fabric, to compose again the truths of so many several kinds into their distinct orders, and make up frames of science or useful knowledge! and after so many ages, nothing is finished in any kind. Sometimes truths are misplaced, and what belongs to one kind, is transferred to another, where it will not fitly match; sometimes falsehood inserted, which shatters or disturbs the whole frame. And what with much fruitless pains is done by one hand, is dashed to pieces by another; and it is the work of a following age to sweep away the fine-spun cobwebs of a former. And those truths which are of greatest use, are least regarded; their tendency and design are overlooked, or, they are so loosened and torn off, that they cannot be wrought in, so as to take hold of the soul; but hover, as faint ineffectual notions, that signify nothing. Its very fundamental powers are shaken and disjointed, and their order towards one another confounded and broken: So that what is judged considerable, is not considered; what is recommended as eligible and lovely, is not loved and

chosen. Yea, the truth which is after godliness, is not so much disbelieved, as hated, held in unrighteousness; and shines as too feeble a "light," in that malignant darkness, which "comprehends it not." You come, amidst all this confusion, as into the ruined palace of some great prince, in which you see here the fragments of a nobler pillar, there the shattered pieces of some curious imagery; and all lying neglected and useless amongst heaps of dirt.—He that invites you to take a view of the soul of man, gives but such another prospect, and doth but say to you, "Behold the desolation," all things rude and waste. So that should there be any pretence to the Divine presence, it might be said, "If God be here, why is it thus?" The faded glory, the darkness, the disorder, the impurity, the decayed state in all respects of this temple, too plainly shew, "The great inhabitant is gone."*

Ther. Your painter, I must own, is a master in his profession; and seems to have a peculiar talent for a night-piece.—But why, I beseech you, so much of his shades and solemnity? Has he no colours, but the dark? no lineaments, but the sour; Could he not allow us one bright tint, one smiling feature, when he was copying the noblest being in this sublunary world?—It is for the honour of the great Creator, to give such a deformed draught of his most finished workmanship?

Asp. It reflects no kind of dishonour upon the architect of Babylon, that its palaces are fallen, its edifices demolished, and its walls levelled with the ground. They might have been built with the exactest symmetry, and once embellished with every graceful ornament, notwithstanding the stroke of violence, or the sap of years, have now reduced them to heaps of rubbish. The human soul, when recent from the inspiration of the Almighty, was bright with knowledge, amiable with virtue, and, in every respect, excellent. But how—to speak in the language of the mourning prophet, a language never more pertinent than on the

* See Mr Howe's treatise, entitled, The Living Temple.

present occasion—"how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!"

Ther. Man's soul is rational and eternal; is the offspring of the Deity, and capable of resembling its Maker.

Asp. What Milton allows to the fallen archangel, I can readily allow to fallen man:

He had not lost
All his original brightness.

The grand and distinguishing faculties of the soul remain. Just as, when a fountain is poisoned, the waters continue to flow; but flow no longer with health, flow rather with death in the stream. These very faculties, unless renewed and regulated by the influence of religion, must be our present misery, and will prove our everlasting curse. "The soul," you say, "is rational, is eternal." And do not even the devils possess the powers of reason? Is not their existence also of an endless duration? Yet are they, of all creatures, the most execrable and the most miserable.

You call the human soul the offspring of the Deity: And you call it properly. Must we then adopt the prophet's exclamation, "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning! Isa. xiv. 12. How art thou degenerated, O man, son of the Most High! Thy glorious original serves only to set forth, with more glaring evidence, thy deplorable apostacy."

Capable, you add, of resembling its Maker. This, I acknowledge, is a valuable prerogative: In this the infernal spirits have no share. But this capacity will always lie dormant, will never awaken into act, never be established in habit, unless Almighty grace intervene.

Ther. The most celebrated philosophers of antiquity, frequently exhort their readers to follow nature, as a certain guide to true excellence. Many eloquent writers of our own country enlarge upon the dignity of human nature; and from this topic derive very forcible arguments, for a correspondent dignity both

of sentiment and behaviour. Upon what can those principles of the ancient sages, and of our later moralists, be founded?

Asp. Indeed, Theron, I am at a loss to tell. If they have any foundation, it is merely imaginary; not laid on truth, nor confirmed by experience. According to my apprehension, they invert the order of things; They take that for a "postulatum," which ought to be ranked among the "desiderata;" and make an axiom of a mere figment.

Had man continued as he was created, to act according to nature, and according to the law of God, would have been one and the same thing. For which reason we find no precepts of religion, no delineation of morality, given to Adam in paradise: Because religion and morality were engraven on his heart; or rather, they resulted from the very bent and tendency of his perfect frame. But, since the fall, it is quite otherwise.

Ther. Have not many of the ancient worthies been living confutations of your opinion? wise philosophers, judicious lawgivers, and steady ministers of justice? their desires refined, their affections benevolent, their whole conduct upright?

Asp. I cannot forbear wondering, that you should instance in lawgivers and ministers of justice: Since the very institution of their office pre-supposes the depravity of mankind. Was human nature agitated by no irregular or vicious inclinations, the barrier of laws would be as needless in civil societies, as the vast banks of Holland are needless in our upland counties.

But this, you will say, is a digressive observation.—Your question requires a positive answer. And it is easy to answer—That the painting is beyond the life. If my author has been too free with the dark, my friend has been too lavish of the glittering colours. Those famous men might aim, perhaps, at the excellency you describe. Not one of them came up to the mark: Or, suppose they did, this would not invalidate my tenet.

Ther. This not invalidate your tenet! Then demonstration carries no conviction.

Asp. Pray, who is your greatest favourite, among all the renowned persons of antiquity?

Ther. Socrates.—He stands at the head of the class; and was, indisputably, the wisest and the best of the heathen world.

Asp. I think so too. Be pleased, however, to recollect the story of the physiognomist, who pretended to discover the disposition of the mind by the cast of the countenance. The professor of this occult science undertook, you know, to exercise his skill upon Socrates; and pronounced him, after an examination of his features, lascivious, passionate, and morose. This judgment, so extravagantly wide of the truth, was bringing a storm of ridicule and resentment upon the poor fortune-teller; when the ingenuous philosopher interposed, and owned the description to be exactly true,—That such was his natural temper; and if his conversation had been of a different turn, it was owing to the aids of philosophy. So that, even in your most finished* character, there was no innate dignity. All was adventitious.

Ther. If corruption was derived unto all men from their fore-father Adam, methinks all should be equally

* Though I love and admire the character of Socrates, yet I cannot approve the whole of his conduct. One thing which gives me particular offence is, the habitual practice of swearing, which occurs in all his conferences with his pupils. *Μα τὸν Δία*, *Νη Δία*, or some such appeal to the Deity, is used, not only in every discourse, but almost in every page: and that upon the most unnecessary occasions. I have often wondered, that so polite a writer as Xenophon should admit this flagrant impropriety into his dialogues, which, besides its irreligious air, is somewhat like the “crambe repetita;” and recurs, and recurs, and recurs, till it is really tiresome. But much more I wonder, that his excellent master should suffer the sanction of an oath to become so trivial, and the honour of his Jupiter so cheap.

This proves the deplorable blindness of human reason; which could mistake so notorious a profanation of the divine name, for a genteel embellishment of speech; it shews us, likewise, our extreme need of that revealed law, which, among other refined precepts, unknown to the religion of nature, enjoins, “Above all things, swear not;” and, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”

corrupt. But this is contrary to known fact. Some we see naturally loving and lovely, gentle in their manners, and subject to no inordinate appetites.

Asp. Some persons may be of more composed, or, if you please, of less dissolute manners, than the generality of other people. Thanks to a better temperature of their constitution, or a more watchful care in their education. But shew me the unregenerate man, who is subject to no inordinate appetites. One vile affection may check another, or a sense of decency may hold the curb upon all. But it is one thing, to have the wild beast in the heart chained; another, to have him expelled, or the lion transformed into a lamb.

Ther. Have we not often observed heroic courage, and a generosity of spirit, where the education has been none of the strictest? To what can we ascribe these laudable qualities, but to the innate virtue and nobleness of the temper, working without any auxiliary succours?

Asp. Virtue, Theron, is a complete assemblage, not some disjointed shreds, of laudable qualities. Those you mention, if not accompanied with the whole circle of amiable accomplishments, are no more to be called virtue, than two or three scattered fragments of an edifice, are to be honoured with the appellation of an house. How often are those very persons, with all their fortitude, slaves to ignoble pleasures, or in bondage to the basest lusts? A most infallible indication, that they have no uniform generosity, nor any real courage. Desire of fame, may prompt to many such acts, as dazzle the superficial eye; which yet are far, very far from genuine virtue.

Ther. Do you then attribute the Grecian politeness, and the high Roman spirit, all the gallant actions of their heroes and generals, to a desire of fame?

Asp. There is reason to suspect, that they derived their origin from some improper motive. And no motive was more artfully instilled, or more assiduously cherished than the spirit of ambition. View their crowns, their statues, their triumphal solemnities;

Read their orators, their historians, their poets. The former were the school, the latter were the masters, to inculcate this grand lesson.

Let us consider the Romans a little more attentively; and not amidst the dregs of their community, but in their very best ages; when their republic subsisted, and their Scipios flourished. Many great and shining deeds were undoubtedly performed: But did they spring from a reverential regard to the Supreme Being; from obedience to his will, or zeal for his honour?

If this principle should be thought too refined, did they proceed from a love to their fellow creatures? In case neither of these motives * actuated their conduct, it can never be placed to the account of virtue.—Had benevolence been their leading principle, why such inhumanity to Carthage? Why must that opulent city be laid in ashes, and her numerous citizens be put to the sword? Were they enemies to mankind, or a nuisance in the world? You well knew, that they were only too industrious, and too powerful; by which means, they would be in a condition to eclipse the magnificence of the Roman name, and dispute the prize of sovereignty with the Roman state. For this crime—a crime, in Ambition's eye, absolutely inexcusable—even Cato's upright soul shall doom them to utter destruction, and Scipio's gentle hand shall execute the horrid decree.

Is this virtue? Does virtue ravage countries, from the mere wantonness of pride, or lust of pre-eminence? Does virtue destroy millions of lives, only to aggrandize a particular people, or extend the dominion of some favourite empire? If this were virtue, Brutus thought too honourably of her character, when he

* A zeal for the honour of God, and a concern for the good of our fellow-creatures, are the true sources of virtue, 1 Cor. x. 24. 31. When our actions flow not from these principles, reason will put a query upon them, and revelation will expunge them from the list of virtues. They may be specious in themselves; they may be costly to the performer; they may even be serviceable to others; but can no more deserve the title of virtue, than the activity of our sun-fire officers, in extinguishing the flames on some insured house, can merit the name of Charity.

termed her an empty name. I am sure, my Theron has juster notions of things. He need not be informed, that true virtue, far from personating the rapacious harpy, acts as a father to others, as a father to all; and, like Him, who is both its pattern and its author, "goes about doing good."

Ther. The most elegant cane, if plunged into yonder bason, while the waters are curled by the breeze, will appear both crooked and coarse. I cannot but think, the accusers of human nature examine her state with a prejudiced understanding; which has the same perverse effect upon their judgment, as those ruffled waves have upon the sight. Or else, they contemplate her condition with a melancholy mind; which, like a jaundiced eye, gives every object a distempered aspect, darkens the cheerful, discolours the beautiful, and hangs even the sun in mourning.

Asp. Rather let this be the comparison to illustrate our point. View the meanest piece of earth, through the prismatic glass, and it will appear, not beautiful only, but perfectly splendid. Remove the delusory medium, and all the sophisticated finery vanishes. The indigo, the orange, the violet, are gone; and leave nothing to be seen, but a rude, unornamented lump of clay. So, if we consider human nature according to the partial representations of self-love, or contemplate it in the flattering mirror of some popular writings, it may seem regular, holy, excellent: But, if we behold it under the light, the unerring light of revelation, its fancied charms disappear; it stands clothed with deformity; and is a spectacle of commiseration, if not of horror.

Ther. What reason have you to father such a notion upon the sacred writings? The sacred writings inform us, that man was made "after the image of God." This, sure, could not be so dishonourable, and depraved a pattern, as your discourse would insinuate.

Asp. Far, very far from a dishonourable pattern! The image of God is the consummate standard of all perfection. In conformity to this admirable exemplar,

our first parents were created; and in this admirable condition, they continued, till, by transgression they fell; fell from the most holy and happy state, into guilt, condemnation, and ruin. Therefore when this fatal catastrophe had taken place, the sacred historian varies his style; and with a remarkable peculiarity, as well as propriety of speech, says, "Adam begat a son in his own* (not in the Divine) likeness." That every reader may advert to this melancholy, but important truth, it is marked more strongly still, it is enforced by a very emphatical repetition. "After his own image,"† Moses adds; as contradistinguished to the image of God, mentioned in a preceding verse. Which expressions are evidently intended to denote the difference between the state in which Adam was created, and Seth was begotten.

Ther. Pray, let me have a succinct, but full account of this tragical story; since all your orthodox divines lay such a mighty stress upon the doctrine of the fall.

Asp. God, having formed the human body out of the ground, animated the structure with a living soul; and transcribed upon this soul, the image of his blessed Self. All was light in the understanding; all was rectitude in the will; and nothing but harmony in the affections.—Man, thus endowed, was placed in the delightful garden of Eden, and furnished with every accommodation, which was necessary to support his being, or desirable to gratify his senses. He was constituted lord of this lower creation; and, amidst numberless indulgences, received only one—easy—negative command, "not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." From this he was to abstain, as a pledge of his subjection, and as an exercise of his obedience. Bliss and immortality were to be the reward of duty; misery and death the punishment of disobedience. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt

* This is affirmed, not of Cain, but of Seth, the most excellent of Adam's children, and father of the holy seed.

† Gen. v. 3. "Corruptus corruptum."

surely die," Gen. ii. 17. was the sanction of the divine law.

How equitable! how gracious the terms! Yet neither the goodness of God could induce him to keep them, nor the authority of God deter him from breaking them. Unreasonably discontented, even with such advantageous circumstances, and presumptuously aspiring to be like the Most High, he hearkened to the suggestions of the evil spirit. In a word, he violated the precept, and incurred the penalty. God was just, and man was undone. He lost his uprightness;* became subject to mortality; and, as the nervous original expresses it, "died the death."

Ther. True; he became subject to many bodily infirmities, and to the necessity of final dissolution. But what has this sentence, or what have these sufferings, to do with your notion of universal depravity in the mind? The death which the Almighty Legislator threatened, can be opposed only to the life which the Almighty Creator gave.

Asp. Be it so—The Creator gave, and man possessed a life, incomparably more excellent than that which the pulse imparts, or the beasts enjoy. He possessed a divine life; which, according to the definition of the apostle, consisted "in knowledge, in righteousness, and true holiness," Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10. This, which was the distinguishing glory, and the supreme felicity of his nature—this, alas! was extinct.

His understanding, originally enlightened with wisdom, was clouded and overwhelmed with ignorance—His heart, once filled with religious veneration, and warmed with heavenly love, became alienated from God his maker. His passions and appetites, instead of moving on, in orderly array, according to the beautiful measures of truth and duty, grew mutinous; shook of the government of reason; and ran wild into

* ————Innocence, that as a veil
Had shadow'd them from knowing ill, was gone,
Just confidence, and native righteousness.

MILTON, b. ix. l. 1054.

the most lawless extravagancies.—In a word, the whole moral frame was unhinged, disjointed, broken.

Ther. What cause have you to suppose, that all this misery was either included in the threatening, or introduced by the fall?

Asp. The ignorance of fallen Adam was palpable. Witness that absurd attempt to hide himself from the eye of Omniscience, among the trees of the garden.—His aversion to the all-gracious God was equally plain. Otherwise he would never have fled from his Maker; but rather have hasted, and on the wings of desire, into the place of the divine manifestation.

A strange variety of disorderly passions* were evidently predominant in his breast.—Pride; for he refuses to acknowledge his guilt, though he cannot but own the fact.—Ingratitude; for he obliquely upbraids the Creator with his gift, as though it had been a snare, rather than a blessing; “The woman whom thou gavest me.”—Want of natural affection: for he endeavours to cast all the blame upon the weaker vessel; and to acquit his obnoxious self, by impeaching the wife of his bosom.—The female criminal acts the same unhumiliated part; neither takes shame to herself; nor gives glory to God; nor puts up a single petition for pardon.

As all these disasters ensued upon the breach of the commandment, they furnish us, I think, with the best key to open the meaning of the prohibitory sanction. They prove, beyond any argument, that spiritual

* Milton, speaking of the unhappy pair, and describing the consequences of their fall, says,

—————Nor only tears
 Rain'd at their eyes; but high winds within
 Began to rise; high passions, anger, hate,
 Mistrust, suspicion, discord, and shook sore
 Their inward state of mind; calm region once,
 And full of peace; now toss'd and turbulent!
 For, understanding rul'd not, and the will
 Heard not her lore! but, in subjection now
 'Tq sensual appetite, who from beneath
 Usurping, over sovereign reason claim'd
 Superior sway.

Book ix. l. 1121.

death, and all its consequences, were comprehended in the extent of the threatening.

Ther. How could one act of disobedience produce such destructive effects? erase the fair image of the Godhead, and stamp the monster, stamp the very devil in its stead?—and so small an act of disobedience too!

Asp. The prohibition, if you please, was small, not so the transgression. It was committed against the clearest knowledge of duty, and the strongest obligations to obedience. It argued ingratitude for the richest favours, and unbelief of the most solemn declarations. It was an act of the most horrid presumption in the creature, and of the most impious rebellion against the Creator.

As to the smallness, or rather the gentle and benign import of the command, this aggravates beyond measure, the crime of disobedience. Alluding to the words once addressed to the Syrian general, we may justly expostulate, “O thou Adam, if thy Lord had bid thee do some great thing, 2 Kings v. 13. in submission to his high authority, and out of gratitude for his unspeakable goodness, oughtest thou not to have done it? How much more, when he says to thee—Freely eat of all, except this single tree. Thousands, thousands of honours, privileges, and gifts be thine; only one acknowledgment of thy subjection mine; and that the easiest which thy heart can wish, or even thy fancy conceive.”

You ask, How could one act of disobedience produce such destructive effects?—I answer, the reality of the fact, in numberless instances of material nature, is plain to a demonstration; while the manner of operation remains an impenetrable secret. Every child perceives the former; Newton himself is at a loss for the latter. For which reason, I have always thought it better to believe what God has taught, than attempt to explain what God has concealed. Let us forego this curious, perhaps fruitless inquiry; and substitute a remark, which naturally arises from the subject, and may considerably edify our minds.

Ther. Edify! Is it possible to render this dishonourable and afflictive notion edifying? Can any generous fruit spring from such a penurious soil?

Asp. Samson, I believe, had no expectation of finding any thing valuable in the relics of his slain lion. But, to his agreeable disappointment, "there was honey in the carcase," Judg. xiv. 8. If our doctrine appear ghastly as the one, it may yield a benefit sweet as the other.

From hence we may learn (what, when rightly learned, is more serviceable than all the sciences) the extreme malignity of sin.—When volcanos open their tremendous jaws, and disgorge a fiery inundation, they confine their fury to a single territory.—When famine lifts her mildewed hand, and destroys the supports of animal life, she is content with ruining a kingdom or a nation. When war drenches his sword in blood, or the pestilence impregnates the air with poison; they also, even they observe some limits, and never make the whole compass of nature the scene of their ravages.—But sin levelled its blow at the whole human race. Sin poured contagion, and spread destruction, through all countries, and all ages. One single act of sin brought confusion and a curse upon the material, and miseries, infinite millions of miseries, on the rational world.* How then should we fear this most pernicious of all evils! with what carefulness guard against its insidious allurements! with what resolution fly from its killing caresses!

Ther. I must observe, that you take for granted what remains to be proved. For, supposing your account true with regard to Adam, yet how does this affect his children? Why must all his posterity be contaminated, because their forefather has played the prodigal! Such a heavy charge against the whole body

* St Chrysostom calls the first transgression, *η παντα λυμαινομενη αμαρτια*. Which is, in a manner, translated by Milton, who, speaking of the same tragical act, says,

————— It
Brought death into the world, and all our wo.

of mankind will not be admitted, without very cogent proofs.

Asp. The proofs are cogent; perhaps irrefragable, — Reason offers to turn evidence in the case. Reason, in concurrence with revelation, demands, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” Job. xiv. 4. If the fountain be polluted, how can the streams be pure? and if the root is corrupt, ’tis impossible to conceive how the branches should be sound, or the fruit good.*

The scriptural testimonies are almost innumerable. They pour their evidence from every quarter; and constitute not two or three only, but a whole cloud of witnesses. “God made man upright,” says the royal preacher; the human nature, in its primitive state, was without any wrong bias: But at, and ever since the first transgression, they have found out and followed many perverse inventions, Eccl. vii. 29.

Ther. I don’t deny, but multitudes of people, seduced by bad example, or betrayed by their own inadvertency, have departed from the rule of duty; have, as the wise man affirms, tried many foolish experiments to acquire happiness, and devised as many idle excuses for their folly. But this is no such irrefragable proof, that they were originally bad: It only implies, that, not taking proper heed to their ways, they warped from their native uprightness. As yonder tulips, though perfectly beautiful at present, if not attended with the necessary cultivation, will degenerate into homely flowers; and, at length, be no better than tawdry weeds.

Asp. No, my friend. Iniquity is not an adventitious thing, caught from example, or contracted by

* Milton has anticipated Theron’s objection; and, in Adam’s soliloquy, very judiciously solved it.

——— Ah! why should all mankind,
For one man’s fault, thus guiltless be condemn’d,
If guiltless? But from me what can proceed
But all corrupt, both body and mind deprav’d;
Not to do only, but to will the same
With me? How can they acquitted stand
In sight of God?

Book x. l. 822.

carelessness. These may increase, but these do not occasion the moral malady. A sinful disposition is as early as our being; the very mould in which all our faculties are cast. David bears very express testimony to this humbling truth, "Behold!" (He sets his N. B. upon the passage. 'Tis a sad, but certain fact; such as should never depart from my memory, nor ever be omitted in my confessions; and is much to be regarded by every reader :) "I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me," Psal. li. 5. As though he had said, "Alas! Lord, this crime, though extremely horrid, is but a little part of my guilt. I have not only sinned in practice, but I am totally and universally corrupt in my very nature."

This he acknowledges, not to extenuate his offence, but to lay open his excessive vileness. And indeed it is not possible to form a right judgment of ourselves, or to be duly humbled before God, unless we add the depravation of our nature to the transgressions of our life. Just as it is impossible to discern what monstrous and voracious animals lie hid in the ocean, if we only glance an eye upon the surface of the waters.

Ther. This, you know, was written by the royal penitent, under the pangs of severe remorse. Does not a sense of his enormous iniquity, together with the apprehension of divine wrath, make his hand shake, and lead him to aggravate features? Or, suppose it were true of the adulterous king, is it equally applicable to others, who have escaped such gross pollutions?

Asp. It is no exaggerating draught, but a faithful delineation; and exactly represents every child of Adam. It was written with the utmost deliberation; and therefore is introduced with that call for peculiar attention, "Behold!" And though David was scandalously criminal, in his intrigue with the wife of Uriah, yet, the general tenor of his life was not only irreproachable, but exemplary. Who so zealous for the house of his God, or so devoted an admirer of the divine word? His heart was an altar, ever flaming with heavenly love; and his tongue a trumpet, to sound the

praises of Jehovah, through all generations. And if he had reason to make this abasing confession, who is the person that can think himself aggrieved by sharing in the imputation?

One of our most eminent martyrs,* when he heard of any malefactor condemned to suffer an ignominious death, used to lay his hand upon his breast, and say, "The seeds of all those villanies, which brought that unhappy wretch to the gibbet, were sown here. And, if they have not sprung up into the same detestable deeds, unto divine grace, unto divine grace alone, be all the glory!"

Ther. Your martyrs had honest hearts, but not always the clearest heads. I admire their zeal, and reverence their memories; but I can no more receive their opinion, as an oracle, than I can be persuaded to worship their relicts.

Asp. I have no intention to palm Popery on my friend, nor any desire to calumniate the human species. If it be disingenuous and sinful to asperse a particular character, how much more unjustifiable to traduce our nature in general?

My account, dark and disgusting as it is, stands confirmed by a higher authority than any private opinion. It is confirmed from an universal survey of mankind, taken by the eye of the Creator himself, and left upon record in the books of revelation. "The Lord looked down from heaven, upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek after God." What is the result of this grand inquiry? It must, without all peradventure, be infallibly true; because God's inspection is too keen to be alluded, and his judgment too impartial to be biassed. This is the report made by the infinitely wise observer:—"They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, † there is none that doth good, no not one," Psal. xiv. 2, 3.

* Mr Bradford.

† The two original words are metaphorical expressions; taken from, wines, that are become sour, and meats, that are in a state of putrefac-

Ther. This, I apprehend, is the character of those besotted creatures, those most egregious of all fools, who say, "There is no God." To them the psalm relates, and to them the abandoned character is appropriated. They have it, if I may so speak, *casu privilegio*.

Asp. It is meant, rather of practical, than of speculative Atheists; who say, not explicitly with their mouths, but implicitly in their hearts, "There is no God;" who live, as if there was no all-seeing Eye, to take cognizance of their present conduct; no Supreme Judge, to call them to a future reckoning. And, I dare appeal to yourself, though perhaps the fondest of fathers, whether this instance of "foolishness is not bound up in the hearts of our children?"* nay, whether it be not natural to us all, both in youth and manhood, to forget our Creator?

In this case, Theron, there is no monopoly. Your right and mine are too strongly established by experience, and too clearly expressed in the preceding Scripture, to admit of any controversy. If there were any that understood—they are all gone out of the way.—There is none that doeth good—no not one. Could any conveyancer in Europe have contrived a form of words more fully to ascertain our unhappy title?

Ther. There may be some texts in Scripture, which seem to countenance your assertion, but these refer to the worst of men, in the worst of times. And can you, with any justice, ascribe the properties of a few reprobates to the whole species?

tion. I believe it is impossible to find images, more strongly expressive of a total depravity, and of the utmost degeneracy.

* Prov. xxii. 15. Let none think, that by foolishness the sacred writer means only those silly tricks, which discover a weakness of understanding in children. Solomon's fool is not the idiot, but the sinner; and the folly stigmatized throughout the Proverbs, denotes, not a failure in the intellectual, but in the religious and moral character.

The words, in this passage, are peculiarly forcible. "Foolishness is in the heart;" implanted in the very nature; sunk deep into the inmost faculties; and not only sunk deep, but adheres almost inseparably: is wrapt, tied, and bound; twines like the ivy, and is rooted like the oak.

Asp. This very passage, and others of a like import, are adopted by St Paul, and applied both to Jews and Gentiles, with this professed design, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be found guilty * before God," Rom. iii. 19. Which evinces, I should think, beyond all doubt, the universality of its extent.

If, to the universality, we add the antiquity of this fact, it will bear the two grand characteristics of truth. Far from being a novel opinion, it was received as a maxim, in the early age of Job. "What is man, that he should pretend to be clean? and he that is born of a woman, that he should presume to be righteous?" Righteous before the infinitely just and holy One! "Behold! he putteth no trust in his saints," though the most exalted of all intelligent beings. "Yea, the heavens," those brightest parts of the material creation, "are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, † who drinketh iniquity!" Job xv. 14, 15, 16; though loathsome to God, and worse than poison to his own soul; yet drinketh it like water, without any hesitation, or the least fear, with an eager and profuse delight.

This, you will observe, was alleged in a dispute, carried on with no small vehemency; yet is admitted on all hands, as unexceptionably true. Be pleased also to take notice, that the charge is not confined to some very notorious sinners, but is laid against the whole body of mankind. Whatever figure they make, each in his own conceit; they are all described in the word of God, as beings insatiably athirst after evil; from

* *Ταροδικος γινεται*, "May become guilty," does not so exactly answer the scope of the context, neither does it so solidly establish the apostle's argument, as "may be found guilty;" be fully convicted, and apparently liable to most just condemnation. Those things were written of old, and were quoted by St Paul, not to render men criminal, but to prove them so.

† The immaculate purity of the blessed God, and the utter depravity of fallen man, are points of so great importance in the scriptural system of divinity, that they are inculcated no less than three times, within the compass of this single book; and by much the same noble contrast of striking images; chap. iv. 17, 18; xv. 14, 15, 16; xxv. 4, 5, 6.

objects, that we cannot endure to behold, or cannot behold without abhorrence.* Such is man by nature. People must have eyes very different from mine, to discern any dignity in this draught.

Ther. As to innate dignity, we will let it pass. But this I must insist upon, and several writers of the first repute are on my side,—That we enter the stage of life in a state of indifference either to good or evil: That the affections are like a balance nicely poised, and preponderating neither one way nor the other: The whole soul, like a sheet of fair paper, is equally susceptible of straight or crooked lines; and will as readily receive the amiable features of an angel, as the hideous deformity of a devil.

Asp. With regard to your first illustration,—The simile, I think, confutes the sentiment. For to be in suspense, whether we shall love the Lord our God, the giver of all good, and the source of all perfection; this, surely, must be condemned as an irreligious temper.—This is a criminal halting between God and Baal. A neutrality, which is no better than hostility.

I fear, the writers you mention pay but little deference to the inspired volume. Our escutcheon is very differently blazoned in that office of spiritual heraldry. “A transgressor from the womb,”† is one of our hereditary titles. Transgressors we are by strong internal propensity, even before we transgress in outward act.

Observe the young hawthorn plants, which have unfolded their green leaves, in yonder nursery; but have scarce learned to spread the gay blossom. Is there in those an equal aptitude to produce the luscious juicy

* The original words have two significations; one is used to signify that abominable practice, which the Egyptians could not bear to see, Exod. vii. 22. Heb. Bib. ver. 26. Engl. Bib. The other denotes an object too squalid to be viewed without loathing.

† Isa. xlvi. 8. A truth so apparent and undeniable, that Seneca could not but discern it, though he was an unenlightened heathen; could not but acknowledge it, though he was one of the proud Stoic sect. “Hac conditione nati sumus, animalia obnoxia non paucioribus animi quam corporis morbis.” *De ira*, lib. 2, c. 9.

ape, or their own coarse and husky berry? By no means. They will (unless grafted with some generous one) certainly, universally, constantly, bear the same harsh fruit with their parent tree. So, certainly, will the human mind, if not renewed by the Spirit of Christ, branch out into ungodly tempers, and bring forth wicked practices.

Ther. The nobleman, mentioned by Xenophon,* when overcome by an alluring temptation, devised, for his excuse, the notion of two souls; one that inclined him to vice; another that prompted him to virtue. This was a moderate caricatura, † compared with my friend's. He will allow nothing regular or graceful in the human heart. You have metamorphosed the master-piece of the creation into such a deformed object, as may justly render him a terror to himself. Can there be a grosser libel upon the Creator, or a greater discouragement to our fellow-creatures?

Asp. If this be a distorted piece, what will you call the following description? "God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. This, perhaps may be reckoned a more monstrous drawing still: Yet it came from that hand, which painted the canopy of the skies, and touched all the pictures of nature into such inimitable perfection.

Pray, let us examine the most distinguishing features in this draught. Not barely the works of his hand, or the words of his tongue, but the "imagination of his heart," are evil. The contagion has spread itself through the inner man. It has tainted the seat of his principles, and the source of his actions. ‡ Is there

* Cyropæd. lib. 6.

† A term used by the Italian painters, to signify a resemblance horrid, or ridiculous.

‡ The original is very nice in its structure, and no less emphatical in its meaning. The heart, or grand principle—the thoughts of the heart, or the various actings of that principle—the imagination of the thoughts, or the produce and result of those actings; namely, desires and affections, counsels and purposes.—Not one, a few only, or the greatest part, but all these are evil.

not, you will say, some mixture of good? No; they are only evil. There is no hopeful tendency. Not so much as a little leaven of piety, that may have a chance to diffuse itself, and meliorate the whole lump. But are there no lucid intervals? No happy moments, when virtue gains the ascendancy? None: he is only evil continually. The usurpation of sin is total, and its tyranny perpetual.

What I have advanced, therefore, is no libel upon the Creator's benignity: because it is the very echo of his own determination. Neither is it so properly discouraging, as humbling and alarming to our fellow-creatures: Humbling, to make us sensible of our ruin; alarming, to make us desirous of a recovery.

Ther. Is not the description which you have produced, peculiar to the men of that wicked generation; whose guilt was as unparalleled as their punishment?

Asp. It is applicable both to them and their successors. The wisdom of God repeats the charge, and fixes it upon the race which survived the flood.* The depravity of human nature continued, nor could the waters of an universal deluge purge it away. So deep, alas! is the stain, and so incorrigible the virulency of original corruption, that it will yield to nothing; to nothing will it yield, but to the "washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. iii. 5. Till this takes place, every heart of man must wear the prophet's stigmatizing motto, "Deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

Ther. This passage, I am informed, is not rightly translated; especially in the last expression. The

* Gen. viii. 21. Where, I think, the particle is used in the adversative, not the casual signification; and should be rendered *though*, rather than *for*—Where it seems likewise, that the forbearance of the righteous God, is ascribed to the great atonement; typified by Noah's burnt-offerings, and expressed by St Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians; who probably alludes to this passage, "The Lord smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the earth any more for man's sake, though the imagination of man's heart be evil from his youth," Eph. v. 2.

Hebrew original does not bear so hard upon the human character, as the English version.

Asp. You allow then, that the heart is deceitful. And of this we have a glaring proof in the conduct of Hazael. He thought it impossible, that he should ever perpetrate such horrid barbarities, as the prophet foresaw. "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" 2 Kings viii. 13. Yes, Hazael; however thou mayest imagine thyself gentle as a lamb, thou art fierce as a dog, and savage as a tyger: Which was most terribly demonstrated by the event.

Suppose we translate the other word somewhat more accurately. The little alteration will be of less service to your cause. Instead of "desperately wicked," you may, if you please, read, "deplorably disordered," Jer. xvii. 3. This is the exact import of the phrase. It is a metaphor derived from a very distempered body; in which the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. "From the crown of whose head, to the sole of whose feet," there is nothing but consuming disease, and enfeebling languors.* The rules of civility may set a specious varnish on the conversation; but until grace, sanctifying grace, administers the remedy, the most civilized heart will be like the pale, emaciated cheek, that is poorly enlivened with paint.

Ther. What say the writers of the New Testament? Is not their way of thinking more liberal and benign? If human nature wore so hideous an aspect, under the legal dispensation; since the coming of our Lord, and the publishing of his gospel, one may expect an improved and more pleasing face of things.

Asp. Human nature, in every period of time, and under every dispensation of religion, is still the same. It was the Spirit of Christ, who indited the Old Testament; and he cannot vary from himself, in the declarations of the New.

I am very much inclined to believe, that all the bodily diseases, which our Divine Physician healed,

* Isa. i. 6. Agreeable to this doctrine, and consonant to this metaphor, is the confession of our liturgy, "There is no health in us."

during his abode on earth, were so many emblematical representations of spiritual disorders, which, like certain family distempers, may be said to run in the blood of all mankind. Will you give me leave, Theron, to explain myself? I don't like to ingross the discourse. Yet I would willingly enlarge upon this subject.

Ther. By all means. The laws of argument, separate from the indulgences of friendship, give you a warrant to urge, whatever may support your cause. Besides, I shall be glad to hear your sentiments upon a point so curious.

Asp. The poor leper, covered with noisome sores, is the very picture of a polluted sinner. Was the one, for his contagious impurities, separated from the society of his fellow-citizens? So shall the other, for his abominable uncleanness, be banished from the beatific presence, unless he be cleansed by the blood, and justified by the righteousness of Jesus.

You pity the condition of that unhappy creature who was born blind. His eyes rolled, but rolled in vain, to find the dawning ray. Such is the benighted state of the human mind, till Almighty goodness command the scales of ignorance to fall off, and pour heavenly day through all the intellectual faculties. Then, and not till then, we begin to know the holiness, the justice, the adorable excellencies of God. We see the sublime purity of his law, and the extreme depravity of our own hearts. We are brought acquainted with the transcendent glories of our Redeemer's person, and apprehend that most comfortable mystery of his substitution in our stead. We discern the ineffable perfection of his merits, and the divinely rich freeness of his grace.* Truths incomparably more delightful to the soul, than all the delectable scenes of creation are to the sight.

* This, and the preceding particulars, are lessons of the last importance in the Christian school. The knowledge of them deserves to be most solicitously sought, both by attentive contemplation, and by earnest prayer. For to know them, is to be truly wise; to be influenced by them, is to be substantially happy.

The paralytic's enervated limbs too truly represent the impotence of our nature. Was he unable to grind a mill, to run in a race, or to turn himself on his side? So unable are we to "fight the good fight of faith," to exercise the graces of Christianity, or even to turn ourselves unto God. Do not you, my friend, experience something of this inability? For my part, I must lay my hand on my breast, and daily, hourly, confess, "The palsy is here. Though not altogether dead in sin (blessed be Christ Jesus, and his quickening Spirit!) yet how languid is my zeal, how enfeebled my industry, in the great affair of everlasting salvation!—I would fain believe, and with a full assurance of faith, the promises of the unchangeable Jehovah. But how often do I stagger through unbelief!—I would fain love, and with the warmest gratitude, my ever-merciful and most beneficent God. But oh! what coldness benumbs my affections! I wish to be humble in every thought, heavenly in all my desires, and wholly resigned to the divine will. But, alas! my sufficiency for these things is like the flaccid sinew, or the withered arm."

It would be endless to particularize all the maladies, which were emblems of our misery, and the triumphs of our Lord's power. Let me only remark, that their bodies were afflicted with a single disorder; our souls labour under a complication of evils. They felt their affliction, and were desirous, importunately desirous of relief. We are, till awakened from above, insensible of our calamitous case. We add, to all our other indispositions, a stupifying lethargy, or an extravagant delirium.

Ther. Such allegorical expositions of Scripture are pretty enough. But I presume, you yourself cannot reckon them demonstrative. For my own part, I must appeal from the surmises of fancy, to the verdict of reason.

Asp. I cannot think, that the allegorical sense, when soberly introduced, is unworthy our regard, or without its weight. However, I have no design to preclude

your appeal. Will the avowed, will the reiterated decision of an apostle, satisfy my friend, and be admitted as the verdict of reason? St Paul has declared of himself, "In me, that is in my flesh," or unrenewed nature, "dwelleth no good," Rom. vii. 18; no good temper, not so much as any good desire. Elsewhere he affirms, that "the carnal mind," or unregenerate soul, "is not subject to the law of God," nay, is an enemy, or rather enmity itself, Rom. viii. 7. Against what? Against sin? That were a noble antipathy.—Against the world? That were a laudible disaffection.—No; but against God and his law. Amazing perverseness! to be enmity against God, who is boundless benignity, and consummate goodness. Enmity against his law, which is the transcript of his amiable perfections, and the faultless model of all virtue.

Ther. This, I suppose, is the character of Saul the Pharisee, not of Paul the apostle; descriptive of his condition, when he was "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious."

Asp. It relates not to himself alone, but is applicable to all who continues in a state of nature. The blessed Author of our being, speaking of mankind in general, says—That "he is even flesh," mere flesh, altogether flesh;* his very soul, and all its powers, are wholly enslaved to fleshly appetites. The beneficent Restorer of our happiness pronounces the same sentence, in the very same words: "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh," John iii. 6. the faculties, which men receive by their natural birth, have a carnal bias; incline to nothing, but sordid pleasures and ignoble pursuits. Our Saviour re- inculcates the admonition,

* Gen. vi. 3. The word flesh, by which the all-wise Creator characterizes man, signifies, in the sacred writings, whatever is dishonourable in itself, provoking to God, or introductory to the ruin of man. The works of the flesh, are a compendium of all iniquity, Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. To walk after the flesh, is the very reverse of walking in the Spirit, diametrically opposite to the divine law, and true holiness, Rom. viii. 4. To be carnally minded, or to have the influence, the savour, the relish of the flesh (*φρανισμα σαρκος*) predominant in our minds, is the spiritual death of the soul; and a presage of eternal death, both in body and soul, Rom. viii. 6.

and illustrates it by a very remarkable allusion. You cannot forget his answer to a procrastinating disciple, "Let the dead bury their dead," Matth. viii. 22; intimating, that as many as are unsanctified by the Holy Ghost, though possessed of an animal, are destitute of the divine life; are no more fit for the kingdom of heaven, for its converse, or its joys, than a pale corpse in the coffin, or dry bones in the charnel-house, are qualified to transact any secular business.

St Paul sets the seal of heaven to this momentous truth, in various passages of his epistles. From a multitude let me select one, and recommend it to your serious consideration. "You that were some time alienated, and enemies," the Colossians, and all mankind, were alienated from the living God; had no true knowledge of him; and, what is worse, had no sincere desire after him. Nay, they were not only strangers, but enemies; in a state of hostility to his holy nature and heavenly will. What can express a greater degeneracy? Nothing, unless it be the following clause: "by a mind intent upon wicked works,"* a mind, not only averse to all good, but passionately prone to all evil.

Ther. A few picked passages, of a figurative import, and artfully cogged by some dextrous interpretation, may seem to support your cause.

Asp. Ah! Theron, there is no need to use slight of hand. He that runs, may read this doctrine in the sacred authors. It is interwoven with the whole series of their historical, and makes a professed part of their practical writings.

What is more common with the inspired penmen, than to express a profligate course of life, by "following our own imaginations, and walking in our own

* Col. i. 21. *Ἐν διαβολῇ ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς κακοῖς*, "mente malis operibus intentā." An eminent critic would thus point, and thus translate the words; and assigns, for his alteration, the following reason; "Mens enim dicitur esse in ea re quam semper cogitat, ad quam cupidine fertur et inclinatur." *Davenant in loc.* Let the words be pointed and translated, either in this or the received manner, they speak the language, and confirm the sentiments, of this whole Dialogue.

ways?" When immorality and licentiousness were predominant in Israel; knew no restraints; and kept no bounds; how does the unerring historian describe this horrible state of things? "Every one did that which was right in his own eyes."* Nothing can more strongly imply the extreme depravity of mankind, than such a phraseology, which makes it one and the same thing, to pursue our natural inclinations, and to act the abandoned sinner.

St Jude cannot write a few lines, but he must touch upon this subject: must teach this humbling lesson.— "Sensual,"† he says, "not having the spirit." According to his estimate, not to be actuated by the power of especial grace, is to remain under the dominion of sensuality. If we may credit this servant of Christ, every man, while unrenewed by the divine Spirit, is governed by flesh and sense. Can any man then pretend to be originally free from the influence of corruption?

St Paul exempts not himself, no, nor any of the highest saints, from the opprobrious charge: "We all walked according to the desires of the flesh, and of the mind."—Which desires in us, as well as in the idolatrous heathens, were base, sordid, and contaminating. Insomuch that we, who are Jews by birth, who are sons of God by our new birth; even we were "by nature the children of wrath.‡ And if liable to wrath, then, doubtless, subject to depravity, and chargeable with sin.

Ther. What says St James? You have suppressed, and I had almost forgot his testimony, though it is so very pertinent to my purpose, and so very explicit in my favour. "Men, who are made after the similitude of God." The similitude of God signifies, in the sa-

* Judg. xviii. 6.—See also Psal. lxxxi. 12. Eccl. xi. 9. Acts xiv. 16.

† Jude 19. The original expression is ψυχικοί, and denotes persons who have no higher a principle, than the animal life, and the rational soul.

‡ Eph. ii. 3, "Hoc uno loco," says Beza, "quasi fulmine, totus homo, quantus quantus est, prosternitur. Neque enim naturam dicimus, sed mortuam, per peccatum; ideoque iræ obnoxiam."

ered books, those moral endowments, which distinguish the possessor both from the brute and the devil. And if men are made after this image, if they are created with these endowments, where is your doctrine of original sin?

Asp. I began to flatter myself, that your objections were exhausted. But since I am mistaken in this particular, surely it must be as great a mistake to imagine, that our apostle would maintain an opinion, so repugnant to the afore-mentioned texts, and so contrary to universal observation. Do not you perceive the very reverse true, with regard to your own children? Why do you address them with such tender entreaties, such warm exhortations, such repeated arguments? Why do you allure them to duty by promises, and deter them from transgression by threatenings? Is all this regimen, all this discipline, necessary for creatures that bear the holy image of God?

They "made after the similitude of God!" Then they have no need of the renewing influences of the holy Ghost, in case they live; and no need of the atonement of Christ's blood, in case they die. Would James, the Lord's brother, assert such an egregious error, as not only opposes a single article, but undermines the whole constitution of Christianity? sets aside the sanctification of the divine Spirit, and the propitiation of the Redeemer's death? Impossible for him to assert! Impossible, I should think, for us to suppose!

St James speaks of a fact that is past; speaks of men collectively, as they were all included in their first parent. The passage, I apprehend, should be translated, not, men that "are," but, men that "were"* created, &c. The Scripture considers Adam, as the common parent of us all; nay more, considers us all as existing in our great progenitor, which is so far from overthrowing, that it establishes, the point in debate.

* Jam. iii. 9. That this is the precise signification of the participle *γεννητας*, may be gathered from 1 Tim. v. 9. where *γεννησια* is translated *having been*; and most necessarily refer, not to the present, but to the past condition of the widow.

For, if we were all created after the similitude of God in and with Adam; it must follow, that we all fell from our conformity to God, in and with Adam. And if so—let me for once retort my friend's interrogatory, Where is not original sin?

I am very sure, it runs through our liturgy; is an essential part of our articles; and most strongly delineated in our homilies. Shall I produce some of those testimonies, which are so clear, as they are copious?

Ther. No more of your testimonies, good Aspasio. Inform me rather, what advantages can accrue from your inculcating, or my adopting, such a doctrine. Suppose it were undeniably true, disagreeable truths, like disagreeable objects, should be consigned over to obscurity, not obtruded upon our view. On such an occasion, the reply of Themistocles should be mine. One of the literati of Greece offered to communicate an elaborate and curious invention; by means of which his memory should be so wonderfully strengthened, as to retain whatever he read or heard. "My friend," replied the hero, "you quite mistake the way to serve me. I want to learn the art, not of remembering, but of forgetting."

Asp. If to forget our disease, were a likely method to restore our health, I should readily concur in your hero's way of thinking. As this will hardly be allowed, I cannot but judge it more advisable, to remember our disease, that we may inquire after a remedy.

Ther. Where is this remedy to be had?

Asp. Not on earth, but from heaven. The schools of science cannot discover it. The courts of kings are unable to procure it. The college of physicians know not how to prescribe for it. But the gospel of our salvation prescribes, prepares, and dispenses it. The language of Christ in his holy word is, "I will bring her health and cure," Jer. xxxiii. 6. And the beginning of our cure is, to be sensible of our disorder.

Hence we are taught to be humble. To review the catalogue of our actual transgressions, is a mortifying

employ. But that which lays the soul in the lowest abasement, is the conviction of inbred iniquity. This strikes at the root of human vanity, and cuts asunder the very sinews of self-conceit. Blindness in the understanding; impotency in the will; disorder in the affections; these are not visitants, but inhabitants,* congenial with our frame, and ingrained in our constitution. How then, O! how can we be vain of our moral beauty, who have an hereditary defilement cleaving to all our faculties? Surely this must banish the Pharisee from our breast, and inspire us with the sentiments of that sincere penitent, "Behold, I am vile!" Job xl. 4; must teach us the language of the abashed leper, "Unclean! unclean!" Lev. xiii. 45.

Ther. I should think it would make us melancholy rather than humble; serve to no other purpose, than to introduce an afflictive sense of extreme wretchedness.

Asp. Did we intend to rest here, your apprehensions would be just. But we urge the doctrine of original corruption, as a preparative for the redemption of Christ.

It is observable, that very few applied to the blessed Jesus in the days of his flesh, but the sons and daughters of affliction. The levee of that Prince of Peace was crowded by the lame, the blind, the diseased. These being sensible of distress, and longing for relief, fell as humble supplicants at his feet: While others, who were firm in their health, and gay in their spirits, rejected him with contemptuous scorn. When we perceive "the plague of our heart," and feel those worse than ulcerous sores, which overspread our nature; we also shall ardently seek to "the Lord our healer." When we find ourselves subject to the curse of the law, in bondage to the tyranny of Satan, and liable to everlasting damnation; then the divine Physician, and the divine Redeemer, will be precious indeed. Whereas, if we remain insensible of our misery, the gospel, which is saving health to the contrite soul,

* Called therefore $\eta \sigma\iota\kappa\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma \epsilon\nu \sigma\pi\omicron\iota\iota \alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\iota\alpha\iota$, "sin that dwelleth in me." Rom. vii. 17.

will be an unaffecting story to our ears: We may hear it, we may read it, as an amusing narrative; but shall not receive it, as a sovereign remedy.

Ther. Not receive the gospel, Aspasio! I hardly understand what you mean. I often study the gospel; I believe it to be a divine revelation, and endeavour to follow its directions. I look upon it, as containing the most refined system of morality; as enforcing every virtue, by the strongest motives; and recommending all, by the most perfect example.

Asp. To which you should add—as revealing that great Mediator, who has fulfilled all righteousness, to affect our justification; who has also the fulness of the Spirit, to accomplish our regeneration. Otherwise, what you mention, is infinitely short of the gospel. It brings no glad tidings to fallen creatures. It administers no succour to ruined sinners. It is like writing a copy for the blind, or setting a task to the disabled; which would rather be an insult on their impotence, than a relief of their distress.

The first particular I wave at present. Only let me ask your opinion of the last; which is a grand doctrine, and a very distinguishing privilege of the gospel. I mean the doctrine and the privilege of spiritual regeneration. Exclusive of which, all your endeavours to possess virtue and practise morality, will be no better than endeavours to fly without wings, or to run without feet.

While unimpressed with a sense of our original depravity, we shall probably sit down contented with some superficial reformation, and not aspire after a renewal of the heart. Civility will pass for sanctity, and a temperate disposition for a gracious habit. Why is the new birth, why are all the saving operations of the blessed Spirit, disregarded by some, derided by others? Because these persons are insensible of their utter inability to all good, and of their abject slavery to all evil. Therefore, they see no reason for this divine agency, or for that universal change.

You also, my dear friend, while unacquainted with

your natural corruption, cannot apprehend either the reasonableness or the necessity of being "renewed in the spirit of your mind," Eph. iv. 23. But when experience has taught you the former, you will want no arguments to convince you of the latter. Can creatures, who are blind in their understandings, discern the things which belong to their eternal peace? Can creatures who are dead in sin, exercise the graces, or discharge the duties of a Christian life? Can creatures, whose hearts are enmity against God, either delight to do his will here, or be meet for his beatific presence hereafter?

Under the influence of such convictions, that new birth which the gospel of Christ promises, which the Spirit of God produces, will appear as necessary for your state, and be as welcome to your soul, as these gentle dews are necessary for the languishing herbs, and welcome to the thirsty soil.

Ther. The dews, though refreshing to the flowers, may be too chilly for our constitutions. And see! the star of evening, by proclaiming the approach of night, has given us a warning to quit our arbour. Some other time we must resume this inquiry: For I am by no means satisfied, that your theory agrees with experience.

Asp. I fear I have already kept you out too long. Let me just observe, as we go in—that the doctrine, however disagreeable in itself, is conducted to an advantageous issue. It is productive of a much more substantial consolation, than history assigns to the great, but exiled Marius. When he fled, with his ruined circumstances, to linger out the poor remains of life among the ruins of Carthage, what was his chief support? "Contemplating," says my author, "that famous city in the dust, he was the less afflicted with his own downfall."*

We have not been put off with such cold comforts,

+ "Inopem vitam in tugurio ruinarum Carthageniensium toleravit: cum Marius aspiciens Carthaginem, illa intuens Marium, alter alteri possent esse solatio."
Vell. Paterc.

such negative benefits. The belief of original sin, has a tendency to make us humble—to shew us our need of Christ, to create in us a hunger and thirst after the renewing influences of his Spirit, and the justifying merit of his righteousness. So that it must be owing to our own perverseness, or our own negligence, if we do not levy a tax upon our loss, and rise even by our fall.

DIALOGUE XII.

THE sun was fiercely bright, and the sky without a cloud. Not a breath fanned the woods, nor a gale curled the stream. The fields, exposed to all the fiery beams, were like a glowing hearth. The little birds, overcome by the potent influence, lost, for a while, their tuneful notes. Nothing was heard in the garden, but the drowsy hum of bees, and the moan-like buzz of winged insects. All nature seemed to languish: The flourishing meads looked sickly; the gayest blossoms began to fade; the sprightliest animals, if not reposed under some cooling shelter, panted for breath, and hung their drooping heads, amidst the all-surrounding blaze and the unsufferable heat. Aspasio disappeared ever since dinner, and none could tell whither he was gone. Theron, as soon as the tea equipage was removed, took his way to the wood. Desirous of the thickest shade, he hastened to the centre. A serpentine walk composed the avenue; which, after several windings, delivered him into a large circular area; not covered with a Grecian or Roman temple, unmeaning imitation of Pagan idolatry; but surrounded with aged and princely oaks; the coalition of whose branches threw over the grassy plat, a majestic, rural dome, and their unpierced foliage “imbrowned the noon-tide hours.”

In the midst, and elevated on a square base, was a statue representing the venerable Elijah on his bended knees, with hands stretched out, and eyes lifted up to

heaven. His attitude, his air, his every feature, were a most lively comment on those strong, energetic expressions of Scripture; "Take hold on God," Isa. lxiv. 7. "Wrestle with the Almighty;* Pour out your hearts before him," Psalm. lxii. 8. On one side of the pedestal, were engraven the priests of Baal, in frantic emotions calling upon their senseless deity, and gashing themselves with unavailing wounds. On the other was exhibited, in basso-relievo, the adoring Tishbite's altar; his victim burning with fire from the Lord, even while the water ran from every limb, and overflowed the trench below.

A remote cascade tumbled from a craggy rock. The stream, after having wasted its silver foam in a winding progress, straggled into this grand harbour. Here it just appeared, gliding down a gentle slope, with a flaunting air, and a prattling noise. Impressed, as it were, with the unexpected solemnity of the scene, it seemed to check its wanton waves, and turned aside into a more sequestered path. As some heedless trifler, who bolts unawares into the royal presence, stands struck with reverence and awe, or retires with precipitance and confusion.

The deep gloom, shedding a kind of night, even while the sun glared in the sky;—not a whisper stirring, among so many millions of leaves; and all their warbling natives hushed in silence;—the sonorous toll of the distant cascade, and the tinkling chime of the nearer rill;—the profound adoration, and fervent devotion, which lived in the lineaments of the impassioned stone:—all these circumstances rendered the place prodigiously august and striking. Not much unlike the ancient oratories, † where holy people retired from

* Coloss. iv. 12. *ἀγωνίζομαι ἐν ταῖς προσευχαῖς.*

† It is thought by some eminent critics, that, when our Lord continued all night *ἐν προσευχῇ Θεῷ*, Luke vi. 12. the phrase denotes his continuance in an oratory; a place set apart for prayer, and a devout intercourse with God.

That there were places of this kind among the Jews, is indisputable; and that the opinion is ingenious, cannot be denied. But I very much doubt, whether it gives us the true meaning of the evangelist. Having

the giddy ring, and the bustling crowd, to ennoble their minds with sublime contemplation; where they bid a temporary adieu to the tumultuous world, its gay impertinence and solemn dulness, in order to maintain a more uninterrupted communion with that mighty Being, who "sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers before him."

Welcome to Theron was the shady bower; welcome the cool aspect, and the musical flow of the water; but more welcome than all was the sight of his friend, who lay reclined at the foot of an oak, with a book half open in his hand, and his eye fixed upon the statue.

Ther. I know not, Aspasio, whether I must make an apology, for breaking in upon your retirement; or call you to an account, for depriving the ladies of your company at the tea-table.

Asp. Indeed, Theron, I have been so much delighted with the place, with the companion in my hand, and the noble object before me, that I scarce observed how the time stole away. And, I flatter myself, if you will take a seat by my side, and share my en-

mentioned a mountain, it would hardly suit his concise manner, to be more particular with regard to the place; neither was the circumstance so important, as to deserve a second mention.—I am apt to think also, that such a place would have defeated the design of our Saviour's retirement, which seems to have been privacy; and that such a title, as God's place of prayer, was wholly appropriated to the temple.

I apprehend, we shall have a more defensible, and, I am persuaded, we shall have a more exalted sense, if we suppose the expression to signify, the copiousness and fervour of our Lord's devotion, the vast importance, and the unequalled success, of this his prolonged and solemn prayer; which could no way be more emphatically declared, than by the addition of the divine name; "He continued all night in the prayer of God."—See Aspasio's remark, p. 307.

* Isa. xl. 22. What a noble image is here, and what an exquisitely fine contrast! God, the great God, sitteth on those lofty and immense heavens, which, at an inconceivable distance, surround this penial globe. From that most sublime and magnificent throne, he looks down upon the inhabitants of the earth: who, in all their pomp and splendour, amidst all their admired works and boasted acquisitions, are mean and impotent in his sight: mean and impotent as the poor insects, which wander over the parched heath for sustenance; which spend all the day in idle insignificant chirpings; and, at night, take up their contemptible habitation on a blade of grass.

tainment, you will be more inclined to excuse, than to aggravate my fault.

Ther. Is Tully then (for I observe his name on the volume) your companion? And can such a devoted admirer of the Bible be so highly charmed with a Heathen classic?—St Augustine somewhere declares, that, though passionately fond, before his conversion, of Tully's writings; yet, after that memorable change, he could no longer relish those admired compositions; because they were not sweetened, as he expresses himself, with the mellifluous name of Jesus.

Asp. I am far from pretending to such an exalted pitch of devotion as that seraphic father attained. I can spend a vacant minute on the delicate odes of Horace, and taste a refined entertainment in Virgil's beautiful poem. But when I hear a sermon, or peruse a religious treatise, which borrows neither dignity nor charms from that amiable and glorious name, I own myself extremely disappointed. Without the offices, the merits, or the grace of Christ, the sermon and the treatise appear as defective, as a body that is neither adorned with the head, nor enlivened with the heart.

Ther. I suppose then, you cultivate an acquaintance with the Grecian and Roman authors, in order to improve your taste, and polish your style.

Asp. These, and, I am apt to think, more considerable advantages than these, may be derived from an occasional application to their works. They may serve as so many shades to set off, with heightened lustre, the beauty and glory of the sacred oracles.

While I peruse Plato's ornamented page, or listen to Cicero's flowing periods, I am somewhat like the person who amuses himself in a gallery of painted flowers. He is pleased with the curious creation of the pencil; but finds none of that delicious fragrance, none of those breathing sweets, which meet him in the garden, and regale his sense from the blooming parterre. So here are brilliant sentiments, and a florid diction; delicate touches of wit, and bold strokes of description. But no discovery of Christ Jesus, no

displays of his ineffable love, no overtures of reconciliation with the blessed God. Nothing to yield us so much comfort in our present state, or any joyful expectation with regard to the approaching eternity.

Besides, when I converse with those celebrated geniuses of antiquity, who were at once the most erroneous and the most judicious;—the most judicious in their taste of polite literature; the most erroneous in their apprehensions of invisible things; they shew me, what they never intended, the inexpressible need of revelation. They teach me to set a higher value on that inestimable gift. I bless the distinguishing goodness of Providence, which has cast my lot,* not at Athens, but in Emmanuel's land. I say, with wonder and gratitude, "Why did not my existence commence in those æras of religious dotage? Why was not my position confined to those regions of barbarism and delusion? Why am not I burning incense to idols; paying senseless adoration to sculptured stone, or worshipping, with detestable ceremonies, a set of lascivious, debauched, and scandalous † deities?"—Surely, Theron, from every perusal of those volumes, attended with such a reflection, we shall see the utmost reason to magnify "the tender mercies of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us," Luke i. 78, and brought us out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel.

Permit me to mention another benefit which may result from a correspondence with those masterly

* Alluding to the story of the Philosopher, who used to bless the gods for three privileges;—That he was made not a brute, but a rational creature:—That he was born not in barbarous climes, but in Greece:—That he lived not in the more uncultivated ages, but in the time, and under the tuition of Socrates.

† This, I think, gives us the most deplorable and horrid idea of the blindness of our fallen nature. The Heathens, even amidst all the politeness of their taste, and notwithstanding their superior advancement in the sciences, were haters of the true God, and robbed him of his honour; nay, what is unspeakably worse, they paid it to monsters;—monsters of lewdness and treachery, vice and immorality. Egregious, sottish, almost incredible stupidity! to worship those beings, which deserved universal abhorrence! to deify those characters, which could never be sufficiently detested.

writers. The streams may lead us to the inexhaustible fountain; lead us to admire the only wise God our Saviour, who has given such a shining vein of ingenuity to his rational creatures. As I read their works, and am charmed with their beauties, I would frequently reflect—"If the essays of a finite mind, and the compositions of a mortal pen, yield such high satisfaction, what rapturous, what unknown delight must arise from an uninterrupted communion with infinite Wisdom! To stand, not at the feet of Homer, and attend the flights of his elevated imagination, not in the presence of Socrates, and hear the dictates of his sagacious soul; but to stand in the courts of the Lord, and before the throne of the Lamb: there to contemplate, without any interposing veil, the counsels of his unerring providence; to have the mysteries of his redeeming love laid fully open to our view; and receive the brightest manifestation of all his amiable, his adorable, his unspeakable attributes!"

Ther. These are advantages truly desirable, and equally obvious. Methinks, it surprises me, that I should never so much as propose them; and grieves me, that I should so long be deprived of them. A view to such very superior improvements will, I hope, render my future intercourse with those favourite authors still more agreeable, and abundantly more beneficial.

But let me ask, what passage was engaging your attention this afternoon?

Asp. The great orator's treatise concerning the "Nature of the divine Being:"* that part especially which proves his existence and perfections from the formation of the human body.

Ther. And don't you perceive, that he is almost as deficient in the knowledge of his subject, as he is mistaken in his ideas of the supreme Cause? The exquisite contrivance and inimitable workmanship of the human frame, were, in those early ages, but dimly discerned. It was the infancy of anatomy; when the very professors had scarcely the qualifications of a modern

* De Natura Deorum.

pupil. Many of the received notions were childish, almost all of them superficial.

Asp. Will my Theron then entertain me with a more accurate description of this wonderful structure?

Ther. How could you take occasion, Aspasio, from the hint I dropped, to conceive any such expectation? It is one thing to discover, another to correct what is amiss. Many spectators can point out an accidental defect in some celebrated statue, or a small indelicacy in some valuable piece of painting, who are absolutely incapable of retouching the one, or supplying the other.

Asp. Since we are fallen upon this point, you must give me leave to renew and urge my request. I shall be extremely glad to hear your remarks upon the subject; especially as you have made this branch of science a part of your amusement; and not without the advantage of anatomical dissections. Whereas I have very seldom applied my thoughts to the former, and never had an opportunity of being present at the latter.

Let me also observe, that our very situation favours, or rather suggests such a topic of conversation. All the fine prospects of the country are excluded. We have scarce any thing left but ourselves to contemplate. And shall this be the only theme we neglect?

Ther. It is somewhat preposterous, I must confess, to pry into the archives of colleges; to ransack the cabinets of the *virtuosi*; to carry our search through the whole compass of external nature; and, at the same time, overlook the far more surprising curiosities which abound in the composition of our own bodies.

Since you insist upon it, my observations, crude and extemporaneous as they are, shall submit themselves to your judgment; provided you will be content to receive only a few of the outlines, and nothing like a finished draught.

Asp. Let me just hint, that the more circumstantial your account is, so much the more welcome will it be to your friend, and so much the more honourable to our common Creator. For, I really think, that Ga-

len's declaration upon this head is perfectly just; which I have read in my favourite commentator Beza, and which speaks to the following effect: *—"Such treatises as display the excellencies of the great Creator, compose one of the noblest and most acceptable hymns. To acquaint ourselves with his sublime perfections; and point out to others his infinite power, his unerring wisdom, and his boundless benignity; this is a more substantial act of devotion, than to slay hecatombs of victims at his altar, or kindle mountains of spices into incense."—Theron, after pausing a few minutes, thus resumed the discourse.

Ther. When some master-builder undertakes to erect a magnificent edifice, he begins with the less decorated, but more solid parts; those which are to support, or those which are to contain the rest. This order, if you please, we will follow, in considering "the earthly house of our tabernacle." †

First, you have a system of bones, cast into a variety of moulds, enlarged or contracted into a variety of sizes. All strong, that they may commodiously bear up the fleshy machine; yet light, that they may not depress the animal with an encumbering load. Bored with an internal cavity, to contain the moistening marrow; and perforated with exceedingly fine ducts, to admit the nourishing vessels. Insensible themselves, they are covered with a membrane ‡ of exquisite sensibility, which warns them of the approach, and secures them from the annoyance of any injurious friction; and, at the same time, preserves the muscular parts

* Vid. Bez. Annot. ad Rom. i. 20.

† 2 Cor. v. 1. St Paul very pertinently compares the bodily structure to a house: and adds, in that strain of godly edifying, which runs through all his writings, our earthly and tent-like habitation, *σκηνοσὶς σαρκὸς καὶ αἰμάτων*. Referring to its mean original, as it was formed out of the dust; and to its short continuance, as it must soon return to dust again. Being, though commodious as a house, yet transitory as a tent; not like the everlasting mountains, which stand fixed and rooted to the centre; but like those portable tenements, which are set up in the evening, are taken down in the morning, and then their place is known no more.

‡ The periosteum.

from being fretted in their action by the hard and rough substance of the bones. Their figures are always most precisely fitted to their uses. They are generally larger at the extremities than in the middle, that they may be joined more firmly, and not so easily dislocated. The manner of their articulation is truly admirable,* and remarkably various; yet never varied without demonstrating some wise design, and answering some valuable end. Frequently, when two are united, the one is nicely rounded, and capped with a smooth substance; the other is scooped into a hollow of the same dimensions, to receive the polished knob; and both are lubricated with an unctuous fluid, to yield the readiest rotation in the socket.

The feet compose the firmest and neatest pedestal infinitely beyond all that statuary or architecture can accomplish; capable of altering its form, and extending its size, as different circumstances require. Besides performing the office of a pedestal, they contain a set of the nicest springs; which help to place the body in a variety of graceful attitudes, and qualify it for a multiplicity of advantageous motions. The undermost part of the heel, and the extremity of the sole, are shod with a tough, insensible, sinewy substance. This we may call a kind of natural sandal: It never wears out, never wants repair, and always prevents that undue compression of the vessels, which the weight of the body, in walking or standing, might otherwise occasion. The legs and thighs are like substantial and stately columns; † articulated in such a manner, that

* "Mirabiles commissuras habent." CIC.

† Styled therefore by the sacred philosopher, "the strong men," Eccl. xii. 3. and compared by the same beautiful writer to pillars of marble Cant. v. 15. As these are the strongest parts of the body, and the support of all the other; hence, I presume, arose that proverbial expression, which occurs in the history of Samson, Judg. xv. 8. rendered by the Septuagint, not very exactly, *νεκρωτος ισχιο μηροσ*; by our English translators, rather too vulgarly, "hip and thigh." I believe, the word signifies here, as it certainly signifies in many other places, what the Latins call "armus;" and that the image is taken from some robust and fierce animal, whose shoulders before, and whose thighs behind, are broken in pieces. Then what mischief can he do? what resistance can

they administer most commodiously to the act of walking; yet obstruct not the easy posture of sitting. The ribs swell out towards the top, with a genteel projection; and are wrought off, towards the bottom, with diminutions. Which variation lessens their bulk, the same time that it increases their beauty.

The ribs, turned into a regular arch, are gently veable, for the act of respiration. They form a secure lodgment for the lungs and the heart; which being some of the most distinguished and important organs of life, have their residence fortified by this strong micircular rampart.* The back-bone is intended, not only to strengthen the body, and sustain its most precious store-rooms, but also to bring down that communication of the brain, which is usually termed the spinal marrow. As an open channel, it conveys, as a well-closed case, it guards, this vital silver; † and, by several commodious outlets, transmits the animating treasure into all the inferior parts. Had it only been large, straight, and hollow, it might have served these several purposes; but then the loins must have been inexorable, and every man impaled (not by the executioner, but by nature) on a stake coeval with his existence. To avoid which, it consists of very short bones, closely knit together, by intervening cartilages. This peculiarity of structure prevents dislocation, and gives the main pillar of our frame the pliancy of an asier, even while it retains the firmness of an oak. By this means, it is a kind of continued joint; capable of various inflections, without bruising the soft medullary substance which fills its cavity; without intercepting the nervous fluid, which is to be detached from this grand reservoir; or diminishing that strength, which is

he make? He is utterly disabled. So that the expression seems to denote (and might perhaps, without violence to the original, be translated) "a total overthrow."

* "Thou hast fenced me," secured my inward and vital parts, "with bones and sinews," Job x. 11. "Crates pectoris," is Virgil's expression.

† This is supposed to be the part which Solomon describes by the silver cord; and is indeed like a cord, on account of its shape; like silver, on account of its colour, Eccl. xii. 6.

necessary to support all the upper stories: A formation so very peculiar in any other of the solids, must have been attended with great inconveniences.—Here it is unspeakably serviceable; is both, for workmanship and situation, a master-piece of creating skill, never enough to be admired.

The arms, pendent on either side, are exactly proportioned to each other, that the equilibrium of the structure may not be disconcerted. These being the guards which defend,* and the ministers which serve the whole body, are fitted for the most diversified and extensive operations; firm with bone, yet not weighty with flesh; and capable of performing, with singular expedition and ease, all manner of useful motions. They bend inwards, and turn outwards; they rise upwards, and stoop downwards; they wheel about, and throw themselves into whatever direction we please. To these are annexed the hands; and all terminated by the fingers; which are not, like the arms, of the same length, and of an equal bigness; but in both respects different; which gives them a more graceful appearance, and a much greater degree of usefulness. Were they all flesh, they would be comparatively impotent; were they one entire bone, they would be utterly inflexible; but, consisting of various little bones, and a multitude of muscles, what shape can they not assume? what service can they not perform? Being placed at the end of the arm, the sphere of their action is exceedingly enlarged. This advantageous situation realizes the fable of Briareus; and renders a pair of hands as serviceable as an hundred. The extremities of the fingers are an assemblage of fine tendinous fibres, most acutely sensible;† which, notwithstanding the delicacy of their tex-

* Called, in Solomon's figurative but elegant sketch of anatomy, "the keepers of the house." Eccl. xii. 3.

† So very acute is the sensibility of these parts, that, I am informed, it furnishes the tribunal of inquisition with one of the most refined expedients in the art of torture. A strong quill, sharpened by the pen-knife, and dipped in some inflammable liquor, is thrust deep between the nail and the finger. When the quill has cut its way through the shivering nerves; and stands planted, like a dagger, amidst the gushing

ture, are destined to almost incessant employ, and frequently exercised among rugged objects. For this reason, they are overlaid with the nails, a sort of horny expansion; which, like a ferule, hinders the flesh from being ungracefully flattened; and, like a sheath,* preserves the tender parts from injurious impressions.

In the ministry of the hands, and activity of the fingers, we possess a case of the finest instruments, or a collection of the noblest utensils; qualifying us for the execution of every work which the projecting genius can devise, or the lavish fancy crave. To these we are obliged for the beautiful statues, which have often entertained our eyes in yonder solitary walks; and even for that melodious trumpet, which now addresses our ears, from the summer-house on the fish-pond. These raise the lofty column, and turn the spacious arch. These swell the majestic dome, and adjust the commodious apartment. Architecture, with all her striking beauties, and all her rich benefits, are the creation of the human hand. Yielding to the strength of the hand, the tallest firs fall to the ground, and the largest oaks descend from the mountains. Fashioned by the dexterity of the hand, they accommodate the sailor with a floating warehouse; and circulate, from Britain to Japan, the productions of nature, and the improvements of art. Obedient to the human hand, metals ascend from their subterranean beds, and compose the most substantial parts of that curious machine,† which transmits far and near, to the monarch's palace, and to the peasant's hut, such treasures of wisdom and knowledge, "as the gold and crystal cannot equal," Job. xxviii. 17.

Among the Egyptians, the hand was the symbol of strength; among the Romans, it was an emblem of fidelity; and, I think, it may, among all nations, be

blood, some barbarous hand sets fire to the extremity. The keen point, the slow flame, and both in the seat of the most lively sensation, put the miserable sufferer to the most excruciating pain.

* "Digitis Munimina."

† The printing-press.

looked upon as the ensign of authority. It is the original and the universal sceptre; that which not only represents, but ascertains our dominion, over all the elements, and over every creature. Though providence has not given us the strength of the horse, the swiftness of the greyhound, or the sagacious scent of the spaniel; yet, directed by the understanding, and enabled by the hand, we can subject them to our will; turn them to our advantage; and, in this sense, make them all our own. These hands (surprising to relate!) these short hands, have found out a way, whereby they can dive to the bottom of the ocean; can penetrate the bowels of the earth; and reach from shore to shore. These feeble hands can manage the wings of the wind; can arm themselves with the rage of the fire; and press into their service the forcible impetuosity of the waters. How eminent is the dignity! how extensive the agency of the hand! It would require more eloquence than your orator possessed, to display the former; and more pages than your book contains, to describe the latter. How greatly, then, are we indebted to our indulgent Creator, for accommodating us with this noble, this distinguishing, this invaluable member!

Above all, is the head; a majestic dome, designed for the residence of the brain. It is framed in exact conformity to this important purpose; ample, to receive it; strong, to uphold it; and firm, to defend it. As the head resembles the general's tent in an army, or the monarch's palace in a city; it has a communication established with all, even the most inferior and remote parts of the system: has outlets and avenues, for the ready dispatch of couriers to all quarters; and for the reception of speedy intelligence, on every interesting occasion. It is furnished with lodgments, wherein to post sentinels of various characters, and appointed for various offices. To expedite their operations, whether they are employed in reconnoitring what passes without, or examining what claims admittance within; the whole turns upon a curious pivot, most nicely contrived to afford the largest, and freest circumvolutions.

This stately capital is screened from heat ; defended from cold ; and, at the same time, very much beautified by a copious growth of hair ; which flows down from the parted forelock in decent curls ; and hangs wantling on the cheeks, clustering on the shoulders. A decoration,* incomparably more delicate than any that all the orders of architecture can supply ; and so perfectly light, that it no way encumbers or incommodes the wearer.

While many animals creep on the ground ; while all of them are prone in their posture, or their aspect ; the attitude of man is erect, which is by far the most graceful, has an air of dignity, and bespeaks superiority. It is by far the most commodious ; fits us for the prosecution of every grand scheme, and facilitates the success of all our extensive designs. It is likewise attended with the greatest safety ; being, if not less than any other position, exposed to dangers, yet more happily contrived to repel or avoid them.

Asp. May it not likewise be intended to remind us of our exalted original, and our sublime end : Our original, which was the breath of the Almighty, and the Spirit of the Most High : Our end, which is not the soil we tread on, or any of its low productions, but the heaven of heavens, and the “ things that are above.”

But, not to divert from our subject, which, in my friend's manner of handling it, is as entertaining as it is instructive. The bones (to carry on your al-

* Absalom's hair was reckoned a distinguishing part of his beauty ; 2 Sam. xiv. 26. The amiableness of the church, in the exemplary conversation of true believers, is displayed by the same ornament. “ Thy hair is as a flock of goats,” that are seen afar off, and appear in a pendent attitude from the summit of mount Gilead ; most agreeably adorning the place, and detaining the spectator's eye, Cant. iv. 1. I prefer the exposition of Arias Montanus, “ quæ pendent, quæ prominent,” as it takes in a circumstance, which corresponds with the pensile position of the hair ; renders the comparison more full and exact ; and is, according to the observation of a most accurate judge, one of the chief remarkable in such a prospect ;

“ Non ego vos posthac, viridi projectus in antro,

“ Dumosa pendere procul de rupe videbo.”

VIRG.

lusion) are only the rafters, the beams, the shell of the living edifice. You have raised the walls, and laid the floors; you have made the proper divisions, and left the necessary apertures. But, in every finished house, the roof is covered, and the rooms are wainscoted. The sashes are hung, and the doors turn upon their hinges. The grates are fixed, and the stairs ascend. Within, the lodgings are furnished; without, the front is ornamented. All is rendered commodious for domestic use, and graceful to the external view.

Ther. This likewise is executed by the great, the divine Artificer. Here are ligaments; a tough and strong arrangement of fibres; to unite the several limbs; and render, what would otherwise be a disjointed, unwieldy jumble, a well-compacted and self-manageable system. Membranes, or thin and flexible tunics; appointed to enwrap the fleshy parts; to form a connection between some, and make a separation between others.*

Arteries, the rivers of our little world,† or the aqueducts of the organized metropolis, some of which ascend to the head, others spread themselves over the shoulders; some extend to the arms, some descend to the feet, and striking out, as they go, into numberless smaller canals, visit the streets, the alleys, and every individual apartment of the vital city. These, being wide at their origin, and lessening as they branch themselves, check the rapid impetus of the blood: To sustain this shock, they are endued with uncommon strength; by performing this service, they oblige the crimson current to pass into the narrowest defiles, and distribute itself into all quarters. The blood, thrown from the heart, dilates the arteries, and their own elastic force contracts them. By which means, they vibrate in proper places, very perceivably against the finger; bring advices of the utmost importance to the

* The intestines are fastened to each other, By the mesentery. The breast is divided into two cavities by the "mediastinum." Both which are reckoned among the membranes.

† A human body was called by the ancients, the "microcosm;" that is, a little world, or the world in miniature.

physician; and very much assist him, both in discovering the nature of diseases, and prescribing for their respective cures. The larger arteries, wherever the body is formed for incurvation, are situate on the bending side; lest being stretched to an improper length by the inflection, their dimensions should be lessened, and the circulating fluid retarded. They are not, like several of the considerable veins, laid so near the surface, as to be protrusive of the skin, but are deposited to a proper depth in the flesh. This situation renders them more secure from external injuries. It conceals likewise those starts and resiliations of the pulse, which, if apparent, would discompose the most sedate, and disfigure the most comely countenance. Could we cast our eye upon the river, which runs through the neighbouring meadow, we might observe several mills intersecting the stream. The waters, at those places, if not entirely stopped, drain away very slowly. In consequence of this obstruction, the lower channels would be sunk dry, and the upper ones swelled into a flood. To obviate both these inconveniences, low-shots are provided, which, carrying off the surcharge, prevent a glut above, and supply the banks below. In those parts of the body, which are most liable to pressure, much the same expedient takes place. The arteries inosculate, or, breaking into a new track, they fetch a little circuit, in order to return and communicate again with the main road. So that, if any obstacle blocks up or straitens the direct passage, the current, by diverting to this new channel, eludes the impediment; maintains an uninterrupted flow; and soon regains its wonted course.

Veins are appointed to receive the blood from the arteries, and re-convey it to the heart. Small at their rise, and enlarging as they advance, they are void of any pulsation. In these, the pressure of the circulating fluid is not near so forcible as in the arterial tubes; for which reason, their texture is considerably slighter. Such an exact œconomist is nature, even

amidst all her liberality!* In many of these canals, the current, though widening continually, and acquiring a proportionable increase of gravity, is obliged to push its way against the perpendicular. By which circumstance, it is exposed to the hazard of falling back, and overloading the vessels, if not of suppressing the animal motion. For a security against this danger, valves are interposed at proper distances, which are no hindrance to the regular passage, but prevent the reflux, sustain the augmented weight, and facilitate a progress to the grand receptacle. This auxiliary contrivance comes in, where the blood is constrained to climb; but is dismissed where the steep ascent ceases, and such a precaution would be needless.

Here are glands, whose office it is to filtrate the passing fluid. Each of these glands is an assemblage of vessels, complicated and intervolved, with seeming confusion, but with perfect regularity. As some kind of sieves transmit the dust, and retain the corn; others bolt out the meal, and hold back the bran; so some of these glandulous strainers draw off the finest, others the grossest parts of the blood. Some, like the distiller's alembic, sublimate; † others, like the common sewers, defæcate. ‡ Each forms a secretion, far more curious than the most admired operations of chemistry; yet all necessary for the support of life, or conducive to the comfort of the animal. Muscles, wove in nature's nicest loom; composed of the slenderest fibres, yet endued with incredible strength: fashioned after a variety of patterns, but all in the highest taste for elegance, conveniency, and usefulness. These, with their

* A parallel instance of frugality is observable in the arteries, whose coats are spun thinner, as the diameter of the vessels becomes smaller, and the pressure of the blood weaker.

† The glandulous substance of the brain, which secretes the animal spirits.

‡ The liver and kidneys. The former of which separates the gall; the latter drains off a fluid, which being sufficiently known, need not be named. I could wish, it had not been so explicitly and coarsely mentioned in our translation of the best of books; but that we had rendered the original, in 1 Kings xiv. 10, "Every male;" in Isa. xxxvi. 12, "Eat and drink their own excrements."

tendons annexed, constitute the instruments of motion. The former, contracting their substance, operate somewhat like the pulley in mechanics. The latter, resembling the cord, are fastened to a bone, or some partition of flesh; and, following the muscular contraction, actuate the part, into which they are inserted. This, and all their functions, they execute not like a sluggish beast of burden, but quick as the lightning. Nerves, surprisngly minute tubes; derived from the brain, and permeated by an exquisitely subtile fluid, which, gliding into the muscles, sets them on work; diffuses the power of sensation through the body; or, returning upon any impression from without, gives all needful intelligence to the soul. Vesicles, distended with an unctuous matter, in some places, compose a soft cushion* for nature; in other places, they fill up every vacuities, and smooth the inequalities of the flesh. As inwardly, they supply the several movements of the active machine; outwardly, they render its appearance plump, well proportioned, and graceful.

The skin, like a curious surtout,† exactly fitted, is superinduced over the whole, formed of the most delicate net-work, whose meshes‡ are minute, and whose threads§ are multiplied even to a prodigy. The

* The calf of the leg, for instance; whose large collection of muscles, intermingled with fat, is of singular service to those important bones. It flanks and fortifies them; like a strong bastion. It supports and cherishes them, like a soft pillow. And what is no less pleasing to observe, it accommodates and defends them on that very side, where they most frequently rest their weight, and where they are least capable of being guarded by the eye.

† "Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh," Job x. 11. The word *surtout* is used according to the French etymology; signifies a garment, coming over the whole body; and is most beautifully expressed by our Lord's *αμφιπυρωσι*, Matth. vi. 30.

‡ The pores of the cuticula.

§ The nervous fibres, and other vessels of the cutis. Nature is somewhat like Solomon's virtuous woman, "who is not afraid of the snow for her household, because her household are clothed in scarlet;" or, as it may be rendered, are clothed "with pairs," have two coats a-piece, Prov. xxxi. 21. (See Gen. vi. 19, 20. where the word occurs in this signification). The body also is accommodated with a double covering. The outermost is that soft whitish tegument, which rises in the pustule of a blister. The innermost is that reddish and exquisitely tender part,

meshes so minute, that nothing passes them, which is discernible by the eye; though they discharge, every moment, myriads and myriads of superfluous incumbrances from the body. The steam, arising from the warm business transacted within, is carried off by these real, though imperceptible funnels,* which constitutes what we usually call insensible perspiration. The threads so multiplied, that neither the point of the smallest needle, nor the incomparably nicer spear of a gnat, nor even the invisible lancet of a flea, can pierce any single part, without causing an uneasy sensation, and a suffusion of blood; consequently, without wounding, even by so small a puncture, both a nerve and a vein.†

The veins, either pervading or lying parallel with this fine transparent coat, beautify the human structure; those parts especially, which are most conspicuous, and intended for public view. The pliant wrist, and the taper arm, they variegate with an inlay of living sapphire. They spread vermilion over the lips, and plant roses in the cheeks, while the eye, tinged

which appears when the blister is broke, and the dead skin taken off. The first is void of sense, and intended to screen the second, not only from the stroke of injuries, but even from the impressions of the air, which, mild as it may feel to the sheathed, would be too rough and sharp for the naked nerves.

There seems to be an allusion to this particular, in that remarkable expression, "Skin for skin." Job. ii. 4. "Skin even unto skin;" the very inmost skin, which cannot be taken away, without the greatest loss, and severest pain. Yet, even this loss a man would suffer, this pain he would endure, in order to preserve precious life.

* These are somewhere prettily styled cutaneous chimneys; and no wonder they are imperceptible, if, as Mr Lewenhoeck affirms, a single grain of sand will cover no less than 125,000.

† A blood vessel at least. Compared with these vessels, the fine filmy threads, which, on some bright autumnal morning, float in the air, or hang on the stubble, must be large as a bell-rope, or bulky as a cable. Such tubes, one would think, should burst at every breath we draw, or even break with their own fineness. Yet they are the conduit-pipes, which convey the vital fluid from and to the grand reservoir. And so exquisite, so admirable is their texture, that they will outlast the strength of lead, or the heart of oak; these wearing away, those growing stronger, by use.

‡ "Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet," Cant. iv. 3. Like a thread, for their delicate shape: like a thread of scarlet for their colour.

with glossy jet, or sparkling with the blue of heaven, is fixed in an orb of polished crystal. Insomuch that the earthly tabernacle exhibits the nicest proportions, and richest graces; such nice proportions as afford the most correct model for statuary; such rich graces, as the canvas never bore, as painting imitates in vain.

Asp. How just in itself, and how pertinent to our purpose, is that well-known acknowledgment of the sacred and royal anatomist; "I am curiously wrought!"* "There is a variety, a regularity, and an elegance, in the texture of my body; in the formation and arrangement of these bones and muscles, these veins and arteries;—resembling shall I say?—rather, infinitely surpassing, the most costly and admired pieces of embroidery."

It is one of the finest similitudes, which the whole circle of polite arts could afford. Yet every comparison, fetched from the performances of mankind, must necessarily debase the noble subject. All the enrichments, which the needle can give, or the most splendid silks receive, are rude, are coarse, are mere sackcloth, when set in opposition to the exquisite delicacy of the fleshly web. As indeed all the celebrated palaces, amphitheatres, temples, which ever adorned the most magnificent cities in the world, are but a heap of confusion, if compared with the symmetry and beauty of the bodily fabric. And, what is beyond measure marvellous, all these wonders of mechanism and decoration arose, not from the purer elements; not from the more refined parts of the creation; but from the dust of the ground.† How easily, Theron, can that stupendous Artificer renew our hearts, and transform our souls into his own image, who could raise such delicate and

* The original signifies "finely wrought," or "elegantly flourished with a needle." The translation adopted by our liturgy is, in this place, flat and inexpressive. The English word *fashioned*, has just the same inferiority to the beautiful Hebrew phrase, as the badge, tacked upon some poor pensioner's coat, has to the star embroidered on a nobleman's breast. Psal. cxxxix. 14.

† "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground," Gen. ii. 7.

stately edifices from particles—despicable particles of the trodden soil !

I could not forbear interposing this remark ; because it tends to manifest our Creator's glory, to encourage our hopes, and strengthen our faith ; otherwise I should be angry with myself for interrupting your discourse. Pray go on with your description of the animal œconomy ; only let me observe, that such a course of incessant action must exhaust the fluids ; must waste the solids ; and unless both are supplied with proper recruits, must gradually weaken, and at length totally destroy, the machine.

Ther. For this reason, it is furnished with the organs, and endued with the powers of nutrition.—Teeth, the foremost, thin and sharp, fitted to bite asunder the food, or cut * off such a portion as the mouth can conveniently manage. The hindermost, broad and strong, indented like the surface of a millstone, † with small cavities, and jagged with little asperities, which qualify them to grind in pieces whatever is transmitted to their operation. Were the teeth, like our other bones, covered with the usual membrane, the act of chewing would always occasion great uneasiness ; and, when any hard substance is eaten, might even lacerate the tender tegument. Were they left without any sort of covering, they would suffer from the inclemencies of the air, and be liable to the penetration of liquors. In which case, they must soon become soft and unfit for service, or be corrupted, and entirely perish. To guard against these disadvantages, they are curiously glazed, or overlaid with a neat enamel, as white as ivory, and harder than the bone

* Called therefore, “ incisive.”

† Styled accordingly, “ molares.”—We find neither of these kinds in the new-born babe. As milk is, for a considerable time, its appointed food, teeth would be of no service to the infant itself. As it is to press the tender nipple for this milky sustenance, teeth would be painful and prejudicial to the nurse. Therefore, nature has postponed the formation of these fine implements, till they became both necessary and beneficial.

self; which renders them an ornament to the mouth;* secures them from various injuries; and exempts them from pain in the office of mastication.

As the rims and cushions of a billiard-table keep the ball from flying off, and send it back into the green sea, for repeated essays of skill; so the lips prevent the food from slipping out of the mouth; and, assisted by the tongue, return it to the renewed attrition of the grinders. While the lips in concert with the cheeks, are employed in this work, their motion compresses the circumjacent glands; and, from innumerable little orifices, a thin pellucid liquor exudes, which moistens the attenuated food, and prepares it for more easy digestion. When the mouth remains inactive, these fountains of spittle are, in a manner, closed. But when it is exercised, either in speaking or eating, their moisture then being peculiarly necessary, they never fail to give out a sufficient quantity.

When the soldier charges his carbine, the cartridge could not make its way to the bottom, without the protrusion of the rammer.† Neither would the food, which we receive at the mouth, descend by the force of its own weight, through a narrow and clammy

* This ornamental furniture of the mouth is, in the grand oriental manner, described by Solomon: "Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep, that are even shorn, which come up from the washing," Cant. iv. 2. Growing, not single like the nose; not in pairs like the eyes; but in rows considerably numerous, like a flock. None rising higher than the other; none standing unduly prominent beyond another; but all set as true as if they were ranged by the compass; and making as regular an appearance as the flocks that are even shorn. They are clean also as the fleeces which have no spot, and white as the colour of the purest wool, like the flocks just come up from the washing.

† This, and the other similitudes, are undoubtedly too mean for the noble occasion. Neither do they, in every circumstance, quadrate with the functions described. The motion of the muscles, which minister to the act of deglutition, is different from the perpendicular protrusion of the rammer; and it is mentioned only to demonstrate the necessity of some propelling force, in order to convey the aliment into the proper receptacle.

When we descant upon a subject of such extensive contrivance, and such finished perfection, as the human structure, it is scarce possible to find similitudes that will correspond in all particulars, or that can rise to the dignity of the original. Yet if they tend, in any tolerable degree.

channel, into the stomach. To effectuate therefore, and expedite its passage, muscles, both strait and circular, are provided. The former enlarge the cavity of the throat, and afford a more easy admittance; the latter, closing behind the descending aliment, press it downwards, and finish the deglutition. Before the food enters the gullet, it must of necessity pass over the orifice of the wind-pipe; consequently, must be in very imminent danger of falling upon the lungs; which would, if not entirely obstruct the breath, yet occasion violent coughing, * and great inconveniences. To obviate this evil, the all-foreseeing Contriver has placed a moveable lid, or hung a cartilaginous draw-bridge: † which, when any, the smallest particle of food advances to enter the stomach, is pulled down and shut close; but the very moment the morsel is swallowed, it is set loose and stands open. By this twofold artifice, the important passage is always barred and made sure against any noxious approaches, yet is always left free for the necessary accession of air, and commodious for the purposes of respiration.

When the malster prepares his grain for the transmutations of the brew-house, he suffers it to lie several hours steeping in the cistern, before it is fit to be spread upon the floor, or dried on the kiln. The meat and drink likewise must remain a considerable time in the stomach before they are of a proper consistence and temperature, either for the tender coats, or the delicate operation of the bowels. For which purpose, that great receiver is made strong to bear, capacious to hold, and so curiously contrived, as to lay a tem-

to explain its formation, to display its uses, and render its wonderful oeconomy somewhat more intelligible, perhaps they may be allowed to take place.

I hope it will be remembered, that Theron speaks not as an adept in the science, but as one whose highest pretensions are, to admire the work, and adore the Artificer. Which acknowledgment may entitle him to some candid indulgence, in case he should offend against the precise anatomical exactness either of sentiment or expression.

* This is what we experience when, in eating or drinking, any thing goes (as is commonly, and not improperly said) the wrong way.

† Called the "epiglottis."

porary embargo * upon its contents. Here they are lodged in the very centre of warmth, and concocted by the most kindly combination of heat and humidity. Here they are saturated with other fermenting or diluting juices, and are kneaded, as it were, by the motion of the stomach, and compression of the neighbouring parts. So that every, the minutest fragment is separated; the whole is reduced to a tenuity, abundantly finer than the exactest grinding could effect; and all is worked up into the smoothest most nicely-mixed pulp imaginable. From hence it is dislodged by a gently-acting force, and passes, by a gradual transition, into the cavity of the intestines.

Near the entrance, punctual as a porter in his lodge, waits the gall-bladder, † ready to transfuse its acrimonious, but salutary juices, on the advancing aliment; which dissolve its remaining viscidities; scour the passage of the intestines; and keep all its fine apertures clear. This bag, as the stomach fills, is elevated by the distension; as the stomach empties, is proportionably depressed. The former posture brings on a discharge, the latter occasions a suppression of the bile. It is furnished also with a valve of a very peculiar, but most convenient form, ‡ through which the detersive liquid cannot hastily pour, but must gently ooze. Admirable construction! which, without any care, or consciousness of ours, prohibits an immoderate effusion, yet ascertains the needful supply.

Sufficiently charged with this adventitious fluid, the nutritive mass pursues its way through the intestines, whose wonderful meanders are incomparably more curious than the mazes of the Dædalean labyrinth. They are actuated with a worm-like or undulatory motion, || which protrudes the received aliment, and

* Which is quite contrary to the œconomy of the gullet, though they are not only contiguous to each other, but a continuation of the same tube.

† The gall-bladder is situate upon the lower margin of the liver; and to secrete the bilious juice, is supposed to be the principal use of that largest of glands.

‡ A spiral form.

|| Styled vermicular or peristaltic.

forces its fine milky particles into the lacteal vessels. These are a series of the most delicate strainers, ranged, in countless multitudes, all along the sides of the winding passage; each so nicely framed, as to admit the nutrimental balmy juices, and reject the gross excrementitious dregs. Had the intestines been straight and short, the food might have gone through them, without resigning a sufficient quantity of its nourishing particles. Therefore, this grandest of all the vital ducts is artfully convolved, and greatly extended, to afford nature an opportunity of sifting more thoroughly whatever passes, and of detaining whatever may serve her purposes. Lest such lengths of entrails should be entangled among themselves, or be cumbrous to the wearer, they are packed into the neatest folds, and lie within a narrow compass. They are at least six times longer * than the body which contains them; yet are they lodged, not crowded; in a part, not in the whole region of the lower belly; and, amidst this small space, have sufficient room to execute the nicest and most important functions. Though the alimentary substance can never mistake its way, yet it may, through some accidental impediment, attempt to return backward. In this case, a valve intervenes, and renders what would be extremely pernicious, almost always impracticable. As the whole proceeds in this serpentine course, it is perpetually sending off detachments of nutritious juices. In consequence of which, it would lose its soft temperature; might become rugged, and pain the tender parts; perhaps be hindered from sliding on to its final exit. To prevent such an obstruction, glands are posted in proper places, † and

* According to this calculation, they must measure, in a pretty tall man, more than thirty-six feet. The substance of the bowels, though thin to a delicacy, is strong to a wonder. The skin of an ox-gut, I am told, will endure the blows of the gold-beater's hammer for many months, nay, for several years.

† In the bowels, which lie nearest the stomach, these glands are smaller or fewer; because, in those parts, the aliment is copiously furnished with moisture; whereas, in the bowels, which are more remote from the stomach, and receive the food drained of a considerable quantity of its chyle, the lubricating glands are either multiplied or enlarged.

discharge a lubricating fluid, which aids the progress of the mass, and renews the secretion of the chyle, till all that remains of the one is clean drawn off, and the other—But here you must excuse me; and, for my neglect of farther particularity, your author shall make an apology: “*Quemadmodum autem reliquiæ cibi depellantur, tum astringentibus se intestinis, tum relaxantibus, haud sane difficile dictu est; sed tamen prætereundem est, ne quid habeat injucunditatis oratio.*”*

The chyle, drawn off by all the secretory orifices, is carried along millions of the finest ducts,† and lodged in several commodious cells.‡ As a traveller, by baiting upon the road, and taking proper refreshment, is better qualified to pursue his journey; so the chyle, diverting to those little inns, is mixed with a thin, diluting, watery substance, which renders it more apt to flow, and more fit for use. From hence it is conveyed to one common receptacle,§ and mounts through a perpendicular tube. When provision or ammunition is transmitted to an army, it generally passes under an escort of able troops. As this is the immediate support, and principal nourishment of the whole system, its conveyance is guarded and ascertain-

A most admirable provision! apparently diversified according to the several changes of the aliment, yet exactly adapted to the exigencies of the animal.

* *CICERO de nat. Deor.*—As Theron avoids meddling with a subject which is become useless and putrescent, I think myself obliged to imitate his delicacy; only I would add one remark in the notes, and shall beg leave to express it in Greek; that if it should prove in any degree disgusting, it may have at least the negative merit not to offend many readers. *Επι δε τα αποχωρευτα δυσχερη απιστησι τις τυ των οχλητος η φουσι, § ασχηγως η δυνατον προσωτατω απο των αιθησιων.* *SOCRAT. Memorab.*

† Fine indeed! since their orifices, through which they admit the chyle, are not discoverable even by the very best microscopes. To this prodigiously-nice constructure it is owing, that nothing enters the substance of the blood, but what is smaller than the smallest arteries in the system; and thereby fitted to pass through the finest capillary vessels, without causing any obstruction.

‡ The glands of the mesentery.

§ The “*receptaculum chyli*,” a reservatory placed near the left kidney.

ed with peculiar caution. The perpendicular tube, not having sufficient force of its own, is laid contiguous to the great artery; whose strong pulsation drives on the creeping fluid; enables it to overcome the steep ascent, and unload its precious treasure at the very door of the heart.—Here it enters the trunk of a large vein, most conveniently opened for its reception. It enters in a slanting or oblique direction. By this method of approach, it avoids thwarting, and coincides with the purple stream, which, instead of obstructing its admission, expedites its passage; and, instead of being a bar to exclude it, becomes a vehicle to waft it.—Its entrance is farther secured by a valve, admirably constructed, and most happily situate: which shuts the aperture against the reflux blood, in case it should offer to obtrude itself; but opens a free, safe, and easy avenue, to introduce this milk, this manna of nature.

The blood, through every stage of its ample circuit, having sustained great expenses; being laid under contribution, by every gland in the whole system; and having supplied myriads of the capillary vessels with matter for insensible perspiration; must be very much impoverished; but is most opportunely recruited by this accession of chyle.—Yet though recruited, it is not refined. In its present crude state, it is absolutely unqualified to perform the vital tour, or carry on the animal functions: Therefore, by a grand apparatus of muscular fibres, it is wafted into the lungs; and pours a thousand, thousand rills into either lobe.—In the cells, the spongy cells of this amazing laboratory, it imbibes the influences of the external air; its heterogeneous parts are thoroughly incorporated; and its whole substance is made cool, smooth, and florid.—Thus improved, thus exalted, it is transmitted to the left ventricle of the heart; a strong, active, indefatigable * muscle; placed in the very centre of the sys-

* *Indefatigable.*—This is a very distinguishing, and no less amazing property of the heart. The large muscles of the arm, or the much larger of the thigh, are soon wearied. A day's labour, or a day's journey, will exhaust their strength. But the muscle which constitutes the

tem. Impelled by this beating engine, part shoots upward; and sweeps, with a bounding impetus, into the head. There it impregnates the prolific fields of the brain; and forms those subtle spirituous dews,* which impart sense to every nerve, and communicate motion to every limb.—Part flows downward; rolls the reeking current through all the lower quarters; and dispenses the nutrimental stores, even to the meanest member, and the minutest vessel.

Observe how the stately Thames, and the rapid Rhine, refresh the forests and the groves; water the towns which crowd their banks, and make the meadows they intersect laugh and sing. So, only with an incomparably richer fluid, and with infinitely more numerous streams, this human river laves the several regions of the body; transfusing vigour, and propagating health, through the whole.

But how shall a stream, divided into myriads of channels, and pervading innumerable tracts, how shall this be brought back again to its source? Should any portion, like your lake-waters after a land-flood, deviate from their course, or be unable to return—putrefaction would take place—a nuisance would arise—death might ensue. Therefore, the all-wise Creator has connected the extremity of the arteries with the beginning of the veins: So that the same force which darts the crimson wave through the former, drives it through the latter. Thus it is reconducted, without the least

heart, works through whole weeks, whole months, whole years, and never becomes weary; is equally a stranger to intermission and fatigue.

* These are what we call the animal spirits; and it is generally supposed, that sensation is caused by the undulatory motion of this nervous fluid.—Though some imagine it is performed by the vibratory motion of the nerves themselves.—Others think, that neither of these opinions will comport with the texture of those fine tubes, or with the nature of the fluid they contain.—It is, I believe, one of those mysteries in the material world, which may reconcile thinking and unprejudiced minds to the mysteries of the Christian revelation. Why should any one wonder to find some doctrines in the Bible that surpass the reach of human understanding, when there are so many operations in the body confessedly and absolutely inexplicable by the most acute anatomist?

extravasation, to the great salient cistern.* They played off afresh, it renews and perpetuates the vital functions.

Where two opposite currents would be in danger of clashing, a fibrous excrescence interposes; † which, like a projecting pier, breaks the stroke of each, and throws both into their proper receptacle. When the wafting is to be speedy, the channels either forbear to wind in their course, ‡ or to lessen in their dimensions. § When the progress is to be retarded, the tubes are twined into various convolutions, || or their diameter is contracted into a narrower size.—Modelled by these judicious rules, guarded by these wise precautions, the living flood never discontinues its interchangeable tide; but, night and day, whether we sleep or wake, still perseveres to sally briskly through the arteries, and return softly through the veins.

Such astonishing expedients are used, to elaborate the chyle, to blend it with the blood, and to distribute both through the body; by means of which, the animal constitution is maintained. In youth, its bulk is increased; in age, its decays are repaired; and it is kept in tenable condition for the soul, during the space of seventy or eighty years.

These are a few, and but a very few, instances of that contrivance, regularity, and beauty, which are observable in the human frame. Attentive inquirers discover deeper footsteps of design, and more refined strokes of skill; discover them not only in the grand

* Solomon makes use of this similitude—"Or ever the pitcher broken at the fountain; or the wheel broken at the cistern," Eccl. xi. 1. The two ventricles of the heart, replenished with blood, are fitly represented by a cistern; and the contractile force of their fibres, acts like a water-wheel in hydraulics. The pitcher, which receives the water at the spring-head, and conveys it away for the owner's services, may probably signify the aorta, and the pulmonary artery; whose functions correspond with the uses of such a vessel.

† In the point, where the streams, from the vena cava and vena cava, meet.

‡ In the great artery, that descends to the feet.

§ In every interval, between all the ramifications.

|| In the vessels which carry the blood to the brain; which form the viscous secretions; and indeed which constitute all the glands.

and most distinguished parts, but in every limb, and in every organ; I may venture to add, in every fibre that is extended, and in every globule* that flows.

Asp. What a various, but uniform system, is the body! I see the greatest multiplicity of parts, yet the most perfect harmony subsists between them all. No one hinders, but each assists the operation of another; and all conspire to the benefit and preservation of the whole. Most judiciously has the great apostle touched this subject; and most happily applied it, to illustrate the reasonableness, and enforce the practice, both of personal and social duties, of private content and public concord. See 1 Cor. xii. 12, &c.

“The body,” he observes, “is not one member, but many.” To each of which some peculiar and needful office is assigned. So that the foot, though placed in the lowest order, and destined to serve on the very ground, has no reason to reckon itself a worthless outcast; or to say, “because I am not the head, I am not of the body.” Neither has the head, in its exalted station, and amidst its honourable functions, any cause to despise the inferior limbs; or to say, with contempt and self-sufficiency, “I have no need of you.” If there were no feet, what would become of the locomotive faculty? Or how could the body convey itself from one place to another? If there were no hands, what should we do for the instruments of action? or how could the animal frame be defended and accommodated?—Nay, the parts, “which seem to be less honourable,” are necessary. Even those which form the sediments, or throw off the dregs, are of the last importance to life and its comforts. Should those be obstructed in their action, the most raging torment ensues; should the obstruction continue, death is the inevitable consequence.—By this wise adjustment, “there is no schism in the body;” no separate or in-

* The extreme minuteness of the globules, which form the red part of our blood, is one exemplification of this remark; if, as Mr Lewenhoeck computes, every globule be 125,000 times smaller than the smallest grain of sand.

terfering ends are pursued by the members; but the safety and support of each are the one undivided care of all.

Thus should it be among men, and among Christians; in the civil community, and in the Catholic church. There is in both a subordination of persons, but a concatenation of interests. For which reason, a general agreement should take place, and a mutual subserviency to each other's welfare. The meanest have no cause to be dissatisfied with their condition; but to acquiesce in the unerring disposal of Providence, and cheerfully contribute their share to the common good. The highest should condescend to men of low estate; and maintain a regard to the well-being of the poorest, as that which is intimately connected with their own. In a word, each should feel a tender concern for all; rejoicing in their happiness, and studying to establish it; sympathising with their miseries, and endeavouring to heal them.

I am sure, my Theron will be pleased with this fine comparison, used by the apostle; and adapted to purposes, at once so noble and so benevolent. Especially, as it receives additional propriety and force from his own observations. But I have one more inquiry to make.

Your system, though organized, though endued with a principle of motion, and furnished with the power of nutrition, is still destitute of sense. The creation abounds with objects fitted to yield the most refined entertainment. The sun impurples the robes of morning, and stars bespangle the curtains of night. Flowers of silver whiteness, and of golden lustre, enamel the ground. Fruits of all radiant hues, and of every delicious taste, hang amiably dangling on the boughs.

“Airs also, vernal airs,
Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
The trembling leaves.”

But we hear of no capacities formed for the enjoyment of these various delights. Without which, the breath

of fields must lose its reviving fragrance; the whispering grove must degenerate into sullen silence; and nature's book of knowledge, all fair and instructive, be no better than a vast unmeaning blank.

Ther. Therefore the great Creator, profusely gracious to mankind, has made us a present, an inestimable present, of the senses: to be the inlets of innumerable pleasures, and the means of administering the most valuable advantages.

High in the head, bright and conspicuous as a star in the brow of evening, is placed the eye. In this elevated situation, like a sentinel posted in his watch-tower, it commands the most enlarged prospect.—Consisting only of simple fluids, inclosed in thin tunicles, it conveys to our apprehension all the graces of blooming nature, and all the glories of the visible heavens. How prodigiously wonderful, that an image of the hugest mountains, and a transcript of the most diversified landscapes, shall enter the smallest circlet of the pupil! How surprisingly artful, that the rays of light, like an imitable pencil, should paint on the optic nerves; paint in an instant of time; paint in their truest colours, and exactest lineaments, every species of external objects!

The eye is so tender, that a slight accident, scarce perceivable by some other parts of the body, would be very injurious to its delicate frame. It is guarded therefore with remarkable circumspection, and the most solicitous care; with a care evidently proportioned to its nice texture, and extensive usefulness. It is entrenched deep in the head, and barricaded, on every side, with a strong fortification of bones. As the incursion of the smallest fly would incommode the polished surface, it is farther defended by two substantial curtains, hung on a most slender cartilaginous rod; which secure it, not barely from blows, and from any hurtful attrition, but also from every troublesome annoyance. In sleep, when there is no occasion to exercise the sense, but an absolute necessity to protect the organ, these curtains spontaneously close, and never

fail to lie shut. At any time, they will fly together with a motion quick as the alarm of fear, I had almost said, quicker than thought itself. At all times they are lined with an extremely fine sponge,* wet with its own native dew; which lubricate the eye-ball; oil, as it were, its wheels; and fit it for a course of unwearied activity. At the end of this skinny mantelet, (if I may use the military style,) is planted a range of bristly palisadoes; † which keep out the least mote; ward off even the straggling atom; and moderate the otherwise too potent impressions of the sun-beams. ‡

The brows are a kind of natural pent-house, thatched and arched with curious wreaths of hair. The thatch is intended to divert the sweat from trickling into the eyes, and offending them with its brine. The arches are so finely coloured, and so elegantly turned, that they set off the whiteness of the forehead, and bestow additional grace on the whole countenance. Because, in our waking hours, there is almost an incessant call for those little orbs, they run upon the finest casters; rolling upwards or downwards, to the right hand or to the left, with the utmost speed, and with equal ease;—which circumstance, added to the flexibility of the neck, renders our two eyes as useful, as if

* The glandula lachrymalis and its ducts; opening on the inner part of the eye-lid, and secreting the fluid, which Theron calls its oil; because it irrigates the eye-ball, and facilitates its motion.

† The hairs, which arise upon the extremities of the eye-lash, grow only to a certain convenient length, and never stand in need of cutting. They are not flaccid and pendulous, like those of the head; but stiff and prominent, like bristles. The first sort would be troublesome; the last is beneficial. Add to this, that their points stand out of the way; those of the upper eye-lid being bent upwards, and those of the lower downwards. So nice is nature, even in such small matters!

‡ The incessant, the more than fatherly care, which the Lord God Almighty takes of his people, is represented in Scripture by this extraordinary provision made for the security of the eye: which is one of the finest images, that fancy can form; and one of the most consolatory truths, that faith can believe. “He kept him as the apple of his eye,” Deut. xxxii. 10. “He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye,” Zech. ii. 8. The reader will easily see, that the comparison, every way beautiful, is carried to the highest pitch of energy and beauty, by the sacred writers. Not barely the eye, but the apple or pupil of the eye; the tenderest part, even of the most tender member.

whole body, like the living creatures in St John's vision, was "full of eyes before and behind," Rev. 6.

The ear consists of an outward porch and inner rooms, with tools of the most admirable contrivance and finished workmanship. The contrivance and the workmanship incomparably nicer than the designs of Palladio, or the architecture of Solomon's temple; though the former were drawn from the magnificent monuments of Rome, though the latter was built in the taste of heaven. Yea, so consummately nice is the structure of this organ, that God, the only wise God, is not ashamed to be called its artificer. "He that created the ear," Psal. xciv. 9, is to be found among the titles of the exalted Jehovah. In one very remarkable peculiarity, this minute fabric resembles that sacred edifice, the porch being loftier * than any other part of the building.

The porch I call that semicircular lodge, which stands somewhat prominent from the head; and is not soft and sinking as flesh, lest it should absorb the sound, rather than promote the repercussion; not hard and stubborn as bone, lest it should occasion painful inconveniences, when we repose ourselves on either side; but of a cartilaginous substance, covered with a tight expansion of skin, and wrought into irregular bends and hollows; which, like circling hills, or surrounding rocky shores, † collect the wandering undulations of the air, and transmit them, with a vigorous impulse, to the finely stretched membrane of the tympanum. ‡ The avenue, or narrow entry, is secured

* Compare 1 Kings vi. 2. with 2 Chron. iii. 4.

† Alluding to those expressive lines, where echo seems to live in the sound, as well as in the sense;

—"Vocemque inclusa volutant

Littora, pulsati colles clamore resultant." VIRG.

‡ So called, because it resembles a drum, both in figure and use. Being a fine skin, expanded upon a circle of bones, and over a polished reverberating cavity. It is affected by the vibrations of the external air, as the covering of the war-drum is by the impressions of the stick. It is also furnished with braces, which strain or relax it at pleasure; and accommodate its tension either to loud or languid sounds.

from the insinuating attempts of little insects, by a morass (shall I say?) of bitter and viscous matter; disgusting to their taste, and embarrassing to their feet. The hammer and the anvil; the stirrup and the drum; the winding labyrinths,* and the sounding galleries: these, and other pieces of mechanism, all instrumental to the power of hearing, are beyond description curious.

Amazingly nice must be the formation, and inconceivably exact the tension, of the auditory nerves; since they correspond with the smallest tremors of the atmosphere, and easily distinguish their most subtle variations. With the gentle gales that fan us, or even with the ruder blasts that assault us, these delicate strings are but little affected; whereas, they are perfect unisons with those fine, those significant agitations of the air, which the acutest touch is unable to discern. These living chords, tuned by an almighty hand, and diffused through the echoing isles, and sonorous cells—these receive the impressions of sound, and propagate them to the brain: These † give existence to the charms of music, and reciprocate the rational entertainments of discourse: These treat my Aspasio with the melody of the woodland choirs, and afford me the superior pleasure of my friend's conversation.

The eye perceives only the objects that are before

* Of this kind is the auditory tube, intended to soften and qualify the rushing sound. Lest, if the incursion were direct, it might be too impetuous, and injure the delicate expanse of the tympanum. While this is designed to moderate, the concavities of the inner structure are prepared to heighten and invigorate the sound, by calling in the auxiliary force of an echo. Such intentions, so varying, nay, so opposite, concur to form this admirable organ!

† Elegantly styled "the daughters of music." For this phrase may refer, as well to the organs which distinguish, as to those which form, the harmonious accents, Eccl. xii. 4. Methinks, I am always desirous to add any apposite expression, or parallel passage, from the Bible. As I find, writers of taste and politeness are studious to embellish their works, with quotations from the classics. And I persuade myself, the reader will allow me to gratify this favourite inclination; because every portion of that inestimable book, however minute, is like the filings of gold, or the sparks of a diamond; is sure, when properly applied, to add worth, and impart beauty.

it; whereas the ear warns us of transactions, that pass above us, behind us, all around us. The eye is useless, amidst the gloom of night, and cannot carry its observation through the bolted door, or the closed window-shutter; but the ear admits her intelligence, through the darkest medium, and the minutest cranny. The eye is upon duty, only in our waking hours; but the ear is always expanded, and always accessible; * a courier which never tires; a sentry ever in his box. To secure a resource, in case any misfortune should disable one of the hearing or seeing organs, our all-gracious Maker has given us duplicates of each.

As there are tremulous concussions impressed upon the air, discernible only by the instruments of hearing; there are also odoriferous particles, wafted by the same aerial vehicle, which are perceivable only by the smell. The nostrils are wide at the bottom, that a large quantity of effluvia may enter; narrow at the top, that, when entered, they may close their ranks, and act with greater vigour. Fine, beyond all imagination, are the steams which exhale from fetid or fragrant bodies. The very best microscopes, which discover thousands and thousands of animalculæ in a drop of putrefied water, cannot bring one individual, among all these evanescent legions, to our sight. They sail, in numberless squadrons, close to our eyes, close by our ears; yet are so amazingly attenuated, that they elude the search of both. Nevertheless, so judiciously are the olfactory nets laid, † and so artfully their meshes

* "Auditus autem semper patet. Ejus enim sensus etiam dormientes egemus. A quo, cum sonus est acceptus, etiam e somno excutimur."—*De nat. Decor.*

† The keenness and sagacity of this sense, furnished the evangelical prophet with a beautiful metaphor, to display the accuracy of the Messiah's judgment in spiritual things, Isa. xi. 3.

The original implies his faculty or sense of smelling; which expression is accommodated to our language, and properly enough translated, "shall make him of quick understanding," q. d. "He shall judge, not according to external appearance, but according to the state of the inner man. Unfeigned self-abasement, affiance in a Redeemer's righteousness, and faith purifying the heart; these endowments, though not observed, or, if observed, not valued by the world; these shall be the test of his

sized, that they catch these vanishing fugitives. They catch the roaming perfumes, which fly off from the opening honey-suckle; and take in the stationed sweets, which hover round the expanded rose. They imbibe all the balmy fragrance of spring, all the aromatic exhalations of autumn, and enable us to banquet even on the invisible dainties of nature.

Furnished with these several organs,

Not a breeze
Flies o'er the meadow, not a cloud imbibes,
The setting sun's effulgence, not a strain
From all the tenants of the warbling shade
Ascends, but whence our senses can partake
Fresh pleasure. *

Another capacity for frequent pleasure, our bountiful Creator has bestowed, in granting us the powers of taste. By means of which, the food that supports our body, feasts our palate; first, treats us with a pleasing regale; then, distributes its beneficial recruits. The razor, whetted with oil, becomes more exquisitely keen. The saliva, flowing upon the tongue, and moistening its nerves, quickens them into the liveliest acts of sensation. This sense is circumstanced, in a manner peculiarly benign and wise; so as to be a standing, though silent plea for temperance. Without recurring to the vengeance of God, or the terrors of eternal judgment, it is a powerful dissuasive from irregular and excessive indulgencies: Because the exercise of sobriety sets the finest edge on its faculties; and adds

approbation, and the objects of his esteem. These constitute, what is called in the next words, "the fear of the Lord."

"In determining the reality of these qualities, he shall be unerringly exact, and infallibly true. Let Hypocrisy put on every mask, and practise all her wiles, they shall avail nothing before the Root and Offspring of David. (ver. 1.) As those extremely subtle effluvia, which escape the inquisition of every other sense, are easily and perfectly distinguished by the smell; so those recesses of the breast, and those secrets of the heart, which lie too deep for all human discernment; even they are naked and open, are obvious and palpable, to his divinely sagacious understanding."

* See that very elegant poem, "The Pleasures of Imagination," Book III.

the most poignant relish to its enjoyments: Whereās, riot and voluptuousness pall the appetite; blunt its sensibility; and render the gratifications extremely languid, if not perfectly insipid. The sight, the smell, the taste, are not only so many separate sources of delight, but a joint security to our health. They are the vigilant and accurate inspectors, which examine our food, and inquire into its properties, whether it be pleasant or disagreeable, wholesome or noxious. For the discharge of this office, they are excellently qualified, and most commodiously situated; so that nothing can gain admission through the mouth, till it has undergone the scrutiny, and obtained the passport of them all.

To all these, as a most necessary and advantageous supplement, is added the sense of feeling, which renders the whole assemblage complete. While other senses have a particular place of residence, this is diffused throughout the whole body. In the palms of the hands, on the tips of the fingers, and indeed through all the extreme parts of the flesh, it is most quick and lively; as the advanced guards, or scouts upon the frontiers, are, or ought to be, peculiarly attentive and wakeful. Scouts did I say? The whole army of Xerxes, drawn out in battle array, with his millions of supernumerary attendants,* were but like a few gleaners straggling in the field, if compared, either in number or order, with those nervous detachments, which pervade the texture of the skin, and minister to the act of feeling. How happily is this sense tempered between the two extremes! Neither so acute, as the membranes of the eye; nor so obtuse, as the callus of the heel. The former would expose us to continual pain; render our clothes galling, and the very down oppressive: The latter would quite benumb the body, and almost annihilate the touch. Nor this alone, but all the senses are most exactly adapted to their respec-

* The soldiers and attendants of Xerxes, amounted to five millions two hundred and eighty thousand. Another army, so large and numerous, occurs not in all the records of history. *Vide* HEROD. lib. vii,

tive offices, and to the exigencies of our present state. Were they strained to a much higher tone, they would be avenues of anguish. Were they relaxed into greater insensibility, they would be so many useless incumbrances.

Asp. How admirable and gracious is this provision, which the blessed God has made, to accommodate us with delightful sensations, and instructive ideas! The taste, the touch, and the smell, are somewhat straitened in the extent of their operations. The ear carries off a correspondence, with a larger circle of objects: But the sight most amply supplies whatever is wanting in all the other senses. The sight spreads itself to an infinite multitude of bodies, and brings within our notice some of the remotest parts of the universe. The taste, the touch, the smell, perceive nothing but what is brought to their very doors; whereas, the eye extends its observation as far as the orbit of Saturn; nay glances, and in an instant of time, to the inconceivable distance of the stars. The compass of the earth, and the immensity of the skies, are its unlimited range.

From this remarkable variety, with regard to the sphere and activity of the senses, St Paul forms one of the finest, boldest, and most important comparisons in the world. By this he illustrates the difference between the wisdom which is derived from the word of divine revelation, and the wisdom which is acquired by dint of human application. In his oration to the Athenians, speaking of their most celebrated sages, he says, "If so be, they might feel after, and find him."* In his epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of the man Moses, our author observes, that "he endured, as seeing him who is invisible," Heb. xi. 27. Writing to his Corinthian converts, he adds, as a farther heightening of the contrast, "We all beholding with open face the glory of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. The knowledge of the philosopher, is like that obscure and scanty information, which is to be obtained by groping

* Acts xvii. 27. *Εἰ ἀρα γὰρ ψηλαφήσιν αὐτοῦ.*

with the hand in a dark night. The knowledge of the Christian, is like that copious influx of clear and enlarged ideas, which we receive by the mediation of the eye, amidst the shining of a bright day.

Tully, we find, has, in the book before us, hit upon some of the most general and obvious uses, to which the several parts of the human body are adapted. Yet how superficial and deficient appears his penetration, when we take in the much deeper discoveries, and the much higher improvements of our modern anatomy! Thus, and abundantly more defective, is his knowledge of moral duties and divine doctrines; when compared with what is taught us, in the plain sermon on the mount, and the unstudied epistles of the Jewish tent-maker.

Therefore, though I would bless the beneficent God, for the ministration of all the senses, and particularly for the noble organs of vision; I would be more especially thankful for that light of the world, Christ Jesus, and his glorious gospel; as well as for that "spiritual eye,*" by which the one is understood, and the other seen—a "lively faith." I would also long for that place of beatific enjoyment, where our views of the adorable Godhead, and our acquaintance with the sublimest truths, will as much transcend all our present apprehensions, as the most enlightened saint exceeds the benighted Gentile.

Ther. The crowning gift—that which improves the satisfaction, and augments the beneficial effects, accruing from all the senses, is speech. Speech makes me a gainer from the eyes and ears of other people; from the ideas they conceive, and the observations they make. And what an admirable instrument for articulating the voice, and modifying it into speech, is the tongue! The tongue has neither bone nor joint; yet fashions itself, with the utmost volubility, into every

* Luke xxiv. 45. "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." *Αινοποιεῖν* is the word used in this place, and the word used by the evangelical historian, when he relates that supernatural act, which gave sight to the blind.

shape and every posture, which can express sentiment, or constitute harmony. This little collection of muscular fibres, under the conducting skill of the Creator, is the artificer of our words.* By this we communicate the secrets of the breast, and make our very thoughts audible. By this we instruct the ignorant, and comfort the distressed; we glorify God, and edify each other; † the academic explains the abstrusest sciences, and the ecclesiastic preaches the everlasting gospel. This is likewise the efficient of music. It is soft as the lute, or shrill as the trumpet; it can warble as the lyre, or resound like the organ. Connecting the sacred anthem with its tuneful strains, we sooth the cares, and beguile the toils of life; we imitate the angelic choirs, and anticipate, in some degree, their celestial joys. As the tongue requires full scope, and an easy play, it is lodged in an ample cavity; and surrounded with reservoirs of spittle, always ready to distil the lubricating dews. It moves under a concave roof, which serves as a sounding board to the voice; giving it much the same additional vigour and grace, as the shell of a violin adds to the language of the strings.

Wise—wonderfully wise, and eminently gracious, is the regulation both of spontaneous and involuntary motion. Was this regulation reversed, what deplorable inconveniences would take place; nay, what unavoidable ruin must ensue! Deplorable inconveniences; if the discharges of the bowels, or evacuations of the bladder, were quite independent on our leave. Una-

* I am sensible, that the glottis has a considerable share in modulating the sound, and forming the voice. But, as the nature and office of this most curious aperture, are very little known by the generality of people; we chuse to follow the popular opinion, so neatly described by the poet;

—————“*Dædala lingua,
Lingua figuratrix verborum, opisexque loquelæ.*”

Anti-Lucret.

† The articulating tongue is called “our glory,” *Psal. lvii. 8.* And such indeed it is when devoted to these purposes. It is then a distinction, not only of man from the brutal herd, but of the righteous from the congregation of the ungodly. It is then like choice silver, or as a tree of life.

“Who would not bless for this the gift of speech,
And in the tongue’s beneficence be rich?”

voidable ruin ; if the action of the heart required the co-operation of our thoughts, or the business of respiration waited for the concurrence of our will.

The will, in some cases, has not so much as a single vote. In others, she determines and commands, like an absolute sovereign ; nor is there a monarch upon earth, so punctually obeyed, as this queen of the human system. If she but intimate her pleasure, the spirits run, they fly, to execute her orders ; to stretch the arm, or close the hand ; to furrow the brow with frowns, or dimple the cheek with smiles. How easily, as well as punctually, are these orders carried into execution ! To turn the screw, or work the laver, is laborious and wearisome : But we move the vertebræ, with all their appendent chambers ; we advance the leg, with the whole incumbent body ; we rise from our seat ; we spring from the ground ; and though much force is exerted, though a very considerable weight is raised, we meet with no difficulty, we complain of no fatigue.

That all this should be effected, without any toil, and by a bare act of the will, is very surprising : But that these motions should be made, renewed, continued, even while we remain entirely ignorant of the manner in which they are performed, is beyond measure astonishing. Who can play so much as a single tune upon the spinet, without learning the difference of the keys, or studying the rudiments of music ? Impossible ! Yet the mind of man touches every spring of the human machine, with the most masterly skill ; though she knows nothing at all concerning the nature of her implements, or the process of her operations. We walk, we run, we leap ; we throw ourselves into a variety of postures, and perform a multitude of motions ; yet are utterly unable to say, which nerve should be active ; which muscle should swell ; or which tendon approximate,

Put a German flute into the hand even of a sensible person, without a master to instruct him, he is at a loss to make the instrument speak ; much less is he

able to sink and soften the sound, to exalt and extend it, just as he pleases: Yet we are self-taught, in the method of forming, regulating, and varying the voice. Naturally, and with unpremeditated fluency, we give it the languishing cadence of sorrow, or the sprightly airs of joy; the low faltering accents of fear, or the elevated tone and rapid sallies of anger.

The eye of a rustic, who has no notion of optics, or any of its laws, shall lengthen and shorten its axis, dilate and contract its pupil, without the least hesitation, and with the utmost propriety; adapting itself, even with mathematical exactness, to the particular distance of objects, and the different degrees of light: By which means, it performs some of the most curious experiments in the improved Newtonian philosophy, without the least knowledge of the science, or so much as any consciousness of its own dexterity.

I can never sufficiently admire this multiplicity of animated organs; their finished form, and their faultless order. Yet I must confess myself struck with greater admiration at the power, the truly mysterious power and sway, which the soul exercises over them. Ten thousand reins are put into her hand; she is not acquainted with their office, their use, or their name; she has not learned so much as to distinguish one from another; nevertheless she manages all, conducts all, without the least perplexity, or the least irregularity; rather with a promptitude, a consistency, and a speed, which nothing else can equal!

Upon the whole—great reason had Euripides to call the human body,

Σοφὴ τέκτονος καλοῦ κειμήλιον.

I believe, the preceding observations will justify us, if we give a fuller meaning to the poet, and translate his words—"the infinitely-varied, and inimitably fine workmanship of a great, supreme, unerring Artist." Or, as Virgil speaks, with a pertinency and a spirit, which epitomizes all I have said, and expresses all I

would say, this bodily structure is indeed—"Non enerrabile textum."*

Asp. "Wonderfully," I perceive, "and fearfully are we made," Psalm cxxxix. 14. Made of such complicated parts; each so correctly fashioned, and all so exactly arranged; † every one executing such curious functions, and many of them operating in so mysterious a manner; as may justly render us a wonder to ourselves. Since health depends upon such a numerous assemblage of moving organs, since a single secretion stopped, may destroy the salutary temperature of the fluids; or a single wheel clogged, may put an end to the vital motion of the solids; with what "holy fear should we pass the time of our sojourning here below!" 1 Pet. i. 17; trusting, for continual preservation, not merely on our own care, but on that omnipotent hand, which formed the admirable machine; that the same hand which formed it, may superintend its agency, and support its being. ‡

When we consider the extensive contrivance, and delicate mechanism—what plans of geometry have been laid; what operations of chemistry are performed; in a word, what miracles of art and elegance are executed, in order to furnish us with the necessary recruits, and the several delights of life;—is there not abundant reason to cry out, with the same inspired writer, "How dear are thy counsels unto me, O God!" "Thy counsels of creating wisdom! thou hast not been sparing, but even lavish of thy indulgent designs. Thou hast omitted no expedient, which might esta-

* That is, a structure, not barely correct, or highly finished, but (as Theron has elsewhere expressed it) "beyond description curious."

† St Paul's language on the subject, is exceedingly beautiful and expressive, *Συναρμολογημένοι ἔσμεν καὶ συμβιβασμένοι*. Eph. iv. 16. The several parts most nicely adapted to each other, and most perfectly harmonizing with the whole. All associated with that propriety, and connected with that firmness, which are the very foundation of symmetry, vigour, and agility.

‡ Agreeably to that philosophical maxim, "Creatio et conservatio eadem est actio;" and to those scriptural acknowledgments, It is God, "who holdeth our soul in life; he is the length of our days; his visitation prolongeth our spirit."

blish my ease; enlarge my comforts; and promote, yea complete, my bodily happiness!" And is not this a most endearing obligation "to glorify the blessed God, with our bodies, as well as with our spirits?" 1 Cor. vi. 20.

Ther. "Our spirits!" Ay; what is this mansion of flesh, though so exquisitely wrought, compared with the noble and immortal inhabitant, which resides within?

That intellectual being;
Those thoughts, which wander through eternity! MILTON.

This consideration inclines me to think, that, if the casket be so highly polished, the jewel cannot be so excessively coarse, as my Aspasio's doctrine of original corruption supposes.

Asp. I perceive your aim, Theron; but must beg leave, at present, to decline all overtures for a dispute. If my arguments have failed, your description has answered its end. I cannot suffer my thoughts to be diverted from a subject, which is so very engaging, yet so rarely discussed. I have such a strong desire to recollect and retain what has been observed, that even your conversation will, at this juncture, lose its relish. Here therefore I put a period to your discourse, and must break away from your company, in order to ruminate and digest my notions, in some sequestered lonely walk. Unless you will permit me, before I retire, to make one remark. And let it not startle my friend, if I venture to say, that, amidst all his curious observations, he has forgot the principal circumstance of honour and excellence, which dignifies the human body.

Ther. I have omitted many fine and admirable properties, I confess. But sure I have not forgot the principal and most distinguishing.

Asp. You need not be displeased with yourself. It argues no defect in your dissertation. The circumstances I have in my view, could never be discovered, by following the dissecting knife. It is learned not

from Cheselden's draughts, or the tables of Albinus ; but from the word of revelation. What I mean, is this : The human body was exalted to a most intimate and personal union with the eternal Son of God. He who decorated the heaven with stars, and crowned the stars with lustre ; " He vouchsafed to be made flesh," John i. 14. " and was found in fashion as a man," Phil. ii. 8. Nay, this is, even now, the apparel of that divine and adorable Person. He is clothed with our nature ; he wears our very limbs ; and appears in the dress of humanity, even at the right hand of God, and at the head of all the heavenly hosts.

What think you of another privilege, mentioned by the apostle ? " Your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. vi. 19. Not your souls only, but your very bodies, are the shrine, in which " the high and holy one, that inhabiteth eternity," condescends to dwell. He, who sitteth between the cherubim, and walketh in the circuit of the skies, is pleased to sanctify these earthly tenements, for his own habitation. And is not this a much grander embellishment, than all their matchless contrivance and masterly workmanship ? Just as the rod which budded, and the manna which was miraculously preserved ; the sacred oracle of Urim and Thummim, with the cloud of glory covering the mercy-seat ; were a much higher distinction to Solomon's temple, than the most heightened beauties of architecture.

Nor must I omit the dignity, the transcendent and amazing dignity, which is reserved for these systems of flesh, at the resurrection of the just. They will then be refined and improved into the most perfect state, and the most beauteous form ; surpassing whatever is resplendent and amiable in the most ornamental appearances of material nature. They will be purer than the unspotted firmament ; brighter than the lustre of the stars ; and, which exceeds all parallel, which comprehends all perfection, they will " be made like unto Christ's glorious body," Phil. iii. 21 ; like that incomparably-glorious body, which the blessed Jesus

wears, in his celestial kingdom, and on his triumphant throne.

When we add all these magnificent prerogatives, which are revealed in scripture, to all those inimitable niceties, which are displayed by anatomists, what thankfulness, what admiration, can equal such a profusion of favours ?

When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise !

DIALOGUE XIII.

THE morning had been wet. At noon, the rain ceased. But the heavens still continued gloomy.—Towards evening, a gentle eastern gale sprung up; which dissipated the dead calm, and cleared the face of the sky.—The sun, which had been muffled in clouds, dropped the veil. Disengaged from the dusky shroud, he shone forth with peculiar splendour. His beams, endeared by their late suspension, were doubly welcome, and produced unusual gaiety.

At this juncture, Theron and Aspasio walked abroad. They walked alternately on the terraces; one of which was opposite to the country, the other contiguous to the parterre; where the gales, impregnated with the freshest exhalations of nature, breathed the smell of meads, and heaths, and groves.—Or else shaking the clustres of roses, and sweeping the beds of fragrance, they flung balm and odours through the air.

At a distance, were heard the bleatings of the flock, mingled with the lowings of the milky mothers. While more melodious music warbled from the neighbouring boughs, and spoke aloud the joy of their feathered inhabitants;—and not only spoke their joy, but spread an additional charm over all the landscape. For, amidst such strains of native harmony, the breathing

perfumes smell more sweet, the streaming rills shine more clear, and the universal prospect looks more gay. Then was experienced, what Milton so delicately describes;

If chance the radiant sun with farewell sweet
 Extend his evening beam, the fields revive,
 The birds their notes renew, and bleating herds
 Attest their joy, that hill and valley rings.

With wonder and delight our friends observed, both the exquisite beauty, and the immense magnificence of things.—They were struck with the most profound veneration of that almighty Majesty, who hung the sun in vaults of azure, and clothed his orb with robes of lustre; “whose right hand spanneth the heavens,” Isa. xlviii. 13. “and stretcheth them out as a tent,” for innumerable creatures, worlds, systems “to dwell in,” Isa. xl. 22.—Charmed they were at the consideration of the Creator’s boundless beneficence; who lights up the light of his countenance, and joy is shed; who opens his munificent hand, and plenty is poured throughout all the regions of the universe. Insomuch, that even inanimate beings seem to smile under a sense of the blessings; and, though they find not a tongue to praise, yet speak their acclamations by their gladdened looks.

Ther. How very different, *Aspasio*, is this delightful appearance of things, from your ill-favoured doctrine of original guilt, and original depravity! Your doctrine is a contradiction to the language of nature. Nature says, through all her works, “That God is good, and men are made to be happy.” Whereas, your opinion would turn the whole world into a vast hospital, and make every individual person a leper or a Lazarus.

Asp. I join with my *Theron*, and with universal nature, in bearing witness to the goodness of our God. And nothing, I am persuaded, displays it more, nothing manifests it so much, as the doctrine of our fall in Adam, connected with our recovery in Christ—Only in one particular I am obliged to dissent. It is not my

opinion that would make, but the sin of our forefather which has made, the whole world an infirmary, and every individual person a leper.

Ther. At this rate, you would crowd into that single act of disobedience, evils more numerous, and more fatal, than the plagues which were lodged in Pandora's box, or the troops which were stowed in the Trojan horse.

Asp. Far more numerous, and infinitely more pernicious. The fable of Pandora's box seems to have been a shred of the doctrine, picked up by the heathen wits, and fashioned according to their sportive fancy: This would, if there was any occasion for such weak assistance, bring in the Pagan theology, as a subsidiary evidence to our cause. The Trojan horse poured ruin upon a single city; but the primitive transgression entailed misery upon all generations.

Ther. You have advanced this heavy charge pretty strenuously, I must confess; but without descending to facts, or appealing to experience. All the invectives are general and declamatory, none pointing and particular.

Asp. It is easy, my dear friend, too easy to draw up a particular bill of indictment; and not only to specify the facts, but to demonstrate the charge. Experience, sad experience, will furnish us with a cloud of witnesses, and prove my remonstrances to be more than invectives.

Were we to dissect human nature, as in our last conference you treated the animal system, we should find the leprosy of corruption, spreading itself through our whole frame. For which reason, it is styled, by an inspired writer, "the old man," Rom. vi. 6. "Old," because, in its commencement, it was early as the fall; and, in its communication to individuals, is coeval with their being; "Man," because it has tainted the body, infected the soul, and disordered the whole person.

St Paul, describing a profligate conversation, speaks in this remarkable manner; "fulfilling the desires of

the flesh and of the mind," Eph. ii. 3. By the desires of the flesh, he means those irregular inclinations, which correspond with the animal part of our constitution: By the desires of the mind, he denotes those evil propensities, which are more immediately seated in the intellectual faculties. And in both, he very strongly expresses the total depravation of our nature.

Ther. What you call evil propensities, I am apt to think, are not really sinful, but appointed for the trial of our virtue. Nay, since they are confessedly natural, they cannot be in themselves evil; because, upon this supposition, God, who is the author of our nature, would be the author also of our sin.

Asp. Then you imagine, that propensities to evil are void of guilt. This is the Popish notion, but neither the Mosaic nor the apostolic doctrine.—In the law of Moses it is written, "Thou shalt not covet," Exod. xx. 17. The divine Legislator prohibits, not only the iniquitous practice, but the evil desire. The apostle gives it in charge to the Colossians, "Mortify your members, which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, and," which is the source of all, "evil concupiscence," Col. iii. 5. Now, can that be free from guilt which we are commanded to mortify? which, if not mortified, denominates us as "children of disobedience," and subjects us to "the wrath of God," Col. iii. 6.

Though these propensities are confessedly natural, they may be evil notwithstanding. The sacred writers oppose what is natural, to what is spiritual. Instead of commending it as innocent; they condemn it as "foolish," 1 Cor. ii. 14, "base," 2 Pet. ii. 12, and "criminal," Eph. ii. 3.—Neither does this make the author of our nature, the author of our sin. But it proves, that our nature has sustained a deplorable loss; that it is quite different from its original state; that what is spoken of the Israelitish people, is applicable to the human race; "I planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine?" Jer. ii. 21.

However, let us observe your proposal; dwell no longer on general hints, but descend to a particular examination. As our examination will chiefly respect the soul, let me inquire, what are her principal faculties?

Ther. The understanding, the will, and the affections. These are the most distinguishing powers which that queen of the human oecumeny retains in her service. These, like the several distributions of some ample river, run through the whole man; to quicken, fertilize, and enrich all his conversation.—But you represent them bitter, as the waters of Marah; unwholesome, as the streams of Jericho; noxious, as the pottage prepared for the sons of the prophets.

Asp. Nor is this a misrepresentation. For such they really are, till divine grace, like Moses' wood, Exod. xv. 25, like Elisha's salt, 2 Kings ii. 21, 22, or the meal, 2 Kings iv. 41, cast in by that holy man of God, sweeten them, heal them, and render their operations salutary.

The understanding claims our first regard. This, however qualified to serve the purposes of civil life, is unable to discover the truths, in which wisdom consists; or to form the tempers, from which happiness flows.

Let us take our specimen, not from the uncultivated savages of Afric, but from the politest nation in Europe. The Grecians piqued themselves on their intellectual accomplishments. They termed all the rest of mankind barbarians: Yet even these sons of science, "professing themselves wise, were," in fact, egregious "fools," Rom. i. 22. Not to enumerate the shocking immoralities, which the poets ascribed to their deities; not to insist upon the gross idolatries, which the common people practised in their worship; even their philosophers, the most improved and penetrating geniuses, were unacquainted with the very first principle* of true religion. Even they could not pro-

* "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord," &c. Mark

unce, with an unflinching tongue, * "That God is e."

Ther. With regard to the philosophers, the prejudices of a wrong education might pervert their judgment; or, in compliance with the prevailing mode, they might adopt customs, and assent to notions, which they did not thoroughly approve.

Asp. A poor compliment this to their integrity! Had I been their advocate, methinks, I would have given up the sagacity of my clients, rather than their fidelity to the cause of God and truth.

With reference to the supreme God, they were equally at a loss. There's not one among all the inferior creatures, not even the crawling worm, or the buzzing fly, but perceives what is beneficial, and pursues it; discerns what is pernicious, and avoids it. Yonder

xii. 29. From which it appears, that the unity of the Godhead is the foundation of all the divine commandments, and of all human worship.

* *Unflinching*—for though, in Plato's book of laws, we meet with *ἡ δὲ ψυχή*—*ἡ δὲ ψυχή*—*ἡ δὲ ψυχή*, again and again; yet he soon departs from this sound speech, and relapses into the language of idolatry.

A learned and ingenious friend would fain have Socrates exempted from this charge.—I wish I could gratify his benevolent temper, and spare that amiable philosopher. But, however justly he may express himself on some occasions, at other times he wavers; he evidently revolts; and is most pitifully inconsistent with himself. Even in his excellent conference with Aristodemus, where he argues admirably well for the existence, he cannot steadily adhere to the unity, of the Godhead. Nay, in his last solemn apology before his judges, he publicly renounces the truth; declares, that he worshipped those gods, which were acknowledged by his countrymen; worshipped them, and no other; on the same festivals, at the same altars, and in the same (idolatrous) manner—"No other:" these are his words, *ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο θεῶν, ἢ τὰς ἀπὸ τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν, καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ τῶν ἑσπερίων ἀποικιστῶν, καὶ ἰωνῶν, καὶ ἀθηναίων καὶ ἄλλων τῶν ἀνατολικῶν.* SOCRAT. *Memorab.* lib. i. c. i. sect. xi. 24.

Let none conclude from this, or any other passage, that we would consign over all the heathens to damnation. This is as far from our intention as it is foreign to the argument. We are only like witnesses, summoned to give in our evidence. From which it appears, that the very best among the Gentiles were ignorant of the true God; or, if they knew him in any degree, "they glorified him not as God; but became vain in their imagination," and vile in their worship.—Whether they shall obtain mercy, or which of them shall be objects of divine clemency, is left solely to the determination of their supreme, unerring, righteous Judge.

—"Non nostrum est tantas componere lites."

caterpillar, whose nourishment is from one particular species of vegetables, never makes a wrong application to another; never is allured by the fragrance of the auricula, or dazzled by the splendour of the tulip; but constantly distinguishes, and as constantly adheres to the leaf, which affords her the proper food. So sagacious are the meanest animals, with relation to their respective happiness! While the most celebrated of the heathen sages were, on a subject of the very same import, merely dotards. Varro reckons up no less than two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions concerning the true good; and not one of them derives it from the true source; I mean a conformity to the ever-blessed God, and an enjoyment of his infinite perfections.

If, on these leading points, they were so erroneous; no wonder, that they were bewildered in their other researches.

Ther. We are not inquiring into the circumstances of this or that particular nation; but into the state of mankind in general.

Asp. Cast your eye, Theron, upon those swallows. They shoot themselves with surprising rapidity through the air. I should take them for so many living arrows, were it not for their shifting, winding, wanton motions. Are not these what you call birds of passage?

Ther. These, and some other of the feathered race, are our constant visitants in summer; but leave us, at the approach of winter. As soon as the weather becomes cold, they assemble themselves in a body, and concert measures for their departure. Who convenes the assembly—what debates arise—or how they communicate the resolution taken—I do not presume to say. This is certain, that not one of them dislodges, till the affair is settled, and the proclamation has been published. Not a single loiterer is to be seen, when the troops are preparing for their decampment; nor a single straggler to be found, when they have once begun their march.—Having finished their journey through the land,

their wings become a sort of sails ; * and they launch, not into, but over the ocean. Without any compass to regulate their course, or any chart to make observations in their voyage, they arrive safely at the desired shore ; and what is still more extraordinary, they always find the readiest way, and the shortest cut.

Asp. “ The stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times ; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming : but my people know not the judgment of their God,” Jer. viii. 7. The young ones of those birds perceive how absolutely necessary it is to forsake the land of their nativity, and travel in quest of milder climes. But our offspring, even when their minds begin to open, “ are brutish in their knowledge,” Jer. x. 14. Born they are, and too long continue, “ like the wild ass’s colt,” † Job xi. 12 ; not only quite destitute of heavenly wisdom, but stupid to apprehend it, and averse to receive it. “ As soon as they are born, they go astray,” and——

Ther. “ Go astray”—To what is this owing, but to the bad examples they behold ? They catch the wayward habit from the irregular conversation of others.

Asp. Is not this a confirmation of my point ? Why are they yielding clay to each bad impression ? case-hardened steel to every edifying application ?—From imitating unworthy examples, you can hardly withhold them by the tightest rein. But if you would affect them with a sense of divine things, or bring them acquainted with God their Maker, “ line must be upon line, line upon line ; precept must be upon precept,

* “ Remigio alarum.”

VIRG.

† How keenly is this comparison pointed !—Like the ass’s, an animal remarkable for its stupidity, even to a proverb.—Like the ass’s colt, which must be still more egregiously stupid than the dam.—Like the wild ass’s colt, which is not only blockish, but stubborn and refractory ; neither possesses valuable qualities by nature, nor will easily receive them by discipline.—The image, in the original, is yet more strongly touched. The comparative particle *like*, is not in the Hebrew—“ born a wild ass’s colt ;” or, as we should say in English, “ a mere wild,” &c.

precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little." What farther corroborates my sentiment, is, that all these tender toils of erudition are generally unwelcome, are too often unsuccessful, nay, will always be ineffectual, without the concurrence of almighty grace.

Besides, Theron, if this propensity to evil be observable in all children, it seems more than probable that the unhappy bias is derived from their parents, rather than caught from their neighbours; and owing, not to the influence of external examples, but to a principle of internal corruption. †—Neglect the education of children, and you are sure to have their manners evil, their lives unprofitable. Nay, only remit your endeavours, and they lose what has been gained; they start aside like a broken bow. And wherefore this? Why do they not, without the rules of discipline or lessons of instruction, spontaneously addict themselves to the exercise of every virtue? just as the cygnets in yonder canal, spontaneously take to the element of water, and the act of swimming.

That bed in the garden before us will suggest the reason. It has been digged and dressed this very day. It now lies smooth and clean. Not a single weed appears on its surface. Yet how certainly will it, in a very little time, produce a plenteous growth of these vegetable nuisances?—Whence can this proceed? No hand will sow them; no wish will invite them. But the seeds, though unperceived by any eye, are already there. Disseminated by the winds, they have mixed

* A great critic has laid down the following rule to be observed in fine writing:

’Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,
The sound must be an echo to the sense.

POPE’S *Essay on Criticism*.

Never was this delicate maxim more nicely exemplified, than in the above cited passage of Isaiah, chap. xxviii. 13. Another instance of the same kind occurs in the seventh verse; where the language seems to mimic the reeling, straggling, giddy motions of a drunkard; while it iterates and reiterates the idea; expresses the same thing, in a different and still different manner; with an apparent, and in this case a significant circumrotation of words.

† St Paul confesses, that he and his fellow-saints were, in their unconverted state, depraved: and this, not *διὰ τῆς ἐξέως*, “by custom, or habit,” but *φύσει*, “by nature.” Eph. ii. 3.

selves with the mold, and are sunk into the soil. just so it is with our children. The seeds of iniquity are within * them; and unless proper diligence is exerted by us, unless gracious assistance be vouchsafed from above, they will assuredly spring up, overthrow their souls, and dishonour their lives.

Ther. Let us leave the children, and make men the subject of our inquiry.

Asp. In this respect, Theron,

Men are but children of a larger growth.

We may leave the vest or hanging-sleeve coat, but we will still find the follies of the child. In youth, what ambition and fondness for despicable pleasures! In manhood, what a keen pursuit of transitory wealth, what a cold inattention to God and holiness! Men, and men too of the greatest abilities, whose penetration on other subjects is piercing as the eagle's sight, and, on the most important points, blind as the inverted mole.

Ther. What! is the understanding like the most shortsighted animal, when lodged in her darkest retirement; that sublime faculty of the soul, which lends her eye to all the rest; sits at the helm, and directs their motions?

Asp. You remember, I presume, that beautiful passage in Milton, † which Mr Addison so highly admires, and so judiciously illustrates. The passage, I mean, where the archangel Michael comes down to advertise Adam of future events, and to execute the sentence of divine justice.

Ther. I remember it perfectly well.—In the east, the great light of day lies under an eclipse. In the

* Whoever chuses to examine the seeds, the poisonous seeds, which are lodged in this nursery of all evil, may see a sample of them in our Lord's description, Mark vii. 20—23; where he characterises the heart, not barely of the hypocritical Pharisee, or the abandoned publican, but of mankind in general.—After such an authority, shall I mention the testimony of Seneca? We are allowed to glean the grapes, when the vintage is gathered. In such a view, I would introduce the philosopher after the Saviour. "Omnia in omnibus vitia sunt; sed non omnia in singulis extant."—*De Benef.* lib. 4.

† Book xi. l. 203, &c.

west, a bright cloud descends; filled with an host of angels, and more luminous than the sun itself. The whole theatre of nature is darkened, that this glorious machine may appear in all its magnificence and beauty. From this radiant chariot the Potentate of heaven alights, and advances with a majestic stateliness to meet Adam.

Asp. Should you see such an august personage alighting from such a splendid chariot, and walking amidst the thronged streets of a city; should you behold every one intent upon his business or diversions, struck with no awe, paying no reverential regard to this celestial visitant; what would you think?

Ther. I should certainly suspect, that some superior power had drawn a veil over their sight, and hid this wonderful spectacle from their view.

Asp. Such is really the case with all mankind by nature, and with the generality of people during their whole life. God, the infinitely-great God, is in every place. Yet how few advert to his presence?—All nature exhibits him to their senses; yet perhaps he is not in any of their thoughts.

The sun, clothed in transcendent brightness, most illustriously displays his Maker's glory. The moon, though dressed in fainter beams, has lustre enough to show us the adorable Deity, and his marvellous perfections. The stars, fixed as they are at an unmeasurable distance, and lessened almost to a point, come in with their evidence, and magnify their Creator to a gazing, but unaffected world.

The air whispers his clemency in the gentle, the refreshing gales of spring. If we take no notice of this soft persuasive address, the tone is elevated; the majesty of Jehovah sounds aloud, in roaring winds, and rending storms. Yet both expedients fail. Man is like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ears. He refuseth to hear the voice of the charmers, charm they never so sweetly, never so forcibly.

Each flower, arrayed in beauty and breathing perfume, courts our affections for its infinitely amiable

Author.—Not a bird that warbles, nor a brook that murmurs, but invites our praise, or chides our ingratitude. All the classes of fruits deposit their attestation on our palates, yet seldom reach our hearts. They give us a proof of the divine benignity; a proof as undeniable as it is pleasing, and too often as ineffectual also.

In short, the whole creation is a kind of magnificent embassy from its almighty Lord; deputed to proclaim his excellencies, and demand our homage. Yet who has not disregarded the former, and withheld the latter?—How few walk, as seeing Him that is invisible, or have fellowship with the Father of spirits? though to walk before him is our highest dignity; and to have fellowship with him, is our only felicity.

Ther. This is owing to inattention, rather than to any blindness or defect in man's understanding. The many works of genius, which have been produced in various ages, are an abundant proof of his intellectual capacity.—Have not the seas been traversed, and the skies measured? Has not the earth been disembowelled of its choicest treasures; while its surface is beautified with towns, cities, palaces innumerable? What fine arts are invented and exercised; and to what a pitch of perfection are they carried? Arts that seem, if not to exceed, at least to rival nature. It was the understanding, which formed all these great designs. It was the understanding, which contrived the means, and conducted the execution. And are not these unquestionable evidences of her very superior abilities?

Asp. Then she is like some great empress, who conquers half the world, but is unable to rule herself; who extends her regulations into foreign climes, while her domestic affairs are involved in confusion.—Do you doubt the reality of this remark? Set yourself to meditate upon the most interesting truths. How desultory, how incoherent are your thoughts?—Charge them to be collected: They disobey your orders. Rally the undisciplined vagrants: Again they desert the task. Exert all your power, and keep them close to their business: Still they elude your endeavours.

The other day, I could not forbear smiling at a little adventure of your youngest son's. Some quicksilver, which happened to be spilt upon the floor, parted into several globules. The shining balls looked so prettily, he longed to make them his own. But when he offered to take them up, they slipt from his hand; as soon as he renewed the attempt, so often he met with a disappointment; the closer he strove to grasp them, the more speedily they escaped from his fingers. He seemed at first to be amazed, then became quite angry, that the little fugitives should so constantly baffle his repeated efforts.—Thus unmanageable I very often find my own thoughts. If yours are under no better regimen, this may convince us both, that all is not according to the original creation.

We apply ourselves to converse with the everlasting God in prayer. Here one would expect to have the thoughts all clearness, and all composure. But here “we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves,” 2 Cor. iii. 5. All these holy ideas, which create reverence, or strengthen faith, or quicken love, come from the Father of lights. Should He withdraw his influence, all will be dull, and dark, and dead. It may be we are somewhat enlivened in this sacred exercise; before we are aware, perhaps in the very midst of the solemn office, our attention is dissipated, and not dissipated only, but scattered to the ends of the earth. The God of all glory is forsaken, and the devotion paid to some senseless foppery. A malefactor, begging his life at the knees of his sovereign, and discontinuing his suit, in order to caress a lap-dog, or pursue a butterfly, is but a faint image of the vanity which attends our devotional services. Reason, which ought to correct these irregularities, is treated like the incredulous lord; who, instead of controlling the unruly multitude, was overborne by their impetuosity, “and trodden under foot,” 2 Kings vii. 17.

Since then the reins are struck out of our hands, and we have lost the rule over our own faculties, surely we

are in a state different, very different, from our primitive constitution.

Ther. However insensible to refined speculation, the understanding, when interest is in the case, is apprehensive enough.

Asp. In temporal,* not in spiritual affairs.—Your younger brother, Theron, is a merchant. We will suppose him at the sea-side, within a small distance of the vessel on which a considerable part of his substance is embarked. We will suppose the vessel in the utmost distress, ready to founder with her leaks, or to strike upon the rocks. If he discovers no sign of concern, calls in no assistance from the country, makes no effort to save the crew, and secure the cargo; would you not think him bereaved of his understanding, or deprived of his sight? Could you conceive a more favourable opinion of his eyes or his intellect, if, instead of trying every method to prevent a shipwreck, he should amuse himself with picking shells from the ocean, or drawing figures on the sand?

We, and every one of our fellow-creatures, have an interest in jeopardy, unspeakably more precious than all the rich lading of a thousand fleets. Our souls, our immortal souls, are exposed, every day, every hour, to the peril of everlasting destruction. Every temptation is threatening to their endless welfare, as a ridge of craggy rocks to a ship that drives before the strongest gale. Yet how unconcerned are mankind? Where is their holy fear? where their godly jealousy? where their wakeful circumspection? Rather what a gay insensibility is observable in their behaviour? Or else, what a lifeless formality prevails in their supplications? their supplications to that almighty Being, who alone is able to save and to destroy. Was not the human understanding both darkened and benumbed, we should see our neighbours, we should feel ourselves awakened into much the same earnest solicitude, as the disciples expressed, when, perceiving the waves boi-

* Called therefore by the apostle, "fleshly wisdom," and opposed to the grace of God, 2 Cor. i. 12.

terous, and their bark sinking, they cried, "Lord! save us! we perish!"

But alas! in things of an unseen nature, though of eternal consequence, interest, that habitual darling of every heart, loses its engaging influence. Nay, when eternity, all-important eternity is at stake, even self-preservation is scarce any longer a governing principle. What can be more deplorable? and, if we admit not the doctrine of original corruption, what so unaccountable?

Ther. This, I must confess, is true with regard to the unthinking rabble. To them may be accommodated the remark of Augustus, who, when he saw some foreign females carrying apes in their arms instead of infants, said to one of his courtiers, "Have the women of those countries no children, that they are so fond of such despicable animals?"—The vulgar are so immersed in secular cares, that one might indeed be tempted to ask, "Have those people no souls, that buying and selling, eating and drinking, ingross their whole concern?" But persons of rank and education think in a more exalted manner.

Asp. Do you then imagine, that an elevation of circumstances sets the affections on things above? or that it is the peculiar infelicity of the vulgar to grovel in their desires? Gold, I believe, is more likely to increase, than to dissipate the fog on the mind. Abundance of possessions, instead of disengaging the heart, fasten it more inseparably to the earth. Even superior attainments in learning, if not sanctified by grace, serve only to render the owner somewhat more refined in his follies. But comparisons between the various classes of mankind, are as useless as they are invidious. None, in either condition, attend to the things which make for their peace, till they are awakened from their lethargy by the quickening Spirit of Christ; and even then, we cannot but observe evident indications of much remaining blindness.

How apt are such persons to mistake the way of salvation! to place their own works for a foundation of

ope, instead of Christ the Rock of ages! thinking by their own performances to win, not seeking from un-erited grace to receive, the inheritance of eternal gl-; which is more absurdly vain, than to offer toys as a equivalent for thrones, or to dream of purchasing adems with a mite.—They are also prone to misap-rehend the nature of holiness; are zealous to regulate the external conduct, without attending to the reno-ation of the heart; in outward forms elaborate; with respect to inward sanctity, less if at all exact. A la-our just as preposterous, as to skin over the surface f a wound while it festers at the bottom, and consumes he bone.

Give me leave to ask, Theron; When our Lord de-ares, “ unless a man be born again, he cannot enter nto the kingdom of heaven,” John iii. 3; when he peaks of “ eating his flesh, and drinking his blood,” John vi. 54; when you hear or read of union with the blessed Jesus, or communion with the most high God; s there not a cloud, if not total darkness, on your mind? * How erroneous was the Psalmist himself in his judgment concerning the divine disposals? “ So foolish was I and ignorant, even as it were a beast,” or as the veriest beast, “ before thee.” † The voice of experience therefore will attest, what the word of revelation has averred,—that the natural man, be his intellectual abilities ever so pregnant, or ever so im-

* With regard to the mysteries of Christ, the greatest proficient are but *obtuse acute*, dull even in their acuteness.—What says the wise A-gur? an invaluable fragment of whose works is preserved in the Book of Proverbs. “ Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man;” even though the following verses bespeak the very singular elevation and extent of his knowledge, Prov. xxx. 2. Conformably to the experience of this excellent man, I have always ob-served, that the more enlightened people are, the more they lament their ignorance; the more they pant after a continual progress in heavenly knowledge; and pray for clearer, still clearer manifestations of the in-comprehensible God.

† I question, whether Aspasio’s translation comes fully up to the em-phasis of the original. The comparative particle is omitted in the He-brew. *As* softens and palliates the matter. Therefore the Psalmist, to express the deepest sense of his ignorance, says, “ I was a beast; yea, the veriest beast,” Psalm lxxiii. 22.

proved, "cannot know the things of the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 14: he has no sight to discern their beauty, no taste to relish their sweetness. Nay, though they are the purest light, and the most perfect wisdom, to him they appear not only dark and obscure, but even foolishness itself.

Would this be the case, if the understanding was not greatly depraved? Should it be difficult for your ear to distinguish the diversity of sounds; or for your eye to discern the variety of colours; would you not conclude, that the organs were very much impaired?

Ther. I think you have treated the understanding as Zopyrus served his own body,* when he went over to the enemy. Do you intend to mangle the other faculties at the same unmerciful rate?

Asp. That nobleman made the wounds which disfigured his flesh: I have only probed the sores which were found in the understanding. If I have touched the quick, and put the patient to pain; it is only to facilitate the operation of medicine, and make way for a cure.—But permit me to ask, Wherein does the excellency of the human will consist?

Ther. In following the guidance of reason, and submitting to the influence of proper authority.

Asp. The will, I fear, rejects the government of reason; and it is undeniably certain, that it rebels against the authority of God.

Cast your eye upon that team of horses, with which yonder countryman is ploughing his fallow-ground. No less than five of those robust animals are linked together, and yield their submissive necks to the draught. They have more strength than twenty men, yet are managed by a single lad. They not only stand in awe of the lash, but listen to the voice of their driver. They turn to the right hand or to the left; they quicken their pace, or stop short in the furrow; at the bare intimation of his pleasure. Are we equally obedient to the calls, to the exhortations, the express injunctions of our heavenly Lord? The blessed

* See ROLLIN'S *Ancient Hist.* vol. iii. p. 46.

Jesus spoke at the beginning, and the world was made. He speaks by his providence, and the universe is upheld. When he shall speak at the last day, the heavens will pass away, and the earth be dissolved. Yet he speaks to us in his divine word, and we turn a deaf ear to his address. He speaks in tender expostulations, and no melting of heart ensues. He speaks in precious promises, and no ardent desires are kindled. The will, which in these cases ought to be turned as wax to the seal, is unimpressed and inflexible as an iron sinew.

Ther. The human will is constantly inclined to preserve, accommodate, and make its possessor happy. Is not this the right position, in which it should always stand? or the most desirable direction, that can be given to its motions?

Asp. I should be glad, if fact bore witness to your assertion. But fact, I apprehend, is on the contrary side. I took notice, as we came along, of some ants busily employed on a little hillock. Have you made any observations, Theron, on this reptile community?

Ther. It is a little republic.* They inhabit a kind of oblong city, divided into various streets. They are governed by laws, and regulated by politics, of their own. Their magazines are commodiously formed, and judiciously guarded against the injuries of the weather. Some are defended by an arch made of earth, and cemented with a peculiar sort of glue. Some are covered with rafters of slender wood, and thatched with rushes or grass. The roof is always raised with a double slope, to turn away the current of the waters, and shoot the rain from their storehouses. They all bestir themselves, with incessant assiduity, while the air is serene; while the roads are good, and abundance of loose grain lies scattered over the fields. By these precautions, they live secure, when storms embroil the sky; they want no manner of conveniency, even when winter lays waste the plains.

Asp. Do we improve, so diligently, our present op-

* See *Nat. Displ.* vol. 1.

portunities? This life is the seed-time of eternity. Do we husband the precious moments like persons sensible of their unspeakable importance? sensible, that if we trifle and are indolent, they will be irrecoverably gone, and we irretrievably ruined?

Sickness, we know not how soon, may invade us, pain may torment us, and both may issue in our final dissolution. Are we duly aware of these awful changes, and properly solicitous to put all in order for their approach? We walk (alarming thought!) upon the very brink of death, resurrection, and judgment. Do we walk like wise virgins, with our loins girt; with our lamps trimmed; in a state of continual readiness, for the heavenly Bridegroom's advent?

Those ants "have no guide, overseer, or ruler. Yet prepare their meat in the summer, and gather their food in the harvest," Prov. vi. 7. We have all these, yet neglect the time of our visitation. We have God's unerring word, to guide us; God's ever-watchful eye, to oversee us; God's sovereign command, to rule and quicken us. Notwithstanding all these motives, is not the speech of the sluggard, the very language of our conduct, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep?"* The most supine indifference, where all possible diligence is but just sufficient! This, you must allow, is the true character of mankind in general. And does this demonstrate the rectitude of their will?

Ther. The understanding may be said to carry the torch, the will to hold the balance. Now, the perfection of a balance consists, in being so nicely poised, as

* There is, if I mistake not, a nice gradation, in this speech of the sluggard; such as very naturally mimics the manner of that lazy creature. He pleads first, for some considerable degree of indulgence,—a little sleep. If that is too much to be granted, he craves some smaller toleration of his sloth,—a little slumber. If the task-master still rings in his ear, still goads his side, one almost sees him, rubbing his heavy eyes, and yawning out his last request,—a little folding of the hands at least to lie down, Prov. vi. 10. When such is our conduct with regard to eternal interest, how justly may we apply that spirited expostulation of the poet;

"Tantanne rem tam negligenter!"

to incline at the least touch, and preponderate with the slightest weight. This property belongs, without all dispute, to the human will.

Asp. What? if one of your scales should descend to the ground, though charged with trifles, that are light as air; if the other should kick the beam, though its contents be weightier than talents of gold? Is not this an exact representation of our will, when the fleeting pleasures of sense, or the puny interests of time, excite our wishes; even while the solid delights of religion, and the immensely rich treasures of immortality, can hardly obtain our attention? However, let us quit the metaphor, and examine fact. Suppose I make it appear, that, instead of chusing the most eligible objects, the will is so deplorably vitiated, as to loath what is salutary, and to be fond of what is baneful.

Ther. If you prove this to be universally the case, you will prove your favourite point with a witness.

Asp. When Providence is pleased to thwart our measures, or defeat our endeavours; to bring us under the cloud of disgrace, or lay upon us the rod of affliction; what is our behaviour? Do we bow our heads in humble resignation? Do we open our mouths in thankful acknowledgments? Observe the waters in that elegant octangular bason. They assimilate themselves, with the utmost readiness, and with equal exactness, to the vessel that contains them. So would the human will, if it were not extremely froward and foolish, conform itself to the divine; which is unerringly wise, and, of all possible contingencies, incomparably the best.* Yet how apt are we to fret with disquietude: and struggle under afflictive dispensations, "as a wild bull in a net."

Ther. This is a very imperfect proof, Aspasio, and

* This seems to be the meaning of the prophet, Isa. xxvi. 7. Not—"the way of the just is uprightness." This sense, in the present connection, is hardly consistent with humility; is by no means proper, to introduce a devotional address to the great Jehovah. Rather—"God's way to the just is uprightness;" or, still more emphatically, "uprightneses:" is in all respects irreprovable, excellent, admirable; suited, perfectly suited, to every sacred attribute of wisdom, goodness, and truth.

corresponds only with part of your accusation. We may dislike what is wholesome, especially if it be unpalatable, yet not be fond of our bane.

Asp. Should you see a person, who thirsts after the putrid lake, but disrelishes the running fountain; who longs for the empoisoned berries of the nightshade, but ahhors the delicious fruit of the orchard; would you applaud the regularity of his appetite? I don't wait for your answer. But I more than suspect, this is a true picture of all unregenerate people. How do they affect dress and external ornament; but are unwilling, rather than desirous, to be "clothed with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5. and "to put on Christ," Rom. xiii. 14. Amusement will engage, play animate, and diversion fire them: but as to the worship of the living God, O! "what a weariness is it!" Mal. i. 13. This is attended, if attended at all, with languor, and a listless insensibility. Frothy novels, and flatulent wit, regale their taste; while the marrow and fatness of the divine word are as "their sorrowful meat," Job vi. 7. What is all this, but to loath the salutary, and long* for the baneful?

Let me, from the same comparison, propose one question more, which may be applicable both to the

* The reader may see this unhappy contrast drawn in the strongest colours, by the royal preacher, and by the mourning prophet, "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." What a crowd of words! emphatically declaring the most incorrigible perverseness; which is a proof against every method of reformation, against all the arts even of divine persuasion, Prov. i. 24, 25.—"The host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped." What a heap of expressions! significantly describing that impetuous ardour, which no prohibitions can restrain; and that insatiable avidity, which never knows when to say, "It is enough," Jer. viii. 2.

If I beg leave to add another example of this kind, it is chiefly for the sake of clearing up an obscure passage in the Psalms; which seems to have been mistaken by the authors of both our versions.—David, to set forth the barbarous assiduity of his persecutors, says, "They wander up and down." They pry into every corner; they search the city, and examine the country: not for meat; which in this connection, is a sense quite foreign to the subject, and very jejune indeed; but to de-

will and to the understanding. Should you hear of another person, the state of whose stomach was so disposed, that it turned the most nourishing food into phlegm, and derived matter of disease, from the most sovereign supports of health ; what would you think of this constitution ?

Ther. I should certainly think it very much dis-tempered.

Asp. Without the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, our souls turn every occurrence into an increase of their sinful depravity. Our very table is a snare ; and, instead of exciting us to gratitude, is a provocative to gluttony. How difficult is it, when we flow in plenty, not to be elated ; when we are oppressed with poverty, not to repine ? Have we business in the world ? it cumbers our thoughts, or tempts us to avarice. Have we no business to manage ? we sink into sloth, and settle on the lees of voluptuousness. If our schemes are prosperous, it is odds but they attach us to the interests of time. If they prove unsuccessful, we too often are chagrined with the disappointment, and sin against meekness. Even the holy commandment, instead of restraining sin, or producing obedience, irritates the inbred depravity ; and renders it more restless, more impetuous, more ungovernable, Rom. vii. 8. Those very things, which should have been for our welfare, (so malignant and raging is our corruption !) are converted into an occasion of falling.

Ther. The will is under no necessity of misemploying her powers. She is free to act in this manner or in that ; and, if a spendthrift, is not a slave.

Asp. In actions which relate to the animal œconomy, the will is unquestionably free. She can contract the forehead into a frown, or expand it with a smile. —In the ordinary affairs of life, she is under no con-

our ; to devour me the destined victim of their rage. And if they are not satisfied, if they cannot compass their design by day, they will grudge ? No ; but they will continue all night, in the prosecution of their purpose. Neither cold nor darkness can retard them ; neither hardships nor dangers can divert them ; but their attempts are as indefatigable, as their malice is implacable. Psalm lix. 15.

troul. We can undertake or decline a journey, carry on or discontinue an employ, just as we please. In the outward acts of religion also, the will is her own mistress. We can read the word of God, or go to the place of divine worship, without any extraordinary aid from above.—But, in matters which are more intimately connected with our salvation, the case is different. Here, as our liturgy expresses it, “we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins.”

Would you have a person delight himself in the Lord; take pleasure in devotion; set his affections on things above?—All this is both his duty and his happiness. But, alas! he is alienated from the life of God. His inclinations gravitate quite the contrary way. His will is in the condition of that distressed woman, who was “bowed down with a spirit of infirmity, and could in no wise lift up herself,” Luke xii. 11. Corruption, like a strong bias, influences, or rather like a heavy mountain oppresses his mind. Neither can he shake off the propensity, or struggle away from the load, until grace, almighty grace, interposes for his release.—“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there,” and there alone, “is liberty,” 1 Cor. iii. 17. that sacred and glorious liberty, which is not the common privilege of all men, but the high prerogative of the children of God.

Would you have a person apply to the great Redeemer; apply with a real ardour of desire, as Bartimæus of old, or the Syrophenician mother!—His will is like the withered arm; cannot stretch forth itself to the all-gracious Saviour; cannot hunger and thirst after his everlasting righteousness and infinite merit; till the Saviour himself speaks power into the enfeebled, the perverted faculty.—If you think otherwise, try the experiment. Persuade men to this necessary practice. Urge the most weighty arguments; devise the most pathetic expostulations; let zeal summon all her force, and rhetoric employ all her art. Without being a prophet, I dare venture to foretell the issue. Disappointments, repeated disappointments, will convince you that our divine Master knew what

said when he solemnly declared, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, and he will give him,"* John vi. 44. Our church, in conformity with this and other Scriptures, has taught us to pray, "Turn thou us, O good Lord," for nothing but thy omnipotent agency is capable of doing it, "and so all we be turned."

Ther. Are we slaves then? Will Christianity send us to seek our brethren, in the mines or in the galleys?

Asp. Christianity does not send but find us there. Here or in a worse slavery. †—It is doubtless a most objectionable state, to wear the yoke, and truckle in chains. Let such, I apprehend, is the state of our minds by nature. To prove this, we need not go down to the lowest ranks of life. "These," you might say with the prophet, "are poor; these are foolish; they have not known the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God—I will get me therefore to the great men," Jer. v. 4, 5. and examine their disposition.

Have you not known persons of the greatest intrepidity, and firmest resolution, hurried away by their lusts, as "a rolling thing before the whirlwind?" Isa. lvii. 13. Perhaps, they were bold enough to face danger, and defy the sword, in the field of battle; yet were no more able to withstand the wanton allurements of beauty, or the soft solicitations of pleasure,

* It is not said the Father *drives*, but *draws*: not by violent, irrational, compulsive means; but by clear conviction, sweet persuasion, and inducements suited to a reasonable being. These are the cords of a beast; these of a man. So that we are not acted upon as clock-work, or influenced as mere machines, but "made willing in the day of his power," Psalm cx. 3.

† St Paul says of Christians, and reckons himself in the number, that naturally they served (not *δουλοῦντες*, but *δουλιζοῦντες*, were absolute slaves to) "divers lusts and pleasures," Tit. iii. 3. The whole verse is very remarkable, and nothing can be more apposite to Aspasio's purpose. It shews us, what they were by nature, who through grace became living images of the blessed God.

This mortifying doctrine is often acknowledged by our church: Thus begins one of her public supplications, "Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful man." It seems, we cannot determine our own wills, nor regulate our own affections. What is this but bondage?

than the moth can forbear fluttering about the flame, even though it singes her wings, and is scorching her to death. Others possessed of a refined imagination, disdain the gross indulgencies of sensuality; yet are slaves to their own domineering passions. They are blown into the most intemperate rage, and pushed on to the most extravagant actions, by every little ruffling accident. They see the meanness, which such an ungovernable spirit argues; they feel the misery, which such internal tempests create: nay, they resolve to suppress the impetuosity of their temper: Yet are bore away by the torrent; and upon the very first provocation, are as furiously resentful as ever. Will you call these persons free, because their task-masters and their tyrants are lodged within? * because the fetters are forged, not for the meaner, but for the immortal part of their nature.

Ther. Let us pass to the affections. These are to the soul what wings are to the eagle, or sails to the ship. These always stand ready to receive the gales of interest, and to spring at the signal of reason.

Asp. O! that they did!—But if the wings are clogged with mire; if the sails are disproportioned to the ballast; what advantage will accrue, either to the animal, or to the vessel? The one will probably be overset in the voyage; the other will lie grovelling on the ground.

Ther. Desire seems to be first, which “opens the mouth, or moves the wing, or peeps,” Isa. x. 14. Desire is active as a flame, and ever in pursuit of happiness.

Asp. What if your flame, instead of shooting upwards, should point its inverted spires to the earth? Would not this be strange, and a sign of great disorder?—God is the centre of perfection, and the source of felicity. All that is amiable in itself, is compre-

• ————— Inordinate desires
And upstart passions catch the government
From reason, and to servitude reduce
Man, till then free.

ended in God. All that is beneficial to us, proceeds from God. Do our desires uniformly tend to this super-excellent Being? Do our wishes terminate in the enjoyment of his ever-glorious Majesty? Alas! we are naturally estranged from him. We covet no communion with him. We are wedded to trifles, and devote upon vanity; but to God we say—it is evidently the language of our conduct—“Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,” Job xxi. 14.

If desire is the first-born among the affections, observe it in children. There it appears in its dawn, and has most of pure nature. See, how those flies, exulting in the sunny gleam, vibrate with all the rapidity of motion their little wings.* So prompt and expedite are the desires of children to any corrupting diversion. See, how sluggishly that snail, crawling forth amidst the refreshing moisture, drags her slow length along. So dull, if not reluctant, are the dispositions of our children to any improving exercise. Rewards will hardly win them to the latter; the rod can hardly deter them from the former. And none, none but God, “by his special grace preventing them, can put into their minds good desires.”†

Is our love under better regulation? How easily are we captivated with a fair complexion and graceful form, especially when set off with the decorations of dress! But how little affected with the beauty of internal character? with the ornaments of virtue, and the graces of Christianity. Can it be supposed, that the pulse of the soul beats regularly, when there is such a passionate fondness for fading embellishments, and such a cold indifference for the most substantial endowments? How ready are we to be enamoured with well-proportioned clay, often to our apparent prejudice, sometimes to our utter ruin? yet how backward to love that infinitely loving and lovely Redeem-

* The wings of a fly are supposed to have the quickest motion of any material substance which lives. And if they make, as naturalists imagine, some hundreds of vibrations in a second of time, I think there can be no competition in the case.

† Collect for Easter-day.

er, who would die himself, rather than we would become a prey to death! Tinder we are, perfect tinder to the sparks of irrational and dissolute affection; harder than adamant, colder than ice, to this heavenly flame.

Ther. If our love is blind, or fear has not lost her eyes. Fear is quick of apprehension; and instead of being stupidly insensible, is ready to "rise up at the voice of a bird," Eccl. xii. 4.

Asp. The passion of fear is sufficiently active, but deplorably misapplied. We fear the approach of men. But are we alarmed at the view of that everlasting shame which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall pour upon the ungodly? We shudder at the drawn dagger, and stand appalled at the headlong precipice: But how often have we defied the sword of almighty vengeance, and sported upon the brink of irretrievable perdition?

Sin is the most pernicious of all evils. Sin violates the divine command, and provokes the divine Majesty. Sin offers despite to the blessed Spirit, and tramples upon the blood of Jesus. For sin, the transgressor is banished from the blissful presence of God, and doomed to dwell with inextinguishable burnings. Do we dread this grand destroyer of our happiness? dread it more than any calamities, more than all plagues?—Take one of those fine may-dukes, which glow with so beautiful a scarlet on yonder espalier. Offer it to the blackbird, that serenades us from the neighbouring elm: The creature, though fond of the dainty, will fly from our hand, as hastily as from a levelled fowling-piece. He suspects a design upon his liberty; and therefore will endure any extremity, will even starve to death, rather than taste the most tempting delicacy in such hazardous circumstances. Are we equally fearful of an infinitely greater danger? Do we fly, with equal solicitude,* from the delusive but destructive wiles of sin? Alas! do not we too often

* The instigating admonition, transmitted to Brentius by an anonymous letter, when the Papists had formed a plot against his life, should

wallow the bait, even when we plainly discover the fatal hook? Do we not snatch the forbidden fruit, though conscience remonstrates, though God prohibits, though death eternal threatens?

Ther. Conscience then, according to your own account, has escaped the general shipwreck. Conscience is God's vicegerent in the soul, and executes her office faithfully. Even the Gentiles, "shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another,"* Rom. ii. 15.

Asp. If there be any remains of the divine image, perhaps they are to be found in the conscience. But even this is not exempt from the common ruin.—Consider its light. It is like a dim taper, feebly glimmering, and serving only to make the darkness visible. Or, if it discovers any thing, it is an obscure something, we know not what: which, instead of informing, tantalizes us; and instead of guiding, bewilders us. As false and delusory lights on the shore, put a cheat upon the mariner, and lead him on to ruin. †—Consider its operations. It is either dumb, or dead, or both. Dumb; or else how vehemently would it upbraid us, for our shocking ingratitude to the supreme omnipotent Benefactor? How loudly would it inveigh against our stupid neglect of spiritual interests, and eternal ages? Dead; otherwise how keenly would it smart, when gashed with wounds—numerous, as our repeat-

be the rule of our conduct on such an occasion; "Fuge! fuge! cito—citius—citissime."

* Methinks, I would not translate the word *metaxu* the *meanwhile*, but *alternately* or *interchangeably* accusing or excusing; sometimes one, sometimes the other; in conformity to the different circumstances of their temper and behaviour.

† This seems to have been the case with the bulk of the Heathen world. Conscience arraigned, and found them guilty. This put them upon practising their abominable, sometimes their inhuman idolatries. Nay, this induced them to give the most scandalous and impious misrepresentations of the Deity. That they might sheath the sting of conscience, and find some salvo for their own iniquities, they made even the objects of their worship, the patrons and the precedents of their favourite vices.

ed violations of the divine law—deep, as the horrid aggravations of our various iniquities?

Ther. Do you call this an answer to my objection, Aspasio? If it be an answer, it resembles, in point of satisfactory evidence, the light which you ascribe unto the conscience.

Asp. The Gentiles, you allege, shew the work, but not the love of the law, written on their hearts. Some leading notices of right and wrong they have; some speculative strictures of good and evil; but without a real abhorrence of the one, or a cordial delight in the other: which, far from ennobling their nature, far from vindicating their practice, argues the exceeding depravity of the former, and renders the latter absolutely without excuse.

No; you say, conscience excuses the heathens. Rather, their conscience bears witness to the equity of the law, while their thoughts make some weak apology* for the tenor of their conduct. This is far from acquitting, far from justifying them. Besides, these weak attempts to excuse are always founded on ignorance. Did they know themselves, their duty, or their God, conscience would, without the least hesitation, bring in her verdict, guilty. The apostle assures us, that till faith, which is a divine principle, takes place in our breasts, “both the mind and conscience are defiled,” Tit. i. 15: here, and elsewhere, very plainly intimating, that the conscience is evil, and ever will be evil, till it is “sprinkled with the blood of Christ,” Heb. x. 22.

It accuses some, I acknowledge; and it ought to accuse, yea, to condemn all. But even here, it evidences itself to be corrupt: For its accusations are sometimes erroneous,† and no better than false witnesses; some-

* The word is *απολογουμένων*, not *επιμαρτυρουμένων*, not *δικαιωσικτων*.

† *Erroneous*—What else was that grand article in the accusations of conscience, mentioned, with such particular distinction, by Virgil?

—————“Phylegasque miserrimus omnes

Admonet, et, magna testatur voce per umbras,

Discite justitiam moniti, et non temnere divos.”

For men to despise such dunghill, worse than dunghill deities, had been

ies partial,* and suborned by appetite; and very, y often ineffectual. Nay, when they do take effect, y produce no fruit that is truly good. They work a genuine humiliation, or an unfeigned repentance: t either a slavish dread of God, as a severe judge; hatred of him, as an inexorable enemy.

Ther. Hatred of God.—Astonishing impiety! Is it ssible for the human heart to admit such enormous, nost incredible wickedness?

Asp. You may well be astonished, Theron; and od may justly demand, “What iniquity have my ople found in me, that they are gone far from me, d have walked after vanity?” Jer. ii. 5. “I created u out of nothing, and endowed you with an immor- l soul. As a father, I have provided for you. As a irse, I have cherished you. I have consigned over your possession the earth, and the fulness thereof. ll my creatures do you service, and even my angels inister unto your good. Do you desire greater emonstrations of my love? I have given what was earer to me than all angels, than all worlds: I have ven my Son from my bosom, to die in your stead. Would you have farther evidences of my tender, my istinguished regard? Behold! I touch the mountains, nd they smoke: I look upon the earth, and it trembles: cast even the princes of heaven, when they break my w, into chains of darkness: But to you, O men, I ondescend to act as a supplicant! Though highly in- ared, and horribly affronted, I beseech you, again and gain I beseech you, to be reconciled.”

To hate † such a God, is indeed the most detestable

their virtue if done, and was their duty to do. What else was that voice of conscience, mentioned by our Lord, John xvi. 2, or that confessed by the apostle, Acts xxvi. 9?

* *Partial*—Otherwise, how could the most celebrated among the an- cient heroes applaud and practise that execrable unnatural crime, self- murder? How could their first-rate historians extol, and almost conse- crate, that diabolical principle of action, pride? And how could their ablest teachers of morality, not only tolerate, but establish the error, by neglecting to find so much as a name for that amiable virtue, humility?

† *Hatred of God* is so shocking an expression, that one would almost wish never to hear or read it. But it occurs in our unerring book; is

impiety. Yet man, foolish man, practises this impiety whenever, for the sake of a vile lust, an ignoble pleasure, or an unruly passion, he transgresses the command of his Creator.

Shall I exemplify the doctrine, in another of the affections?

Ther. In truth, Aspasio, I begin to be sick of the subject. If human nature is so ulcerated, the less you touch it the better. However, let us not quite omit the irascible appetite.

Asp. Of this we have already taken a side-view; if you chuse to see it in full proportion, make your observation on Fervidus. Fervidus comes home in a rage. His cheeks are pale, and his lips quiver with excess of passion. Though he can hardly speak, he vows revenge, and utters imprecations. What is the cause of all this wondrous ferment? A neighbour, it seems, has dropt some reflecting hint, or a servant has blundered in some trifling message. Such usage, Fervidus says, is intolerable; and such negligence unpardonable. This same Fervidus has offered numberless affronts to his Maker; he has most scandalously neglected the will of his almighty Lord; yet feels no indignation against himself. He is all fury, when his own credit is touched; but when the interest of Christ is wounded, he can sit unconcerned, or pass it off with a laugh. Anger, I acknowledge, is sometimes becoming and useful. But is this its right temperature? this its proper application?

Ther. This is the practice only of some few turbulent spirits. To saddle their qualities upon every person is a procedure just as equitable, as the madman's* calculation was reasonable, who took an account of every ship which entered the harbour, and set it down for his own.

Asp. The latter part of my charge, I fear, is appli-

too often exemplified in common life; and is engraven, by corrupt nature, on every human heart. See Rom. i. 30; Exod. xx. 5; John xv. 25; Rom. viii. 7.

* Thrasylus, an Athenian.

ble to more than a few. However, let us consider the most calm and sedate minds. How are they affected under injuries? Do they never aggravate failings into crimes? Do they find it easy to abstain from every emotion of ill-will? easy to love their enemies, and good to those who hate them? These god-like temperaments, if our nature was not degenerated, would be the spontaneous produce of the soul. But now, alas! they are not raised without much difficulty; seldom come to any considerable degree of eminence; never arrive at a state of true perfection. An undoubted proof, that they are exotics, not natives of the soil.

Now we are speaking of plants, cast your eye upon the kitchen-garden. Many of those herbs will perfume the hard hand which crushes them, and embalm the rude foot which tramples on them. Such was the benignant conduct of our Lord: He always overcame evil with good. When his disciples disregarded him, in his bitter agony, he made the kindest excuse for their ungrateful stupidity, Matth. xxvi. 41. When his enemies, with unparalleled barbarity, spilt his very blood, he pleaded their ignorance, as an extenuation of their guilt, Luke xxiii. 41. Is the same spirit in us, which was also in our divine Master? Then are our passions rightly poised, and duly tempered. But if resentment kindles, and animosity rankles in our hearts; this is an infallible sign, that we swerve from our Saviour's pattern; consequently, are fallen from our primitive rectitude.

Ther. What say you of the fancy? This sure, if no other, retains the primitive rectitude. What pictures does she form, and what excursions does she make? She can dive to the bottom of the ocean, can soar to the height of the stars, and walk upon the boundaries of creation.

Asp. That the fancy is lively and excursive, I readily grant. It can out-travel the post, or out-fly the eagle. But if it travel only to pick up shells; or fly abroad, to bring home mischief; then, I apprehend, though you should admire the faculty, you will hardly

be in raptures with its agency. This is the real truth. Our fancy, till divine grace regulate and exalt its operations, is generally employed in picking painted shells or culling venomous herbs; "weaving (as the prophet very elegantly, and no less exactly describes the case) the spider's web, or hatching cockatrice-eggs," Isa. lix. 5; busied in the most absurd impertinencies, or acting in speculation the vilest iniquities. That which should be "a garden inclosed, a fountain sealed," Cant. iv. 12. for the Prince of Peace, is the thoroughfare of vanity. And, even when we are renewed from above, O! how necessary is it to keep an incessant watch, and exercise a strict discipline, over this volatile, variable, treacherous vagrant!

The memory, as well as the fancy, is impaired; or, if not impaired, is debauched. Why else does it so firmly retain the impressions of an injury, but so easily let slip the remembrance of a benefit: Any idle fopperies, which sooth our vanity, and increase our corruption, cleave to the thoughts, as the vexatious burr to our clothes; while the noble truths of the Gospel, and the rich mercies of a gracious God, slide away from the mind, and leave no lasting trace behind them. This double perverseness is very emphatically, and too truly represented by Jeremiah; "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number," Jer. ii. 32. If we hear a loose hint, or read an immodest expression, they are almost sure to fasten themselves on our memory. If shaken off, they follow us with a troublesome importunity. If excluded, as unwelcome visitants, they force themselves, again, and again, upon our imagination. They dog us to the closet; they haunt our most retired hours; and too often disturb our very devotions. Tell me now, can that faculty be upright and uncorrupted, which is a perforated sieve to transmit the beneficial, but a thirsty sponge to imbibe the pernicious?*

* This, I think, suggests an unanswerable confutation of that specious argument, frequently used in behalf of some fashionable but dissolute di-

Ther. Well, my friend, whatever guilt I or others have contracted, flattery, I dare be positive, is none of ours. Human nature has received no heightening or adulatory touches from your pencil. You have portrayed her foolish and beastly, and every thing bad and devilish.

Asp. And this, even this abomination I must not except, I dare not except. Envy is a devilish disposition. It subsists no where, but in damned spirits, and fallen souls: Yet, infernal as it is, it has been found in persons of the most exalted character. The magnanimous Joshua felt its cankerous tooth, Numb. xi. 29. The disciples of the blessed Jesus were soured with its malignant leaven, Matth. xx. 24. An apostle declares, that "the spirit which dwelleth in us, lusteth to envy," James iv. 5; is impetuously prone to that detestable temper.

Lying is confessedly a diabolical practice; yet how unaccountably forward are our children to utter falsehood? As soon as they are born, they go astray; and as soon as they speak, they speak lies.—I said unaccountably; but I recal the expression: The cause is evident, they have lost the image of the God of truth, and are become like that apostate spirit, who "is a liar and the father of it," John viii. 44.

What think you of malice, of hate, and revenge? Are they not each a species of murder, and the seed of the old serpent? Unless, therefore, we are entirely free from all these hellish emotions, we must, we must acknowledge, "that the prince of this world," John xiv. 30, has his party within us. May the almighty hand of our God extirpate and subdue it day by day!

You tell me I am no flatterer. Should a person who professes himself the friend of his fellow-creatures, sooth them into a false peace? should he bolster them up in a groundless conceit of their excellency, when

version. "They are interspersed," say their admirers, "with sentiments of virtue, and maxims of morality." Should we admit the truth of this plea; yet the depraved disposition of mankind, is pretty sure to drop the morality, and carry away the ribaldry.

they really are no better than "an unclean thing?" shall the surgeon assure his patient, "all is well," even when the mortification has taken place, and the gangrene is spreading? This were to refine the first out of all benevolence, and to flatter the last into his grave.

A disputant of less complaisance than my Theron, would probably ask, with a contemptuous sneer, "Have you then been drawing your own picture?"—To whom I would reply, with confusion and sorrow, "I have;" alleging this only to moderate my confusion, that I am daily seeking, by prayer and watchfulness, more and more "to put off this old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," Eph. iv. 22. And, to alleviate my sorrow, I am endeavouring continually to remember, that however unworthy I am, however vile I may have been, my adored Redeemer's righteousness is perfect; and in this righteousness every believer is to make his boast.

Ther. So then man is blind in his understanding; perverse in his will; disorderly in his affections; influenced by dispositions, which are partly brutal, and partly diabolical.—I have often heard you extol, in terms of high admiration, the virtue of humility: You have lavished all the riches of eloquence, when haranguing on poverty of spirit. If such be the condition of mankind, they have infinite cause to be poor in spirit. They must therefore have one excellency left, and, according to your own account, a very distinguishing one.

Asp. Scarce any thing displays, in a more glaring light, the extreme depravity of man, than his strong propensity to pride, notwithstanding so much vileness, and so many deformities.—Should the noisome leper admire the beauty of his complexion, or the impotent paralytic glory in the strength of his sinews, would they not be mistaken, even to a degree of sottishness and frenzy? Yet for man, fallen man, who has lost his original righteousness, which was the true ornament of his nature; who is become subject to base and sordid

lusts, or, as the apostle speaks, "is earthly and sensual,"—for him to be proud, is still more absurdly wicked. And, since this is the case, I cannot acquit him from the last and heaviest article of the sacred writer's charge; I have a fresh and more convincing proof that we do him no wrong, when we call his nature, his disposition, his wisdom—"devilish," Jam. iii. 15.

Ther. Why do you reckon pride an universally prevailing corruption? I see no ground for such a dishonourable suspicion. I hope I myself am an instance to the contrary. To unguarded sallies of passion, to several other faults, I confess myself subject; but cannot think that I am proud.

Asp. Ah! Theron, if you was not proud, you would not be passionate. Unreasonable anger always proceeds from an overweening opinion of our own worth. One who, besides his acquired knowledge of human nature, had the supernatural gift of discerning spirits, is observed to join "humility" and "meekness," Eph. iv. 2; intimating, that they are amiable twins, and where one exists, the other cannot be absent. Always consistent with himself, he links together the opposite vices, "heady and high-minded," 2 Tim. iii. 4; not obscurely hinting, that those who are easily provoked, are certainly proud. Shall I add, without offence, if we fancy our minds to be clear from the weeds of vanity, and our thoughts free from the workings of self-admiration, it is a most pregnant symptom, that we are over-run with the former, abandoned to the latter, and blinded by both.

Pride was the first sin that found entrance into our nature, and it is perhaps the last that will be expelled. What are all our afflictions, but a remedy provided for this inveterate disease; intended to "hide pride from man?" Job. xxxiii. 17. What is the institution of the Gospel, but a battery erected against this strong hold of Satan; ordained to "cast down every high imagination?" 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Though that remedy is often applied, though this battery is continually playing, yet the peccant humour is not entirely purged off, nor

the elatement of spirit totally subdued, till mortality is swallowed up of life.

Pride is the sin which most easily besets us. "Who can say, I have made my heart clean," Prov. xx. 9, from this iniquity? It defiles our duties, and intermingles itself with our very virtues. It starts up, I know not how, in our most solemn hours, and our most sacred employs. The good Hezekiah, whose prayers were more powerful than all the forces of Sennacherib, was not proof against the wiles of this subtle sorceress, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. Even the great apostle, who had been caught up into the third heavens, was in danger of being puffed up with pride; in such great danger, that it was necessary to put a lancet into the gathering tumour; or, as he himself expresses it, to fix a "thorn in his flesh, and permit the messenger of Satan to buffet him," 2 Cor. xii. 7.

How pathetically is this corruption lamented, and how truly described by "a sweet singer of our Israel!"

But pride, that busy sin,
Spoils all that I perform;
Curs'd pride! that creeps securely in,
And swells a haughty worm.

Thy glories I abate,
Or praise thee with design;
Part of thy favours I forget,
Or think the merit mine.

The very songs I frame,
Are faithless to thy cause;
And steal the honours of thy name,
'T' build their own applause. WATT'S *Hor. Lyr.*

Ther. Now, I presume, you have given the last touches to your distorted portrait.

Asp. There are other disagreeable and shocking features; but those I shall cast into shades, or hide under a veil. One particular you must allow me to add, which, like a sullen air in the countenance, throws aggravated horror over the whole: I mean, an inclination to be fond of our slavery.

In other instances, the "captive exile hasteth to be

posed," Isa. li. 14. But here we prefer bondage to freedom, and are loath to leave our prison. Of this, our backwardness to self-examination, is both a consequence and a proof. Self-examination, under the agency of the Spirit, would open a window in our dungeon; would shew us our wretched condition: and teach us to sigh for deliverance. Why have we such a dislike of reproof? Because we hug our chains, and chuse darkness rather than light. Reproof is more grating than the harshest discord, though it tends to dissolve the enchantment, and rescue us from the tyranny of sin; while flattery, which abets the delusion, and strengthens the spell, is music to our ears. Is not our reason, which should arraign and condemn every irregularity, forward to invent excuses, and to spare the favourite folly? Reason, which should unsheath the dagger, superinduces the mask; and, instead of striking at the heart of our vices, screens them under the cover of some plausible names. A wicked habit is called a human infirmity; insnaring diversions pass for innocent amusements; a revengeful disposition is termed spirit, gallantry, and honour. Thus our reason (if, when so egregiously perverted, it deserve the name) is ingenious to obstruct our recovery, and rivets on the shackles which our passions have formed.*

This the eternal Wisdom foresaw, and therefore uttered that tender expostulation, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" Even the inestimably precious knowledge of an all-atoning and completely-justifying Saviour, who preaches, who has purchased, and who works deliverance—preaches in his word, has purchased by his blood, and works by his Spirit, deliverance for the captives, the

* Perhaps this is what our Lord means, when, developing the human heart, and discovering its latent enormities, he closes the dark account with *αἰσχρονομία*, *foolishness*: implying that stupidity, which has no sense of its misery; that perverseness, which has no inclination for a recovery; both which render all the other evils far more inveterate, Mark vi. 22.

wretched captives of ignorance, sin, and death. **This** I take to be the most flagrant and deplorable effect of human depravity—our aversion to the doctrine, the privileges, the grace of the gospel. Beware, dear Theron, lest you prove my point by—shall I speak it? would you suspect it?—your own practice. Zealous as I am for my tenets, I should be sorry, extremely sorry, to have such a demonstration of their truth.

Ther. You are highly obliging, Aspasio, to single me out for your evidence. Yet why should the honour be appropriated to myself? It belongs, upon the foot of the preceding calculation, not to your friend only, but to the whole species. If you was aiming at none but the licentious and abandoned, you would have none to oppose you but persons of that character. Your arrows of satire would then be rightly levelled, and might be serviceable to mankind; whereas, to put all in the black list, to mark all with the villain's brand, this can never be Christian charity, this is unsufferable censoriousness.

Asp. Let me beseech you, Theron, not to misapprehend my design. I speak not as a malevolent satirist, but would imitate the faithful physician. I am opening the sore, that it may admit the healing balm: and should I perform the operation with an envenomed instrument? My soul abhors the thought.—I must intreat you likewise to remember the distinction between a state of nature and a state of grace. We are all naturally evil. Such we should for ever continue, did not a supernatural power intervene; making some to differ, both from their original selves, and from the generality of their neighbours. Are they refined in their temper, and reformed in their life? I grant it. But then it is the influence of the sanctifying Spirit, which purges away their dross, yet not without leaving some alloy.

Ther. Here, Aspasio, you certainly strain the bow till it breaks; since Scripture itself celebrates some persons, as absolutely perfect. What says Moses, the

inspired historian? "Noah was perfect in his generation," Gen. vi. 9. What says the God of Moses, who can neither deceive nor be deceived? "Job was a perfect man and an upright," Job i. 2. Consequently, their nature must be entirely cleansed from this hereditary defilement; and their character confutes your derogatory representations of mankind.

Asp. Those eminent saints were perfect; that is, they were sanctified throughout; sanctified in all their faculties: no one grace of religion was lacking. As in the new-born infant, there is a human creature complete; no constituent part of the vital frame is wanting: though each is tender, all are very feeble, and none arrived at the full size.

They were upright. This word seems to be explanatory of the preceding; and signifies an unfeigned desire, joined with a hearty endeavour, to obey the whole will of God; excluding, not all defect, but all reigning hypocrisy, and wilful remissness.—The interpretation, thus limited, is of a piece with their conduct. If stretched to a higher pitch, it is evidently inconsistent with the narrative of their lives.

Pray, what was your motive for decorating the silvan retirement (which sheltered us yesterday,) with the statue of Elijah?

Ther. Because I thought, his solitary life, and gloomy temper, suited that sequestered bower; because the memorable adventure, there represented, is with me a favourite portion of sacred history.

Are we pleased with spirited and delicate raillery? Nothing exceeds his pungent sarcasm on the stupid and despicable dupes of idolatry. Every sentence is keen as a razor, and pointed as a dagger, yet wears the appearance of the most courtly complaisance. We may truly say, in the beautiful language of the Psalmist, "His words are smoother than oil, and yet be they very swords."*

Are we delighted with instances of magnanimity?

* 1 Kings xviii. 27. "And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a God. Either he is talk-

A single prophet, unsupported by any human aid, maintains the cause of truth, against the king, his grandees, and hundreds of the apostate priests. He ventures to stake all his credit, to risk his very life, and (what was dearer to him than personal credit, or bodily life) the honour of the true God, and interests of his holy religion; to risk all on the immediate interposition of a most surprising miracle.

Do we admire the triumphs of faith? His faith was, in a manner, omnipotent. He prays, and torrents of fire descend from the sky, to devour his adversaries, 2 Kings i. 10. He prays again, and the sluices of heaven are shut: there is neither dew nor rain for several years, 1 Kings xvii. 1. A third time he prays, and the windows from on high are opened; abundance of showers water the earth, Jam. v. 17, 18. On another occasion he presents his supplications, and God makes his feet like harts feet, insomuch that an aged prophet outruns the royal chariot, 1 Kings xviii. 46.

Asp. I commend your taste, Theron; and am particularly pleased with the reasons of your choice. But do not you remember, that even the wonder-working Tishbite failed in his resignation, and failed in his faith? Eminent as he was for mortification, he gave way to unreasonable discontent; and, though a champion for the living God, he yielded to unbelieving fear.* “The man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth,” Numb. xii. 3; yet he, even he was provoked in his spirit, and spoke unadvisedly with his lips, Psal. cvi. 33. Was not Peter the hero among our Lord’s followers? Yet he trembles, more

ing, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.”

* Elias, or rather Elijah, “was a man subject to like passions as we are,” Jam. v. 17. Upon which passage, an eminent commentator makes the following remark: “This probably is said, with respect to his fear and discontent, manifested 1 Kings xix. 3, 4.” *Ομαστρον* must, I think, imply a state liable to the irregular workings of passion; not free from the sinful infirmities of nature. Otherwise, it is an instance foreign to the purpose, does by no means answer the end designed; which is to encourage the heart, and strengthen the faith, even of frail, corrupt, offending creatures. See verse 16,

han trembles, at the shaking of a leaf; he denies his divine Master, scared by the voice of a woman.

Look wherever we will, we find proofs of human depravity; reigning uncontrolled in some, making frequent insurrection in all. It is written on our own hearts, by the pen of experience; the finger of observation points it out, in the practice of others;—even in the practice of those who have been saints of the first rank, and of the highest endowments. Yet they were defective;—defective too, in that very quality which was their distinguishing gift, in which they particularly excelled.

Ther. While we are talking, the day has insensibly stole itself away, and left us surrounded with twilight: which is a sort of lustre intermingled with darkness; no part wholly lucid, no part wholly obscure. An emblem, according to your representation, of the renewed soul, and its imperfect holiness.

Asp. A very just one. Even where the gospel shines, still there is an incurrent gloom of corruption. Ignorance mixes itself with our knowledge; unbelief cleaves to our faith: Nor is our purity free from all contamination. The prophet Zechariah, foretelling the establishment of the gospel-kingdom, and describing the state of its spiritual subjects, says, “It shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark.”* This, as to its literal sense, we now see exemplified in the circumambient atmosphere. With regard to its spiritual meaning, every true believer feels it accomplished in his own breast.

Ther. While you are so vehement in decrying all human attainments, consider, Aspasio, whether you do not check and dispirit us in the pursuit of exalted virtue.

Asp. I suppose, you never expected to be such an adept in geometry as Archimedes, nor so profound an astronomer as Newton; yet this did not check your

* Zech. xvi. 6. 1 Cor. xiii. 9. “For we know in part.” Perhaps this declaration of the apostle may be a key to the prophet’s meaning. However, it is a sufficient confirmation of Aspasio’s sentiment.

application to the study of mathematics, or the contemplation of the heavens. Your brother, the merchant, I presume, has no prospect of amassing the wealth of a Croesus, or the immense treasures of a Kouli-Khan; yet this does not dispirit him in prosecuting the business, which brings him both opulence and honour.

However, Theron, so long as you deny the imputation of Christ's righteousness, I must acknowledge you act a consistent part, in being zealous for the perfection of personal obedience. You ought either to acquire the one, or to accept the other: Therefore I shall produce no more arguments for your discouragement; but shall comprise the whole of my answer, in the motto to an Irish nobleman's arms,—*TRY*. Or, if this be too concise, I will subjoin, with a very little alteration, the words of a king; "When you have attained what you pursue, bring me word again, that I may go and possess it also," Matth. ii. 8.

Ther. According to your account, the most advanced and established Christians are but like a company of invalids. Does not this extremely derogate from the honour of our Lord, considered as the Physician of souls? It seems to make a mere nothing of sanctification, and would swallow up Christ the King, in Christ the Priest.

Asp. Invalids they are;* and such will continue till they are dismissed from this great infirmary, and admitted into that holy, happy, blessed world; where

* Do not the best of men lament their ignorance of the divine perfections, their slowness of heart to believe the divine promises, and the languor of their gratitude for inestimable, for innumerable gifts of the divine goodness?—Do they not frequently feel deadness in their devotions, disorder in their affections, and various other relics of the original leaven?—Do they not often complain, in the language of the apostle, "When I would do good, evil is present with me?" and say with the earliest Christians, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened:" burdened, not so much with affliction; those heroes in Christianity had learned to rejoice in tribulation: but burdened with a sense of their spiritual infirmities, and with the workings of their inbred corruption; which, to a tender and lively believer, are the heaviest of crosses, and the most galling of loads. Nay, do not the heirs of glory wash their very robes, even their fairest deeds, and their brightest graces, in the blood

the inhabitant shall no more say, I am either in soul
in body sick," Is. xxxiii. 24.

If the cure was never to be completed, this doubt-
less would be dishonourable to our almighty Physi-
an. But the spiritual recovery, begun on earth, and
advancing through time, will be perfected in heaven,
and prolonged to eternity. Does this make a mere
nothing of sanctification? No; but it makes room for
continual progress, and affords cause for continual
humiliation. It reserves a most exalted prerogative
for the heavenly state and beatific vision; and per-
petually reminds us of a most important truth,—That
our present blessedness consists, not in being free from
all sin, but in having no sin imputed to us, Psalm
xxxii. 2.

This imperfection of our obedience, instead of con-
founding, maintains a proper distinction between
Christ the King, and Christ the Priest. Whereas, if
we were perfect in piety, the priestly office, with re-
gard to us, would be superseded. What need of an
intercessor to recommend our prayers? what occasion
for an high priest to "bear the iniquity of our holy
things,"* if some taint of the original leaven did not
pollute our best services?

Neither does this detract from the wisdom, from
the goodness, or from the power of Christ. It rather
administers to the advantageous display of all these
divine attributes.—Of his wisdom in conducting the
affairs of his church with such exact propriety, that
the righteousness of faith may have its due honour,
and the sanctification of the Spirit its proper esteem.
—Of his goodness, in carrying on the work of grace
amidst so much infirmity, and so many corruptions;
and in crowning, with consummate happiness, such frail
undeserving creatures.—Of his power, in extracting a
variety of benefits even from——

of the Lamb? which, if they were free from spot, and void of impurity,
need not be made white in this sacred fountain. See 2 Cor. v. 4; Rev.
vii. 14.

* Exod. xxviii. 38. "Id est, expiare peccata, quibus sanctissimæ
ceteroquin actiones nostræ inquinatæ sunt." WITS. de Econ.

Ther. Benefits, Aspasio! Can any thing beneficial proceed from an evil, which, according to your own representation, is so incorrigibly malignant?

Asp. It will tend to make us lowly in our own eyes, when we remember, that by nature we are altogether become abominable; that the remains of natural depravity still adhere to our minds; how must such a view of ourselves cover us with shame, and lay us low in abasement! "Less than the least of all thy mercies," Gen. xxxii. 10, will be the language of such a one's very soul.

It will dispose us to compassionate others. How can we take a brother by the throat, and require faultless perfection in his behaviour, when we ourselves in many things offend, in all things fall short? Every such consideration rebukes what I may call spiritual unmercifulness; it pleads for tenderness and forbearance to our fellow-creatures; it is a monitor within, and whispers that affecting remonstrance, "Oughtest not thou to have compassion upon thy fellow-servant, since thy almighty Lord hath" such renewed, such unwearied, "pity on thee," Matth. xviii. 33.

It will teach us to admire the riches of grace. Shall fallen creatures, that are taken from the very dung-hills of sin, and rescued from a hell of inward iniquity,—shall they, notwithstanding their deplorable depravity, and innumerable deficiencies,—shall they be admitted into the bosom of eternal love? they be exalted to the thrones of glory, and numbered with the princes of heaven? This is grace, transcendently rich, and divinely free indeed!

Will it not reconcile us to the approach of death? This, methinks, like wormwood on the nipple, or gall in the cup, must tend to wean us from the world. How can we be enamoured with such a land of darkness, and such a vale of tears? Or, why should we covet, when Providence gives the signal for our departure, to prolong our abode in these territories of disorder? Surely this must incline us to leave them, every day, more and more in our affections; and at

ast to leave them, without any reluctance, by final dissolution: leave them for that better country, where our personal righteousness will no longer be defective, like the waning moon; but shine forth with consummate lustre, like the meridian sun, in the kingdom of our Father.

It will endear the blessed Jesus in every capacity; as the stings of the fiery flying serpents, and the dearth of the waste howling wilderness, endeared to the Israelites both their miraculous antidote, and their bread from heaven. They who believe this truth, must see their inexpressible and incessant need of Christ's Spirit. The protestation of Moses, on a particular occasion, will be the daily, the hourly breathing of their souls: "Carry us not up hence, unless thy presence, thy Spirit go with us," Exod. xxxiii. 15. For without this aid, we can discharge no duty aright, nor successfully resist any temptation. They will be exceedingly cautious not to "grieve," Eph. iv. 30, that sacred guest, lest he depart from them, and abandon them to the power of their lurking corruptions; knowing that if he abandon them, when such foes are within, and so many snares without, their case will be worse than Samson's, when his locks were shaven, and the Philistines all around him.

How highly will such persons value the blood of the covenant, and the intercession of their great High Priest! They will no more presume to enter into the presence of the most high God, without a fiducial reliance upon the atoning and interceding Saviour, than the sons of Jacob would have ventured to appear before the viceroy of Egypt, without the company of their younger brother, Gen. xliii. 5. In all, in all their intercourse with Heaven, the great Propitiation will be their plea, and the great Advocate their confidence. The impotent man waited at the pool of Bethesda, and the Syrian general dipped seven times in Jordan. These persons will not only wait, but live by the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," Zech. xiii. 1. They will wash, in the sacred sancti-

fyng stream, not seven times only, but seventy-times seven.

And when such sentiments possess the mind, how dear ! O how dear and desirable will our Lord's obedience be ! I called some time ago, our own works worm-eaten things ; and must not these corruptions, if they remain ever so little in the heart, tarnish our graces, and debase our duties ? Must they not be deprecatory to all our accomplishments, and too much like corroding vermin in the substance of our timber, or at the core of our fruits !—Should we not then renounce, utterly renounce these tarnished, worm-eaten things, and rely, wholly rely, for everlasting acceptance, on our divine High Priest, who, in his mediatorial works, as well as in his wonderful person, is altogether light and perfection ?* and neither in him, nor in them, is there any deficiency or any darkness at all.

Excuse me, Theron ; I fear I have been preaching : The importance of the text must form my apology. It is an introduction, not to the records of history, or the transactions of philosophy, but to the riches of Christ.

Ther. If my Aspasio has been preaching, I can assure him for his comfort, that his audience has been very attentive ; and though the sermon was somewhat copious, the hearer neither slept nor gaped. However, I should be glad to have the whole reviewed and summed up, that if it has been large as the pyramid, it may, like the pyramid, terminate in a point.

* *Light and perfection.*—This is the meaning of that mysterious ornament, which, in the grand officiating robes of the Jewish high priest, was annexed to the breast-plate, and styled Urim and Thummim ; only the Hebrew words are in the plural number, and denote every degree of illumination, and all kinds of perfection.—Does not this very significantly teach sinners, whence to seek their wisdom, and where to look for their perfection ? There never was, in all ages, more than one Urim and Thummim, and only one person, in each generation, was appointed to wear it. And who is there, in all worlds, that can give us heavenly knowledge, but the Spirit of Christ ? What is there, in ourselves or all creatures, that can present us unblameable before God, but the obedience of Christ ?

Asp. This then is the state of our nature. The image of the Creator is lost; blindness is in the understanding; disorder in all the affections.—In the will, enmity against God, the sovereign good; inability to all that is spiritual and heavenly; with a propensity to whatever is sordid and earthly. The whole soul is deformed, distempered, rebellious. And shall such a creature lay claim to those amiable and sacred endowments, which may be a proper recommendation to infinite holiness? Is such a creature qualified to perform those righteous acts, which may approve themselves to the demand of God's law, and to the inflexibility of his justice?

Should we conceive the vain hope, or make the vainer attempt, I would now address him as Jehoash formerly answered Amaziah. Amaziah king of Judah, elated with the little victories he had obtained over the Edomites, began to fancy himself invincible. Prompted by this foolish imagination, he challenges Jehoash king of Israel, to meet him in a pitched battle, and receives this ironical apologue by way of reply, which, for gallantry of spirit and delicacy of wit, for poignancy of satire and propriety of application, has seldom been equalled, perhaps never exceeded: "The thistle that was in Lebanon, sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife; and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle," 2 Kings xiv. 9. What are we, when we offer to establish our own righteousness, or presume to justify ourselves before the most high God, but despicable thistles, that fancy themselves stately cedars. And is not every temptation, is not each corruption, a wild beast of the desert, which will trample on the impotent boaster, and tread his haughty pretensions in the dust!

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