

THE
EVANGELICAL GUARDIAN
AND REVIEW.

VOL. II.

OCTOBER, 1818.

NO. 6.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE
REV. MR. JOHN WINRAM, ONE OF
THE REFORMERS IN SCOTLAND.

THERE were several respectable families of the surname of Winram, which are mentioned by Mr. Nisbet in the first volume of his *Book of Heraldry*. Mr. John Winram, the Reformer, seems to have been of the family of Kirkness.

In the early part of his life he entered into the order of the Monks of St. Augustine, and after having been a regular canon for some years, was elected, about the year 1540, sub-prior of their abbey or monastery, at St. Andrews. The prior, who was Lord James Stewart, and natural son of King James V. was then in his nonage; and consequently, much of the common business of the abbey devolved on Mr. Winram. His character, while he professed popery, is thus given by Archbishop Spottiswood, "He was a man of good learning, and one who secretly favoured the truth."

There appears to have been a diversity in the temper and conduct of our reformers. Some of them were men of a bold spirit, they went about daily, to different parts of the kingdom, preaching the doctrines of the reforma-

tion, and openly inveighing against the corruptions which had been introduced into the Roman Church. These zealous and faithful men were either soon apprehended and put to death, or compelled to seek refuge in England, or in countries more distant.

Other of our reformers were of a more timid spirit, or thought that they could most successfully promote the general cause, by disseminating in a private manner the Protestant principles among the persons with whom they were conversant, and over whom they might expect to have some influence. In their public preaching they taught the pure doctrines of the Gospel, but in such a way as if there had been no controversy concerning them.

Mr. Winram seems to have been of this last kind. While he was enlightening the minds of many in the knowledge of truth, especially the minds of his brethren, the monks, most of whom afterward became Protestant ministers, he avoided uttering in public any thing that might subject him to persecution.

His dexterity in this respect, and at the same time what may possibly be reckoned his timidity, were evident at the trial of Mr. George Wishart, at St. Andrews, February 23, 1546. Mr.

dinal Beaton. In concert with other persons who were secret favourers of the reformation, he appears to have been all along weakening the efforts of the popish party, and paving a sure way for a general acknowledgment of the truth.

Such a person as he was, and there were many such among our original reformers, added in the eyes of other nations a considerable degree of respectability to the Protestant cause in Scotland. Contrary to the blind assertion of some adversaries, we are warranted, after a careful inquiry, to say that our reformation was planned and conducted, not by a mean and illiterate multitude of people who had no right knowledge, but by some of the principal noblemen of the kingdom, and by pious and learned clergymen, who had received at the universities a liberal education.

Mr. George Martine, in his *History of the See of St. Andrews*, informs us that there were seventeen monks of the Augustine priory, or abbey, who became Protestant ministers, and were provided in churches which had belonged to the abbey. Their conversion, it may be presumed, was, under God, much owing to the pious endeavours of their superior when he resided among them.

Both Mr. Winram and his prior, the Earl of Murray, retained their abbey revenues after the reformation. It may indeed be remarked, that when the monastery buildings in Scotland were demolished, the monks and friars were not thrown destitute, but had yearly salaries allotted them, which were called "Friars Pensions."

Mr. Winram was a benefactor to St. Leonard's College in St. Andrews. As prior of Portmoak, viz. of the monastery of St. Servanus's Isle, in Lochlevin, which was a cell belonging to the Augustine abbey of St. Andrews, he annexed, October 5, 1570, to the said college the aforesaid priory, with the baronies of Kirkness and Auchmaire.

*Brief Statement of the Evidences
and Uses of Divine Revelation.*

Reasoning from the nature of Deity, we might conclude, *a priori*, that the mind of rational man must have a natural sense of the existence of a supreme intelligence. God made all things good. That goodness consisted in part at least, in a suitability in the creature to answer the end of its creation.

The inferior animals were placed on this earth, with a peculiar design to subserve the use of man. In order to answer this end the *fear of man* was constitutionally connected with their existence. Was it not for this, not only the largest and the most useful animals, but even the most feeble and seemingly insignificant, might soon overpower the lord of the manor, and drive him from his earthly possessions. Gen. x. 2.

Man was designed to give unto God active praise. God consequently created man under such constitutional regulations as that he must inevitably have a sentiment of a divine existence as soon as the moral and rational faculties would be capable of rendering obedience to their Prince.

Sufficient arguments may be advanced, *a posteriori*, to prove the existence of an innate sense of Deity in the human heart. The operations and effects of this sentiment, torturing the consciences of some in the midst of their re-vellings, soothing the minds of others in the midst of their distresses; the universality of this sentiment through all nations, (later accounts having contradicted the exceptions which Locke and others had quoted) and even the systems of Atheists themselves, who notwithstanding their professions, do all in an unguarded moment betray their belief of some supreme intelligence, are sufficient for this purpose.

But although the principle exists, it is extremely confused and indefinite in its exercise. The fall has impaired every natural endowment, and has exceedingly obscured our prospects into futurity. That there is a future existence is generally believed; but the modus of that existence is a mystery to the natural man. That it is affected somehow by our conduct in this life is also a prevalent opinion; but the connexion between our conduct in time and our state through eternity, is very indistinctly known. Darkness and doubts obscure our prospects of God and futurity, and mar our religious investigations. Nor is there a possibility of attaining to certainty concerning these subjects by any exertion of human reason, unless asserted by supernatural aid. Such an aid is actually afforded us. Our God, gracious and merciful, has deigned to become our instructor. Upon our ignorance he has had compassion, and has provided information for us upon a subject

of the utmost importance. The maker of mind had intercourse with minds particularly sanctified for the Master's use. Thus, he raised up patriarchs, prophets, apostles and evangelists, to receive a revelation from himself, and to communicate its truths to the nations. This is the revealed system, which is contained in the Scriptures, and is the sure and perfect rule of human conduct.

Among others qualified by the Holy Ghost to write the will of heaven, Paul was a chosen servant. Distinguished as a preacher and missionary of the cross, he was no less eminent as a writer for the canon of Scripture; in relation to which he says, 2 Tim. iii. 16. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

This passage contains two distinct propositions, which shall be briefly discussed in this article.

I. The Scriptures are a Divine Revelation.

II. This Revelation is useful to mankind.

I. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are a Divine Revelation;

The Scriptures of which Paul speaks, must have been those of the Old Testament, as the New had then no existence. But it is easily demonstrable that if the Old be taken for truth, the reception of the New cannot be rationally avoided; and besides, the apostle in our text, does not limit the proposition to the Jewish canon. "All Scripture is given by inspi-

ration." In this, Paul at least bears witness to the truth of all his own epistles, and indeed to all the books of the New Testament, except the writings of John, of Jude, and the second epistle of Peter. He well knew that all except these, which had not yet been written, were at this time in the possession of the churches, and publicly received by them as a revelation of Heaven's mind. We need be in no doubt therefore but he would recommend their perusal to Timothy, in this second epistle. Nay more, it would have suggested to him the propriety of receiving the whole canon of Scripture which the inspired Paul then knew to be incomplete. All those portions of Divine truth which come sanctioned to the churches by apostolic authority, are certainly to be received as such. And thus the assertion, "all Scripture is given by inspiration," evidently includes all those Scriptures which, either then or in a future time, should be recommended to the church by her inspired directors;—all those writings which the church has universally received as forming the complete canon of the oracles of God.

To pious Christians in the exercise of gracious affections, no further proof of the proposition is necessary, than that which this and other collateral passages afford, 2 Pet. i. 21. Heb. ii. 4.

Christianity, nevertheless, obliges us to be able on every proper occasion, to render a reason of the hope that is in us. And as he who is able to swim in the waters, can wade the farthest, so are Christians whose faith qualifies them to swim through myste-

rious disputations and doubts, able to wade deepest in the waters of rational argumentation. If unbelievers have made an appeal to reason, to reason let the controversy be carried. No Christian is afraid to let reason have its full scope. When it passes its own bounds, it becomes raving madness. Then only do we reject it as an umpire. No Christian need be unwilling, *ceteris paribus*, to meet with any infidel upon the fair field of reason and argument. I shall therefore attempt to confirm the apostolic assertions, by arguments drawn from the storehouse to which infidels themselves have recourse. In the first place then,

1. History proves the divine authority of the Scriptures.

God in our formation, gave us a constitutional propensity to believe what is told us. This was necessary for the preservation of our lives. If a system of universal doubt prevailed in early life, the child should never have arrived at youth, nor the youth to the maturity of manhood. Nature teaches us to believe; the frequent experience of deception, to doubt. When all probability of deceit is removed, we fulfil a law of our nature by firmly believing the report of witnesses, whether by word or by writing. We have the testimony of many witnesses to the truth of our holy religion. Every possibility of their being deceived themselves in what they relate, and of their having any ability or design to deceive others, is removed. In short, creditable witnesses, moral in their characters and virtuous in all their deportment, have written an account of doctrines which they were inspired to teach; they have con-

firmed their mission and doctrines by a seal which could not be even counterfeited without discovery. The seal of miracles performed frequently, openly, and powerfully. Numbers of witnesses, eyewitnesses too, have written to those who had every opportunity of proving the truth or falsehood of their narratives, an account of a life spent in a constant series of good offices, the performance of numberless miracles, and that in the presence of a people learned, powerful, and zealous for their own ways, and prejudiced against him and his doctrines. They have written this without contradiction and without detection. Their enemies, their persecutors, have also written in confirmation of the capital circumstances which they themselves have related. Jewish, heathen, as well as Christian historians have added their suffrages to the truth of the Scripture account of certain persons delivering certain doctrines, and performing certain miracles in attestation of their divine origin.

In resisting such evidence, therefore, infidels resist an acknowledged law of their nature, and consequently they act unmanly, unreasonably, and capriciously.

2. Reason itself confirms the truth of this proposition.

Reason informs us that man could not have been his own creator, and that being possessed of active power and design, he who made him must have possessed intelligence and power in perfection. Our constant dependence upon the Author of life, is also a doctrine of reason. It teaches that human affairs are in great disorder. It teaches that human

knowledge is extremely limited; that it is no more than ignorance concerning the end of our creation, and the prospects of a future existence.

We meet with phenomena for which it cannot account in every quarter, especially where our best interest is at stake. It shows the need of information respecting the origin, the present condition, and the destination of man. It shows the probability that his Maker will show kindness, and afford such instruction as is required upon these important topics. It does more. It teaches that when a revelation from heaven is pretended to be made, that if it tends to debase humanity, suppress the nobleness of soul, to encourage whatsoever is ruinous to peace and order, such a system cannot be from God. It teaches us that when men of credit and honour, though of little power, declare certain things which lay them under the severest distresses of body, and poverty, without a possibility of affording them any earthly comfort, or advancing their secular interest; when such men form a system, wise in its contrivance, virtuous in its tendency, powerful in its reforming effects upon those who embrace it, calculated to pull down ambition, luxury, and pride, to exalt the noble and benevolent affections of mind, such men are what they give themselves out to be. But such is the system which the Gospel contains, which Christ, his prophets, and apostles have published, and they gave themselves out to be authorized and commissioned by heaven. We are therefore obliged to believe them, or otherwise to reckon them the vilest of impostors, a thought against which, reason re-

coils. Black indeed must that heart be, and hardened with systematic guilt, which can read the Bible and study its pure morality, and yet can in a moment of calm reflection believe or assert, that those teachers of sincerity, those sublime preachers of virtue, who included thoughts and words as well as actions under the sentence of their approbation or disapprobation, could have been the worst of men, the vilest impostors.

3. The intrinsic excellence of the Scriptures announce their origin to be divine.

This excellence appears from many considerations.

1. The ideas they give us of God, are gloriously applicable to the necessary existent Creator of all things. The religion of the heathen represented their gods more like brutes than holy beings. Their multiplicity of deities, inferior and superior, was shocking to reason itself. Not so the God of the Scriptures. His self-existence, his power, his glory, his spotless purity, his overruling providence, his glorious condescension, his constant superintendence over human affairs, *His all* sublimely transcends the speculations of Plato himself, much more the trash of Pagan mythology.

2. They alone afford a probable history of man.

Extremely childish have been the visions of infidels about the origin of humanity, and the nature of mind. No man of sense, can peruse without a smile of contempt, or a sigh of compassion, the Ruins of Volney, or the ideal vagaries of Hume. And yet these are truly philosophic writers upon other subjects. Had they even been contented to ridicule reli-

gion, and insiduously to attack some of its isolated and detached doctrines, like the prince of impiety, Voltaire, they would not have so much exposed their own absurdity. But as soon as an infidel proposes a system, or publishes a history of being, then does the futility of their pretences glaringly appear, and the glorious Gospel recommend its solid truth to the inquisitive mind. The creation, the nature, the fall of man, the depravity of his conduct, his whole history, is accountable and intelligible upon the scheme of the Gospel, and upon it alone.

3. The morality which revelation establishes is pure, spotless, and every way perfect. It alone is founded upon a true knowledge of human nature, and the relation in which it stands to being in general. The stoical philosophy was founded on a belief that man's nature was more excellent than it really is. The Epicureans founded their system upon a supposition, that human nature is entirely material, carnal, sensual. The former taught the duty of improving the mind, of putting on a firm, resolute, unmoved character, to the total neglect and contempt of the body, and those mental affections which are more immediately the result of our embodied state. The latter neglected the higher virtues, and cultivated the bodily appetites with the utmost care and attention.

Both were right in some parts of their systems, and wrong in others.

They erred on opposite extremes. The morality of the Bible is alone perfect. It is founded upon the relations in which our complex nature stands to God, and makes provision for

the cultivation, the pleasure, and improvement of every faculty and power of our nature. Man is a contrast. Spirit united with matter; sublimity and dignity with weakness and sensuality. The Stoics cultivated that, and despised this; the Epicureans this, and neglected that. True morality gives each its place, and reduces both to the highest state of improvement. It instructs us in our duty to God, to our brethren of mankind, and to ourselves. It is not satisfied with externals. It reaches the heart, and prescribes rules for thinking as well as for speaking and acting. Obedience to its dictates, will inevitably procure comfort and happiness to individuals, peace and prosperity to society, honour and glory to God.

4. The plan for a universal reformation, which revelation proposes and promises to establish, infinitely surpasses all the systems of politicians and the visions of infidel philosophers. One class of politicians taking advantage of human corruption, for their own exaltation and aggrandizement, assert that nations must be forced by the sword and the cannon to do their duty. To obtain a strong energetic executive, armed with severe laws and a horde of mercenary hirelings at his disposal to enforce them by stripes, by imprisonments and tortures, is the height of that reformation for which these contend. They only propose an established religion, and a hireling priesthood as a subsidiary. Another class, equally erroneous, suppose that the essence of reformation consists in the total abolition of every species of religion, and of every form of government with which

any force is connected. Under the system of the former class, the world and outraged humanity have now for a long time groaned. The incapacity of the latter plan to afford any real amendment, will perhaps be experienced before many years are passed over our heads. It is difficult to know which most to detest, the hypocrisy of the old, or the avowed impiety of the new, politicians. The Bible alone proposes a scheme of politics, which if universally embraced, would give immediate peace to the earth, and would for ever shut the temple of Janus. May the Lord open the eyes of mortals to see it, and to embrace it for the comfort of this distressed world!

Science, though it in part discovers duty, cannot at all dispose the mind to practise it. Liberty, though it puts us in possession of our privileges, is not able to introduce such a subjective state as is calculated either to enjoy these privileges, or to preserve them from the wiles of artifice, or the grasp of ambition. Real religion supplies this defect. It changes the heart, destroys sordid selfishness, and introduces into the soul the love of God and of man. It plucks up by the roots the weeds of corruption and pride, it subjects the passions under the sway of reason, and directs the activity of man to its appropriate objects. In short, while it teaches man his duty to superiors, inferiors, and equals, it enables him to discharge it with punctuality and care.

4. The fourth evidence for the divine authority of the Scriptures, we proposed to draw from the fulfilment of prophecy.

God alone knows what is in the womb of time, and whenever fu-

turity is revealed, we must acknowledge it to be from him.

The fulfilment of prophecy proves the divinity of our religion by ocular demonstration. We can have no reason to doubt of the truth of prophecy, and consequently of the truth of revelation, when we see instances of things which could no ways depend upon human conjecture, foretold with the greatest clearness, and fulfilled hundreds of years afterward with the greatest exactness. We actually see in the state of men and things around us, the completion of many of the prophecies; and there is no room to suspect so much as a possibility of forgery or illusion, since the prophecies are received in books which have been constantly read in public assemblies these nineteen centuries; nay, they have been translated into all languages, dispersed through all nations, and commented upon by different authors of different ages, of different nations, and of different ranks. Obscurities there are indeed in the prophetic writings, for which many good reasons might be assigned, and this particularly because prophecies are the only species of writing which is designed for the instruction of future ages more than the times for which they are written. If the prophecies had been delivered in plainer terms, some persons might be for hastening their accomplishment, as others might attempt to defeat it. Men's actions would not appear so free, nor God's providence so conspicuous in their completion. If, for instance, the apostle John had declared that the Pope of Rome should be dethroned in the year 1798, all those who have the

Bible in their hands would have known the certainty of the event; and consequently the nations called Christian, would rise in a body to dethrone the holy see. Infidels might thence argue, that the Christians palmed these prophecies upon the world, and then had the impiety to arise to fulfil their false pretensions. Such artifices are frequently practised upon a smaller scale, and would undoubtedly detract from the evidence of our religion.

But the prophecies though obscure are equally certain. The blinded protestant nations see not the period appointed for the downfall of the man of sin; and consequently instead of helping to pull down antichrist, they afford him all possible support.

This, though base in them, is a thing in which God's glory is ultimately advanced. The infidels themselves are at this day the persons who directly fulfil the prophecies of Daniel, of Paul, and of John. Our eyes behold a real miracle, an ample confirmation of our holy Scriptures performed by divine Providence, through the instrumentality of his very enemies. Time, which detracts from the evidence of other writers, is daily adding something to the credit and authority of the prophets.

Future ages will comprehend more than the present, and the present more than the last. And the perfect accomplishment will produce a perfect knowledge of all the prophecies. Many passages might be cited in that book which we hold in our hands, and the events corresponding to them pointed at in the fate of the Arabs, the Jews, the Turks, and the followers of antichrist. In confirma-

tion of the visions of Daniel and John, we now see antichrist tumbling from the throne of blasphemy on which he sat. In answer to the prophetic prayer of Ezekiel, xxi. 27. dreadful overturnings are experiencing in every quarter of the globe. The mosque of Mahomet shakes, the impostor Peter has dropped his keys, the horns of the beast which for ages pushed the church, and made her dearest blood flow through the streets, are now turned against himself, and will prevail. According to Paul's prophecy, Heb. xii. 26, 27, the heavens of political power quake, and the earths which they overlook tremble; and those things which are now a shaking, will be changed in their nature and aspect, so that the permanent reign of reason, of liberty, and of piety may bless the inhabitants of earth with constant and virtuous civilization.*

5. And lastly, the truth of revelation appears from its internal and external effects upon those who embrace it with faith and with cordiality.

Whatever infidels may think upon the subject, the reception given by true Christians to the Gospel of the Son of God, does not entirely consist in that rational belief which it in common with other histories forces from them. Believers have an internal sense bestowed upon them by the Holy Ghost, peculiarly calculated to judge of the truth of revelation. This makes it a direct revelation to every one so qualified. It is not considered merely as delivered to, and coming from, Moses and the prophets, but principally

as an immediate message from God to the soul. "He that believeth," saith John, "hath the witness in himself," 1 Epis. v. 10. Was a blind man to argue against colours, and ridicule those who had their eyesight as often as they spake about seeing the sun, we would treat him with contempt and pity. A blind man, however, who would argue against the possibility of man's having a fifth sense, because he himself has only four, would act not more irrationally, than infidel philosophers do, who argue against the existence of an internal sentiment which realizes spiritual objects, as much as the external eye does visible objects, because they are themselves destitute of that privilege.

Christians, under the banner of the captain of the Lord's host, are however secure from their envenomed shafts. They may barb anew the arrows of former adversaries, they may dip them in their deadliest poison, they may whirl them at the shield of faith, but like the feeble dart of aged Priam they will fall to the ground without a stroke. The internal comfort, joy, confidence, and light which divine revelation communicates to the believing soul, is a sufficient demonstration of its authenticity, although the saved subject of this experience should be totally unable to answer the arguments of irreligion and unbelief.

The external effects which revelation has had, and continues to have upon societies and individuals, are pretty generally known. Early did it splendidly triumph over every opposition which the combined force of ignorance and learning, of prejudice and of

* The above was written some years ago.

earthly interest, of power and of cunning, of hell and of earth, could erect. The weakest and most feeble instruments completed a revolution through all the nations, and the despised cross of a crucified Master triumphed over the glittering crowns of empurpled monarchs. Those who embraced the Gospel, were immediately changed from their vicious habits, to the best behaviour. Meekness, virtue, and charity adorned their lives. They surpassed the Epicureans in their care of the body, while their firmness and perseverance in the path of mental improvement, far exceeded the exertions of the disciples of Zeno. If we examine the external manners of men in this very age and country, the friends of Zion will bear a comparison with their most moral neighbours. Christianity enforces and sanctions every duty, by every motive which can effectually interest our hopes and our fears. □

(To be continued.)

—

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS.

IT is the peculiar glory of the Gospel of the Son of God to commend itself to the affections and the pursuits of man, upon principles the most repugnant to human wisdom, and the most humiliating to human pride. The preaching of "Christ crucified," which to them that believe is "the wisdom of God and the power of God," ever has been, and ever will be, to the prejudices of this world "a stumbling-block," and to its philosophy, "foolishness." This reception, however, is not to be

wondered at, since the religion of the Lord Jesus completely inverts all its calculations and prostrates all its dignity. The highest ambition of sinful man is, to glorify himself; and his greatest happiness, to be glorified by his fellow-men. His desire of distinction is seen in every action of his life, and heard in every breathing of his heart; and to gratify it, under any or every form of affluence or pleasure, of honour or of power, he will count no labour too severe, no sacrifice too great. That however which he esteems and pursues as the consummation of his happiness and the perfection of his nature, is but the mark of his folly and a proof of his sinfulness; and the longer he continues the vain pursuit, the more eager and desperate are the pantings of his spirit, and the further does he rove from the fountain of his peace, his blessedness, and his glory.

In this career, no man ever went with more impetuosity or success than did Saul of Tarsus. A greater or a loftier spirit never breathed in our world. His was a soul of celestial fire—his an intellect of the most enormous power and the most comprehensive grasp—his a nerve that no danger could shake, and a zeal that no difficulty could quench—whose acquisitions were as unequalled as his talents were unrivalled—whose honours were as brilliant as his merit was transcendent—who, before his conversion to the faith of Jesus, enjoyed among his countrymen every privilege and distinction to which his heart could aspire: for, "if any man," says he, "hath whereof he might glory, I more; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of

THE
EVANGELICAL GUARDIAN
AND REVIEW.

VOL. II.

NOVEMBER, 1818.

NO. 7.

BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE EVIDENCES AND USES OF DIVINE REVELATION.

(Continued from page 261.)

IT is needless to be too inquisitive about the very modes in which God communicated the doctrines of revelation to the prophets and apostles, and guided their pens in committing them to writing. Whether he opened a communication directly with their minds, or represented his will to them in dreams or in visions, by the instrumentality of angels; or whether he so affected their external senses as to convey certain ideas into the mind, or made use of all these methods as occasion might render necessary, is of little consequence to us. He might have used these and many other modes, for any thing we know, and have answered the purpose contemplated. He took his own plan of revealing his own will. In his superior wisdom our hearts ought to acquiesce, although we cannot completely explain the manner of the Holy Ghost's inspiration.

Neither can we see any great end to be answered, either to the

Vol. II....No. 7.

friends or foes of revelation. by a discussion of the question, whether the writers of the Scriptures were inspired, and acting under that inspiration in every word and syllable, historical, doctrinal, or prophetic, which they have written, or whether it was not the case that the ideas only were suggested by the Spirit to the penmen, leaving them to their own feelings, the exercise of their own understandings, for the manner and the language in which these ideas should be clothed and communicated. This is rather a curious than a useful or easily resolved question. Inferences may be drawn from reason and Scripture in favour of both sides.

It is sufficient for Christian piety to rest satisfied in the belief that a merciful God has communicated directions and instructions to dependent ignorant creatures; and, as he designed this for special purposes, his overruling particular providence could not fail to make provision, that its doctrines, its sentiments, its principles, its precepts, its promises, its prophecies, should not be in the least misrepresented by the penmen employed to record them, so as to affect the security of those who reposed upon them with implicit confidence.

This might also sufficiently fortify a candid mind against the illiberal criticisms or the impious cavils of infidelity.

We come now

II. To demonstrate the proposition, that Divine Revelation is useful to Mankind.

This proposition is subdivided into four distinct particulars: 1. DOCTRINE, 2. REPROOF, 3. CORRECTION, And, 4. INSTRUCTION in righteousness. We shall follow this order, and briefly offer some observations on each of these particulars.

1. Divine revelation is useful to man, on account of the doctrines which it proposes for his reception.

God made man an intelligent creature, capable of observation and reflection. He bestowed upon us an understanding whose object is the investigation of truth. The five external senses are calculated to convey notices to the soul of what passes without; or to speak more accurate, the soul, through their medium, acquaints itself with external objects. The understanding not only examines the ideas there formed, but is also empowered to combine, abstract, and manufacture them into an infinite variety. The Author of human nature, in giving an extraordinary revelation to man, might be naturally supposed to address, at least a part of it, to this speculative power of the mind. He did so. "Scripture is profitable for doctrine." It affords certain truths for the exercise of the intellectual powers of man; food for the understanding. What are we to

think then of those who assert that it is immaterial what a man's principles are, provided his practice be good. Without adverting at this time to the contradiction which this proposition involves, it is evidently opposite to the spirit of that declaration. "The Scriptures are profitable for doctrines." They contain speculative principles, and this part of their excellency is the very first which Paul mentions, Rom. xv. 4. Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience, might have hope.

The doctrinal propositions which God has revealed to us in the Gospel are very numerous. He has treated with us always as rational creatures; and unless the Scriptures did address themselves to our reason, they could neither be his Word nor the rule of our duty. Scripture doctrines will, without doubt, afford matter for the Church's investigation in all periods of her militant journey, and, doubtless, matter of song in her triumphant entrance into glory. Deity has, in them, revealed his own character, his sovereign right and authority to dispose of his creatures, and his long-sparing mercy to sinners. He has revealed doctrines which reason could not discover, and which, when discovered, it cannot fully comprehend: doctrines which, although we can understand and believe, yet we cannot completely analyze. Among these the existence of three distinct persons, equal in every respect, in one indivisible infinite essence, is the most inscrutable, awful, and sublime. The mystery of the hypostatical union of a divine and human nature, into one glorious

Person, appointed as a vicarious substitute to make atonement for sin, is no less admirable to the speculative believer than it is fraught with consolation to those who are weary and heavy laden. The doctrine of the unlimited sovereignty of God, involving unconditional election and reprobation, is also a truth of dread import. It is calculated to fill the souls of the guilty with horror and dismay, while to him who has made his calling and election sure it is matter of comfort and unspeakable joy. The doctrine of universal depravity, including sin imputed, inherent, and actual, is a Scriptural proposition, addressed to the human understanding by its divine Author. The Scriptures also are profitable in revealing to us the doctrines of justification by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, which secures the title to the inheritance of the saints; and of sanctification by the implantation of his Spirit in a dead and passive soul; and the co-operating exertions of the soul itself, when regenerated by the divine energy, giving a meetness for heaven, and a taste for the enjoyment of its company and blessings.

The new covenant, with all its connecting circumstances, the certainty and permanence of its privileges, and its dependence on God's unchangeability, securing for its subjects happiness on earth and joys unspeakable and full of glory in heaven, is a doctrine and subject of profitable speculation for a sincerely penitent sinner.

2. Divine Revelation is profitable for Reproof.

Mankind are universally admitted to be guilty of transgression against the laws of morality. The

love of God and the good of society are scarcely noticed by the mass of the people. The honour of heaven is despised, and futurity discarded from the thoughts of the prince and the subject.

If Deity was to address mankind, we might conclude from his nature that he would challenge his creatures for transgressing against the general order. A revelation from the spotless Sovereign of heaven and of earth must contain reproof to the guilty inhabitants of this domain. Was our sensibility quick to virtue, and our reason prompt in approving of justice, less reproof would be required. Had we no reasoning powers at all, or no sense of general order, it would be as absurd to address us by reproof, or doctrine, as to address the block or the statue. Understanding and ratiocination are presupposed to be in our possession by the revelation which addresses itself to us in the language of reproof; and this being the case, it cannot fail to be profitable to sinners.

Reproof is administered to us on account of our ignorance.

This is supposed by many a sufficient apology for error and misconduct. Prov. xix. 2. That the soul be without knowledge is not good. Ignorance is not only in itself culpable in proportion as we enjoy opportunities of information; but it makes way for the commission of the vilest crimes. To sit down in contented ignorance of what God would have us to do in our generation for the support of his glory, the honour of his Son, and the good of his church, is a sign of awful obduracy of heart. Alas! how pre-

valent is it in this generation. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," may be now proclaimed, as well as in the days of Hosea. Inattention to the duty of the day is no less common, and no less reprov'd by God in his word. Hebrews iii. 7—8. To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. 2 Pet. i. 12. See that ye be well established in the present truth. Inattention, the fulfilment of prophecy, and the remarkable coincidence between the volume of inspiration and the appearances of the world, has left mankind, and even Christians, an easy prey to delusions. The Christian eye should watch the finger of God, and the motions of the providential wheel. The Christian's soul should be fired with zeal for the house of the Lord and the testimony of Jesus, otherwise the reproof of lying at ease in Zion, and all the consequent woes, shall be pronounced upon him. Our errors in doctrine, and in morals, our guilt, in heart and in life, our misconduct in the church and the state are all reprov'd by God's word.

3. Correction. The Scripture is profitable *προς κτανεθηρισιν*.

It is useful, in order to turn men into the right way, from which they have been long wanderers. Man is not only an intelligent, but also an active being. His choice is not perfectly regulated by the light of his understanding, neither is the will always inclined by its last or highest dictate. This would be the case, perhaps, if man was a perfect and simple intellect: in his soul is however implanted certain innate propensities and sentiments: these have their influ-

ence over the will and choice of man; sometimes acting in connexion with the understanding; but often in fallen man directly opposed to its clearest dictates. Even Paul exclaims, When I would do good evil is present with me. What the understanding dictates is contradicted by unruly passions and carnal affections. Man has instinctive affections, apt to be aroused into the turbulence of passion, which silence the voice of reason in his understanding; and under their depraved influence is he often hurried to perpetrate actions which he himself condemns. Man has a heart as well as a head. It is not therefore sufficient for his direction that the understanding be enlightened with doctrines and reprov'd with argument. We often assent to truths while we contradict them in practice. In order to correct, to convert efficaciously, the affections must be touched, the sentiments must be inclined to virtue, the sensibilities of the soul must be whetted, and the active powers of the mind directed to their proper objects.

The Author of nature has wisely adapted revealed religion to the complex nature of man. As it is calculated to enlighten the understanding, so it is to improve the heart. Is Scripture profitable for doctrine? It is so for corrections also. Ps. xix. 7. God's law is perfect, and converts the soul that lies in sin. The statutes of the Lord are right, and do rejoice the heart. They equally err, though upon opposite extremes, who make religion to consist entirely in feelings, sensible experiences, and lively affections; and those who make no part at all of it to consist in these. What

the Spirit of God hath joined in revelation let not man put asunder in practice. In our soul he conjoined intellectual with active powers: both these are to be sanctified by religion, that the whole man may give glory to God. Doctrines of truth must fill the intellect, while salutary correction is administered to the passions and affections of the mind. If either of these parts be wanting in the professors of religion, they have not yet learned Christ as they ought. It is not enough to know the truth, if the heart is cold and the soul inactive. In vain have we zeal and industry for the good of Zion, unless that zeal be according to knowledge. It is our duty to learn from the inspired penman of the Epistles to Timothy. While the Scriptures describe the true character of God, they detect and correct false modes of worshipping him, and turn us. *αὐτὸς ὁδὸς ὁδὸς*, to walk through the right way of his divine precepts. They lead those that are out of the way into the paths of pleasantness and peace. They correct immorality, by introducing a reformation; they rectify all the misconceptions, and mistakes, of those who listen to the voice of their precepts. Thus the Gospel of the Son of God is not in word but in power. 1 Thess. i. 5.

4. The apostle informs us that the holy Scripture is profitable for our instruction in righteousness. The word in the original is *πρὸς παιδείαν*. It implies the whole system of tuition and discipline, by which a youth is prepared for active life. The Scriptures then, as they are calculated *πρὸς παραστροφήν*, to introduce us into the right way, so also *πρὸς*

παιδείαν, to complete our education in the school of rectitude. *ἢ δικαιοσύνην*. They do not merely initiate us into the first rudiments of a virtuous life, but they continue their instructive lessons until the man of God be perfected.

They have wrong conceptions of the Scriptures who wish to administer instruction out of them only against sins in general, without a particular application to the time, place, and quality, of the hearers. In a complete system of education, every particular in the student's character must be considered, and application accordingly made. This is that for which the Scripture is intended, and is truly profitable. *Isai. lviii. 1.* Cry aloud, spare not; show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.

In this particular there are two things to be noticed, 1. The instruction itself, and 2. That in which it consists, i. e. in **RIGHTEOUSNESS**.

1. The instruction alluded to includes *information, exhortation, and chastisement*. *Ps. xxxviii. 8, 9.* and *Heb. xii. 6.* Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.

2. The righteousness in which, and for which, the tuition is administered, implies the *meritorious righteousness* of Messiah's life and death, and the *sanctifying righteousness* implanted in the soul by the Spirit of adoption.

Divine revelation then is useful to *inform* us that Jesus Christ is set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins. It commands, it entreats, it exhorts, sinners to believe in this crucified Saviour; to come to him that they may

have life ; to lay hold of his perfect righteousness as the only covert from the storm ; to appropriate his meritorious obedience, and his atoning blood, to themselves for justification from all their sins, inherent, imputed, and actual. It administers awful threats, soul-piercing denunciations, the stings of an awakened conscience in case of disobedience. John iii. 18. He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth in him.

2. The Scriptures inform us that the Holy Ghost is sent from the Father and the Son, to convince the world of sin, to implant righteousness in the souls of sinners ; to change the heart ; to repair the damages of the fall ; to lead them in the ways of holiness, whose end should be life everlasting. The Scriptures exhort sinners to watch the motions of the Spirit, and not to resist its impulses ; to acquiesce in its suggestions, and yield the soul to its guidance through life and death ; to practise righteousness, to pursue after its beauty, and to be constantly attentive to the discharge of every personal and social duty. The Scriptures threaten us with rods and with stripes, if we break the covenant of God ; with the desertion of the Comforter from us, if we refuse to obey his voice ; with terror and anguish of conscience, if we yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness ; and with eternal torments, if we persist in neglecting the righteousness of Christ to cover us, and that of his Spirit to sanctify and cherish our inward man. Rev. iii. 18. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou

mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed.

All Scripture, all the writings of the Old and New Testament, are of divine original, and they are all of great use and advantage, some in one way and some in another. They are of use either for revealing important doctrines respecting God and ourselves ; for reproving and for convicting of sin and of error ; for rectifying and reforming what is amiss ; and for direction, in a way of faith and obedience, unto the obtaining of a righteousness, both for justification and sanctification, that we might be righteous in Christ, and from him derive all renewing and purifying grace for the performance of every duty, and making us holy in heart and in life. It is true, indeed, that this light is come into the world, and that we have chosen darkness in its stead. The Scriptures are, however, the real means and medium of saving operations ; and the Spirit of God, which efficaciously performs the business, does it ordinarily through their instrumentality. John xv. 3. Now are ye clean through the Word which I have spoken. John vi. 63.

Two short inferences shall now close this treatise.

1. The first inference we shall draw is this : it is from a real perversion of mind that infidelity proceeds.

The proofs of divine revelation are so many and convincing, they have been discussed by so many eminent pens, that no candid mind can harbour any doubt upon the subject, unless the affections be perverted and preju-

diced against the purity of life which Christianity requires. Infidels are generally men of corrupt inclinations: the precepts and threats of the divine law torment their guilty conscience.

They begin to wish there was no God, no heaven, no hell. In this state of mind they snatch at every straw; they greedily catch at every thing calculated to flatter their wishes. The witty sarcasms of Voltaire, the open criticisms of Bolingbroke, and the low, abusive scurrility of Paine, afford them some glimmerings of hope.

Carnal conversation corroborates their wishes, and the countenance of some more seared wretches than themselves, soon enables them to renounce the faith of the Gospel. Those infidels who do not fall within this description, who are men of talents, of erudition, and of general morality, have argued against religion from its abuses: they have neglected the investigation of its own intrinsic excellence. How blindly did the revolutionists in Europe palm upon the Gospel that tyrannical oppression which the corruptions of Popery and prelacy have appended to it; but which its doctrines and precepts constantly condemn. Never was there a piece of composition that reproves tyrants with more power and authority than the sacred volume. Never was there a piece of composition that enforces a spirit of equality more than it does. These infidels are ignorant of the history of Christianity, if they are yet to be told that a zealous Christian and an enemy to Cesar are synonymous terms. Infidels ought to consider their great danger from

want of proper attention to the evidences of our holy religion. We have, at least, two chances to their one. The whole host of unbelievers may be challenged to comment upon our sacred oracles, and show a single injury that would accrue to any individual, or to any community, from an explicit obedience to them. If our scheme then is right and true, it must needs follow that they are mischievous members of an earthly society, and that they will be tormented with everlasting punishments in the fire of hell. If they are in the right, and we in an error, we at any rate enjoy as much of the comforts of life as they do, and our errors in reality afford us more consolation and joy than their truths can do. And we are certainly equally safe with them hereafter.

O ye, who, from the pride of a false philosophy, from the depraved habits of a corrupt and wicked life, despise or reject the pure precepts of Christianity, could you but one hour feel its comforts, were you once admitted into the banqueting-house of the Lord Jesus, did the spirit of the bride actuate you when she so lovingly sung. Isa. lxi. 10. Song v. 10. Nay, even did you drink of these waters of Marah, when the soul is fainting under desertion, and longing for the return of its God, you would at this moment be constrained to acknowledge, that these sorrows you would not exchange for your former joys; much less would you be content, on any earthly account, to lose the anchor of your Christian hope.

2. Unsanctified believers are utterly inexcusable.

While the thunders of mount

Sinai are denounced against those who openly reject the Gospel and its precious offers—the indignation of the Lamb, who now discovers himself to be the dreadful and fierce Lion of the tribe of Judah, will overtake in their hypocrisy those who have made an insincere profession of faith in his name. Sincerity of attachment to Christ, on his own account, is a state of mind peculiar to those who are hidden from the storm. Those who have given a rational assent to the evidence of divine revelation, who acknowledge that it is profitable for many purposes, and have nevertheless neglected to study its contents, are inconsistent, self-condemned wretches, and open contemners of the divine authority. To believe the Bible, and to consult its counsels, and to confess that God speaks, and not listen to his voice, is a vice more daring than infidelity itself. To believe the Bible, to consult its doctrines, and after all to reject them, because they do not suit our corrupted taste, our slothful minds, our false philosophy, or upon any pretence whatever, is still worse. To reject doctrines which, by fair criticism, are taught in the Word of God, merely because we cannot accurately account for them, being above the comprehension of reason, is a gross violation of respect to Jehovah, and a step higher yet in the tower of presumption and arrogance.

The condition of how many thousands, alas, is this!

To embrace the Scriptures of truth, to acknowledge their utility, to give a historical assent to the doctrines delivered, to confess the justice of their reproofs, the salutary tendency of the correc-

tion and instruction which they administer and nevertheless to refuse obedience, to lie at ease in Zion, to put on a total indifference to the quarrel of his covenant, to turn away our hearts from Christ, our necks from his yoke, our backs from his cross, to live contented with a form of godliness, while destitute of its power, to be unconcerned in public, undutiful in the family, prayerless in the closet, graceless and christless in ALL, is to be enhancing and approving of our own condemnation, is to be adding fresh fuel to the fire of hell. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered you together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not; behold your house is left unto you desolate! We unto thee, Bethsaida, and Chorazin, for it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for you." The nearer we approach to the summit of glory, the more dreadful will be our fall into the abyss of misery, unless we completely arrive at the goal

We turn away our eyes from beholding this mournful spectacle, to see those who sing for joy in the realms of bliss. These are they who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony: who have known and experienced, to their unceasing comfort, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness."