

DISSERTATIONS
UPON
VARIOUS SUBJECTS,
WORTH THE ATTENTION OF
EVERY CHRISTIAN;
AND
*Of real service to the Sincere Inquirer
after*
TRUE RELIGION.

By JEREMIAH LEAMING, A. M.
Rector of Christ's Church, in Stratford, (Connecticut.)

Ye know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
JOHN 8. 32.

MONTREAL :
Re-Printed from an old Edition,
BY NAHUM MOWER.

.....
1813.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IN order to make the expense of printing as cheap as possible, I have omitted to put down chapter and verse, when I have used the words of scripture. And I have also omitted the names of those authors, to whom I am indebted for various observations.

If what is said is truth;—that is all any person can want. If it is not truth, it ought not to be received, although it were recommended by an author of the first character.

TO THE HONEST READER.

THAT the reader of the following Dissertations may not mistake my meaning, I shall define some of the expressions which I have to make use of in this treatise.

By the episcopacy, I mean, the government of the church by bishops, as established by the apostles.

By the word presbytery, I mean, a number of presbyters embodied under an apostle, or bishop, without whom they cannot act as a body.

By the word bishop, I mean, an officer in the church, superior to a presbyter, and that he is of the same office which the apostles sustained.

By the word presbyter, I mean, an officer of the second order of the clergy.

By the word deacon, I mean, an officer of the third order of the clergy.

By the word ordination, I mean, the solemn setting men apart for the service of God in his church; and giving them a commission for the office they bear, according to the laws of Christ.

The subjects will all be thrown into distinct sections, that the reader may form a judgment upon one point at a time; which is the best way to find out the truth.

AN INTRODUCTION.

Section I. *Giving the true sense of several places of scripture.*

Sect. II. *An inquiry what the commission was which Christ gave to the apostles.*

Sect. III. *An inquiry how the apostles exercised the commission given to them by Christ, in which, a direct proof of episcopacy will be exhibited from plain matters of fact, recorded in scripture.*

Sect. IV. *Shewing that the apostolic office is to continue to the end of time :—And that the office of the apostles was distinct from the evidence which was given to the world, that they were the chief ministers of and in the gospel kingdom.*

Sect. V. *That the religion which came from heaven is divine—that the ordinances of this religion are divine ; and the officers who are to administer these ordinances, do it by a divine commission.*

Sect. VI. *That the different opinions of mankind about religion, cannot alter the nature of true religion.*

Sect VII. *Peoples' notions that they can serve God as well, without public worship, without the ordinances, and without a minister, as with them ; considered and refuted.*

Sect. VIII. *A few observations upon the new divinity, as it is called, by which children are prevented entering into covenant with Christ, because their parents are not so good as they should be.*

Sect. IX. *Shewing what self-righteousness is, and what is inherent holiness.*

Sect. X. *In which will be laid before the reader, a plain account of justification according to the tenor of scripture.*

Sect. XI. *In which will be given a short account of the excellency of the common prayer.*

Sect. XII. *An exhortation to engage people in the practice of every christian duty.*

INTRODUCTION.

THE most important question that can employ the mind of man, is this, Whether there is, *eternal happiness to be obtained*, and *eternal misery to be avoided*? This naturally leads the man to inquire, whether there is any direction given from heaven concerning religion? When mankind are in doubt concerning this point, they have no ruling principle of action. But when they take a view of what our blessed Saviour hath done, they see that he hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. In this, our adorable Redeemer, hath opened to man the great future scene of things, which will be various in proportion to his behaviour in this life: by which, Christ hath given force to his laws, which were never felt before.

In this view of the subject, mankind must see the advantages religion proposes;—The pardon offered—their duty explained—the important doctrine taught—the sections of virtue enlarged, and ascertained—a perfect example exhibited—and the terms of acceptance before God, adapted to the present circumstances of human nature.

These things lead mankind to look back to the creation, and forward to the consummation of redemption. In this view, he sees, that God hath had a church in the world ever since the covenant of grace was made with Adam, though at different times, under different administrations. In this kingdom of God, there always has been an order of men appointed by heaven, to be governors and rulers, who had the sole right of administering in sacred things.

We need not inquire now, who these were in the patriarchal state, or under the levitical dispensation; but it nearly concerns us to know, who are the lawful ministers in Christ's kingdom. This I hope, fairly to

decide, from scripture and reason. Before I enter upon this, it may not be amiss, to observe a few things, that may cast some light upon the subject ; and also to give the true sense of some places of scripture, which have been strangely interpreted to raise objection against the episcopal government of the church.

This will be attempted, in the first section.

Dissertations on various Subjects.



SECTION I.

Giving the true sense of several places of scripture.

AS the scripture is the rule by which we are to be judged, it certainly is the rule by which we are to regulate our conduct : therefore it is of the utmost importance, that we have a true knowledge of what is revealed from heaven.

The doubts and difficulties with which men are frequently embarrassed in their spiritual researches, do, in a great measure proceed from that general deviation from the primitive simplicity of gospel truths, and gospel language, which so sadly prevails among the various denominations of Christians : in consequence of which, a multitude of useless, and unscriptural distinctions have been introduced into what are called systems of divinity, which serve only to perplex and confound the minds of anxious and well disposed inquirers. Of this sort, are the sentiments of those who pretend that ordination was performed, in the time of the apostles, by presbyters only. Let us inquire whether this claim can be supported, by any one instance in the New-Testament.

We are referred to the 13th ch. of the Acts, to prove a presbyterian ordination. It is said that the prophets and teachers there mentioned, were presbyters ; and ordained St. Paul and Barnabas. Provided this was an ordination ; then presbyters undertook to ordain those that were apostles before. A notion too absurd to be advanced by any gentleman who has the least regard for his own character ! Whatever is meant by this designation, it was not an ordination, to give St. Paul the apostolic office.

St. Paul in declaring how he received his authority as an apostle, says, *Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father. Gal.*

1. 1. Here he asserts as plain as words can express it, that he did not receive his authority by ordination ; for if he did, it must have been conveyed by man. He hath told us, that Christ gave him his commission in these words, *For I have appeared unto thee, for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, to whom I now send thee. Acts 26. 10.*

The next place brought for the support of the presbyterian ordination, is, that Timothy *was ordained by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. 1 Tim. 4. 14.*

To make this text say any thing in favour of the point, for which, it is adduced, there ought to be clear evidence, that those who ordained Timothy, were all mere presbyters : and that no apostle had any hand in the business. Can this be made to appear? No! so far from any thing of this nature ; that we know, that St. Paul ordained him.

Suppose those who assisted St. Paul were all apostles, or all presbyters, it makes no alteration in the case ; for St. Paul was the ordainer. He who gives the words of commission is the ordainer. And let who will assist, they only give their assent, but do not give any authority to the person ordained ; because there can be no authority given, without words, to specify what the authority is, annexed to the office, for which the person is ordained.* St. Paul *desires Timothy, to stir up the gift of God that is in thee, by the laying on of my hands. 2 Tim. 1. 6.* It is said, this was the gift of the Holy Ghost. I do not deny it. For it was necessary he

* In many places of scripture, preaching is called prophesying, and there is no doubt, that the word prophecy in this place, means the words that St. Paul used in ordaining Timothy. To convey the true sense of this place, it may be read thus. *Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee, by the words made use of in thy ordination, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.*

should have the spirit given to him, in his commission, as he was an officer in a spiritual kingdom.

If Timothy was ordained by presbyters, then presbyters undertook to ordain an apostle; for he had the same power, (as I shall shew hereafter) with which the apostles were endowed.

Some people are in great trouble, fearing that Epaphroditus will be found to be an apostle. I hope all those who take St. Jerome's authority to be decisive, will allow that he is on our side of the question, when they read what he hath said upon the 11 chap. 25 v. of the epis. to the Phillipians. "That Epaphroditus is called an apostle because he had also received the office of an apostle among them."

"Theodoret expounds the same place thus: St. Paul called Epaphroditus an apostle, because to him the charge of Phillippi was committed: wherefore it is manifest, that those which in the beginning of the epistle were called bishops, were under him, having the place of presbyters."*

The reader is desired to take notice, that there were three distinct offices in the church at first, apostles, presbyters and deacons.

* Eusebius, chron. Hieron. "Those very persons were called apostles, whom, by usage of speech, the church now calls bishops." Theodoret asserts the same.

"Anciently the same persons were styled bishops and presbyters, the name of apostles being then given to them who are now called bishops: but in process of time, they gave the name of bishop peculiarly to them who anciently were called apostles." Theod. upon 1 Timothy 3. 1.

Blondelly apologiapro sententia Hieronymi page 50, "hath declared, that all the ancients constantly assert, that James, our Lord's brother, was ordained bishop of the church at Jerusalem by the apostles."

If what this gentleman hath asserted be true, the very man, who in scripture is styled an apostle, is by the ancients called a bishop, a plain proof, that those who had the apostolic power, were, in after ages, called bishops.

SECTION II.

An inquiry what the commission was, which Christ gave to the Apostles.

THE design of religion is to fit and prepare mankind to enjoy the regions of eternal bliss.—For this end Christ came into the world, that he might redeem us, and teach us the way to be happy in the next life, for this end he instituted a church, and appointed officers in it to officiate in his name, by the authority he gave in these words, *As my Father hath sent me, even so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.* John xx. 21, 22, 23.

The power that was given to Christ by his Father, was communicated to his human nature: for no addition of power could be given to the divine nature.

Therefore, the power he received from his Father, was such, as might be communicated to the human nature of those he sent. Christ declares he gave the same power to the apostles, which his Father had given to him. So their administrations must be considered as done by the authority they received in their commission.

They were called apostles before this commission was given; but they were not invested with authority as chief ministers in the kingdom of Christ, till he gave them this commission. After they received it, they were invested with all the authority that was necessary for the government of the church, and to constitute all the officers in it, even such as they themselves were. Thus you see, what the authority of the apostles was. And it is a matter of very great importance to every Christian, to know by whose authority it is, that their ministers teach, and with what a sanction they administer the holy sacraments of the gospel.

In the commission which Christ gave to the apostles, they received power to ordain such officers in the

church, as the gospel constitution pointed out for her ; and consequently such officers as they were themselves ; they received power to govern the clergy and the church—to administer the seals of the covenant—to teach and instruct those that enter into the church of Christ, what power he had given them ; and he acquainted them that the exercise of this power, was not to be confined to the Jews only, but to be extended to all nations.

The apostles, and all others of the same office to the end of the world, were to be regulated in the exercise of this power, by the laws which Christ gave to his church.

It is said, the apostles governed the clergy and the church by divine inspiration. It is true : and we have the very same inspiration, to direct those of the same office, with the apostles, how to govern the church *now* : for the apostles committed to writing all the laws of Christ respecting this point, and they have been safely handed down to us.

The apostles themselves neither ordained officers—nor governed the clergy nor the church—nor did any thing as officers in the gospel kingdom, but only what Christ in his life, and before his ascension, had taught them concerning the constitution of the church. For we have no account that the Holy Ghost was to inform them any thing, but what Christ had taught them before. *The Holy Ghost shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I said unto you.*

It is very clear and evident, that there is no charge, or direction in scripture, given to mere presbyters, concerning ordination : And it is as clear that the apostles did constitute an officer to whom they gave particular direction concerning ordination. It is evident therefore, that they gave a power to some ministers to ordain, and yet did not give it to all they ordained ; for the former had orders to ordain, where there was a number of presbyters in the same church.

As to the doctrines, the apostles were to preach,

these are all to be regulated by the laws of Christ. And Christ declares, that he himself, (that is his human nature) was limited, as to what he should say : for he affirms, *I have not spoken of myself, but the Father who sent me ; he gave me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak.* As to points of faith, they are all fixed ; we are to hold fast, the form of sound words, and not depart from the faith once delivered to the saints.

This leads me to take a view of another branch of authority given to the apostles ; which consisted in correcting the obstinate, by inflicting censure ; and releasing and absolving the penitent. This authority is contained in these words, *Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them : and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. What ye bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven ; and what ye loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.*

Some people are offended at these expressions, as the Scribes were when our Saviour said unto the sick of the palsy, *Thy sins be forgiven thee.* Our Saviour says, this was done, *to let them know, that the SON OF MAN hath power on earth to forgive sins.* The same power that Christ received from his Father, he gave to the apostles. And they are both to be regulated by the same rule.

If people understand, that this authority of remitting and retaining sins, is no more than inflicting censure upon the obstinate, and absolving and releasing the penitent ; they would see plainly, that such a power is necessarily lodged in the hands of the apostles.

The instance of this power, is of equal use with any of the former ; for every society under heaven, must have a power lodged in it, for the protection and security of it.

Every society must have authority to encourage those that *do well*, to check and punish those that *do ill*. They must have a power to call men to an account for such offences, as are hurtful to the community : and al-

so, to determine what offences lessen or forfeit all pretensions to the privileges of the society.

There never was a community, where some did not need encouragement, and others reproof and correction. And this will happen, as well in church as state,

Nor is it less essential to any society, that its officers, and administrations should not be left open and common; but there must be some to administer who are solemnly set apart for that very purpose. Without this there can be nothing but confusion either in church or state.

It should always be remembered in this affair, that the authority intrusted by Christ with the apostles, and handed down to posterity, is of a spiritual nature.— This is implied in the conveyance of it; *Receive ye the Holy Ghost; to govern my kingdom, for my kingdom is not of this world.* It is a spiritual kingdom.

To shew that his kingdom was by no means of this world, he has ordered the whole frame of it so, that the kingdoms of this world have nothing to fear from it; but much to hope. For at the same time that the good christian is rendering all honour—glory—and dominion to the Great Head of the Church, he knows that *he must render unto Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's.*

Again, by Christ's sending of the apostles, as his Father sent him, we are to understand, That God will own and bless their labours, and ratify what they do, according to the tenor of the gospel, by the authority they received from Christ. When the sacraments are administered by the authority Christ gave, we are to view them as communicating and conveying the same grace, as they would, if Christ was here and administered them himself.

The ordinances of the gospel can lose none of their efficacy by length of time: and as Christ is not here to administer them himself, they must be as effectual: they must be as efficacious, when administered by those, whom he hath sent, as if done by himself. Perhaps, many neglect the sacraments, for want of being fully convinced of these truths. Ministers are to perform

their sacred offices, in the name, and by the authority Christ hath given them ; not by their own authority.

It is much to be lamented, that christianity is scarcely allowed by some, to be a divine institution. Its ordinances are viewed by many, as only *political* : and the ministers of Christ, as *officers appointed and empowered* by the people. Men who have no pretensions to a divine commission, think they may, and actually do undertake, *to regulate the faith of the gospel ; and fashion and frame the church of Christ as they please*. May they yet see the truth. Christianity, that is true, genuine christianity, is *all divine*. The ordinances of the gospel are divine ; the authority by which the ordinances are administered, is divine. If this is not the case, the religion of Jesus Christ, is all a delusion at the best.

All the authority the apostles received from Christ, is to be regulated by the tenor of the gospel. Their *remitting and retaining sins*, was to be ratified in heaven, provided it was done according to the spirit of that law, given by Christ, for the regulation of his church ; and in no other sense.

It is certainly the wisest and safest way to treat the authority Christ gave to the apostles, *with respect*, rather than contempt. What is done by his authority he will most assuredly own, as done by himself, and we shall find it ratified in the court of heaven. *He that despiseth his ambassadors, will be viewed as despising him ; and he that despiseth him, as despising him that sent him*.

Again : Let it be observed, that as Christ gave this power of ordination to none besides the apostles, with a direction to them to convey it to others ; it is plain, none can receive this power, but from those that have it themselves. That the apostles had such a power, as before described, cannot be denied. Was not the church convinced from the clearest evidence, that the apostles had such a commission ; and is there not incontestible evidence upon record handed down to this day, that this is a divine commission ; and that the very same office in the church of Christ is to continue to the end of time ?

SECTION III.

An Inquiry, how the apostles exercised the commission given to them by Christ: in which, a direct proof of episcopacy will be exhibited, from plain matters of fact recorded in scripture.

IN the preceding section, I have shewed, that Christ gave the very same commission to the apostles, which he had received from his Father. I shall in this section, bring into view the conduct of the apostles, in the use of the power, they received from Christ. What the apostles were empowered to do, we must judge from what they have in fact done.

The first thing the apostles did, after our Saviour's ascension, in the exercise of the apostolic office, was to empower St. Matthias as an apostle, to supply the place of Judas. From that time, he was allowed to be an apostle, endowed with the very same power, which the eleven apostles had. This is an eminent instance, in which the apostolic power was conferred upon *one*, that was constituted an apostle, by the authority Christ gave to the eleven apostles. Which thing, the apostles would not have done, provided their commission could not be transferred to another. Another instance we have of the same kind in St. James, our Lord's brother, whom the apostles constituted an apostle, and placed him over the church of Jerusalem. It was very evident he was not one of the eleven apostles. For James the brother of John was killed with the sword; and James the son of Alpheus was not any relation to our blessed Saviour. But there is mention made of James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, who are said to be our Lord's brethren. And there can be no doubt, that this is the James ordained by the apostles, and was placed as an apostle over the church of Jerusalem. The very man, St. Paul mentions when he says, *I saw none of the apostles, save*

James our Lord's brother. This is another instance of conferring the apostolic power.

It must be allowed by all, that St. Paul was an apostle, appointed with the same power to be exercised among the gentile christians, as St. James had, among the Jewish converts. Let us then inquire, in what manner St. Paul exercised the commission given to him by Christ: In which, a direct proof of episcopacy will be exhibited from plain matters of fact recorded in scripture.

This I shall do, by making inquiry, whether St. Paul has not given to Timothy a much more extensive charge, or *commission*, to be exercised by him, at Ephesus, than he gave to all the *elders*, or presbyters, of the same church?—And to make this plain, I will lay before you, the charge, that St. Paul gave to those elders in common with Timothy.

It is certain, that St. Paul, sent from Miletus to Ephesus, *and called the elders of the church*: And when they came, he gave them this charge, *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.* This is all, and the whole charge given to all the elders of Ephesus. The same charge St. Paul gave to Timothy, *Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine: continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*

Thus far the charge given to Timothy and the elders, is exactly the same: And provided Timothy had no farther charges given to him, we might be apt to imagine, he was not superior in office to the presbyters of that Church.—But, I will

Undertake to point out several particulars of very great importance, that St. Paul gave in charge to Timothy, which he did not so much as mention to all the elders, or presbyters of the same church.

He did not mention to those presbyters, what qualifications were requisite for the persons that were to be

ordained. But he informs Timothy very particularly concerning the qualifications of those, he was empowered to ordain, both for presbyters and deacons. It seems very strange, that St. Paul should send for the elders of Ephesus to come to him, to receive his last charge; and if they were empowered *to ordain, that he should say nothing to them*, concerning that matter, when he expected never to see them again in this world.

Again: He charges Timothy *to lay hands suddenly on no man*, to ordain him. But he does not acquaint the elders of that church, that they were to lay hands on any man to ordain him.

Again: He charges Timothy, *not to receive an accusation against an elder, or presbyter, but before two or three witnesses*. But he does not order the elders of the same church, to receive any accusation against their brethren.

When St. Paul had given the direction to Timothy, how he should receive the accusation against an elder, he next proceeds to give him orders how he should execute the sentence; *them* (meaning the elders) *that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear*. But he gave no direction that looks like this, to all the elders. Indeed, it would have been inconsistent to have done so; for nothing can be plainer, than that the sole government of these elders, and the whole church, was committed to Timothy.

The fact will appear plain, from what St. Paul said to the elders at Miletus. He told them, that *some of themselves should arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them*. Now, if they were to govern both themselves, and their people, then was the proper time for St. Paul to have told them, that they were to receive the accusation against those offending elders:—And then that sin, that they should rebuke before all. But St. Paul is so far from doing any thing of this nature, that he does not say any thing that has the least appearance of giving such a charge.

St. Paul gives to Timothy one solemn charge more, that is very remarkable, *I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontus Pilate, witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment, without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Timothy was not like to live till Christ come to judgment:—Therefore the charge here given by the apostle, was not merely to the person of Timothy, but to his office. This is of the like nature, with that promise to the apostles, *that Christ would be with them to the end of the world.*

From hence we may see, that those officers of Christ, who had power to constitute other officers in the church, had charges given to them, that were not merely personal; but such as had relation to the office they sustained. But the charge to the elders or presbyters was *always personal*: Such as was to continue during their lives:—But as they had not power to constitute others in their room, so there is no charge given to them, *to keep what was committed to them, till the coming of Christ; or to commit what they had received to faithful men.*

Could those who oppose the government of the church by bishops, find as much said, and given in solemn charge to all the elders of Ephesus, as was plainly given to Timothy only; it would be, in the opinion of all judicious men, a better proof of their authority to ordain, than all that hath been hitherto advanced upon the subject.

You may see evidently from what hath been said, that Timothy is charged with the government of the *elders*, and of *the church* at Ephesus.

St. Paul gives him excellent rules to be observed, both in choosing men to be ordained, and governing them after they were ordained.

There is no doubt but that there were elders in this church, before Timothy had the care over it. If the presbyters had power to *ordain*, and *govern*, what need was there, for sending Timothy?—Or why should he

only be directed in this weighty affair?—Would it not be more likely that a number of presbyters should be charged in this point, than *one man*, who is pretended to be only equal in office with them, should have the sole care of this most important business?—Those elders had a charge given to them; that was proper to their office; but not having power to *ordain* or *govern*, the direction given to them, was only to take care of their own conduct, and to *teach* or *feed* the people. over whom they are placed, for that very purpose.—There is no mention made that they were to receive an accusation against *any one*; but there is an absolute rule given to Timothy how he is to receive an accusation against those very presbyters, if *they offend*: And he is ordered to pronounce sentence against them, that *others may fear*. I cannot see what they had to *fear* from him, unless he had that authority for which I contend.

It is very strange that when Timothy had so many more, and those more *important charges*, given to him, than all the elders of the same church had; that any, who have the Bible in their hands, should ever doubt of his being superior in office, to those presbyters.

But farther; St Paul was inspired when he gave the charge to the elders of Ephesus, and when he wrote the epistles to Timothy, in which he gives such an extensive commission: So that he could not be mistaken concerning the authority of Timothy, or the elders.

And since he, under inspiration, gave a power and authority to Timothy, which was never given to the elders; we must conclude he was superior in office to them. No pains have been wanting to shift off this argument: But it is very evidently a just way of reasoning.

St. Paul was inspired when he gave his charge to Timothy and the elders; and if he actually gave Timothy the same authority that our bishops claim; and the elders the same power. only that the presbyters in the church of England exercise: Then episcopacy is of

divine right, and the whole dispute is at an end. Is not this really so? Is not this the very truth; if we are to be guided by the facts recorded in scripture, concerning Timothy and the elders? Look into the scriptures: judge for yourselves.

If what I have advanced is not fact, it may be easily exposed:—If it is an *undeniable truth*, it is a truth of very *great importance*, if religion be so.

For how can people *believe*, without they *hear*; and how can they *hear*, without a *preacher*: And can they *preach* that are not sent? *For no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron: So also Christ, glorified not himself, to be made an high-priest: But he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.** Heb. v. 4. 5.

Christ appeared not as a public teacher of that religion he came to establish, till a voice from heaven declared, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*; after this, he is said, *to teach and preach the gospel of the kingdom*.

Thus he was sent by his Father; and as his Father sent him, so he sent the apostles. If he had power to send them, he gave the same power to the apostles to send others. And if the apostles, acting by virtue of that authority he gave them, constituted two orders below themselves, that is, presbyters and deacons; and if neither of these orders received the power to constitute others, (as it does not appear from scripture that they pretend to have it, or that they received any direction or charge about it) then there must have been another order, in which the power of ordination was lodged.

* Lest any one should fall into a mistake, and suppose Aaron was immediately called, and so was not consecrated; it may be well for them to read Exodus, chap. 28 and 29, in which they may see, that by God's command, Aaron and his robes were to be consecrated by Moses, to give him the power of high priest among the Jews. He was not the high priest until this was done, any more than christians are ministers before they are ordained.

And it is very apparent from scripture, that Timothy was invested with this power, and placed over the church at Ephesus ; while the elders of the same church were of the second order of the ministry. If people dislike the name of a bishop, as a successor in the apostolic office, and choose to call him president, I have no objection ; provided he is ordained by those who have power to ordain, and commissioned to ordain and govern the church according to the practice of the apostles.

What I have asserted and proved, is, that the apostles did give a power to some ministers, which they did not give to others. I do not contend for the name ; provided he is invested with the commission which Christ gave to his apostles, he has all I contend for.

It is very clear that there is no charge or direction in scripture, given to mere presbyters, concerning ordination. The apostles did constitute an officer, to whom they gave direction concerning ordination :—It is evident therefore, that they gave a power to some ministers, which they did not give to others. For this assertion, I appeal to the practice of the apostles, as it is recorded in scripture ; which is given from heaven.—When any man will shew us any one place in the scripture, where any one presbyter, or number of presbyters, have the same charges given to him, or them, as plainly and as expressly as they are given to Timothy, concerning ordination :—Then an appeal to the scripture may be of some service, in support of the notion that presbyters have power to ordain : Till this is done, we must think that the scripture is plainly on our side of the question.

It will be of no avail to boast of this sect and the other's being remarkably blessed in their administrations: That they have grown numerous, and the like ; this is not a sufficient proof that they are right, or of the validity of their ordination. What is justly demanded in this point is, that they prove from some fact, recorded in scripture, that mere presbyters, by

virtue of their office, as such, did ordain officers in the church of Christ. I have proved, that there was an order of men, in the time of the apostles; that did, in fact, do this; and that they had orders to ordain, where there was a number of presbyters in the same church:—And that those presbyters had no direction given to them about it.

If a presbyter has power to ordain, he must, in the first place, have received it from a bishop. The bishop used no expression in ordaining him, that can possibly imply such a power,—the ordainer has no design to convey it—he that was ordained had no expectation of receiving such a power.—There is nothing in scripture by which he can prove that he has it. From whence then did he obtain it? All power in the kingdom of Christ is of a spiritual nature, and must be derived either immediately from Christ, or from those whom he hath appointed to convey it. The first, I suppose, few at this time will pretend to claim; the latter, none have a right to claim, till they prove the conveyance.

By what I have now laid before you, concerning Timothy and the elders of Ephesus, it plainly appears, that the episcopal government of the church, is as ancient, as the church itself. It must be granted, for it cannot be denied, that there were, in the first days of the church, three distinct orders of officers, called apostles, presbyters, and deacons. If these orders of officers were constituted under inspiration, in the church at first, who has had an order from heaven, since that time, to alter it? If there has been an order from heaven, since that time, to change the constitution of the church, let it be produced. If there has not been any such order, then all that deviate from the practice of the apostles, have so far departed from the will of heaven.

Nothing is now claimed by our bishops, but the very same that St. Paul gave in charge to Timothy: nothing prohibited to the presbyters of our church,

that he commanded and charged the elders to do at Ephesus.

The direct proof of episcopacy that I have laid before you, is taken from facts recorded in the sacred volume, concerning the state of the church at Ephesus. The same evidence might have been produced in our favour, from the government of the church at Jerusalem, in Crete, and all other fully constituted churches ; but this would have interfered with my designed brevity.

However, enough, I hope, has been said, to satisfy every one, that is willing to be determined in this point, by the practice of the apostles.

Should any one imagine, that I have perverted the scripture, let that be the judge betwixt us. I have made no forced constructions of any place, but have fairly argued from plain matters of fact there recorded. I appeal to the scripture for the truth of what I have advanced. Search the scriptures, and see if what I have said, is not first said in them ?—A fairer decision cannot be proposed :—And I hope it is so fair, that it will have a full, and complete satisfaction, to the honest inquirer after the truth. Lastly, let it be observed, that Arius who lived in the fourth century, is the first presbyter that pretended to ordain. And all the ancients constantly affirm, that the church universal, was under the episcopal form of government, when they lived and wrote.

SECTION IV.

Shewing that the apostolic office is to continue to the end of time :—And that the office of the apostles was distinct from the evidence which was given to the world, that they were the chief ministers in the gospel kingdom.

THE apostles when they first founded the church, conformed exactly to the laws which Christ had given for a rule to his church in every age. One law was not given for the age of the apostles, and *another* for after ages. If this was the case, let those different laws be distinctly pointed out. The apostles themselves were such officers as the gospel constitution *prescribed*. Therefore so long as the gospel constitution continues, there must be such officers in the church, as the apostles were ; or the church has not such officers as the gospel constitution points out to her. Nor has she such officers as she had at first. And unless she has such officers she cannot be like the church of Christ, when it was first founded. So far as any church deviates from the order of the church of Christ, when it was first founded, so far they have departed from the rule given to the church from heaven.

It must be allowed, that the apostles acquainted the world what their commission was, and from whom they received it ; and gave sufficient evidence that they had such a commission from Christ, as they pretended to execute : And that this commission was recorded in scripture, that all the churches might *know*, what their commission was, and how far it extended.

There is nothing in the commission of the apostles, that indicates their office to be temporary ; but much to the contrary. Those, who hold that the apostolic office ceased with the apostles, have nothing to offer in support of their assertion, that has any manner of weight in it.

A proper distinction ought to be made between the *evidence* of the apostolic office, and the *office itself*.—There has not been such care taken in this particular as might be wished. If there had, it might have prevented much altercation. There is a manifest distinction between the *office*, and the *evidence* of the office.—Yet the presbyterians have not made the least distinction in the case. They sometimes take the *evidence* for the *office itself*; at other times they take it for *part* of the office:—But at all times they take the *evidence* for the *foundation* of the office.

For they say, “the apostolic office has ceased, because the extraordinary powers have ceased, on which “it was *founded*.”

The working of miracles was not the *office* of the apostles, nor the foundation of the *office*. The commission given by Christ was the *foundation* of the *office*: And the working of miracles the *evidence* that the religion they preached was the true religion:—And that they were the chief ministers of it, under Christ the head, who gave them their authority.

If we enquire into the nature of the apostolic office, and distinguish *that* which belonged to the office, from *that* which was an evidence to the world, that there was such an office in the church; we shall readily discern that there is the very same reason why the apostolic office should continue to the end of the world, as why it should be appointed at first.

If we recollect in what the essence of the apostolic office consisted, and remember that the working of miracles did not belong to the apostles as *part* of their office; it will appear that a man’s reasonings are very weak indeed, who asserts that the apostolic office has ceased, because the working of miracles had ceased. The presbyters and deacons wrought miracles in the time of the apostles:—Have their offices ceased, because the working of miracles have ceased? Any man that reasons at this rate, confesses that he does not know how to answer his opponent’s argument.

When our Saviour gave a charge to the apostles, *that one should not be above another*, he meant, that one apostle should not be above another apostle ; that one presbyter should not be above another presbyter ; that one deacon should not be above another deacon in office. We have no reason to think, that Christ had a design to forbid a subordination of officers in his church : For if he had, it is certain the apostles would not have assumed to themselves a character superior to the presbyters ; which they actually did. There certainly were three orders of ministers in the church of Christ at first. St. Paul says, *God hath set some in his church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers ; after that miracles.*

That is, after God had appointed three orders of officers in his church, he gave to these officers the power of working miracles, to evidence, among other things, to the world, that he had appointed these three orders of officers in his church. The words *after that*, were not accidentally inserted ; but with design to distinguish between the *offices*, and the *evidence* of the offices. Here St. Paul has told us, as plain as words can express it, that God hath appointed three orders of officers in his church. Are we the church of God ? Then we must have the same order, that is, the apostolic order, as well as the other two. Yet some say, the apostolic order ceased with the apostles. Have the apostles told us that their office was to cease ? They have not given the least hints of this, which they would not have failed to have done, had they been acquainted with such a design. Therefore, unless it can be proved, that the apostles, under inspiration, have abolished the apostolic office, there must be three orders of gospel ministers in gospel churches still, by apostolical, or which is the same, divine institution.

Whenever a rule is given from heaven to the church, that rule remains in full force, till such time as it is set aside by the same authority which gave it at first. No man has had authority since the time of the apos-

ties, to change the constitution of the church, formed by the apostles. Or to say, the church is not to be governed now, in the same manner that it was in the age of the apostles; unless he produces an order from heaven, sufficiently authenticated, to support his assertion. I conclude, therefore, that the law given to the church in the age of the apostles, must be first abrogated, before the apostolic office can be supposed to have ceased. So long as the church is under the same law, it must be under the same discipline, and consequently presbyters must be subject to the successors of the apostles.

When we see the constitution of the church in the days of the apostles is the very same with that of the church of England; we must conclude, that the church of England in her constitution, is regulated by the same laws which were given by Christ to the church universal at first. And consequently, that church, in her constitution, can be supported from scripture.— This must appear to be the case, in the judgment of every man who is not blinded with prejudice. We have scripture to support our sentiments upon this point; for Christ's promise to the apostles runs thus, *Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world, Amen.* How could he be with the apostles to the end of the world, unless the office was to continue to that period? As to the pretence that he would be with their *ordinary office*, but their *extraordinary office* was to cease; this is all the invention of man. If they had any office that was to cease, when they were dead, they could have told us of it, and we could have understood it. The scripture has not given us the least intimation of it, therefore it is a matter without foundation; and it is a great pity that any man should be led away with such a delusion. However, if any one has any evidence, that the apostolic office was to cease, let it be produced.

SECTION V.

That the religion which came from heaven is divine, that the ordinances of this religion are divine, and the officers who are to administer these ordinances, do it by a divine commission.

THE design of the christian religion is to bring men to happiness, by making them holy and virtuous ; that is, to make happiness, not the fate of men's nature, but the reward for their duty.

The duties which the christian religion requires, the rewards it promises, are such, as are plainly most agreeable to our natural notions of God, and most conducive to the happiness and well-being of men.— 'This is a sufficient proof' to convince any one, that the religion we profess, actually came from God :— Such a religion has the character of God stamped upon it ; and certainly comes directly from him. A religion which rests upon such a foundation, comes with all the authority necessary to command the attention of all men. That the gospel or doctrine of Christ, separate from the mistakes, and corruptions, and uncertain comments of men, is such an institution ; is evident from the whole frame and spirit of the gospel.

Besides this evidence, from the excellency of it ; it is moreover proved to be taught and confirmed by God himself, which is most manifest, from the testimony given. The miracles which our Saviour wrought, were a complete demonstration of the divinity of his religion. The history of his life, death, and resurrection delivered down to us, testified by his apostles, are the most undeniable evidence of the same truth.

In fine, the apostles saw him alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, conversing with him for forty days, and at last, beholding him ascend visibly into heaven. These are such demonstrations of his being a teacher sent from heaven, and consequently,

that his doctrine was the express will of God; that nothing but the most extreme malice and obstinacy could prevent our giving assent to these evidences.

Thus you see the christian religion lays before you, the most striking evidence of its divine origin; after the belief of the redemption purchased by Jesus Christ, the ordinances become a part, nay a chief part of what is required to be done, by those who expect to receive the benefits of redemption.

These ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, come to you under the sanction of a divine command. And from hence you are required to pay that attention to them, the importance of the subject requires.

Perhaps, many may imagine, if they had lived in our Saviour's time, had heard his preaching and seen his miracles, and could have received the sacraments from his hand; they should have immediately, with cheerfulness, become his disciples; and that the religion he taught would have had a powerful influence on their whole life.—This is all a mere fallacy.

For when Jesus Christ was about to leave the world, he took care that his church should be supplied with proper officers for carrying on the salvation of mankind. Accordingly, before his ascension he gave the same power and commission to the apostles which he had received from his Father. And he told them, that what they did in his name, and by his authority, should be ratified in heaven. And this order of officers in the kingdom of Christ, has been preserved in his church to this day. And whoever receives the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper from the hands of such officers as have been appointed according to the will of Christ, will receive the same benefit from those ordinances, as they would have done, had they been administered by Christ himself. This is sufficient to take off all objections; for it is done by divine commission.

All schemes formed by the invention of men, contriving how men may make themselves holy and fit

for heaven, before they do what Christ has commanded to be done for that end ; is all self-righteousness at the best. Obeying a law which we make ourselves, constitutes the self-righteous man.

It would be well, for people to observe the conduct of the *Centurion who sent the elders of the Jews to our Saviour, beseeching him to come and heal his servant ; and when Jesus was not far from his house, the Centurion sent friends to him saying, Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof. Neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee ; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man, having soldiers under me, and I say unto one, go, and he goeth ; and to another, come, and he cometh ; and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled and said, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*—Thus you see the Centurion, though he viewed himself as unworthy, believed that Jesus had power to heal his servant.

In this manner all men should come to Christ, and attend to do what he hath required, and believe he will bless his own institutions :—Not for their worthiness, but because it is done under the sanction of a divine commission. If men can be persuaded to view religion in this light, we should soon behold the conduct of mankind, turning their backs to the vanities of time, and seeking after the riches of eternity.

SECTION VI.

That the different opinions of mankind about religion, cannot alter the nature of true religion.

ALL true religion must be conveyed to us by revelation from heaven, in the first instance, dictated by infinite wisdom—perfect goodness, and eternal love. A religion recommended to us, by a being of such transcendent perfections, cannot possibly be altered by the different opinions of mankind ; but must remain fixed, according to the will of that being who gave it at first. In this view of the subject, can any one be so weak, as to follow the advice of a poor fallible mortal, who is dictated by vile passions, and private interest ; and disregard the counsel of unerring wisdom ? If any thing in nature deserves to be called folly and madness, it is the preferring human invention to the wisdom which comes from above. Are we yet to be taught how ignorant we are—how silly in our choice—how apt to be deceived with false appearances ? How shamefully mistaken in our views, and always disappointed in our hopes ? Then how unreasonable it is, for us to undertake to mend that religion which came from a being that cannot err ?

By our opposition to the religion of Jesus Christ, we shall neither obtain one that will suit us better, nor enjoy the advantage of that which we have. To refuse to be governed by that religion God hath given us, is to resolve to be wicked without *constraint*, that we may be miserable without *remedy*. It is to refuse to be conducted by unerring wisdom, and to choose to be guided by the counsels of men as weak as ourselves.

Here, perhaps, it will be said, There are so many different opinions about religion, that it is not worth while to trouble our heads about it : Since after all we may be mistaken, and it is as well to be without any religion, unless we can find the right. For some ad-

wise us to join with one sect of christians, and some with another : Each maintaining, in his turn, that the life and power of religion is only to be found among those of his own particular society ; in these divided counsels, which shall we embrace ? The answer is ready. Take not that religion which is the invention of men, but that which comes from heaven :—And hath all the evidence, to convince you of the truth of it, that the importance of the subject requires.

Here, it may be asked, where shall we find such a religion ? I answer, in that sacred book, by which you will be judged. You will not be judged by the opinions of men, therefore it must not be the rule of your conduct, but you will be judged by the word of the great Jehovah. There you may see what the order of the church of Christ was, when it first began : And no man has had power to alter it since.

In that word of life, you may see, what the faith was, given to the saints ; and also, how the discipline of the kingdom of Christ was exercised by officers Christ appointed for that purpose. All this will be plain, if you can be persuaded to lay aside all the inventions of men, and take the word of the everliving God for your guide. Can there be any thing more reasonable than to take your direction from infallibility itself, in matters that concern your eternal welfare ?—The matters of fact recorded in the sacred volume, will inform you how to regulate your future conduct ;—and these facts come to you recommended under the sanction of divine truth. And is not this sufficient to command the attention of every creature, who believes he has an immortal soul ?

It highly concerns all, very carefully to examine this affair, that amongst such a great diversity of opinions, they may know where the truth is. A thing, in which it concerns every man in the highest degree to be well informed ; that his religion may be such as is according to the will of God, and have its due influence upon all his own conduct ;—otherwise, his religion will be con-

tinually changing according to the fashion of the day. —For it is very evident, that a religion formed by the invention of man is ever changing with, and according to the humour of the times, and has its fashions as well as other things.

But that religion which came from heaven, is unchangeable ; because it is designed to fit us for an unchangeable state of happiness, and prepare us for a region of uncreated light and glory, where Eternal Nature, in its essential and unchangeable splendours, manifest the blessed presence, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in their full, and undivided Trinity of Glory.

Whether the professors of a religion be many or few ; whether they be influenced by the spirit of it, or not ; whether they be sincere, or hypocrites ; whether they be detected, or not ; the religion is still the same :—It does not change nor alter with the changing tempers, dispositions and interests of mankind, in different times and places ; nor is it to be charged with the guilt of practices, against which it protests in every page.—Poor, unhappy man ! how art thou tost upon the ocean of uncertainties, when you leave that rule which came from heaven, to follow the invention of man, which will always deceive you !

SECTION VII.

Peoples' notions that they can serve God as well, without public worship, without the ordinances and without a minister, as with them ; considered and refuted.

THERE are but few men that pretend religion is useless. To believe there is a God, who is the first cause and creator of all things, implies that homage and adoration are due to him. The thoughts of his being the disposer of all events, naturally points him out to man, as the proper object of his address. Thus public prayer becomes a duty agreeable to the dictates of reason and common sense.

Before the dawning of christianity, we find in the world temples raised, rites instituted ; and in many places a system of devotion established. Thus we see, reason taught men, that they could not live without religion :—But how could they find out the true religion ? Here they were at a loss ;—and well they might be so. For it was the business of the bright and Morning Star to diffuse light through the world : This was the business of the Sun of Righteousness, who came with healing under his wings to cure the superstition of the nations,—to establish not only a divine and rational system of morality, but also a pure and spiritual devotion ;—to dispel the clouds of ignorance that overshadowed men's minds ; and let in upon the soul those bright and heavenly rays, that are necessary to guide us into all truth.

No sooner did our blessed Saviour begin to preach his gospel, but some were amazed and knew not what to say :—Others were charmed, and readily confessed, *Thou art the Christ. Thou art that prophet that should come. Thou art the Son of the living God. Never man spake like this man.* Not one who heard him speak, but he found evident marks of his divine mission.—Many professed a desire to follow him ; but some of

these, like our modern christians, were for making their own terms.

As there are some people who are much engaged to set up a private religion, in opposition to the public worship which Christ hath appointed :—I would fain know what objections they have to be saved in the use of those means which Christ hath appointed. Perhaps, they will say, they have no objections on that head.—But their notion is, that they can serve God as well at home, by reading their bibles and praying in their own houses, as at church. And as the yoke of Christ is easy, they think that they can serve God with more ease, than to be at the trouble to dress and go to church. And moreover, they have a great concern about their domestic affairs ;—and accordingly are not able to attend upon both. But in answer to these quibbles, and a thousand more, let it be observed, that God hath given to man, six days, out of seven, to be employed in the affairs of this world :—But the seventh part of time he hath reserved to himself, to be employed by us in public worship, and in receiving the ordinances of the gospel, from the hands of such ministers as are sent by God to instruct mankind in their duty, and to administer the seals of the covenant.

But these people who wish to serve God with that, which costs them nothing, will say, that they can worship God in private, and not be at any expence in paying a minister : *Hang the law and the prophets*, ay, and the priest too ; we have no need of either. And provided we can't have a minister without giving our money to him, we chuse to have none.

Alas !—Is the grand objection to the religion of Jesus Christ come out at last ?

Those who make this objection, either believe that the christian religion came from heaven, or they do not. If I cannot prove that the christian religion came from God, with all the evidence so important a subject requires, I will give up the point.—But if it be true, it highly concerns every one, to do every thing

in his power to support it ; and to give his attention to it, that he may not lose the benefit of it. For the fashion of this world passeth away ; and our continuance in it is momentary and uncertain. And the hope of a better state, is the only thing that can give us comfort here ; and living according to this hope, the only thing, that can give us a just ground to expect happiness hereafter.

And blessed be God, that he hath given us such clear evidence, that the christian religion came from Him, that no man can doubt of it, who makes evidence the foundation of his conduct. If God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, it is certain the christian religion is true. And there is the clearest evidence for this, of any one fact, that has ever been since the world began. And no reasonable objection can be brought to contradict it.

For the dignity of the body is such, that it ought to be raised ;—the power of God is such, that it can be raised ;—the justice of God requires, that it should be raised ;—and the testimony of scripture is clear, that it hath been raised ;—and the promise of scripture is plain, that we shall be raised.

Christ hath made a propitiation for mankind ; and God's raising Jesus from the dead, is clear evidence to the world, that God hath accepted that propitiation, as an atonement for sinful man. And that God, by Jesus Christ, is reconciling the world to himself. And it is certain, that God will in the last day, judge every man, who has had the light of the gospel, according to his conduct, under the dispensation of grace.

The world was made, that we might be born ; we are born, that we might acknowledge God to be the creator of ourselves and of the universe : We acknowledge him, that we might worship him : We worship him, that we may be fit to receive his favours, and manifest our dependence upon his Providence. Christ redeemed us, that we might inherit immortality : We receive this immortality, that we may forever serve him, in his kingdom of glory.

Can any man, who believes all these things, be so ungrateful to God, as to refuse to support this holy religion, according to the appointment of God himself? No :—It cannot be. Therefore, I shall close this subject by laying before you a few places of scripture which plainly enjoins it as a duty upon all to support the clergy. And the places of scripture, shall be so plain to the points, that there can be no dispute concerning the matter.

“Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?
“Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit
“thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of
“the milk of the flock?”—1 Cor. ix. 7.

“If we have sown unto your spiritual things, is it a
“great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?”—
1 Cor. ix. 11.

“Do ye not know that they which minister about
“holy things, live of the things of the temple? And
“they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the
“altar?—Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they
“which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.”
—1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.

“Let him that is taught in the word, communicate
“unto him that teacheth in all good things.”—Gal. vi. 6.

All these orders came from heaven, and are binding upon all christians. And it is evident, men cannot serve their Maker, according to his appointment, without a minister.

SECTION VIII.

A few observations upon the new divinity, as it is called; by which, children are prevented entering into covenant with Christ, because their parents are not so good as they should be.

I MUST beg leave of the new divines to take a view of their sentiments. As far as I have been able to learn, they prohibit children entering into covenant with Christ, unless one, or both of the parents are in full communion. I will allow this subject to be *new*, but deny it to be *divine*. Whatever is received under the sanction of religion, must be as old as religion itself. Otherwise it wants the monuments, the marks and evidence of true religion. Where these three things are wanting in religion, it rests upon a very slender foundation. The honest man knows not how to proceed, nor can he find any place, whereon to rest the sole of his foot.

But, when he takes the sacred scripture for the rule of his conduct, it is easy for him to find out what he must do. The religion of Jesus Christ is level to all capacities.

Can you read the gospel and doubt whether Christ died for you? whether God will grant pardon to penitents,—or his assistance to those who ask it? whether he will reward all such, as are listed under the banner of Christ, and are his faithful soldiers?—Is there any difficulty in understanding these things?

Perhaps, you may have many doubts concerning the sacraments of the gospel, and how, and what grace they confer: But dispute as you will, this one thing is clear, *he that believes and is baptized shall be saved*. Is there any promise you shall be saved, if you are not baptized? Is not baptism for the remission of sins?—And is not every son of Adam, in such a state, that he wants pardon?—Yet the new divinity, as it is called, declares,

that children shall not be admitted to this privilege of baptism, unless one or both of the parents are so, and so qualified.

The prophet Ezekiel thought otherwise, upon this point ; and I suppose upon better evidence ; for he declares, under the spirit of inspiration. *That the son should not bear the iniquity of the father.* He knew, that the children of the Jews, let their parents be what they would, were, by an order from heaven, to be entered into covenant at eight days old. The iniquity of the parent was no bar in the way, to prevent the children receiving the benefit of the covenant.

Our blessed Saviour has left this affair, both as to the privilege and the subject, as he found it. He hath not said, that children shall be deprived of the privilege of the covenant, if their parents are wicked ; neither hath he said, that infants are not fit subjects to enter into covenant in the christian church. Provided they were in the Jewish, why not in the christian church ? Some of our Saviour's forward disciples like our new divines, seem to think they knew better than their master, *rebuked those who brought young children to Christ : But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. And he took them up in his arms, put his hand upon them, and blessed them.*

If the kingdom of God means the kingdom of glory ; the little children are certainly proper subjects for the kingdom of Grace : If it means the kingdom of grace, then it is a direct and absolute decision, that all little children, let their parents be what they will, have a right to enter into the christian covenant by baptism.

Some, perhaps, will ask the question, What service can it be, for the child to be baptized when it knows nothing of the matter ?

I answer, no one would ask this question unless he would be wiser than his Maker. For what could the

child of a Jew, understand in this affair, any more than a child of a christian.

When a child is born into this world, it must have the spirit of life, or in other words, the breath of life, for the support of the animal life, otherwise, it cannot live. So, when a child is born into the kingdom of grace, it must have the Spirit of God, for the support of the spiritual life ; otherwise, it cannot live the life of a christian. The Spirit of God dwells with his church ; to guide and direct the members of it—to encourage all their good desires—to help them to overcome all their infirmities :—In a word, to labour with them, in the work of their salvation, to make their calling and election sure.

In order to obtain these benefits, we must become members of his church. How then can any one lay a bar in the way ? or pretend to offer any objection, by which any child should be debarred the privilege of baptism ?

It may be, some one will say, I was baptised when an infant : But I was not converted by the divine Spirit, till I come to the years of maturity. Be it so. What conclusion can be drawn from this ? Can you say ; the Divine Spirit was not conferred upon you in baptism ? Can you say, that the blessed Spirit hath not often been warning you to avoid the vanities of time ; and to view the importance of eternity ? Can you say, you should have had the same measure of divine assistance which you have received, had you never been baptized ?—This, I imagine none will dare assert. Let it be observed, that conversion is one thing, and our obeying Christ, in receiving the sacraments of the gospel, is another.

Those who deny the efficacy of the ordinances of the gospel, act upon the same principles which Naaman the leper did, when he was advised by the prophet, to dip himself seven times in Jordan, and he should be clean. The proud Syrian turned away in a rage. But his servant more wise than himself, said unto him,—

“If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather then, when he only saith unto thee, Wash and be clean?”

This convinced the master, and he obeyed the man of God, and was cured. Had he been cured when he had dipped three times, he would not have dipped again: But he was not cured, till he had completely obeyed the divine order. “Then his flesh returned unto him, as the flesh of a little child.”

It was not an efficacy in the waters of Jordan, that produced his cure; but it was effected by the Divine Spirit, which the prophet declared should be the case, provided he did as he was ordered;—and the event proved it to be true. Just so it is, with regard to baptism and the Lord’s supper. It is not any efficacy in the water of baptism, or in the symbols of the Lord’s supper, that produces a change in the soul: But when we obey a divine command, God blesses his own institution to effect the end designed.

We may, by partaking of these sacraments, receive as much benefit to our souls, as Naaman did to his body, by dipping seven times in Jordan. And is not this a sufficient motive to engage our attention in this affair? When we consider how great a favour, is granted to us by redemption, we ought to have some striking monument placed in our view, to bring to our recollecting minds, the advantages derived to us from the atonement Christ hath made for sinful man. What can strike our attention more powerfully than to receive these sacraments, which Christ hath commanded us to do, in order to fix in our souls, the remembrance of what he hath done for us?

The public will be greatly obliged to the new divines provided they would be kind enough to inform mankind, what their sentiments are concerning the sacraments of the gospel. If they believe these sacraments were appointed by authority from heaven; and do confer some favour and benefit to the receiver; why are they not administered to all? that all may receive

these favours. But on the other hand, if they believe these sacraments were not appointed by authority from heaven—are of no advantage to the receiver—are nothing more than an insignificant ceremony; why do they administer them to any person whatsoever?

Thus the point is fairly stated; let then declare which of these opinions they embrace; then we shall know where to find them.

The fatal consequences of refusing baptism to infants, is a matter, to which, we ought to give our most serious attention.

It is much to be lamented, that any children in a christian land, should be brought up in a state of heathenism. None can be allowed to be christians, who have not entered into the christian covenant. Those who have not been baptized, will conclude that they are not under the same obligation, to observe and obey the laws of the gospel, as those are, who have put on Christ by baptism. And the consequence which will flow from such an apprehension, is very mischievous to those persons, who have been debarred the privilege of the covenant.

Another thing, to which, it may be well for the new divines to attend, is, the commission, if they have received it; which runs thus, *Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Those men, who first received this commission, were educated in the Jewish religion; and knew that children were to be entered into covenant at eight days old. And provided, infants were not fit subjects, and were not to be members of the christian church, Christ would not have failed to have told his disciples of it: As he knew that the children were the greatest part of all nations, which they were to baptize. And as he did not except the children in his commission, it is evident he designed they should be included among those, whom the apostles were to baptize in all nations.

Is there any way, by which, the kingdom of Christ can be more effectually destroyed, than by taking

such methods, and forming such schemes, as will prevent people from becoming members of that kingdom which is not of this world?—Can a man, who has a proper value for the privileges of the gospel, remain an unconcerned spectator when he sees men eagerly pursuing a plan directly opposite to the spirit of that religion, which he knows to be true?—It is not agreeable to my disposition to find fault, with that which passes for religion, unless it is grossly erroneous. But when I see, that true religion, suffers for want of explanation, I believe it is my duty, to inform those that are in need of it. People should be informed better, who make objections to infant baptism;—and say, that we must believe first; and infants are not capable of believing, therefore are not fit to be baptized. Our blessed Saviour has told us, that *whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, &c* (Matt. xviii. 6) I have no dispute with any one, about the signification of the word *believe*, they must dispute that matter with Christ who used the term.

After all, it is plain, that a child is as capable of entering into covenant with God by baptism, as it could be by circumcision. *The covenant in Horeb was made with the infants, as well as others.* (Deut. v. 3. 4.) And the covenant in the land of Moab, was made, not only with the men of Israel, and their wives, but with their little ones.—(Deut. xxix. 10, 11.)

The Jewish infants could not have the circumcision of that heart, any more than the christian children can *believe*. And provided in the gospel dispensation, children are prohibited entering into covenant with God by baptism, they are in a worse condition than the Jewish children were.

It may be, some will say, if we are born of the spirit it is no matter whether we are baptized or not.—In answer to this, I gave St. Peter's opinion, *Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.*—(Acts x. 47.)

SECTION IX.

Self-righteousness and evangelical obedience explained:

ALL denominations of christians agree in exploding self-righteousness ; though but few seem to understand in what it consists. I shall in the plainest manner, undertake to shew what self-righteousnes is ; and what evangelical obedience is.

All righteousness is obedience to some law. Self-righteousness is obedience to a law we make ourselves, and set it up in opposition to the laws of God.

The righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, is obedience to the laws of Christ.

I have no design to teach you how you can be good christians, and not believe in Jesus Christ. No, the first step in the christian religion, is to believe the record or the testimony which God hath given of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must believe the history of prophecies and miracles, before we believe our Saviour's divine mission ; we must believe our Saviour's divine mission, before we can believe his revelation, concerning a future state ; we must believe he hath given us a law for the rule of our conduct, before we shall undertake a life agreeable thereto. This is the natural and necessary order, which precedes that righteousness, which exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees.

I shall now bring to your view, what the righteousness of the pharisees was, in our Saviour's estimation.

What our saviour says, concerning their religion, is this, *Ye devour widows houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. Ye pray in the markets, and in the corners of the streets, to be seen of men.* Which caused our Saviour to say, *In vain do ye worship God, teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men. Full well you reject the commandments of God, that you may observe your own traditions.* This is the account our Saviour gives of them.

In the next place, let us enquire what account they give of themselves. And I believe the pharisee when he went up with the publican, to the temple to pray, represented his righteousness to as much advantage as it would possibly bear. Let us attend to his account of it. What he undertakes, is first, with great pomp, and high swelling words, to tell God of his negative holiness. "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers or even as this publican.

Here you see the pharisee.—Instead of an act of humiliation, in that awful presence before which he stood, with an air of triumph, and self-sufficiency, he says, *God, I thank thee, I am not like other men.* The prayer he made use of, is the true picture of the man's heart; and shews with what a disposition of soul, and frame of mind he came to worship God Almighty.

He does not examine himself by the word of God; but by the conduct of some of his neighbours, and because, in his own fancy, he is not so bad as they are, he thinks himself very pious. If they were half as bad, as he seems to have an inclination to represent them; he might be better than they were, and yet extremely wicked.

That I may do justice to the pharisee, I will consider the other part of his prayer. *I fast twice in a week; I give tythes of all I possess.* This was a law of his own making. For he was not commanded by the law of Moses to *fast twice in the week, nor pay any tythes of mint, and other herbs*; after he had vowed it to a sacred use, our Saviour says he ought to pay it. Thus it appears he was a transgressor of the law of God; and all the religion he had, was obeying a law he made himself.

Let us hear what St. Paul says, concerning the righteousness of the pharisee, who was educated among that sect; he declares, *That he profited in the Jews religion, above many of his equals, in his own nation*: And then he declares in what it was that he exceeded, *Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers.*

Thus you see, from our Saviour's account of the pharisee, and from the account he gives of himself, that he was not that good man, which he pretended ; but was really a very bad man, making a pretence of piety, when he wanted every qualification of it.

I shall, in the next place, take a view of the true scripture account of that righteousness, without which, our Saviour says, we can in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The righteousness which Christ requires in us, is *inherent holiness*. Or in other words, obedience to the laws which he hath given, for a rule, by which his church are to regulate their lives. You have heard what the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees was. You see it did not consist in obedience to the divine law ; therefore it is easy to find out, how we may have a righteousness, that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, without supposing that we are justified by it ;—or that it is the cause of our justification. The righteousness which Christ requires of us, is obedience to those very laws, which he himself hath given. And is not this far preferable to the righteousness which consists in obedience to the laws of men ? Obeying the laws of Christ will qualify the soul to enjoy the happiness of heaven, and provided we are prepared to enjoy the happiness of those blessed abodes, the merits of Christ will give us a title to them.

But how can this be done, if man has nothing to do ? If when he imagines he is drawing nearer to God, in the use of his appointed means, he is really running farther from him ; what must he do ? must he sit still, lest he run farther from God ? The scripture gives us no such direction. And it would make a good christian's heart bleed, to think that any man, who has the bible in his hand, should be led away in such a delusion. I really, from my very heart, pity all persons, who suffer themselves to be led away, by *evil men, and seducers, that wax worse, and worse :—Deceiving, and being deceived*. But continue, thou my brethren, in the

things that thou hast learned, and hast been assured of; Knowing of whom thou hast learned them, even from the word of the everliving God.

In the word of God, we are told, that Christ hath redeemed mankind; this is completely done by him alone. No man has any thing to do in this affair.—After Christ had paid the price of our redemption, he gave a law, for us to obey, that was calculated for such beings as we were after the first sin; And he has told us, to observe all things, whatsoever he hath commanded. And he hath purchased, and gives to us, all the assistance we want to do this.

Is this required to be done?—Remedies appointed, by Christ, to be laid before mankind, and yet are they not required to use them? Did not Christ know what remedies were proper, and what would prove effectual, on our part, to accomplish our salvation?—If he did, and has appointed these means, then mankind are bound to obey these orders.

And yet, after all this, is there nothing for man to do?—It is, amazing to hear any christian talk at this rate; but such things have been said, by those, whom we cannot but wish that they may inform themselves better. We charitably hope they mean well; but we must say, they are very much in the wrong, and are greatly mistaken.

This error would be easily rectified, and a thousand more which flow from it, provided people would make a proper distinction between *redemption* and *salvation*; or, in other words, make a proper distinction between what Christ hath done to redeem us; and what we must do, in order to obtain the benefits of redemption.—Thus I have explained what redemption is,—what self-righteousness is,—and what that righteousness is, without which, you cannot be justified by the merits of Christ. Thus the merits of Christ is one thing; and inherent holiness another.

SECTION X.

In which, will be laid before the reader, a plain account of justification according to the tenor of scripture.

AMONGST all the questions, of which the learned have treated, perhaps none are less understood by the generality of people, than this concerning justification. The subject hath been handled by several great men on each side of the question ; and it might possibly be deemed presumption to differ from any of them, had they not differed so widely among themselves.—Much hath been said, and various have been their conjectures :—Yet little hath been written, that can be of any service to those who want it most : Because these things have generally been published in large volumes, which most people either never hear of, or never see. And besides, many of those treatises refer to authors, which the reader knows nothing of. And since all have the bible in their hands ; I shall undertake, to lay before the reader, a plain account of justification as it is manifested in the scripture. This shall be done, in a plain and artless manner, that every honest inquirer may be satisfied what the doctrine is. Most writers have had recourse to St. Paul's epistle to the Romans ; in what they have advanced upon this subject, and it may be proper for us to take a view of what is said in this epistle.

Perhaps there is no part of the New-Testament, which has been more misapplied by the ignorant, more wrested by the learned, and more falsely interpreted by the melancholy person, than the epistle to the Romans. All this mischief has been owing to a mistake of what was St. Paul's design in writing this epistle. People have fell into this mistake, by picking out some detached sentences from the middle of the epistle, without considering their connexion with what went before, or followed after. And by that means, have lost

sight of the apostles argument, which is very clear and forcible, if rightly attended to.

You know, this epistle was directed and addressed to the saints at Rome, which at that time, was the most learned and polite city in the world. Accordingly, St. Paul makes use of all his art and address in writing this epistle.

In the fore part of it, he takes notice, that Jews and Gentiles had embraced the christian religion. That the Gentiles by corrupting themselves, contrary to the law of nature; and the Jews by disobeying the law given them from heaven, were both become liable to the wrath of God. Therefore, he says; *As many as have sinned without the law, shall also perish without the law; as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.* (Rom. ii. 12.) Then he proceeds to shew the insufficiency of both these laws, in point of justification. Since all have sinned, there must be an atonement, in order that God may be reconciled to man.

This atonement could not be effected by sinful men, for they could not redeem themselves. Redemption was completed entirely by our blessed Saviour. When this was done, Christ placed mankind under a new state of probation. In which, he told them what he had done to redeem them; and what they must do, in order to obtain the benefits of that redemption. What Christ has done, is *one thing*, and what is required of men to do, is *another*. We cannot be justified before God, by our obedience to any law whatever; *we are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.* Rom. iii. 24.

Notwithstanding the whole of the human race are redeemed, none will obtain the benefits of that redemption, but only those, who by their obedience to the laws of Christ, are qualified to receive the gift of eternal life.

Neither faith, nor obedience to the laws of Christ.

nor both together are the cause of our being justified before God. 'Tis only the merits of Christ, that can avail before him, as the cause of our being received into his favour.

From this view of the subject, we shall see that St. Paul and St. James,—(who by some persons are supposed to contradict each other) are perfectly consistent in what they say concerning justification. Neither of them are treating of the cause of justification, but the condition which is man's part to perform, in order that he may be justified by the merits of Christ.

To make this point clear beyond all dispute, let it be observed; that God proved the faith of Abraham two ways;—first he proposes to him certain things as matters of belief only : Such as these,—that God would be his shield and great reward,—and give the land of Canaan to his posterity : And last of all. that he should have a son in his old age, to inherit that land ; and that the Saviour of the world should descend from that son.

Abraham believed God in all these promises ; and *it was imputed to him for righteousness*. This is what St. Paul asserts.

Then the Almighty lays a command upon Abraham to see if he would *obey* as well as *believe*. The command was to offer up his only son Isaac. Here you may see, that not only faith was required of Abraham, but obedience to a divine command. This was the good work, mentioned by St. James. He places the argument in the same point of light. *Was not*, says he, *Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar ? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect ?* (Romans iv. 3.) In other words, it proved, that his faith in the promises of God, was firm and steadfast.

St. Paul proved Abraham's faith to be complete, because he believed what God had told him. St.

James proved Abraham's faith to be complete, because he did what God commanded.

I have prepared the subject now, to lay before you a short and plain account of the doctrine of justification, as contained in the sacred scripture. Justification, not only signifies that our sins are pardoned, but we are entitled, through the merits of Christ, to the glories of a blessed immortality. The true state of justification, is briefly this,—That if we consider who it is that pronounces the sentence, it is Jesus Christ only, as Judge of the human race. If we consider what is the meritorious cause of our justification, it is only for the obedience,—the atonement and intercession of our blessed Saviour, that we are entitled to any favour. But if we have respect to what kind of qualifications are to be found in us, before Christ will suffer us to be made partakers of the benefits of his atonement: Then we shall see, that we shall be judged, not by the law Adam was under before the first sin, but by the gospel; for the covenant of grace, is the law designed for us; and our sincere obedience to the new covenant, is the method appointed by Christ to qualify us to be partakers of the benefits of redemption. In this view of the subject, it is plain, that in order to have a true knowledge of justification, you must take these three things into the account,—The sentence of the Judge—The atonement and intercession of the Mediator—and the qualifications of the man. Take these distinctions, and you will make the scripture consistent. When it means the sentence of the judge, *It is God that justifieth.* (Rom. viii. 33.) When it means the merits of Christ are the cause of our justification, then it declares, *That by him,* (that is Jesus Christ) *all that believe are justified.* (Acts xiii. 39.) When it means the qualifications in man, then it is expressed thus, *By thy words shalt thou be justified,* (Matt. xii. 37.) *Justified by faith.* (Rom. iii. 28.)

Here it may be asked, provided our title to future

happiness depends entirely upon the merits of Christ; why is every man judged according to his works?

In answer to this, let it be considered, that our title to happiness is one thing;—and the degree of it is another. I suppose every one will allow, that there will be different degrees of happiness in the state of bliss. And there must be some reason why one will have a greater degree of happiness than another. The merits of Christ will be equally extended to all that shall have any degree of happiness:—Accordingly, if nothing is to be considered in judgment but the merits of Christ, then all the saints would have the very same degree of happiness. But St. Paul has declared, That there is one glory of the sun,—another of the moon,—and another glory of the stars; for as one star differeth from another star in glory: So also is the resurrection of the dead. From which place Chrysostom infers, That though all the righteous shall be received into the kingdom of heaven; yet they shall not all have the same degree of happiness. Though vessels of different dimensions may be all full, yet they do not all hold the same quantity. Though every one receive a crown, yet those crowns are not of equal lustre.—Whereas some shall shine as the sun, others will be fainter, and others will only twinkle as the smaller stars.

Our title to happiness is founded in the ransom Christ paid to redeem us, and in his intercession for our acceptance before God; but then, each man will be judged exactly according to his conduct; that men and angels, and all created intelligencies, may see that he is dealt with, exactly according to the design and spirit of the last dispensation, given by Christ. In this dispensation, *Eternal life is the free gift of God.* But then, that man might be capable to receive this gift, he must obey the gospel; which will produce a right temper for the celestial state. We are to be rewarded in a future state; but the reward is the free bounty of heaven, and yet will be distributed exactly according to our conduct.—From hence, it is evident we are saved by free grace

and mercy, and yet our own endeavours must be exercised, in order to be fitted to receive the favour.

This plain account of justification must give you a clear view of what the doctrine is. That justification is the sentence of the Judge ; and not the act of him that stands at the bar to be judged.

May this view of the subject give you comfort and consolation, while you are here ; and when you leave this world, and your state of probation is ended, may you by the merits of Christ, be entitled to the glories of a blessed immortality.

SECTION XII.

In which will be given a short account of the excellency of the common prayer.

THE design of public worship, is,—That we should all, with one heart and with one mouth adore God, petition him for those things we want, pray to him for the continuance of such as we possess, and praise him for the favours we enjoy, more especially for redeeming love.

We are required to do this, not under a view of informing God of any thing, or of persuading him to alter his measures :—But in order to alter us, and to bring our wills to a due submission to the will of God, that we may have such a temper of mind, as it may be proper for him to bestow his favours upon us. This is the end for which prayer hath been enjoined. All the modes of religion should be so regulated as may best promote the piety and devotion of those who attend upon it. It is plain, there can be no such thing as public worship without a form. Provided a minister has no form himself; yet the words he uses in prayer, are a form to all those who join with him in their public devotions. And they cannot have any other public or social worship, besides those very words he uses, whether they like them or not.

And indeed all worshipping assemblies have forms printed, and make use of them. Is not singing of psalms a part of divine worship? and mankind cannot do this part of worship without a written form.—If it should be attempted, it is easy to see that the greatest confusion must ensue. And there may as great confusion arise from extemporary prayer, as by singing extemporary.

There is such a thing as a man's being proud of his humility ;—and there is such a thing as a man's being proud of his praying extemporary. And pray tell me,

which of the two things is most odious? When a man is proud of his gifts in prayer as it is called, very improperly, and it is discovered, as it often is, by the devout person, it certainly spoils his devotion, and throws him into the greatest confusion.

When a pious and devout soul, hath entered into the church of God, with a design to worship him in spirit and in truth;—and considers in whose awful presence he is, and the congregation ready to join with him, and he with his knees bowed down to the earth, and his eyes, heart and hand lifted up to heaven:—And suppose a proud arrogant young man, ignorant of the world, of himself, and of the religion of Jesus, should be the person to dictate the prayer of the congregation; and he should, instead of praying in a humble, devout, and decent manner, spend the greatest part of what ought to have been prayer, in telling the Almighty, in expressions proper to flatter the vanity of man, how great he is, what he is, what he can do, and what he must do: And in a commanding tone of voice, dictate him how he shall do it. Under these circumstances, what would be the confusion of a devout congregation? That such things, or something similar, has happened, is too evident to be denied.

I would by no means, be understood, that this is the case of all those who make use of extemporary prayer. I believe there are many worthy and judicious men, who use it, and do the best they can to promote the devotion of the people. And perhaps many wish for a reform in the business, but are not able to bring it about.

Under these circumstances, would it not be natural to inquire, Whether a form of prayer, well digested and properly worded, with such expressions, in which, a congregation might all unite, would not be preferable to extemporary prayer? If this should be the result of the enquiry, that a good form would be a great advantage to the sincere christian in his devotion: Would it not naturally lead to enquire, whether, all things con-

sidered, a better form of prayer for public worship can be drawn up, than that of the common prayer of the church of England? This enquiry may be answered best, by taking a view of the excellency of that most edifying service.

In this divine service, there is none of those vain disputations, and impertinent controversies, which have been raised to the great disturbance of the church.— There are no new opinions, or airy speculations, which only serve to tickle men's ears, and please their fancies, and so divert their thoughts from the spirit of devotion.

If you will take a serious view of this service, you will find nothing asserted, but what is agreeable to God's word; nothing prayed for, but according to his promise; nothing enjoined as a duty, but what is agreeable to his commands; nothing said or done, but what is grave and sober, solemn and substantial; nothing but what is proper for the worship of the great Jehovah.

There is nothing necessary to be *known*, but we are *taught* it; nothing necessary to be *done*, but we are *enjoined* it; nothing necessary to be *obtained*, but we *pray* for it. In this service, we ask every thing in the name of Christ; which is the only way, by which we can obtain what we desire; and by consequence, the most proper way to build us up in our most holy religion.— Let us suppose a number of sober and devout christians (such as we all should be) met together to perform their public devotions to Almighty God; every one of which had lift up his soul to God, imploring his assistance in the performance of so great a work, and accordingly are now ready to set about it.

After the minister has read some proper places of scripture, that may fit and prepare the minds of the congregation to approach their Maker; and lest any should in a thoughtless manner, rush into the presence of God; the minister, in a very grave exhortation addresses the people to consider the importance of the business they are about to enter upon.

Our minds being brought into a right frame and temper, we all, both minister and people, prostrate ourselves before the Most High God, *confessing*, upon our knees, the manifold sins that we have committed. Which confession is so contrived, that the whole congregation may join in it. And while we are thus upon our knees, the minister rises up, and pronounces and declares, that God will pardon all those who sincerely repent and believe the gospel. And according to our faith so shall it be done unto us. When this is done, we address God as our Father, in that divine form, which he hath taught us. And then we proceed to praise God, in hymns and psalms appointed to be used.

Having thus praised God, our hearts are composed with all attention to hear what God hath told us in the sacred scripture; having heard God speaking in his holy word, we then adore him in that sacred and heavenly hymn called the *Te Deum*. By using this hymn, our souls are upon the wing, and rised up to the highest pitch of admiration, and are in earnest to hear, the mystery of our redemption, from the sacred gospel.—At the end of which, we praise God, that he hath revealed these things to us; and acknowledge our belief of the scripture, by repeating the apostles' creed, which contains the sum of them.

Thus ends the daily service, with proper collects and prayers, together with a general thanksgiving for all the favours we enjoy, spiritual and temporal.

But upon the Lord's-day, Wednesdays, and Fridays, the litany is appointed to be used; a service that comprehends all, and every thing that we can possibly desire of God Almighty, either for ourselves, or others. A service, that is the best calculated to raise our devotion to the highest pitch of ardour, of any thing that the wit of man ever hath invented. Indeed it is so seraphic, that it is evident, the images were taken from revelation.

In the next place, we proceed to the communion service; the excellency of which, is so great, and so plain, that I need not say any thing in commendation of it.

That nothing may be wanting to build us up in our most holy faith, our church hath appointed a sermon to be preached, which if found, plain, and practical, as it ought to be, cannot but be very advantageous to the pious christian. And would be a means to excite him to participate of that ordinance of the Lord's Supper, as often as he had opportunity.

The excellency of the liturgy of our church, is so calculated, that there is nothing wanting to recommend it to every christian, but only a steady and constant use of it. Those who find fault with it, never have used it, and do not understand how to use it.—And how far then can their judgment or opinion about it, be relied upon?—For what can a man know concerning those things of which he never had any trial; and is destitute of that knowledge by which it is to be made. The person who is qualified to pass a judgment in this case, must be one, who hath used, both a set form of prayer, and the extemporary mode of worship. Such a man is able and is qualified to determine which of the two modes of worship is the best, and most conducive to raise devotion to the highest degree that mortals are capable of in this imperfect state.

And may all those who attend upon the service of our church, take care to worship God in body and mind: that they always use those postures of the body, that are most expressive of their reverence to God, in that part of the service where it is enjoined. For the temper of the soul may greatly be effected by the posture of the body. We are to worship God with our bodies and our souls, which are his.

Another thing which ought by no means to be forgotten, is this, that every person who is worshipping God in public, should be careful to speak out with an audible, but humble voice, all the parts of the liturgy

enjoined him to use. This is bodily worship, as much as kneeling. And by a constant and pious practice of this excellent service, our souls will be raised above the world, and approach the regions of bliss, and be blessed by the God they worship.

There is another observation, to which I wish every one might pay attention ; and that is, that every one might observe in what manner the scripture is read to them in the church through the year. In the method it is appointed to be done, constitutes the best mode of teaching pure, genuine christianity that can possibly be formed. For the scriptures appointed to be read from Christmas to Trinity Sunday, lay before us, the various steps, and the whole history of what Christ has done to redeem fallen man. And from Trinity Sunday to Advent, the church hath wisely pointed out those scriptures to be read, which acquaint fallen man, what he, by the assistance of the Divine Spirit, must do, in order to obtain the benefits of that redemption. And as at the close of this mortal scene, we must all appear at the bar of Christ's judgment-seat, to receive a sentence according to our conduct :—So the church has provided, that in the close of the year, in the four Sundays in Advent, we are taught in the genuine language of heaven, that we must all be judged by that very law which Christ himself hath given to the church.

So that in the compass of the year, we are taught, from pure scripture, read to us in the church, what Christ hath done to redeem us ; and what we must do to obtain the benefits of that redemption.

When all these things, so advantageous to promote piety and goodness, are to be found in the service of our church, and not to be found in any other mode of worship whatever ; how much does it concern all, that they never fail to give their attendance as often as it is used ? For the time when they are absent, they lose that instruction from scripture which they might enjoy if they were present, and gave their attention to it.—This must be sufficient to command the attention of all men.

SECTION XII.

An exhortation to engage people in the practice of every christian duty.

THE great end and design of true religion, is, to train men up in the practice of every virtue while they are in this world, that they may be qualified for the happiness of that which is to come.

This has been God's design in all his institutions of religion from the beginning of the world, that he might bring mankind to submit to his will, and become a peculiar people, zealous of good works. This was his purpose in calling the patriarchs to go out and leave their native land. This was his design in giving the Jews a law, by which they were distinguished from all people upon earth. This was the end and intent of his sending his Son into the world, with the clearest evidence for the truth of our most holy religion.

There are so many errors crept into this religion, that it becomes necessary to point out in the plainest manner, what true religion is. The apostle, under inspiration, hath enumerated some of the most infallible and positive characters of true religion, in these words,—“Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

It is necessary for us to understand what true religion is,—the advantages that would accrue to us, if we practice it,—the assistance of the Divine Spirit to enable us to do so, and the obligations we are under, to follow where the spirit of the gospel directs us.

There are two texts of scripture, which are often used by unbelievers, and urged against the authenticity, of that written revelation, in which, they are contained. For my part, says one, all my religion is contained, in what one of the Jewish prophets says,—“In doing jus-

“tice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with my God.” For my part, says another, the apostle James has exactly hit upon my notions of religion, that it consists—“In visiting the fatherless and the widows, “and keeping myself unspotted from the world.”

Doubtless these texts contain the very sum and substance of true religion. But if the men saw the import of these texts, and how much is implied in them, I am fully persuaded, they would be ready to make as many new objections to these, as any other truths contained in the scripture. At least, I am sure, that the temper of the world in general, is directly opposite to the spirit of these texts.

When St. James speaks of visiting the fatherless and widows, in their affliction, he doubtless includes, under these, all the tender offices of sympathy and love which we owe to one another.

The fatherless and widows are named, as being generally, the greatest objects of distress ; but the precept, taken in its true spirit, relates to that charitable, benevolent, God-like temper of mind, which those have who are governed and directed in all their actions, by the spirit of truth.

True faith, is a meek, humble, self-denying resignation of the whole man, from a conviction of his own inability to save himself. He knows he has done nothing, nor ever can do any thing to redeem himself. This is done by Christ. For which favour he is bound by the strictest ties and bonds of gratitude to shew every kindness to his fellow creatures, which is in his power.

From this divine union of faith and love, springs up that charity, which in its most enlarged and unlimited sense derives blessing to all that are within its reach ; and from hence, in all its fair and beauteous branches, it is cherished and enlivened.

The very essence of religion, is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and flowing from thence, in copious streams into the afflicted breasts of the poor,

the widow and the fatherless. The omission of any one of the least of these duties of love, is an offence more heinous in the sight of heaven, than a thousand errors in doctrine.

Let us be as orthodox as we can, let us hear as many good sermons and conversations as possible :— But for heaven's sake, and for our souls' sake, let us not violate, in the minutest instance, any thing of this eternal law of love.

Thus you see the excellency of the laws of the christian religion : But in order that you may be enabled to live a life agreeable to these laws, Christ has purchased the assistance of the Divine Spirit, and gives it to the members of his church ; not as a rule for their conduct, but to assist them in obeying the laws of Christ ; and warning them, to attend to those things contained in the written revelation. We should always seek for, and cherish the assistance of this blessed spirit.

Blessed be God, there is no man without the assistance of the Divine Spirit, no sinner but he is reprov- ed by this Spirit for his evil deeds. The Divine Spirit is a friend who speaks to mankind, at all times and seasons, in the hurry of the day, and in the silent shades of the night ; amidst the anxiety of expectation, and the ardour of possession ;—vigorously remonstrating against every sinful suggestion, and sharply rebuking the mind for every sinful act.

The pride of man, does not like the frequent appearance of this Heavenly messenger, and treats him many times with disdain. Go thy way for this time, was the language of voluptuous greatness, to an inspired apostle ; go thy way for this time, is still the language of every man of the world, when he is checked or interrupted in his vicious and lawless pursuits, by the voice of this inward monitor. His language is,—Why art thou perpetually intruding on my hours of business, pleasure, or repose ? and teasing and disquieting me with thy ill-timed admonitions and rebukes ?

How many instances are there, in which men have given such rash and impatient answers to the Spirit of God? when some darling passion hath importunately solicited for immediate indulgence?

But who is this messenger, this inward witness (—It is no other, than the eternal Spirit of thy God and thy Redeemer, who by continually opposing the language of truth to the spirit of error, hath been endeavouring to free thy soul from the state of bondage, and to bring it into a state of perfect liberty.

I fear many mistake death for life, misery for happiness, time for eternity. Thy will and affections have been fixed upon objects which cannot give the pleasures; turned from thy God, the true and only source of goodness and happiness, to work wickedness in the elements of sin and darkness. When we follow the maxims of the world, all is darkness, disorder and disquietude: But when we pursue the way the gospel hath pointed out, then we shall, by the assistance of the Divine Spirit, have a clear and distinct view of those things that belong to our peace.

Let us all remember, there is a time at hand, when, light as we may think of the blessings we now enjoy, we shall most ardently long for the support that religion affords, and the consolation of the Holy Spirit. When languishing with sickness, and oppressed with pain, it is God alone who softens our pillow, and supplies us with inward strength; when tottering with age, and bowed down with infirmities, it is he alone who can be our rod and staff. And when the lamp of life, is so near expiring, that we can scarcely see our passage to the verge of time, it is he alone that can light up the lamp of God in our hearts, and conduct us through the dark valley of the shadow of death, to the bright regions of celestial glory.

Too many there are, that cannot bear to be told the necessity of a holy life; that they must have a righteous temper, in some measure like to that of Christ's. Such persons will reply, they know of no righteousness,

not only that imputed by Christ. If we may judge from the conversation of such a person, we must think, he esteems himself absolutely perfect ; if we judge from his practice and actions, he is very far from it. These persons make no distinction between that righteousness by which we are justified ; and that inherent holiness which fits us to receive the gift of eternal life. Our obedience to the divine law, determines the degree, not the title, to our happiness.—Yet many christians seem perfectly indifferent. what degree of this happiness shall be theirs. If they can get to heaven, it matters not what their happiness is. Such persons are putting off, the preparation for the eternal world to a future day. Any time, rather than the present, is generally allotted for this business. Any means, rather than those which Christ hath appointed, are generally pitched upon.—When we consider what advantages we have ; how can we put off this business one moment. when we know we are not sure of the next ? When we consider what our blessed Saviour has done for us, how can we forbear crying out, O, my blessed Saviour ! what do I see ? What manifestations of thy desire of my happiness ? What pains hast thou endured to make me happy forever ?—What manner of love is this ?

These contemplations, which are proper for us, must carry our souls, from earthly objects, into the regions of glory ; they leave this world, arise till they get before the throne of God ; they take a view of that world, where there is no noise, but that of hallelujahs. In that blessed place, there is no discontent, no war, no dissensions ; there all agree, and are all one church, and live in love and harmony inexpressible. The pious soul, swallowed in admiration,—cries out, Lord Jesus, give me my portion in heaven, I desire no more ; it is all I aim at. It is all that is uppermost in all my pursuits. O that I may obtain that blessed state, by the atonement and intercession of my adorable Redeemer.

When millions of ages are passed, the happiness and glory to the righteous will be as it were beginning.—

All these favours are the effects of Christ's love to mankind. Can we then raise the ecstasies of our joy too high ; or our acclamation of praise be too much exalted ? Or, the manifestation of our gratitude be too conspicuous ! No ! Nothing that is infinite as these favours are, can ever meet with an adequate return from the praises of finite mortals. This is all that it required ; and all that we can give, to acknowledge the favour received.

Thus I have laid before you some of those great objects, which relate to your eternal state. I have endeavoured to introduce you, into a proper method, to understand the nature of true religion,—The design of God, in giving of you such a religion, and the way to discover the true character of your own hearts. Let these sentiments fix your future conduct. Let your life be regulated by the will of Him who made and redeemed you ; and then you cannot fail of being eternally happy.

QUESTIONS, &c.

I SHALL suppose my readers to have considered with care and candour what I have advanced in the foregoing sheets ; and I shall now propose a few plain material questions ; which if honestly answered, may cast some light upon true religion.

QUESTION I. Were not the apostles appointed by Christ, the first and chief ministers in his kingdom ?— And did they not, by virtue of the commission he gave them, govern the clergy and laity during their lives, according to the laws given to the church ?

QUEST. II. Do not all christians allow, that the apostles exercised this power in the same manner, as it is laid down in the preceding question ?

QUEST. III. Can we suppose, that the apostles acted contrary to the express direction of Christ, in the government of the church ? If not, must not the government they exercised be according to the spirit of the laws of Christ's kingdom ;—or in other words, be of divine appointment ?

QUEST. IV. Have the apostles acquainted us, that there was *another* rule given from heaven for the government of the church, that was to take place after they were dead, *different* from that by which they governed it, when alive ?

QUEST. V. If there has been no law given for the government of the church since the time of the apostles, must we not take *that* law for the government of it now, by which the apostles governed it in their time ?

QUEST. VI. Can any man, unless he has the same office, which the apostles had, justly claim the same authority in the government of the church, which the apostles exercised in the discipline of elders, or presbyters?

QUEST. VII. If the apostolic office died with the apostles, where shall we find in the church now, such an officer as has a right, according to the gospel constitution, to discipline an offending presbyter?

QUEST. VIII. Was not the government of the church exercised by the apostles, exactly the same with that of episcopacy?

QUEST. IX. Must not episcopacy originate, either from the *invention of men*, or from *divine appointment*? If from the invention of men, where was the place, when was the *time* of its being done? Who were the men that invented it? Where are the laws by which it was constituted? What ancient writer is there that supports it? If none of these things can be specified, must we not then reject the notion that episcopacy, is the invention of men; and acknowledge it to be of divine appointment?

QUEST. X. Can we conceive any possible way or method by which episcopacy could be introduced into the church, but only by apostolical institution?—Or, which is tantamount, by the appointment of Christ himself? Was it not the form of the government of the church in the time of the apostles? Has it not been the form of the government of the church universal ever since? Was there any other form of government known in any part of the christian church for 1400 years after Christ?

QUEST. XI. What do those, who deny episcopacy, object to this?—Don't they say, that the apostles left

the church under a *presbyterian form of government* when they *died* ; although it was episcopal when they were *alive* ? *

QUEST. XII. If there was a time when there were no christians in the whole world, but only presbyterians, then if episcopacy was the invention of men, must it not be said, it was the invention of presbyterians? Will the presbyterians undertake to prove this to be a fact? And 'f this is not true, can they support their scheme?

* Those who affirm that the apostolic office is not to continue to the end of the world, but died with the apostles, ought to consider, that what they assert wants two things to render it creditable. One is, it wants the air of truth; the other, the evidence of the fact.

THE END.

