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In Two Volumes

Home, Henry

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Sect. II. Morality considered as a branch of duty to our Maker.

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little of moral duties ; and a savage, with respect to these, is not much superior to a child. The formation and government of the world, as far as we know, are excellent : we have great reason to presume the same with respect to what we do not know ; and every good man will rest satisfied with the following reflection, That we would have been men from the hour of our birth, complete in every part, had it been conformable to the system of unerring Providence.

S E C T. II.

Morality considered as a branch of duty to our Maker.

HAVING travelled long on a rough road, not a little fatiguing, the agreeable part lies before us ; which is, to treat of morality as a branch of religion. It was that subject which induced me to undertake the history of natural religion ; a subject that will afford salutary instruction, and will inspire true piety, if instruction can produce that effect.

Bayle starts a question, Whether a people may not be happy in society, and be qualified for good government, upon principles of morality singly, without any sense of religion. The question is ingenious, and may give opportunity for subtle reasoning ; but it is useless, because the fact supposed cannot happen. The principles of morality and of religion are equally rooted in our nature : they are indeed weak in children and in savages ; but they grow up together, and advance toward maturity with equal steps.

Where-

Where-ever the moral sense is in perfection, a sense of religion cannot be wanting; and if a man who has no sense of religion, live decently in society, he is more indebted for his conduct to good temper than to sound morals.

We have the authority of the Prophet Micah, formerly quoted, for holding, that religion, or, in other words, our duty to God, consists in doing justice, in loving mercy, and in walking humbly with him. The last is the foundation of religious worship, discussed in the foregoing section: the two former belong to the present head. And if we have gratitude to our Maker and Benefactor, if we owe implicit obedience to his will as our rightful sovereign, we ought not to separate the worship we owe to him, from justice and benevolence to our fellow-creatures; for to be unjust to them, to be cruel or hard-hearted, is a transgression of his will, no less gross than a total neglect of religious worship. “Master, which is the great commandment in the law? “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with “all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This “is the first and great commandment. And the second is like “unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these “two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (a).” “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, “ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. “For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye “gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, “and ye clothed me: sick, and ye visited me: in prison, and “ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer, saying, “Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, “and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took “thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? When saw we thee

(a) Matthew, xxii. 36.



“ sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall
 “ answer, Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it
 “ unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it un-
 “ to me (a).” “ Pure religion and undefiled before God, is this,
 “ To visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction; and to keep
 “ himself unspotted from the world (b).” “ *Hostias et victimas*
 “ *Domino offeram quas in usum mei protulit, ut rejiciam ei suum*
 “ *munus? Ingratum est; cum fit litabilis hostia bonus animus,*
 “ *et pura mens, et sincera conscientia. Igitur qui innocentiam co-*
 “ *lit, Domino supplicat; qui justitiam, Deo libat; qui fraudi-*
 “ *bus abstinet, propitiat Deum; qui hominem periculo subripit,*
 “ *optimam victimam cædit. Hæc nostra sacrificia, hæc Dei sacra*
 “ *sunt. Sic apud nos religiosior est ille, qui justior * (c).”* The
 laws of Zaleucus, lawgiver to the Locrians, who lived before the
 days of Pythagoras, are introduced with the following preamble.
 “ No man can question the existence of Deity who observes the
 “ order and harmony of the universe, which cannot be the pro-
 “ duction of chance. Men ought to bridle their passions, and to
 “ guard against every vice. God is pleased with no sacrifice but
 “ a sincere heart; and differs widely from mortals, whose delight

* “ Shall I offer to God for a sacrifice those creatures which his bounty has
 “ given me for my use? It were ingratitude to throw back the gift upon the gi-
 “ ver. The most acceptable sacrifice is an upright mind, an untainted conscience,
 “ and an honest heart. The actions of the innocent ascend to God in prayer;
 “ the observance of justice is more grateful than incense; the man who is sincere
 “ in his dealings, secures the favour of his Creator; and the delivery of a fellow-
 “ creature from danger or destruction, is dearer in the eyes of the Almighty than
 “ the sacrifice of blood.”

(a) Matthew, xxv. 34.

(b) James, i. 27.

(c) Minucius Felix.



“ are splendid ceremonies and rich offerings. Let justice there-
“ fore be studied ; for by that only can a man be acceptable to
“ the Deity. Let those who are tempted to do ill, have always
“ before their eyes, the severe judgements of the gods against
“ wicked men. Let them always keep in view the hour of death,
“ that fatal hour which is attended with bitter remorse for trans-
“ gressing the rules of justice. If a bad disposition incline you
“ to vice, pray to Heaven at the foot of the altar, to mend your
“ heart.”

Morality is thus included in religion. Some nations, however, leave not this proposition to reasoning or conviction, but ingross many moral duties in their religious creed. In the 67th chapter of the Sadder, a lie is declared to be a great sin, and is discharged even where it tends to bring about good. So much purer is the morality of the ancient Persians than of the present Jesuits. The religion of the people of Pegu, inculcates charity, forbids to kill, to steal, or to injure others. Attend to the consequence : that people, fierce originally, have become humane and compassionate. In a sacred book of the ancient Persians, it is written, “ If you
“ incline to be a saint, give good education to your children ;
“ for their virtuous actions will be imputed to you.” The people of Japan pay great respect to their parents ; it being an article in their creed, That those who fail in duty to their parents, will be punished by the gods. In these two instances, religion tends greatly to connect parents and children in the most intimate tie of cordial affection. The reverence the Chinese have for their ancestors, and the ceremonies performed annually at their tombs, tend to keep them at home, and prevent their wandering into foreign countries.

Superstitious rites in some religions, are successfully employ'd to enforce certain moral duties. The Romans commonly made their solemn covenants in the capitol, before the statue of Jupiter ;



ter; by which solemnity he was understood to guarantee the covenant, ready to pour out vengeance upon the transgressor. The Burates, a people in Grand Tartary, have a custom, which is, to demand an oath upon a mountain, held to be sacred. They are firmly persuaded, that the person who swears a falsehood, will not come down alive. The Essenes, a Jewish sect, bound themselves by a solemn oath, to shun unlawful gain, to be faithful to their promises, not to lie, and never to harm any one. In Cochin-China, the souls of those who have been eminent for arts or arms, are worshipped. Their statues are placed in the temples; and the size of a statue is proportioned to the merit of the person represented. If that custom be executed with candor, there cannot be a nobler incitement to public spirit. The Egyptians did not reach the thought of honouring virtue after death; but they dishonoured vice, by prohibiting it from the Elysian fields.

The salutary influence of religion on morality, is not confined to pure religion, whether by its connection with morality in general, or by inculcating particular moral duties. There are many religious doctrines, doubtful or perhaps erroneous, that contribute also to enforce morality. Some followers of Confucius ascribe immortality to the souls only of the just; and believe that the souls of the wicked perish with their bodies. In the second chapter of the Sadder, it is written, that a man whose good works are more numerous than his sins, will go to paradise; otherwise that he will be thrust into hell, there to remain for ever. It adds, that a bridge erected over the great abyss where hell is situated, leads from this earth to paradise; that upon the bridge there stands an angel, who weighs in a balance the merits of the passengers; that the passenger whose good works are found light in the balance, is thrown over the bridge into hell; but that the passenger whose good works preponderate, proceeds in his journey to paradise, where there is a glorious city, gardens, rivers, and beautiful

tiful virgins, whose looks are a perpetual feast, but who must not be enjoy'd. In the fourth chapter of the Sadder, good works are zealously recommended in the following parable. Zeradusht, or Zoroaster, being in company with God, saw a man in hell who wanted his right foot. "Oh my Creator," said Zoroaster, "who is that man who wants the right foot? God answered, "He was the king of thirty-three cities, reigned many years, "but never did any good, except once, when, seeing a sheep ty'd "where it could not reach its food, he with his right foot pushed "the food to it; upon which account, that foot was saved from "hell." In Japan, those of the Sinto religion believe, that the souls of good men are translated to a place of happiness, next to the habitation of their gods. But they admit no place of torment; nor have they any notion of a devil, but what animates the fox, a very mischievous animal in that country. What then becomes of the souls of ill men? Being denied entrance into heaven, they wander about to expiate their sins. Those of the Budsdo religion believe, that in the other world, there is a place of misery as well as of happiness. Of the latter, there are different degrees, for different degrees of virtue; and yet, far from envying the happier lot of others, every inhabitant is perfectly satisfied with his own. There are also different degrees of misery; for justice requires, that every man be punished according to the nature and number of his sins. *Jemma O* is the severe judge of the wicked: their vices appear to him in all their horror, by means of a mirror, named *the mirror of knowledge*. When souls have expiated their sins, after suffering long in the prison of darkness, they are sent back into the world, to animate serpents, toads, and such vile animals as resembled them in their former existence. From these they pass into the bodies of more innocent animals; and at last are again suffered to enter human bodies; after the dissolution of which, they run the same course of happiness or misery as at first. The
people:



people of Benin, in Africa, believe a man's shadow to be a real being, that gives testimony after death for or against him; and that he accordingly is made happy or miserable in another world. A religious belief in ancient Greece, that the souls of those who are left above ground without rites, have not access to Elysium, tended to promote humanity; for those who are careful of the dead, will not be altogether indifferent about the living.

Immense are the blessings that men in society reap, from the union of pure religion with sound morality: but however immense, I boldly affirm, that they scarce counterbalance the manifold evils that society has suffered from impure religion, indulging and even encouraging gross immoralities. A few of the most glaring instances shall be selected. The first I shall mention is, the holding religion to consist in the belief of points purely speculative, such as have no relation to good works. The natural effect of that doctrine is, to divorce religion from morality, in manifest contradiction to the will of God. What avails it, for example, to the glory of God, or to the happiness of mankind, whether the conception of the Virgin Mary was maculate or immaculate? The following few instances, taken out of a large heap, are controversies of that kind, which miserably afflicted the Christian church for ages, and engendered the bitterest enmity, raging with destruction and slaughter among brethren of the same religion. In the fifth century, it was the employment of more than one general council, to determine, whether *the mother of God, or the mother of Christ*, is the proper epithet of the Virgin Mary. In the sixth century, a bitter controversy arose, whether Christ's body was corruptible. In the seventh century, Christians were divided about the volition of Christ, whether he had one or two Wills, and how his Will operated. In the eighth and ninth centuries, the Greek and Latin churches divided about the Holy Ghost, whether he proceeded from the Father and Son, or only from the Father. In the eleventh century, there



there arose a warm contest between the Greek and Latin churches, about using unleavened bread in the eucharist. In the fourteenth century, it was controverted between Pope John XXII. and the divines of his time, whether souls in their intermediate state see God, or only the human nature of Christ. Franciscans have suffered death in multitudes about the form of their hood. It was disputed between the Dominicans and Franciscans, whether Christ had any property. The Pope pronounced the negative proposition to be a pestilential and blasphemous doctrine, subversive of Catholic faith. Many councils were held at Constantinople, to determine what sort of light it was that the disciples saw on Mount Tabor: it was solemnly pronounced, to be the eternal light with which God is encircled; and which may be termed his energy or operation, but is distinct from his nature and essence. A heap of propositions in the creed of St Athanasius, as far as intelligible, are merely speculative, such as may be adopted or rejected, without the least danger to religion, or to morality; and yet we are commanded to believe every one of them, under the pain of eternal damnation. An endless number of such propositions, adopted by the Romish church, clearly evince, that Christianity was in that church held to consist entirely in belief, without any regard to good works*. Whether the Alcoran was eternal, or whether it was created, is a dispute that has occasioned much effusion of Mahometan blood. The Calif Mamoun, with many doctors, held it to have been created; but the greater number insisted, that being the word of God, it must like him be eternal. This opinion is embraced by the present Mahometants, who hold all who deny it to be infidels. There is among men great uniformity of opinion in

* The great weight that was laid upon orthodoxy, appears from a triumphal arch erected over the tomb of Charlemagne, upon which was the following inscription: "Here lies the body of Charles, a great and orthodox emperor."



matters of importance. Religious differences are generally about trifles, where liberty ought to be indulged without reserve (a); and yet upon these trifles are founded the bitterest enmities. It ought therefore to be a fundamental law in every church, to abstain from loading its creed with articles that are not essential; for such articles tend to eradicate brotherly love, and to convert into bitter enemies, men who are fundamentally of the same faith.

In the next place shall be mentioned, certain articles of faith that tend to sap the very foundation of one or other moral duty. What, for example, can more effectually promote cruelty, than the creed of the Idaans, a people in the island of Borneo, That every person they put to death must attend them as a slave in the other world? This belief makes them prone to war, and occasions assassinations without end. According to the creed of the savages in Canada, the killing and burning enemies are what chiefly entitle them to be happy in another world; and that he who destroys the greatest number, will be the most happy. At the same time, they have no notion of greater happiness there, than plenty of game, great abundance of all things without labour, and full gratification of every sensual appetite. The Scandinavians had no notion of greater bliss in another world, than to drink beer out of the skull of an enemy, in the hall of Woden, their tutelar deity: can hatred and revenge in this world be more honourably rewarded? The doctrine of tutelar deities is equally productive of hatred and revenge: relying on a superior power who espouses all my quarrels, I put no bounds to my resentment, and every moral duty in opposition is trampled under foot. The following creed of the inhabitants of the Marian or Ladronne islands, is a great encouragement to cowardice. Heaven, according to that creed, is a region under the earth, filled with cocoa-trees, sugar-

(a) Elements of Criticism, vol. 2. p. 493. edit. 5.

canes,



canes, and variety of other delicious fruits. Hell is a vast furnace, constantly red hot. Their condition in the other world depends not on good or bad actions, but on the manner of their death. Those who die a natural death, go straight to heaven: they may sin freely, if they can but secure their persons against violence. But war and bloodshed are their aversion, because those who suffer a violent death go straight to hell. In many ancient nations, a goddess was worshipped, whose province it was to promote animal love without regard to matrimony. That goddess was in Greece termed *Aphrodité*, in Rome *Venus*, and in Babylon *Mylitta*. To her was sacrificed, in some countries, the virginity of young women; which, it was believed, did secure their chastity for ever after. Justin mentions a custom in the island of Cyprus, of sending young women at stated times to the sea-shore; where they prostituted themselves as a tribute to Venus, that they might be chaste the rest of their lives. His words are, “Pro reliqua
 “pudicitiae libamenta Veneri soluturas (a).” In other nations, a small number only were prostituted, in order to secure to the remainder, a chaste and regular life. This explains a custom among the Babylonians, which, far from being thought a religious act, is held as a proof of abandoned debauchery. The custom was, That every woman once in her life should prostitute herself in the temple of the goddess Mylitta. Herodotus reports, that thereby they became proof against all temptation. And Ælian observes the same of the Lydian ladies. *Credat Judeus Apella*. Margaret Poretta, who in the fourteenth century made a figure among the Beguines, preached a doctrine not a little favourable to incontinence. She undertook to demonstrate, “That the soul, when
 “absorbed in the love of God, is free from the restraint of law,
 “and may freely gratify every natural appetite, without contract-

(a) Lib. 18. cap. 5.



“ing guilt;” a cordial doctrine for a lady of pleasure. That crazy person, instead of being laugh’d at, was burnt alive at Paris. In the fifteenth century, a sect termed *brethren and sisters of the free spirit*, held, That modesty is a mark of inhering corruption; and that those only are perfect, who can behold nakedness without emotion. These fanatics appeared at public worship, without the least covering. Many tenets professed by the Jesuits, open a door to every immorality. “Persons truly wicked, and void of the love of God, may expect eternal life in heaven; provided only they be impressed with fear of divine anger, and avoid heinous crimes through the dread of future punishment.” Again, “Persons may transgress with safety, who have a probable reason for transgressing, such as any plausible argument. A judge, for example, may decide for the least probable side of a question, and even against his own opinion, provided he be supported by any tolerable authority.” Again, “Actions intrinsically evil, and contrary to divine law, may however be innocently performed, by those who can join, even ideally, a good end to the performance. For example, an ecclesiastic may safely commit simony, by purchasing a benefice, if to the unlawful act, he join the innocent purpose of procuring to himself a subsistence. A man who runs another through the body for a slight affront, renders the action lawful, if his motive be honour, not revenge.” A famous Jesuit taught, that a young man may wish the death of his father, and even rejoice at his death, provided the wish proceed, not from hatred, but from fondness of his father’s estate. And another Jesuit has had the effrontery to maintain, that a monk may lawfully assassinate a calumniator, who threatens to charge his order with scandalous practices.

A doctrine that strikes at the root of every moral duty, as well as of religion itself, is, That God will accept a composition for
 fin;



fin; a doctrine that prevailed universally during the days of ignorance. Compositions for crimes were countenanced by law in every country (*a*); and men, prone to indulge their passions, flatter'd themselves, that they might compound with God for sinning against him, as with their neighbours for injuring them. Those who have no notion of any motive but interest, naturally think it to be equally powerful with the Deity. An opinion prevailed universally in the Christian church, from the eighth century down to the Reformation, that liberal donations to God, to a saint, to the church, would procure pardon even for the grossest sins. During that period, the building churches and monasteries was in high vogue. This absurd or rather impious doctrine, proved a plentiful harvest of wealth to the clergy; for the great and opulent, who are commonly the boldest sinners, have the greatest ability to compound for their sins. There needs nothing but such an opinion, to annihilate every duty, whether moral or religious; for what wicked man will think either of restitution or of reformation, who can purchase a pardon from Heaven with so little trouble? Louis XI. of France was remarkably superstitious, even in a superstitious age. To ingratiate himself with the Virgin Mary, he surrendered to her the county of Boulogne with great solemnity. Voltaire remarks, that godliness consists, not in making the Virgin a Countess, but in abstaining from sin. Composition for sins is a doctrine of the church of Rome, boldly professed without disguise. A book of rates, published by authority of the Pope, contains stated prices for absolutions, not excepting the most heinous sins that men are capable to commit. So true is the observation of Æneas Silvius, afterward Pope Paul II. "Nihil est
" quod absque argento Romana curia det: ipsa manuum impositio,
" et Spiritus Sancti dona, venduntur; nec peccatorum venia nisi

(*a*) Historical Law-tracts, tract I.

" nummatis.



“ nummatis impenditur *.” Of all the immoral atonements for sin, human sacrifices are the most brutal; deviating no less from the purity of religion, than from the fundamental principles of morality. They wore out of use as kindly affections prevailed; and will never again be restored, unless we fall back to the savage manners of our forefathers. Composition for crimes, once universal, is now banished from every enlightened nation. Composition for sins, was once equally universal; and I wish it could be said, that there are now no remains of that poisonous opinion among Christians: the practice of the church of Rome will not permit it to be said. Were men deeply convinced, as they ought to be, that sincere repentance and reformation of manners are the only means for obtaining pardon, they would never dream of making bargains with the Almighty, and of compounding with him for their sins.

In the practice of religion, the laying too great weight on forms, ceremonies, and other external arbitrary acts, has an unhappy tendency on morality. That error has infected every religion. The Sadder, the Bible of the Gaures, prohibits calumny and detraction, lying, stealing, adultery, and fornication. It however enervates morality and religion, by placing many trifling acts on a level with the most important duties. It enjoins the destruction of five kinds of reptiles, frogs, mice, ants, serpents, and flies that sting. It teaches, that to walk barefoot profanes the ground. Great regard for water is enjoined: it must not be used during the night; and when set upon the fire, a third part of the pot must be empty, to prevent boiling over. The bramins have wofully degenerated from their original institutions, thinking at

* “ There is nothing to be obtained from the court of Rome, but by the force
“ of money: even the ceremony of consecration, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost,
“ are sold; and the remission of sins is bestowed only on those who can pay for
“ it.”

present,

present, that religion consists in forms and ceremonies. As soon as an infant is born, the word *Oum* must be pronounced over it; otherwise it will be eternally miserable: its tongue must be rubbed with consecrated meal: the third day of the moon, it must be carried into open air, with its head to the north. The inhabitants of Formosa believe in hell; but it is only for punishing those who fail to go naked in certain seasons, or who wear cotton instead of silk. In the time of Ghenhizcan, it was held in Tartary a mortal sin, to put a knife into the fire, to whip a horse with his bridle, or to break one bone with another; and yet these pious Tartars held treachery, robbery, murder, to be no sins. A faction in Ægina, a Greek commonwealth, treacherously assassinated seven hundred of their fellow-citizens. They cut off the hands of a miserable fugitive, who had laid hold of the altar for protection, in order to murder him without the precincts of the temple. Their treacherous assassinations made no impression: but tho' they refrained from murder in the temple, yet by profaning it with blood, says Herodotus, they offended the gods, and contracted inexpiable guilt. Would one believe, that a tribunal was established by Charlemagne more horrible than the inquisition itself? It was established in Westphalia, to punish with death every Saxon who eat meat in lent. The same law was established in Flanders and in French-county, the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Listen to a celebrated writer upon that poisonous conceit. “ It is certain, that in every religion, however sublime, many of the votaries, perhaps the greatest number, will still seek the divine favour, not by virtue and good morals, which alone can be acceptable to a perfect being, but either by frivolous observances, by intemperate zeal, by rapturous ecstasies, or by the belief of mysterious and absurd opinions. When the old Romans were attacked with a pestilence, they never ascribed their sufferings

present



“ sufferings to their vices, or dreamed of repentance and amend-
 “ ment. They never thought that they were the general robbers
 “ of the world, whose ambition and avarice made desolate the
 “ earth, and reduced opulent nations to want and beggary. They
 “ only created a dictator in order to drive a nail into a door; and
 “ by that means they thought that they had sufficiently appeased
 “ their incensed deity (a).” Thus, gradually, the essentials of
 religion wear out of mind, by the attention given to forms and
 ceremonies: these intercept and exhaust the whole stock of de-
 votion, which ought to be reserved for the higher exercises of reli-
 gion. The neglect or transgression of mere punctilios, are punish-
 ed as heinous sins; while sins really heinous are suffered to pass
 with impunity. The Jews exalted the keeping their sabbath holy,
 above every other duty; and it was the general belief, that the
 strict observance of that day was alone sufficient to atone for every
 sin. The command of resting that day, was taken so literally,
 that they would not on that day defend themselves even against an
 assassin. Ptolomy, son of Lagus, entered Jerusalem on the Jewish
 sabbath, in a hostile manner without resistance. Nor did experience
 open the eyes of that foolish people. Xiphilin, relating the siege
 of Jerusalem by Pompey, says, that if the Jews had not rested
 on the sabbath, Pompey would not have been successful. Every
 Saturday he renewed his batteries; and having on that day made
 a breach, he marched into the town without opposition. One
 cannot help smiling at an Amsterdam Jew, who had no check of
 conscience, for breaking open a house, and carrying off money; and
 yet being stopped in his flight by the sabbath before he got
 out of the territory, he most piously rested, till he was apprehend-
 ed, and led to the gallows. Nor are the Jews to this day cured
 of that frenzy. In some late accounts from Constantinople, a fire

(a) Natural History of Religion, by David Hume, Esquire.

broke



broke out in a Jew's house on Saturday: rather than profane the sabbath, he suffered the flames to spread, which occasioned the destruction of five hundred houses *. We laugh at the Jews, and we have reason; and yet there are many well-meaning Protestants, who lay the whole of religion upon punctual attendance at public worship. Are the Roman Catholics less superstitious with respect to the place of worship, than the Jews are with respect to the day of worship? In the year 1670, some Arabians, watching an opportunity, got into the town of Dieu when the gates were opened in the morning. They might easily have been expelled by the canon of the citadel; but the Portuguese governor was obliged to look on without firing a gun, being threatened with excommunication, if the least mischief should be done to any of the churches. The only doctrines inculcated from the Romish pulpit down to the Reformation, were the authority of holy mother church; the merit of the saints, and their credit in the court of heaven; the dignity, glory, and love of the blessed Virgin; the efficacy of relics; the intolerable fire of purgatory; and the vast importance of indulgences. Relying on such pious acts for obtaining remission of sins, all orders of men rushed headlong into vice †; nor was there

a

* “ And there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and
 “ was bowed together. And Jesus laid his hands on her: and immediately she
 “ was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue with
 “ indignation said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to
 “ work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day. The
 “ Lord then said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose
 “ his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? and ought not
 “ this woman, whom Satan hath bound, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-
 “ day?” *Luke*, xiii. 11.

† An ingenious writer pleasantly observes, “ That a croifade was the South-sea
 “ project of former times: by the latter, men hoped to gain riches without indu-
 “ fry:



a single attempt to stem the current of immorality; for the traffic of indulgences could not but flourish in proportion to the growth of sin. And thus was religion set in direct opposition to morality. St Eloy, bishop of Noyon in the seventh century, and canonized by the church of Rome, delivers the following doctrine. "He is a good Christian who goes frequently to church; who presents his oblations upon the altar; who tastes not the fruit of his own industry till part be consecrated to God; who, when the holy festivals approach, lives chastely even with his own wife for several days; and who can repeat the creed and the Lord's prayer. Redeem then your souls from destruction, while you have the means in your power: offer presents and tithes to churchmen: come more frequently to church: humbly implore the patronage of saints. If you observe these things, you may, in the day of judgement, go with confidence to the tribunal of the eternal Judge, and say, Give to us, O Lord, for we have given unto thee." A modern author subjoins a proper observation. "We see here a very ample description of a good Christian, in which there is not the least mention of the love of God, resignation to his will, obedience to his laws, nor of justice, benevolence, nor charity." Gross ignorance and wretched superstition prevailed so much even in the fourteenth century, that people reckoned themselves secure of salvation, if at the day of judgement they could show any connection with monks. Many at the point of death, made it their last request, to be admitted into the mendicant order, or to be interred in their burial-place. Religion need not associate with morality, if such silly practices be sufficient for obtaining the favour of

"stry: by the former, they hoped to gain heaven without repentance, amendment of life, or sanctity of manners." *Sir David Dalrymple, a judge in the court of session.*

God.



God. Is this less absurd than the Hindostan belief, That the water of the Ganges hath a sanctifying virtue; and that those who die on its banks, are not only exempted from future punishment, but are wafted straight to paradise?

Forms and ceremonies are visible acts, which make a deep impression on the vulgar. Hence their influence in reasoning and in morality, as we have seen in the two sketches immediately foregoing; and hence also their influence in religion. Forms and ceremonies are useful at public worship; but they ought not to take place of essentials. People however, governed by what they see and hear, are more addicted to external acts of devotion, than to heart-worship, which is not known but by reflection.

It will be no excuse for relying so much on forms and ceremonies, that they are innocent. In themselves they may be innocent; but not so in their consequences. For they have by such reliance a violent tendency to relax the obligations of morality. Religious rites that contradict not any passion, are keenly embraced, and punctually performed; and men, flattering themselves that they have thus been punctual in their duty to God, give vent to their passions against men. "They pay tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin; but omit the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith (a)." Upon such a man religion sits extremely light. As he seldom exercises any act of genuine devotion, he thinks of the Deity with ease and familiarity: how otherwise is it accountable, that the plays, termed *Mysteries*, could be relished, where mean and perhaps dissolute persons are brought on the stage, acting Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and even God himself? These divine persons were certainly not more regarded, than the Grecian gods, who frequently made part of the *Dramatis personæ* in Greek plays. Many other facts might be urged, to prove the low ebb of reli-

(a) Matthew, xxiii. 23.



gion in those days: I select one or two, which probably will afford some amusement to the reader. Bartolus, the famous lawyer, in order to shew the form of proceeding in a court of justice, imagines a process between the devil and mankind. The devil cites mankind to appear at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, claiming them as belonging to him by Adam's fall. He swells in rage, demanding whether any one dares appear in their behalf. Against the Virgin Mary, offering herself as their advocate, the devil makes two objections; first, That being the mother of the Judge, her influence would be too great; second, That a woman is debarred from being an advocate: and these objections are supported by numberless quotations from the *Corpus Juris*. The Virgin, on her part, quotes texts permitting women to appear for widows, orphans, and for persons in distress. She is allowed to plead for mankind, as coming under the last article. The devil urges prescription, as having been in possession of mankind ever since the fall. The Virgin answers, That a *mala-fide possessor* cannot acquire by prescription. Prescription being repelled, the parties go to the merits of the cause, which are learnedly discussed with texts from the Pandects. The memoirs of the French academy of Belles Lettres (*a*) has the following story. A monk returning from a house which he durst not visit in day-light, had a river to cross. The boat was overturned by Satan, and the monk was drowned when he was beginning to invoke the Virgin Mary. Two devils having laid hold of his soul, were stopped by two angels. "My Lords," said the devils, "true it is, and not a fable, that God died for his friends; but this monk was an enemy to God, and we are carrying him to hell." After much altercation, it was proposed by the angels, to refer the dispute to the Virgin Mary. The devils were willing to accept of God for judge, because he would judge according to law. "But from the Virgin Mary,"

(*a*) Vol. 18.

said



said they, “ we expect no justice : she would break to atoms every gate of hell, rather than suffer one to remain there a moment who pays any worship to her image. She may say, that black is white, and that puddled water is pure.— God never contradicts her. The day on which God made his mother, was a fatal day to us.”

People who profess the same religion, and differ only in forms and ceremonies, may justly be compared to neighbouring states, who are commonly bitter enemies to each other, if they have any difference. At the same time, dissocial passions never rage so furiously, as under the mask of religion ; for in that case they are held to be meritorious, as exerted in the cause of God. This observation is but too well verified in the disputes among Christians. However low religion was in the dark ages, yet men fought for forms and ceremonies as *pro aris et focis*. In the Armenian form of baptism, the priest says at the first immersion, *In name of the Father* ; at the second, *In name of the Son* ; at the third, *In name of the Holy Ghost*. This form is bitterly condemned by the Romish church, which appoints the three persons of the Trinity to be joined in the same expression, in token of their union. Strahlenberg gives an account of a Christian sect in Russia, which differs from the established Greek church in the following particulars. First, In public worship they repeat *Halleluia* but twice ; and it is a mortal sin to repeat it thrice. Second, In celebrating mass, not five but seven loaves ought to be used. Third, The cross stamped upon a mass-loaf ought to have eight corners. Fourth, In signing with the cross at prayers, the end of the ring-finger must be joined to the end of the thumb, and the two intermediate fingers be held out at full length. How trifling are these differences ! and yet for such differences, all who dissent from them are held unclean, and no better than Pagans : they will not eat nor drink with any of the established church ; and if



a person of that church happen to sit down in a house of theirs, they wash and purify the seat *. There are few sects founded upon more trivial differences than the Turkish and Persian Mahometans. The epithets given to the Persians by the Turks are, "Forfaken of God, Abominable, Blasphemers of the Holy Prophet;" and so bitter is their enmity to the Persians, that the schools of the seraglio are open to young men of all nations, those of Persia alone excepted. The Persians are held to be such apostates from the true faith, as to be utterly past recovery: they receive no quarter in war, being accounted unworthy of life or slavery. Nor do the Persians yield to the Turks in hatred. Whether coffee be or be not prohibited in the Alcoran, has produced much controversy in the Mahometan church, and consequently much persecuting zeal. A mufti, not fond of coffee, declared it, like wine, to have an inebriating quality, and therefore was virtually prohibited by Mahomet. Another mufti, fond of coffee for its exhilarating virtue, declared it lawful; "because," said he, "all things are lawful that are not expressly prohibited in the Alcoran." The coffeehouses in Constantinople, were for a long period alternately opened and shut, according to the taste of the reigning mufti; till coffee at last, surmounting all obstacles, came to be an established Mahometan liquor. Religion thus runs wild, whenever it loses sight of its true ends, that of worshipping God, and that of being just to man. The Hindows hate the Mahometans for eating the flesh of cows: the Mahometans hate the Hindows for eating the flesh of swine. The aversion that men of

* Christians, occupy'd too much with external forms, have corrupted several of the fine arts. They have injured architecture, by erecting magnificent churches in the ugly form of a cross. And they have injured painting, by withdrawing the best hands from proper subjects, and employing them on the legendary martyrdom of pretended saints, and other such disagreeable stories.

the



the same religion have at each other for the most trivial differences, converts them frequently into brutal savages. Suppose, for example, that a poor man, reduced to the extremity of hunger, makes a greedy meal of a dead horse, a case so deplorable would wring every heart. And yet, let this be done in Lent, or on a meagre day—Behold! every zealot is instantly metamorphos'd into a devil incarnate. In the records of St Claude, a small district of Burgundy, is engrossed a sentence against a poor gentleman named *Claude Guillon*. The words are, “Having considered the process, and taken advice of the doctors of law, we declare the said Claude Guillon duly convicted for having carried away and boiled a piece of a dead horse, and of having eat the same on the 31st March, being Saturday.” And he was beheaded accordingly 28th July 1629; notwithstanding a defence above all exception, That he committed that irregularity to preserve his life. How was it possible for the monsters to persuade themselves, that this sentence was agreeable to God, who is goodness itself!

No less prejudicial to morality, than the relying too much on forms and ceremonies, is the treating some sins with great severity; neglecting others equally heinous, or perhaps more so. In a book of rates for absolution, mentioned above, no just distinction is made among sins; some venial sins being taxed at a higher rate than many of the deepest dye. For example, the killing father, mother, brother, sister, or wife, is taxed at five gros; and the same for incest with a mother or sister. The lying with a woman in the church is taxed at six gros; and at the same time, absolution for usury is taxed at seven gros, and for simony at no less than sixteen gros*.

A maxim adopted by many pious persons, has a smiling ap-

* A gros is the third part of a ducat.

pearance,



pearance, but in its consequences is hurtful both to religion and morality; which is, That to testify our veneration for the Deity, and zeal for his service, the performing public and private worship, and the fulfilling moral duties, are not alone sufficient; that over and above we are bound to fast, to do penance, to honour the priesthood, and to punish the enemies of God, *i. e.* those who differ from us in principles or practice. This maxim, which may be termed *the doctrine of supererogation*, is finely illustrated by an author mentioned above. “ The duties which a man performs
“ as a friend or parent, seem merely owing to his benefactor or
“ children; nor can he be wanting to these duties without break-
“ ing through all the ties of nature and morality. A strong in-
“ clination may prompt him to the performance: a sentiment of
“ order and moral beauty joins its force to these natural ties:
“ and the whole man is drawn to his duty without any effort or
“ endeavour. Even with regard to the virtues which are more
“ austere, and more founded on reflection, such as public spirit,
“ filial duty, temperance, or integrity: the moral obligation, in
“ our apprehension, removes all pretence to religious merit: and
“ the virtuous conduct is esteemed no more than what we owe
“ to society, and to ourselves. In all this, a superstitious man
“ finds nothing which he has properly performed for the sake of
“ his Deity, or which can peculiarly recommend him to the di-
“ vine favour and protection. He considers not, that the most
“ genuine method of serving the Divinity is, by promoting the
“ happiness of his creatures. He still looks out for some more
“ immediate service of the supreme Being: and any practice re-
“ commended to him, which either serves to no purpose in life,
“ or offers the strongest violence to his natural inclinations; that
“ practice he will the more readily embrace, on account of those
“ very circumstances, which should make him absolutely reject
“ it. It seems the more purely religious, that it proceeds from

“ no



“ no mixture of any other motive or consideration. And if for its
 “ sake he sacrifices much of his ease and quiet, his claim of merit
 “ appears still to rise upon him, in proportion to the zeal and devotion
 “ which he discovers. In restoring a loan, or paying a debt, his
 “ divinity is no wise beholden to him; because these acts of justice
 “ are what he was bound to perform, and what many would
 “ have performed, were there no God in the universe. But if he
 “ fast a day, or give himself a sound whipping, this has a direct
 “ reference, in his opinion, to the service of God. No other mo-
 “ tive could engage him to such austerities. By these distinguish-
 “ ed marks of devotion, he has now acquired the divine favour;
 “ and may expect in recompense, protection and safety in this
 “ world, and eternal happiness in the next (a).” My yoke is
 easy, saith our Saviour, and my burden is light. So they really
 are. Every essential of religion is founded on our nature, and to
 a pure heart is pleasant in the performance: what can be more
 pleasant, than gratitude to our Maker, and obedience to his will
 in comforting our fellow-creatures? But enthusiasts are not ea-
 sily persuaded, that to make ourselves happy in the exercises of
 piety and benevolence, is the most acceptable service to God that
 we can perform. In loading religion with unnecessary articles of
 faith and practice, they contradict our Saviour, by making his
 yoke severe, and his burden heavy *. Law, upon Christian per-
 fection, enjoins such unnatural austerity of manners, as to be sub-
 versive both of religion and morality: loose education is not
 more so. Our passions, when denied their proper exercise, are
 apt to break their fetters, and to plunge us into every extrava-

* An old woman walking with others to a sacrament, was observed to pick out
 the worst bits of the road: “ I never can do enough,” said she, “ for sweet Jesus.”

(a) Natural History of Religion.



gance: like the body, which squeezed in one part, swells the more in another. In the same way of thinking, the pious Jeremy Taylor, treating of mortification, prescribes it as the indispensable duty of a Christian, to give no indulgence even to the most innocent emotions; because, says he, the most indifferent action becomes sinful, when there is no other motive for the performance but barely its being pleasant. Could a malevolent deity contrive any thing more severe against his votaries?

In the same spirit of supererogation, holidays have been multiplied without end, depriving the working poor of time, that would be more usefully employ'd in providing bread for themselves and families. Such a number of holidays, beside contradicting Providence, which framed us more for action than contemplation, have several poisonous effects with respect to morality. The moral sense has great influence on the industrious, who have no time for indulging their irregular appetites: the idle, on the contrary, are obvious to every temptation. Men likewise are apt to assume great merit from a rigid observance of holidays and other ceremonies; and having thus acquired, in their opinion, the favour of God, they rely on his indulgence in other matters which they think too sweet for sinners.

Monastic institutions are an improvement upon holidays: the whole life of a monk is intended to be a holiday, dedicated entirely to the service of God. The idleness of the monastic state among Christians, opens a wide door to immorality.

In the third section, penances are handled as a mode of worship, for obtaining pardon of sin. But they are sometimes submitted to by the innocent, in order to procure from the Almighty still more favour than innocence alone is entitled to; in which view they are evidently a work of supererogation. They seem to have no bad effect with respect to religion, as distinguished from morality: the body is indeed cruciated unnecessarily; but if enthusiasts

thufiafts voluntarily fubmit to bodily diftreffes, they have themfelves only to blame. With refpect to morality, their bad tendency is not flight. Thofe who perform extraordinary acts of devotion, conceive themfelves peculiarly entitled to the favour of God. Proud of his favour, they attach themfelves to him alone, and turn indifferent about every other duty. The favourite of a terrestrial potentate, affumes authority; and takes liberties that private perfons dare not venture upon: fhall a favourite of Heaven be lefs indulged? The Faquirs in Hindoftan fubmit to dreadful penances; and, holding themfelves fecure of God's favour, they are altogether indifferent about the duty they owe to their neighbour. So much are they above common decency, as to go about naked, not even concealing what modefty forbids us to expofe. The penances enjoined in the Romifh church, fuch as faffing and flagellation, have evidently the fame bad tendency*. With refpect to faffing in particular, to what good purpofe it can ferve, except to gluttons, is not readily conceived. Temperance in eating and drinking is effential to health: too much or too little are equally noxious, tho' their effects are different. Fafting therefore ought never to be enjoined to the temperate as a religious duty, becaufe it cannot be acceptable to a benevolent Deity. Listen to a great prophet on that fubject. "Behold, ye faft for
 " ftrife and debate, and to finite with the fift of wickednefs; ye
 " fhall not faft as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard
 " on high. Is it fuch a faft that I have chofen? a day for a man
 " to afflict his foul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrufh,
 " and to fpread fackcloth and afhes under him? Wilt thou call

* A feft of Chriftians, ftyled *Flagellantes*, held, that flagellation is of equal virtue with baptifm and the other facraments; that it will procure forgiveness of fin; that the old law of Chrift is to be abolifhed, and a new law fubftituted; enjoining the baptifm of blood to be adminiftered by whipping.



“ this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord ? Is not this the
 “ fast that I have chosen ? to loose the bands of wickedness, to
 “ undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and
 “ that ye break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the
 “ hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out, to thy
 “ house ? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and
 “ that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh (a) ? ”

The most extraordinary penance of all, is celibacy considered as a religious duty. Many fathers of the church declare against matrimony. St Jerom in particular says, That the end of matrimony is eternal death ; that the earth indeed is filled by it, but heaven by virginity. The intemperate zeal of many primitive Christians led them to abstain from matrimony, and even from conjugal caresses, if they had the misfortune to be married ; believing that the carnal appetite is inconsistent with pure religion. Edward the Confessor was fainted, for no better reason than the abstaining from matrimonial duties. Jovinian, in the fourth century, taught, that all who observe the laws of piety and virtue laid down in the gospel, have an equal title to happiness in another life : consequently, that those who pass their days in celibacy and mortification, are in no respect more acceptable to God than those who live virtuously in marriage without mortification. He published his opinions in a book, against which Jerom wrote a bitter and abusive treatise, still extant. These opinions were condemned by the church, and by St Ambrose, in a council at Milan ; and Jovinian was banished by the Emperor Honorius. Such ridiculous self-denial was not confined to Christians. Strabo mentions a sect among the Thracians, who made a vow of perpetual virginity ; and were much respected on that account. Garcilasso mentions virgins in Peru consecrated to the sun : a vestal guilty of

(a) Isaiah, lviii. 4. &c.

frailty



frailty was buried alive, her lover hanged, and the inhabitants of the town where she lived put to the sword. Among all the absurd acts of mortification, the present affords the strongest instance of superstition triumphing over common sense; for what can be more inconsistent with common sense, not to talk of religion, than an endeavour to put an end to the human species? Some glimpses of reason have abated the zeal of enthusiasts for celibacy; but have not totally extirpated it, for celibacy of the clergy remains to this day a law in the Romish church. It cannot however seriously be thought the will of our benevolent God, that his priests should be denied the exercise of natural powers, bestowed on all for a most valuable purpose. This impious restraint, which contradicts the great law of *Increase and multiply*, has opened the door to gross debauchery in the pastors of the Romish church, tho' ecclesiastics ought of all men to be the most circumspect in their conduct. Men restrained from what is necessary and proper, are more prone than others to break out into gross irregularities*. Marriage is warmly recommended in the laws of Zoroaster. Children are said to be a bridge that conducts men to heaven; and a man who has no children, is held to be under the power of Ahriman. The prayer of a priest who has no children, is held disagreeable to Ormusd.

The celibacy of the clergy was countenanced by the Pope; and enforced from a political consideration, That it united the whole

* An ingenious writer, mentioned above, makes the following observation.
“ The celibacy of ecclesiastics was originally introduced by some superstitious refinements on the law of God and nature. Could men have been kept alive without eating or drinking, as well as without marriage, the same refinements would have prohibited ecclesiastics from eating and drinking, and thereby have elevated them so much nearer to the state of angels. In process of time, this fanatical interdiction became an instrument of worldly wisdom: and thus, as frequently happens, what weak men began, politicians completed.” *Sir David Dalrymple.*

clergy



clergy into one firm body under his spiritual Majesty. How short-sighted is man! It was justly esteemed at the time to be the corner-stone of Papal power; and yet became the chief cause of its downfall. Celibacy precipitated the Romish clergy into adultery, fornication, cunning, dissimulation, and every secret vice. Will men of such manners be listened to, when they preach purity to their hearers? There was no medium, but either to reform their own manners, or to give every indulgence to the laity. But the ignorance and superstition of the latter, rendered the former secure in their own opinion. The restoration of learning broke the charm. Men beginning to think for themselves, were provoked at the dissolute lives of their pastors, and raised a loud cry against them, not yet thinking of their doctrines. Reformers were burnt as heretics; and clergymen were held to be emissaries from Satan, to establish his throne upon earth. Knox, that violent reformer, believed seriously, that Cardinal Beaton was *a conjured enemy to Christ Jesus*. Providence brings good out of ill. Had not the clergy been dissolute, poor Christians might have laboured under ignorance and ecclesiastical thralldom to this hour. Our reformers, beginning with their pastors, extended insensibly their hatred to the doctrines taught by their pastors. Every article of faith was sifted: the chaff was separated from the corn; and a reformation was established upon the scriptures, rejecting every innovation of the Romish church.

There is not mentioned in history a more impudent attack upon moral principles, than a privilege assumed by the Bishop of Rome, to disengage men from their oaths and promises: it is not a greater stretch to disengage them from every duty, whether of morality or of religion. The barons of Valentia, dreading a persecution against the industrious Moors, their tenants, obtained the following clause to be inserted in their king's coronation-oath: "That he should not expell the Moriscos, nor force them to be
" baptized;

“baptized; that he should never desire to be relieved from the oath by a dispensation from the Pope, nor accept a dispensation if offered.” The Emperor Charles V. took this oath solemnly in presence of his nobles; and yet accepted a dispensation from the Pope, absolving him from the oath, and from the guilt of perjury in breaking it. Augustus King of Poland, in the treaty of Altramstadt, renounced the kingdom of Poland to his competitor Stanislaus. The defeat of the King of Sweden at Poltowa, was an inviting opportunity to renew his pretensions. A solemn treaty stood in his way; but the Pope removed that obstacle, by annulling the treaty, and setting him at liberty. The Pope has been known even to bestow that wonderful privilege upon others. Pope Paschal II. having with a solemn oath renounced the right of investitures, empowered the cardinals to declare his oath null. Bishops also, imitating their superior, have assumed the privilege of dispensing with moral duties. Instances are not rare, of curates being authorized by their bishop to entertain concubines, paying for each a regular tax of a crown yearly. Nay, in some provincial synods, they are enjoined to keep concubines, in order to prevent scandal. Common prostitutes, licensed in the city of Leghorn, have a church peculiar to themselves, and must not enter into any other. They follow their trade with the utmost freedom; except in passion-week, during which they must forbear sinning, under pain of banishment.

The power of bestowing kingdoms, assumed by the Bishop of Rome, was an encroachment on the rules of justice, no less bold. Christian princes, not many ages ago, esteemed the Pope's gift to be their best title of property. In the 1346, the Venetians requested the Pope's permission to carry on commerce in Asia, and to purchase there pepper and cinnamon. The Pope not only granted their request, but pronounced anathemas upon any who should dare to interfere in that commerce. Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain,



Spain, applied to Pope Alexander VI. to vest in them the property of America, discovered under their auspices by Columbus. The Pope having formerly made a grant to the kings of Portugal, of their discoveries in the East Indies, both grants were held sacred; and it came to be strenuously disputed, under which of the grants the Molucca islands were comprehended. Both grants proceed upon a narrative, of the power bestowed by Almighty God on the Pope as successor to St Peter and vicar of Christ. To imagine, that the Almighty would bestow such powers on the Bishop of Rome, or on any human being, shews gross ignorance of the common rights of mankind, and of the government of Providence.

The grossest of all deviations, not only from sound morality but from pure religion, and the most extensive in its baneful effects, is a doctrine embraced by established churches, not many excepted, That because heretics are odious in the sight of God, it is the duty of the orthodox to extirpate them root and branch. Observe the consequence: people who differ from the established church, are held to be obstinate sinners, deserving punishment here as well as hereafter. The religion of every country is changeable; and the religion at present dominant may soon be under depression; which of course subjects all mankind to the rigour of persecution. An invention more effectual for extirpating the human race, is not within the reach of human powers: the horror of human sacrifices is as nothing in comparison.

The old Romans, far from having any notion of persecution, adopted the gods of every nation they conquered. A learned writer (a) observes, that as the number of their gods increased with their conquests, it is possible that they might have worshipped all the gods in the world. Their belief in tutelar deities produced

(a) Morinus.

that



that effect. Titus Livius mentions a sect of Bacchanals that spread through Italy. They performed their ceremonies during night, men and women mixing in the dark after intemperate eating and drinking. Never did wicked wretches deserve more exemplary punishment; yet listen to the following decree of the Roman senate, breathing the true spirit of toleration. “ Ne qua Bacchanalia Romæ, neve in Italia essent. Si quis tale sacrum, solenne, et necessarium duceret, nec sine religione et piaculo se id omittere posse; apud prætorem urbanum profiteretur; prætor senatum consuleret. Si ei permissum esset, quum in senatu centum non minus essent; ita id sacrum faceret, dum ne plus quinque sacrificio interessent; neu qua pecunia communis, neu quis magister sacrorum, aut sacerdos esset *.” The Jews however were prone to persecution; for tho’ they considered the supreme being as their tutelar deity, yet the malignity of their nature prevailed to make them hold in abhorrence the worship of every other god. Even among themselves, they were abundantly disposed to war; and nothing kept within bounds the Pharisees, the Sadduces, and the Essenes, their three sects, but terror of the Roman power. The Christian religion implies toleration in its very nature and principles; but being corrupted by ignorance, interest, and superstition, it became prone to persecution above all others. Christian sects were enflamed against each other to a degree of bruta-

* “ Let there be no Bacchanalian ceremonies performed in the city, nor within Italy. If there be any person who reckons it a matter of conscience to perform these rites, and that he ought not to omit them, let him state his opinion to the city-prætor, who shall thereupon consult the senate. If liberty be granted him by the senate when no fewer than a hundred senators are present, let him perform the sacrifice, but privately, in presence of no greater number than five persons. Let there be no public fund for them, nor any who shall preside as priest or master of the rites.”



lity; the most opposite to peace and brotherly love, inculcated in the gospel. It was propagated by the orthodox, that Arius expired in a common jakes, and that his intrails burst out. The same is related of Huneric King of the Vandals, a zealous Arian; with the following addition, that being possessed with the devil, whom he had glutted with the blood of many martyrs, he tore his flesh off with his teeth, and ended his wretched life in the most excruciating, tho' justly deserved, torments. The falsehoods every where spread during the fourteenth century against the Jews, such as their poisoning the public fountains, killing Christian infants, and drinking their blood, with many other falsehoods of the same stamp, were invented and greedily swallowed through the influence of religious hatred. The greater part of persecutions have been occasioned in the same manner; for men are not so desperately wicked, as to approve of persecution, unless when blinded by intemperate zeal. The same religious hatred produced the assassination of the Duke of Guise, and of two Henries, Kings of France; produced the gun-powder plot; and produced the most horrid deed that ever was perpetrated among men, the massacre of St Bartholomew*.

No false principle in religion has shed more innocent, or rather virtuous blood, than that of persecuting heretics; *i. e.* those who differ in any article from the religion established by law. The doctrine of burning heretics, is in effect the professing to burn

* Monsieur de Tavannes, afterward Marechal of France, was a great partisan of the Queen-mother, and so active in the massacre, that with his own hand he murdered no fewer than seventeen Huguenots. Having on deathbed made a full confession of his sins, "What," said the priest, "not a word of St Bartholomew?" "Of St Bartholomew!" answered the penitent; "the service I did that memorable day to God and the church, is alone a sufficient atonement for all my transgressions."

men highly virtuous; for they must be so in an eminent degree, who submit to be burnt alive, rather than be guilty even of dissimulation. The Mahometan practice of converting people by the sword, if not more rational, is at least more manly. Louis IX. of France, one of its best princes, would have been a greater blessing to his people, had he been less pious: he had an implacable aversion to heretics, against whom he thought it more proper to employ racks and gibbets, than argument and persuasion. Torquemada, that infernal inquisitor of Spain, brought into the inquisition, in the space of fourteen years, no fewer than 80,000 persons; of whom 6000 were condemned to the flames, and burnt alive with the greatest pomp and exultation. Of that vast number, there was perhaps not a single person, who was not more pure in religion, as well as in morals, than their outrageous persecutor. Hunter, a young man about nineteen years of age, was one of the unhappy victims to the zeal of Queen Mary of England for Popery. Having been inadvertently betray'd by a priest to deny transubstantiation, he absconded, to keep out of harm's way. Bonner, that arch-hangman of Popery, threatened ruin to the father, if he did not deliver up the young man. Hunter, hearing of his father's danger, made his appearance; and was burnt alive, instead of being rewarded for his filial piety. A woman of Guernsey was brought to the stake, without regard to her big belly; which bursting by the torture, she was delivered in the midst of the flames. One of the guards snatched the infant from the fire: but the magistrate who attended the execution, ordered it to be thrown back; being resolved, he said, that nothing should survive which sprung from a parent so obstinately heretical. Father Paul (Council of Trent, book 5.) computes, that in the Netherlands alone, from the time that the edict of Charles V. was promulgated against the reformers, fifty thousand persons were hanged,

3 N 2
beheaded,



beheaded, buried alive, or burnt, on account of religion. Some Faquirs, crazed with opium and fanaticism, have been known with poisoned daggers to fall upon uncircumcised Europeans, and to put every one to death whom they could master. In the last century, a faquir at Surate murdered, within the space of a minute, seventeen Dutch sailors with seventeen stabs of a dagger. We think with horror of human sacrifices among the ancient Pagans; and yet we behold them every day among Christians, rendered still more horrid by the most atrocious torments that religious hatred can devise.

The great motive to such cruelties, is the superstitious and absurd notion, that heretics are God's enemies; which makes it thought an acceptable service to God, not only to persecute them by fire and sword in this world, but to deliver them over to Satan in the world to come. Another circumstance enflames religious hatred; which is, that neighbours are either intimate friends or bitter enemies. This holds with a slight variation in sects of the same religion: however minute their differences be, they cannot be intimate friends; and therefore are bitter enemies: the nearer they approach to unison, if not entirely concordant, the greater in proportion is their mutual hatred. Such hatred, subduing the meek spirit of Christianity, is an additional cause for persecution. Blind zeal for what is believed to be the only true religion, never discovers error nor innocence in those who differ, but perverseness and criminal obstinacy. Two religions totally different, like two countries in opposite parts of the globe, produce no mutual enmity. At the siege of Constantinople by the Turks, ann. 1453, the Emperor, in order to procure assistance from the princes of the Latin church, ordered mass to be celebrated in one of his churches according to the form used in Rome. The people with great indignation protested, that they would rather see the Turks in their churches, than the hat of a cardinal.

The



The history of the Waldenses, tho' well known, cannot be too often repeated. In the twelfth century, a merchant of Lyons, named *Peter Valdo*, dissatisfied with the pomp and ceremonies of the Romish church, ill suited, in his opinion, to the humility of a Christian, retired to a desert in the high country of Provence, with several poor people his disciples. There he became their spiritual guide, instructing them in certain doctrines, the same that were afterward adopted by the Protestants. Their incessant labour subdued the barren soil, and prepared it for grain as well as for pasture. The rent which in time they were enabled to pay for land that afforded none originally, endeared them to their landlords. In 250 years, they multiplied to the number of 18,000, occupying thirty villages, beside hamlets, the work of their own hands. Priests they had none, nor any disputes about religion: neither had they occasion for a court of justice, as brotherly love did not suffer them to go to law: they worshipped God in their own plain way, and their innocence was secured by incessant labour. They had long enjoy'd the sweets of peace and mutual affection, when the reformers of Germany and Geneva sent ministers among them; which unhappily laid them open to religious hatred, the most unrelenting of all furies. In the year 1540, the parliament of Provence condemned nineteen of them to be burnt for heresy, their trees to be rooted up, and their houses to be raz'd to the ground. The Waldenses, terrified at this sentence, applied in a body to Cardinal Sadolet, bishop of Carpentras; who received them kindly, and obtained from Francis I. of France, a pardon for the persons under sentence of death, on condition of abjuring heresy. The matter lay over five years; when the parliament, irritated at them for persevering in their tenets, prevailed on the King to withdraw his pardon. The sentence was executed with great rigour; and the parliament, laying hold of that opportunity,



portunity, broke through every restraint of law, and commenced a violent persecution against the whole nation. The foldiers began with maffacring old men, women, and children, all having fled who were able to fly; and proceeded to burn their houfes, barns, and corn. There remained in the town of Cabriere fixty men and thirty women; who having furrendered upon promife of life, were butchered each of them without mercy. Some women who had taken refuge in a church, were dragged out, and burnt alive. Twenty-two villages were reduced to afhes; and that populous and flourishing diftrict, became once more a defert.

To conceive this horrid fcene in all its deformity, the people persecuted ought to be compared with the clergy their perfecutors; for the civil magiftrate was the hand only that executed their vengeance: on the one fide, an induftrious people, pure in their morals, and no lefs pure in their religion: on the other, proud pampered priefts, abandoned without fhame to every wickednefs, impure in their morals, and ftill more impure in their religion—the world never furnifhed fuch another contrast. Had the fcene been reverfed, to make thefe wretches fuffer perfecution from the Waldenfes—but that people were too upright and too religious for being perfecutors. The manners of the Chriftian clergy in general, before the Reformation, enlivens the contrast. The doctrine promulgated during the dark times of Chriftianity, That God is a mercenary being; and that every perfon, however wicked, may obtain pardon of his fins by money, made riches flow into the hands of ecclefiaftics in a plentiful ftream. And riches had the fame effect upon the Chriftian clergy that they have upon all men, which is, to produce pride, fenfuality, and profligacy: thefe again produced diffipation of money, which prompted avarice, and every invention for recruiting exhausted treafures

treasures *. Even as early as the eighth century, the Christian clergy, tempted by opulence, abandoned themselves to pleasure, without moderation; and far exceeded the laity in luxury, gluttony, and lust. When such were the pastors, what must have been the flock! Rejoice, O Scotland, over the poverty and temperance of thy pastors. During that period, the clergy could read, and, like parrots, they could mumble prayers in Latin: in every other respect, they rivalled the laity in ignorance. They were indeed more cunning than the laity; and understood their interest better, if to covet riches at the expence of probity, deserve that name. Three articles were established that made religion an easy service. First, That faith is the essence of religion, without regard to good works; and hence the necessity of being strictly orthodox, which the church only could determine. Second, Religious worship was reduced to a number of external ceremonies and forms, which, being declared sufficient for salvation, absolved Christians from every moral duty. Remark, that a priest is always the chief person in ceremonial worship. The third article, That God is a mercenary being, is mentioned above, with its necessary consequences. These articles brought about a total neglect, both in clergy and laity, not only of morality, but of every essential religious duty. In fine, there never was a religion that deviated more from just principles, than that professed by Christians during the dark ages. Persecution reached none but the sincerely pious and virtuous. What a glorious tolerating sentiment doth Arnobius (a) throw out, and what profusion of blood

* In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, many of the clergy dealt in merchandise; and, being free of taxes, engrossed all. In the Netherlands particularly, there was a great cry, that monasteries were converted into shops and warehouses, and the mansions of secular priests into tap-houses and inns.

(a) Lib. I. Adversus Gentes.

would



would have been prevented, had it been adopted by all Christians !
 “ Da veniam, Rex summe, tuos persequentibus famulos : et quod
 “ tuæ benignitatis est proprium, fugientibus ignosce tui nominis
 “ et religionis cultum. Non est mirum, si ignoraris : majoris
 “ est admirationis, si sciaris *.” The following parable against
 persecution was communicated to me by Dr Franklin of Philadel-
 phia, a man who makes a great figure in the learned world : and
 who would make a still greater figure for benevolence and candour,
 were virtue in this declining age as much regarded as knowledge.
 “ And it came to pass after these things, that Abraham sat in the
 “ door of his tent, about the going down of the sun. And behold
 “ a man bent with age, coming from the way of the wilderness
 “ leaning on a staff. And Abraham arose, and met him, and
 “ said unto him, Turn in, I pray thee, and wash thy feet, and
 “ tarry all night ; and thou shalt arise early in the morning, and
 “ go on thy way. And the man said, Nay ; for I will abide un-
 “ der this tree. But Abraham pressed him greatly : so he turn-
 “ ed, and they went into the tent : and Abraham baked un-
 “ leavened bread, and they did eat. And when Abraham saw
 “ that the man blessed not God, he said unto him, Wherefore
 “ dost thou not worship the most high God, creator of heaven
 “ and earth ? And the man answered and said, I do not wor-
 “ ship thy God, neither do I call upon his name ; for I have made
 “ to myself a god, which abideth always in mine house, and pro-
 “ videth me with all things. And Abraham’s zeal was kindled
 “ against the man, and he arose, and fell upon him, and drove
 “ him forth with blows into the wilderness. And God called un-

* “ Forgive, Almighty power, the persecutors of thy servants ; and, in the pe-
 “ culiar benevolence of thy nature, pardon those men whose unhappiness it is to
 “ be strangers to thy name and worship. Ignorant as they are of thee, we cannot
 “ wonder at the impiety of their actions.”

“ to



“ to Abraham, saying, Abraham, where is the stranger? And
 “ Abraham answered and said, Lord, he would not worship thee,
 “ neither would he call upon thy name; therefore have I driven
 “ him out from before my face into the wilderness. And God
 “ said, Have I borne with him these hundred ninety and eight
 “ years, and nourished him, and clothed him, notwithstanding
 “ his rebellion against me; and couldst not thou, who art thyself
 “ a sinner, bear with him one night?” The historical style of the
 Old Testament is here finely imitated; and the moral must strike
 every one who is not sunk in stupidity and superstition. Were it
 really a chapter of Genesis, one is apt to think, that persecution
 could never have shown a bare face among Jews or Christians.
 But alas! that is a vain thought. Such a passage in the Old Te-
 stament, would avail as little against the rancorous passions of men,
 as the following passages in the New Testament, tho’ persecution
 cannot be condemned in terms more explicit. “ Him that is weak
 “ in the faith, receive you, but not to doubtful disputations. For
 “ one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak,
 “ eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth, despise him that eat-
 “ eth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that
 “ eateth. Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to
 “ his own master he standeth or falleth. One man esteemeth one
 “ day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let e-
 “ very man be fully persuaded in his own mind. But why dost
 “ thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy
 “ brother? for we shall all stand before the judgement-seat of
 “ Christ, every one to give an account of himself to God. I know,
 “ that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteem-
 “ eth any thing unclean, to him it is unclean. The kingdom of
 “ God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and
 “ joy in the Holy Ghost. Let us therefore follow after the things
 “ which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify an-
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“other (a).” Our Saviour himself declared against persecution in the most express terms. The Jews and Samaritans were of the same religion; but some trivial differences in the ceremonial part of worship, rendered them odious to each other. Our Saviour being refused lodging in a village of Samaria, because he was travelling to Jerusalem, his disciples James and John said, “Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?” But he rebuked them, and said, “The Son of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them (b).”

It gives me real concern, that even the hot fire of persecution, did not altogether purify our Reformed clergy from that satanical spirit. No sooner were the Dissenters settled in New England, where they fled to avoid persecution, than they set on foot a persecution against the Quakers, no less furious than what they themselves had suffered at home. Nor did the Reformed clergy in Scotland lose sight of that magisterial authority, which had been assumed by their predecessors of the Romish church, on the ridiculous pretext, of being ambassadors to men from Jesus Christ. Upon a representation, ann. 1646, from the commission of the kirk of Scotland, James Bell and Colin Campbell, bailies of Glasgow, were committed to prison by the parliament, merely for having said, that kirk-men meddled too much in civil matters. Could a despotic prince have exerted a more arbitrary act? but the church was all-powerful in those days*.

* Toleration in religion, tho' obvious to common understanding, was not however the production of reason, but of commerce. The advantage of toleration for promoting commerce, was discovered long before by the Portuguese. They were too zealous Catholics to venture so bold a measure in Portugal; but it was permitted in Goa, and the inquisition in that town was confined to Roman Catholics.

(a) Epistle of Paul to the Romans, chap. 14.

(b) Luke, ix. 54.



I would do justice to every church, not excepting that of Rome; and it is doing that church no more but justice to acknowledge, that the spirit of persecution was not more eminent in it, than zeal for making converts. The former is retiring out of the world; and I wish it most profound rest, never again to revive. People begin to be ashamed of it, as of a garment long out of fashion. Let the other continue for amusement: it is innocent; and if it do no good, it is not productive of so much harm.

The desire of making converts proceeds from two different causes. In superstitious zealots, it proceeds from an opinion, that all who differ from them are in the road to damnation: for which reason, there is a rage of making converts among Roman Catholics; who, without ceremony, deliver over to the flames of hell, every person who is not of their communion. The other cause is more natural: every man thinks himself in the right, especially in matters of consequence; and for that reason, he is happy to find others of his opinion (*a*). With respect to the first cause, I beg attention to the following considerations; not with any hope of converting zealots, but to prevent, if possible, others from becoming such. In none of the works of God is variety more happily blended with uniformity, than in the formation of man. Uniformity prevails in the human face with respect to eyes, nose, mouth, and other capital parts: variety prevails in the expressions of these parts, serving to distinguish one person from another, without hazard of error. In like manner, the minds of men are uniform with respect to their passions and principles; but the various tones and expressions of these, form different characters without end. A face destitute of a nose or of a mouth, is monstrous: a mind destitute of the moral sense, or of a sense of religion, is no less so. But variety of expression in different faces,

(*a*) Elements of Criticism, vol. 2. p. 493. edit. 5.



is agreeable: because we relish variety; and a similar variety in the expressions or tones of passion, ought to be equally agreeable. Endless differences in temper, in taste, and in mental faculties, that of reason in particular, produce necessarily variety in sentiment and in opinion. Can God be displeas'd with such variety, when it is his own work? He requires no uniformity except with respect to an upright mind and clear conscience, which are indispensable. Here at the same time is discovered an illustrious final cause. Different countenances in the human race, not only distinguish one person from another, but promote society, by aiding us to chuse a friend, an associate, a partner for life. Differences in opinion and sentiment, have still more beneficial effects: they rouse the attention, give exercise to the understanding, and sharpen the reasoning faculty. With respect to religion in particular, perfect uniformity, which furnisheth no subject for thinking nor for reasoning, would produce languor in divine worship, and make us sink into cold indifference. How frantic then is the rage of making profelytes? Let every man enjoy his native liberty, of thinking as well as of acting; free to act as he pleaseth, provided he obey the rules of morality; equally free to think as he pleaseth, provided he obey the great God as his maker and master, and acknowledge the necessary connection of religion with morality. Strict uniformity in other matters, may be compared to a spring-day, calm and serene; neither so hot as to make us drop a garment, nor so cold as to require an addition; no wind to ruffle, nor rain to make shelter necessary. We enjoy the sweet scene for a moment: we walk, we sit, we muse;—but soon fall asleep. Agitation is the element of man, and the life of society. Let us not attempt to correct the works of God: the attempt will betray us into absurd errors. This doctrine cannot be better illustrated than by a conversation, reported by the Jesuit Tachard, between the King of Siam, and a French ambassador, who, in his master's
name,

name, urged that king to embrace the Christian religion. "I am surpris'd," said his Majesty of Siam, "that the King of France, my good friend, should interest himself so warmly in what concerns God only. He hath given to his creatures different minds and different inclinations, which naturally lead them to differ in opinion. We admire variety in the material world: why not equally admire it in matters of religion? Have we not then reason to believe, that God takes pleasure in all the different forms of worship? Had it been the intention of God to produce uniformity in religion, he would have formed all men with the same mind." Bernier introduces some Gentiles of Hindostan defending their religion much in the same manner: "That they did not pretend their law to be universal; that they did not hold ours to be false, as, for ought they knew, it might be a good law for us; and that God probably made many roads to heaven."

With respect to the other cause above mentioned, viz. the desire of putting people in the right road. To reason others into our religious principles, is natural; but it is not always prudent. I wish my neighbour to be of my opinion, because I think my opinion right: but is there no danger of undermining his religious principles, without establishing better in their stead? Ought I not to restrain my desire of making converts, when the attempt may possibly reduce them to abandon religion altogether, as a matter of utter uncertainty? If a man of clear understanding has by some unhappy means been led into error, that man may be set right by fair reasoning: but beware of endeavouring to convert people of low parts, who are indebted for their creed to parents, to education, or to example: it is safer to let them rest as they are.

At any rate, let us never attempt to gain profelytes by rewards nor by terror: what other effect can such motives produce, but
dissimulation



diffimulation and lying, parents of every secret crime. The Empress of Russia uses a method for converting her Pagan subjects of Kamskatka, no less agreeable than effectual; which is, to exempt from taxes for ten years, such of them as profess the Christian religion. This practice may be political; but it tends not to advance religion, and is destructive of morality. Terror, on the other hand, may be equally effectual, but is not altogether so agreeable. The people of Rum, one of the Hebrides, were Papists till the beginning of the present century, when in one day they were all profelyted to the Protestant faith. Maclean of Coll, their chieftain, went to the island with a Protestant minister, and ordered all the inhabitants to appear on Sunday at public worship. They came, but refused to hear a Protestant minister. The chieftain reasoned with them: but finding that his reasonings made no impression, he laid hold of the most forward; and having made a deep impression on him with his cane, push'd him into the church. The rest followed like meek lambs; and from that day have continued firm Protestants. The Protestantism of Rum is styled by their Popish neighbours, the faith of the *yellow sick*.

To apply rewards, terror, or any other means, for making profelytes, except fair reasoning, appears to me a strange perversion. Can God be pleased with such means, or can any rational man justify them? What then should move any one to put them in practice? I should be utterly at a loss to answer the question, but for a fact mentioned more than once above, that the rude and illiterate, judge by sight only, and not by reflection, which makes them lay weight on the external visible act, without thinking of intention, because it is not visible. In truth, the bulk of mankind rest upon the external profession of religion: they never dip into the heart, nor consider how that stands affected. What else is it but the external act merely, that moves the Romish missionaries to baptize the infants of savages even at the moment of expiring?



III. 2. 3.
expiring? which they prosecute with much pious ardour. Their zeal merits applause, but by no means their judgement. Can any rational person seriously believe, that the dipping a savage or an infant in water, will make either of them a Christian, or that the want of this ceremony will precipitate them into hell? The Lithuanians, before their conversion to Christianity, worshipped serpents, every family entertaining one as a household god. Sigismundus, in his commentaries of Muscovy, reports the following incident. A converted Christian having persuaded a neighbour to follow his example, and in token of his conversion to kill his serpent, was surpris'd at his next visit, to find his convert in the deepest melancholy, bitterly lamenting that he had murdered his god, and that the most dreadful calamities would befall him. Was this person a Christian more than nominally? At the end of the last century when Kempfer was in Japan, there remained but about fifty Japan Christians, who were locked up in prison for life. These poor people knew no more of the Christian religion, but the names only of our Saviour and of the Virgin Mary; and yet so zealous Christians were they, as rather to die miserably in jail, than to renounce the name of Christ, and be set at liberty.

I cannot with satisfaction conclude this sketch, without congratulating my present countrymen of Britain, upon their knowledge of the intimate connection that true religion has with morality. May the importance of that connection, always at heart, excite us to govern every action of our lives by the united principles of morality and religion:—what a happy people would we be!

A P -



