

(SUBJECT CONCLUDED.)

AN EXPLANATION OF THE PRINCIPAL SCRIPTURES REFERRED TO IN SUPPORT OF MINISTERIAL OFFERS OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.

I RESUME my pen to offer an explanation of some sacred portions of Holy writ, which have been, I think, misapplied and perverted; and, upon fair examination, I trust that what I offer will be found coincident, with the perfections of Jehovah; with his eternal and immutable decrees; with his real character; and with the whole analogy of faith. I proceed, therefore, to consider the scriptures which are viewed and strenuously urged as countenancing those ministers who make offers and overtures of *spiritual blessings* to sinners in general; instead of preaching them, as the free gifts of God, granted absolutely, in his eternal counsel, to sinners elect, and immutably ordained to be conveyed, in the power and demonstration of the Holy Ghost to their hearts, through the free annunciation of them in the ministry of the gospel, by means of which,

they are made willing and obedient, and discriminated, as God's elect, holy and beloved, from the rest of mankind.

If, in considering these scriptures, we regard biblical order, the first which calls our attention is Gen. iv. 6, 9. "And the Lord said unto Cain, why art thou wrath? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well sin lieth at the door." Here the Almighty speaks to Cain, not in evangelical strains, but in the language of the legal covenant; under which Cain stood, and according to the tenor of which, "do this and thou shalt live," he expected to be accepted of God, and to have his works rewarded, with the divine favour and benediction. Nor does the divine expostulator utter a single syllable to him respecting the acceptance of the persons and offerings of men, through the person and offering of the promised seed of the woman, in whom Abel believed, and was accepted, and by faith in whom, he presented his offering to the Lord, but addresses him in the mere diction of the covenant of works:—"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door:" that is, if thou doest all things required by the law, thou shalt live in them; but if thou continuest not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, thou art verily guilty and accursed; thou shalt surely die.

Now, should the truth of this interpretation be denied, and should it be affirmed that Jehovah

addressed Cain in evangelical language, then it must be believed, that acceptance with God, even upon gospel principles, is conditional; that it is suspended upon the performance of human works; and consequently that it is not of grace. For, according to the apostle's reasoning, "If it be of works, then it is no more of grace." It has always very forcibly struck me, that there is a much closer affinity between what are called gospel offers of grace, and *conditional* acceptance with God, than most people are aware of.

"Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men. Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold," Prov. viii. 4, 10. We have here a fine description of the teachings of him, who spoke as never man spoke: God the Son incarnate; the wisdom of God the Father in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. He taught among the Jews in Judea, on the tops of the mountains, in the highways, in the gates and streets of Jerusalem, in the synagogues and temple, and in the various places of public resort. He called unto men, and his voice was to the sons of men. But what evidence does the combination of these verses exhibit, that he *offered* to them his mercy and salvation? Can it be fairly inferred, from his call to the sons of men, that he approached them with *overtures of grace*, and tendered them the bliss of heaven, any more than it

can, from the address of a monarch to his subjects, in which he declares his own pleasure, and calls them to attend to their duty, as subjects, that he *offers* them his kingdom, and *tenders* them his crown ?

And, if it does not follow of necessity, that because our Saviour called unto the sons of men, he offered them the special blessings of his love, there can be no shew of right whatever, to represent the above scriptures, nor any of similar import, as inculcating the doctrine of offers ; especially when there is nothing, either in the scriptures themselves, or in their connexion, that requires such a construction. It is, I think, much better to view them, as a lively and striking picture of the Prince of Peace, standing among the Jews, preaching the mysteries of his glorious kingdom ; asserting his own dignity, power, and authority, as the true Messiah ; his mission and commission from God the Father, to perform the stupendous work of salvation, to introduce a dispensation entirely new, set up and establish new rites and ordinances of divine worship, to remove and abolish the whole Mosaic ritual, and erect a glorious kingdom in the world, which should extend unto the ends of the earth, and exist coeval with time ; and counselling and exhorting them, as a nation and body politic, to attend to his ministry, admit the truth of his doctrine, and receive his dispensation, with a natural faith, such as that with which the Ninevites received the preaching of Jonah ; and Ahab,

the messenger of Elisha ; which, had they done, it would have been the means of saving them from those tremendous judgments, with which they were threatened, because they set at nought his counsel, despised his reproofs, and rejected his person. Prov. i. 24-31. " Because I have called and ye refused, etc. ; and Isa. lxxv. 12-15. " Therefore will I number you to the sword, &c. ; all which has been fulfilled. The commonwealth of Israel is no more : the Jews are dispersed over many nations, and are a taunt, a scorn, and a curse, unto this day. But while the wrath of a jealous God, came upon them to the uttermost, it was well with the righteous : they escaped. The disciples of Jesus were preserved from the common destruction ; divine providence had appointed for them an asylum where they dwelt in security.

But it may, perhaps, be still better to understand these addresses, as powerful commands issuing, sovereign and free, from the Almighty Instructor, designed to convey, and actually conveying, spiritual instruction and understanding to the hearts of the elect, among those whom he addressed ; and causing them to value the instruction which he gives, and the knowledge which he imparts, beyond the finest gold, or the choicest rubies. When we hear the Almighty saying, by the mouth of his prophet, to the dry bones, " O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord ; " and when we behold him passing by the sinner dead in his trespasses, and wallowing in the blood of his guilt ; and hear him

say to the poor forlorn wretch, "live:" do we, or should we consider these divine addresses, as mere exhortations to live, or *offers* of life? No: we view them, and we ought to view them, as sovereign commands, replete with omnipotence and life; like those at which nonentity started into existence, and breathless Lazarus leaped from the tomb, conveying both life and vigour to the dead. To understand them as mere exhortations and offers would greatly depreciate the majesty and grandeur of the scriptures, and obscure the meaning of the following declarations of our Lord; "I know that his commandment is life everlasting." "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are life." To whom, and in what sense are the commandments of the Father, and the words of the Son, spirit and life everlasting, but to the elect; and as they are attended by the life and power of the Holy Ghost to their hearts? The rest hear their sound, but do not understand their spiritual import; nor are they ever addressed to them, any farther than principles and actions, merely natural or moral are implied; therefore they never are to them spirit and life. Now, when Jehovah says to the dead, "live;" if he utters a powerful command, giving life to the soul; where is the impropriety of considering him, when he says, "hear, receive my instruction," as issuing an effectual command, by which the ear of the deaf is opened, the understanding of the dark benighted soul is enlightened, and real spiritual

instruction is truly and for ever sealed upon the heart of the ignorant. Should this interpretation be considered improper, it will be indispensable to show wherein the impropriety consists ; and also to shew scriptural authority for asserting that when the “King eternal” says to the dead in sins, “live,” he only exhorts them to live, or makes them an offer of life ; or, admitting that he utters a command, by which he really impregnates the soul with divine life, to produce a warrant for maintaining, that when he says to the blind and ignorant, receive my instruction, he does no more than offer them instruction, and exhort them to receive it ; since in both cases the form of speech is the same ; since a power to receive spiritual instruction is as remote from the unregenerate, as is a power to give themselves life ; and since the former is as much the gift of God, and the fruit of the Holy Ghost as the latter.

“Whoso is simple let him turn in hither ; as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.” Prov. ix. 4, 5. The characters here addressed are the simple, and such as want understanding. The word simple, is used in the scripture, in both a good sense and a bad one. *In a good one*, and signifies a principle of integrity and uprightness, diametrically opposite to guilt and hypocrisy, to serpentine art and cunning ; as may be seen in the following quotations from the sacred

records ; “ The Lord preserveth the *simple*.” “ Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves ; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless,” *simple*, “ as doves.” “ He that giveth let him do it with *simplicity*.” “ For they that are such serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly ; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the *simple*.” “ For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in *simplicity* and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to youward.” *In a bad one* : to signify folly, and real ignorance of God and divine things, and that foolishness, which is attended with a wilful obstinacy, in rebellion against the laws of heaven : this the subsequent citations will fully evince. “ For the turning away of the *simple*” from God, “ shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.” “ The *simple* inherit *folly*, but the *prudent* are crowned with *knowledge*.” “ A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself ; but the *simple* pass on and are punished.” In one of these two senses it must be understood here. If the *latter* ; we behold our Saviour, not making *general* offers of his *peculiar* favours, but, with God-like majesty, calling effectually his own people, from amongst the rest, to partake of the banquet of his love, just as he called James and John away from their father, who was with them in the same ship. It appears that our Lord, as he walked by the sea

of Galilee, saw Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; and as he passed, said unto them, without mentioning either of their names, "follow me;" and they followed him. And as he proceeded on his way, he saw James, and John his brother, in a ship, with Zebedee their father; and he called them. Now as nothing is said respecting the language which he used in calling them, we are naturally led to conclude, from the connexion of this account of the calling of James and John, with that of the calling of Peter and Andrew, that he made use of the same words, "follow me," without mentioning either of their names. Zebedee, no doubt, heard the words of his mouth, as well as his sons; and as the language used was not of a discriminating nature, why did he not conclude, that Jesus called him? Had he not the same external and rational ground on which to draw the conclusion, that his sons had? Nay, had he not as good authority, from hearing what our Saviour said to his sons, to believe that he invited him as well as them, as any one has to conclude, that because the non-elect hear the same gospel language which the elect do, salvation is offered to them? Will any one venture to affirm, that when Jesus said, "follow me," he intended Zebedee, and that the call was directed to him? Surely not: it was evidently designed for James and John only; and being directed by divine power to *their* hearts, proved effectual; and they left their father and followed him. In like manner, when

he says by his servants to a mixed multitude, "come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled," he intends the elect only; and his powerful and all constraining love, being secretly conveyed to them with his word, they come, they eat, they drink. If we understand the word *simple* in the former sense, then we see him with all the tenderness of a lover, and the kindness of a friend, giving the most encouraging invitation, and the most unquestionable authority, to sinners already regenerated, hungering and thirsting after spiritual refreshment, yet indulging hesitation, and, through the want of a correct understanding, fear to approach with boldness, and feast, with freedom, upon the bounties of his grace: the fulness of the blessing of his glorious gospel.

In Cant. v. 2. and its connexion, we have a striking representation of the church in a supine, lethargic state, and of Christ coming to raise her from her sinful torpor, to a state of spiritual activity. He speaks: "Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." She hears him and knows his voice: "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh." But still she indulges in sloth and indolence, and begins to frame excuses: "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" He touches her dull and sluggish heart

with the magnetic power of his love. She feels the heavenly attraction, and unable to resist, she arises in haste, and flies to embrace her beloved, but alas! he is gone. As a just rebuke for her lukewarmness, indolence, and ingratitude, he has withdrawn and concealed himself; and left her to seek him with shame, sorrow, and disappointment. But what has any part of this subject to do with offers and tenders of spiritual blessings to sinners, either elect or non-elect, converted or unconverted? I cannot help expressing my astonishment and grief, that any one, especially my venerable opponent, should suffer himself thus to trifle with sacred things, distort the holy scriptures from their true and obvious meaning, and prostitute them to the support of a sentiment, which I am confident, their divine Author never intended they should, in the least degree, countenance. Nor do I believe, that an honest man will, upon mature deliberation, venture to affirm, in the presence of a jealous God, and the world, that the above scripture does, in any shape whatever, favour the doctrine of *offers*.

“O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.” Isaiah, xlvi. 18. What has this portion of scripture, any more than the former ones, to do with overtures of mercy and offers of salvation? There is not the smallest degree of apparent affinity between them. In the fear of God, with whom we have to

do, in the application and exposition of his holy word, the subsequent thoughts upon the prophet's meaning, in this place, are humbly submitted for the consideration of the candid reader.

The Most High, in the freeness and sovereignty of his pleasure, choose the seed of Abraham for his portion, and set them apart to be to himself a peculiar nation. Deut. xiv. 2.; xxvi. 18. "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." "And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people; as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all his commandments." With his right hand he led them forth out of Egypt; and according to the purpose which he formed in himself, and the promise which he made unto their fathers, he, with miraculous wonders and signs, planted them in the land of Canaan. To them he committed his lively oracles, and gave them statutes, laws, and ordinances relative to both their civil and ecclesiastical polity, such as he never gave to any other nation under heaven. Deut. iv. 8. He gave them also peculiar promises and *threatenings*, both relating to their national economy, and both suspended upon certain conditions clearly specified in the word of God. Lev. xxvi. Deut. iv. 23, 27. If they hearkened to his voice, kept his covenant, obeyed his commandments, observed his statutes, and performed his ordinances, they were to be blessed

with perpetual national existence, increase, power, dominion, grandeur, and greatness, above all nations upon the earth ; and to enjoy rest, peace, and tranquility uninterrupted, with a profusion of wealth, cattle, corn, oil, wine, and all the delicacies produced by the good land which he had given them ; but, if they refused to obey his voice, broke his covenant, disobeyed his commands, and neglected his statutes and ordinances ; curses the most tremendous, and plagues almost innumerable, war, famine, pestilence, and dreadful diseases, evil beasts, dispersion, captivity, and death, were to be inflicted upon them without mercy. Deut. xxviii. 15—68. The commands given to this people, with the promises and threatenings annexed to them, may be considered as constituting that national covenant which God made with them, and according to the tenor of which, he invariably dealt with them in all succeeding ages. With the conditional tenor of this covenant, the language used by the prophet in the passage under consideration, perfectly accords ; but with the *gospel* scheme of absolute grace and *unconditional* salvation ; with righteousness imputed without works ; and with peace made by the blood of the cross, it is quite discordant. In the punctual performance of the conditions of this covenant consisted the national righteousness of Israel, by which they were secured from temporal calamities, and through which they enjoyed national peace and prosperity ; and the non-performance of them was that unrighteousness which

exposed them to the desolating scourge of the Almighty, and actually deprived them of peace and every earthly good. Deut. vi. 24, 25, and xxxii. 46, 47. "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us." "And he said unto them, set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it." See also Ezek. xviii. Had they obeyed the commands of God and kept his covenant, then had their peace been as a river great and permanent, and their righteousness abundant, grand, and to their enemies, terrible like the waves of the sea. Lev. xxvi. 3, 6, 7, 8. "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; and I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword."

Upon the principles of this covenant God stood bound by his faithful oath, to bless them with all that he promised them, and he was no less bound by his justice and truth, to inflict upon them, all the evils with which he had threatened them. Upon these principles the servants of God proceeded in their warnings, admonitions, and exhortations, implying conditions which they gave to the house of Israel, and upon these principles therefore must Ezek. xviii. 30 ; xxxiii. 2 ; Matt. xxiii. 37, 38 ; Acts iii. 19, and all scriptures of the like import be explained. For whoever views them with reference to the covenant of grace, and the scheme of spiritual and eternal salvation, suspends our title to, and our possession of, everlasting life, and its attendant blessings, upon the good pleasure of the human will ; and throws a veil of impenetrable obscurity over the freeness and sovereignty of divine grace.

“Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me : hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” Isa. lv. 1-3. The objects of this divine address, are not the unre-

generate, the earthly, the sensual, the devilish; who with appetites eager and insatiable, are pursuing the empty riches, the airy honours, and the sinful pleasures of the present world. They are, in general, self-sufficient, self-admired, self-loved, self-satisfied, and self-blessed. They are, in their own esteem rich, and see no want of any thing, relating to the future world; full, and feel neither hunger nor thirst after spiritual delights: for them they have no gust. Things divine and heavenly, are too refined and exquisite for their depraved taste; they treat them as things nauseous and disgustful while the pollution which is in the world through lust, is grateful to their vitiated appetites. If these, as some think, are the hungry and thirsty poor, whom God invites to the fatness of his house, who are "the rich whom he sends empty away?" Luke i. 53. Let this question be fairly answered. If the *hungry and thirsty*, who are filled with good things are the *unregenerate*; then the rich, who are sent empty away, must be the *regenerate*, and regeneration must be a real disadvantage, and an awful mark of God's displeasure; but if the *former* are the rich, who are sent empty away, then the *latter* are the poor, who are filled with good things, and of course, the persons addressed in the text; as they must be called to the waters before they can drink them. John vi. 37. These are the poor and needy, who, when first brought to feel their poverty and want, seek the waters of spiritual peace, comfort, and refreshment, from the doctrine of the old

covenant, "*do and live*," and their own performances of things, which they conceive to be their duties ; but these, like broken cisterns, deceive. From these channels, therefore, they return, like the children of the Jewish nobles, ashamed with their heads covered. Jer. xiv. 3. In this pursuit they meet with disappointment after disappointment. They seek earnestly and sincerely, early and late : they toil and labour, till they fatigue both body and mind, but all in vain ; they find no water. The fiery law, and the burning heat of sin dry up their spirits, till their tongues fail for thirst, and their souls faint within them. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he hears their piteous moan, and delivers them out of their distresses. Psa. cvii. 5, 6 ; Isa. xli. 17. He opens before them the fountain of living waters in the gospel of his love, and presents to the view of their enlightened minds the rich, nutritious doctrines, the cheering promises, and the satisfying blessings of his grace ; infinitely more sweet and pleasant than wine and milk ; all free, the absolute gifts of his bounteous goodness, to the poor and needy ; and meets their " ardent wishes and longings," their indigence and fears, with a hearty welcome to all they want and ask ; bidding them come, with all their poverty, and all their wants, and freely partake of the rich repast. "*Ho ! every one that thirsteth*," that desires the blessings of grace, and longs for divine delights, turn from the fiery law, which breathes nothing but death, and throws destruction around ; "*come ye*,"

to the sweet refreshing waters of the gospel; "*and he that hath no money,*" that is, reduced to the last extremity and hath no price of merit to bring in his hand; "*come ye,*" with all your wants and woes, with all your demerits and unworthiness; "*buy and eat,*" receive as my free gift, all that the gospel presents to your view, and make a free use of it, for your spiritual nourishment, comfort, and satisfaction; solace yourselves; drink to satiety; all is free; all is at your service! "*Wherefore do ye spend money, for that which is not bread; and your labour for that which satisfieth not?*" Why do ye toil and labour under the legal yoke, and spend your time, and strength, and property, to fulfil the law, and all with a view of obtaining peace and satisfaction for your troubled souls? "*Hearken diligently unto me,*" listen with attention to my voice in the gospel, by which you are directed to living fountains of water, and "*a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined,*" freely granted to the poor and needy, who are ready to perish. "*Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your souls shall live;*" the words that I speak, when heard with understanding, and mixed with faith, are spirit and life to the soul; "*and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David;*" I will seal upon your hearts my everlasting covenant of grace, which I made with you in Christ before the world began, which is ordered in all things and sure, and in which you

are truly and for ever blessed, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Now as this very affectionate and pathetic language is evidently directed, to those persons, who are brought by regenerating grace, to feel their guilt and misery, and ardently desire divine enjoyment of pardon, peace and communion with God ; but who through the influence of an erroneous judgment, a disposition to cleave to the covenant of works, the temptations of Satan, and sometimes an unsound ministry, are seeking them in the use of improper means ; I cannot help concluding that it is designed of God, to correct their mistakes, to inform their judgment, to evangelize their minds, and to bring them through the power of the Holy Spirit, to the real enjoyment of his love and favour, and all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord ; and that there is not an *offer*, nor the shadow of an *offer*, of any one blessing, to be seen in the text.

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God for he will abundantly pardon.” Isa. lv. 7. What is offered here ? mercy ! pardon ! If these are offered to the wicked and unrighteous man, *to become his*, upon his forsaking his ways and thoughts, and returning unto the Lord, then, prior to his performing these acts, he has no kind of interest in them, nor title to them ; but his right to them is suspended upon his forsaking his ways,

and thoughts. Where then is free grace, and the gift by grace? Alas! they are enveloped, and concealed in the dark, thick fog of evangelical offers; and all that appears is an *ignus-fatuus*; a system of duty, with proposals of reward; if you forsake your ways and thoughts, which are not good, and return to the Lord, you shall be amply rewarded with mercy and pardon. Such is the divinity current in these days of rebuke and blasphemy, of error and delusion, of wandering and apostacy from the truth as it is in Jesus! When the wicked forsake their ways, and the unrighteous their thoughts, and return unto the Lord, is there not a cause? Undoubtedly there is; and that cause must be either of God, or of themselves. If of God, where are overtures of mercy and offers of pardon to the unregenerate? Is it not an act of amazing mercy in the Most High, to turn sinners from the evil of their ways? And, does he not cause them to return unto himself, because he formed them, in his ancient counsel, to be vessels of mercy and honour, and afore prepared them unto glory; and because they have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace? If not, what means the following inspired language? “But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices: I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee

with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices ; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Isa, xliii. 22—25. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins ; return unto me ; for I have redeemed thee." Isa. xlv. 22. Redemption and pardon, including all the riches of mercy, are here represented, by the pen of inspiration and infallibility, as freely given to sinners, prior to their returning to God, and before they perform any good work. Now, could we conceive it possible for the divinely instructed Isaiah, while acting as the amanuensis of the Holy Ghost, to be inconsistent ; affirming, at one time, that mercy and pardon are freely given to elect sinners, in the purpose and covenant of God, prior to their forsaking their sinful ways, and vain thoughts, and turning to the Lord ; and that their forsaking their pernicious ways, and returning to the Lord, are the *effects* of their interest in the unbounded treasures of his mercy, and the invaluable blessing of pardon ; and at another, declaring that they have no interest whatever in either of these blessings before they forsake sin and return unto the Lord ; and, that their forsaking sin, and returning unto him, are the cause of their interest in them : could we imagine this eminently wise prophet, to be so like

many among us, who think, or at least, seem to think, that it is the most consistent to be inconsistent ; we might then think, that in the passage before us, he might possibly make a *conditional tender*, of what he had before published as *free gifts already bestowed*. But if we believe it impossible for him, while declaring the counsel of the Most High to err in judgment, or advance doctrines at all discordant, we cannot but conclude, that in the text before us, he speaks of mercy and pardon, as manifested and applied only ; and that it contains neither proposal nor offer of any thing ; but is a plain and positive declaration, that whenever the wicked forsake their ways, and the unrighteous their thoughts, and return unto the Lord, they shall receive mercy and pardon at his hands ; as if he had said, “ let the wicked forsake their ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts,” whenever they will, they shall receive both mercy and forgiveness ; both shall be applied with evidence and power to their hearts.

“ Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions ; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.” Ezek. xviii. 30. Israel had sinned by transgressing the covenant which God had made with them, as his chosen and peculiar nation ; upon the performance of which, depended their national peace, prosperity, and existence. They had done those

things, which he had forbidden them to do, on pain of punishments the most dreadful, to be inflicted in various forms. He, therefore, according to the conditional tenor of that covenant, repeats, in the most solemn and awful manner, his determination to punish them, if they continued to go on in sin. But, as that covenant admitted of repentance and reformation, as conditions of pardon, and exemption from punishment, the prophet, on that very ground, and on no other, exhorted them to repent, and turn from all their transgressions, that iniquity might not be their ruin, as a body politic. Joel i. ii.

Now, if, in that covenant which contains all our eternal salvation, with every spiritual good, repentance were made the condition of our interest in the invaluable treasure ; then we might, without incurring the charge of inconsistency, offer spiritual blessings to sinners to become theirs upon the performance of the condition required : but this is not the case. All is free, in that holy and glorious covenant ; nothing is conditional ; all is absolutely given and applied ; nothing is proposed and offered ; and it is very remarkable, that God, by the mouth of the same prophet, whose words we have just been considering, when speaking to the same people, on the grand subject of the covenant of grace, uses language quite the reverse of the above : language the most positive ; and not in the least indicative of any thing like overtures, offers, or conditional proposals, of the blessings therein spe-

cified. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean ; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Ezek. xxxvi. 25--27.

I will, and you *shall*, is the language of sovereign grace, speaking in that covenant, which is established upon better promises, than those which are attended with conditions and threats.

"As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live ; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel ? " Ezek. xxxiii. 2. If we explain this upon Arminian principles, we represent that absolute, Almighty Being, who neither "*borrow*s leave to *be* ;" nor craves permission to *act* ; who willed universal nature into existence ; whose dominion knows no limitation ; whose power is subject to no controul ; and who ever *did*, and ever *will do*, all his pleasure, amidst all the murmurs, frowns, and hostile airs of human pride : this immense, amazing Being, is, I say, by an Arminian interpretation of this passage, represented as dependent upon depraved and helpless worms ; wishing and longing for their salvation, but unable to effect it without their leave ; and

prostrate, at the feet of sovereign dust and ashes, wooing and beseeching them, to gratify his wishes, and give him the desire of his heart: than which representation, nothing can be more false, nor more degrading to infinite majesty. If we explain it upon Calvinistic principles, then we are under the necessity of considering it in connexion with some other economy, than that of the covenant of absolute grace, in which divine sovereignty, unlimited, and immutable, reigns with infinite grandeur, in the absolute, eternal, unalienable grant of all spiritual blessings to the guilty and undone: and shines with ineffable and unfading lustre, in the free and effectual application of them to the heart and mind, darkened and enslaved by the joint powers of hell and sin; by which application, without either offer or tender, the soul is delivered from its darkness and chains, and is brought into the light and liberty of the sons of God. With this grand economy, independent of all creatures, it will by no means agree. But it perfectly coincides with the national covenant made with Israel by their sovereign Creator, in which he promised them, life, peace, and prosperity as a nation, upon the condition of obedience, or of repentance and reformation, in case of default. When they obeyed his voice, they increased, they prospered, they were happy. When they rebelled, the long-suffering God, sent his prophets to warn them, to expostulate with them, and exhort them to turn from their wickedness and live. Nor is it possible to explain these

words of Ezekiel, in harmony with reason and truth, unless we consider them with reference to the system of divine government which Jehovah established in Israel, and according to the principles of which, he ruled his ancient people in all their generations. And therefore, when he appeared in frowns and poured out his indignation upon them, he assured them by the mouth of his prophet, that he did not punish them capriciously or wantonly, and for the sake of seeing them in misery, as if he delighted in cruelty, and felt pleasure in the distress and anguish of his creatures; but having threatened them with death and destruction, if they broke his covenant, and remained impenitent; and they having sinned, it became him, as a righteous governor, to proceed against them and punish them to the full extent of the threatening. Nay, that unless they repented and turned from their wickedness, he was bound by all the ties of holiness, justice, and truth, and by all the honours of his eternal throne, to consume them utterly. Hence the propriety of that affectionate exhortation, "*turn ye, turn ye;*" and of the pathetic expostulation, "*why will ye die, O house of Israel?*" As they had power to turn from that external wickedness, which had exposed them to death or national ruin, and as life and prosperity were promised, upon condition of reformation, it remained according to their federal constitutions, for them to determine, whether it should be life or death: God could not but act agreeably to his word. "See, I have set before thee this day

life and good, and death and evil ; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply ; and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them ; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing ; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live. That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him ; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days ; that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." Deut. xxx. 15—20.

“ Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break of thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor ; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.” Dan. iv. 27. No spiritual blessings, and of course no offers of them here. The utmost that can be fairly made of this text is good advice to the king

of Babylon, to leave his high crimes, that he might escape those degrading judgments, which they were likely to bring upon him, and that his temporal tranquillity might continue.

“And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize; and the remnant took his servants and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, the wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye, therefore, into the highways; and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither,

not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." Matt. xxii. 1—14.

If bidding to the marriage, and offering spiritual blessings are the same, it must unavoidably follow, that all who come at the bidding, receive the offer, and of course accept the things which are offered; as the acceptance of an offer, and the reception of what is offered, always involve each other. How then comes it to pass, that among the guests, there was found one who had not a wedding garment? He had accepted the offer as truly as any one there, if bidding and offering are synonymous. He was bidden with the rest; he came in with the rest, and he was with them in the house when the king came in to see the guests. Now if the wedding garment be a spiritual blessing, if it be offered with other blessings of the same kind, and if the acceptance of the offer, be the same as the reception of what is offered; how, I again ask, came it to pass, that he was found without it, and for the want of it, cast out? Will any one say, that the wedding garment is not a spiritual blessing? How then is it essential to salvation? Or will it be said that the acceptance of the offer, and the reception of what is offered, are different things? Then let the difference be defined, and let it be shown how I could accept the offer, without receiving the thing offered;

or else discharge this parable, as unfit for the service of evangelical offers.

My opinion of this parable is, that the design of our Lord in speaking it, was to exhibit the state of the visible church, under the gospel dispensation ; and to show, that after his ascension, his apostles should first preach the gospel to the Jews ; that upon their refusing to hear it, they should turn to the Gentiles, and go from one kingdom to another preaching the word of life ; that, after them other ministers would be raised up, and sent forth to proclaim salvation in his name ; that by these means some would be truly called and converted unto the Lord, and others influenced to reform and assume a profession of Christianity, without receiving its life, light, power, and glory ; that these different characters would be united in the bond of external church fellowship, and be together in the same visible church state, undistinguished by every eye, but his who searches the heart and the reins ; and that all mere profession of religion, and *exterior* church privileges, are quite insufficient to save without his own righteousness, with which he arrays his people, and in which they are exalted to everlasting honour.

“ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! ” Matt. xxiii.

37. I cannot conceive our Lord's meaning to be that he would have gathered them to himself *spiritually* so as to make them the happy partakers of eternal salvation ; because that kind of gathering has no dependance whatever upon the will of man ; and because it is expressly declared by the scriptures, that " all whom his Father giveth him, *shall* come unto him ;" and that " his people *shall* be willing in the day of his power." But, that had they, as a nation, attended to the voices of his prophets, been obedient to his word, and kept his ordinances, he would have preserved them from their enemies, just as a hen preserves her brood under her wings, from injurious weather, and birds of prey. Or, if after they had sinned and brought themselves into distress, they had forsaken their wickedness, he would have delivered them from all their troubles. Deut. xxx. 1—10 ; Jer. xxvi. 12, 13. But they would not : they despised his messengers, and stoned and killed them ; they closed their ears against all his warnings, threatenings, and promises, and persisted in their sinful conduct ; which according to their national constitution, and the peculiar covenant they were under, made it impossible that he should preserve or deliver them, for he could neither change his mind, nor break his word ; their house was, therefore, left unto them desolate and unprotected ; exposed to all the fury of the Roman army, and abandoned to total destruction. Luke xix. 41—44. All then contained in this text is conditional, temporal protection or destruction,

depending upon obedience or disobedience. There is nothing in it which gives countenance to offers of those free blessings, which have no dependence upon human conduct.

“Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Mark i. 15. Whether we understand this as a mere exhortation to faith and repentance, natural or spiritual, or as a powerful creative command, which reaches the hearts of the elect, and produces faith and repentance in them, while it only enters the ears of others, there is nothing in it favourable to the offers contended for; unless faith and repentance are offered, to suppose which, even upon this scheme would be absurd, since it is maintained, that whatever is offered in the gospel, is offered or proposed to sinners, to become theirs *upon their believing*.

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” Acts iii. 19. Does the apostle speak here of spiritual repentance and conversion; and of the forgiveness and refreshment from the presence of the Lord, which are inseparable from everlasting life? If he does, either the *former* are conditions of the *latter*, or the Holy Ghost uses conditional language when speaking of absolute blessings, neither of which ideas can be received, because they evidently militate with truth. The forgiveness and divine refreshment, which are united with eternal

salvation are blessings absolutely granted, by an act of divine grace ; and are therefore, free from every human condition, and it being the office of the Holy Ghost, who is truth itself, to bear witness to the truth, and to guide the simple into all truth, it is quite incompatible with both his character and his office, to make, to the human mind, a false representation of the will of God, by using language implying conditions, when speaking of blessings which are absolute. It is, I think, made evident by the context, that the apostle in this address to the Jewish nation, exhorted them to repent, of the rejection and murder of Jesus Christ, by which they had exposed themselves to calamities the most dreadful ; to turn to him as the true Messiah ; reform their lives ; and receive the gospel dispensation ; that they might, as a nation, receive forgiveness, be delivered from those tremendous judgments, with which they were threatened, and receive times of refreshing, or national prosperity, from the Lord, according to the tenor of the covenant between him and them, in which, temporal good and evil were set before them, and suspended upon their conduct. If they obeyed the voice of his prophets, and regarded the word which he sent to them, they were to live undisturbed in the peaceful possession of the rights and privileges, which he had granted them ; but if they despised his servants, and disobeyed his word ; they were to be punished with war, famine, and captivity ; and in case of impenitence, and a continuance in disobedience,

and rebellion, total dispersion and destruction. The Lord God of their fathers, had, according to his promise, raised up unto them the glorious Messiah, the Prince of all the prophets. Him they despised and hated; and closing their ears upon his word, they conspired against him, and became his betrayers and murderers. Now, God having declared by Moses, that whoever would not hearken to the words, which that prophet should speak, he would require it of him; Peter put them in mind of the awful threatening. Deut. xviii. 15—19; Acts iii. 22, 23. But as God had promised them forgiveness, deliverance, protection, and prosperity, if they repented and reformed, the apostle exhorted them to repent, and turn to God, that they might receive the promised pardon, and escape the threatened punishment. Deut. iv. 30, 31; Isa. i. 16—20. The latter chapter from the 10th to the 20th verse, is evidently descriptive of the state of the Jews, between the death of Christ, and the destruction of their nation. They had killed the Prince of life, and their hands were full of blood; they still continued to offer sacrifices, but the ceremonial law being abolished by the obedience and sacrifice of Christ, they were no longer acceptable to God; they had forgiveness of sins preached by the apostles, to which they were advised to attend; and if they received the gospel dispensation, they were to continue in the land of Canaan, and eat the good of it, but if they rebelled they were to be devoured by the sword.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

Rev. iii. 20. If the Redeemer stands at the door of the hearts of all who hear the gospel, knocking, and offering to enter, it must be with a design, either to enter, or not to enter them ; if with a design not to enter, where are his uprightness and sincerity ; or to what purpose does he make the offer ? Is it for the real benefit of sinners ; or is it for his own glory ? If he merely offers to enter, and proceeds no farther, what real advantage do sinners derive, or what honour arises to himself, from the offer ? Are the former profited by being trifled with and mocked ; or is the latter glorified, by pretending to do, what he never intended ? If with a design to enter, it unavoidably follows that if he does not enter every heart at which he knocks, it must be either owing to a change in his will, or a defect in his power ; or else, to the suspension of his entrance upon the determination of the human will. Now I presume, it will not be said, even by my opponent, that it is owing to either of the former ; because he professes to believe both his omnipotence and immutability ; nor to the latter, because he would not seem to favour Arminianism. It must, therefore, either be *proved* that Christ *enters* the hearts of all who hear the gospel, or *confessed* that he does not *knock* at the hearts of all who hear it. The real meaning of the text, I think, is this : Christ by his servant John, had been ad-

addressing the seven churches of Asia ; some of them he had censured, and had threatened to come to them, and chastise them, unless they reformed ; to others of them he had made most precious promises, and in order to raise their minds, to a due attention to what he had said, he assured them, that he would “ come quickly,” that he was, even then, like a person standing before the door, just ready to enter in among them, to fulfil both his threatening and promises ; and that the members of those churches who were spiritually-minded, and disposed to receive him, and desirous of holding communion with him should be honoured with his presence and blessed with his fellowship.

PROVIDENTIAL INTERFERENCE
MAINTAINED AGAINST THE SUGGES-
TIONS OF INFIDEL PHISOSOPHY.

A LETTER ADDRESSED TO P. W. B.

SIR,

Upon reading your apparently ingenuous confession, "that, prior to your reading a certain Periodical Miscellany, you had indulged many prejudices against revealed religion; but upon reading its manly and energetic pages, you felt your attention arrested and captivated, and some of your prejudices removed," I was much pleased; my soul rejoices at the conquests of the glorious cross over the sceptical principles, which in the present day, are most artfully and industriously disseminated among all ranks of people, by the emissaries of the arch fiend, who makes it his hourly employ, to beguile the souls of men, by infatuating their minds with strong delusion, by inspiring them with a fatal disbelief of the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and by prompting them to believe and receive a

lie, that they may sin without remorse, take pleasure in unrighteousness, and, in the end, receive, as their just reward, an awful portion with him and his angels, in the lake of fire, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And upon perusing the queries annexed to your pleasing confession, I felt an inclination to submit to your dispassionate perusal, a few thoughts by way of reply.

You ask, first, "If two men, equally righteous and favourites of heaven, pray, the one for, the other against a certain event, how can the prayers of each, at one and the same time, be granted?"

As you express a doubt whether all your prejudices against revealed religion are entirely removed, I think myself warranted to consider this query, as a portrait of the present state of your mind, as it respects divine revelation; and as implying a doubt of the authenticity of the Holy Bible. As you suppose it possible for two men of the above character to pray, the one for, the other against a certain event, so, you seem to think, that as the scriptures promise the answer of prayer, the petitions of each must be granted at one and the same time, or the truth of the divine page would be dubious.

That the case you suppose may possibly exist, is freely granted; two men, equally righteous, and favourites of heaven, the one a subject of the French, the other of the British government, may possibly pray, the former for the final victory of France over Britain, the latter for the final dominion of Britain

over France ;* but that the prayers of each, must, at one and the same time, be answered, in order to establish the validity of the scriptures, must be denied. The mind that requires such evidence of the divine origin of the Old and New Testament, is not likely to be soon satisfied ; because it requires that which is, in its own nature, impossible. The reason is plain : the Infinite Supreme must be the immediate efficient, or permissive cause of every event ; to assert the contrary would be to assert a most egregious contradiction, tantamount to saying the Supreme is not Supreme ; for if any cause in earth or heaven, could produce an event without, at least, his permission, it must do it in defiance of his will, and in spite of his power ; and must, therefore, stand entitled to the supremacy ; a thought at which all that deserves the name of reason must recoil with horror. There can be but one subsistence to whom the title of Supreme can, without the most glaring and shocking absurdity, be applied. And as that immense Being who justly bears this transcendent name has no compeer, his supremacy must be absolute, his dominion must extend to every creature, and his will must determine every event that occurs throughout universal nature. Is this denied ? Then I call upon the man who denies it, to name the event which took place without a cause. Does he decline the arduous, the eternal task, and admit a cause to

* This was written when England and France were at war, in 1806.

every event? Then he must call the cause of each event, an event produced by another cause, and that cause an event existing by another cause, and so go on, ascending from effect to cause, till he reaches the summit of the amazing climax of all nature's effects and causes:—the self-existing *I AM!* who has neither cause nor beginning: the first and the last, who is over all, through all, moving every wheel in nature's immense machine, by the counsel of his will, and the power of his hand; creating or permitting every cause, and every effect, for the glory of his supreme sovereignty, wisdom, goodness, and power.

Now, Sir, as my reason will not admit of more than one Supreme Being, nor suffer me to think of an event which is not determined by the supreme will, so neither will it permit me to conceive an idea of so much as the shadow of imperfection in that will; it therefore compels me to believe, that the Most High cannot will that the same identical event shall, and shall not occur; as that would betray the greatest weakness; and, consequently, it obliges me to conclude, that if two men equally righteous and favourites of heaven, were to pray, the one for, the other against, a certain event, it would be utterly impossible that the prayers of each should be granted. Can the Supreme do any thing without an act of his will? Or can a thing be, and not be, at the same time? These are ideas, which no sober mind, under the government and influence of chaste, unperverted reason, can for a

moment endure. It appears then, with evidence clear as the unclouded sun, that in the case supposed, the grant of the requests of each suppliant, is so far from being necessary *to evince the divinity of the scriptures*, that only to *suppose* it requisite *to answer that end*, would rather evince the absence of sanity from the mind in which the supposition is entertained.

It ought never to be forgotten, that while the scriptures promise that the desire of the righteous shall be granted, they expressly limit both the desire, and the grant to the *will of God*. “This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing *according to his will* he heareth us ; and if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” 1 John v. 14, 15. It cannot, therefore, appear necessary, that all the prayers of the righteous should be granted, until it be proved that they are all *coincident with the will of God*. Were then ten thousand of these requests refused by the Almighty, while such proof is absent, and absent it must eternally be, the validity of the scriptures would remain unaffected by the refusal.

It may, perhaps, be asked whether it is possible for a truly righteous man to offer up a petition that will not meet the divine approbation ? To this, I reply, that it is more than possible ; it is most certain, that some saints of the first magnitude have prayed, and their prayers have been disapproved and rejected by the Lord, as opposite to his will,

and incompatible with his honour and his designs. Moses, the man of God prayed that the Lord would either forgive the sins of the people of Israel, or blot him out of the book which he had written ; but the Lord refused his request, and said unto him, " Whosoever hath sinned against me him will I blot out of my book. Wherefore, now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee ; behold, mine angel shall go before thee ; nevertheless, in the day that I visit, I will visit their sin upon them," Exod. xxxii. 32—34. David besought the Lord for the life of his child, but the Lord rejected his prayer, 2 Sam. xii. 16—18. Job and Jonah prayed for immediate death, and their requests were denied, Job vi. 7, 8 ; Jonah iv. 3. James and John, two disciples of our Lord ; solicited permission and power to command fire to come down from heaven to consume those Samaritans, who refused to receive him ; but so far was their gracious and compassionate Master from indulging their humour, that he gave them a severe rebuke, Luke ix. 54, 55. The mother of Zebedee's children desired that her two sons might sit, the one on the right hand, the other on the left of our Lord, in his kingdom ; and she received a denial, with this information, that to sit on his right hand and his left, in his glory, was an honour which would be given to them for whom it was prepared, Matt. xx. 20—22.

The scriptures teach us, that the prayer which *accords with the will of God, and meets the Divine*

approbation, is indited by the Holy Spirit, and presented in the faith of his operation. "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought ; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered ; and he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints *according to the will of God*," Rom. viii. 26, 27. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask *in faith nothing wavering* ; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed ; for let not that man think, *that he shall receive any thing of the Lord*," James i. 6. See also Matt. xxi. 22.

But although the saints have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, they have also flesh that lusteth against the Spirit ; and these are contrary the one to the other ; the *former* is entirely pure, in the *latter* there dwelleth no good thing ; and their prayers are dictated sometimes by *that* sometimes by *this*. Fleshly principles are carnal and corrupt ; these often raise in the minds of the best of men carnal and corrupt desires ; and these desires, frequently, burst forth in ardent petitions. Moses desired to be blotted from the Lord's book, because he did not cordially approve of the divine procedure. Job asked for death because he fretted at the chastening of the Lord. Jonah prayed for dissolution, because he was angry with the Lord for shewing

mercy to Nineveh ; and others have prayed, and do pray from motives no less sinful than these.

It appears then, that all the prayers of the righteous and favourites of heaven, are not indited by the Holy Ghost ; that those prayers which are not indited by him, are not according to the will of God ; that those petitions which are not according to his will, he cannot grant ; that, consequently, all the requests of the righteous cannot be granted ; and, therefore, that the denial of some of them supports no argument, countenances no objection, against revealed religion.

You next ask, “ If that law which is called attraction, be the bond of nature, what less than the alteration or suspension of its force which must disorder the whole structure of the world, can prevent a building exposed to a violent earthquake or tempest, whose beams and cement are dislodged, from overwhelming in its ruins, a good man, who, ignorant of these matters, lies sleeping in his bed ? ”

This query if I rightly understand it, supposes,

First, That the law of attraction is the bond of nature.

Secondly, That without the alteration or suspension of its force, a building exposed to a violent earthquake or storm, with its cement and beams dislodged, must bury in its ruins a good man, who ignorant of these matters, lies sleeping on his bed within its walls.

Thirdly, That neither the alteration nor the suspension of its force can take place, because either

this or *that* would quite disorder the structure of the world ; therefore,

Fourthly, That the preservation of the supposed good man is impossible.

Now I would ask, if the law of attraction, whose force is of such amazing importance in your mind is the Supreme Being ? It either *is* or is *not*. If it is, it possesses understanding and will, and can boast unlimited authority and power ; and could, therefore, if it would, draw all the walls of the building outward, and cause all the beams to follow them, and let the poor good man lie safe and undisturbed on his bed to finish his repose, and yet keep the structure of the world in order ; for unconfined power can draw *this* way and *that*, *here* raise a confusion among the elements, and *there* preserve order at the same instant. If it be not, it must be a creature depending for its force and effects upon him who is the Supreme Being : his servant always at his beck, entirely subject to his will, to be employed, or dispensed with, at his pleasure. This must be confessed, or its independence and immutability proved. But who will undertake the mighty work ? Chaste philosophy condemns the attempt as vain and impious. Infidelity applies with ardour to the task ; but faints and languishes beneath its weight. The law of attraction independent, immutable ! Let infidel philosophy blush at the weak and childish thought of attributing to a part of nature, independence and immutability : for what is the law of attraction, but a part of

nature ? Has philosophy yet to learn, that if it is not God it must belong to nature ? Or has she, in any of her bold adventures and indefatigable researches discovered something existing that is neither God nor nature ? If she has, what is it ? The law of attraction ? If she has not, then God and nature must be the only subjects of our contemplations ; and while we employ our thoughts upon these two objects, care must be taken to keep them always distinct in our mind ; ever viewing God as the Creator, nature as the creature ; the *former* as supreme, independent, and immutable ; the *latter* as subject, dependent, and mutable. The fool, indeed, says in his heart, there is no God ; and that nature is all that exists. But how does he know there is no God ? Can he prove there is no such Being ? Can he make it evident, beyond all contradiction, that nature is all that exists ? Or shew, if there is no God, by what means it exists ? To believe a proposition to be true without sufficient evidence of its truth, is folly in the extreme. To rest assured that *there is no God*, without clear, full, undeniable proof, that there is no such subsistence, and to risk upon the belief of the *bold position* all that depends upon the opposite position *there is a God*, is to act with all the temerity of the most outrageous madman. He who believes nature to be all that exists, must also believe, that the *whole*, and every part, is self-created ; and that, as there are apparent throughout the whole, most wise design, and surprising skill ; each part pos-

sesses rationality, and, of course, that a block has brains as well as a philosopher.

But you believe that there is a God, and that he reigns supreme over all nature, or there is neither truth nor reason in your confession ; for the being and supremacy of God lie at the very foundation of all revealed religion, and are the vital roots on which it grows ; without these, it would be a mere nonentity. You must, therefore, admit as an indisputable truth, what is asserted above ; viz. that the law of attraction is entirely subject to his will, who rules over all, and that it stands at his beck as his devoted servant, ready to be employed or not, according to his righteous pleasure. To acknowledge his absolute supremacy, and at the same time, to deny his unlimited authority, and all-sufficient power to do what he will, *in* and *with* every part of nature, of which the law of attraction is one, must, I think, excite both astonishment and disgust in every mind that possesses any degree of taste for consistency, or feels the smallest regard for the credit of common sense.

But suppose, in compliance with philosophy, we say, that the Most High, by an immutable decree of his will, has appointed the law of attraction to be the perpetual bond of nature, and the grand means employed by his power to hold all her members in union, and to prevent dissolution and disorder until the time ordained for it to be dissolved, so that, with respect to nature in *general*, the suspension, or even the alteration of its force, for one

moment only, would disorder the whole structure of the world; will it follow, that it can neither be suspended nor altered in regard of a *particular part* or *parts* of it, without producing that tremendous effect? Or, admitting that, in consequence of divine determination, and on no other ground can it be admitted, the suspension or alteration of it, on any occasion whatever, quite impossible, without disjoining the universe, may it not be *occasionally counteracted*, especially with respect to some particular objects, and yet the general good order of the stately fabric of the universe be preserved? If, since the creation, it has never been for a moment suspended nor altered, has it never been *counteracted*; so that, notwithstanding the sameness of its nature, and the constancy of its operation, it has not always produced the same effects upon certain bodies? It is thought by some, that in consequence of the power of attraction, all bodies upon the surface of the earth naturally gravitate to the centre of the earth; so that if it were perforated, and two stones, one on each side of it, were put into the perforation, they would meet and stop exactly in the middle, or at the centre. Now, if through the invariable force of attraction upon them, all bodies upon the face of the earth incessantly tend to its centre, by what force do they sometimes retrograde from it? That they sometimes do so, is a truth too evident to want any kind of proof.

We will suppose a case. A ball of iron, or lead,