

against him : and let me observe, that, of all the sins which provoke God to pour out his curses on an individual, or a city, or a nation, there is none equal in guilt to the sin of infidelity, or the rejection of the LORD Jesus and his glorious gospel.

GOD never cheats us with lies ; or by flattering words and fair speeches, raising our hopes and desires too high ; or, by cold, dry words and haughty reserves, and dark, distant expressions, sinking our expectations too low : but he wisely adjusts his promises to our real wants ; and, like a tender and affectionate father, gives us a most free, full, and fair account of all the temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings we may expect from him : and we may be confident of what I would stile,

An ardent and combined application of all the perfections of God, in order to the actual execution of all his designs, and the steady fulfilment of all his purposes and promises, without any stated reserves, or allowed exceptions for one single moment. Sincerity animates him in the whole extent of his wise conduct and glorious administration : he will not deceive us in one instance. For GOD to speak contrary to his sense of things, or repugnant to truth shining in his mind, and with a design to deceive, would be a wilful lye ; it would be an outrage on his very
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nature, a violation of the inward sentiments of his heart, a force, even to violence, put upon the inclinations of his pure and holy soul.

As God is animated by sincerity, and ardently actuated by a most mighty and infinite love of truth; and as he is intirely directed by faithfulness as his eternal law; therefore he cannot pretend to friendship where he has none, nor make promises of kindness where none is intended; nor can he act a false or unfriendly part after his promises are made, and his professions of love and regard are published and brought home to his people's hearts. God never declares one word more of friendship than he really feels for that soul to whom he speaks; and he scorns to flatter men or angels even for a single moment.

He disdains to make pretensions of friendship on purpose to deceive, or to have an advantage over us, to impose upon us, to seduce us, to cheat, disappoint, and vex our souls, as artful men and deceitful devils always do, on purpose to ruin the objects of their fatal and ruinous seduction.

He abhors, with all the intense hatred of a God, to use crafty insinuations and soft speeches to ensnare us: his infinite sincerity, his ardent integrity of heart, urges him to do nothing, to say nothing, to think nothing, but what is fair and open, free, friendly, and faithful, that will bear the light of heaven and the severest scrutiny of

of men and angels. He uses none but fair and open dealings in all his actions, and transactions with the whole world of mankind.

God speaks very seriously, very earnestly, and very warmly too, whenever he speaks at all, either to saints or sinners, to friends or foes: he leaves no man at a loss for his meaning, and what he will do for him if he is a friend of God, and what he will do most dreadfully against him if he shall be found an enemy: he speaks in the flaming fire of love in every word of promise, and in the ardent fire of wrath in every word of his threatenings to the wicked and ungodly.

All these views should give us the highest veneration for the inspired Scriptures of God, a mighty and unbounded confidence in his promises, and a most vigorous and perpetual imitation of his inflexible INTEGRITY and inviolable faithfulness.

R E C O L L E C T I O N .

Let us, my dear reader, stand still for a few moments, and review the ground we have trod: 'tis delightful ground; 'tis the soil of Paradise; 'tis the garden of God: they are the fields of beauty and joy we have travelled over, and the prospect is pleasant and lovely whether we look backward or forward, or all around. We may say with delight and wonder, O! how great is

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thy goodness, and how great is thy beauty. Zech. ix. 17. How excellent is thy loving kindness, O ! GOD ; therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. Pf. xxxvi. 7. O ! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and goodness of GOD. Rom. xi. 33.

We have considered what are the wants and wishes of an immortal soul, that knows its own highest and eternal interest and happiness, and have found that it consists in a clear and familiar acquaintance with GOD, in a special knowledge of his attributes, in large and comprehensive prospects of GOD, and in deep and durable impressions of his lovely perfections on our minds, in order to produce in us the very best affections towards him, the utmost confidence in his power and faithfulness, the most profound submission to his dominion, and the most cordial and cheerful obedience to his laws.

We have drawn out the scriptural character of this most sublime and glorious being, and have proceeded to shew, how he has made a most astonishing advancement on his own character in the redemption of the church by the LORD Jesus Christ. We have taken new prospects of the exquisite wisdom and prudence of GOD in contriving our redemption—the unfathomable goodness of GOD in giving Christ—the holiness of GOD in

fixing the order and beautifying the whole work of salvation—the justice of GOD in punishing sin, and becoming the guardian of this salvation. We have seen that the JUSTICE of GOD is an ardent and immutable regard to the rights of the divine nature, with a determined resolution to preserve those rights inviolate to eternity : and in the redemption of man, we have viewed divine justice as shining out in its brightest terror and glory. We have taken a sweet and charming prospect of the sincerity of GOD, as it consists in the upright intention of his heart to speak the truth, the clear and naked words of truth—in the determinate inclinations of his will to exert his perfections agreeably to his words of promise and threatening, and his intire self-consistency of character, scorning all duplicity of conduct, and always acting with the dignity of a GOD.

And now, my dear reader, if you are a true christian, let me invite you to join with me in an act of joy and triumph in this most lovely and adorable GOD. He has made himself over to us in those glorious words, which are a compendium of the covenant of grace :—I will be to you a GOD, and ye shall be to me a people. Heb. viii. 10. And what doth these precious words include, my dear christian brother ? what are the delightful contents of this fundamental promise of the new covenant ? Let me attempt

to spread abroad the sense of them in the following exposition. His spiritual nature is suited to our spirits; his immutability is the security of our happiness; his eternity is the duration of our felicity; his omnipresence is our constant and sociable friend; his life and omnipotence is the life and strength of our minds; his omniscience is our watchful and kind overseer; his wisdom is our constant guide; his goodness our inexhaustible treasure; his grace covers all our unworthiness; his mercy pardons all our guilt; his love is the light and joy of our hearts; his patience spares our comforts and our lives; his holiness is the fountain of our sanctification; his justice is the guardian of our rights, and the avenger of our injuries; his sincerity is the basis of all our hopes; and his veracity and faithfulness are the everlasting security of our eternal salvation! What a God is this, my friend! and what ground have we for habitual love to him, and habitual joy in him, as our own covenant God for ever and ever!

Thus far we have advanced in our DEMONSTRATION of the divine Inspiration of the Scriptures, from the first grand source of evidence, (viz.) the goodness of the doctrines, laws, and promises, contained in the Scriptures; and I trust we have made good our ground as we go on. But, let it be observed, my appeal is chiefly to the
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wise and serious christian, who is the best judge of the force of this glorious and sublime argument: at the same time I would wish to elevate the minds of younger christians to more enlarged prospects of our holy religion; and I fear not to say, likewise, to enable them to stand the fiercest shocks of infidelity, bid defiance to all ridicule, and triumph over all opposition from earth and hell.—Review, my friends, again and again, the nature of Inspiration, and this convincing evidence of its reality: and let me proceed to observe, that the argument is far from being exhausted; we must, therefore, resume the consideration of it, and carry on the demonstration with farther degrees of light and evidence: 'tis a theme worthy of the eternal contemplation of angels, and 'tis a subject that has the highest and happiest tendency to dignify our understandings, to give strength and life to our recollective powers, to spread a sacred warmth and fire through all our best affections, to inspire a deep satisfaction and peace into our consciences, and fix our hearts with an unshaken attachment to our divine master, and fire us with a zeal for his glory, immortal as our existence. Let us then, my dearest friends, address ourselves afresh to these object of wonder and beauty, and plunge our souls, with unbounded rapture, into this unfathomable ocean of truth and love, revealed in the glorious gospel of the blessed God

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In this sacred volume we see the lost prospects of GOD'S RELATIONS TO OUR WORLD, and to MAN, restored and asserted in the most clear and expressive language. GOD is declared to be the maker of the world. In the beginning GOD created the heavens and the earth. Gen. i. Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Rev. iv. 11. Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and seas, and all things that are therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. Neh. ix. 6. And GOD said, let us make man in our image. Gen. i. 26. The LORD GOD formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. Gen. ii. 7. All souls are mine. Ezek. xviii. 4. The souls which I have made. Isai. lvii. 16. He formeth the spirit of man within him. Zech. xii. 1. There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding. Job xxxii. 8. The spirit of GOD hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. xxxiii. 4. The LORD hath made all things for himself. Prov. xvi. 4. The judge of all the earth. Gen. xviii. 25. For *of him* as the efficient cause, and *through him* as the preserving and directing cause, and *to him* as the final cause, are all things, to whom be glory for ever.

ever. Amen. Rom. xi. 36. Thus you see God is the creator, the owner, governor, and judge, of all mankind; and these relations of God to the world and to man are displayed in the strongest light in the holy Scriptures: we are here assured, that in his hand our breath is, and his are all our souls and ways; and him we ought to glorify as the last end of the whole creation, and the highest end of man.

You see here the original *PERFECTIONS* and *BEAUTIES* of the *SOUL* of the first man painted in strong and lively colours, as made upright and after the image of God, as consisting in knowledge, holy dispositions of heart, and pure affections of love, and intense delight in his creator. You see here described, in the most awful manner, the *ORIGINAL APOSTACY, TREASON, and REBELLION* of the first parents of mankind. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men: for in him (i. e. Adam) all have sinned. Rom. v. 12. Man is covered with ignorance and darkness in his understanding; the death of sin is in all his powers; he is obstinate and perverse in his dispositions towards God; his carnal mind is enmity against God; * vitiated and corrupted in his conscience; and under the dominion of sin in his thoughts, volitions, and affections. The thoughts
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* See Charnock's awful discourse on Man's Enmity to God. 370.

of his heart only evil all the day. Gen. vi. 5. (Heb.) Without strength, and ungodly. Rom. 5. And we are all children of wrath, even as others. Ephes. ii. 3.—In this sacred book the clearest discoveries are made of the great evil of sin, and of that wickedness and corruption of all kinds in which mankind are universally involved; and the consequence of this must have been, that, when they were thoroughly convinced of the evil of their horrid ways, a sense of their aggravated guilt would fill them with awful thoughts of the divine vengeance justly due to them for their manifold offences.

It pleased God, therefore, in his sovereign grace and wisdom, so to order it, that the GOSPEL DISPENSATION opened with a free and glorious proclamation of pardoning mercy. Men were assured, that, upon their returning to God, through Jesus Christ, the great saviour, whom he had provided, by a humble faith and sincere repentance, their past iniquities should be forgiven them; they should be received into the divine favour, and admitted to the most glorious hopes and PRIVILEGES: at the same time, the most holy and excellent laws and precepts were given them, for instructing and directing them in their duty. And God condescended to deal with them in the way of a gracious covenant, which contained the most clear and express promises of
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eternal life and happiness.—See Dr. Leland's admirable work, intituled, *The Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation.* 2 vols. 4to. 1764. Vol. 2. p. 256.

This glorious and immortal book, in the last and best dispensation of the gospel, shews us the goodness of God bursting out all at once with a flood of grace and glory, from the very bottom of his heart, towards lost mortals: the ministry of Christ and his apostles opened itself with the discovery of the highest wonders in the universe, even the deep and eternal love of God to miserable mankind sinners. We have here ideas of things past in eternity beyond the verge of reason; we have ideas of invisible objects, now present, beyond the reach of the natural understanding; and we are furnished with ideas of objects and transactions invisible and future, beyond the bounds and extent of reason, on purpose to elevate, dignify, and improve the mind of man with new views of God to eternity.

But, my dear reader, we must break off this Contemplation in this place, that it may not be disproportionate to the rest, and resume it in the next.—I trust you will agree with me in this

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That we have already brought our demonstration to such an issue, that every person who shall read the three last Contemplations with attention

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and common sense, must, if he has any integrity, acknowledge, that the Scriptures are not the invention of men, but must be given by Inspiration from God; and, consequently, christianity is true, and a divine revelation. Indeed, my reader, if this be not acknowledged, you must renounce your understanding, abandon all pretensions to reason, and commence a brute for life.

Select BOOKS on the Subject of this
CONTEMPLATION.

1. The RELIGION of JESUS DELINEATED, 4to. 1726. By the excellent Mr. John Reynolds.—This is such a lovely display of the beauty and excellence of the christian religion, that I have no words to express my sense of its worth: if my readers have not seen it, they have a most exquisite satisfaction yet to come.

2. Dr. John Leland in his view of the Deistical Writers. Vol. I. 8vo. —Towards the close he has given us such a beautiful picture in miniature of the christian religion, as will please every man of sense and true taste if he shall read it over a thousand times.

3. And in his last and greatest work, styled, The Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation, vol. 2. part 2. chap. 13. he has given us a view of the excellencies of christianity on a larger scale, and 'tis carried on with unutterable spirit, fervour, and beauty, for near 40 pages together, in the quarto edition; and, while it does honour to revelation, gives us, at the same time, a charming view of the goodness and beauty of the doctor's heart!

4. If my reader desires farther edification and pleasure from this enchanting theme, let him read Dr. Doddridge's preface to the 3d volume of the Family Expositor; Hervey's Rhapsody on the Blessings of the Gospel, dialogue 17; and Mr. John Brine's Sermon on the Glory of the Gospel, preached at Kettering, May 23, 1762.

A
CONTEMPLATION
ON THE
GOODNESS AND BEAUTY
OF
SCRIPTURE,
WITH A
CONCISE VIEW
OF THE
MIRACLES.

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A C O N T E M P L A T I O N

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G O O D N E S S A N D B E A U T Y

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S C R I P T U R E .

On BEAUTY and TASTE.—The SCRIPTURES give us an astonishing PROSPECT of the divine and infinite SATISFACTION of CHRIST.—Of his glorious RIGHTEOUSNESS for our JUSTIFICATION.—Of vital UNION with CHRIST.—ADoption and SANCTIFICATION.—Of the ASSISTANCES of the HOLY SPIRIT.—The SCRIPTURES enforce, beautify, and enlarge the LAW of NATURE ; and give us most striking EVIDENCES of the IMMORTALITY of the SOUL.—The most noble and divine MOTIVES addressed to the best SPRINGS of ACTION in the SOUL ; and point out the most glorious EMPLOYMENT in GOOD WORKS all through LIFE.—We have here the most lovely EXAMPLES of HOLINESS and a generous TEMPER.—The richest and strongest CONSOLATIONS under the troubles of LIFE, and against the TERRORS of DEATH.—We have here the most unbounded SCENES of the TERRORS and GLORIES of the RESURRECTION of the

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DEAD; the last JUDGMENT; with the final STATE OF MISERY and HAPPINESS OF MANKIND in ETERNITY.—The nature of MIRACLES, with a view of the principal MIRACLES of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT, as a striking EVIDENCE of their DIVINE INSPIRATION.

WE have already observed, that the goodness of the doctrine of Scripture consists in its fitness to remove all our sin and misery, and to prepare us for happiness in the knowledge, resemblance, and fruition of God. We hope that something has been done in the last Contemplation to evince this truth. We shall now resume that delightful subject: but permit us first to say a few words on BEAUTY and TASTE.

BEAUTY is that quality in objects which excites love.

Beauty is of various kinds. Thus there is a beauty in the visible heavens and the earth; a beauty in the various creatures below man; a beauty in our own species; a beauty of person, of countenance, voice, temper, manners, and behaviour; a beauty in virtue and the graces of the heart; a beauty in thoughts, expressions, and eloquence; and what is the highest beauty of all, a beauty in the discoveries and truths of the Scripture. The final cause of intellectual and moral beauty is to raise agreeable ideas in the mind, and to attach our souls inviolably and eternally

eternally to GOD, who is the supreme beauty as well as the final cause of our immortal souls.

TASTE is a power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and divine revelation.

Taste is an internal, strong, active power, feelingly alive to every fine impulse of truth, goodness, and beauty; with a quick and keen disgust at every object that appears EVIL, deformed, base, and indecent, and fit to do us hurt*.

Taste is a clear, lively, and distinct perception of all the beauty, truth, and justness of the thoughts and expressions which compose a discourse or treatise: it distinguishes what is conformable to eloquence and propriety in every character, and suitable in different circumstances; and whilst, with a delicate and exquisite sagacity, it notes the graces, turns, manners, and expressions most likely to please, it perceives all the defects which produce the contrary effect, and distinguishes precisely wherein those defects and blemishes consist, and how far they are removed from the strict rules of eloquence and the real beauties of nature.

This happy faculty of taste is a kind of natural reason, wrought up to perfection by a refined education,

* Read Mr. Addison's admirable papers on Imagination and Taste. Vol. 6. No. 411.—421. And Dr. Akenfide on the Pleasures of Imagination, in three parts, 8vo.

education, close attention, and thought; by lively converse with the wisest of mankind; and, above all, by a lively converse with the great friend and teacher of man, the only wise God, our saviour. *

This good taste is not confined to literature; it takes in, also, all sciences and branches of knowledge. It consists, therefore, in a certain, just, and exact discernment, which points out to us, in each of the branches of knowledge, whatever is most curious, beautiful, and useful; whatever is most essential, suitable, or necessary to those who apply to it; how far, consequently, we should carry the study of it; what ought to be removed from it; and what deserves a particular application and preference before the rest.

ROLLIN, p. 51.

In the sacred Scriptures we have objects full of grandeur to astonish, newness to surprize, and beauty to excite love, and to please the most correct, sublime, and devotional taste; we will proceed to view some farther discoveries of divine revelation, which dignify the understanding, and spread life and joy through all the powers of the soul.

In this glorious volume you see captives to an almighty conqueror, rescued by a divine and infinite

* Read Rollin's Reflections on a good Taste, in his admirable Method of Study. Vol. 1. p. 41.—53. Eng. edit. 12mo.

finite redemption, paid by an almighty redeemer : you see rebels and traitors reconciled to their glorious and offending soveraign by the divine and infinite sacrifice of an holy and heavenly priest : you see guilty criminals saved from the just sentence of an inexorable judge, by the punishment of a divine surety, who has made a real and PERFECT SATISFACTION to the essential justice of GOD.

You see a DIVINE and INFINITE RIGHTEOUSNESS prepared and provided by GOD himself, and placed to our account * for our pardon and justification ; and in this act we see GOD acting, at one and the same moment, as a most awful judge, and a most amiable father towards his dear children.

You see all pride in our righteousness scorned and demolished, and all presumption on the goodness and grace of GOD, without the right use of the means and the practice of holiness and good works, cut off from every man in the world who shall pretend to call himself a christian. Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound ? GOD forbid !

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* The Greek verb which we render impute, has four senses, viz. to think of—to judge—to reason with—and to impute or place to account : and all these senses may be admitted, with great propriety, in GOD's act of justifying a sinner by the divine and infinite righteousness of Christ ; for he thought of it with delight—he judged it fit for us—he reasoned with his justice and holiness concerning it—and he places it to our account as our justifying righteousness.