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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A SERIES OF LETTERS, IN DEFENCE OF DIVINE REVELATION ***

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A SERIES OF LETTERS, IN DEFENCE OF DIVINE REVELATION; IN REPLY TO REV.
ABNER KNEELAND'S SERIOUS INQUIRY INTO THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE SAME.

* * * * *

BY HOSEA BALLOU,
Pastor of the Second Universalist Society in Boston.

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**TO WHICH IS ADDED, A RELIGIOUS CORRESPONDENCE, BETWEEN THE REV. HOSEA BALLOU, AND THE REV.
DR. JOSEPH BUCKMINSTER AND REV. JOSEPH WALTON, PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES IN
PORTSMOUTH, N. H.**

District of Massachusetts, to wit: District Clerk's Office.

Be it remembered, that on the twenty-fifth day of July, A. D. 1820, in the forty-fifth year of the Independence of the United States of America, HENRY BOWEN, of the said district, has deposited in this office, the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor in the words following, to wit:

"A Series of Letters, in defence of Divine Revelation; in reply to Rev. Abner Kneeland's Serious Inquiry into the authenticity of the same. By HOSEA BALLOU, Pastor of the Second Universalist Society in Boston. To which is added, a Religious Correspondence, between the Rev. Hosea Ballou, and the Rev. Dr. Joseph Buckminster, and Rev. Joseph Walton, Pastors of Congregational Churches in Portsmouth, N. H."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies, during the times therein mentioned:" and also to an Act entitled, "An Act

supplementary to an Act, entitled, an Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies during the times therein mentioned; and extending the benefits thereof to the Arts of Designing, Engraving, and Etching Historical, and other Prints."

JOHN W. DAVIS, *Clerk of the District of Massachusetts*

TO THE READER.

Some few suggestions respecting the following Controversy are thought necessary in order to inform the reader how it was first introduced, the motives which led to it, and those which induced to its being published to the world.

We learn from the Rev. Mr. KNEELAND, that having at different times been exercised in his mind with serious doubts respecting the authenticity of the Scriptures, and the system of Divine Revelation, recorded in them, he was induced to solicit a correspondence with the Rev. Mr. BALLOU on the subject. That, in order to render the controversy the more interesting, by calling into action the energies of mind, and by directing the correspondence to definite purposes, he assumed the character of a real opponent, determining to maintain the opposition, in all its forms, until reduced, by necessity, to yield to successful arguments directed against it. It was with great reluctance that the advocate for the christian religion, in this controversy, consented to undertake a work of this nature; not, however, because he esteemed it unnecessary, or because he entertained any doubts with regard to the defensibility of revelation, but, as he contends, on account of the want of abilities and means to do the subject justice. His opponent, however, being a familiar acquaintance and friend, as well as a preacher in the same profession of faith with himself, having led him to believe that a labour of this kind was called for by the most sacred obligations of brother to brother, he was induced to render what assistance was in his power, without infringing too much on other important duties in which he was almost constantly engaged.

When the controversy closed, Mr. KNEELAND felt such an entire satisfaction in his own mind, that the objections which he had stated were fairly answered, and the validity of the Scriptures vindicated, that he was led to believe that to publish the correspondence would be of service to the cause of Christ. He therefore obtained leave of his correspondent, and carried the manuscripts to the westward, where he offered proposals for the work, and obtained a number of subscribers; but being called to remove to Philadelphia, he was under the necessity of postponing the publication for a season. The publisher having obtained some knowledge of this correspondence, and being informed by the Rev. Mr. KNEELAND that the arguments which it contains were, in his opinion, calculated to strengthen the believer, as well as confirm the doubting, he negotiated for the manuscripts and now presents the work to the public, entertaining a hope that it may serve the interest of christianity, and promote a respect and veneration for the sacred writings.

The letters which passed between Mr. BALLOU and two respectable clergymen in the town of Portsmouth, N. H. were some years since published in Vermont; but several circumstances rendered it proper that this work should be reprinted. Besides its being nearly or quite out of print, the first edition was on an inferior paper, the work badly executed, and a number of errors were discovered.

To those who believe in the universality of divine goodness, the publisher feels confident the following work will be received and read with no small satisfaction. And a hope is entertained that it may be the means of enlightening some, who though they possess the spirit of universal love and benevolence, have not the felicity of believing in the divine goodness to the extent of their own desires.

H. BOWEN.

A SERIES OF LETTERS, &c.

EXTRACTS No. 1.

[The first letter of the *objector* was designed merely as an Introduction, inviting Mr. B. to the investigation of the important subject of *moral truth*, or more particularly the truth of *divine revelation*. The following are extracts.]

"The thought has long since occurred to me that the present age is an age of discovery and improvement. The human mind seems to be developing its powers in a most wonderful manner; new inventions, new discoveries, and new theories are the fruits of new experiments; while many are improving upon theories and subjects already existing. Thus human nature seems to be almost prepared to make a regular advance in *moral* as well as *scientific truth*.

"However pleasing this must be to every real lover to the arts and sciences, yet there seems to be a disposition (at least, as it respects all moral and religious subjects) to chain down the human mind to its present attainments, and thereby prevent all further improvement. O how long will it be before common sense shall burst this bubble of fanaticism, and all its mists become evaporated and removed by the rays of simple and native truth? Then shall man know for himself that, under God, all his powers and faculties are as free as the element he breathes. Free to think, free to speak, and free to act as reason and good sense shall dictate. Supposing that you and I should think of setting an example for others, by trying to throw off the prejudices of a false education, so far as we have been thus entangled, and search for the *truth within us*, as the foundation of all TRUTH which materially concerns us to know. Who, except our own consciences, will ever call us to an account for so doing?

"It gives me pain when I see what time and money, what labour and toil have been expended, and are still expending, in plodding over, as it were an old dead letter; to learn languages which exist *no where* only on paper, barely for the sake of reading the opinions of other men, in other times; men who lived in other ages of the world, and under very different circumstances from ourselves; whose opinions, all of which are worth preserving, might be given in our own language, so as to answer every purpose which can be answered by them, at less than a hundredth part of the expense it necessarily requires to obtain a competent knowledge of those languages in which almost every thing, supposed to be valuable, has been originally written. And after all, the truth, or falsity, of every proposition must depend on the truth or falsity of the principles embraced in it; and not on the language in which it was originally written.

"If the Greek and Hebrew languages be any security against things being uttered or written falsely in those languages, I should not only think it important to learn them, but to adopt them, if possible, as our vernacular tongue.—But as I believe none will contend for this, I should like to be informed of what possible service it can be to an American to learn either of those languages? Is it not a fact, that every natural as well as moral truth may be fully unfolded to the understanding without them? This will lead the way to one of the principal subjects which I mean to discuss. It maybe said, that the *holy scriptures* were originally written in Greek and Hebrew: viz. the bible, which contains a revelation of the will of God concerning the duty, interest, and final destination of mankind. This, if admitted, gives the Greek and Hebrew languages an importance that nothing else could. Hence the importance of preserving the Greek and Hebrew languages, without which, religion could not be preserved in its purity. And as all have not an opportunity of attaining to a knowledge of those languages, it is the more necessary that some should, lest the knowledge of languages, on which so much is supposed to depend, should be lost to the world.

"If I understand the above proposition, it seems to be this: The only revelation of God to man, which was ever recorded on either vellum or paper, was written partly in Greek and partly in Hebrew; hence, the revealed will of God cannot be known only through the medium of those languages. If the truth of all this can be made to appear, I should find no difficulty in admitting all the consequences which must result from such premises. It appears a little extraordinary, however, to my understanding, and not a very little neither, that God should make a revelation of his will in one age, and not in another; to one nation; and not to another; or that he should make a revelation in one *language*, and not in another! If a special revelation, was ever necessary at all, it is difficult for me to see why it was not equally necessary in all ages of the world, to all the nations of the earth, and in all languages ever spoken by man.

"How sweet is truth to the understanding! And, when spoken in a language every word of which is familiar, how harmonious it sounds to the ear by which the sentiments find their way to the heart!

"When God speaks to the *inward man* there is no need of going to Lexicons, Dictionaries, and Commentaries to know what he means. I would not complain, however, even of this method to ascertain truth, if I could be so happy as always to come away satisfied. But to consider a subject on which much is supposed to depend, and, desiring if possible to obtain the truth, plod through the dark mists occasioned by the ambiguity and contradiction of authors, and after all, be obliged to dismiss the subject as much in the dark as it was found, is too insupportable to be confided in as the only road to moral truth.

"Let it not be supposed however, that I mean to insinuate that the bible contains no moral truth; so far from this, I conceive it to be replete with moral instruction; that is to say, there are excellent moral maxims in the bible; but respecting these there is neither ambiguity nor obscurity; and probably for this plain reason, because there seems to be no dispute about them. These however are none the more true for being written, and would have been equally true if found in any other book, and at the same time not found in the bible. Truth is truth wherever found, and all moral truth, as well as natural, must be eternal in its nature.

"Much of the bible however, is merely historical; and whether most of the things there related are either true or not, I do not see any connexion they either have, or can have, with either my present or future happiness. As for instance, I do not see how my happiness is at all connected with the story of Daniel's being cast into the den of lions—or of Jonah's being swallowed by a fish! any more than it is with the story of Remus and Romulus' being nursed by a she wolf! And if not, these things are matters of total indifference; yea, as much so as the extraordinary, and, were it not for comparing things supposed to be sacred with profane, I would say, ridiculous stories in the heathen mythology. If it should be contended that the facts recorded in sacred history are necessary to prove the power and providence of God towards his children, it may be answered that those in profane history, if true, are equally conclusive. If it should be said that we cannot place the same confidence in profane history as in sacred, it brings me to the very subject of my inquiry—viz.

"If the things stated in the bible are no more reasonable than those in profane history, what reason have we to believe *these* any more than *those*? Must not our own reason finally determine for ourselves whether or not either be true? And if we are in no sense interested in the truth or falsity of those accounts why need we trouble ourselves about them?

"Yours, &c, A. KNEELAND."

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LETTER I.

Much esteemed friend,—The desire you express of attempting those researches which seem necessary to promote the further attainment of moral truth, is appreciated as truly laudable; and did I feel myself adequate to your wishes, I should enjoy a peculiar felicity in complying with your request. But so far from this I am very sensible that the magnitude of the general subject which you have introduced, requires to be investigated by abilities far superior to those possessed by me, and demands a tribute from resources not within my possession. However, as you have imposed an obligation on me by the communication which is here acknowledged, I will make a feeble attempt to suggest a few reflections relative to the main subjects of your epistle, which if they do nothing more, will return merited acknowledgements and plead the necessity of calling to your assistance abilities more promising.

While I view the advances which are making in the knowledge of the arts and sciences, with the pleasure of which you speak, I am apprehensive that the propensity "to chain down the human mind to its present attainments, and thereby prevent all further improvements," relative to moral truth, may have its rise in a principle, which, so far from being inimical to man, is, in its general tendency, incalculably beneficial. No desire is entertained to justify all the zeal and all the means which are employed to prevent the free exercise of the human mind, in its researches after divine knowledge, and to retard the influx of that light which would prove unfavourable to doctrines which have little more than prescription for their support; but it seems reasonable to make a proper distinction between what may be called a salutary principle in the human mind, and a wrong application or an erroneous indulgence of it. The principle referred to, inclines us not only to hold in the highest veneration any improvements which we have made, but also to retain such acquisitions in their purity. Now it is believed that what you complain of, has its rise from the foregoing causes, and is nothing more than a wrong or an erroneous indulgence of a natural desire which in its general tendency is advantageous. Nothing is more incident to man, than to misapply his desires, and to overate his reasonable duty. But it is at the same time believed that a remedy of such defects which should consist in the destruction of those principles which are improperly acted on, would be worse than the disorder. And now the thought strikes me, that the way by which we account for the improprieties which have just been traced up to their causes, will as charitably account for what seems to incite you to aim a fatal stroke at a fabric which has its foundation in the immovable principles of our moral nature, and which, though through the wanderings of the human mind, may have not a little hay, wood and stubble, yet possess too much gold, silver and precious stones, to be forsaken as a pile of rubbish.

It gives you "pain to see what time and money, what labour and toil have been expended and are still expending in plodding over as it were an old dead letter; to learn languages which exist *no where* only on paper, barely for the sake of reading the opinions of other men who lived in other times," &c. But you allow that all this would be necessary if "the only revelation of God to man, which was ever recorded on vellum or paper was written partly in Greek and partly in Hebrew," and that "the will of God cannot be known only through the medium of those languages." In this last particular, you express what appears very reasonable, and I presume you would be willing to consent to all this expense and toil, even if the proposition were to lose part of its importance, and it were only contended that God had actually made a revelation to man, which was written originally partly in Greek and partly in the Hebrew, without saying that he has never caused a revelation to be written originally in any other

language.

A revelation from God, if it were written only in the Hebrew or Greek, would be considered of sufficient value to recompense the labour of learning the language. But you contend that this revelation, if real, can be translated into English, but, you must allow that to translate it, the original must be learned first. Will you say, that after the translation is once made, the original is of no more use? How then are future ages to determine whether they have not been imposed on? Suppose no person of the present age understood the languages in which the scriptures were first written, surely in this case, those languages would be lost beyond recovery. Suppose then it should be doubted whether our bible was not a fabrication, written originally not in Hebrew nor in Greek, but in some more modern language, how could the suggestion be refuted?

You appear to be perplexed with the disagreement of authors, as commentators, and I presume, critics on the original text; you speak on this subject, as if it were too much for patience to endure. Now, dear brother, I confess I feel very differently on this subject. I feel a devout, a religious gratitude to him whose wisdom is foolishness in the sight of too many of my fellow creatures. I view the very thing of which you complain, as that fire and crucible which have preserved the written testimony from any considerable corruptions. This is a subject on which volumes might be written to the instruction and edification of the disciples of Jesus.

The queries which you state concerning a revelation's being made in one age and not in another, in one nation and not in another, in one language, and not in another, if a special revelation were necessary, &c. are not considered as very weighty objections to the doctrine of the scriptures. I believe you will allow that our species of being commenced on this earth in a different way than that by which it has been continued. But why should the Creator, create a man and a woman at one time, and not at all times when he sees fit to multiply his rational creatures? It is not only evident that God saw that the laws of procreation were sufficient to perpetuate man, and to multiply his rational offspring, but it is likewise apparent that the connexions, relations, and harmonies of society are principally built on this law. So I humbly conceive, that the continuance and propagation of a divine revelation are even as well secured by the means which have been employed for that purpose, as if the Almighty had in every age, and in every country made such a revelation, and moreover, it is likewise apparent, that the mental labours necessary in obtaining a knowledge of these divine things greatly contribute to their enjoyment, and render the christian fellowship, faith and hope peculiarly interesting and edifying. Here again I can only suggest a subject on which voluminous writings might be profitable.

You seem to entertain an idea that the historical part of the bible can be of no importance to you, as it has no connexion with your present or future happiness. You instance the particulars of Daniel's being cast into the den of lions, and Jonah's being swallowed by the fish, &c. As these are circumstances in the history of that nation which continues a comment on, and an evidence of prophesy, they are too interesting to be dispensed with. If you could produce the decree of a powerful monarch, sent into all parts of his dominions, which was occasioned by "Remus and Romulus' being nursed by a she wolf," the case would bear some marks of a parallel. Profane authors advert to such events as sufficient support of any fact which they endeavor to maintain.

I come now to your main object. Speaking in regard to the credibility of what is written by profane authors, and of that which is recorded in the scriptures, you ask—"Must not our own reason finally determine for ourselves whether or not either be true?" To this I reply in the affirmative; but then reason must have its means and its evidences. For instance, I read of the death and resurrection of the man Christ Jesus, I consider this vastly important event as it stands in connexion with the evidences which support it, and reason is the *eye* with which I examine these evidences, and when reason is constrained to say all these circumstances could never have existed unless the fact were true, it is then I am a believer in Jesus. But if I must consider the resurrection disconnected from the evidence, reason has nothing to do with it. Please to accept these hasty remarks, not as an answer, but as suggestions which may lead to one, and as a testimony of my respect and esteem.

Yours, &c. H. BALLOU.

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EXTRACTS No. II.

"A revelation from God, let it be made in any language whatever, I am very ready to admit, must be considered of sufficient importance, not only to justify all reasonable pains to preserve it, but also to hand it down in its original purity to posterity. We owe it, not only in gratitude to the *giver*, but we owe it in justice to *future generations*, who would have just occasion to reproach us, if they could know that so valuable a treasure was put into our hands, which might have been handed down to them, and that we suffered it to perish through what must be termed by them, a *criminal neglect*."

"You will perceive, therefore, that I had no particular allusion to a revelation from God, when I spoke of translating the most valuable of ancient writings into English. No one will pretend that such translations could not be made sufficiently accurate to answer all the purposes, either of history or of the useful arts. It is admitted that the case is quite different, if there be a mystery in these writings, the truth of which depends on literary criticism, or grammatical exactness; but if these writings are nothing more than the bare opinions and discoveries of *men*, and of men too, as liable to error as ourselves, and if no one was to view them in a different light, I apprehend there would be all the confidence placed in a translation, that could with propriety be placed in the original itself. For, after all, we should try the facts by other corroborating testimony; and as to the opinions, we should judge of them only by the reasonableness and fitness of things. Although I have heard it objected to the translation of *Seneca's Morals*, that much of the beauty of the style is lost in the translation, yet I never heard it pretended but that the ideas are sufficiently clear; but the case would have been quite different if mankind had ever been taught to believe that their final and eternal salvation depended in the least degree on an exact observance of those moral principles. And I very much question whether there ever has been a translation of the bible, or even of any other work, in which the most important facts were not sufficiently apparent. If the fact can be supposed otherwise, it must be admitted that, comparatively speaking, but very few people at the present day are benefited by a revelation from God. For the great mass of mankind have to receive the bible altogether on the credit of others. And who are their guides in this case? Answer, Translators and Commentators! And as these men made no pretensions to inspiration, unless the translation is *substantially* correct, as to matters of fact, how are the common people benefited by a revelation from God!"

[Having adverted to the previous studies in the dead languages, which are required before an admittance can be obtained in our common colleges, the objector proceeds.]

"But I am off from my main subject. I will now endeavour to call up all my mental faculties, seriously to attend to a revelation from God. The idea suggested in these words is beyond all expression awfully sublime. Yea, not even the bursting of *Vesuvius*, not the *aurora-borealis*, not the forked *lightning*, not the tremendous *earthquake*, no, nor yet the greatest *phenomenon in nature*, of which the human mind can conceive, can afford such ideas of the truly sublime, as the *truth*, if it could be realized, of the above proposition. Let me not hastily reject without serious reflection, that, which of all truths, must be the most important. O help me, my dear friend, help me also, O thou who art the only source of truth, thoroughly to investigate this momentous subject! But let me not be deceived. Let me not receive for truth, that which cannot be made sufficiently clear to my understanding. There can be no more harm in *doubting*, than in *believing*, where the evidence is not clear. All that which appertains to eternal truth will remain, whether I now see it or not; and that which does not appertain to it will never be realized, although I may now be made to believe it. There can be no harm, therefore, in investigating this subject in the same way and on the same principles, as I would investigate all subjects. Although I cannot expect to offer any thing very new, yet I am disposed to examine the subject for myself, and that too, in my own way. I shall quote no authors, for I have not read but few on this subject which meet my approbation, and even them are not now by me. My own understanding is the only author to which I shall appeal. If that can be cleared of the difficulties which have fallen in its way, I am willing, yea I wish, still to believe in divine revelation.

"Here let me close my preamble, which is already made too lengthy, and come immediately to discourse 'ON DIVINE REVELATION.'

"In order to know the truth or falsity of any proposition, we must in the first place understand the terms by which the proposition is made; for without such previous knowledge, we cannot know what is meant either to be affirmed or denied. By *divine revelation*, I understand 'a communication of sacred truth,' made directly from God to man. In order for any man to know that a revelation has been made to him from God, it must be made in such a way, that neither his perception, nor his judgment or understanding, can possibly be mistaken. For, as man by his reason alone, never could have foreseen that a revelation would be made, therefore, unless it should have been made in such a way that he could not have been deceived, a rational man would be more likely to conclude that he was deceived, than that, which to him would seem more unlikely, should be true. It seems, therefore, that a revelation from God to all our conceptions of the fact, must be considered, if existing at all, as something supernatural; otherwise it could be nothing more than discovery, or a fortuitous event. Hence a revelation from God, however true, and however clear, to the person or persons to whom it was first communicated, must lose its evidence, in some degree, when it comes to be communicated by him or them to others; for, being communicated to others, although it is still revelation, yet not being received immediately from God, it cannot be accompanied with the same evidence which it was in the first place; therefore, to say the most of it, it is nothing more than the *history* of a revelation. It is made no less true than it was before; but its truth now rests upon very different testimony.

"The principles in nature all existed, before they were discovered by man. Their being discovered,

neither changed their nature, nor made them any more true. What consternation a total eclipse of the sun, or of the moon must have produced, before their cause was known? They are now viewed, especially that of the latter, among the common occurrences of nature. Yea, many of the operations of nature, which are now perfectly understood by chemists, could they be viewed by the common people, who know not their causes, they would be inclined to believe they were supernatural. At least, it would not be difficult to make them believe so, especially when this knowledge was confined to a few, and those few were so disposed. These remarks are not designed to do away the force of any arguments which may be founded on miracles; for this is no proof that miracles may not exist; but then, how is a miracle a revelation of any thing more than what is contained in the miracle itself? This is what I cannot see, but I shall have occasion to say more on this subject hereafter. It will be needless for me to object to the inferences drawn from miracles until a miracle is proven.

"If a man absolutely knows something of which I am ignorant, and informs me of it, it makes no difference to me how he come by his knowledge—it is revelation to me. It may not be divine revelation; but supposing it is, or is not, in either case, how am I to believe? Is it any thing that will admit of mathematical demonstration? If so, I shall take up with nothing short of being convinced in this way. Is it any thing which he has discovered? If so, he must give me evidence of such a discovery. Is it something to which he was an eye witness? Then the truth to me, depends for the present, entirely on his credibility. I must be convinced in the first place that he was not deceived himself, and secondly, that he has no motive in deceiving me. And evidence equally conclusive must accompany the truth of divine revelation, or it ought not, nay more, it cannot, rationally be believed. But supposing that I am convinced of the truth, and therefore believe; and I relate the same to a third person; is it equally revelation to him as it was to me? Yes, it may be so considered, in one sense, at least, for it informs him of something of which he was before ignorant, as much so as it did me, but then the truth of the fact does not rest with him on equal testimony, and therefore he is more excusable if he does not believe. If, however, he can believe all that I believe, and in addition to that, believe also in *me*, then, and not till then, he will become a believer in the same truth. But if he even suspects my veracity, it weakens in his mind, all the other testimony; and though he may still believe in the main proposition, yet he believes with less strength of evidence.

"Here a very important question arises in my mind. Is divine revelation something that rests entirely on matters of *fact*; or is the most essential part, which concerns us to know, a mere matter of *opinion*? On a few moments of reflection, however, it appears that this can hardly admit of a question. For all that relates to a future, and an eternal state, must be a mere matter of opinion only; and the facts recorded in the scriptures are supposed to corroborate and substantiate those opinions. Now, as they respect matters of fact, I believe the scriptures are substantially the same in all versions, and in all languages into which they have been translated. And if so, there is no need of learning the original languages in order to become acquainted with the matters of fact recorded in the bible. We never should have seen, nor even heard, of so much controversy and biblical criticism, if the disputes had been wholly relative to matters of fact. No, all the various readings, different translations, and interpolations, have little or nothing to do with a dispute of this kind. But if the facts can be disputed, they must be disputed upon other grounds than that of biblical criticism.

"Take, for instance, the 'death and resurrection of the man Christ Jesus,' which you have mentioned; can any one suppose that there ever was, or ever will be, a translation which makes any thing more or less in favour of this fact? This is not pretended. And if not, how does a knowledge of the Greek language help me to believe this fact?

"This brings me again to my main subject; and now two very important questions arise in my mind.

"1. In relation to the facts, as stated, respecting the life, death, and resurrection of the 'man Christ Jesus;' are they positively and absolutely true?

"2. Admitting the truth of the facts, does it necessarily follow, or is there any thing which renders it certain, that, in regard to other things, neither he, nor the apostles, so called, could be mistaken? And that, in all their writings, they have stated nothing which is incorrect? That is, what certain evidence have we that the writers of the books, which being compiled, are called the New Testament, were all honest men? That they could not have been mistaken relative to the things which they have written? And that in every instance, they have written the truth?

"Respecting the first proposition, I have already observed that the truth of it does not, neither can it, depend on biblical criticism. They are either facts, which are substantially correct, or they are fabrications. The circumstantial differences between the original copies themselves, as recorded by the four Evangelists, are much greater than what can be found in all the different versions, translations, &c. that have been collated. Hence no argument can be brought against the truth of those facts from either a real or supposed difference between the translation, and their respective originals. For even if

not only the original copies, but the language also in which they were originally written, should be entirely lost, it would not militate, as I can see, against the truth of the facts therein recorded.

"The translation acknowledges and affirms itself to be a *translation* out of the 'original Greek,' together with former translations compared, &c. Now permit me to ask, is not this as good evidence of the existence of the *original Greek*, as the original Greek is of the *facts* intended to be proved thereby? I should consider the translation of any work, which was generally known at the time of its translation, better evidence of the existence of such a work, though the original should be entirely lost, than the work itself, even in the original, could be of the existence of facts, which, if they existed at all, were known at first to but very few.

"You have suggested, sir, that if the original of the scriptures were entirely lost, future ages would not know but they had been 'imposed upon.' I think, however, you will not insist on this point, lest you should destroy an argument, which, hereafter, you may very much need. I recall my words. For this seems to imply that we are already engaged in a controversy; whereas, I trust we are both candidly in search of truth. I suspect, however, there is too much truth in your suggestion; but then its truth, instead of relieving, only increases my difficulty.

"Every one must know that when the translation of the scriptures was first made, the original not only existed, but it must have been known to others, beside the translators, who were able to detect the *fraud*, if there had been any, as to substantial matter of fact. And, in a work of so great importance, this certainly would have been the case. Hence you will at once perceive, that when the copies were few in number, and before the art of printing was discovered, fabrications and interpolations might find their way into the original scriptures with much greater facility, than could any considerable variations by an intentionally erroneous translation; especially after the work become generally known, and so highly valued, as to require a translation of it.

"As you admit that 'reason is the *eye* by which we are to examine the evidences' which stand in support of the 'resurrection of the man Christ Jesus,' and of course, as I presume, by which we are to examine the evidences in support of all other subjects, I shall say no more upon this part of the subject until I hear your reasons for believing in the resurrection of Jesus; for this fact, as I conceive, must be considered the main hinge on which the whole Christian system rests, if it can be supported by any fact, on which it will finally turn.

2. "But after all, my greatest difficulty is with my second proposition. To relate facts substantially correct, which persons have either seen or heard, requires no degree of uncommon skill, or uncommon honesty; but to state things which will absolutely take place, which are yet future, requires something more than common skill; and to state things correctly, which will take place in eternity, must, as I conceive, require nothing short of *divine wisdom*. That the evangelists have stated nothing more than what is *substantially* correct, as it respects matters of fact, will be admitted by all: for every one knows there is a *circumstantial* difference in their writings, both as it respects the order of time, and in several instances, as it respects matters of fact.

"If the account given us of Jesus be even substantially correct, I think there can be no reasonable doubt but that he was capable of telling his disciples every thing which it concerns us to know relative to a future state of existence.—But I have been often struck with astonishment, when reflecting on the subject, that Jesus said so little in regard to a future state! Notwithstanding he was long with his disciples, as we are told after his resurrection, and did eat and drink with them; yet, how silent he was upon the subject of eternity, and of a future and spiritual world! At the only time when we should rationally suppose that he could be a competent witness in the case, admitting his death and resurrection true, is the time when he is entirely silent as to the final and eternal state of man! Should we admit therefore that Jesus at this time was capable of declaring eternal truths, yet, as he testified nothing on the subject, nothing relative to the subject can be proved from his testimony.

"It may be said that Christ had plainly taught his disciples respecting this subject, previous to his death, and therefore it was not necessary for him to say any thing more respecting it. But a confirmation of what he had before taught, if it had been repeated after his resurrection, would have added great weight to his former testimony. We need not dwell however, upon these niceties, as the main question is not involved in them. Yet I am inclined to think that if all the words of Christ, which have been handed down to us, should be closely examined, they would be found to be much more silent on the subject of a future state than many have supposed. But the main question is, are we certain that he could not have been mistaken in the things whereof he affirmed? This question may be thought *blasphemous*: but I cannot see wherein the blasphemy consists; for I cannot help making the inquiry, in my own understanding, and as my object is to gain instruction, I put the inquiry on paper. You may say that Jesus was endowed with *divine wisdom*, and therefore could not err. That divine wisdom cannot err, I admit, but does divine wisdom secure man at all times, and under all circumstances, from

mistake? If the man Christ Jesus was in fact *man* (and that he was man, even Trinitarians admit) notwithstanding he was endowed with divine wisdom, why might he not without any dishonour to the Deity, be sometimes left to exercise only the wisdom of *man*? And to say that the wisdom of man cannot err, would be saying contrary to daily experience. I have not contended that Jesus ever erred; but I contend that he must have been liable to error, or else he was not man. And the supposition that he did not err, not even in thought or opinion, ought not to be admitted without the most conclusive testimony.

"But whatever may be the conclusion on this subject, as it respects the 'man Christ Jesus—a man approved of God,' yet what shall we say concerning the apostles? Were they also absolutely secured from error? These men, according to the confession of one of them at least, not only had been, but still were—*sinners*. Paul, notwithstanding his apostleship, still acknowledges the plague of his own heart 'I am carnal, sold under sin—when I would do good, evil is present with me—O wretched man that I am!' &c. Are such men absolutely proof against even the error of opinion? It appears to me there are too many incidents of imperfection recorded in the lives of the apostles to admit all this. Peter once rebuked his master, at another time denied him. He once objected to the voice of the spirit, and was afterwards accused by his brethren for obeying it. Paul accused Peter to his face, and also disagreed with Barnabas. And other circumstances might be named, proving them to be destitute of intuitive knowledge. Considering, therefore, all these things, how do we know but that in their zeal to do good, (for I do not consider the apostles bad men; neither do I think any the worse of Paul for either acknowledging his own faults, or detecting the dissimulation of Peter,) I say therefore, in their zeal to do good, how do we know but that they stated things relative to another world, which were only inferences, which, as they supposed, were justly drawn from what they had either seen or heard, or else what their own fruitful imagination dictated? If we are at liberty to view the apostles in this light, however highly their opinions are to be valued and respected, yet I see no occasion of investigating their writings with the eye of biblical or grammatical criticism; for after all, they are but the opinions of men like ourselves.

"But if it can be demonstrated that the opinions of the writers of the New Testament can be relied on, as containing eternal truth, without any mixture of error, then it is very important for us to know the meaning of all the words they used, not only as it respects their general import, but also the exact and particular sense in which they used them. This however cannot be done without a thorough acquaintance, not only with the Greek, but also with the Hebrew language, for they used many Hebraisms, which, with a knowledge of the Greek only, we should not be likely fully to comprehend.

"Yours, &c.

A. KNEELAND."

* * * * *

LETTER II.

Much esteemed friend,—In replying to your second number, you will excuse me if I begin by finding some fault, in which, however, I will endeavour to be as sparing as the case will admit.

On the subject of the languages, after reading in your first number the following in its connexion: "If I understand the above proposition, it seems to be this; the only revelation of God to man, which was ever recorded on vellum or paper, was written partly in Greek and partly in Hebrew; hence the revealed will of God cannot be known only through the medium of these languages. If the truth of all this could be made to appear," &c. and after replying to your argument on this subject, I can hardly account for the insinuation in your second number, by which you suggest, that you had no particular allusion to a revelation from God when you spoke of translating the most valuable of ancient writings, &c. The subject of a revelation you acknowledge to be your main object; if this be the case, you have this object in view when you speak of the Greek and Hebrew, and also when you speak of the arts and sciences.

You contend in your second number, that the translation of the Scriptures out of the original languages is as good evidence of the existence of the original, as the original could be of the facts they relate, &c. And this I believe is the only acknowledgement you make in favour of the original's having been any benefit. You seem not willing to allow that the retaining of the original language is of any use in proving to after generations that the translation was correct, which seems not easy to account for. But I will give you no further trouble on the subject of this nature; nor will I occupy my time in investigating the question relative to the necessity of studying those languages, which you acknowledge is off from your main subject, and take some notice of your queries respecting a divine revelation. Although I am unable to trace the connexion of many of your remarks with which you call

your main subject, yet I am not disposed to doubt that you comprehend such connexion—I think I understand your statements so as to be able to discern the following particulars, as subjects of your inquiry.

"1st. Is it reasonable to suppose that God has ever made a special revelation to man? 2d. Is the resurrection of Jesus capable of being proved? And, 3d. If so, does it follow that this was designed by divine wisdom to give us any hope respecting a future state?"

It is not pretended that you have stated these questions just in this order, but these are the subjects which your second number suggests to my mind.

I shall take a much nearer road to come to a solution of these questions, than that which would lead me to follow you through all your remarks, because you have furnished me with the means to do so.

1st. You acknowledge that a divine revelation "if real," is of "all truths the most important." Here let the eye of reason examine. Why should a revelation from God be more important than those discoveries which our Creator has enabled us to make in the arts and sciences? Why should such revelation be more important than the use of the mariner's compass, or the art of printing? Even without contending that a divine revelation is of any greater importance than the arts and sciences, your allowing it any importance at all, is, in the eye of reason an argument in its support. Had you taken the other road, and contended that there was no necessity of a revelation, and had you been able to make this appear, you would have proved to the eye of reason, that a Being of infinite wisdom, who can never act without a just cause, had never made a revelation. But if reason admits of its importance, as long as this is the case, it will be looking not only with a fervent desire, but with expectation till it makes the discovery. You will, no doubt, allow that a divinely munificent Creator would not omit any thing which is of importance to his intelligent creatures.

Perhaps you will, (though I do not see why you should) call up a former query, which was answered in my first, which answer was not receipted in your second, and ask why this revelation was not made in every nation, in every language, and in every age? But you will be sensible that the same questions might be stated respecting the progress of science and the discovery of the arts useful to a refined state of society.

You will not think it strange that I am some disappointed that you took no notice of my remarks on the above query as I really attach importance to that little piece of reasoning. If reason has no reluctance in acknowledging that man is multiplied and continued here by a law which was not able to bring him into existence at first, why may not a revelation from God, be perpetuated by different means than those which first made it, and thereby the great object be even better secured than by a perpetual revelation, which would seem to render research unnecessary, and leave the reasoning powers without employ?

But it is time for me to inform you that I feel myself under no obligations to labour to prove what you and I and many thousands of others have considered sufficiently proved from ancient prophecy with which our heavenly Father has favoured so many ages and nations and languages. And furthermore, permit me to tell you, that if you are disposed to doubt and to disprove what you acknowledge to be of such vast importance, it is your province to bring forward your strong reasoning, if such you have, by which the prophecies of the old testament, those delivered by Christ and his apostles shall be made to appear either to have no just analogy with the events of which they speak, or that they were contrived by impostors since the events took place.

2d. You acknowledge the validity of the evidences in favor of the resurrection of Jesus. You say; "That the evangelists have stated nothing more than what is substantially correct, as it respects matters of fact, will be admitted by all." Again; "I do not consider the apostles bad men." Now the apostles are the deponents who solemnly testify the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. Why should you wish me to prove what you allow to be true? Why do you not take the other hand, and say the apostles were impostors, they were the opponents of the righteous rulers of the Jews who put their master to death? Why do you not avail yourself of the story put into the mouths of the guard who watched the sepulchre, and say that those timid disciples who all fled and left Jesus when they saw him bound, not only went to the sepulchre and stole the body of Jesus and hid it where no mortal could ever find it, but then went to Jerusalem and boldly affirmed he was alive, who was dead, and then had the boldness and audacity to accuse the rulers of having "denied the holy one and the just, and desired a murderer to be delivered unto them; and of having killed the prince of life, whom God had raised from the dead?" The reason is obvious, you see the impropriety of such argument.—But:

3d. Allowing the resurrection of Jesus, the truth of divine revelation, the honesty of the apostles of Jesus, are we to rely on what they say respecting a future state? Answer, yes, most assuredly. For here let reason ask, whether a divine revelation founded on the resurrection of Jesus could have a more

reasonable object, than the bringing to light, life and immortality? Again let reason ask whether the divine Being would endow Jesus and his apostles with the gift of miracles, by which the divinity of their missions was proved to the understanding of all who believed, and then suffer them to teach things of a moral, a religious, or of an eternal nature which were not true? By so doing, it would seem that God gave power to heal the sick and to raise the dead for no other purpose than to gain the attention of men to what was the mere guess work of men subject to error in the things which they pretended to teach.

For myself I am perfectly satisfied that infinite goodness would never do any thing so imperfectly. I am satisfied, being convinced of the truth of the facts which you acknowledge, that the testimony of Jesus and his apostles respecting this and the coming world, may be relied on with the utmost confidence and safety. You intimate that Jesus said but a little on the subject of a future state. I am entirely of your opinion. And yet I am persuaded that he and his apostles have said as much on the subject as is necessary for us to believe. They have given sufficient proof that the design of our Creator is a design of eternal goodness to our race of being. Jesus has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. The Christian is enabled to hope for existence with God in an eternal state, and this is as much as our present welfare requires. I have no doubt that many passages of scripture have been applied to a future world, by Christian expositors, which have no allusion to such a case—but this harms not the glorious truths and divine realities of the religion of the blessed Saviour.

I have many reasons for not believing in the general sentiment that supposes the revelation contained in the scriptures was designed to prepare men in this world for happiness in another, and that a want of a correct knowledge of this revelation here, would subject the ignorant to inconveniences in a future state. Such a sentiment is an impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God. For if this were the case, why was the gospel not early published to all people? Why were ages after ages suffered to pass away, and generations after generations permitted to sink into eternity without a ray of that light which was indispensable to their everlasting happiness? Was it not as easy for the eternal to send his son at the dawn of time as after so many ages had passed away? Was it not as easy for him to communicate to all nations as to one? But divine wisdom has seen fit to manifest itself by degrees in the system of the gospel as well as in the knowledge of science; and we have no more evidence to believe, that those who go from this state to another ignorant of the gospel of Christ, will, on that account, be rejected of God from his favour, than we have to believe that those who have died ignorant of the sciences, will, on that account be so rejected.

Every communication from God, whether relative to the moral or physical world is evidently designed for our profit in the state where such communication is made. This improvement of the moral and religious state of man was the evident design of the revelation of God, and to this agree all the prophets. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree."

You seem to be opposed to biblical criticisms. So am I, if the object be to fix a creed to which all must conform on pain of being anathematized, but if the object be to get the right understanding of the sacred text all in humble submission to that CHARITY which is greater than a FAITH that could remove mountains, no harm can ever arise from it, but a benefit.

No one can more sincerely wish to have the frivolities of superstition and the endless multitude of nothings which arrogant creed-makers have impiously superadded to pure christianity removed from the church than I do; but wisdom must direct in this great and necessary work. It was those who had more zeal than discernment who asked if they should pluck up the tares from among the wheat? They were told that they would pluck up the wheat with the tares.—Let us be careful, my brother, and in our zeal to cleanse, take care and not destroy.

If you are troubled with unbelief, if this plague have entered your heart, permit me to suggest a remedy. Humility is the first step, sincere piety towards God the second, let these be followed by that for which the Bereans were commended and the deadly virus of unbelief will soon be purged. Will you say; "physician heal thyself?" I reply, I think I have found relief by the use of the prescription, and am so much in favour of it, that I am determined to continue its application myself as well as recommend it to others. If you ask why I do not direct some arguments more cogently to prove divine revelation? I answer, in the first place, you have granted the validity of the evidences; and secondly, if I think of the attempt, the brilliant labours of better abilities argue the impropriety of it.

But if you think it necessary to labour this subject, I will propose the single instance of the conversion of St. Paul for investigation. By this means we shall be kept from rambling after different subjects. If you can give a reasonable account of this conversion without admitting the truth of christianity, I will acknowledge you have left me destitute of one evidence on which I now rely. On the other hand, if you fail in this, you may reasonably suppose that you would fail in any other case of equal moment in this general controversy.

Yours, &c.

H. BALLOU.

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[The letter containing *extracts* No. 1, having been laid before the Rev. EDWARD TURNER, of Charlestown, Mass. he saw fit to reply to it. The following are extracts from his letter.]

"Passing over the principal parts of your introduction, which generally embrace sentiments to which I readily subscribe, I will just notice what you say concerning the study of languages. I am not so tenacious of this kind of study, as to believe that too much time has not often been employed in it. I am also convinced with you, that 'the truth or falsity of every proposition must depend on the truth or falsity of the principles embraced in it.' But still I am not able to say that the study of Greek and Hebrew can be of no 'possible service to an American.' Neither, because those languages are not a perfect 'security' against falsehood, does it necessarily follow that they are no 'security' at all. For how shall we arrive at the knowledge of the 'principle embraced in a proposition' without the knowledge and use of language? We cannot in any other way. Now if it be a fact, that a proposition embracing certain principles may suffer by translation, and even its principles be perverted and misrepresented, then, an understanding of the original, in which the proposition was written, may, in my opinion, be very useful. It may assist a man to arrive at a true knowledge of the 'principles' upon which said proposition is founded.

"It gives you pain to see what time and money, what labour and toil are expended in plodding over an old dead letter, to learn languages, which exist no where only on paper, barely for the sake of reading the opinions of other men, in other times; men who lived in other ages of the world, and under very different circumstances from ourselves, whose opinions (all of which are worth preserving) might be given in our own language, so as to answer every purpose,' &c.—But if these 'opinions' should be given in our own language, there must be some to understand Greek and Hebrew, or the opinions of those ancient writers, let them be worth ever so much, would never find their way to us. And when we have gained those supposed opinions, through the translation, how do we know that the translators were faithful? Who can say they were not warped by system? not misled by preconceived ideas? Who can say they have not wilfully imposed upon us? Under such circumstances, the ability to detect any inaccuracies or imposition, would, in my view, be very desirable. You have, yourself, my brother, availed yourself of this ability, and very justly merited the gratitude of your readers, by rectifying the judgment, upon certain terms used in the scriptures, the former translation of which, you have disavowed. As I value those efforts of yours, and have been instructed and edified by them, I am proportionably sorry to find them treated in the language of disparagement.

"You observe that 'the learned are as much at variance with each other as the unlearned,' and this circumstance you say, 'weakens your confidence.' But upon what subject are they not at variance, even where Greek and Hebrew are not concerned? Have philosophers been always agreed, when they have discoursed in one language? Have chemists been always of one opinion, though the subjects of their investigations are material bodies? You will not reply affirmatively. And if not, and no system can be found which is not in some degree 'liable to misconstruction, disputation and deception,'—what are we to do? Shall we depend upon nothing? Shall we remain immovable for fear we should fall? Shall we never attempt to walk for fear we should stumble? I must be allowed to express my concern, that, it should appear 'not a little extraordinary to you that God should make a revelation of his will in one age and not in another, to one nation and not to another, or in one language and not in another, and if a special revelation was ever necessary at all it is difficult for you to see, why it is not equally necessary, in all ages of the world, to all nations of the earth and in all languages ever spoken by man.' It is true, I may be unable to see why a revelation was not equally necessary to one nation as well as to another, and at the same time, but is this a proof that no revelation was ever made to any nation at any time? I know of no special reason why the laws of electricity were not developed to my grandfather as well as to Dr. Franklin, with whom he was contemporary; or why the great principles of civil liberty should not have been discovered to other nations as well as to our own, and at the same time, or to ALL nations, a thousand years before they were discovered to one. But all this is no discredit to those discoveries. But I find reason to doubt whether a revelation 'is equally necessary in all ages of the world.' I doubt whether a special revelation is NOW necessary; and for a very obvious reason; because a special revelation has already been made. And as this, though at first, really special, follows the general course of other things which are beneficial, and which commence with a few and diffuse themselves to many, it is a reason which precludes the necessity of a constant recurrence of miracles or any other special medium of revelation. You certainly will not deny, that, admitting there has been a revelation from God, it has been progressive like all things else, which involve the interests of man. If we admit these facts, they will go far to explain some of the difficulties, to which you allude; but if we do not, our disbelieving

in a special revelation will not remove, but increase our difficulties.

"Your's, &c.

E. TURNER."

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EXTRACTS No. III.

[To the extracts above, the objector replied as follows.]

"Remarking on the doubts which unavoidably arise in my mind on account of the diversity in the opinions of the learned respecting the meaning of certain parts of the scriptures, our friend asks, 'upon what subject are they (the learned) not at variance, even when Greek and Hebrew are not concerned? Have chemists been always of one opinion?' &c. which must be answered in the negative. Nevertheless I may take liberty to observe that inasmuch as they have disagreed, it shews that the subjects about what they have disagreed, are as yet obscure, and therefore perhaps none of them are entitled to full and complete 'confidence:' for whatever is plain and obvious, men seldom disagree about. That the sun and moon are *globes*, and not *triangles*, all are agreed; and it would be impossible to raise a dispute on the subject: but whether either or both of them are inhabited, or even capable of being inhabited, by rational beings, similar or like unto ourselves, is a proposition not so clear, and respecting which the greatest philosophers might possibly disagree. The above remarks are intended to shew that when men differ in opinion, whether learned or unlearned, it is obvious that the truth about which they differ, to say the most of it, is yet but obscurely made manifest to their understanding.

"In order to remove an objection, to the idea of revelation, on account of its being made only to one nation, &c. our friend says, 'It is true, I may be unable to see why a revelation was not equally necessary to one nation as well as to another, and at the same time; but is this a proof that no revelation was ever made to any nation at any time?' I am very ready to answer this question in the *negative*. But at the same time I must be excused for not being able to see any analogy between revelation and the discovery of the laws of electricity; as mentioned by our brother; and therefore my mind is not to be relieved from its difficulty in this way. If it could be proved that the principles manifested by revelation were like the principles in nature, against the developement of which there is no great barrier at one time than at another except what exists in the ignorance of man; and if the Christian could now try the experiment over again, and thereby demonstrate the truth of the doctrine of the *resurrection*, the same as the philosopher can try the experiment for himself, and thereby demonstrate the truth of the doctrine of *electricity*, then my doubts or surprise at the seeming partiality in the developement or discovery of the principles of the doctrine of *revelation* would be entirely removed. But the very idea of a *revelation* supposes the manifestation of it to differ essentially from all the discoveries of man. Therefore the remarks of our friend relative to the laws of electricity, &c. seem to be hardly in point. The evidences of revelation to all, excepting those to whom the revelation was first made, are in their very nature essentially different from the evidences of natural philosophy, chemistry, &c. For these are founded in immutable principles which never vary, and are ever open at all times to thorough investigation and experiment. Hence if the learned have any doubts on the subject, those doubts may be removed by ocular demonstration; and even when they are enabled by any new discoveries to correct some former opinions, which were either founded on mere conjecture or imperfect reasoning, yet the first principles still remain, and the former evidences, instead of being weakened, are increased by every new discovery or experiment in the developement of truth. But not so with evidences of divine revelation. Although ever so clear at first, and so well supported by facts, concerning which the witness had the clearest evidence, yet the evidences being of such a nature as preclude a repetition, like those respecting a vision of the night or any other phenomenon, are liable to suffer by passing from one to another, and also to be impaired by every change which they are caused to pass. And if the evidences of any fact may be weakened at all, either by lapse of time, or by passing through different hands; by the same causes, if continued, they may lose all their strength. That the evidences of some facts may be thus weakened, I believe will not be denied. Hence what was once clear may be now doubtful, and in process of time may become entitled to no credit. If therefore the evidence of revelation either have been, or ever shall by any circumstances whatever be thus impaired, then a new revelation may become necessary either to revive or to strengthen the evidences of the old. If Christ should make his second appearance, according to the opinions of some, it would be as much of a revelation as his first appearance was; and this new revelation would corroborate and confirm the old; but if nothing of the kind should ever take place, and if there should be nothing more to confirm the validity of prophesy, but let the world pass on for several thousand years as we know it has for fifteen hundred years past, how long will either the Jews or christians believe in divine revelation?

"I believe however, we had better see whether the old revelation can be fully proved before we go

very far into the inquiry whether a new one is necessary.

"That I deserve any credit in the opinion of our friend or my own conscience for the unwearied pains I have taken to ascertain the correct ideas communicated to us in the scriptures is very grateful to my feelings; and let it not be imagined for a moment that I feel at all disposed to shrink from my former assiduity; for as long as the world, or any considerable part thereof, believe the scriptures to be divine revelation I think it very important that they should have a correct understanding of them. So long therefore as I hold this to be my profession, I mean faithfully to pursue it; ever remembering that I am not accountable in the least degree either for the truth or falsity of the bible, but only for my faithfulness in preaching, taking heed that I do not preach that for bible, which is not bible.

"Let not my brethren be 'concerned,' or made in the least degree unhappy on my account. My mind was never more tranquil respecting religious subjects than at the present moment. My doubts, whatever they are, give me no uneasiness; they only excite me to diligence and assiduity in endeavouring by all possible means to ascertain the truth; and wherever, or in whatever light, it shall be discovered, I am fully satisfied that eternal truth is perfectly right, yea just as it should be.

"For, provided deism should prove true in its stead, what is there to be lost if christianity fails? Ought we not to be thankful for, and also satisfied with the truth of either? It appears to me that all ought to be satisfied with the truth whatever it may be; and therefore my present object is to ascertain, if possible, what truth is.

"'Did human reason,' saith he, 'unassisted by divine light make the discovery?' (i. e. of the 'unity of God.')

—'Then indeed would "all nations, in all ages," have possessed the great object made manifest by revelation.' In answer to this, I would only ask, were not the laws of electricity discovered by 'human reason unassisted by divine light?' Why then were they not known to 'all nations, in all ages?'—The fact is, what reason is capable of discovering may also be long concealed from the eye of reason.

"Yours, &c.

A. KNEELAND."

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LETTER III.

Dear Sir, and Brother,—As I have not the opportunity of presenting your third number to our mutual friend and brother, to whom it most properly belongs to reply, I have thought it no more than reasonable that I should acknowledge the receipt of your favour accompanying this acknowledgement with some observations on the most essential parts of what you have suggested.

You wish us to take it for granted, that those parts of our communications to which you make no reply, are at least, generally speaking, satisfactory to your mind. Respecting this particular, you will suffer me to point out, what appears to me, a very material defect in your proposed method.

Suppose, sir, an argument be laid down on which much depends, in the opinion of the writer, and out of a proper reply to which, he anticipates great advantages; he waits for a reply—No reply comes to this particular, but the very same query which the argument was designed to answer is still urged; is it not easy to see that much labour may be in vain in consequence of this method? If you answer to a question, stating with great seeming earnestness, viewing the question of importance in the mind of him who states it, you would not only expect, but you might really need to be informed what effect your reply was allowed to have in the mind of your opponent. And as he might not anticipate the use which you had designed to make of his answer, you would not judge it advisable to submit to him whether he should reply or not.

You have finally put the dispute about the necessity of retaining the dead languages at issue on the question relative to a future state, in the following words; "If the opinions recorded in scripture relative to a future state of existence are to be relied on, as being dictated by God himself, and in a way too, that was not mistaken; and that the writers of the scriptures being thus inspired, have written nothing but the truth, then I admit," &c. Now from this your own statement you will see the importance of retaining those languages until it be fully discovered that no credit is due to these writings which we have been in the habit of believing to be divinely inspired. Your discernment will at once discover that it would be imprudent in the extreme, to obliterate, without first knowing that what was to be defaced was of no utility. A child, ever so old, who should utterly deface his father's last will and testament, which had made ample provisions for his future wants, merely because he had not a perfect understanding of it, or on suspicion that there were some possible defects in it, could not be considered prudent in so doing. But if the will should finally fail, and prove invalid, no loss would be sustained even

if it were committed to the devouring element. To say, the will may be destroyed until it has been proved, would be absurd.

In your further remarks on our brother's communication, you find occasion to suggest a difference between the subject of revelation and the discoveries which have been made by men in the powers and properties of nature. But when you have contended successfully for this (which by no means has any power to refute his argument) you seem not to realize that there must be as great a difference in the evidences by which these different subjects are communicated to the mind, as there are in the subjects themselves. It is acknowledged, without controversy, that we cannot demonstrate by any mathematical or chemical process that there ever was such an emperor in Rome as Augustus Caesar, or such a governor in Judea as Pilate, or such a man as Jesus; but then we are not, on this account, or any other, unable to find such kind of evidence as the nature of the case admits, and such as is sufficient to satisfy the candid mind. Should any one now pretend to deny that Louis XVIth. was beheaded, and allege as proof that no such thing was to be credited, because it had never been discovered as the result of a chemical process, would you hesitate to fault his reasoning?

Should it occur to your mind that you have contended that the evidence of revelation is as different from the evidence required in natural discoveries, as the subjects themselves are different, you are reminded that you have contended for this only with a view to *weaken* the force of the former, and in a way to disallow its validity. At the same time you state that you do not undertake to deny a special revelation from God, but "wish only to take a review of the evidences, and see if they are such that it is *impossible* it should be false." Of these evidences you speak thus; "Although ever so clear at first, and ever so well supported by facts, concerning which the witnesses had the clearest evidences, yet the evidences being of such a nature as to preclude a repetition, like those respecting a vision of the night or any other phenomenon, are liable to suffer by passing from one to another," and finally "lose all their strength." Here it seems you pretend to state the character of the evidences of a divine revelation, which evidences you wish to review. Permit me to ask, dear brother, if it would not have appeared more consistent with piety and candor to have reviewed before you fixed the character of the evidences?—There is a proper order in which every thing should be conducted. All our researches should be kept from the embarrassments of prejudice. Though I feel much reluctance in entering on so great a subject as the vindication of the truth of divine revelation, fearing, I should fail in doing that honour to the subject which I am confident it deserves, I am inclined to suggest a few things which I think are worthy of some notice. As you speak of a vision of the night, the evidences of which were clear to the person and satisfactory at the time, those evidences would naturally lose their force when communicated to others and finally lose their strength. Let us suppose a case. A man shall have a vision of the night, in which it shall be revealed to him that some time before the present generation shall leave the stage of life, the kingdom of Great Britain will be overcome by the power of France; that very many of the flourishing cities of England will be destroyed in a very awful manner; that London will be laid level with the ground; that the distress of the inhabitants during the siege will be extreme; that for some time before this great event, there will be wars and rumors of wars among the nations, and certain signs very wonderful will be seen in the heavens. This man tells his vision very circumstantially and several persons write it down. Now suppose as the time passes away, these events, one after another, should take place, all in the same order in which the vision represented them; do you feel willing to say that the evidences of the truth of this vision, are all the time losing their force? No surely they are not; they are all the time gaining strength and waxing brighter. Whether I am able to satisfy you that the above case is a fair representation of the evidences of divine revelation, or not, it discovers in some degree the ground on which, in my mind, revelation is established.

Compare, if you please, the prophesy of Jesus recorded in the 24th of Matthew, with the history of the events of which the divine messenger spake.

Yours, &c.

H. BALLOU.

P. S. You have noticed, no doubt, in a parenthesis, that I do not allow your argument on the dissimilarity of divine revelation and principles of nature to have any force to do away the argument of our brother, to which you replied. It was evidently not his design to argue a similarity between the nature of these widely different subjects, but to show that no greater partiality appears in the divine wisdom, in not discovering the truths of revelation in all ages, to all nations and in all languages, than in its not leading the human mind to the discovery of electricity or any other of the laws of nature in the same manner. Will you endeavour to maintain that the divine economy has nothing to do in directing means and circumstances to the development of the laws of nature and to the discovery of useful inventions? And if you allow it has, why do you not assign a reason why these discoveries should not have been made in all ages, to all nations, and written or rather *printed*, in all languages that cannot as well be applied in the other case? In this way you would do away his reasoning and my own likewise,

for as you notice, we were both of one mind on this subject.

Before I close this postscript, I wish to remark on the subject which you have in view, in reviewing the evidences of divine revelation, which you say is to "see if they are such that it is *impossible* it should be false." Now it appears to your humble servant, that faith does not require evidence of the description you lay down. I grant it wants to be satisfied and it has a right to expect it; it feels under no obligation to evidence which comes short of conviction; but it does not require all *possibility* to be taken into its account. This would seem to go beyond the limits of faith and enter into the regions of certainty. If the evidences in support of faith be sufficient to give rest, peace, and consolation to the mind, and if the faith be strong enough to effect the conduct of the believer in a proper manner, the object of faith is obtained.

The hopes of the husbandman may serve to illustrate this particular. He does not know for certainty that his fields will produce him any thing; he does not know that the coming season will be favourable to his crops, yet he plants and sows in comfortable expectation. He rises early and labours cheerfully, his expectations are full of comfort, he sleeps quietly and enjoys content. But if you ask him whether he views it *impossible* that he should fail of a harvest? he will with but very little concern answer in the negative.

"The just shall live by faith, we walk by faith and not by sight." All, therefore, that we can reasonably expect in the case before us, is to find a decided *balance* of evidence in favour of the religion of the gospel. And to *review* the evidences of this religion, it seems necessary first to allow that there are evidences in existence which go to prove it, if their validity be allowed. For instance, the four evangelists, the acts of the apostles, together with the epistles of the apostles are considered evidences of the truth of this religion. And can you reasonably require more until you are able to show that all these come short of establishing the credibility of the facts which they relate with apparent honesty and simplicity not to be met with in any other ancient writings?

There are a great many other evidences which serve to corroborate those mentioned, but if you can do *them* away, no doubt the others may be as easily removed.

You will duly consider that in disproving the religion of Jesus Christ, you disprove all religion, for I am satisfied that you will not pretend that you are making a choice between the gospel and some other doctrine. No, the choice is between the gospel and no religion at all.

Come then, strip away all the clouds of superstition, and demonstrate at once that there has been no sun in the firmament during the whole of a cloudy day! Soar like the strong pinioned eagle, make your tour beyond the mists of error and bring us the joyless tidings that there is no clear sky in the heavens. Can you imagine any thing to be more pleasing than the coming of one that brought *good* tidings? But let us have the worst of it. Show from undoubted authority that there never was such a man as Jesus, or show that he was a wicked impostor and deservedly lost his life. Show moreover, that there never were such men as the apostles of Jesus, or that they were likewise impostors, and all suffered death for their wicked impiety! Give the particulars of Saul's madly forsaking the honourable connexion in which he stood, for the sake of practising a fraud which produced him an immense income of suffering!

But you say the apostles were not bad men. Very well, then let us see how good men could tell so many things which they knew were not true, and suffer and die in attestation of what they knew to be false. You will see the danger of supposing that honest men can bear testimony to falsehood under the pretence of doing good, as this would destroy all testimony at once; even your own cannot be relied on after you maintain this abominable principle, which has been practised a wicked priesthood for ages. H.B.

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EXTRACTS No. IV.

[The objector in his fourth number begins by explaining himself in some particulars wherein he had not been fully understood, and also by making some concessions respecting the importance of retaining the original languages in which the scriptures were written; and, bringing these remarks to a close, he proceeds as follows:]

"In regard to a revelation from God, the three propositions which you have stated answer my mind well enough, as far as they go, to which, however, I would wish to add a fourth; and ask, admitting the three first propositions true. 'Fourth. Is it reasonable to suppose that the apostles had any other means of forming their opinions relative to a future state than what passed before their eyes?—viz. the miracles of Christ, the circumstances attending his death, his resurrection, and the miracles wrought by themselves in his name?'

"1st. Is it reasonable to suppose that God has ever made a special revelation to man?"

"You say I have acknowledged that a divine revelation 'if real, is of all truths the most important;' hence you call upon the 'eye of reason' to examine this proposition to see why it should be considered more important than the discoveries made in the arts and sciences, &c. I think these questions may be easily and correctly answered. One relates to the blessings of *eternity*; and the others to those only of *time*; hence if the truths manifested by a revelation had been of no more importance to man than the truths in natural philosophy, reason would say, God would have left them also to be discovered, if discovered at all, like all other truths, without a special revelation. But, you must excuse me for not being able to see the force and conclusiveness of your reasoning, when you say that my 'allowing it any importance at all, is, in the eye of reason, an argument in its support.' Supposing I am informed of a large estate bequeathed to me by some benefactor. I acknowledge that it is very important to me, if true, as I am in great need; yet I do not believe it true. Now, is my acknowledging its importance, if true, an argument in support of its truth? If it is so, the reason of it is out of my sight.

"I should think that the reason of man (the only reason with which we are acquainted) would hardly undertake to say whether a revelation is either necessary or not necessary. The only evidence that reason can have of its necessity is its truth; and a supposition that it is not true equally supposes it not to be necessary. For to suppose otherwise supposes that God has omitted something which was necessary to be done! Try the matter as it respects a new revelation. Who will undertake to say that a new revelation either is or is not necessary? No one who believes in a revelation will deny the possibility of such an event. Suppose then for the moment it is true; and something is brought to light infinitely more glorious than any thing of which the human mind has yet conceived; will any one say it is unimportant? Or is the 'allowing it any importance—an argument in its support?'

"I am very ready to allow that a 'divinely munificent Creator would not omit any thing which is of importance to his intelligent creatures:' and on this ground I admitted the *importance* of revelation 'if real;' but I am yet unable to see how this is any argument in its support. It seems to me that this argument might be turned right the other way with equal force. If revelation be not true, it is not necessary it should be; and man can be made just as happy in this world by knowing all that he can know without it, as those are who believe in it; and admitting it not true there is no more importance in all the stories about it, than there is in the *Alcoran*! Now, supposing you should 'allow' all this, would it be any argument against the truth of revelation? I think not.

"In answer therefore to the first particular, I must be allowed to say that the only reason in favour of a divine revelation must grow out of the evidence in support of the facts on which it is predicated; for, aside from those evidences, I do not see why mankind should be taught to believe in a future life and immortality by special revelation, any more than they should be taught the arts and sciences by special revelation; yet reason does not reject the evidences of such an event when they are made clear to the understanding.—Therefore, it appears to me that your first proposition is involved in the second, viz.

"2d. Is the resurrection of Jesus capable of being proved?"

"I should have said something more on the subject which was answered in your first number, and which I neglected to acknowledge in my second, if it had occurred to me as being necessary. I will briefly state here that your reasoning on that subject is satisfactory; and if a revelation can be fully proved I feel not disposed to complain on account of its seeming partiality. Infinite wisdom dispenses his blessings so as best to answer his benevolent designs; and were we to object to the *manner*, merely because we do not comprehend the *equality*, we should be satisfied, strictly speaking, with nothing.

"But you have excused yourself from undertaking to prove your second proposition in a way that I did not expect, viz. by finding, as you supposed, in my words, an acknowledgement of its truth. Here again I must confess my misfortune in giving too much grounds for the wrong construction. Every one knows however the ambiguity of words, and how the meaning of a sentence may be altered by placing the emphasis on a different word from what the author intended. I acknowledge that my words will admit the construction you have given them; yet you could but see that it was giving up at once what I had in a number of places, both before and after, considered a main question. And then, you ask me why I wish you to prove what I acknowledge to be true. If you will be good enough to review the passage, and notice that the word *substantially* was emphatic, and contrasted with *circumstantial*, a little below, you will perceive that my meaning was simply this. No one will pretend that the evangelists were correct in every minute particular, but only correct in *substance*; and by the ALL, by whom this will be admitted, I mean those who believe in divine revelation; that even they would acknowledge, that in point of correctness, the writers were 'no more' than *substantially* so. However:

"You think if I am 'disposed to doubt,' &c. it is my province to bring forward my 'strong reasoning,' &c. I know of no disposition that I feel respecting the subject but to ascertain, if possible, the truth. If I have doubts, it is not because I choose to doubt, but because I cannot help them; and if I have faith it is

such as is given me. Of one thing I have no doubt; that is, that the truth, whatever it is, is right. But:

"Admitting the scriptures are not true, I shall not attempt to guess what is true respecting the subjects to which they relate. For I might guess a hundred different ways to account for what we know is true, and all of them be wrong.

"My doubts on this subject are nothing more than *doubts*; they do not amount to a confirmed *unbelief*, because they admit the possibility of the account's being true.

"Yours, &c.

A. KNEELAND."

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LETTER IV.

Much esteemed friend,—Your fourth number is hereby acknowledged; and though occasions for finding fault are in some measure extenuated, it still appears that you have lost the real connexion of your arguments, and have made the subject of the languages one of your main subjects, when judging from your first number, it was no more than a vestibule to the grand edifice which it was in your mind to examine.

However, you having paid more than half, we will not stand about the fraction, as long as we have a profitable object in view. You call up what you call the subject. I suppose the main subject. This you state as follows: "In regard to a revelation from God, the three propositions which you have stated answer my mind well enough, as far as they go; to which however, I would wish to add a fourth, and ask; admitting the three first particulars true.—4th. Is it reasonable to suppose, that the apostles had any other means of forming their opinions, relative to a future state, than what passed before their eyes? viz. the miracles of Christ, the circumstance attending his death, his resurrection, and the miracles wrought by themselves in his name?" I wish, in this place, to show you that your added proposition possesses no power relative to our argument which is not comprehended in the last of the three which I stated. For if it be allowed, as you propose, that my propositions are true, then you consent to the validity of the apostles' testimony respecting a future state, which granted, it makes no difference in what way the apostles come to the knowledge of futurity. When a thing is known, it is known. The means by which it is known add nothing to either side of the argument. If you allow that my argument on this subject is correct, as it seems you do, then you acknowledge that God would not endow men with the power to heal the sick and raise the dead, whose testimony concerning a future state could be justly doubted. I will not be too positive that I rightly apprehend your meaning on this subject, but as you propose to allow my three propositions, and as you make no attempt to do away my reasoning, especially on my last, I think I should not understand you according to your own proposal in any other way.

The methaphor which you use to help you away from my argument respecting the *importance* of a revelation from God, does not appear fully adequate to the purpose for which you use it. It might not be a reasonable, a necessary disposition of property for the proposed benefactor, to give you a large estate; it might be, in the eye of reason a very improper donation, and one which would deprive legitimate heirs of what they had a right to expect from a father towards whom they had always acted with filial obedience.—But if you will make the case a parallel, and suppose you are an heir, a lawful child, and your father has a large estate to dispose of, then you will see that it is right and just, and no more than what you have reason to expect; that it is necessary, and that this necessity is the importance of the subject, you will at once see that this importance is a reason, yea an evidence that you have a right to expect it. I called on you to prove that no revelation was needed; I acknowledged that if none was necessary, a being of infinite wisdom would make none. You venture to say, that the "only evidence that reason can have of the necessity of divine revelation is its truth." It is believed, sir, that this hypothesis involves too much. It is saying that reason can discern the necessity of nothing until it obtains it, whereas the truth is evidently the other side of the assertion. We are frequently experiencing the necessity of things which we have not already attained, and by this want we are incited to use the means by which we finally obtain them.—"Ask, and ye shall receive, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you," &c. It is believed, and no doubt it may be argued with success, that the moral and religious state of man really required a divine revelation. Never did the parched ground, the withering plant, the thirsty herds need the showers from heaven, more than man, that WORD of life which descended as the rain and distilled as the dew, when the gospel was published by a cloud of faithful witnesses, called of God for that purpose.

After acknowledging that your words admit of the construction which I gave them respecting the

apostles stating no more than what was substantially true, you inform me that you meant something very different; then, sir, it seems you must mean that they stated that which is not true. And if so, why do you not prove wherein they testified falsely, which would at once cast their bands from us? By this mean you would show that their testimony is deserving of no credit.

On the subjects of your doubts, you recollected my request, that you bring forward your reasons, &c. But in room of doing this you inform me that your doubts are *involuntary*. But I wish to know if this renders it improper for you to state your reasons for doubting? You further inform me that your doubts do not amount to a confirmed unbelief. Again, I would ask if it be necessary for you to wait until you are a confirmed unbeliever before you state your reasons for doubting the truth of the testimony which Christians call divine?

By these questions you will perceive that I am waiting for you, and if I am not able to meet your arguments, I am ready on making the discovery, to acknowledge your reasoning too strong for my weak powers to manage.

Yours, &c.

H. BALLOU.

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EXTRACTS No. V.

[After acknowledging the receipt of *Letters* Nos. 3 and 4, and remarking on several parts of the reply to *Extracts* No. 2, making some concessions, &c. as he found it necessary, the *objector* proceeds as follows.]

"But, your final conclusion, after all, comes so near what I conceive to be the truth, that, were you as correct in every thing as you appear to be in this, I should hardly think it expedient to pursue this controversy any further. "The Christian is enabled," you say, "to hope for existence with God in an eternal state, and this is as much as our present welfare requires." Most excellent! To this proposition I cheerfully assent. Yea, I would consent even to pruning it a little, which no doubt would spoil it in your view. Instead of 'this is as much as,' read, 'even this is more than,' and your proposition would stand exactly right. Again, you say,

"I have many reasons for not believing in the general sentiment that supposes the revelation contained in the scriptures was designed to prepare men in this world for happiness in another, and that a want of a correct knowledge of this revelation here, would subject the ignorant to inconvenience in a future state. Such a sentiment is an impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God.'

"Here again, should I admit a divine revelation, I most heartily agree with you; and also with the reasoning which follows under this proposition. For it is more consistent with reason and good sense to believe (like the fool) in the existence of no God, than to believe in a God who is either partial or cruel! If such were the general sentiment of mankind, the evils resulting from it, in my humble opinion, would not be worse than the evils which have resulted from the belief in a God of the character just mentioned. One who, according to the sentiment, has let millions, even millions of millions, of his rational creatures die ignorant of a divine revelation, when he knew without the knowledge of, and belief in, such a revelation, they must sink down into eternal ruin and misery! And, so far as a revelation respects the damned, as though it was designed to aggravate and increase their misery by increasing their sensibility, he makes known his will, by special revelation, to a few, accompanied with the gift of his holy spirit, through the divine efficacy of which, a selected and chosen number will be admitted to bliss and glory, to the utter and eternal exclusion of the millions above mentioned!!!

"If such a sentiment does not impeach the divine character, not only of partiality, but of *cruelty*, I know of nothing that could. But, Sir,

"Are you not aware that your sentiment, as above stated, which has met my approbation, on the supposition that divine revelation can be maintained, is as much opposed to the general sentiment of Christianity, as it respects this particular, as any thing which I have written or probably shall write on this subject? I presume you are aware of all this, and I hope you are prepared for its consequences. You have more to apprehend, however, from this general sentiment, than I have. You have levelled an arrow at the very seat of life of what is considered *orthodoxy* in divinity, it is impossible but that the wound should be severely felt. For you are not insensible sir, that it is not only the general, but almost the universal sentiment of orthodoxy, from *his holiness the Pope* down to the smallest child who has been taught to lisp the christian name, that the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ was designed to prepare mankind in this world for heaven and happiness in another. Hence it has been believed that

those who have died ignorant of the gospel, and being at the same time born of ignorant or unbelieving parents, must be lost forever. But those who hear and reject the gospel must be still more wretched in another world. With this sentiment, however, it seems you have no more fellowship than I. Therefore, my brother, it may be well for both, but more especially for you, that the days of rigorous persecution are over. For notwithstanding orthodoxy will consider us both equally opposed to christianity at heart, yet, of the two, you will be considered the most dangerous character. I shall be considered the *open*, but you the *secret enemy*; who, under the garb of professed friendship, are doing your utmost to sap the very foundation of the christian's hope! And you will not be considered any the less dangerous for your writings, being approved in any sense, by one who has the audacity, as they will term it, to doubt of the truth, of divine revelation! Instead of discovered impious blasphemy in the honest inquiry of your friend as it will be supposed you ought to have done, and instead of threatening him with endless burnings therefor;—or for not being disposed to receive, even truth, without cautious and thorough examination, you have painted christianity in such beautiful colours that infidelity itself finds but little cause to oppose it. Should these letters therefore ever come before the public you must be prepared for the gathering storm. For should you be able to reconcile revelation with the above proposition, if reason be not fully convinced of its truth, it will find nothing to object to the principles it inculcates. However, as this is not the avowed sentiment of christians, generally speaking, you must permit me to proceed.

"As it respects biblical criticism, notwithstanding all I have written on the subject, if the object is what you have proposed, 'to get the understanding of the sacred text,' I have no objection to it, but, for those who have time and inclination, think it laudible. Your caution, likewise, that in our zeal to cleanse we 'take care and not destroy,' is no doubt reasonable, and I trust duly appreciated. Your method also for curing or removing unbelief is happily chosen, and is what I am now attempting, which, with your assistance, I hope to make a proper, if not a successful application.

"Although the 'validity of the evidences' of revelation was not intended to have been granted, as I have informed you in my fourth number, yet I shall not press you to argue the points till I have given you the reasons for my doubts; for these being removed, nothing more will be necessary.

"Yours &c.

A. KNEELAND."

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EXTRACTS No. VI.

[Here twelve pages or more of the objector's manuscript are omitted, as the nature of his arguments will pretty fully appear in the reply; and as he has been obliged to rescind the ground he had taken, it is not expedient to publish his remarks. That the reader may see a little of the manner, however, in which he has given up his part of the argument, the following is inserted.]

"Speaking however on the evidences of revelation, you have stated some things worthy of serious consideration; which if correct, and I cannot say but they are, give me considerable satisfaction; and are very grateful to my feelings. 'It' (faith) say you 'does not require all *possibility* to be taken into the account: this would seem to go beyond the limits of faith and enter into the regions of certainty.'

"According to this doctrine, I may yet, perhaps, be considered a believer in divine revelation, and of course in Christianity. If 'all possibility' is not required, then certainly some *doubts*, some *possibility* of failure, may be admitted without destroying the consistency of the Christian faith.

"Here as it respects the argument, you have seemingly foreclosed every thing which I shall say by way of objection; at least, you have anticipated all my arguments on this subject. For evidences and circumstances calculated to raise *doubts* in the mind; and shewing the *possibility* of uncertainty, are all the arguments which I have expected to produce in this case. But it may not be improper to inquire how much uncertainty, or *possibility* of uncertainty, may I admit in my calculation without destroying the Christian faith? That there are evidences in favor of divine revelation, and, which would support it, if there were nothing to counterbalance their testimony, is a proposition which I admit, and which I think cannot be disputed. Hence I conceive it must be admitted that there is a *possibility*, at least, of its being true.—But after all, if the weight of evidence in the mind of any one should preponderate against it, I doubt whether such an one could consistently be called a believer in divine revelation.

"You have suggested that in disproving the religion of Jesus Christ, I should disprove all religion; as there can be no choice between this and any other; for if this can be proved false all may be proved false &c. or words to that effect. In this I hardly know how to understand you. So far as the religion of Christ consists in 'feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and keeping himself unspotted from the

world,' I admit, that 'in disproving the religion of Christ,' I should 'disprove all religion:' that is to say, in other words, so far as the religion of Christ is not founded on revelation, but on the relation and dependence existing between man and man, to disprove it would disprove all religion: but if the religion of Jesus Christ consists purely and exclusively in believing in a future state of existence, then disproving it would not disprove all religion. A man may be what the poet calls 'the noblest work of God' i.e. 'an honest man,' and attend to all the duties embraced in that religion which St. James calls 'pure and undefiled before God and the father,' and yet have no *opinion*, that is, no settled opinion, in regard to a future state. If a man has religion enough to be a good husband, a good neighbor, a good citizen, and can rationally enjoy all the blessings which appertain to this life, of what consequence is it to him, or to any one else, what he believes in regard to a future state? This is a question worthy of serious consideration.

"The denial of revelation, much less to doubt its truth, does not render it necessary that I should do what you have proposed; neither is it my disposition to destroy if I could the peace even of an individual. Hence, I have no wish to 'demonstrate that there is no sun in a cloudy day;' but only to prove that clouds and darkness are as necessary to the well being of man as clear sunshine. Neither would I be the bearer of the 'joyless tidings that there is no clear sky in the heavens;' but only to query whether our portion of 'clear sky' is not that which reflects upon the earth; and that only during the short period of our lives? Who has a right to complain, if our blessings are circumscribed to our sphere of action? Must we enjoy nothing, because more is not allotted to our share? It is very probable there may be millions of other suns, enlightening other worlds, and systems of worlds, giving life, light and warmth to rational beings like ourselves, exceeding all imagination in number; and yet, have little of the blessings of those heavenly luminaries that falls to our enjoyment! They merely form a beautiful canopy over our heads. It is true, their greatest use to us may be that of which we are mostly ignorant; in balancing systems &c. but yet we must have some knowledge of those benefits, before we can feel grateful for them. Dost thou wish to visit them? Dost thou desire to know more concerning them than thou canst know in this state? Calm and deliberate reason would say unto thee, 'Be content, O vain man! with thine own lot, and not try to soar above thy proper station!'

"The above is not designed as a reflection; it is only what I take to myself.

"You have proposed what I conceive you think is the only alternative to which I must flee, when I give up the truth of divine revelation. But may I not stop to inquire whether there is not some medium between the two extremes which you have mentioned? Must I believe that there was no such man as Jesus, or if there were, that he was an impostor; or else believe all that is stated concerning him? Must I also believe the same of the apostles or else believe them impeccable? May not even good men be honestly deceived? and being deceived, honestly lead others into an error?—That honest men do not bear 'testimony to falshood,' I admit; neither could such a principle be justified even under a 'pretence of doing good;' yet I will not undertake to say that no such *pious frauds* have ever been practiced in the world, and even among professed christians; and how soon it was practiced after the days of the apostles, and whether or not by some even in their day, would be very difficult now to determine. Neither is it necessary I should say any thing more upon the subject, as you admit this principle 'has been practised upon by a wicked priesthood for ages!'

"In remarking on my fourth proposition, which I added to the *three* which you had proposed, you say, 'I will not be too positive that I rightly apprehend your meaning on this subject, but as you propose to allow my three propositions, and as you make no attempt to do away my reasoning, especially on my last,' &c. Here permit me to observe, I am well persuaded you did not fully understand me, whatever you did yourself, on this subject. You will perceive, sir, both by my fourth number, and also by my fifth, that my answer to your *three propositions* was not completed. Probably if you had waited for the whole of my answer you would have understood me much better, and also would have seen the use and propriety of my fourth proposition.

"I think, as you will perceive by my fifth number that even honest men may be mistaken. And if so, it is very important to know whether the apostles judged only from outward circumstances, or whether they had some internal evidence, called *inspiration*, by which they always knew the truth of the things whereof they affirmed. This was the object of my fourth proposition.

"That you did not fully understand me appears by your saying, 'If it be allowed that my propositions are true, then you *consent* to the validity of the apostles' testimony respecting a future state.' If this could be allowed, it might then be admitted, that in this argument it makes no difference how the apostles come by their 'knowledge of futurity.'—But I did not know, neither do I now perceive, that my admitting the apostles to be honest men makes it necessary also to admit the validity of their 'testimony respecting a future state;' unless it can be shown that honest men are never mistaken respecting the things whereof they affirm. I admit the '*honesty*' of my good friend, in the above quoted proposition; but I can hardly be willing, purely on this account, to '*consent*' to its truth.

"As it respects an inheritance given in a WILL, &c. I have some doubts whether reason always carries things as far as you would wish to carry this metaphor to make it a parallel. Reason sometimes moves in a small circle; and that too without being unreasonable. If the benefit is said to have been absolutely made, and reason is informed of the fact, it has a right to take it for granted, that the donor had the property to give, and that it is not given to the injury of any one else. But yet he consults his own interest, and that only, when he says, 'this is very important to me, if true, yet I doubt, yea I have reasons for not believing it true.' Would any one say that such a man talketh unreasonably?

"You have called on me to prove 'that no revelation was needed;' and have acknowledged, 'that if none was necessary, a being of infinite wisdom would make none.' And at the same time you have argued very pathetically indeed to prove the necessity of a revelation; that is, if that can be called argument which grows out of a man's own feelings: A man, however, of different feelings might bring forward arguments equally energetic, and perhaps equally conclusive, but diametrically opposite.

"I know not what evidence you wish, or what evidence would be accepted, to prove that a revelation is not necessary. Even if such were the fact, it appears to me to be hardly susceptible of proof. It may be no more difficult, however, than it is to prove that a revelation is true. I presume that nothing short of a *revelation* would convince you that a *revelation* is not necessary! For who but God can know what either is, or is not necessary for God to make known?

"But if arguments drawn from our feelings are admissible, hear, for once, the voice of simple nature, proclaiming in her simplicity by every thing which exists either in or around you, that a revelation is neither necessary nor useful. That every thing which can be enjoyed in life can be enjoyed equally as well, and often better, without either its knowledge or belief. That every duty, either to God or man, can be performed as well, and with the same beneficial effect. And finally that man may be brought, without either the aid, knowledge, or belief of revelation, not only to be reconciled to his conditions and station in life, but also to curtail all his *anxious* desires to which he not only *believes* but *knows* there is a natural possibility of obtaining.

"If one could be brought who would solemnly testify to the truth of the above paragraph, would you believe his testimony? I presume not. But why not? Will you say it is impossible it should be true? No one can know this for a certainty, except those whose misfortune it is, if it be a misfortune not to believe in a future state of existence. If such there are, however, and yet their lives are exactly correct, their examples in society equally good, and their enjoyments apparently equally as great as other men, why should you doubt their testimony? Would you say they were *bad men*?—could you say they were *dishonest men*?—and if *honest*, according to your argument, why not believe them? I can see no inducement that any one could have to deny a revelation, if he believes it true; but I can see a very great inducement for mankind to maintain the reality of a revelation, although at the same time they may doubt its truth.

"If you doubt whether the human mind can be brought to such a state as has been mentioned above, it is only for the want of proper evidence; the fact, however, is susceptible of proof. Yea, it can be more than proved; *the happy unbeliever* in idle tales, but believing in eternal principles, knows it for a certainty. I do not mean that he knows for a certainty, that there is no revelation, but he knows for a certainty that a belief in revelation is not absolutely necessary to a happy life. Now, if such characters exists, will you receive their own testimony in support of the above fact? If not, it will be of no use to produce them.

"In order to make a proper estimation of virtue, we should take into consideration the motives and inducements a person has to be virtuous. The virtue of some men seems to be predicated on the following principles; on the consideration that they are going to heaven and happiness in another world, while others, whom they conceive not so good as themselves are going to hell, a place of never ending torments. On this ground they can be very *pious* also, and do a great deal for religion. At the same time they will tell you, as many have, if they believed all were to be alike happy in another world, they would then stick at no crimes to obtain their object, but would indulge themselves in all manner of gratifications, &c. Such virtue, however, I conclude does not stand very high in your estimation. No; but you would be virtuous on a more noble scale; so long as you can believe that you shall have an eternal existence with God, in a happy conscious identity, you are willing every body else should enjoy the same blessing; on supposition that this is true, or as you can believe it, you are for doing all the good in your power, and at the same time taking all the comfort you can in doing it. You are trying to make every one believe what you believe, that they may enjoy what you enjoy. But the moment this faith, and this hope of yours is gone, your virtue is gone with it; you can now do nothing, and of course enjoy nothing!

"Now compare this virtue with the virtue of one whom the christian world would call an infidel! One whose faith, and of course, hope, does not extend beyond what he knows has been the lot of some, and,

as far as circumstances will admit, may be his own; and yet he is always faithful in the discharge of whatever appears to be his duty, always enjoys life, whether in prosperity or adversity, and is always, so far as it respects circumstances over which he has no control, reconciled and contented with his lot. He knows his life is uncertain, and although he has no real faith or well grounded hope beyond the present state of existence, yet the thought gives him neither anxiety nor concern. His only object is to do good; to enjoy life while it lasts, to cultivate and improve human nature for the benefit of posterity; to bear the evils and misfortunes of life with fortitude, and to be unfeignedly thankful for all the happiness of which he is made susceptible. Therefore whether his life be for a day, or for eternity, it matters not, because, for the present, it is all the same to him: his duties are the same, and his enjoyments are the same. O how happy! How inexpressibly happy, is such a state as this!

"While others are feasting their fruitful imaginations with the idle and visionary dreams of fanaticism; with a kind of chimerical heaven of which they know *nothing*, as to its certainty: this man is in heaven already: dwelling in love, he 'dwelleth in God, and God in him.'

"Do you not wish, my brother, that you could find such a character among Christians? But Christianity does not afford such a character, in *full*, nor is it possible that it ever should. Such a character, however, there may be, and when the world, or any considerable part of them can receive his testimony, he may make his appearance.

"You seem to think it may be successfully argued 'that the moral and religious state of man really required a divine revelation.' This argument, if I understand you, grows out of the ardent desires of man; which, it is admitted, would be pretty conclusive if it could be made to appear that the desires of man are never fruitless. Man, it is true, rationally desires happiness; for this is essential to his moral existence; yet, may he not, through ignorance, or from some other cause, suppose things essential to his happiness, which, in fact, are not essential, and therefore ardently desire them? But does it necessarily follow that the particular things desired in such cases are absolutely necessary? and therefore will absolutely be granted? I believe not.—And if he may be thus deceived in any one thing, why may he not be deceived in the supposed necessity of a divine revelation? It is believed that a perfect reconciliation to the present state of man; to what he is, with the prospect only of what he yet may be in this life, without either the hope or the fear of a future existence, would be infinitely better than any thing which has yet been produced by a belief in divine revelation; especially any further than a revelation is conducive to this end; and if a revelation ever was necessary, it was necessary only to reconcile man to his present state of existence. But if man can be equally reconciled without the *knowledge*, or, what amounts to the same thing, without the *belief* of divine revelation, then the end of such a revelation is obtained.

"It seems to be expedient that I should say a few more words, 'respecting the apostles' stating no more than what was substantially true.'

"I hope, however, we shall not lose sight of the main subject in debate, by criticising on words. I say *main subject* here, as I think there will be no occasion of saying any thing more on the subject of the *languages* in relation to the arts and sciences.

"I am not disposed to think, sir, that you have designedly wrested the meaning of my words; nor that you are unwilling to receive my meaning when it is fully understood; and yet, having once explained on this subject, I am unable to account for your remarks.

"After my informing you that you had misconstrued me, and also stating my meaning, as I supposed, more explicitly, you have informed me that if your first construction was not my meaning, it seems that I must have meant the reverse of it, which, I must aver, is as foreign from my meaning as your first construction! For neither your former nor latter construction was in my mind when I wrote the sentence to which I allude: but a different idea from either of your constructions was in my mind, and was what I meant to state; which idea, as I conceive, is as fairly expressed by my words, and is a more just construction of them, taking into consideration the sentence which follows, than either of the ideas which you have expressed as their meaning.

"Permit me therefore to state again, that whatever might have been my opinion respecting the writings of the apostles, I did not mean to suggest, and much less to affirm in that sentence 'that they stated that which is not true!'—Neither did I mean to acknowledge in that sentence that they had stated 'no more' than what is true, at least in *substance*; but I did mean this, and this only, that admitting those things were true, all would admit that the design of the apostles was nothing *more* than to state the truth of those things in *substance*; because all would acknowledge that they were not careful to be correct as to every *minutiae*. But as this makes nothing either for or against the main point, I wish to add no more respecting it, than simply to remark, that even if the apostles had gone on the opposite extreme of what I meant I should not think them 'deserving of *no credit*.' Supposing they had descended into *minutiae*, and related, to an exact nicety, every particular circumstance (which is

exactly the reverse of what I mean to state), would they on this account have been deserving of *no credit*? I think not. Considering the time, however, which had elapsed after the facts are said to have taken place, before a history of them was given in writing, I think the evangelists are entitled to *more credit*, on the whole, than what they would have been if their testimony had borne the complexion last mentioned.

"To close this letter, which perhaps is already too long, I would here acknowledge that as I have expressed doubts in the subject of divine revelation, you have a right to hear my reasons for doubting. These I promised to give you (as I thought) at the close of my fourth number. You have informed me, verbally, that I promised to give you my *doubts* only. If I did so, it was only a slip of the pen, to which I am too prone; it was my *reasons for doubting*, which I meant to have promised you; and in my next I shall endeavor to fulfil that promise.

"Yours, &c.

A. KNEELAND."

* * * * *

LETTER V.

Dear sir, and brother,—Your fifth and sixth numbers were received together, and will be noticed in the order in which they came to hand.

You observe that you know of no better evidence that "there ever was such a story reported among the Jews, in the days of the apostles, than there is to prove the actual resurrection of Jesus," &c. This suggestion leads to the following queries.

1st. Was there in the days of the apostles, such a man known in the country of the Jews, as Jesus Christ?

2d. Was this man put to death, as the four evangelists and others testify?

3d. Did the apostles declare to the people who put him to death, that they knew that he had arisen from the dead?

4th. If the Jews who put Jesus to death could go to his sepulchre and show his dead body to the people, would the story of the resurrection ever have gained any credit among the Jews?

5th. If they could not find the body of him who had been crucified, would the opposers not endeavour to report something that might appear as plausible as they could, especially as they had the keeping of the sepulchre in their own hands?

6th. What would more naturally suggest itself to the imagination of men, in the situation of the rulers of the Jews, than the story of the disciples having stolen the dead body, &c. Or,

7th. Was this account written long since the apostles' days, by an unknown author, who made the whole story as he wrote it? If this last question cannot be answered in the affirmative without doing violence to the most authentic testimony and also to the plainest dictates of reason, it seems to follow that the 6th preceding question, must be accepted in the affirmative, which furnishes sufficient evidence to prove that such a story was reported among the Jews in the days of the apostles.

Whether you are correct in supposing there is as much evidence to prove the resurrection as to prove the report of the disciples' having stolen the body, or not, it appears to me, that there is no proper ground on which the latter can even be doubted.

Suppose a writer in vindicating believer's baptism in opposition to the sprinkling of infants, should relate a wonderful story concerning the persecutions of the baptists, in which he should set forth the particulars of one of their leading characters having been put to death by their opposers. In this account, the author says; Those murderers, after they put the man to death, for fear his friends should steal the body, went and placed a strong guard round the tomb to watch for the space of three days and nights, but before the expiration of this period, the guard came to the rulers and make known that the body is gone, and acknowledge at the same time, that there were such wonders seen by them at the tomb, that they were unable to endure the sight and retain their natural powers; that the rulers gave them money to report that a number of the baptists came while the guard was asleep and stole the body—"So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Pædobaptists unto this day." Would this story appear any ways to the advantage of a cause, with which reason and common sense have any thing to do?

Reason, sir, for which you seem determined to contend, is candid; it readily acknowledges that the account of this report among the Jews is a true account. And it acknowledges also that the truth of this account is good evidence to prove that the rulers of the Jews found it necessary, in order to oppose the truth of the resurrection, to get such a report in circulation.

You have not taken me exactly on the ground of my argument, in supposing that, by *revelation*, I mean nothing more than "what was revealed to me by the resurrection of Jesus, allowing the resurrection true." My design was to consider the three propositions, viz. revelation, the resurrection of Jesus, and the truth of the testimony of the apostles, concerning matters of fact, true, disjunctively; and also to avail myself of whatever might arise to the advantage of my argument from the relation of these facts. All this you will, as a generous and candid antagonist, be willing to allow me to do, on the supposition that the three propositions, above named, be granted. For surely no necessary deduction from granted premises can mislead, unless what is granted be false. You will furthermore see, that by granting the truth of divine revelation some degree of allowance is given to the probability, at least, of the testimony of the apostles respecting a future state. The confining of the subject of revelation, to that only which is revealed by the resurrection of Jesus, seems an unnecessary restriction, which can answer no purpose but to embarrass an argument which it would have no real force in refuting; for if the resurrection be admitted, which affords such an important revelation as grows out of the fact, it establishes the general truth of a DIVINE REVELATION from God to man. This being granted, all that stands in a necessary relation to it may with propriety be used in defence of any particular question relative to the general subject. I have already argued the truth of what the apostles say of a future state, from the facts which you grant for the sake of the argument, but you seem to misapprehend me in supposing that I mean to contend, that what the apostles have said respecting a future state, was spoken by way of *conclusion* from certain known facts. The known facts, such as the miracles of Jesus, his resurrection, and the miracles wrought by the apostles, I used as proof of the divine mission of these servants of God. This divine mission being proved, gives the ground on which I contend for the merit of their testimony concerning a future state. You should have regarded my argument, as placing the credibility of the apostles' testimony concerning a future state, on the fact of their divine mission, and not as you seem to have done, on the supposition, that they could not err in drawing conclusions, &c.

You have misunderstood me also, in supposing that by "the guess work of men," I had any allusion to the known miracles related by the apostles. What I called "mere guess work of men," was the *opinions* of the apostles on supposition they were not divinely directed, in the testimony they laid down respecting a future state. On this particular subject, all you have said in reply to my reasoning, has no just relation to my argument.

It was expected, that in relation to the foregoing subject, you would have seen the necessity of either denying the reality of those miracles, which, if true, prove the divine mission of Christ and his apostles, or of granting the authority of their testimony. But in room of finding what was so confidently expected, I find the mistakes above pointed out, which occupy considerable space, without deciding any thing, or furnishing ground on which I feel disposed to place any argument.

The next particular which demands notice is stated as follows: "Your final conclusion, after all, comes so near what I conceive to be the truth, that were you as correct in every thing as you appear to be in this, I should hardly think it expedient to pursue this controversy any further." You then quote me. "The Christian is enabled to hope for existence with God in an eternal state, and this is as much as our present welfare requires." You rejoin; "Most excellent! to this proposition I cheerfully assent. Yea, I would consent even to pruning it a little which no doubt would spoil it in your view. Instead of, 'this is as much as,' read, 'even this is more than,' and your proposition would stand exactly right." You assure me that you are in search of truth.—Truth is the only design of your heart. It would be uncharitable in me to doubt your sincerity. You sincerely and cheerfully assent to the above proposition viz. that the christian is enabled to hope for existence with God in an eternal state, and this is as much as our present welfare requires. This you say is *most* excellent. But notwithstanding you cheerfully assent to this proposition, and can pronounce it *most* excellent! Yet you think, if the proposition was so altered as to allow us no hope of a future existence with God, it would stand *exactly* right! This variation is so small, this difference is so little that you think if I were as correct in every thing as I am in this, there would be no need of pursuing this controversy any further! Let me ask dear sir, if such reasoning as this can promise a profitable reward for our labours, and a recompence for the precious time we are spending? The eye of reason, I say is candid: it sees and knows, that if a hope of existence with God hereafter is *more than* our present welfare requires, such an expectation is awfully dreadful beyond the power of language to describe. Reason knows that there is an infinite difference between no existence hereafter, and an eternal existence. And it knows, that if the former is exactly what our present welfare requires, the latter is completely repugnant to it.

With what you here contend for, I will connect a passage from your sixth number. "He knows that a

belief in revelation is not absolutely necessary to a happy life." By bringing these passages together, I am led to understand what you mean by the latter viz. that a belief in a happy future state, is not necessary to our present felicity. This is what you know! What then are you in pursuit of? You pretend to be earnestly solicitous to have your doubts respecting divine revelation removed if possible; you call on me to assist in this work as if you viewed it with deep concern.—If your doubts should be removed, if you should be altogether convinced that God has actually revealed the truth of a happy immortality, you know it would add nothing to your happiness. Furthermore you argue, following the passage quoted from your sixth number, that this belief in the revelation of a happy futurity is not necessary to produce a virtuous life. Allowing all you argue on this subject, you feel sure that a real conviction of the truth of the christian doctrine, and hope of future blessedness, would be of no advantage to your virtue or happiness! I ask again, what are you in pursuit of? You compliment me too highly in your encomium on the sermon in which I laid down that man is so constituted that he is always willing to exchange that which gives him trouble, for that which gives him comfort. And you advert to this particular sentiment of mine, in your observations on St. Paul's conversion, and very justly refuse to allow him to be an exception of the general rule. But are you not an exception of this rule? Do you not appear to be solicitous to have your doubts removed without expecting the least advantage by it? Are you not employing your time in writing voluminously on a subject which you *know* can yield you no recompence? In search after the evidences of the christian hope, you cannot say: where is that faithful, that friendly witness by which I can believe, and believing, enjoy as a precious reality that hope which is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and stedfast; which entereth into that within the veil, where our forerunner hath for us entered; which hope would enable me to sing that triumphant song; "O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." No, this hope would add nothing to your happiness, and what you want it for is not for me to imagine.

You can employ the powers of luminous reason in contemplating eternal nothing with sweet complacency. This is "exactly" as it should be! Varying from this the proposition would need to be "pruned!" Dear brother, does reason countenance all this absurdity? If it be a pleasure to contemplate non-existence does it not involve the absurdity of enjoying the expectation of the discontinuance of enjoyment?

You have expressed, with interjections, the value of truth. You seem almost disposed to arrogate to yourself a peculiar regard for this divine treasure. I can fancy I hear your secret addresses to this lovely divinity; in rapturous language, with aspect of eager affection saying; O truth, the loveliest of all attractions, thou art balsam for every wound, antidote for every poison; thou sweetenest every bitter cup; the gloomy prospect of living, in thy bright sunshine is by thee changed into the joyous expectation of soon losing sight of thee forever in the elysium of non-existence!

I will not burden you with further deductions, so repugnant to the dictates of reason; but I will cherish a hope, that you will see sufficient reason for rescinding the arguments which lead to them.[1]

[Footnote 1: Perhaps the reader may be a little astonished here, that the objector should ever have consented to publish arguments which makes him appear so much to a disadvantage. But an honest objector, who has been so blind to his own heart as not to perceive the real cause of a perfect reconciliation to the general providence of God, instead of feeling *chagrined*, will feel *grateful*, when his errors are *honestly exposed*. Believing, therefore, that others may be in the same predicament, these arguments are published to the world.]

On supposition divine revelation be true, you agree with me on the subject wherein I differ from the general opinion, that a knowledge of the gospel in this world is indispensable to the soul's felicity in the next, but you are confident that this my sentiment will be viewed by the Christian world in general, with greater abhorrence than even your own arguments, &c. And you hope I am prepared for the consequences. Reply—I have little or no concern about what opinion reputed orthodoxy may entertain of the truths which reason and revelation harmonize in supporting, nor am very careful about any preparation to meet the consequences which may result from the inseparable companions, *superstition* and *ignorance*.

In my view, the commonly received opinion, on the subject under consideration, is no more reasonable, than the supposition that the happiness and wellbeing of our children, in this world, depend on their having had a correct knowledge of their parents, of their wisdom and parental providence for them, before they were born. The wisdom and goodness of God, according to scripture and reason, are universal. The ignorance of mortals concerning them, on the one hand, makes them no less, and their knowledge, on the other makes them no greater. We must duly regard, however, the evident fact, that the enjoyment of reasonable beings, is extended by the extension of knowledge, which renders acquirements in science and divinity an object of the first magnitude.

The sentiment which you express on the above subject is what I am well persuaded can never be refuted, and it appears to me that by placing the system of divine revelation on the ground above noticed, it is rendered free from these absurdities which have rendered it exceptionable to the eye of reason and philosophy.

The gospel of everlasting life, like all real science, has always existed, but like the sciences, has been developed by degrees, and brought to the understanding of mankind as a mean of refinement, improvement, and of conformity to mortal principles, as expressed by that eminent divine St. Paul, 2 Cor. 5, 18, 19, 20. "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them: and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Now to suppose that men, who on account of their ignorance of the gospel are unreconciled to God, who has undertaken the gracious work of reconciling them to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, are on account of their unreconciliation excluded from being the objects of divine favour is a grand absurdity to say the least.

The fact is, the gospel is a dispensation of general favour, and it actually communicates many invaluable blessings to those who know nothing of its divine principles. There are millions of people in the world who are blessed in a great variety of respects by means of civil government, who know nothing of the principles of the governments by which they are protected. How many blessings are constantly falling, as it were like a shower, on our infants and youth in America, from the favourable government of our happy country, and yet these children know not the difference between an absolute monarchy and a republic.

How many millions of the human race are daily fed from the products of agriculture, who know nothing of the principles which produce those rich supplies. So there are multitudes who enjoy many blessings procured by the gospel of Christ, who have no knowledge of the sublime principles of this religion. But here again I will repeat the remark, that our rational felicity is greatly increased by an extension of our knowledge in the principles of the doctrine of Jesus, which consideration is a proper incentive to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Knowledge is food for the mind and nourishes and strengthens it as aliment does the body. Our youth learn to read the books which they are favoured with in consequence of the discovery of the art of printing, and they obtain great advantages by means of those books, while they remain entirely ignorant, many of them, of the art by which such a favour is put into their hands. But still it is healthy to the youthful mind, to receive the knowledge of this and other arts, and even to know that an art so extensively useful was not known in the world four hundred years ago. A person on being informed of the first discovery of this art, and of its being practiced, in the first place, with separate wooden types, might be disposed to doubt the ignorance of men in those times. He might think it incredible that any thing so easy, that even children can perform was unknown to the learned world in those times when learning flourished in ancient Greece and Rome. And I am of opinion that many now, who are disposed to doubt the circumstances which attended the first promulgation of the gospel, and even call themselves unbelievers, do in reality, owe even their existence and of course every blessing they enjoy to those facts of which they now doubt. Yes, sir, the light of reason, and the knowledge of moral principles, on which you feel disposed to place so much consequence, I am inclined to believe are reflections of that light which was the delightful theme of the evangelical Isaiah, chapters 6, 7, 8. "I the Lord hath called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. I am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images." Am I deceived, sir, or is it evident, that the glorious LIGHT which illuminates our moral hemisphere, and distinguishes our country from barbarism and savage ignorance, is the gospel? The name of Jesus, his doctrine, the reformation, seceding from the Church of England and persecution for conscience sake, rank as causes of the settlement of New England by our forefathers, and of the existence of the men who are carrying on this correspondence. This is mentioned with a view to direct your mind to the consideration of that course of causes and effects by which we are enabled to reason on what we call moral and physical principles. And a hope is entertained that due regard will be paid to this self-evident fact, that nothing ever took place without an adequate cause to produce it.

With this reflection, I come to notice your remarks on the subject of St. Paul's conversion; for it appears to me that you have allowed certain facts without assigning any adequate causes by which those facts came to exist. You make no attempt to deny that there was such a man as St. Paul, nor do you deny his having been educated, and religiously instructed as the scripture history concerning this man sets forth. But you assign no reason why he became a believer in Jesus Christ, you assign no reason for his becoming a preacher of the doctrine of Jesus, you assign no reason why he should so

patiently suffer for the religion, the truth of which you are now calling in question. You allow that before his conversion he persecuted unto death the "weak and defenceless disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus." But you assign no reasons why weak and defenceless men should become the disciples of Jesus. You would fain insinuate that what he relates of the particular circumstance which happened to him on his way to Damascus was a mere reverie. But you make no attempt to show how such a reverie could produce in this learned pharisee a belief that Jesus, who was crucified had actually arose from the dead, when there were not even the shadow of evidence existing to prove such an improbable fact. You are inclined to this notion of a reverie on account of some experience of your own, which your good sense and after reflection have discovered to be nothing on which dependence ought to be placed. Sir, where is the similarity of your case with that of the learned pharisee? Do you really believe you ever experienced a reverie, that would go in the least to cause you to believe in the resurrection of a man who was hanged in your sight, and who you knew was buried, and of whose resurrection you had no evidence, only a vague reverie? Do you believe you ever experienced a mere imagination which was strong enough to produce the above belief, and which could continue to influence you all your life long, lead you to forsake a most honourable connexion, and to espouse a religion which all the prejudices of your education opposed, and to labour continually for its support and to suffer every thing for its defence? No, you pretend to no such thing, therefore your case is very different from St. Paul's.

I agree with you, that the case of this apostle comes under the rule which you recollect I suggested in my sermon. He undoubtedly viewed the religion which he received in room of the one he parted with the most valuable. And to this agrees his own testimony. Phil. iii. 7, &c. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

As you promise to say more on this subject, I shall *continue* to expect an attempt to deny the conversion of such a man as St. Paul is set forth to have been, to the Christian religion, under all the circumstances which the scripture account mentions; or an attempt to show that such a conversion could *probably* take place without supposing the facts on which the religion of Christ was founded were realities; or lastly, an acknowledgment that this conversion may reasonably be allowed as evidence to us of the truth of the Christian religion.

Should you be disposed to disallow the account which the scripture gives of St. Paul, I will ask the favour of you to point out and show to my understanding where in Paley's *Horae Paulinae* fails of proving the truth of the scripture history of St. Paul.

* * * * *

What follows is designed to notice your sixth number; out of which the following subjects are selected, on which some remarks are made.

1st. You observe that "when we hear things, which to our understanding are improbable, the improbability of the facts raises a doubt in our minds; and certainly there can be no harm in suspending our judgment, nor yet in withholding our belief until we are fully satisfied." This first subject regards the degrees of evidences which are required in different cases, and the moral propriety of withholding the assent of the mind in the case of a want of evidence.

2d. You are not disposed to doubt that many of the prophets were good men; nor will you contend that they were not all such, and taught the people according to the best of their abilities—And yet you hesitate to allow the divinity of their testimony.

3d. I notice that you acknowledge that there are evidences in favour of divine revelation, which would support it, if there were nothing to counterbalance their testimony.

4th. You hardly know how to understand me where I suggest, that in disproving the religion of Jesus Christ, you disprove all religion, &c.

5th. An inquiry whether Jesus and the apostles might not be honest men, and yet their testimony in certain cases not to be relied on!

6th. You suppose that arguments equally energetic and equally conclusive might be drawn from our feelings against, as in favour of the necessity of divine revelation.

7th. In enumerating the virtues and enjoyments of one who does not even desire a future state, you mention unfeigned thankfulness for all the happiness of which he is made susceptible.

8th. You assert, that if a revelation ever was necessary, it was necessary only to reconcile man to his

present state of existence. And,

9th. You seem to fault me for supposing that in case you did not mean as I took you, on the subject of the apostles' testimony, you must mean the reverse, &c.

These nine particulars, it is true, do not comprehend every item contained in your sixth number, but I believe that a candid reply to each of them will satisfy you that a competent degree of attention has been paid to this communication.

1st. Concerning the degrees of evidence required in certain cases to carry conviction of facts to the mind; it has always been allowed by those who have vindicated the religion of Jesus, that a belief in miracles requires more evidence than a belief in ordinary events recorded in history. Having granted this they proceed to associate the evidences, which God in his divine economy has given and preserved, and conclude with grateful assurance that the evidence of the miracles of Jesus, his unspeakably glorious resurrection from the dead, together with the miracles with which the first promulgation of the gospel was effected, are abundantly sufficient to carry conviction to vastly the greatest part of candid minds.

In the mode the last sentence is concluded, I must, in justice to others, take the sentiment there expressed to myself; for I am sorry to say that christians, who have contended against infidelity have, generally, been less charitable than the genius of the religion they have, in many respects, most ably defended. I cannot find authority for denying candor to one who is unable to believe on the ground of such evidence as may satisfy my mind of a fact. I will therefore suppose that some who are candid, may, from some cause which we cannot analyze, be unable to believe the great truths of the gospel, on such evidence as is abundantly sufficient to convince others who are as scrupulous as necessary investigation requires.

It is, sir, the opinion of some very learned authors, who stand in the very first rank, for candor and erudition, that the proofs of which the gospel is susceptible are, in all respects, equal to what they could have been in any other way concerted, within the reach of human conception. This is going to a great length I confess; and yet I am strongly inclined to their opinion. I will candidly state why I am so.—1st. Taking the subject in the gross, I am convinced of the truth of the gospel of Christ. Now as I believe this gospel is not of man, but of God, I likewise believe that God in consummate wisdom has planned the evidences by which it is and will be supported in the world, until it fills the whole earth. 2d. As I believe that divine wisdom has planned, ordered and directed all the means which will finally operate as evidences in defence of the gospel, I cannot believe that the wisdom or sagacity of man could have suggested a chain of evidences which could so well have secured the cause to be supported. And 3d. I have spent much time in reflecting and studying on this momentous subject, some time in reading authors on both sides of the question, a great deal of time in reading the scriptures, and have come to this conclusion that no set of men ever lived in this world that could either have planned such a scheme as the gospel, or ever have invented such a chain of evidences for its support.

If the single miracle of the resurrection be considered, as the fact on which all other facts relating to the gospel seem to rest, it is confidently believed that no human invention could have concerted a system so well calculated to secure the fact to all future generations, as that which has been adopted by the divine economy. Had the whole of the Jewish nation with their Gentile neighbours, together with the Roman authorities, all confessed Christianity, being fully convinced of the resurrection of Jesus, and had they inscribed all the miracles recorded in the new testament on monuments which should defy the hand of time to bring them to decay, it requires but a moment's reflection to see that all this would have vastly increased the difficulty now to prove that it was not all contrived by man's invention.

But let us consider the unbelief of the Jews, the violent opposition of that ancient priesthood, its coalition with the Roman government against the gospel, the great jealousy which the acknowledged miracles of Jesus had excited, the vigilance by which he was watched by his religious enemies, the careful scrutiny employed to discover fraud in his miracles if it were possible; and then add to these considerations that the miracles of Jesus were publically performed, and of such a nature as to admit of the easiest possible detection if they had not been real: and finally to disarm unbelief at once, consider that the ministry of the gospel was set up by the apostles, on the bold declaration that God had raised the crucified Jesus from the dead! A declaration, which if it had not been true, mark well, sir, could have been as easily refuted and rendered the derision of all people as any declaration that could have been made. But I shall lose myself, and forget that you have not yet called my attention so directly to this subject, as to justify my entering largely into it.

What you have said on the subject of believing in the testimony of David, that the "Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works," also the same sentiment communicated by Jesus Christ, that God loves his enemies and that he requires of us the same exercise towards our enemies, though perfectly reasonable, as I view the subject, seems to call up the question, how it happens that

thousands of professed Christians, who believe in the miracles of Jesus, his resurrection and the miracles of the apostles, are notwithstanding hostile to this divine and glorious sentiment of the blessed Jesus! Being compelled, by the visible evidences of divine goodness, seen in the rain and sunshine, they advance so far as to acknowledge that *temporal* favours are generally distributed, but that God does really love the wicked, they utterly deny. Now while you can believe this great moral truth without a miracle, Christian people in general cannot believe it with one. You are not to suppose that I am willing to allow that you believe this sentiment without a miracle, though you would insinuate, that this is the case. My opinion is, that had it not been for the miracles recorded in the new testament, the truth of which you are disposed to call in question, you and I, if we had existed, would have had no more light on this subject than the rudest savage, or what is worse, the most superstitious and contracted Christian. If you have any ground on which you can fairly refute my opinion on this subject, I hope you will faithfully perform it; if not, it will be expected that you will express your acquiescence. Such is the power of natural prejudice which we know exists in the human mind, that without a divine revelation from God, supported by the most evident miracles, man will not extend his views of divine benevolence scarcely beyond the rivers and mountains which environ the circumscribed vicinity of his birth. Trace the power and operation of this prejudice and you find it maintaining hostility against the light of revelation itself, and it is only by slow degrees that it is brought into submission. We reason very injudiciously when we bring ourselves to believe, that by the light of reason we could know and understand all the moral truths which we have been taught by revelation; we forget that revelation has illuminated our reason and taught it how to see and understand.—Just as well might the sprightly youth refuse to acknowledge that its mother learned it to walk, and ever gave it nourishment and strength to perform the exercise, and allege that it can walk as well as she can. As well might the learned graduate refuse the grateful honours due to his instructors, and say: my reason, my understanding comprehend these sciences, of what use then are these learned professors and this college institution? But would not reason point him to the condition of those, to whom the blessings of instruction, which, through much difficulty had given him the light of science, had not extended? Would it not force the comparison on his understanding, and humble him into gratitude?

It seems impossible, sir, for reason to compare our situation with theirs, who have not been enlightened by the gospel, without kneeling, like the woman in Simon's house, at the feet of Jesus.

2d. If the prophets were not divinely inspired, will you suggest any way by which their pretensions to divine inspiration can be reconciled with their honesty? They all speak in the name of the Lord, and evidently aim at the high pretention of being spoken to, in a special manner, by God himself. Will you say: they were a set of poor deluded enthusiasts? But this would contradict your reason which can see in every page of their writings a very different character. A passage from the 1st chapter of Jeremiah is here quoted for an example. "Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, before I formed thee &c. I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child: But the Lord said unto me, say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said unto me, behold, I have put my words in thy mouth."

Here Jeremiah evidently designed to declare himself an inspired prophet of God, by which he was justified in speaking in his name. Now if all this was mere fiction, how can it be entitled to a better character than that of blasphemy?

As a specimen of this prophet's knowledge of future events we may notice his prophesy of the seventy years captivity. See chap. xxv. 11, &c. xxix. 10, &c. Compare with 2 Kings xxiv. 2 Chron. xxxvi. Ezra i. 1, and other corresponding passages.

I will ask you to consult the character of Daniel, and observe with what genuine humility he pretends to divine inspiration, chap. ii. xxx. "But as for me, the secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but that the secret might be made known, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart." If Daniel did not receive a divine revelation, it must be allowed that he was deceived, or that he meant to deceive the king. But if he were deceived, or if he meant to deceive, can you give any good account how he could tell the king's dream and the interpretation, which reached into the far distant periods of time, and which has been remarkably fulfilled in the rise and fall of the four great empires of the world, and is still fulfilling by the advances of the kingdom of Christ? I will say nothing of the prophet Isaiah, who speaks of the Messiah more than seven hundred years before he was born, as if he had been his contemporary. Nor need I speak of Moses who foretold the dealings of God with the house of Israel as if he had lived now and had written their history. But I must insist on your paying some nice attention to the prophesies of Christ concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. This prophesy is recorded very circumstantially in the 24th of Matt. Be so good, sir, as to compare this prophesy with the history written by Josephus and let candor decide whether the author of that prophesy was divinely inspired, or whether he was a poor deceived enthusiast.

If you allow that Jesus Christ was an honest man how is it possible for you to deny his being divinely inspired? He certainly pretended to foretell events; he most surely pretended to perform most astonishing miracles. Of these facts we have as much evidence as we have that there was such a man. Now, sir, if he were honest, he was divinely inspired and endued, or he was an enthusiast even to insanity. And yet in every instance, where the powers of his mind were tried, by the profoundest learning, and sharpest wit that could be brought against him, he discovered a mind as clear as light. A volume of vast extent could not exhaust the subject I am now upon, but as you have the same opportunity and means which I have to trace it, I shall insist on your treating this subject with candor and shall expect you to acknowledge that Jesus was divinely inspired, or show how he could be honest, without this divine endowment.

3d. You acknowledge, that there are evidences in favour of divine revelation, which would support it, if there were nothing to counterbalance their testimony. I shall here find some fault. Why do you allow that there are evidences in favour of divine revelation, and not state what they are? Why do you insinuate that there is something to counterbalance their testimony and not state what it is? When an antagonist finds his opponent candid enough to allow that some evidence stands on his side of the argument is it not necessary for him at the same time to be informed what it is? Does he not need to know what his opponent is willing to allow to be evidence? And does he not likewise need to know how this evidence is counterbalanced? However, as you have not favoured me with such necessary assistance, I will attempt to proceed without it. But here I must go partly on presumption and partly by guess. In the first place I will inquire what particular circumstance recorded in scripture, which, if true, would substantiate revelation; and which you may suppose there is evidence sufficient to prove, if there was nothing to counterbalance it? This I will presume is the resurrection of Jesus. Why I think you would be most likely to have this particular in your mind, is, because on this event, I believe all will agree, depend the validity of the prophecies, the truth of the testimony of Christ himself, and the authority of the apostles. I will then presume that you acknowledge that there is evidence of this wonderful fact; but at the same time I am to understand, that, in your mind there is something to counterbalance, in some degree, if not entirely, this evidence.

Having proceeded so far, I am now to guess what the evidence is that you think would support this all important fact, if it were not counterbalanced. But here I find myself in difficulty. My difficulty is in finding any kind of evidence which could prove such an event, if there were nothing to counterbalance it, that could possibly be counterbalanced. Will you say that the testimony of the disciples, that they had seen the man alive after his death would be sufficient evidence to prove the fact? Suppose twelve men of honest fame, should report, and even depose, that the last man who was publicly executed in Boston, had actually arose from the dead, and that they had ate and drank with him a number of times since he was executed. Should you suppose this sufficient evidence, if there were nothing to do it away? But what could do it away? If the people could go to the grave and find the body there, the testimony of the twelve would remain no evidence at all, and therefore could not afterwards be called evidence sufficient to support the fact if there were nothing to counterbalance it. But suppose the people cannot find the body, would it not be thought that the body might possibly have been conveyed away by design of some who might have occasion to keep it a secret? But a guard is placed to watch the grave; but a guard might be bribed. The one we have account of was bribed, according to the story; and if they could be bribed by the chief priests and rulers, why not by some body else? Finally, would the testimony of these men be sufficient to prove such an extraordinary fact even if the body could not be found? I think for myself, that various opinions would result from such evidence. Some would believe that these men had entered into some very extraordinary plot, and calculated that they should be most likely to succeed by means of persuading the people that they were favoured with a knowledge of this resurrection. Others might believe them honest men, but by some crafty contrivance imposed on. Others might believe that the spirit of this man had appeared to the twelve, but that no real resurrection had taken place. But I very much doubt whether any very stable people would consider the testimony of the twelve men sufficient to support this fact if there were nothing brought, or if nothing could be brought against it. Such a circumstance would no doubt cause a great deal of talk, the depositions and the names of the deponents would be published in the newspapers, perhaps for several weeks, but after a little time it would die away.

Finally, I cannot conceive of any evidence that could sufficiently support the fact that Jesus who was crucified, did actually rise from the dead, if nothing could be brought to counterbalance it, that could possibly admit of being counterbalanced.

The question seems to remain, and the substance of it is this. 1st. If Jesus did actually rise from the dead what kind of evidence would his disciples need in order to be satisfied of the fact? And 2d. What kind of evidence must they be able to bring to the people in order to convince them of the fact?

I will here suppose that it is not necessary to prove that the disciples of Jesus, who preached him and his resurrection all their lives after they commenced at the day of pentecost, really believed what they

preached; but the evidence by which they believed it I now inquire for. We must notice that the disciples did not expect the resurrection, they were not believers of this fact when their master was crucified. They were awfully disappointed, and not *only* disappointed but intimidated, as the account fully shows. They all forsook Jesus at his trial, and Peter for fear of being involved with him denied being his disciple.

The evidence then of his resurrection must be such as will convince those of the fact who have no expectation of the event. We will now look at the account. "And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him." This very rational account shows as plainly as the case will admit that these women had no expectation of his resurrection. I omit here what passed at the sepulchre when these women were there, for this does not relate to the disciples. The angel at the sepulchre told these women that Jesus had risen, and directed them to go and tell his disciples. "Now when Jesus was risen early, the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept." This mourning and weeping could not be the effect of the pleasing expectation of soon having their divine master with them; no, it was the natural effect of the amazing disappointment which had closed all the hopes they had entertained. "And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her," believed? no, "believed not." After that he appeared in another form to two of them as they walked, and went into the country.—And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them. "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he had risen." It seems unnecessary to quote into this communication all the instances related by the four deponents of Jesus' being seen of the eleven; his frequently being with them, eating with them, holding lengthy conversations with them, &c. Now as these disciples knew that Jesus had been crucified and buried, and a guard had been placed to guard the sepulchre, and moreover knowing for certainty that the body of Jesus was not where it had been deposited, and being favoured with his presence on a variety of occasions for forty days, the evidence to the disciples was of a character described by the author of the Acts. "To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." I believe, sir, that such evidence as Jesus is said to have given his disciples of his resurrection would be entirely sufficient to remove all doubts in their mind, however prone they were to unbelief. I am of opinion that such evidence would convince you and me of a similar fact.—Two questions are here necessary. 1st. Can we conceive how the evidence could have been less without being insufficient? And 2d. Can we conceive how it could have been stronger? I will not take up time to argue these questions, I feel satisfied on them myself. I will now ask whether we can imagine the possibility of any evidence that could counterbalance the evidence of the resurrection in the minds of the disciples? Thus we are brought to the suggestion, that any evidence which could be sufficient to prove such a fact, if no evidence appeared against it, must be such as admits of no refutation.

You will not forget, and think that I have been endeavouring to prove the resurrection of Jesus, or that the disciples even believed it; all I have been seeking for is that kind of evidence which would be necessary to prove to the disciples such a fact, and to show that such evidence cannot admit of refutation. However, you will at once see that, allowing our reasoning to be correct, and allowing the disciples did really believe the resurrection, either of which, I do not believe you will undertake to dispute, the resurrection is proved beyond all contradiction.

2d. Let us now inquire what kind of evidence was necessary for the disciples of Jesus to bring to the people, in order to convince them of this all-important fact on which the whole scheme and ministry of the gospel rested. It seems that the disciples did not believe on the testimony of others, though of their own intimate acquaintance, persons in whom they would place as much confidence as in any in the world, no doubt. Of course, they could not expect other people, who had not been the disciples of Jesus, would believe in his resurrection on their testimony. The evidence which the disciples had was sufficient for them, but their testimony would surely be much less; and any thing less would be insufficient as before stated.

We will now have recourse to the account. But first let us notice, that we are not endeavouring to prove that the disciples ever persuaded any to believe in the resurrection of Jesus; this is, as it must be, considered a fact, not disputed. The question is by what evidence did the apostles convince thousands of the people in Jerusalem and its vicinity, that Jesus who was publicly executed, was not only the true Messiah promised in the law and prophets, but that he had actually arose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Before Jesus ascended, he, after saying many other things to his disciples who were together in the city of Jerusalem, said to them; "Thus it is written, and thus it behoveth Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And

behold, I send the promise of my father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." See the same account in Acts, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." According to this account, Jesus did not direct his disciples to undertake to convince the people by their testimony, but charged them to wait for divine power. Accordingly they did wait. Now look at the account which we have, of what took place on the day of pentecost. I will not mutilate this account by quoting parts, there is no need of quoting what you have perfectly in your memory. Take particular notice of what Peter said to the people who had been accessory to the crucifixion of Jesus. He who was so intimidated as to deny Christ, now stands in the midst of the people and boldly asserts, that Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved of God among them by miracles and wonders, and signs which God did by him, among them; and that they knew this to be the case. He further tells them that they had with wicked hands crucified and slain this man who was thus approved of God. And he assured the whole house of Israel, that God had made this same Jesus whom they had crucified both Lord and Christ. He moreover boldly declared that God had raised Jesus from the dead. Now add to the testimony of Peter, the astonishing manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit, as described in the account, and you have the evidence by which about three thousand souls were convinced of the resurrection of Jesus in one day. Here let us consider; the people had been acquainted with Jesus, and had been eye witnesses of his miracles; many of them were personally acquainted with Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead. They had been, many of them, fed by his miracles and had seen his wonderful works. Now put all together and it is evident that they had sufficient reason to believe. I cannot conceive how reasonable people in the candid exercise of their judgments, could avoid believing.

Look, sir, at the account of the miraculous cure of the lame man, who lay at the gate of the temple. Notice the words used to effect it. "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." "And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they knew that it was he who sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple." Hear what Peter says to the wondering multitude on this occasion. "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the holy one and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead: whereof we are witnesses. And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, and the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." Here we have the evidence by which about five thousand men, besides women, believed—that is, owned their belief. When the high priest and others called Peter and John before them, and demanded, by what power, or by what name they had done this thing, Peter answers, filled with the Holy Spirit; "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole: be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught by you builders." Hear what these rulers say when Peter and John were sent aside. "What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it."

Such evidence as we have noticed, which the disciples were enabled to bring to the people, of the resurrection of Jesus, was sufficient to remove every reasonable doubt and to bring over to this faith, those who had been his murderers.

I will now inquire whether it is reasonable to suppose that less evidence would have effected such conviction?—And on the other hand, I will ask whether stronger proof could in the nature of things be given? And lastly, to come to our object again, does such evidence possibly admit of being counterbalanced? I understand that these questions admit of no other answers than such as go to show, that if there be any evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, sufficient to support it, if there were no evidence to counterbalance it, such evidence is not capable of being counterbalanced.—You will perceive that our reasoning must issue in the truth of the resurrection, unless we assume the extravagant notion, that the people who lived in Jerusalem and its vicinity, at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus, were not brought over to believe it.

It is hoped that no objection will be brought from the circumstance of the rejection of the gospel by the rulers of the Jews, and by the major part of that hierarchy, as long as it is perfectly evident that their opposition and unbelief were indispensably necessary for the fulfilling of the prophecies, for the carrying of conviction to the Gentiles, and for the purpose of perpetuating the necessary evidences on which we, at this day, must rest our belief of this religion.

4th. You hardly know how to understand me when I suggest, that in disproving the religion of Jesus

Christ, you disprove all religion, &c. I think I added, that there is no choosing between this religion and some other, we must have this, or none.

By the religion of Jesus Christ, I mean to comprehend all that the doctrine of the scriptures encourage us to believe in and hope for, and also all that this doctrine requires, also all that it teaches us to expect as resulting from obedience and disobedience. I am fully persuaded that you never can disprove this religion, so as to do away its effects on your own mind. Its maxims contain all the morality you know of, and all that a Deist calls natural religion, he has been taught from the revealed wisdom of God. The further you advance into the society of man, where the light of the holy scriptures has least extended, so much the more do you lose sight of the moral virtues; and so much the more do you lose sight of the simple unity and divine benevolence of God.

My meaning, sir, however, was not very extensive. It was to say, as in a familiar conversation, I might express myself as follows: Brother, if we disprove the religion of Jesus Christ, that is, if we give up our present belief, there is no other religion, that we have heard of, that can have the least claim to our belief. Judaism, Paganism, Mahomedanism, could neither of them have any claims; nor in fact could what people call Deism, or the belief in one God. If you say there is certainly demonstrated in the very nature of things an eternal unchangeable principle or law which governs all things; I will answer, I am surprised to hear a rational being, who cannot remember forty-five of our short years, and knows not that he shall live in the world another hour, talk about eternal things, use great swelling words of vanity about unchangeability, and yet deny that God has made a revelation to man! I am really of the sentiment expressed by him who is justly styled the light of the world, who said "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son revealeth him."

5th. You seem to inquire whether Jesus and his apostles might not be honest men; and yet their testimony, concerning a future state be erroneous. Answer, this case comes into the same argument as the case of the prophets, to which attention has been paid. We have no more reason to believe that Jesus and his apostles were honest men, than we have to believe that they pretended to divine inspiration, and to the power of working many very astonishing miracles. It does not appear reasonable to suppose that these servants of God, thought they could, and did heal the sick and raise the dead, when in fact they could do no such thing. Therefore, if they pretended to do such things and did them not, they were all impostors, and surely deserve no better appellation. Now if I can bring to your mind my inference, it is this. God would not endue Jesus Christ and his apostles with power to work miracles, by which the attention of the people would be drawn to them and by which they would naturally be led to place confidence in their testimony, and yet leave them in the dark concerning those things of which they speak to the people.

What you say on this subject, indicates that you did not understand me to infer the validity of the apostles' testimony concerning a future state, from any higher authority than their simple honesty unconnected with the other part of the argument, which was as plainly set forth in my former communication as you will now find it in this.

6th. You suppose that arguments equally energetic, and equally conclusive might be drawn from our feelings, against, as in favour of the necessity of divine revelation.

Though I am not of your opinion, yet I am disposed to think that desires very fervent may in some instances exercise the human heart against the knowledge of divine truth. But, sir, this is the effect of moral disease, not of a sound mind. A foul stomach will nauseate at the sight of wholesome food; distempered eyes are rendered painful by the rays of light; one whose deeds are evil loves darkness for this very reason. Now that people affected with these infirmities should be exercised with fervent desires to avoid what gives them uneasiness is surely very natural; but that a person in health and having good exercise should loathe that which is good and nourishing, that one who has sound eyes should dislike the enlivening beams of the sun, or that one whose works are wrought in God, should love darkness rather than light is not reasonable.

You are cautioned against supposing that these remarks are designed to be applied to yourself, for I bear you record that your exertions and assiduity for the attainment of true knowledge have been laudable, and worthy of imitation. But all this only proves to me that your reasoning is unnatural, and that no man would be more rejoiced to know the truth of divine revelation than yourself.

7th. That a person who does not even desire a future existence should realize the goodness of the divine Being, and feel truly grateful for all enjoyments does not stand in a clear light in my mind. I cannot conceive that it is possible that any thing could remove a desire to exist in the future, except a very strong fear that that state would be awfully miserable. To be thankful to God, and to rejoice in his goodness, and at the same time feel no desire to continue in the enjoyment of such favour is to me a complete solecism, which sufficiently refutes itself.

8th. Your assertion, that if a revelation was ever necessary, it was necessary only to reconcile man to his present state of existence, is thought to be an error of no small magnitude. If you had said that revelation was necessary only for the improvement of man in his present state it would have been more correct.

As for man's present existence, it seems he has love enough; people wish to live here, and no doubt they would wish to stay forever if they had no hope in the future. By improving our present state by a divine revelation, I wish to be understood to comprehend all that is meant by the ministry of reconciliation. This has for its object the reconciliation of man to God. But it is a soul rejoicing fact, that of the precious things brought forth by the sun of righteousness, the hope of immortality is its most precious jewel. This makes every thing valuable. Hence we may lay up our treasures where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. Here God's bright favour will never grow dim, nor will our love and gratitude ever decay. Do you see this celestial form leaning on her anchor, and while the raging waves of a restless sea dash against her, feel unmoved? Do you observe her aspect firm, and her eyes turned towards Heaven? And wouldst you wish to cast her down and wreck her on the quicksands of dismal doubt? Go, brother, to the chamber of sickness, where life's waning embers can no longer warm the dying heart, there hear from cold and quivering lips this hope expressed, I long to be with Christ, I long to be at rest. Would you blast this amaranthine flower? Would you plant in its stead the night shade of despair?

Do not, dear sir, listen too long to the wild suggestions of vain fancy and wandering imagination, under the specious pretence of searching after truth. I am apprehensive that she who persuades you that she is truth, really deserves another name. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, he also is made unto us wisdom.

Give me the light of this bright sun to see,
All other lights like met'ors are to me;
Give me that way, that pleasant path to know,
I'll walk no other path while here below.
Wouldst thou be wise? This wisdom learn to scan,
Which brings to God, the wandering heart of man.

9th and last. You misunderstand me in supposing that I meant to insinuate, that by what you *wrote* respecting the apostles' stating nothing more than what was substantially true, you must mean that they stated falsehood. I meant, if you do not believe that they stated the truth you must believe that they stated falsehood, in which case I called on you to make a short work of our argument by proving that what they stated was not true. I wonder you should not have thought of this way to understand me, because there is no way to explain your words into the meaning which you supposed I had attached to them, while what I now suggest is fairly the necessary result of what you stated.

On this subject I am disposed to say a little more. If we find ourselves in serious doubts respecting any important particular of our religion, and we wish to have the matter cleared up to our satisfaction, why should we spend much time and write many sheets, with no other apparent object, than to keep away from the subject which labours in our minds? If you were under the necessity of bringing a tree to the ground, and of removing it from the forest, would you ascend the tree and begin your work on the extreme twigs, or would you cut the trunk off near the roots, when the whole mass would come down together?

You will apprehend my meaning. The fact is, if the Christian religion is ever overthrown, it must be done, not by proving that professors of it have held errors and have been superstitious, and have ever practised wickedness, using the name of Christ for a cloak, &c. but by proving the testimony, of the new testament false. Cut the trunk of the tree off at this place and the work is done.

But if it were possible, in the nature of things for the testimony borne in the new testament to be proved false, can you persuade yourself to believe that it would not have been done? If a book containing the grossest falsehood, the most palpable frauds, pretensions the very easiest to be detected of any that can be imagined, could be got up and published, and be copied by many hands, and be translated into different languages on purpose to overthrow the popular religion of all countries where the book is sent or carried, and if in spite of truth, and all the learning of a learned age, if in spite of all sorts of superstition combined with civil government, if in spite of reason, argument, persuasion, the tender love and compassion of parents, interest, honour, ease, peace and quiet; if in the face of the most cruel sufferings and most awful deaths, this book, with all its abominable lies, and most palpable frauds could succeed, its doctrines run and be glorified; if ancient superstitions, than which nothing can have a more despotic sway over the human heart, if the priests of long venerated idols with thousands of their votaries were humbled before this testimony, what is there now on which we can rely for success against it?

How beautiful are reason and candor. Dr. Gamaliel gives us a handsome specimen. "Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves, what ye intend to do as touching these men.—For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody: to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to naught. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. And now, I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

Let us remark, 1st. You will notice that this passage ranks with hundreds of others which to the understanding of sound judgment wears every feature of an honest and true statement of facts. I will take it on myself to say that it does not appear reasonable that men who were fabricating a falsehood, would ever have thought of such a method as this to give it currency. 2d. You will naturally observe that this learned doctor of the law was himself persuaded of the truth of the apostles' testimony, and though he was not willing to make so great a sacrifice as he must if he professed Jesus openly, he was willing to espouse the cause so far as his learning and influence would go, without rendering himself odious to his friends.

3d. It is pretty evident, that whatever Theudas made a handle of in order to obtain disciples, Judas of Galilee had that very unpopular tax (I do not consult any authority as it is immaterial, but only follow a probable suggestion) which was collected about the time of the birth of Jesus, or some other, by which he no doubt, strove to disaffect the Jews against the Roman government, which they very naturally were opposed to. But Judas did not succeed.

4th. Jesus never tried to persuade the people against the civil authorities, nor did he ever promise his disciples any worldly benefits, nor try to allure the people after him by holding out, as inducements, any thing that the carnal passions of men are in love with; and yet he succeeded though he lost his life. 5th. Dr. Gamaliel was of opinion that if the gospel were not of God, it would come to naught, but it did not, nor is there the least probability it ever will.

Yours, &c.

H. BALLOU.

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EXTRACTS No. VII.

[In this number the objector gives the whole ground of his objections, and the reasons for his doubts: *which he states as follows, viz.*

"1. Mankind, in all ages of the world, have been, and still are prone to superstition.

"2. It cannot be denied, but that a part of mankind at least, have believed, and still are believing in miracles and revelation, which are spurious.

"3. The facts on which religion is predicated are unlike every thing of which we have any positive knowledge."

Under the first article, the objector appealed to the known superstitions of the world: not only of the Pagan; but of the Jewish, Mahometan, and Christian world. He took a view of the present state of Asia, spake of the "voluntary sacrifices of human life to the great image at Huger-naught!" and of women "voluntarily climbing the funeral pile to be burned with their deceased husbands!" He took a view of the *Inquisition* in Old Spain; and finally of the various superstitious notions and practices among the different sects of christians in our own country.

Under the second article, he discarded largely on the pretension of Mahomet, and of their great influence and extent; and also of the particular tone given to the Christian religion by Constantine, who, holding the reigns of government, had superior means in extending his influence over the Christian world. Having made these remarks, the objector proceeds:]

"If therefore, he had happened only to have favoured the opinions of the Gnostics, we might have expected, and probably it would have been the fact, that the learned clergy of the present day would have held that Jesus was not a man in reality, but only a man in appearance; that he assumed a body that he could put on or throw off at pleasure; and that he died and was raised again *in appearance only*. Or otherwise, if he had been disposed to come down to the simplicity and understanding of the common people, then indeed Christ might still have been considered as the Jews' expected Messiah; yet we should have considered him a man, and nothing more than a man; though 'a man approved of God;'—'a

man who hath told us the truth;—even 'Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph;' as it seems was the opinion of Peter, John and Philip. But the former opinion had been too long treated as heresy by all the bishops to be imbibed by Constantine, while the bishops themselves, on the other hand, had been too long contaminated with the Platonic philosophy to descend to the simplicity of the latter; therefore we have a religion, compounded, partly of the simplicity of the truth, and partly of Platonism. Constantine, however, being supported by a great majority of all the bishops, in a great measure effected his purpose; though not fully to his expectation: for it seems he did not expect that any one would presume to oppose the decisions of this grand council, which he had summoned and convened at his own expense, or at the expense of the empire, but in this he was mistaken; for many, even after this, would take the liberty not only to think for themselves, but also to speak their own thoughts.

"One circumstance more I cannot avoid mentioning in this place, viz, the conversion of Constantine from heathenism to the Christian faith. Great men, if turned about at all, must be turned about by great means! But whatever might have been thought of Constantine's conversion by the people of that day, the account given of it does not argue any thing very forcibly in my mind, in favour of the truth of divine revelation. Great men, however, are not always free from superstition; and they are just as likely to be deceived respecting things which are above their comprehension as others. This is the most charitable way in which I can reconcile the following account which, as Eusebius, the contemporary and historian of Constantine, says, was stated under the solemnity of an oath. For a full account of this extraordinary story. See the 2d vol. of Dr. Priestley's Church History, per. 7, sec. 9. I shall not attempt to quote it in full, nor is it necessary, and what I do quote is from memory only, as I write abroad, my books not being with me.

"Reflecting on the ill success of his predecessors in the numerous wars in which they had been engaged, when their priests and oracles had ever promised them success, and also considering the better success of his father, Constantine concluded from these circumstances that his father prayed to, and was assisted by a different god! When he prayed, therefore, he always prayed to the God of his father. And being thus praying one evening, towards the going down of the sun, with his face toward the same, he saw the appearance of a *cross* in the sun, with these words over it in Greek, [Greek: tetra nika] *by this conquer*. Not knowing, (or else pretending not to know) what this sign should mean, he called together some of the christian priests for an explanation; who explained it as might naturally have been supposed they would, that it was a representation of the cross, on which Christ was crucified, and that there could be no doubt but that he had now interposed as God, in behalf of the christians, to deliver them from their enemies, and of course from further persecution! I do not pretend to be any thing more than *substantially* correct in the above account (by which you will further see how I use the word *substantially*, about which we have had some dispute) i. e. I may, yea undoubtedly, have differed, as to words, yet I know I am correct in the most material part, and of the use which Constantine made of this supposed miraculous, or supernatural appearance. He said also, the soldiers saw it as well as himself! Now, if we give full credit to this account, what must we think of Christianity? The meek and lowly Jesus, who was led 'like a lamb to the slaughter,' without the least resistance, and who had suffered thousands to follow him in the same way, now, by a miraculous interposition, arms a man with carnal weapons, and, Mahometan like, authorizes him to vindicate his cause, and avenge his wrongs, by shedding the blood of his enemies! Or, if we do not credit this account, what must we think of Constantine? and also of Christianity so far as it can be traced to, and made to depend on his influence? That candor and charity, however, which I ever wish to maintain, will oblige me in this, as in all other cases of a similar nature, to take the middle course. I shall therefore suppose that there was some natural appearance, perhaps a parhelion, the cause of which Constantine did not fully understand, and, from the appearance in the sky around it, his fancy, aided by superstition, painted to his imagination the supposed cross, as also the Greek words, which being pointed out to the soldiers they might easily imagine the same, or, if they did not, would not like to oppose the opinion of their general. Thus circumstanced, whether he really believed it to be any thing supernatural or not, Constantine was disposed to make the most of it he could, by turning it to the best possible account.[2]"

[Footnote 2: "Upon the whole," says Dr. Priestly, (vol. 2, p. 96) "it appears to me most probable, that Constantine and his friends saw a natural parhelion, and that all the other circumstances were either imagined, or invented; and that the story has lost nothing in passing through the hands of Eusebius." Constantine also states (which I forgot to mention above) that "Christ appeared to him in a dream, the night following, with the very same sign which he had seen in the heavens, ordering him to make a military standard like it, and assuring him that it would be his security in battles." "By this note it will be perceived that I have compared what I have written with the part of the history from whence it was taken, and that I find nothing in it materially erroneous."]

"It appears, however, after all, that Constantine was a man of great moderation, and on the whole, a very good man: yet, that he was not wholly clear from superstition is very evident from the following circumstance. Notwithstanding his extraordinary, and what was supposed by all, miraculous

conversion, together with his great pretensions; and all that he had done for christianity, yet he neglected his own *baptism* till he found he was very nigh his end; when he dressed himself in white, and the bed on which he lay, also all in white, in which dress he was baptised and partook of the *sacrament!* and thus he continued in *white* till he died. This was undoubtedly from a mistaken notion, that there was something really purifying in those outward ceremonies, and also from the doctrine of the Navatians, a certain sect, whose opinions it was supposed he favoured, though not very openly, i.e. if a person committed sin after having been thus purified he could not die in union with the church.

"You may perhaps object here and say, all this is to no purpose, as christianity was well established before; and had existed for nearly three centuries, and increased too, notwithstanding the many most bitter and cruel persecutions. Therefore what you say respecting Constantine only proves that christianity has been corrupted, but it is no objection against its truth. Very good. If the facts above stated are admitted, let them prove what they will, I am not the author of those facts, nor accountable for what is proved by them. The conversion of Constantine, however, if correct, bears some analogy to the conversion of St. Paul: hence, the supposition that one is not correct, brings a little doubt over the mind respecting the truth of the other: for both being by means which were supernatural; if both are supported on equal testimony, why should they not both share the same fate in our minds? Both were equally possible; it is the want of probability, therefore, arising from the want of equal evidence in its favour, which leads us to reject the truth of the circumstances attending the conversion of Constantine, rather than those attending the conversion of St. Paul. The conversion of Constantine also, if genuine, seems to have been designed for a very different object, and was attended with a very different effect. This would incline me to believe in the validity of that of the apostle's, rather than that of the emperor. Nevertheless, as it respects the facts; he who caused a light at mid-day, above the brightness of the sun, might as easily have painted the sign of the cross on his disk; and he who spake to Saul from Heaven, with an audible voice, in the Hebrew tongue, might as easily have painted letters and words in Greek, so that they might be distinctly read in the firmament!

"Leaving all ancient miracles and revelation, I will come down to those of our own times, and in our own country.—Strange to tell, there is a sect of people now among us, who sprang up less than half a century ago, whose religion is professedly founded on miracles and revelation. On miracles wrought by the first founders of the sect, as by Christ and his apostles, and on a revelation also made directly to them, and through them to the believers, as by the inspired writers of the new testament. They appear to be something similar in sentiment, as it respects the person of Christ, to the ancient Arians; with this difference only, they conceived that as Christ made his first appearance in Jesus, the son of a *carpenter*, so he has made his second appearance in Ann, the daughter of a *blacksmith*, whom they call *mother*; and they consider their church the *New Jerusalem*, that holy city which was to come down from God out of Heaven.

In the year 1808, about the same time after their first rise as it was after the days of Jesus to the writing of the new testament, they published a history of their sect, in a work entitled '*Christ's second appearance,*' or the *New Jerusalem Church*, setting forth their rise, progress and present state; together with their principles, customs and mode of worship. This work contains an account of their mother *Ann*, and the first elders; and particularly an account of the miracles said to have been wrought by them. If my memory serves me, (as the book is not by me) there is an account of about *forty* miracles, all of which are well attested, and though they acknowledge that most of them are inferior to those wrought by Jesus and his apostles, yet they contend that they are no more inferior to those than those are to the miracles wrought by Moses. They contend that for the plagues in Egypt, the dividing the red sea, bringing water out of the rock, feeding Israel forty years in the wilderness with bread from heaven, and that there should always fall a double portion on the sixth day, but none on the seventh, that that which fell on the sixth day, should keep two days, but on all other days it would keep but one, and that afterward, some of the same bread or manna was laid up in the ark of the covenant which kept for ages, as a memorial; also the dividing the waters of the river Jordan, and the fall of the walls of Jericho; yea most or all of these, according to reason or human appearance, are as much greater than the miracles wrought by Jesus and his apostles, as those are greater than those wrought by Ann and her elders! It is true, they did not pretend to raise the dead, but either these accounts are all fabrications and lies, or else they had among them the gift of healing, and that too miraculously. A woman who had fell with her horse, by the falling of a bridge, and had broken several of her ribs, besides being otherwise very much bruised, was cured in one evening, so that she joined in the dance! A boy who had cut his foot so that a person might have laid his finger into the wound, which bled very profusely, was cured in a few hours so that nothing was to be seen of the wound excepting a white streak, about the bigness of a common thread! and many others of a like kind, too numerous to be mentioned in this place.

"You will readily perceive that I allude to the *Shakers*; a people who are enjoying privileges among us which no other people enjoy, except the Friends, called also *Quakers*: and who are debarred from no

privileges excepting those from which they either religiously or *superstitiously* debar themselves. Thus people, in consequence of their religion, have entirely changed their manners, customs, and modes of worship. They have also endured considerable persecution; and that they have not suffered martyrdom in defence of their religion, is no fault of theirs. There can be no doubt but that there has been fanaticism enough on their part to have done it, if there had been only bigotry and cruelty enough in the people, at that time, to have put it in execution. Let the same spirit reign among the people for a short time, which reigned in Boston when the *Quakers* were put to death for their religion, and the *Shakers* also would be able to boast of their martyrs in defence of the truth of their particular sect, and of course of the miracles and revelation on which it is said to have been founded.

"And here I wish to remark a little on *martyrdom*, seeing it is often brought in defence of the truth of divine revelation. I am aware that great stress has been laid upon this, and it will still be considered as one of its main pillars. I apprehend, however, that more stress has been laid upon martyrdom than what it will justly bear. If this is a test of the truth of religion, there is scarcely any religion but what may be proved true. Only make death honourable, of any kind whatever, in the eyes of the people, and there are always enough who are ready and willing to die for the sake of the honour which will be in consequence attached to their names. But only let any particular kind of death be considered, in the eyes of the people, *meritorious*, and the sure and certain road to *endless bliss*, and there will not only be enough found willing to undergo this death, if they can find any to inflict it upon them, but they will absolutely court it! Instead therefore of having my faith strengthened by reading the book of martyrs, as I thought I had some reason to expect, it has produced a quite contrary effect. Notwithstanding these accounts were taken down by the friends of the martyrs, and by them have been handed down to us, who, as we may well suppose, were rather prejudiced in their favour, yet nevertheless, it is impossible to disguise the spirit and motives with which many of those infatuated people eagerly sought and met death.

"In all those accounts it is but too clearly discovered, what has been too often the fact, that the most bitterly persecuted would have become the most violent persecutors, if there had been only a chance for them so to have done, and if there had been, in their view, an equal occasion. The persecutors of people for their religion have always considered the persecuted, either heretics or infidels; who if persecuted by heathens, unless they could be brought to sacrifice to their heathen gods, or if by christians, unless they could be brought to acknowledge the particular faith embraced by the *orthodoxy* of the day, were considered as mere nuisances or pests to society; and therefore for the public good, it was thought necessary to take them out of the world! While on the other hand, the persecuted have always considered that, if they suffered death in defence of their religion, they were certain of being raised to great honour and dignity in another world; a privilege which they undoubtedly believed their persecutors would never enjoy! And, whatever was the opinion of Christ and his apostles on this subject, it cannot be denied but that the idea very soon become prevalent among their followers that the distinction between them and a wicked world, particularly their persecutors, would be eternal! Under these circumstances, I do not wonder at all that men have been found willing to die for their religion; yea, and even to court death by all the means of which their own consciences would approve!

"But, you may say, all this does not account for the death of the first martyrs. Very true. I admit that it does not. But it shews that, only let the work be begun, from any cause whatever, there is no difficulty in its being continued.

"Suppose then, if you please, that the first martyrs were killed by a *mob*, a mere *rabble*, without any legal process, or even form of *trial*; as, from which appears by the account, was the case with the death of *Stephen*, the first christian martyr; and, according to tradition, most of the other apostles: (and it may be remarked here, it is only by tradition that we have any account of the death of the apostles; as all authentic documents on the subject, if there ever were any, are lost:) I say, let such a circumstance as the death of Stephen take place in any country, and in any age of the world; but more especially in that age and country in which he lived; and then let the same honour, and the same supposed consequences be attached to such a death, as undoubtedly were attached to the death of Stephen; and there can be no doubt but that others would be willing to follow the example.

"Only let the blood once begin to flow, no matter how, and then only attach eternal consequences to it, and hold out inducements of an eternal nature, and persuade men to believe them (which is not so difficult a thing as some may imagine) and you will never want for victims, so long as you can find a zeal sufficiently blind and *mad*; as to continue the slaughter. In this way, I conceive martyrdom, of every species and kind, may be rationally accounted for.

"But it may be said all this does not disprove the miracles and revelation on which the christian religion is founded.

"I acknowledge it does not; neither do I expect to disprove them. I admit that revelation, and of

course the christian religion may possibly be founded in truth, notwithstanding the truth of all that I have as yet urged, or shall urge against it. But I call on you, sir, to disprove the miracles and revelation which I have mentioned, of a more modern date, or else acknowledge their truth. If you acknowledge the truth of those miracles, I shall expect you will conform to the religion predicated upon them; and of course forsake your bosom companion (which I presume would be a much greater cross than ever you have yet taken up,) and also your darling offspring (or else take them with you) and go and live with the *Shakers!!!* But if you prove them false, it will only be that people may become so infatuated as to believe in miracles which are spurious.

"For notwithstanding the smallness of the numbers of this people, which by the way, are considerable; and notwithstanding the contemptible view in which they have been, and still are held by the world; yet, you may find it more difficult to prove the falsity of their pretended miracles than at present you are aware; for they are very well attested; and some of the witnesses are still living, or were so when their testimony was first published; as also, if I recollect right, some of the persons on whom the miracles were said to have been wrought; who, no doubt, would still testify to the same things. If they testify falsely, who can help it?—Although thousands may *believe* to the contrary; many of whom being too in situations, probably to have known these things, if true; yet I believe it would be difficult, and very difficult indeed, to find any who could absolutely say that those things did not take place.

"And if there is a people now existing among us, in different parts of the country, and in different, but large extensive families, whose manners, customs, and worship are all very different from ours, and who believe in miracles on which their religion is said to have been founded; and if those miracles, although not founded in truth, cannot now be proved false, notwithstanding they are said to have taken place in our own country, and ever since we were born, I would ask, ought any one to be censured for not giving full credit to miracles said to have been wrought, all of them nearly two, and most of them above three thousand years ago; and among a people too, of which we know but very little? I say, ought any one to be censured for doing this, although he should not be able to prove any of those miracles false?

"I conclude I shall not be censured for not believing in the miracles said to have been wrought by the Shakers; but let the government undertake to annihilate that blind and superstitious class of people: let them increase their numbers by persecution, which, like the effects of all other persecutions, undoubtedly they would; let them, in the course of two or three centuries, get the reins of government into their own hands;[3] let them then follow the example of Constantine in demolishing the temples of the heathen gods; let them demolish every steepled meeting-house, and introduce an entire new order of things; let them also remake their scriptures, change in some degree their mode of worship and manner of living, and fix every thing to the policy of the state; let the old opposition be entirely extinguished, and new sects spring up among themselves; let this be the order of things for a number of centuries, and then let a man call in question the truth of Shaker miracles or Shaker revelation, and he must do it as his peril! It would undoubtedly cost him his life!

[Footnote 3: Were it not for other causes besides that of Christianity, I should think this full as likely as it was that Christianity should ever get the reins of government, judging from what Christianity was when it had existed no longer than the Shakers.]

"I might also mention here another person now living in the western part of the state of New-York, who also makes pretensions to be Christ in his second coming, and in imitation of him has chosen *twelve* as immediate apostles, and who has a considerable number of followers. But as this person is still living, and it is uncertain whether the sect will take much root, I choose to pass it over in silence.

"I shall only call your attention to one circumstance more, and then dismiss my second proposition.

"You very well recollect, I presume, the account given by Mrs. A—, of W—, N. H. in which she affirms that she saw and conversed with her husband, Mr. John A—, for about an hour and a half, who appeared to her some considerable time, I believe about three months, after he had been dead! This is no fiction. Mrs. A— is still living, and still affirms to the truth of what she has testified; which account you know was published by two respectable witnesses who took it down, for that purpose, from her lips.

"It is true, there has been but very little said in the world respecting this matter, and I presume, for this plain and obvious reason; the account did not correspond with the views of what is termed *orthodoxy* in Christianity. If it had, i. e. if he had brought as much tidings concerning the supposed *hell* in another world, as he did respecting the supposed *heaven*, the account would have been published in every magazine, in every religious tract, and in every periodical work throughout the globe! Why not so, as well as many accounts which were similar in other respects? But as this account did not favour

such views, it is left to die in oblivion.

"As the particulars of this account, however, make nothing either in favour or against my present purpose, I shall not occupy time and room to relate it. Suffice it only to say, if there were no mistake or deception in the matter, this account can be nothing short of a revelation from God; as much so as any revelation which has ever been made from God to man.

"For no one can believe that Mr. A. could appear to his wife, after he was dead, unless God sent him; and if God sent him, no one can doubt the truth of his testimony. No one can well conceive of any motive Mrs. A. could have in giving this account, unless she fully believed it. Her daughter also was able to corroborate the account in some degree, by saying that she heard her mother conversing in the bedroom, but heard no other voice; and she interrogated her on the subject when she came out, by asking with whom she had been talking, &c. But surprised on being informed that it was with her father, and supposing, as she naturally would, that her mother had been talking in her sleep, she requested her to say nothing about what she had either seen or heard, saying, that no one would believe her if she did. But Mrs. A. was able to convince her daughter that she had not been asleep, by telling her of persons who had gone by her window during the time; one man in a soldier's dress, and another driving a yoke of oxen. I state these things from memory only, for I have not seen the account since soon after it was published, or at least within three or four years, that I now recollect; yet I believe I could state the whole of it nearly verbatim as it was published. Now I do not believe that Mrs. A. ever designed to state, or that she now has the least idea that she has stated any thing incorrect on this subject. And yet after all, I doubt of its reality!

"Such is my incredulity; and I see no way to avoid it. If it be a fault in me, may God forgive it; though I am wholly unconscious of it's being one.

"When one of two things presented to the mind must be true, and the truth of one absolutely excludes the truth of the other, a rational man will always believe that which to his own understanding is the most probable. Concerning therefore the account given by Mrs. A. it stands, in my mind thus: either it is all a reality, i. e. that her husband did absolutely appear to her; that he did give her the account which she has stated; and that that account is in fact true; or else, it was nothing more than the power of imagination, which a certain train of ideas and reflections had produced in her mind, which, like a kind of reverie, seemed to her like a reality. And although I should not have made the same conclusion once, yet from my present knowledge of human nature, together with my own experience, I do not hesitate to reject the former idea, and believe the latter. If in judging thus, I do injustice either to Mrs. A. or to the truth of God, I can only ask forgiveness of a wrong, which, in truth, is by no means intended. But in justice to my own understanding I could not state differently, if I knew this would be the last sentence I should ever write.

"Hence after making proper deduction for all that can be accounted for in this way, laying out of the question at the same time all that we may justly suppose were the mere glosses of the historian, or the lubricious figures of the poet, which are very peculiar to the ancient style of writing; after making due allowances also for interpolations, or what in more modern times have been considered *pious frauds!* and after rejecting every thing (if any such there be) which savors of gross imposition! if there be any thing left to support the truth of divine revelation, then it may rationally be believed.

"3. The facts on which revelation is predicated are unlike every thing of which we have any positive knowledge.

"Of the truth of this proposition you must be sensible; yea, unless the revelation had been made directly to ourselves, it is impossible that it should be otherwise than true. Neither of us have ever seen any thing miraculous! The ancients, however, were carried away with this *supposition*; the same as the moderns have been with the idea of witches, wizards, ghosts, apparitions, &c. and many things which once would have been considered *ominous*, are now rationally accounted for. In this way, things once supposed to be *miraculous* also, may have lost their supposed divine qualities.

"This much, however, I believe, and of this much I have no doubt, that Paul and the other apostles were convinced of the truth and the salutary effects of the moral precepts which had been taught and practised by Christ; and they were willing to preach and enforce them by all the means in their power, even at the risk of their lives. Believing this, and practising accordingly, constituted them wise and good men; and happy would it have been for the Christian world if they had always followed in their steps, without ever undertaking to dictate to others, either modes or forms of worship, or to use coercive means to compel men to the faith.

"That the apostles also believed in the resurrection, and also in eternal life, I have no doubt; this sentiment, however, was neither new nor peculiar to them, but had been held long before, not only by the pharisees, among the Jews, but by some of the Grecian philosophers; and the truth of it I am not at

all disposed to dispute; yet nevertheless, whether the evidences on which it was founded were not originally mere *visionary*, like the appearance of Mr A. before mentioned, is the subject under consideration.

"There may be, and undoubtedly are principles in nature which are not yet understood by any; and many more which are understood only by a few. The operations of these principles would undoubtedly, even at the present day, appear miraculous to thousands; and must appear very extraordinary to every one until they are understood. But this I conclude is not what is meant by miracles. Respecting miracles, I have only to ask myself this question, viz.—Which is the most likely to be true; either that men should have been honestly deceived, in the first instance, or otherwise facts should have been so misrepresented, that fabrication should have been honestly believed for truth; or else, that things so contrary to every principle of which I know in nature, should have taken place? Let reason only dictate the answer.

"Another source of evidence in support of divine revelation is prophecy. And here, notwithstanding I think it very probable that much importance has been attached to many writings, under the idea of their being prophetic, which are nothing more than the poetic effusions of a fruitful imagination; yet I have long been of opinion that there have been, and perhaps still are men in the world who are endowed, by nature, with gifts and faculties differing from men in general; and particularly, say if you please, with a *spirit of prophecy*, which, however, I must consider nothing less nor more than a *second* or *mental sight*. By this sense, or faculty of seeing, they are enabled to bring events which are yet future, as well as those otherwise out of sight, present to their minds; and thus they can behold them with their mental eye, as clearly as we behold objects at a distance.

"This, you may say, is visionary indeed. And you may wonder how I can doubt of the truth of miracles, if I can believe in such a chimerical idea as this!

"But stop, my dear sir, you believe in such a power some where or other; for without it there could be no such thing as prophecy, and if such a power exist, even in the universe, why may it not exist in man? For myself, I cannot account for the spirit of prophecy in man, (and it must be in man, or else men could not be prophets) in a more rational way. I should not be disposed, however, to consider such a power, sense, faculty, or by what other name it might be called, any more supernatural than the organs of sight and hearing. If the natural eye is so formed that objects may be painted on it, simply by the action of vision, to the immense distance of the fixed stars, so that we are enabled to behold them, why may not the mental eye be so constituted as to bring future events present to the mind with equal certainty?

"If such a power, however, were once known to exist, it would be likely to be counterfeited; and hence we may suppose, arose that horde of impostors, by the name of soothsayers, sorcerers, necromancers, magicians, &c.

"But even where this power exists, if it be a natural power, it must have its limits, and some may have it to a greater degree than others, and also some may make a good use of it, and others bad.

"Accounting for prophecy in this way, you will readily perceive that it is no certain evidence of a future state; for although the time may come when all creatures in all the vast dominions of God may be made happy in the enjoyment of his blessings, yet it does not necessarily follow that you and I shall *exist* at that time! i.e. in conscious identity!

"If I am asked why I wish to explain every thing upon natural principles, without admitting the immediate agency of the Deity, my only answer is, because to my understanding it is more rational, and of course more likely to be true.

"That men could divine, or foretell future events, or declare present things which are beyond their sight by intuition, all of which seems to be embraced in the word *prophecy*, is an idea which has existed perhaps from time immemorial; and however unaccountable it may seem, yet, to a certain degree, at least, we are obliged to admit the fact; but whether, after all, this is any thing more than the effect of that kind of foresight or ratiocination, which all men (idiots excepted) have to a greater or less degree, but some much greater than others, is still a question. But should I be obliged to admit the truth of prophecy, in the sense in which it is generally understood, I should account for it in the way you have seen.

"I do not perceive, at present, how a revelation could be made to the understanding of any man only through the medium of the operations of nature. Unless it were made to some of his outward senses, how could he know whether it was any thing more than a chimera of his own brain? If there were any faculty in his mind by which he could view these things over and over again, (the same as we look at the heavenly bodies) and did he always behold them in the same light, then he would feel safe in

declaring that such things did exist; and unless the prophets had some such criterion by which they could determine on the truth of their predictions. I do not see how that even *they*, and much less *we*, should feel safe in placing any real confidence in them.

"The prophecies of our Saviour, however, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, are more clear and striking than any thing else we have of the kind; and if it were certain that these were written before the event took place, it would be a very strong proof of something more than what any one can suppose could have been the result of human foresight. There must, at least, on such a supposition, have been a faculty of seeing which we do not possess. These predictions, however, if made by Jesus, must have been made in the hearing of John, as well as Matthew; and of course, he must have known them with more certainty than Mark or Luke; who, in consequence of not being personally acquainted with Jesus, could have known them only from hear say; and as it is pretty generally agreed, that John wrote his gospel more than twenty years after the event took place, it is very remarkable that he should be entirely silent on this subject! John, as we must suppose, knowing of this prediction; knowing also that it had been recorded by all three of the other Evangelists, (though Luke is not very particular on the subject) and knowing also that they had all written before the event took place; and he living to see the whole verified, and then wrote his gospel afterwards, how natural it would have been for him, first to have recorded this prediction, at least, in substance, and then to have mentioned its fulfillment, as a confirmation of the prophecy! But not a word on the subject.

"This, however, is no evidence that Jesus did not deliver those predictions, and that they were not written by Matthew and Mark, and also hinted at by Luke before the events took place; yet still it raises a doubt and a query in the mind whether these are not interpolations, or else the books wholly written after the events took place, and of course these predictions put into the mouth of Jesus by the historian. When the copies were few in number, and those kept by the Christians only, interpolations might have been made without much danger of detection. The heretics were early accused of interpolating, altering, and forging the scriptures; and although they, i. e. the majority of the believers, as it is likely would be very careful to detect any thing which contradicted their views in point of doctrine, yet whether they would be equally careful respecting those interpolations which favoured the Christian faith is a question worthy of consideration.

"In Calmet's dictionary of the bible, under the word gospel, we have an account of between thirty and forty gospels, of which he gives their names, but none of which are now extant. Neither is there any thing, which I now recollect, of any disputes about the validity of the writing of the apostles, except what is merely traditional, until about the year 180, when Celsus undertook to disprove the whole. I may be incorrect, in this, however, if I am, you will correct me: for excepting barely the bible, as I have informed you before, I have no books by me on this subject.

"Another circumstance must be taken into consideration, and which bears great weight in my mind. That is, the great and astonishing difference there has been made in the state and condition of mankind by the discovery or invention of the art of printing; an art for which we cannot be too thankful, nor too highly appreciate its benefits. For it would be very difficult now to realize the situation of mankind previous to the invention of this art.

"Writing, it is true, as we may rationally suppose, was carried to a greater state of perfection at that time, than it is at present; for it was of more use, yet its use must have been very limited, and it is reasonable to suppose that a very great proportion of the common people could neither read nor write. For it could be of but little use to them, as they had nothing to read, for books of all descriptions, and upon all subjects, must have been, comparatively, very few. This, as you would readily perceive, would have a tendency to cause the common people to place great confidence in any thing that was written. Hence, generally speaking, it was sufficient barely to say, concerning any matter, [Greek: gegraptai], *it is written* to gain full belief.

"It is with all ancient sects, as it is with ancient nations and kingdoms; their history may be traced back until we find it veiled in mystery, and mingled with fable. We are not to suppose, however, that these things were done at the time, with an intent to deceive; but after the events, whatever they were, had passed away, and the imagination had been long in operation respecting the traditions concerning them, they are dressed up with all the appearance of real history; and might so be construed and believed, were it not for improbability. The probability is, that when such histories were first written, they deceived no one, or at least, no one thought it worth while to undertake to detect them, because, not knowing what effect they would have, they considered their errors were of no material consequence. The Shaker Book has been published nine years; and although I conclude that very few, if any, except the Shakers themselves, believe the miracles therein recorded; yet no one that I know of has thought it expedient to undertake to refute them. And unless the sect should grow to more consequence than it is at present, I presume that no one will give himself much trouble on the subject. If it should be thought necessary, however, to refute these pretended miracles, in order to prevent

those in scripture from growing into disrepute, then it will alter the case.

"I am perfectly reconciled and willing, however, that whatever is truth should be true; and have not the least inclination, even if it were in my power, to alter one truth respecting eternity. This is the state of my mind exactly; a state into which it has been growing, gradually, for many years; and, strange as it may seem to you, I can assure you in the fear of that God before whom I stand or fall, and by whom I have been supported hitherto, it is the most happy state of mind in which mortals can be placed! "Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax in homines benevolentia." Luke ii. 14, Beza.

"Whatever may be your opinion concerning miracles, I believe it must be admitted that there was no more of a miracle in the production of man, originally, than there was in the production of other animals; and as nature has not provided man with clothing for the body, which it does for other animals, especially those which inhabit cold climates, it is evident that man was originally produced under the torrid zone; and that he could not have lived in any other part of the world, had it not been for art. What alteration the discovery of the arts has made in the original constitution of man, it would be difficult now to determine.

"What man must have been previous to the discovery and use of *fire*, is difficult now to conceive. We can trace man down, however, from grade to grade, until we are at a loss to determine whether such a race of beings belongs to the human species.

"I have long desired, and should be glad if some one of sufficient learning and skill would point out to me the line of demonstration between the human and brutal creation; and say where the human ends, and where the brutal begins!

"Naturalists take care to say but little on this subject, and I believe the task would be more difficult than what people in general imagine.

"Come then, ye learn'd, ye great and wise,
Unfold the soul to mortal eyes;
Say where eternal life shall end,
Or where eternal death begins!
For death eternal theirs must be,
Whose souls no future life shall see!
And why should mortals vainly weep
For creatures wrapt in endless sleep?
They've had their day, they've had their bliss,
Their life, their joy, and happiness,
And now must we forever mourn,
Because their life will not return!
"O foolish man! go, and be wise!
Learn where the source of greatness lies;
To be content is to be blest:
A cure for woes is endless rest.
If God be good to all the race
Of animals before his face,
Although the life of some be short,
(One day begins and ends their sport)
Shall we presume he is less kind
To human souls of nobler mind,
Unless he lengthen out their days
To endless years in future maze?
"It cannot be! His love is such,
Whate'er he gives, little or much,
Is always good: faith, hope, desires;
Or any grace which he inspires.
All, all are good: for man indeed,
(Whilst here) such gifts, such helps may need!
All bring him to his final goal,
Where nature's law winds up the whole!

"But you will say, does God inspire man with faith and hope barely to deceive him; and does he not mean that he should ever realize the 'things hoped for?' which must be the case, unless the hope is founded on a reality. Answer: Let us rather say, unless the *hope* be a reality. The hope of man is in fact a reality, as much so as any thing else which exists. It is, however, what it is, i. e. *hope*; and not what is not, i. e. the 'things hoped for.' But hope never deceives any one, it continues as long as the creature

has any use for it; and it is never taken away from any (except a disordered mind, to which all men are liable) as long as it can be of any service to the creature.

"That hope is given for thy blessing NOW."—*Pope*.

"Mankind, if ever, are very seldom made unhappy and wretched in consequence of doubting the existence of a future state. Thousands, no doubt, think they should be wretched in this condition: but, although I have been acquainted with a number of this description, I never saw one made unhappy in consequence. It is the *fear of endless misery* which produces so much wretchedness in the world.—This idea, it is true, begets all description! It produces that fear which hath torment. It disturbs the brain; destroys the mental faculties; and, by distracting the imagination, fills the soul with horror! It is infinitely more to be dreaded than *endless death*! But what fear or dread can there be in the idea of *endless sleep*? Surely none. People are too apt to confound the idea of the absence of immortality with endless misery, believing this to be the only alternative. This is not correct. Mortality and death are the only opposites to immortality and eternal life. The former I know is true, and yet I am satisfied with knowing, (i. e. for an absolute certainty) nothing further; nevertheless, as I feel truly thankful for my present existence, should I be so happily disappointed as to find all my doubts, founded in error, I trust, as I should be inexpressibly happy, so I should be inexpressibly thankful for a future life."

"Yours, &c.

A. KNEELAND."

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LETTER VI.

Dear sir, and brother,—In replying to your seventh number, I propose taking the advantage which you have favoured me with, by the division of your subject. I hope by this, to be able to compress my remarks on your reasoning, and avoid any unnecessary protraction of this epistle.

You allow, that a "general view of the whole ground" on which the scriptures seem to rest, would be sufficient to support the truth of divine revelation, were it not for the following considerations.

1. Mankind, in all ages of the world, have been, and still are prone to superstition.
2. It cannot be denied, but that a part of mankind, at least, have believed, and still are believing in miracles and revelations which are spurious.
3. The facts on which revelation is predicated, are unlike every thing of which we have any positive knowledge.

If I rightly apprehend your meaning of "the whole ground" in which the scriptures seem to rest, a general view of which would be sufficient to support a belief in revelation, were it not for the three considerations above quoted; it occupies, at least, prophecies concerning a Messiah and the fulfillment of those prophecies by a Messiah, according to the account which we have in the New Testament.

As it will serve to circumscribe the bounds of our present reasoning, it is thought best to direct our inquiry to the consideration of the facts recorded in the New Testament, presuming if these be admitted, the prophecies will not be denied.

But have I not occasion, sir, to be surprised to find your first proposition adduced as evidence unfavourable to the christian scriptures? Was there ever a time when the world of human kind, both Jews and Gentiles, was more deeply involved in the darkness and stupidity of superstition than when the Messiah entered on his public ministry? If the doctrine of Jesus had been pleasing to the superstitious Jews, if it had accorded with the idolatrous notions of the Gentiles, (which was impossible) if his Messiahship had been espoused by both, and by their consent and influence had been handed down, and declared to have been evidenced by all the miracles recorded in the four Evangelists, do you not see that your first proposition would be of Herculean strength against this religion? On the contrary, it being well established, from unquestionable authority, that as St. Paul observed, Christ crucified was a stumbling block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness, the whole force of Jewish and Greek superstition, as it opposed, serves to strengthen the evidences of our faith.

Will you be so good as to read the account which is recorded of the miracle which Jesus wrought in giving sight to the man who was born blind, and inquire carefully from beginning to end for any thing that looks in the least as if the writer was endeavouring to write a falsehood in a way to have it deceive the reader. This request might, as I humbly conceive, be made in respect to any of the other miracles; but what I had in view, particularly when this subject came to my mind, was the following words,

spoken by the pharisees to him who had been blind; "Thou art his disciple: but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this fellow we know not from whence he is." Is it not plain from this as well as from many other scriptures, that in the same degree that the pharisees' superstition run in favour of Moses, it operated against Jesus? I know the objector may say, the Jews expected a Messiah; but then they did not expect such a character as was Jesus. They also expected Elias to come first, but they did not expect such a character as John. You, and all the world know that the protestant clergy in Europe and America used to pray for the downfall of the Pope; but when he was humbled, they all joined in fervent prayer to set him up again. How did this inconsistency happen? Answer: The way in which it pleased God to humble the Pope, was not the way which clerical wisdom and prudence had planned; and we all see now, that they are better pleased with the Pope and the Inquisition, than they were to have him lose his power in a way which endangered their own. Now, sir, if liberal principles do obtain, and if the cause of civil and religious liberty should finally triumph, in spite of popish and protestant clergy with monarchy united, do you believe that this triumph will ever be imputed to the superstition of king-craft and priestcraft? On the ground of your first proposition this would be your conclusion. The pharisees and those who adhered to them, built the sepulchres of the prophets, whom their fathers killed, and said; "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." These *holy* men were sure that they were much better than their fathers who persecuted the prophets; they had no disposition to persecute; all the wealth in the world could not have tempted these *godly saints* to kill a prophet of God. However, St. Paul writing to the Thessalonians, says, "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men." But the Jews would not have put Jesus to death if he had been a pharisee, and had not departed from their traditions and superstitions. But he was not a pharisee, nor did he adhere to their superstitions; and for this cause he was to them "a root out of dry ground." To them, he had no form nor comeliness, no, nor had he any beauty that they should discern him. Say, brother, is not this the superstition which you are urging as unfavourable to the evidences of christianity? And does not the passage above quoted from Thessalonians go to prove what all ecclesiastical history as well as the New Testament proves, that the Christians were persecuted by the Jews and by the Gentiles? Did any thing but superstition ever persecute? It surely does not aim to build up that which it persecutes: and therefore in room of its being evidence against the genuineness of what it opposes, is justly admitted as a valid evidence in its favour. It is well known that our Christian doctors, clergy, and laity have been long persuaded that a glorious day of universal peace and gospel light is not only promised, but fast approaching; and if their prayers have any influence, it is evident that the time is hastened by their means. All this looks very well, and a man would be thought to be impious, if not insane, who should intimate that these saints were superstitious or illiberal, or that they possessed the spirit of persecution.—But what has been their spirit for, say, twenty-five years past towards a doctrine which teaches universal peace on earth and good will towards man? Is there any thing bad which they have not spoken against this doctrine? Have they not treated its preachers with all the contempt and even ridicule of which they were capable? Have they not used all their influence to keep the doctrine from being preached in their meeting houses, and have they not dealt with church members who have believed this benign doctrine of love, with excommunications attended with as many aggravations as they could invent? In a word, is there one bitter herb in all the ground which was cursed for man's sake, that has not been used against what is called the poison of this abominable heresy? If they had the power of the pope, if the inquisition were at their command, would they let such power lie dormant for want of zeal? Balaam smote his ass with a *staff*, but said: "I would there were a *sword* in mine hand, for now would I kill thee."

But after all that has been said and done against this doctrine of universal benevolence and grace, its progress confounds its enemies, encourages its friends, and calls to mind the parable of the mustard seed. Suppose for a century to come it should continue its advances according to what it has gained for the twenty-five years above mentioned, is it not evident that the knowledge of God would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea? But would any body then, being acquainted with the history of these times, think of making use of the superstition of our clergy to oppose the evidences of this doctrine? Would such a one say, it is probable that in those times of superstition, the clergy who had great influence with the common people, might alter many passages of scripture, and in room of using the word *elect*, interpolate the words *all men*? If I understand your argument, this is the use you make of superstition. But, sir, I am satisfied that the superstition of our times will be sufficient proof to future ages, that the scriptures which so abundantly prove the doctrine of universal salvation, were not the production of a superstitious clergy who were known to oppose this doctrine with all their learning and influence.

Now if you please, you may indulge in strengthening your hypothesis, and prove by the faithful histories of different nations, that Jews, Greeks, and Romans were most stupidly superstitious. Also that India, Turkey, and Arabia are now groaning under the ponderous weight of this vanity. Go on and

enlarge on all that you have said, and point out all the superstitions of which we read or know; show how powerful this superstition is in the human heart; how it renders its votaries blind to reason and the principles of moral truth; show how hard it is to break in upon this almost invincible phalanx; but consider, sir, the blacker you represent this cloud, the brighter you render the evidences of the religion of Jesus.

You need not be informed, what the Christian world all knows, that the doctrine of Jesus Christ, founded on the miracles recorded in the four Evangelists and in the Acts of the Apostles, was propagated among Jews and Gentiles, whose superstitions, though various, rendered them both hostile to this new religion, and incited them to persecutions which subjected the "weak and defenceless disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus" to trials and sufferings, fears and temptations of which we can have but a faint conception.—The grand hypothesis on which the gospel was advocated, and by which it succeeded in obtaining vast multitudes of Jewish as well as Gentile converts, was the resurrection of Jesus, who was publicly executed on a cross by the Roman authority instigated by the rulers of the Jews. All this must be accounted for in a rational way. The facts are as well attested as any thing of which history gives any account. The four gospels have been commented on, and quoted, and adverted too by a greater number of controversial writers, than any other book of which we have any knowledge. The epistles of St. Paul when compared with the Acts and with each other have all the necessary characteristics of being genuine, and of relating nothing but realities.

You, sir, allow that the authority on which this religion rests, would be sufficient to support it, if it were not for the consideration of your three propositions, the first of which, I trust, you will acknowledge stands in its vindication.

Your second proposition may now be noticed.

That part of mankind have believed and still are believing in miracles and revelations which are spurious, we have no interest in denying, but we feel under no obligation to admit this fact as any evidence against Christianity, or of any force to counterbalance the evidences which stand in its favour. What would you think of such kind of reasoning as should contend, that as it is evident that many have been, and still are imposed on by counterfeit money, it justifies serious doubts whether there ever was any true money in the world? Would you not reply, that as the counterfeit is entirely dependent on the true for its imposition, in room of being evidence that there is no true money, it demonstrates that there is?

It being well known, nor ever doubted by the friends or enemies of Christianity, that its founder and his apostles proved the divinity of their missions by miracles alone, it was nothing more than might be rationally expected, that impostors would rise up under those sacred pretensions, with a view to establish themselves. But if this religion of Jesus Christ, had not at first been built upon this foundation, impostors would never have thought of imposing on people with such pretensions. Impostors, therefore, together with all their deceptions, cannot, as I humbly conceive, be admitted as evidence *against* the genuineness of the gospel, but in *favour* of it.

As to Mahomet of whom you speak, I have always understood that he made no pretensions to miracles. He pretended to hold correspondence with the angel Gabriel, and to receive revelations from God in this way; but he never attempted to sanction his divinity by miracles; and indeed there was no need of this, for he declared he was commissioned from heaven to propagate his religion by the sword, and to destroy the monuments of idolatry. His kingdom was of this world, therefore did his servants fight; but they did not fight always alone, for he fought at nine battles or sieges in person, and in ten years achieved fifty military enterprizes. He united religion and plunder, by which he allured the vagrant Arabs to his standard. He asserted that the sword was the key of heaven and hell; that a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms are of more account than two months of fasting and prayer. He assured those who should fall in battle, that their sins should be forgiven at the day of judgment, that their wounds would be resplendant as vermillion and odoriferous as myrrh, and that the loss of limbs should be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim. But what you can find in Mahometism which in the least militates against the evidences of Christianity I know not. It is affirmed by writers, that he collected his ideas of God and of morals from the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.

From Mahomet you go to the conversion of Constantine, taking particular notice of the account given of his seeing the sign of a cross in the sun, &c. And as we are now on the subject of miracles, we must not forget the miracles of the *Shakers* which seem to *shake* your faith! Two *notable* miracles you have honoured with a place in your epistle, or honoured your epistle with them, which, I shall not undertake to determine. A bridge fell with a horse on it, which fell with the bridge; the rider was a woman; by the fall several of her ribs were broken, and she was otherwise bruised; but she was miraculously recovered so as to be able to dance in one evening. A boy cut his foot, the wound bled profusely; the boy was miraculously healed in a few hours. These are the miracles; but whether mother Ann, or some

of her elders performed these miracles you do not inform me. It seems to be allowed that *most* of these Quaker miracles are inferior to the miracles recorded in the New Testament, but not more inferior to them, than they are to the miracles of Moses.

Doctor Priestley, with his usual candor, endeavours to assign a natural cause for what Constantine saw, and you are inclined to his opinion, to all of which I have no objections to make; and I am by no means certain, that a proper attention to the pretended miracles of the Shakers, might not issue in assigning a natural cause for them. But however this may be, I cannot see how the matter affects our belief in Jesus Christ. Do you not discover a difference too wide between the case of Jesus and his doctrine, and Ann Lee and her principles to admit of the comparison which you seem inclined to make? You have also mentioned the case of Mrs. A——'s seeing her husband and talking with him after he was dead, which you would draw into the same comparison. That Mrs. A—— may have satisfactory evidence of her having seen and conversed with her husband since his death, I am not at all disposed to dispute; but here the matter ends. God has not seen fit to endue her with the power of working miracles. If this woman should come into a public assembly and work astonishing miracles before all the people as an attestation of her having seen her husband, and you and I should be present, and see these marvellous things with our own eyes should we doubt the woman's testimony?

I have already, in a former communication shown that the declaration of the apostles of the resurrection of Jesus, until it was accompanied with power from on high, was never even communicated to the public, or ordered to be communicated. But in fact the disciples were strictly commanded to tarry at Jerusalem until the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Constantine would have had no occasion to depose under the solemnity of an oath, concerning the sign of the cross, &c. if he had had power to evidence his declaration by miracles. If Ann Lee's disciples will heal the sick, restore the lame, and raise the dead in so public a manner that the people at large may know these facts, then, sir, they will no longer need to purchase poor children in order to increase their societies. And if God should see fit to call me from my wife and children by such evidences as these, I hope I should not disobey his divine mandate.

But will you reply, that miracles having ceased, we have no right to expect them? In return it may be asked, how we are assured that miracles are not now necessary as they were twenty or thirty years ago? Will you retort this question and ask why miracles are not now as necessary to evince the truth of christianity as in the days of Jesus and his apostles? To this we reply: the miracles on which the gospel was founded, or propagated, were of the most extraordinary kind; they were of extensive publicity, and of ocular notoriety; they were vastly numerous, extending to the infirmed of all descriptions; and they were continued long enough to answer the purpose for which they were intended.

You will feel satisfied that the *enemies* of Jesus and his apostles knew for certainty, that those miracles wrought by them were realities; and that they, in room of imputing them to the divine agency, violated their own reason, by referring to an evil agent such power and acts of goodness; I say you will feel satisfied of all this, if you will set down and read all the accounts relative to this subject, in the four gospels, carefully regarding this question: Do these writers discover any marks of deception or fraud?

In no instance do the evangelists betray the least anxiety for fear what they relate will not be credited. Even when they pen the astonishing miracles of which they pretend to be eye witnesses, they make no pause to clear up any thing; but tell the whole as if the whole was publicly known. In a word, this history, this sacred testimony, carries its own competent evidence within itself.

It has been noticed by those who have written on this subject, as evidence that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were the real authors of those books which bear their respective names, that a great many passages are alluded to or quoted from the evangelists, exactly as we read them now, by a regular succession of Christian writers, from the time of the apostles down to this hour; and at a very early period their names are mentioned as the authors of their respective gospels; which is more than can be said of any other historian whatever. See Lardner and Paley. I will not call up Ann Lee in this place, but I will suppose an attempt should be made now in New-England to convince Trinitarians of the error of supposing there are three persons in the Godhead. This shall be undertaken by men who are wicked enough to attempt to deceive by pretended miracles. One is selected as a leader, and the others to the number of twelve profess to be his followers. The leader pretends to a revelation from God, the substance of which is, that Jesus Christ is a created being and dependent on the Father. This doctrine he preaches and directs his followers to go into every town in New-England and proclaim this truth to the people, and exhort them to repent of their former doctrine and turn to God. This impostor pretends to work miracles in confirmation of his divine mission; and also pretends to give his disciples power to work miracles. He informs his friends that he is to lose his life and that they must lose their's, in order to establish this doctrine. Stop, we have come to an absurdity. Who would undertake to deceive their fellow creatures for no other reward than the loss of their lives? But let us pursue on. This leader

pretends to give sight to blind people, to heal the sick with a word, and to raise the dead. It is reported all round the country that many such cases have actually taken place; that the blind do receive their sight, the sick are raised to health at once, and one man in particular who was dead four days, has been called out of his grave. People now are waked up; many believe the reports; thousands are flocking from place to place to hear this man and to see his miracles. In this case who would be most likely to place themselves very near to this pretender? Who would one expect to find near his person? Answer, some of the Trinitarians; chosen ones too; men of sound judgment, and who could be depended on as able to detect any fraud. How long is it reasonable to suppose these pretensions could possibly continue with any success? It may be asked likewise, whether all honest, reasonable, and candid Unitarians would not express their abhorrence of such pretensions? Are you, sir, of opinion that such a fraud could possibly be managed in a way to insure success? A moment's reflection is sufficient to put the question to rest.

But we will still pursue our supposition. The Trinitarians enter a complaint against this teacher, to the authorities, alleging that he is guilty of treason; he is arrested, convicted, and publicly executed. At the time of his arrest his disciples all forsake him, and one being found near him denies that he knows the man. All is over now, and people go about their common avocations; once in a while a word or two may be dropped on the subject of the impostor, but the thing is dying away, till all at once the twelve disciples of him who was executed came boldly before the public and proclaim the resurrection of their leader, charge the rulers of the people of having murdered him, and declare that God has raised him from the dead, and appointed them to be witness of this to the people, and to preach Unitarianism. What would be thought of these men? Would the doctrine of the divine unity be likely to triumph over its opposite, the Trinity, by the preaching of the twelve? Would there be any attention paid to these men, except by authority, to disperse them and cause them to desist from such madness, and go about some honest business? But now they pretend to work miracles in confirmation of the truth of the resurrection! Enough. Suppose, sir, I should tell you that I believe such pretensions might be so managed as to succeed completely, would you not reply, that the success of such pretensions being altogether a fraud, would itself be as great a miracle as is recorded in scripture, with the addition of absurdity? You will remember that you suggested that it would require a miracle to dissuade me from my belief; and I hope you will see that you must believe in a miracle in order not to believe with me!

Will you say that the foregoing does not come to the difficulty, that the question is, was not the account we have of those things in the gospels, forged long since the days in which they are represented to have taken place? Then, sir, in room of the above supposed fraud, undertaken to propagate *Unitarianism*, you may take the supposition of a forged book published by the friends of that doctrine, in which just such a story is told of the first propagations of the sentiment as is told in the New Testament of Jesus and his apostles—and the Trinitarians shall be made to act the part of the old pharisees. Can you, sir, conceive that the book would meet with any better success than the impostors themselves? Would our learned doctors of the Trinitarian school be silent while such a book was in circulation?

Would they suffer it to be handed down to posterity unanswered and unrefuted? Would they see their churches imposed on in this way, their doctrine sat at nought, and this most extravagant imposture obtain credit? Ask likewise on the other side; would honest Unitarians pay any attention to such a book? Would they impose on their fellow creatures in this way? Would they instruct their children to believe what they knew to be a lie?

It should be kept in mind that when the gospels were written and for more than two hundred years afterwards, christianity was hated and persecuted beyond what we can easily conceive, by the emperors of Rome and their wicked governors, who being authorized by special edicts for that purpose put to the most cruel tortures and horrid deaths the followers of Jesus. The superstitious priests of heathen idols, were constantly active with all possible inventions calculated to excite jealousies and sharpen the edge of persecution against a doctrine that was calculated to subvert their order and demolish their temples. It was not until A. D. 311, that Maximin Galerius, who had been the author of the heaviest calamities on the christians, published a solemn edict, ordering the persecution to cease, which his indescribable horrors and painful sickness compelled him to do. The next year Constantine, and his colleague Licinius granted to the christians a full power of living according to their own laws and institutions.

For nearly three hundred years then the gospel ministry, founded on miracles, which, if not real, were as easily detected as any falsehood whatever, was oppressed by cruel edicts acted upon by the bitterest enemies. Where was all the boasted learning of this learned age? Where was all the sagacity of the sagacious? Could not a priesthood, for ages improved in scarcely any thing but imposition and fraud, succeed in detecting pretensions, which, if not real, were too grossly absurd to impose on the most artless?

You, sir, are entirely right in saying you cannot prove this christian revelation and the miracles on which it was founded, false. For if this could ever have been done, there can be no reasonable doubt that it would have been by its enemies in its first rise; but the day is past for the detection of this fraud, if it be one; for the age in which all the means of detection were in possession of its enemies, has long since passed away and those means are lost. The imposition, possessed at first of no solidity, might have been blown into the air with a breath of common sense, has magnified and petrified till it promises to fill the whole earth, and is as hard as an adamant.

We hear of no writer's undertaking to disprove Christianity till about one hundred years after the apostles' day, when Celsus wrote a violent work against the Christians, who were, at the same time, suffering severe persecutions. But this author, though a bitter enemy to Christ, allows his miracles; but like the old pharisees imputes them to a different power from that of God. Why should this enemy of Jesus, his religion, apostles and followers allow those miracles?—It seems that there can be no good reason for this unless they were realities. You say, "that no miracles or revelations that have come down to us are supported by so good authority as those recorded in the New Testament, I admit." But how can you conceive of *any good evidence* of such miracles as are recorded in this book? We have no account of any testimony under oath that they were realities. And even if we had, could the solemnity of an oath be admitted as good evidence? I think not. Indeed there was no authority that would allow the apostles to depose in favour of the resurrection of Jesus; but there were no authorities that could prevent their bearing a mere convincing testimony. I have endeavoured heretofore, to show that there can be no good evidence of such a fact as the resurrection, which is capable of being refuted; and I will here add, of admitting reasonable doubts of the fact, in the mind. It is a question which properly belongs to this subject, and which should be often called up, whether the evidences of the resurrection were not as strong as they could have been, both to the disciples and to those who believed on Jesus through their testimony; and furthermore, whether we can conceive how the evidences could have been stronger on which we believe, without perpetual miracles, which not only seems an absurdity, but would, if as powerful as they were at first, preclude the exercise of our reasoning faculties and the necessity of investigation, which is one of the most rational enjoyments of which we are capable.

I grant, if the vulgar error, that our eternal salvation depended on our being correctly acquainted with this subject, were true, it would follow, of course, that the least difficulty in the way of our knowing the whole matter, might be attended with fatal and awful consequences. And for myself, should I adopt the popular opinion that those who go out of this world not understanding the doctrine, or believing in Jesus Christ, must hereafter be forever excluded from the blessed immortality which is brought to light through the gospel, it would be difficult for me to account for the least obscurity nameable, and much more difficult would it be to account for the limited circle in which divine truth has been caused to shine. But I have before intimated that the consequences of our unbelief here, can with no more propriety be carried into an eternal state, than the consequences of our ignorance of any science. It is derogatory to the sacred loveliness of divine truth, either to promise any further reward to those who seek and find her than the enjoyment she brings to the soul in her own native sweetness, or to threaten those who neglect so divine a treasure with any other inconvenience than the loss of such felicity during their foolish neglect.

It becomes the philosopher and perhaps more the christian to exercise patience, but patience is sometimes tried with the bigotry and nonsense of the self-righteous, self-wise, and self-knowing, who profess the religion of Christ, yet stand tiptoe, like James and John, to call fire from heaven to consume all who do not receive their master. But the true spirit of our religion rebukes such blind zeal and foolish arrogance, by showing that such a disposition is the malady which the gospel is designed to cure. While the Christian clergy have spent their breath and wore out their lungs in anathematising with eternal vengeance, those whom they call infidels, have been worse than infidels, and brought a greater stigma on the name of Jesus, than his open enemies from *Celsus* down to T. Paine. I would by all means except from the above remark a goodly number who have done honour to our religion by treating its opposers, as its spirit dictates, with candor and sound argument well mingled with divine charity.

Indeed I think I see much reason to look on what is called infidelity, with a charitable disposition for this plain reason, it has greatly contributed to enlighten the Christian commonwealth, by calling into action the very best of human abilities and directing them to search for the true grounds on which our faith securely rests.

I hardly know how I ought to reply to what you say about the persecution of Stephen, &c. At one time you write as if you would doubt the authenticity of those New Testament accounts; then again you advert to them for assistance. But why should you go over such ground, on which so much depends, as if you did not realize that the subject was worthy of a pause for consideration?

When you advert to the martyrdom of Stephen by a mob, (which by the way was *the council*), you

take no notice of the cause of his being arrested, accused or condemned.

Let reason and candor look at the account. "And Stephen full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Celicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist, &c. Then they suborned men, which said, we have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and come upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, and set up false witnesses, which said, this man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses delivered us. And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. Then said the high priest, are these things so?" Here follows that admirable speech of Stephen before the grand council of his nation, which defies all conjecture of forgery, and enraged his enemies against him. And they stoned him for pretended blasphemy. The concluding clause of this speech is particularly worthy of notice. "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the just one; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." Now, sir, is there any more evidence for believing that there was such a man as Stephen stoned according to the above account, than for believing that he was stoned by the authority of the council, and for what is here set forth?

This council which put Stephen to death, was the same before which Peter was arraigned on account of the miracle wrought on the impotent man; which according to Dr. Hammond was the Sanhedrim.

But you seem much engaged to prove that martyrdom does not prove the truth of a belief for which the martyr dies. Here you have not been careful to distinguish cases. A *Papist, who has been brought up to believe in the divine presence*, might perhaps suffer death rather than renounce it; and yet we should not consider this sufficient to prove the doctrine of *transubstantiation*; but no candid person would doubt the *sincerity* of the martyr. But why should we hesitate to believe the doctrine for which he suffered? Answer, the doctrine is not a subject of which he could have positive knowledge. He could not be eye nor ear witness of the fact. But the testimony for which the disciples of Jesus suffered, was a testimony concerning a matter of fact, of which their eyes and ears could take proper cognizance; and if their sufferings are allowed to prove their sincerity, then it is granted that they believed in the resurrection of Jesus. If the entire unbelief of the disciples in the resurrection could be overcome, and they brought to believe that they saw Jesus and talked with him, and ate with him, and were frequently in his company after his resurrection, for forty days; and if they were willing to suffer persecution and death rather than desist from troubling the people with this testimony, it appears to me that reason will allow that this is, at least, some evidence of the truth of this astonishing fact; though this was not the evidence which carried conviction to so many thousands of the Jews as well as of the Gentiles. This we have before shown was the manifestation of the mighty power of God in the miraculous wonders which God wrought by the apostles.

You speak of the honour, which was no doubt attached to the martyrdom of Stephen, as being an inducement to others to submit to this example, &c. You hereby allow that the testimony for which he suffered was surely believed, otherwise no honour could attach to those who suffered for it. Why then do you not attempt to show the probable ground on which this testimony was erroneously believed?

I humbly conceive that your observations which regard to the uprightness of the apostles are too indefinite. You say, "This much, however, I believe, and of this much I have no doubt, that Paul and the other apostles were convinced of the truth and the salutary effects of the moral precepts which had been taught and preached by Christ; and they were willing to preach and enforce them by all the means in their power, even at the risk of their lives," &c. And this you think, "constituted them wise and good men." Here, sir, do you not leave room for the notion that the apostles would enforce their moral doctrine with the testimony of the resurrection of Jesus and their pretensions to miraculous powers, when they had no belief in the former, and knew the latter to be an imposition? If these men endeavoured to enforce any principles by practicing such impositions, however pure those principles were, these men were vile impostors, and merited all their sufferings. I solemnly protest against the wisdom or goodness of any man who is an impostor.

I proceed to notice your third proposition, which is as follows:

"3. The facts on which revelation is predicated are unlike every thing of which we have any positive knowledge." "Of the truth of this proposition," you say I "must be sensible." You must indulge me, sir, in saying that you have made a mistake. I am insensible of the correctness of your statement. The FACTS on which the Christian faith is predicated, are of that description which come within the observation of the outward senses of men.

I know of no fact on which Jesus called the people to rest their faith, that they could not as easily judge of, through the medium of their senses as of any facts in nature. See John v. 36, "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." 10th, 24th, 25th, "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, how long doest thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." 37th, 38th, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in him."

All the works of which Jesus spake, were such as the people could know and examine by seeing and hearing, and concerning which there was no necessity of their being ignorant or imposed upon. See the account of John's sending two of his disciples to ask Jesus if he were the Christ. Luke vii. 20, &c. "When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, art thou he that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus, answering, said unto them, go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." Of such facts the people were capable of judging, and on such facts the Messiahship of Jesus rested. And furthermore, it was on such facts that the testimony of the apostles concerning the resurrection of Jesus rested. Now it is evident that those facts on which divine revelation is predicated, are like facts of which we have positive knowledge, in all respects as it regards the case of knowing them. It was just as easy for people to know those things, as it is for us to know the things which are familiar to our senses.

If you mean by the above proposition, simply that miracles are not wrought before our eyes, it is granted; but have you shown that a *continuance* of miracles would more rationally vindicate the gospel, than the divine economy has done by preserving the *variety of evidence* which is now at our command? If this cannot be done, then the discontinuance of miracles is no reason why we should doubt the truth of this revelation. How then is your third proposition, even in any sense in which it can be true, to be understood unfavourable to divine revelation?

It may not be improper to notice some reasons why the continuance of the miracles, on which the gospel was first propagated, would not comport with the divine economy.

1st. As has been before suggested, it would, if combined with the force it first had, preclude the exercise of the mental powers of investigation.

2d. This power of working miracles must have been distributed to various sects and heresies, or by being confined to one order, prevent the existence of any other, which would be another preventive of immense reasoning, and tend to circumscribe the sphere in which the human mind is capacitated to move.

3d. The continuance of those miracles must have changed the order of nature, and continued men on earth forever, or from generation to generation; for if this power had been exercised on some and not to the advantage of others, it would look like the partial systems of men, and in room of commending the impartial goodness of God, would have refuted it.

But, the manifestation of this divine power, in those miracles on which our religion is founded, while it is attended with none of the evils which a continuance would evidently produce, besides forming an immovable rock on which so glorious a superstructure is safely founded, furnishes an immense subject for the power of ratiocination.

You will excuse me for not noticing particularly all you say about modern pretensions to revelations and miracles, as I think it would occupy time that may be better employed. But I will observe on your opinion, that it is remarkable, that Saul when he was converted, did not go to Jerusalem to inquire more fully into the circumstances of the resurrection, that if he had done this, you would not have hesitated to make use of it against his declaration recorded in Gal. i. 11, 12. "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Why do you mention that we have not a particular account of St. Paul's conversion written by his own hand? Do you think that what a man writes of himself is more to be depended on, than what his biographer writes of him? Your suggestions on this subject seem to indicate, at least, some scruples respecting this conversion, but not in a way to show where the ground of scruples lies. What is there for me to answer? Why do you treat this subject with such neglect? In a former communication, I requested your attention to it in a special manner, with a view to confine our reasoning to our subject,

and to avoid rambling from one thing to another without making ourselves acquainted with any thing. In your reply you never attempted to give any account why Saul should embrace the religion he had persecuted; you made no attempt to give any reason why he preached Jesus and the resurrection; nor did you assign any reason why he should be willing to suffer the loss of all earthly enjoyments and endure persecutions for Christ's sake; nor did you attempt to prove that there never was such a man and such a conversion. The subject you considered still before you, and in this seventh number you have spoken of it again, but have paid no particular attention to it.

What you say on the subject of prophecy, does not appear to me, either to reflect any light on it, or to call up any question of importance. Your query whether the books of the New Testament were not written after the destruction of Jerusalem, which would suppose that the prophecy of the destruction of that city was written after the events took place of which the prophecy speaks, is an old suggestion in which I am unable to see any thing very reasonable. And I will remark here, that men who seem to lay an uncommon claim to reason, ought to make use of it when arguing on such momentous subjects. What difference would it make whether St. Matthew wrote his gospel before, or after the destruction of Jerusalem, as it respects the prophecy which Jesus delivered concerning it? You allow St. Matthew to be an honest man. You do not doubt then but Jesus did deliver such a prophecy before his death, which was certainly before the destruction of the city. Then surely it makes no difference whether the prophecy was committed to paper before, or after the fulfilment of it. Besides, you seem to urge the *silence* of St. John on the subject as unfavourable to the account, because he wrote his gospel after Jerusalem was destroyed. As to interpolations which you think might have found their way into the gospels, it appears to me, sir, that a candid consideration of this subject would issue in this conclusion; if any important interpolations had been admitted, they would have produced such a disagreement as to effectually destroy the validity of the books; for if one heresy could be indulged, it is reasonable to suppose that another would be, and so on, which in room of allowing us the scriptures in their present consistent form, would either have destroyed their existence altogether, or have varied so as to confound their ideas.

For a candid, learned, and impartial view of the scriptures of the New Testament, I refer you to Paley's evidences, and in particular to his eleven propositions, which he has proved in a manner satisfactory, as I conceive to the candid inquirer.

These propositions begin on page 103, and are the following.

1. "That the historical books of the New Testament, meaning thereby the four gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, are quoted, or alluded to, by a series of christian writers, beginning with those who were contemporary with the apostles, or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in close and regular succession from their time to the present.

2. "That when they are quoted, or alluded to, they are quoted or alluded to with peculiar respect, as books *sui generis*, as possessing an authority which belonged to no other books, and as conclusive in all questions and controversies among christians.

3. "That they were in very early times collected into a distinct volume.

4. "That they were distinguished by appropriate names and titles of respect.

5. "That they were publicly read and expounded in the religious assemblies of the Christians.

6. "That commentaries were written upon them, harmonies formed out of them, different copies carefully collected, and versions of them made into different languages.

7. "That they were received by Christians of different sects, by many heretics as well as catholics, and usually appealed to by both sides in the controversies which arose in those days.

8. "That the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen epistles of St. Paul, the first epistle of John, and the first of Peter, were received without doubt, by those who doubted concerning the other books which are inclosed in our present canon.

9. "That the gospels were attacked by the early adversaries of Christianity, as books containing the accounts upon which the religion was founded.

10. "That formal catalogues of authentic scriptures were published, in all which our present sacred histories were recorded.

11. "That these propositions cannot be affirmed of any other books, claiming to be books of scripture; by which I mean those books which are commonly called Apochryphal."

The first evidence adduced by this celebrated author to prove his first proposition, proves that the gospel of St. Matthew, which contains a very particular account of the prophecy of Jesus concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, was written before the event took place. This evidence is a quotation from the epistle of Barnabas, St. Paul's companion, in the following words: "Let us therefore, beware lest it come upon us, *as it is written*, there are many called, few chosen." St. Matthew's gospel is the only book in which these words are found; and you will perceive by the expression, "as it is written," that Barnabas quoted the passage from an author of authority. Barnabas wrote his epistle during the troubles which ended in the destruction of the Jews and their city. This epistle of Barnabas is quoted by Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 194: by Origen, A.D. 230. It is mentioned by Eusebius, A. D. 315, and by Jerome, A. D. 392. (Paley's evidences, p. 106.)

Your insinuations that the origin of the christian scriptures is involved in fable and mystery, should have been accompanied with a clear refutation of the arguments used by Lardner, Paley, and others, who have with much learning and labour traced the stream to its fountain.

I must say something on the subject which you introduce concerning man, as a species of being, or you may think me inexcusable for the neglect. There seem to be two main questions suggested on this subject; the first inquires what man was farther back than history reaches; and the other directs the mind to a "line of demarcation" between the human and the brute.

We have no account that I know of when the use of fire was not known. We read Gen. iv. 22, that Tubal-cain was an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron, and if reason has any thing to do in this case, we may suppose that the use of fire was known to these mechanics. The date to which this reading belongs, is 3875 years before Christ; but there can be no reasonable doubt but that the use of fire was known long before, and that it was used in the offerings which were made by Cain and Abel.

That the discovery of arts and the progress of science have changed man from what he originally was, is no more reasonable, than to suppose that the education which a child acquires by degrees, by the same degrees changes him in respect to his nature. That the arts and sciences serve to improve and extend the human intellects is reasonable enough, but that they add any thing to the natural principles or faculties of man is not conceivable.

In fixing the "line of demarcation" between the human nature and the brutal, I will suggest two characteristics which you have noticed by which the distinction may be ascertained.

The first is the power or faculty of improving from generation to generation his condition by means of art, and knowing how to advance from one degree of science to another. This I will suppose belongs to man and is peculiar to our race of being. We know of no other animal on earth that has ever improved his condition by the discovery of the arts or an increase of science.

The other characteristic is one of your propositions, on which you build your system of doubting, viz. *Superstition*. This is found in no creature but such as is susceptible of religion. Man is the only religious animal, if I may be allowed this form of expression, found on the earth.

The progress which man has made in arts and sciences, and the progress he has made in divine or religious knowledge distinguish him from the brutal creation. As in the former he has run into thousands of errors, so in the latter he has wandered in darkness, with now and then a blessed ray of light which improved his mind. When the knowledge of the arts became generally defused by means of the extension of the Roman government, it pleased our blessed Creator to cause the sun of divine light to rise on the Jew and Gentile world. And gave him a covenant of the people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.

Your opinion that men are seldom made unhappy in consequence of doubting a future existence, may be true in a comparative sense, for I believe there are few in comparison with the whole, who do doubt on this subject. Generally speaking, it is the few, who like the philosopher that rendered himself blind by endeavouring to find out what the sun was composed of, thought there was no sun nor any light, that so far give up a hope of futurity as to be miserable in their belief.

That the idea of endless torment, such as our clergy have represented, and with which they have most horribly terrified thousands and driven them into black despair, is more horrible than no existence at all will be allowed by every candid mind. But in contemplating an infinite source of divine benevolence, and his means of giving and perpetuating existence, and of rendering existence a blessing, the mind is not driven to the necessity of selecting between these two evils. No, sir, the mind thus employed has sweeter themes and brighter prospects—in belief of that invaluable treasure, that divine testimony of the inspired apostle: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive;" which sentence you nor I ever heard a preacher of endless punishment recite in a sermon in our lives, the soul rises by faith into sublime regions of future peace and everlasting enjoyment, when death shall

be swallowed up of life.

I need not tell you, my brother, that it has been through many trials, afflictions, doubts, and temptations, that your feeble humble servant has found the way to this rock; you cannot be altogether ignorant of this travail of mind. Permit me then to call to remembrance the bondage we have escaped, the sea through which we have passed, the sweet songs of deliverance and salvation which we have chanted to our Redeemer in the faith of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. And here permit me to request your assistance in giving me support, and in strengthening my hands in the work of the Lord.

Yours, &c.

H. BALLOU.

* * * * *

EXTRACTS No. VIII.

"In regard to the story reported among the Jews, respecting the body of Jesus, I admit there is a greater probability of there being such a report, especially if the body could not be found, and the apostles affirmed that he was risen from the dead, than there is that the resurrection, should be actually true: hence, perhaps, I was not so much on my guard in the expression as I ought to have been. What I particularly had in my mind was, that I might find it difficult to prove even the existence of such a story, i. e. in the days of the apostles; and still more difficult to prove, even on the ground that there was no resurrection, that this story was true; and therefore there could be no use in urging the truth of this story in order to invalidate the truth of the resurrection. I do not conceive, however, that because I doubt the *fact*, I am under obligations to account for the *fallacy*. It always belongs to the advocates of the truth of any story, to bring forward sufficient evidence to prove the same. I can think of a solution, however, that would appear to my understanding much more probable, than to suppose, as mentioned in your seventh article, the 'account written long since the apostles' day;' yet it may, perhaps, be attended with equal or greater difficulties, viz. that the body was not stolen by the apostles, but was taken away by other persons, who were willing that Jesus should be *deified*, according to the then common acceptance of that word among the Greeks, and who studied this stratagem with an express design to deceive the Jews, as a punishment to them for so cruelly putting him to death, and also to deceive his disciples, in order to enhance the honour of the name of Jesus.

"This might have been done, as I conceive, by persons who never became his open followers, so far as to suffer death on his account, but were contented in having gained their object; to do which, it was only necessary in the first instance to frighten the soldiers. It may be difficult after all, as I have observed concerning the human species, to say where the truth of the account ends, or where the fallacy begins; but that some such thing should have taken place is more probable to my understanding than that the literal resurrection of Jesus should have been true. But I perceive that my expression, concerning the report among the Jews, was a little too strong; and carried rather more in it than what I was aware. For even on my hypothesis, as well as on every other which admits the absence of the body, such a report would appear very probable.

"It must be granted, as you have suggested, that there was such a report among the Jews at the time when that record was made, or else that record would not appear at all to 'advantage' in support of the truth of christianity.

"That 'reason is candid,' I also admit; and if I am blundering in making mistakes, I believe you will have the goodness to acknowledge that I am candid in retracting them again when they are so pointed out to me that I can see them.

"Respecting divine revelation, it is true, I understood you to mean something more than barely what is predicated on the resurrection of Jesus; yet in the second proposition of the three which you made, viz. 'Is the resurrection of Jesus capable of being proved,' I understand you to state one single fact, on which you are willing to rest the final issue of the argument. This being the most important fact, relative to the truth of christianity, and which, probably, is as difficult of proof as any, I do not perceive any disingenuousness in confining you *now* to this proposition till it is either proved or admitted. Neither do I perceive how this can embarrass your argument, as you have proposed to consider them 'true, disjunctively,' as well as conjunctively. When therefore you have proved the three propositions *disjunctively*; particularly the second, above named, then I shall be willing you should avail yourself of their *union*.—You may say, perhaps, I have proposed to admit the truth of your three propositions; but you will also perceive, it was only for the sake of introducing a fourth proposition, which it will not be necessary for you to consider until the three first are proved true.

"I conceive that reason has no more to do in this case than to judge of the evidences of facts; and

then, if the facts are supported, reason can judge of their relation one to the other; but to assume, in the first place, the truth of revelation, and then infer from *that* the probability of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, appears to me to be unreasonable. Therefore, if you attempt to prove the truth of revelation, I conceive you must in the first place prove, 'disjunctively,' the truth of the resurrection. If, therefore, you have considered yourself excused from proving the facts on which the truth of revelation seems to rest, because I have granted them for the sake of the argument, you have misapprehended my meaning. I grant *nothing*, respecting the main question, until it is *proved*.

"Notwithstanding what you have said about 'the known facts,' and 'facts which you grant, for the sake of the argument,' &c. you will perceive by my seventh number, that I do not consider the 'miracles of Jesus, his resurrection, and the miracles wrought by the apostles,' either granted or proved, i. e. in relation to the main question; and hence, whatever weight your argument may have, when you have succeeded in that (if you should succeed at all) at present they seem to be hardly conclusive. I know it would save you much time, if you could draw from me an acknowledgement of the truth of the facts on which you rely; and you seem to argue, if I understand you, as though that was already the case; but whatever you may have understood, I must distinctly disavow any such acknowledgement; and I shall still expect (unless it is done in answer to my seventh number) when you come to reply to this, that you will state distinctly, and together, the evidences and arguments on which you mostly rely.

"If, however, you have meant nothing more by all this than to point out the use you shall make of the miracles, &c. (which have been granted for the sake of the argument) when those miracles, &c. shall have been either proven, or else acknowledged true, in relation to the main question, then I have no fault to find; but otherwise, your argument in this place seems to be a little premature.

"You say, 'the known facts, such as the miracles, &c. I used as proof of the divine mission of the servants of God. This divine mission being proved gives the ground on which I contend for the merit of their testimony, concerning a future state.'

"Here you will perceive, sir, that, according to your own statement, to prove this divine mission, you must first prove the certainty of those miracles, &c. on which the truth of the divine mission is predicated. And these are things about the truth of which, as I indicated all along, there may be serious doubts.

"I am at a loss also to understand, what you mean by a 'divine mission.' You inform me that I misapprehended you 'in supposing that' you 'mean to contend, that what the apostles have said respecting a future state, was spoken by way of *conclusions* from certain known facts.' Here, I must confess, I am really at a loss to understand you: how that either Jesus, or his apostles, could understand a divine mission, even if they had received one, unless it were by *conclusions* from *certain known facts*, that is, facts well known to them, I cannot conceive; and therefore must have some further explanation on this subject before I can fully answer you. For I must be better informed than I am at present, what you mean by a *divine mission*, before I can see the necessity of 'denying the reality of those miracles—or of granting the authority of their (Christ and his apostles) testimony;' that is, in regard to a future state. But even if I should be made to see this, it would be of no use for the present; because as it respects the final issue of the argument, I have not, neither do I now admit the reality of those miracles: as you must have seen by my seventh number.

"The next particular which demands notice is the quoted passage which I pronounced *Most excellent!*

"Here a serious query suggests itself to my mind. I ask myself: am I, or am I not, as capable of writing my sentiments, so as to be understood by a rational man, as those plain illiterate men who wrote the gospels? And yet if my words are so wrested by logical *twisticisms* (if I may be allowed to use that expression) so as to mean what never entered my heart, and all this with apparent serious candor too, what may have been the fate of the writings of the evangelists? Now this is something in which I cannot be deceived, i. e. as it respects myself; for any man of common sense does know his own meaning, whether his words fully express his meaning or not, or whether they may be made to mean something else or not.

"Permit me therefore once more to explain. The expression, *Most excellent!* was not so much intended to have been applied to the sentence preceding it, as to the author of that sentence, whose goodness, in stating so explicitly what he understands by the christian faith, I commended. And you must excuse me for not being able to see any inconsistency, absurdity, or contradiction in my words which follow that expression. Suppose a case. You have a good and faithful servant, who feels happy in your service, and is perfectly contented with his fare. You promise him with some favours which you had never before made known to him. He is elated with the idea of your goodness, which he has never doubted, but did not know till now that it was to be manifested in this particular way. You tell him that a knowledge of this, with his former knowledge, 'is as much as his present welfare requires.' He very

readily assents to the truth of the proposition; and further adds, it is even 'more than is necessary for his present welfare,' for he was contented and happy before. Would any rational man say that your servant talked unreasonably? Would he say that such reasoning was absurd? I think not. Your servant does not despise either your goodness or your bounty; he considers that his master knows best, what is best for his servant; and he receives with gratitude whatever is bestowed. Your argument would have appeared to me more just, if, after fully understanding me, which I perceive, by the use you have made of the quotation from my sixth number, you now do, you had proved from well known facts, or from conclusive argument, the absolute necessity of the hope of a christian in order for the 'present welfare' of mankind. In doing this you would have ingenuously refuted the proposition which I say would have been *exactly right*.

"You do not seem, sir, yet to have fully understood me as to my object in searching for truth. You ask, saying, 'Do you not appear to be solicitous to have your doubts removed, without expecting the least advantage by it?' You must know, sir, that this is only on supposition, that my doubts are founded in error; in which case I should reap the advantage, as my object is truth. You will recollect that my first object was to search for *moral truth*; without being at all solicitous where, or on what ground it shall be found. Truth *only* is my object. In this *only* I feel at all interested in this argument. Hence I shall be just as much obliged to you to *confirm* me in my doubts, admitting they are founded in truth, as I shall to *remove* them, admitting they are founded in error.

"I once thought just as you, viz. that the idea and contemplation of enjoying future life was absolutely necessary to present enjoyment; but I am now fully convinced, yea, more, it is absolutely known to be a fact, that the idea is altogether visionary and illusive. I admit that a knowledge of the truth, so far as the truth may be known, is perfectly *congenial* with the present happiness of mankind: though it is often the case that a partial knowledge of the truth, in relation to any particular subject, produces distress and misery rather than enjoyment. I now am very happy in knowing some things, which, once, only the idea of their being true would have given me pain. I am inclined to think that the idea of *now* enjoying the pleasures, or *now* enduring the pains of a future life is altogether chimerical. I can enjoy the life or lives of others in a future tense just as well as I can *now* enjoy my own future life. I have as much reason to believe that rational intelligence always did exist, as I have to believe it always will; yea, one idea is just as certain to me as the other, and no more so. And as I cannot reflect on the idea of eternity past, only with a kind of reverential *awe* mingled with sublime pleasure; so the idea of eternity to come produces in me the same sensation; yea, feeling myself equally ignorant of both, (which must be the case on the supposition that revelation is not true.) I can perceive no difference. I feel anxious to know, however, every thing which can be known on this subject; and yet, at the same time, I am inclined to think I should *doubt* of every revelation of which I can have any conception, unless it should be so made that I could see its truth, (or at least the evidences of its truth) over and over again, and that they should still remain by me at all times, so that I could examine them, and re-examine them, the same as I now look at the stars in the firmament.

"Thus I have opened my mind to you, more fully than I have ever done before, on this subject; and notwithstanding your writings may be very beneficial to others (as well as mine, for some may stand in need of one, and some of the other) yet, here comes up my doubts again, if I am benefited by them, I expect it will be in a different way than that of being any more persuaded of the truth of divine revelation. Nevertheless, I am no less anxious to continue the correspondence on this account.

"Your address to TRUTH, which you are pleased to put into the mouth of my argument, is closed with an idea which does not grow out of my hypothesis. 'The joyous expectation of soon losing sight of thee (i. e. truth) forever in the ellysium of non existence!' *Non-existence*, sir, does not *exist!* Neither does the term convey an idea to my understanding of any thing. I know of no existence, neither can I conceive of any, except that which I believe to be eternal in its nature. And the idea of *something* being formed or made out of *nothing*, or of something's returning to nothing again, I have long since exploded. Every thing, however, excepting first principles, is liable to *change*. Hence arises the various modes, states, circumstances, conditions and situations in beings and things: also their different properties, relations and dependences.

"I know not whether consciousness is a being, or whether it be only a mode of being. If it be the former, it always did, and always will exist, in some state or other; if the latter, the state of the being may be so changed that although identity exists, yet consciousness is not there. And there is no more absurdity in this idea than there is in supposing that the same matter which forms a *cube*, may become a *globe*. I can as well conceive of a conscious being to day, becoming unconscious to-morrow, as I can conceive of a person in a sound sleep. But *non-existence* (strictly speaking) sounds to my understanding something like the *falsity of truth!*

"I now come to your reply to my sixth number; and in my remarks, which will be but few, I shall follow the arrangement which you have made.

"1st. The candid concessions which you have made, and the charity which you have extended towards doubting Christians, or candid unbelievers (for such I conceive there may be) is honourable both to yourself and to the cause which you have espoused, and your writing, of course gains a much more favourable reception than the writings of those who appear to be filled with a spirit of acrimony, and are ready at once to deal out anathemas against every thing of which they cannot approve. But, sir, you will permit me to say, we ought to be cautious, lest our personal attachment to an author, and his charitable feelings towards us be such, as imperceptibly to blind us to correct reason, and cause us to imbibe his errors, merely because they are his, and mistake them for truth.

"I am well aware that I should find it difficult to prove that I now believe what I do without a miracle, as you have suggested; for if miracles have existed they may have, indirectly, more influence in my mind than I am at present sensible of; and therefore I will not undertake to say that I am not principally indebted to them for my present views of the character of the supreme Being. I am disposed to acknowledge in humble gratitude all the blessings which I have received, and am made sensible of, let them come to me by what means, or through what channel soever. But I do not see how you had a right to expect that I should either *refute*, or else *acquiesce* in your opinion on this subject.—What! must I either prove that there have been no such things as miracles, or else admit their truth! Must I either refute your notion that they have had great influence on my faith and practice, or else '*express my acquiescence*' that such is the fact! Hard lines! I choose to take the easier course, and confess that I am too ignorant to do either. I am willing, however, still to be instructed.

"2d. I have nothing at present to say on the subject of prophecy; i.e. to reconcile the pretensions to it with the honesty of the prophets, without admitting divine inspiration, better than what I have written in my seventh number. When I have received your answer to that I may have something more to write. I would suggest, however, here, that as you frequently make use of the expression 'divine inspiration,' I want the expression more fully defined and explained. I have no distinct idea, that I know of, of *divine inspiration*. I suppose you mean the same by it which you did by the 'divine mission,' given to the apostles, or at least something similar; but still I am ignorant of the subject. You have sometimes spoken of divine revelation, as though it was something distinct from this divine mission, and which was a proof of it; but, you must excuse me, I am still all in the dark about it. Do be so good as to inform me how you suppose the prophets, or apostles, or even Jesus, could know for a certainty that they were divinely inspired?

"3. When I acknowledged that there are evidences in favour of divine revelation, I did not suppose it necessary to state what those evidences are; because some of them, to say the least, are very apparent. The bare report of any thing, I conceive to be evidence of the report's being true; and would be sufficient to acquire belief should nothing arise in the mind to counterbalance it: and as I had repeatedly promised to give you the reasons for my doubts I expected to have been indulged a little longer before I should have been again faulted on this subject. But as it respects this matter I am all patience and submission, if it may be so that truth shall finally come to light.

"Under this article you have gone into a very lengthy discussion to shew that the evidence by which the apostles believed in the resurrection could not be counterbalanced, &c. And if I understand what you have written it amounts in my mind to about the following, viz. the apostles could not have been convinced of the fact of the resurrection by any evidence short of the fact itself. 2dly. If the fact did exist there is no evidence which can counterbalance it. *Ergo*. As the apostles were convinced of the truth, the fact did exist. This is pretty much like saying, if the fact were *true*, it could not have been *false*! But I spoke of the evidence in relation to *ourselves* rather than the *apostles*: we believe or disbelieve for ourselves, and by such evidence as *we* have. You think if twelve men should testify in favour of a resurrection, and the body could not be found, 'various opinions would result from such evidence.' If so, some might believe the account true; and they might persuade others to believe it; and only let it be reported and believed that some one had died for the truth of it, and it would make no difference after this, as it respects the influence of faith, whether the account was true or false.

"You will excuse me for making no further remarks on what you have written under this article till you have answered my seventh number, and also given me a more clear definition of *divine inspiration*.

"4. What you have written under the fourth article, generally speaking, is satisfactory, till I come to the last sentence; and even with that I have not much fault to charge you with. It is true we may be mistaken as to our ideas of the eternity or immutability of any thing; but then, as it respects argument, it is just as well as though we were correct, as no one can prove us otherwise; no, nor even raise a reasonable doubt on the subject. But even if it could be demonstrated that there is not a rational being now in the universe who existed two centuries ago, or one who will exist two centuries hence, I conceive, as the fact could not, so the knowledge of the fact ought not to make any difference in the relation, dependence and moral obligation between man and man. Man learns by his own experience, as well as from the experience of others; and *vice versa*; hence we profit by the experience of those

who have gone before us.

"When man shall universally learn this great moral truth that much of his happiness is inseparably connected with the happiness of his fellow beings, which is one of the immutable principles of moral nature, then each individual will strive to the utmost to promote the general welfare; for in so doing he increases his own individual happiness, and also the happiness of posterity.

"5. What you have said under the fifth article, for reasons already given, will be considered in my next number, when I hope I shall be furnished with more light on the subject.

"I will only observe here that a miracle, as I conceive, must be performed agreeable to, or else it must be a violation of the laws of nature. If the former, whatever it might be to others, to those who understood the means of its operation, it could be, strictly speaking, no miracle; and if no miracle, no evidence, to them, of divine inspiration: but if the latter, and those who performed the same were ignorant of the power by which they were performed, I do not see how that the performance of a miracle could give them any knowledge of futurity. And if not, what did give it to them, and in what way was it given?

"It will still be recollected that I do not admit the existence of miracles, although I speak of them as though they were true, merely to shew that even if they were true I should still have my difficulties respecting the truth of divine revelation.

"6th. Your remarks under the sixth article are satisfactory, though they have not convinced me of the incorrectness of my opinion; because that which is founded in *truth* is, after all the only thing that is 'good and nourishing' to the understanding. The sound mind pants only after truth; and as he knows eternal truth is unalterable, he is not foolish enough even to desire, it should be what it is not. The reason why we often desire that which we cannot have is because, not knowing the whole truth, we do not know but that we may have the things we desire.

"7th. As it respects 'not even deserving a future existence,' I was not fully understood. I only meant an *anxious* desire, as I expressed a little before, and as also I expressed *anxious concern* a little after; that is a desire which is incompatible with reconciliation to truth whether that truth gives us little or much. Had not truth been favourable to our existence we certainly should not have existed; and I can see no reason to fear a truth which has been so favourable as to give us being. It is true, a desire to exist as long as we can enjoy life seems to be inseparably connected with our moral nature; and yet I can see no terror in that which takes away our sensibility, whether it be for a night, for ages, or for eternity. I should just as soon think of being terrified at the idea of a sound and sweet sleep. If the truth be what I suspect it is, I see no good reason why it should be revealed to us, any more than the hour of our death! This truth is wisely concealed from us.

"8th. You have seen me so long in the dark that I begin to doubt whether you would be willing to own me correct, even if I should come fully into the light; i. e. according to your understanding. Is it possible sir, that you should suppose me capable of writing so great a solecism as the following, viz.: If a revelation were ever necessary, it was necessary only to convince mankind that a revelation is not true! But it seems that such must have been your construction, or very near it, or else you could not have found the error of so great magnitude, of which you speak. Although I did not express my idea so full and explicit as I might, and perhaps ought to have done, yet I can assure you that, by reconciling man to his present state, I meant nothing less than what you have expressed in a former letter; and I meant to include all for which you have contended in the article now under consideration. For 1st. If divine revelation were necessary, the thing revealed is undoubtedly true. 2d. If true, I am fully satisfied with your views on the subject.

"9th. Your explanation relative to what you suggested in a former letter (i. e. *that I must mean that the apostles stated falsehood*) is satisfactory; though what you now say you meant, as I have already informed you, was not exactly my meaning. The fact is, I did not mean to express any opinion as to the truth or to the falsity of the apostles' testimony. I very readily grant, however, that, if I 'do not *believe* that they stated the truth' 'I must believe that they stated falsehood;' unless (which would be very extraordinary) the weight of evidence be so exactly balanced in my mind that it is impossible for me to form an opinion on the subject.—But supposing I disbelieved their testimony altogether; what could I do more than to give my reasons for not believing it? Would it be reasonable to call on me to prove their testimony false? It is a very hard thing to prove a negative!

"You will have already perceived by my seventh number that I have no idea that the facts on which the Christian religion is said to have been founded can now be proved false. No, whatever might have been the case in the time of it, they were neglected too long before any attempt of this kind was made, though the accounts should have been supposed ever so erroneous as to promise any success in their refutation. And I am inclined to think that one century *then* would involve facts in as much obscurity as

five centuries would *now*. But I have already expressed my doubts whether the facts on which the religion of the *Shakers* is said to be predicated, although not half a century standing, can now be proved false; and yet if they are true they are nothing short of miraculous.

"The Christian religion therefore, true or false, undoubtedly will stand, in some shape or other, and be believed more or less, as long as man remains upon the earth. For if it was introduced without any violations of the laws of nature, i. e. without miracles, which probably was the case, if false, we cannot expect any such violations for the sake of destroying it; and without such violations I do not see how it could be destroyed, because the believers of it, invariably, believe it to be established on such mysterious supernatural principles; and I expect but very few, comparatively, will ever have sufficient strength of mind to throw off the mystic veil.

"Yours, &c.

A. KNEELAND."

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LETTER VII.

Dear sir, and brother—Desiring to bring our present correspondence to a close as soon as the merits of its subject will admit, I propose in replying to your 8th number, to remark only on the most essential particulars, taking no particular notice of two classes contained in your communication, viz. that which seems to grow out of a misconstruction of my arguments and that in which you appear to agree with them. Indulging in this liberty, the subjects to which I will endeavour to confirm myself are the following.

1st. Your method of accounting for the absence of the crucified Jesus, from the sepulchre where it was laid and guarded by the Roman soldiers.

2d. What you suggest respecting the divine mission of Christ and his apostles, the miracles which were wrought by them in attestation of the Messiah, and the credibility of their testimony regarding a future state.

3d. What you contend for respecting the *utility, or inutility* of the christian hope of future felicity.

4th. Something on the instructions of Jesus to his disciples respecting their conduct toward their enemies.

5th. What you suggest respecting Jesus' not being known to the two disciples, &c.

6th. Your criticism on my argument respecting the evidences of the resurrection, &c.

1st. You propose to account for the absence of the body of Jesus, by supposing, that some persons by frightening the guards were enabled thereby to convey the body away, which they did being willing that Jesus should be thought to have risen from the dead, whereby he would be deified, according to the notions of the Greeks respecting deifying men after they were dead, &c. Those who thus stole the body were not the disciples of Jesus, but some persons who were desirous thereby to punish the Jews for so cruelly putting Jesus to death.

Here you have proposed two subjects as forming the cause, in the mind of those who stole the body, of their undertaking so hazardous an enterprise, neither of which appears to me to wear the necessary marks of probability.—1st. If they wished to have Jesus deified according to the notions of the Greeks, there was no need of establishing the belief of his having rose from the dead. This was not the case with those who among the Greeks were deified after their death. The tombs of their heroes whom they placed among the gods, remained among the people.

2d. Who that then lived in Jerusalem or its vicinity could look on the crucifixion of Jesus as an act of cruelty? Others than Jews would not feel very much interested in this affair, as Jesus had confined his ministry to the Jews, and directed his disciples not to enter into any of the cities of the Gentiles, this matter was a case which seemed to concern the Jews only. Now look at the case. The Jews expected a Messiah, a deliverer, one who should become their prince, and deliver them from the bondage of the Romans. Jesus pretended to be sent of God as their Messiah of whom the ancient prophets had spoken; he pretended to work miracles in confirmation of his divine mission; but in room of delivering the Jews from the Roman yoke, he prophesied of their destruction by the Romans. Now, sir, if Jesus made all these pretensions without divine authority for so doing, if he caused to be reported that he wrought miracles when he never wrought one in his life, if he kept the people in a continual uproar driving about the country from one extreme of Palestine to another all by his frauds and fascinating deceptions;

and in order to quiet the people, and have things go on in a regular order, those who were charged with the public concerns brought about the crucifixion of this impostor, who knowing all these things, being a Jew would think of accusing these godly pharisees and rulers of cruelty for so doing? If Jesus did not do the works which he pretended to do, he certainly was an impostor, and it is in vain to attempt to save him from such a charge. And if he were such a *blasphemous* impostor as to pretend to work miracles by the power of God, when he knew he had no such power, it appears very plain that he deserved to die according to Jewish customs. If the miracles of Jesus had been of a different description, there might have been some deception. That is, if such miracles had been pretended as you state of the Shakers; in such a case nobody would trouble their heads about the matter. Some would say, the good woman perhaps was badly hurt, and she thought her ribs were broken, when in fact they were not, and with a little good nursing she was able to join the dance; others might be extravagant enough to suppose that something marvelous had taken place, but who would know? Or, I will add, who would care? But will you undertake to argue that the most learned and artful could impose on people by pretending to have power from God to open the eyes of the blind, to heal all manner of diseases with a word, and to raise the dead from their graves? No, sir, if Jesus did not perform the miracles which he pretended to perform, there is no propriety in believing that any body was disposed to charge the Jews with cruelty for ridding community of such an impostor. But after all, even allowing your proposed method of accounting for the absence of the body, which by no means is half as probable a story as that reported by the Jews, as this does not account for the disciples' believing that Jesus had actually arose from the dead. What is to be done with this circumstance? Are we to suppose that as soon as the disciples found that the body was missing, they took it into their heads that he had actually arose from the dead without any further evidence? Well if they really believed it they could honestly state their belief to the people. You will remember that you have agreed that the apostles were honest men. But then the apostles go further, they assert that they were certified of the real resurrection of Jesus by many *infallible* proofs, that they saw him, conversed with him, ate with him, heard his discourses in which he expounded the scriptures of the law, of the prophets, and of the psalms which respected his passion and resurrection. Will you allow these men to have been honest men, and still suppose that somebody stole the body of Jesus from the sepulchre? The boldness of the disciples in declaring the resurrection, their willingness to suffer all manner of persecutions for the name of Jesus, show plainly that they did believe in his resurrection. Here I refer you to my former arguments in which I have attempted to make it appear that the disciples could not have been deceived.

But even allowing, that the body was stolen, and that the disciples were deceived, there is still, if possible, a greater difficulty to account for, viz. the success of the preaching of Jesus and him crucified. Here I wish, in a special manner, to call your attention. The four evangelists and the acts of the apostles were written in the life time of the disciples of Jesus; this, Paley, in his Evidences of Christianity, fully proves. He likewise proves beyond any reasonable doubt that they were written by the men whose names they bear. These historians then relate all the miracles recorded in the four gospels, and inform us that Jesus actually performed them. They give each of them an account of the crucifixion and resurrection of their divine master. They relate the things of which they were eye witnesses. But supposing they were deceived, which I humbly conceive, is not supposable, can we reasonably believe that these gospels in which such barefaced falsehoods were recorded would ever gain credit among a people whose religious education was to be all overthrown by coming into the belief of those writings?

But the apostles had not these books to assist them in their ministry; they went on in preaching Jesus and the resurrection, first in the city of Jerusalem, and throughout all Judea, and among the Gentiles with astonishing success before they wrote the accounts which we have. Now, sir, on the supposition that the body was stolen will you account for the people's being persuaded that Jesus rose from the dead?—Is it possible to conceive of any thing to which the Jews could have been more opposed, than to the testimony, that the man whom they had crucified was the Messiah, and that God had raised him from the dead? Now turn to the account given in Acts, chap. ii. and let reason and candor have their voice in the matter under consideration. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Can you conceive of any thing that could have been more trying to the feelings of the people? Observe, "whom ye have crucified." Bring the matter home to yourself. Suppose you had been active in the prosecution of one of your fellow creatures, and the prosecution should have terminated in the execution of the accused, how would it try your feelings for your neighbours to come and tell you, that you had been the murderer of a good and innocent man? But in the case under consideration there are circumstances that heighten the importance of the subject. The great Messiah in which all the Jews were educated to believe, as much as we are educated to believe in Christ; this personage is the subject. See the account, "Now, when they heard this, they, were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do?" Why do we hear this exclamation? "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Why should the people now feel thus affected? Why do they not cry out against the men who accuse them of having done this wickedness, as they did against Jesus a few days before? Can you, sir,

believe that all that caused this, was the body's having been stolen from the sepulchre, the disciples having gotten the whim into their heads that Jesus had arose from the dead, now run about like mad men and accuse the people of having murdered the great Messiah, the anointed of God, affirming that God had raised him from the dead, when barely the absence of the dead body was all the evidence on which this could be founded? Not only did the testimony of Peter, on this occasion, which will remain a most memorable one while the world stands, carry pungent conviction to the very hearts of the people, but it happily issued in the glorious triumph of faith in the risen Jesus in about three thousand of the then present audience.

In the fore part of this chapter we have an account of the manifestation of the mighty and miraculous power of God which was the evident cause of the conviction of the people; and to no other cause, I humbly conceive, can we impute such consequences.

Permit me to remark here, that all that ingenuity has ever invented about how the body of Jesus was disposed of, can have no weight at all against the doctrine of the resurrection which the apostles propagated. The body's being absent from the sepulchre never convinced one reasonable being in the world, of the fact of the resurrection. It did not convince those who first saw the sepulchre empty.

"Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping; and they (the angels) say unto her, woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto him, because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She supposing him to be the gardner, saith unto him, sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, 'Mary.' She replied, 'RABBONI!'" How naturally is this account given. In what an artless manner is the story told. I so much admire the sincerity and unaffected love of Mary to her master that the following reflections demand a place here. The person who but three days before was crowned with thorns, was reviled and spat upon, was most ignominiously crucified between two thieves and laid in the sepulchre is so much the object of Mary's affection that she appears solicitous for the body. I cannot doubt the truth of Mary's being here, for the story is told without any design. But why is Mary here? If Jesus was an impostor she never knew of his working a miracle in her life. But if Jesus was in fact what he pretended to be and if he wrought those miracles which are recorded of him, all is explained. But it is evident that Mary had not thought of Jesus' having been raised from the dead, when she saw that he was absent from the sepulchre. When Jesus spake to her, and called her by name as he had frequently done before, she knew him. When this Mary and the other women that were with her went to the eleven, and told them the story, they did not believe it, nor does it appear that Peter believed in the resurrection, even after Mary and others had certified him, and he had been himself to the sepulchre and found it empty; but he went away "wondering in himself at that which was come to pass."

The evidences by which the disciples believed in this all-important truth were equal to its importance and to its extraordinary character. These evidences have been noticed.

2d. The mission of Christ and his apostles, the miracles wrought by them in attestation of that mission, and the credibility of their testimony respecting a future state may now receive some notice.

You are disposed to call on me to inform you what I mean by this mission, to which I reply; I mean a divine appointment to act in a certain official character, accompanied with certain powers by which they were *enabled to evince*, by miracles, this their appointment.

Jesus was appointed by God himself to reveal the divine character, nature, and will of the Father to the world, by his preaching, by his miracles of mercy, by his sufferings, by his death and resurrection. The apostles were sent by Jesus Christ on the same mission, on which Jesus himself was sent. See his prayer, John xvii. "As thou has sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Those who believed in Jesus, and acknowledged him to be the Messiah, believed on account of the miracles which he wrought, and as I have before argued, Jesus never required of any a belief in him, barely on his testimony of himself, but on the evidence afforded by the works which he did in his Father's name. So likewise, those who believed on Jesus through the ministry of the apostles, never were called on to believe but by the authority of as great wonders as were wrought by Christ himself. I need not say much on this particular, as you must know that the ground on which I have here placed this subject, is the ground on which the New Testament places it.

The absurd notions which have been erroneously adopted by Christian doctors and councils concerning the mission of Christ to appease the divine wrath, to reconcile God to man, to suffer the penalty of the divine law, &c. &c. which have rendered the gospel a mystery and a mist, in room of a high way for the ransomed of the Lord to return to Zion in, is chargeable to the enemy who sowed tares among the wheat. These opinions with a multitude of studied inventions about a mysterious work of sovereign elective grace wrought in certain individuals, in an unknown way and frequently in an

unknown time all which is to be followed by a system of mysterious sanctification, connected most mysteriously with final perseverance, together with all the intricate unknown items set down in the Westminster Catechism, have only served to perplex some, puff others up with spiritual pride and exalt them in the kingdom of spiritual wickedness in high places, to drive some to despair, and to disgust reason and common sense in others. There is not a word of all the above jargon in the sacred scriptures, which give us a most rational account of the great object of the gospel ministry. This object is the redemption of mankind from moral darkness, which is the whole occasion of moral evil, and to produce that improvement in the religious world which science is designed to effect in the political. It is to bring truth to light, to commend the character of God to man, to lead all men into the true knowledge, spirit, and temper of the divine nature. Thus we discover in Jesus no partialist, no sectarian, no friend to any one denomination, more than another. And when he had accomplished, by his sufferings, what the prophets had foretold, he then sent his gospel of the love and mercy of God to the whole world. His divinely inspired apostles followed the examples of their leader and preached the universal, impartial goodness of God to all men, and confirmed their mission by similar miracles to those wrought by Jesus.

You further inquire the grounds on which we are to believe Jesus and his apostles respecting a future state. Reply, on the same ground on which we believe them in other matters, viz. because they have proved the divinity of their mission or appointment to teach truth by the power of the God of truth. See 2 Cor. xii. 12, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." You need not be told that an *apostle* is a messenger, and that a messenger must have a mission. What then were the signs of St. Paul's mission? Answer, patience, signs, wonders, and mighty deeds. Jesus is said to be the great *apostle*, and high priest of our profession, and he evinced his apostleship by signs, by wonders, and mighty deeds. Now, sir, as these signs were designed to prove to us that Jesus and his apostles were divinely inspired, so they are the ground on which we may safely believe their testimony in all things.

If your inquiry extends further than the plain statements and facts go, you will at once see that they go beyond the demands of reason, for it is an unreasonable thing to require of an uninspired person any further account concerning the way by which an inspired man knows what he says to be true, than it has pleased God to enable his messenger to make known.

When the pharisees asked the man who was born blind, to whom Jesus had given sight, "What sayest thou of him? that he hath opened thine eyes? he said, he is a prophet." How comes this man to believe that Jesus was a prophet? Because the sign of a messenger of God had been given. If the pharisees had asked him, how he knew that Jesus was a prophet, would he not answer them by the miracle wrought upon him? If they should further ask him of particulars, how Jesus could be a prophet, how he knew things which others did not know, would they have discovered any wisdom in their questions? or would he have discovered any in attempting to answer them?

If I may further remark on the mission of Jesus and his apostles, it seems reasonable to say that it comprehends the whole doctrine of the gospel, that is to say, they were appointed to preach the gospel which comprehends the whole ministry of reconciliation, or a manifestation of reconciling truth. There is, therefore, no truth in the gospel which is not calculated in its nature to reconcile man to God, when such truth is understood.

If our heavenly Father had from all eternity predestinated far the greatest part of mankind to a state of endless un-reconciliation, the revelation of this to them who were thus destined, could have no effect in reconciling them to God. What had Jesus or his apostles to do with such doctrine as this? Nothing. They make no mention of any such thing. If according to the vain traditions received from the wisdom of this world that cometh to nought, our tender babes were doomed to everlasting wrath for the sin of the first man who lived on earth, the manifestation of such a truth could reconcile none of those victims to this God of unmerciful vengeance. But what had Jesus to do with such blasphemous doctrine? See him as the representative of God, as the great apostle of heaven to man, notice what he does and what he says. He takes young children in his arms and blesses them, he says suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. If our Creator was full of wrath and vindictive vengeance towards sinners, the manifestation of such a truth would by no means reconcile sinners to God; but when God commendeth his love towards the sinner through the mission, ministry, or dispensation of Jesus Christ, such truth when revealed, naturally reconciles the sinner to God. God is eternally the same, his love is the same, his will to do his creatures good is always the same, and his means to carry his good will into effect are always at his command.

Jesus taught sinners, enemies to God, that God to whom they were enemies, loved them. This he demonstrated by the rain and sun shine which was communicated to the evil and the good, and this impartial love of God, he urged as the perfect pattern for our imitation, and set it up as the mark where lies the prize to be won by our Christian vocation. I say unto you love your enemies, pray for them that

use you spitefully and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; that is, that you may imitate him in your conduct and moral character. Now, sir, what has all this to do about reconciling God to man? What has it to do about appeasing divine wrath? If Jesus taught the doctrine of God's love to sinners, and our doctrine taught by our Christian doctors of God's wrath and hatred towards sinners be true, the matter is settled at once. These doctors being ministers of divine truth, Jesus may be any thing else, but he cannot be an apostle and high priest of God.

But I need not extend this article, you are as well persuaded of the erroneousness of these doctrines of men as I am; but it belongs to this subject, to take a general view of the ministry of Jesus and his apostles. It is so especially, because this view shows at once the necessity as well as the nature of this divine ministry. If you view the nature of truth as you have heretofore expressed it, and as I am confident you do, you cannot reasonably doubt the necessity of having it manifested to the world.

It was necessary then for God to endue one with this ministry of truth, it is reasonable that others, being taught by him should be appointed to the same ministry; but you will see at once that truth could not be preached to the Jews without moving the superstitious scribes, pharisees, and doctors of the law against it, this opposition hid its natural tendency, and terminated in the death of the divine teacher; and if the disciples had gone on and preached the same doctrine, reason would suppose that they would all have been put to death immediately, and the work of reformation would have stopped. Now, sir, if I am able to reason at all, it was necessary for God to make a display of divine power in vindicating truth, which would place it on ground too high for all the superstition of the world to remove. You contend that the voice of reason should be heard. What does it say? It says that God produced man in the first place on this earth, in a different way from that by which man is now multiplied. Reason says, there was a necessity for this; but it does not say that the means of procreation now do not answer even a better purpose than to have man multiplied by the same means by which he came first to exist. The same reason will contend that in the establishment of the gospel ministry in the world, different means were necessary from those which are successfully employed in perpetuating it.

3d. You contend that the Christian hope of a future happy existence, is not necessary to our present happiness; and that there is nothing more disagreeable in the thought of an eternal cessation of existence, than there is in the thought of reposing ourselves in quiet sleep. Notwithstanding what you say about non existence, all your play on words makes no difference about the thing talked of. Nor do I see that reason in your observations on this subject, for which you contend. You very well know that to cease to possess an identity of being and of intellect is what we mean by non-existence, and this is just the thing for which you argue. Now when we contemplate taking refreshment in sleep, it is in hope of awaking again in a better condition for enjoying ourselves and others, and for the performance of our duty. But the contemplation of passing out of existence, never to have another thought is certainly very widely different as to the nature of the subject, from the former. Now, sir, why should not these different subjects produce different sensations in the mind? And wherein one is entirely repugnant to the other, why is it not reasonable that the contemplation of them should be attended with effects in the mind as repugnant to each other as are the subjects? If it be a pleasure to a parent to contemplate, when he retires to rest with his family, the expectation of seeing them again in the morning, all refreshed and invigorated anew is it not reasonable to suppose that a contemplation exactly reverse from this would produce mental pain? I can conceive, without any violation of my reason or senses, how a fond mother can take satisfaction in nursing her babe to sleep, knowing that the tender being needs this repose; but I cannot conceive how the same affectionate mother could be equally pleased with the thought that her child would never wake again in time or in eternity. I feel grateful to the giver of every good and perfect gift, that he has given that blessed hope which is as an anchor to the soul, whereby the Christian in his dying hour is enabled to take a short farewell of his friends, expressing his hope of meeting them soon in a better world. And I think it unreasonable, even in the extreme, to suppose that a rational person could, in a similar situation, feel as well satisfied with an expectation of an extinction of being.

You fault the address to truth, which you say I put into the mouth of your argument, but this you do without the least occasion, nor is it in your power, sir, to show that your argument does not afford all I have made it say. You might, or rather you have varied the language a little, but the sentiment is preserved entire. The address to truth would, as before, extoll her existence, express the most ardent and constant love for her divinity and finish the climax by *soaring down* to non-existence, which you can contemplate with as much satisfaction as you could an eternal existence in the enjoyment of the object of your love!

But you contend that truth is lovely, and if your doubts are consistent with truth you shall be happy to be confirmed in them; &c. This hypothesis, sir, is too large to suit your own views; for you have before decided a choice between the doctrine of eternal misery and that of, I will call it, annihilation for this is its true meaning. You have revolted at the thought of eternal misery, but your hypothesis allows you no such liberty. Truth is lovely, and if the doctrine of eternal punishment, with all the fire and brimstone

that has ever been preached by the most zealous advocates of torment be truth, your hypothesis compels you to embrace the goddess, and contemplate eternal misery with the same pleasure that you do non-existence, or with the same you would everlasting felicity did you believe in it!

If we would reason well, we must reason from what we know. We know that man is capable of being miserable, he is capable of great sufferings; likewise he is capable of being happy, he is capable of great enjoyments. Now to pretend that he has no choice, that it is as well for him to be miserable as to be happy, as well for him not to exist as to exist, is the reverse of reason.

4th. As Jesus, in the instructions which he gave to his disciples, respecting their conduct towards their enemies, had no design reaching to the laws of a body politic, but only to the conduct by which the ministry of the gospel would best succeed in its early beginning, while it was *necessary* for it to be persecuted, by which we are now favoured with its evidences, we may now err in applying those instructions differently from their primary design. St. Paul, as much as any of the disciples of Jesus, submitted himself to the directions of non-resistance, yet he insists on submission to the higher powers, because they were the ministers of God, even revengers to execute wrath upon them that do evil.

5th. With a confidence rather unusual, you challenge me to account for Jesus' not being known by the two disciples while he walked with them on their way to Emmaus; you bring a comparison, and urge the subject in a way to signify that you have found something in the scripture account that "*refutes itself*." You might have considered Mary's case too as a similar one. She saw Jesus with whom she had had a familiar acquaintance, but she thought it had been the gardner, and talked with him without knowing him, until, in the same manner as he used to address her, he said *Mary*, when in a moment she knew him. So the two brethren walked on the way with Jesus, and attended to his conversation, which must have been of considerable length, yet knew him not until he performed an office at table in which no doubt, he appeared as he had done many times before, which led them to know him at once. But I am called on to tell how they could walk and discourse with him and not know him. Well, sir, do you not understand that your question is asked on supposition that the miracle of the resurrection was a fact, and on the supposition that Jesus could appear and disappear to persons as he pleased? We are informed that when the two brethren knew him, "he vanished out of their sight." On the supposition then, that Jesus could appear and disappear at pleasure, is it at all difficult to allow that he could appear to his acquaintance as a stranger, if he pleased?

It seems to me, sir, a little unaccountable why you should take hold of this subject with so much seeming earnestness. Is it possible that you should suppose that the fate of this particular should have any power on our general subject? Without the least concern for the argument in which I am engaged, I might allow that St. Luke was wrongly informed respecting this particular, but that he wrote it just as he understood the matter. And what would follow? Would this prove any thing false on which christianity rests? I am unable to see how it affects the argument one way or the other. I am not the less inclined to believe the account, because it does not affect the truth of the resurrection; and I should think that as this story does not seem at all necessary in proof of that fact, it would be considered an evidence that the writer of it was not endeavouring to make a story for such a purpose. If we read the several accounts of the resurrection, we shall perceive that the writers probably put down as many particulars as come into their minds at the time of writing, without thoughts coming into their minds how the truth of the resurrection would be proved by the incidents which they wrote. There is no design of this sort in what they have written that we can see. They write as if they knew for certainty that Jesus rose from the dead, and as if the matter was out of all dispute. They discover no concern for fear the account they were giving would not be believed. There is not one instance of an attempt to guard the story by clearing up any difficulty. Would impostors write in this way? It is not believed that there was ever the instance. Imposture is like a thief who starts at his own shadow, and discovers guilt by endeavouring to hide it. But truth having no concern of this sort, discovers none.—And this is in all respects the apparent character of the four gospels.

6th. Your criticism on my argument respecting the evidences of the resurrection I shall now endeavour to show to be incorrect.

You criticise as follows; "The apostles could not have been convinced of the fact of the resurrection by any evidence short of the fact itself. 2d. If the fact did exist there is no evidence which can counterbalance it. *Ergo*, as the apostles were convinced of the truth, the fact did exist. This is pretty much like saying, if the fact were *true* it could not have been false!"

The first member of your criticism supposes that I contend that the apostles had no evidence of the resurrection but the fact itself. The second member of your criticism supposes that I contend the fact of the resurrection could not exist without proving itself to the apostles in such a way that no evidence could counterbalance it. Now in both of these you are under a mistake, I never urged the fact of the resurrection as evidence of itself to the apostles. I never pretended that they saw him rise. We have no

account that any body saw this act performed. If the apostles had stood by the sepulchre and had seen the body of Jesus rise up and walk out of the house of death, then their evidences of his resurrection would have been the fact itself; but this was not the case, nor did I use any intimations of this nature. So the first member of your criticism is an error of yours. 2dly. If Jesus had rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and never had given any proofs of this to any one, would the fact of his having risen be any evidence of itself to any person? It surely would not. Nor have I suggested any thing which intimates that the resurrection could not have been true without proving itself to be so to the apostles. What seems a little remarkable respecting this subject, is, you profess to care for nothing but simple truth, and yet you seem to study how to avoid it, as the above criticism seems to evince. I say *seems* to evince, for I am not prepared to accuse you of such a fault—I would charitably believe that you thought your criticism would hit something or another nearly about right, without understanding what the amount of it is.

After having laboured, in a lengthy manner, as you acknowledge, to prove that the evidences which proved to the apostles the truth of the resurrection could not be counterbalanced, you must reasonably suppose that I feel a little disappointed that you should condescend to pay no other attention to my reasoning than the above criticism. If I did not make my argument clear why should you neglect to point out to me wherein it was wanting? Why should I not expect to have my errors corrected, as well as to be called on to correct my brother's? Should not these kind offices be reciprocal? If you conduct in this way, I shall certainly grow vain, and boast of doing more for you, than you do for me.

Having noticed in a brief manner, the several particulars which were proposed on my first page, I will occupy a few more with some observations on the evidences which we are favoured with, on which to build our belief in the resurrection of Jesus.

I have in one or two instances referred you to Paley, who has, with abilities and learning suited to such a task, brought forward the authorities on which the credibility of the gospels rests. I have set down his eleven propositions respecting the scriptures, and I humbly request you to examine the proof which he has brought to support them. If he has fairly supported all these propositions, as I humbly conceive he has, will you show why the scriptures of the New Testament are not worthy to be credited by us?

I am loath to attempt to present the evidences on which I conceive our faith rests, because in the first place they are vastly numerous; 2ndly, I do not believe that I am capable of doing that justice to the subject which it justly claims; and 3dly, Paley has done it by the assistance of Dr. Lardner's works, to so great an extent, that it renders unnecessary any attempt of mine.

However, as there seems a particular sort of pleasure in it, I will here make a little addition to what I quoted in my former communication, and notice that, following the passage from the epistle of Barnabas, Paley mentions an epistle written by Clement, bishop of Rome,[4] another of St. Paul's fellow labourers. "This epistle is spoken of by the ancients as an epistle acknowledged by all; and as Irenæus well represents its value," "written by CLEMENT, who had seen the blessed apostles and conversed with them, who had the preaching of the apostles still sounding in his ears, and their traditions before his eyes." In this epistle of *Clement*, he quotes Mat. v. 7, xviii. 6. Next to *Clement*, Paley notices *Hermes* who is mentioned by St. Paul, Rom. xvi. 14, in a catalogue of Roman Christians. Hermes wrote a work called the *Shepherd or Pastor of Hermes*. [5] Says our author, "Its antiquity is incontestible from the quotations of it in Irenæus, A.D. 178, Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 194, Tertullian, A.D. 200, Origen, A. D. 230." In the epistle there are allusions to St. Matthew's, St. Luke's, and St. John's gospels.

[Footnote 4: Paley's Evidences, p. 107. Referred to Dr. Lardner's Creed, vol. 1, p. 62, et seq.]

[Footnote 5: Paley's Evidences, p. 110. Lardner's Creed, vol. 1, p. 111.]

Next to Hermes our author mentions IGNATIUS, who became bishop of Antioch, about thirty-seven years after the ascension of Christ; and was without doubt personally acquainted with the apostles. Epistles of Ignatius are referred to by Polycarp his contemporary. Passages, found in the epistles now extant under his name, are quoted by Irenæus, A.D. 178, by Origen, A.D. 130. In these epistles there are various undoubted allusions to the gospels of St. Matthew and St. John. Of these allusions the following are clear specimens: "Christ was baptised of John, that all righteousness might be fulfilled by him." "*Be ye wise as serpents in all things, and harmless as doves.*" "Yet the spirit is not deceived, being from God; for it knows whence it comes, and whether it goes." "He (Christ) is the door of the Father, by which enters in Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and the apostles and the church." Ignatius speaks of St Paul in terms of high respect, and quotes his epistles to the Ephesians by name.

Next to Ignatius, our author mentions POLYCARP who had been taught by the apostles; had conversed with many who had seen Christ, was also by the apostles appointed bishop of Smyrna. This

testimony concerning Polycarp is given by Irenæus, who in his youth had seen him. "I can tell the place," saith Irenæus, "in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, and his going out and coming in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his person, and the discourses he made to the people, and how he related his conversation with John amid others who had seen the Lord, and how he related their sayings, and what he had heard concerning the Lord, both concerning his miracles and his doctrine, as he had received them from the eye witness of the word of life: all which Polycarp related *agreeably* to the scriptures."

In one short letter of Polycarp's, there are near forty clear allusions to books of the New Testament: which is strong evidence of the respect which Christians of that age bear for these books, and positive evidence that the gospel had been written before this epistle.

Papias, a hearer of John, and companion of Polycarp, as Irenæus attests, and of that age, as all agree, expressly ascribes the respective gospels to Matthew and Mark, in a passage quoted by Eusebius. He informs us that Mark collected his gospel from Peter's preaching, and that Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew. This authority fully shows that the gospels bore these names at this early period.

The authors which are here mentioned, all lived in the days of the apostles, that is, when the apostles were aged men, these were their pupils in the gospel, and their epistles which have reference to the gospels are very justly used to prove that the gospels were written by the men whose names they bear. From these most early authors, Paley goes on, and brings down, by regular succession, the christian authors, until he comes into the fourth century, when they are vastly numerous.

By the foregoing authority, together with an innumerable multitude of corroborating circumstances, we are led to entertain no doubts but that the gospels of Matthew and John were written by these eye witnesses of the things which they relate; and that the gospel of Luke was written by a person of this name, who had his information from undoubted testimony of the apostles; and that Mark wrote his gospel from St. Peter's mouth, and that this gospel may be called the gospel of Peter.

Those eye witnesses then wrote what they saw, and if they were honest men they wrote the truth.

We, sir, do certainly know as well as we know any thing which ancient history records, that the testimony of the miracles and resurrection of Jesus was believed in the age to which these things are referred, and that this testimony was sealed by the sufferings and death of vast multitudes of believers.

It should be noticed, that according to all accounts which have come to us, there were no worldly motives of any sort by which the propagators of the gospel were induced to labour in this cause. But on the contrary, every earthly consideration was direct against them; and furthermore let us remember, that the whole hierarchy of the Jews and all the superstition of the Gentiles were in arms against this religion, as I have before observed, nearly 300 years.

Hoping, dear brother, that these hasty remarks will be favourably received, and duly considered. I remain,

Yours, &c.

H. BALLOU.

* * * * *

EXTRACTS No. IX.

[As the objector here begins to give up his ground, his letters from this place will be given nearly entire. He commences this number as follows, viz.]

"*Dear sir and brother*—Your reply to my seventh number has been received, and hereby duly acknowledged. I have just given it a second reading, with peculiar care and attention; and I must add, generally speaking, with peculiar satisfaction too; for as it has tended in some degree to revive my almost extinguished faith in divine revelation, so it has in the same ratio served to obliterate, in some degree, those doubts which seemed to be rising *mountains high*, in my apprehension, and portended ere long to overturn all my former faith.

"There are some of my objections, however, which seem not yet to have been fully met on their proper ground, and of course not fully removed; and I must therefore be yet indulged with a few remarks.

"1st. Notwithstanding all the learning of the Greeks and Romans, in the days of Jesus and his apostles, yet, as you very justly insinuate, I am inclined to believe there never was a time in which 'the

world of human kind, both Jews and Gentiles, was more deeply involved in the darkness and stupidity of superstition than when the Messiah (i. e. Jesus) entered on his public ministry.' And notwithstanding your argument drawn from superstition, is admitted as good, and weighty, as far as it goes; yet, as it is conceived, it does not fully come to the point.

"For, in the grossest ages of superstition it is reasonable to suppose that there are always some who entertain serious doubts and scruples in regard to the propriety of many of the superstitious notions of their leaders. These will be more easily wrought upon. And although they may be directed by various circumstances to fix the mind upon something much better in point of moral principle, yet how far this would prevent them from connecting many of the superstitious notions of the age with those moral principles, only giving them a different dress, I am not able to say; neither do I see how the superstition of the Jews and Gentiles, generally, would be likely to prevent a thing of that kind.—It is the suspected superstition of the apostles and primitive christians and not the superstition of their opposers, to which the proposition alludes. Men, I conceive, may be honest, and yet superstitious; they may also give up one superstition, by being convinced of its error, and yet another will gradually grow in its stead. I am sensible, however, that this argument will better apply to those who were converted to christianity after the days of the apostles, when it is agreed that miracles had ceased, than it will to the apostles themselves.

"But, from what you have written, together with my further investigation of this subject, I cannot but perceive that this argument, even on its proper ground, does not contain all that force which, at first view, I thought it might: because, 1st, it must apply to the apostles, or else, as it respects the main question, it does not seem to have any real bearing on the subject; and 2dly, the change of the apostles appears to have been too sudden, and too extraordinary, to be accounted for in this way. That superstitions, however, have arisen, even in the christian church, you do not undertake to deny, but seem rather to admit; and it was on this fact that the first proposition was founded; but I perceive there is a difficulty in carrying this objection back to the apostles; for then the doctrine was new, and without precedent; and (unless the miracles on which it is said to have been founded were real) without any certain prospect of success. Although therefore the religion of the despised *Galatians* (for such were the christians called by the Romans) was considered by their persecutors, to be nothing more than a gross, and even impious superstition, yet no one can expect successfully to account 'in a rational way,' for the facts, whether real or supposed, on which that supposed superstition is said to have been founded. Hence the doubts growing out of my first proposition seem to be rendered equally, if not more doubtful than the reality of that truth, the evidence of which this objection was supposed in some degree to counterbalance.

"2d. The truth of my second proposition, viz. that a part of mankind at least have been and still are believing in miracles and revelations which are spurious, you seem not disposed to deny; but yet, at the same time you think you are 'under no obligation to admit this fact as any evidence against christianity.' That a spurious or pretended miracle does not invalidate a real one I admit; yet if a spurious miracle may obtain credit, and be in fact believed, it raises a query whether there have ever been any others but spurious. Your argument respecting 'counterfeit money' is admitted good in relation to that subject, but whether it will apply with equal weight to the subject of miracles may admit of a doubt. I do not see how the pretended miracles of the Shakers are at all 'dependent' on the miracles of Jesus for their 'imposition.'

"I meant nothing more by the miracles of Mahomet than his pretended 'correspondence with the angel Gabriel,' which I considered, if true, *miraculous*; as I conceive every revelation must be let it be communicated how it will.

"I have nothing to object to the picture which you have given of the life and religion of Mahomet; and as to what I have said in regard to the conversion and influence of Constantine, in giving a particular tone to the christian religion, you are not disposed to disagree with me: and at the same time you are 'by no means certain that a proper attention to the pretended miracles of the Shakers might not issue in assigning a natural cause for them.' Of all this I have no doubt. But, that these miracles are believed by the Shakers, you do not undertake to deny; nor that their religion, their faith in Ann, as being Christ in his second coming, and that their present mode of worship are all predicated upon them. They do not deny the miracles of Christ and his apostles any more than Christians in general deny the miracles of Moses and the prophets; but appeal to *theirs* as being equally of divine origin, and thereby clothing their religion with the same divine authority. Now, unless these things can be accounted for 'in a rational way,' which you seem to think may be the case, though you do not attempt it, they certainly raise a query in the mind at least whether the miracles recorded in scripture rest upon any better foundation.

"If a thing is absolutely known or believed to be miraculous, it is miraculous; (at least to those who thus believe) and whether any thing can be justly argued from the inferiority or superiority of a miracle,

I know not. In the raising of Lazarus, it is true, though the effect was the same, we discover as great a miracle, and perhaps greater, than in the raising of a son of the Shunamite by Elisha the prophet; 2 Kings iv. 34, 35, but the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus can hardly be said to have been wrought either by Jesus or by his apostles, and therefore that was not particularly referred to in the comparison of miracles; neither do I know that the comparison, in any sense, has much weight. Whether Lazarus ever died again or not we are not informed: neither do I recollect of ever hearing an opinion on the subject; but, if he died, it seems that his resurrection must have been very different from the resurrection of Jesus; i.e. to an immortal state, so that he 'dieth no more.'

"You admit, if I understood you, that the testimony of the apostles, concerning the resurrection of Jesus, had it not been accompanied with plain and astonishing miracles in the open day, and before the surrounding multitudes, who had ocular demonstration of their truth, would have been entitled to no more credit than the testimony of Mrs. A—, respecting her conversation with her deceased husband. For although it might have been true, and we could have no good reason to doubt the sincerity or belief of the witnesses, yet after all, its truth would solely rest on their mere *ipse dixit*, which would not be sufficient to establish so important a truth in the world. Hence, as you very justly observe, 'the declaration of the apostles of the resurrection of Jesus, until it was accompanied with power from on high, was never even communicated to the public, or ordered to be communicated.'

"In this manner I understood your reasoning, and I think I understand you correctly; and all this appears to be very candid; it is acknowledging all I would wish you to acknowledge on this subject. But here comes the difficulty. Miracles in process of time cease; and now people must believe, if they believe at all, without the testimony's being 'accompanied with power from on high.' And how can we believe in the miracles said to have been wrought by the apostles, without the testimony's being accompanied by miracles any more than they could at first believe in the miracles of the resurrection of Jesus without the testimony's being accompanied by miracles? You have already anticipated this objection, and have endeavoured to answer it by arguing that 'perpetual miracles would, if as powerful as they were at first, preclude the exercise of our reasoning faculties and the necessity of investigation, which is one of the most rational enjoyments of which we are capable.' Although this argument, it is confessed, has considerable weight, yet it does not seem wholly to remove the difficulty. I feel very much like those Jews who proposed the question to Jesus; 'how long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ tell us plainly.' I am not satisfied that the evidence of the truth of the resurrection is as great, at this day, whatever it was then, as it could have been. If Jesus had remained on the earth till this time, or if he had appeared to every generation since, it appears to me the evidence would have been much greater; and yet not so great as to 'preclude the exercise of our reasoning faculties.'

"In your statement respecting the controversy between *Unitarians* and *Trinitarians*, it appears to me you have left out some very important circumstances which ought to have been taken into the account to have made it any thing near a parallel. You seem to have forgotten the destruction of the Jews by the Romans about the time the books of the New Testament are said to have been written; during which calamity, as the history of those times inform us, about one million one hundred thousand Jews were cut off, and among whom, it is more than probable, all their leaders, who were then concerned in the death of Jesus, were included; and only about ninety-seven thousand, not a tenth part, were taken prisoners. The Jews in the adjacent countries, however, probably are not taken into this account, but they were all equally subdued to the Romans. And if the power of the Jews were so limited at the crucifixion of Jesus that they could not lawfully put a man to death without liberty from the Roman governor, what must we suppose was their power after the destruction of their city and temple? On a review of the subject, therefore, I think you will perceive that your case, however plausibly stated, falls very far short of being a parallel. We may well suppose, I think, that the Jews were so humbled by the Romans, that, 1st, they had not the power; and, 2dly, they might not under these circumstances be inclined any longer to persecute and put to death the christians. And this was the only way it seems, at that day, that either Jews or Gentiles thought of putting down what they considered heresy or superstition. I consider therefore the destruction of the Jews as giving a very favourable opportunity to get up a new system of religion, partly or wholly based on theirs, but a little removed from it, so as to neglect the use of sacrifices, which, if I mistake not, according to the Jewish traditions, could only be offered at Jerusalem. And the long lapse of time, before the dogmas of this new sect was attempted to be refuted by argument gave an opportunity to involve the supposed facts on which the christian religion is predicated in such obscurity, that it stands now in no danger of refutation from that source. Some may be made to doubt, others to disbelieve, but nevertheless no one can prove it false.

"If it be proved true, however, it must be proved from the record which we have; for I know of nothing which can now add much weight to that testimony, unless it be the fulfilment of some sinking prophecies which yet remain to be fulfilled, or else the return of miraculous powers and a new revelation in further confirmation of what we already have. And if what we have be true, it seems we have a right to expect, ere long, something of the kind. The ten last chapters of the prophecy of Ezekiel, I think no

one will pretend has ever been fulfilled, as yet; and when fulfilled, the events will prove the divine inspiration of that prophecy. But if it should never be fulfilled, or its fulfilment be delayed till the Jews every where should give up all hope and expectation of any thing of this kind; and should, through unbelief, neglect their present customs, as many of them already have done, by intermarrying with other nations, and thereby should become both lost to themselves and to the world, which would be the same as though they were extinct, I apprehend that no confidence would be placed in that part of the prophecy after such a period. In like manner the fulfilment or the non-fulfilment of the following words will have a similar effect. 'This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.' Some pretend to say that even this prophecy has been already fulfilled; but we have no evidence of it, and I think we may say the prophecy in Ezekiel, above mentioned, has been fulfilled, with as much propriety. But this is rather off the point.

"In regard to the death of Stephen, notwithstanding his trial seems to have been by the council, yet the manner of his death, as stated, seems to have been rather turbulent than otherwise. 'When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and *they* (whether the council, or the spectators I cannot say) gnashed on him with their teeth—then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city and stoned him.' Such proceedings at this day, as this appears to have been, we should be inclined to call a *mob*, let it bear what other appellation it may.

"That the first martyrs, however, did, from some circumstance or other, believe in the resurrection of Jesus, on which all their hope seems to have been predicated, I think cannot admit of a rational doubt. For to suppose otherwise, supposes such madness and folly in those unfortunate men, who suffered every thing which could be inflicted upon them rather than to give up their testimony; that it seems nothing can be a parallel, unless it be the madness and folly of such unreasonable doubts.[6] And this seems to be all for which you contend, as it respects the present query; because you seem to think the first believers in this all-important truth could not have believed by any evidence which could have existed had it not been for the truth of the fact believed in. Now here is the mistake, as I conceive, if there be any; i.e. in supposing that the apostles and primitive Christians could not believe short of such indubitable evidence. Only suppose the resurrection to have been actually believed, by any evidence, or any circumstance whatever, no matter what, for it makes no difference in this argument, and the report would naturally be like all other reports of such an extraordinary nature. Both zeal and imagination would be enlisted on the side of its truth. Extraordinary discourses would be put into the mouths of the martyrs, after they were dead, as well as extraordinary deeds into their hands; and altho' contradicted ever so many times by their enemies and persecutors, yet the contradictions would never so out run the report but that many would still believe. When much strength of testimony had been thus added, by verbal reports, during twenty or thirty years, let a few men undertake to paint up real histories and letters in the name of the first disciples, and let these be kept in the hands of those who are strong in the faith, and let them be read for a long time, only in their own assemblies or churches although they might contain something of which they had not before heard, this is only what would be natural for them to expect, and as it contained the main thing which was the object of faith, and those other things, if true, went to establish their faith still more, who would be likely to call the truth of such writings in question? Not those who believe in the main question certainly. They would be a thousand times more likely to pass over in silence things of which they had some scruples, for the sake of the main question, then they would be to endanger the truth of the main question, as they might think they should, by criticising on mere circumstantial things. I am not now speaking of the apostles, whom I have considered *honest* men; yet I should suppose that even these men might have much good at heart, although they should conduct exactly in the way which I have suggested. And how little time would it require to put this matter beyond all possible refutation? Not so long, I conceive, as did elapse before that work was attempted by Celsus.

[Footnote 6: I have here expressed myself in strong terms, with a view to check my doubts and prevent their running wild.]

"You will see by this, sir, in what light my argument views the apostles. It does not suppose 'that the apostles would enforce their moral doctrine with their pretensions to miraculous powers,' although they might with the 'testimony of the resurrection of Jesus,' but it supposes that their successors might contend that the apostles worked miracles, and many of them might believe that they did, just as the apostles believed in the resurrection, when no such thing as the resurrection or the miracles of the apostles ever existed in fact. This is what the argument supposes, and it is wholly predicated on the possibility of the apostles' being made to believe, some how or other, I do not pretend to say how, that Jesus had risen from the dead when no such thing had taken place. But, only believe in the resurrection, and there is no difficulty in believing in the miracles of Jesus or the miracles of his apostles. They are equally well attested, and no more improbable. Yea, if they were true, they were not *believed*, but absolutely *known* to be true by the apostles. They knew it as well as they could know the

truth of any object of sight. And the truth of what they knew being all which they needed in support of what they taught, I do not see, on this supposition, how they could have the occasion, or the motive, to state one thing falsely concerning it. No, nor could their followers have any occasion to add to their testimony, for nothing which they could add would be of any more weight than that which we may suppose was already in their possession. The two first chapters of Matthew and Luke (or all except the genealogy in Matthew, and the preface of Luke) the authenticity of which has been suspected by some of the learned, and I believe not without pretty good reasons, do not contain a single word in support of the resurrection; neither is the subject of them, as I now recollect, mentioned either by Christ or any of the apostles in any other part of the New Testament. And although the truth of those narratives is no more miraculous than the resurrection, yet I presume you would not contend that a belief of these, also, is absolutely necessary to the Christian faith.

"With these observations, I shall once more, and probably for the last time quit my second proposition, and proceed to take notice of what you have written on my third.

"And here you must pardon me if I remark, without the least view of finding any fault, that if my words will admit of a bad construction, that construction seems to be the first one which strikes your mind. If you suppose me capable of such an abominable absurdity as to say, that if the man of this town who was born blind should be restored to his sight by some one's anointing his eyes with clay and spittle, and this done in our presence, we could not know it! that we could not know but that the seeing man was a total stranger whom we had never before seen, and that the blind man had absconded no body knows how or where! I say, if this was the way in which you understood my third proposition, you are perfectly excusable: otherwise, it is difficult to account for your remarks. But, having thus found your antagonist, you level your artillery against him, nor desist until you have put to death without mercy this creature of your own fruitful imagination. Having done, you begin to query whether you had not mistaken my meaning; and after making a wonderful effort, by calling up these penetrating powers of research, which are only summoned on extraordinary occasions, you dive through the mists of obscurity, in which my words seem to be too often placed, and behold my proposition in its true light!

"My proposition is no sooner seen than 'granted': which is, that we have no positive knowledge of miracles; or, to use your own words, 'miracles are not now wrought before our eyes.' But although you grant the truth of my proposition, you do not admit that this is any objection against the truth of divine revelation, for a number of reasons which you have given; all of which, no doubt, are satisfactory to your own mind.

"But sir, this is a matter of opinion only, and if I agree with you at all, it must be from the consideration that the Governor of the universe must do right. But, although the time may not be yet, nevertheless I am clear in the opinion that the revival of miracles will, in process of time, be absolutely necessary in order to preserve the faith in those which have already been. But, I contend, if the scriptures be true, we have a right to expect the revival of miracles; and I do not see how they can be fulfilled without. Considering the prejudices of the Jews, as a people, I cannot suppose that they will ever believe in Jesus, as their promised Messiah, short of being convinced of its truth by a miracle; and should they return to the land of Palestine, and there rebuild their temple, at Jerusalem, it would be such a clear fulfilment of the prophecy of Ezekiel, that it would be equal to a miracle, and do as much towards corroborating the truth of all the other prophecies.

"You finally come once more to the circumstance of the conversion of St. Paul, where you again find some fault (and I must confess, not without some reason) at my neglect to meet your arguments on this subject; or in other words, to do away the scripture account, and reconcile it with my hypothesis; i.e. that of supposing him to be converted without a miracle. To be ingenuous with you, sir, I must acknowledge that I have ever supposed this to be the most difficult task I should have to do; and therefore I wished to hear all you had to say on the subject of the resurrection before I attempted it.

"Since I wrote my last I have examined Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*, a work of extraordinary merit which had never before fallen into my hands: his *Evidences of Christianity*, I have read several years ago, but have not lately particularly examined that work. In the exposition of the argument, (of the work first mentioned) Paley sets forth, as I conceive, the only possible grounds on which either the epistles of St. Paul, or the acts of the apostles, can be supposed to be forgeries, in their full force. And then he attempts to prove their genuineness by their internal evidence, which they contain within themselves, entirely aside from those objections; and which would have been of equal weight even on the supposition that the whole had been concealed from the time they were written till now, and we should now, for the first time, examine them. And although I might not fully agree with him in all points, yet I think he proves, beyond all contradiction or rational doubt, what he mainly attempts to prove; i. e. that the epistles were written by some person acquainted with the circumstances mentioned in the history, and that the writer of the history must have been acquainted with the circumstances alluded to in the epistles, where, at the same time, there is not the least apparent design in those references or

allusions; which, as he very justly argues, prove the genuineness of both. I do not pretend to quote his words, as the book is not now by me.

"This, it must be confessed, is a great acquisition in favour of the truth of christianity; because it evidently carries the writings back into those times when every thing was fresh in the minds of all who had any knowledge of the subject of which those writings treated. Now comes the point. Paul expressly declares that he saw Christ after he was risen from the dead. His declaring that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, could have been only from the report of others; but it agrees pretty well with what has been recorded by the evangelists. His declaring that he had been seen 'of above five hundred brethren at once,' must have been also by report, which report might have been incorrect, as there is no mention made of it in either of the gospels. Yet if incorrect it might have been very easily refuted. But when he comes to say, 'And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time,' there remains for him no such excuse. Paul, as it seems, could not believe that he had seen Jesus, literally, and personally, when he had not. And if he knew that he had not, and yet declared that he had, and meant that others should believe that he had, he was not *honest*, as I before admitted that he was; and now to say that he was not honest, as I clearly see, would involve me in still greater difficulty, as then I could give no rational account for his life and conduct. What shift shall I now make? For having supposed that my doubts were really founded on reason, I must have good reason for so doing before I can give them up: i.e. I must be fully convinced that they are founded in error.

"What can we suppose that Paul meant by Christ's being seen *of above five hundred brethren at once*? Is it at all likely that such an extraordinary circumstance should have happened without any mention being made of it in either of the five histories which we have of those times? Might he not mean the same which the author of the Acts means, speaking of the day of Pentecost? And therefore the whole might not have been designed to be understood literally, but spiritually true? And notwithstanding the literality of the language, may not all the miracles of Christ and the apostles, and even the account we have of the resurrection, be all accounted for and reconciled in the same way? But here I involve myself in difficulty again; for, if I mistake not, this was very near the opinion of the Gnostics, whom the apostles and fathers every where spake against.—'These,' says Dr. Priestley, 'taught that it was not *Jesus* that was properly *the Christ*, or that he had not flesh and blood like other men.' They also 'denied the doctrine of the resurrection.' These therefore, 'Paul, Peter, Jude, and John, most strenuously opposed.' Again, says he, 'The apostles they considered as judging only by their senses, which were deceived in this case: and though they gave entire credit to them with respect to every thing which they had seen, or heard, they considered them as plain unlettered men who were ignorant of what was not within the sphere of their senses.' To these it is supposed that John alludes in his first Epistle iv. 1—3. If, therefore, the apostles did believe, and contend for the literal resurrection, and personal appearing of Jesus, and if in this they were opposed by the Gnostics, even in their day; there is no way now, that I see, any longer for me to maintain my doubts only by believing that the first disciples, as well as Paul, thought they saw Jesus when in fact they did not, and that the idea of miracles by which these things were said to have been propagated and which carried conviction to the multitudes, was nothing more than the bold figurative language of the day, designed, in reality, to deceive no one; or else mere exaggerations: or, what perhaps is still more probable, partly of both. But enough!

"I confess I begin to grow dissatisfied with this kind of reasoning. What does it all amount to? What am I bringing, after all, to oppose the laboured researches of Drs. Lardner, Paley, Priestley, and others, as well as the pertinent observations of my worthy friend who has so long borne with me, and obliged me with his friendly and christian-like aid on this subject? Let me pause and consider—I have acknowledged that there are evidences in favour of divine revelation; have I proved any of those evidences false?—No! this I have acknowledged I could not do. What have I put into the other end of the scale, to weigh down those evidences? Ah! what indeed! Nothing! except it be my own ignorance, and the errors of other men, in whose errors I have no more faith than those who believe in the truth of that which I have been disputing! I will therefore, instead of pursuing the dispute any further, begin to think once more whether the thing for which you so ardently contend may not in reality be true.

"But, here again, I must be cautious, lest I should err as far on the other hand. For notwithstanding when I found that I could not help doubting, I tried to reconcile myself to my doubts, and have sincerely and honestly tried to make myself believe that I was perfectly reconciled either way; yet the moment I begin to think about the certainty of immortality and eternal life, I am all on fire! I hardly know how to contain myself! And were it not for the special obligations, which I feel to my family, and to the world, more than any thing which I ever expect to receive from the world, I should long to 'depart, and be with Christ, which is far better.' Thus my doubts, whatever they are, may be needful for me.

"Your remarks respecting my claims to the privilege of one who is weak in the faith are very pertinent and just. For I must confess in proportion as my doubts arose, as to the truth of the resurrection, equal doubts would arise as to the propriety of preaching it for a truth. I wish you to understand, however,

that my mind has never been settled there, if it has ever vibrated that way, it was only momentary, and rather on mere supposition than any confirmed opinion.

"In answer to what you say in regard to hope, I will only add: Though a man should have ever so firm a hope in any thing whatever, and should afterwards find that his hope was founded in error, the hope would be taken away; but if at the same time he should find that the truth is absolutely better than the error hoped for, he would also find that a better thing is given in lieu of his hope: but if a man has hope, though that hope should be founded in error, if the hope remain as long as the man exists, it is not taken away from him, as both cease to exist together. Once more, and finally: a hope which is founded in truth, a knowledge of the truth can never take away. Although a man may hope, and ardently desire to exist eternally, yet I do not see how a man can extend either his hope, or his desires, beyond the possibility of his existence. To my understanding, this is just like supposing that a man which does not exist may yet hope and desire; or that a man may hope and desire, after he shall have ceased to exist.

"After returning you my sincere thanks for your kind indulgence and labours of love, I shall close the present number. I cannot take my leave of this number, however, without expressing my humble gratitude to the Allwise disposer of events, that he has given such abundant manifestations of his unspeakable goodness to his creatures; that he has also, as I may perhaps be permitted to hope with you, given a divine testimony of his infinite love and universal benevolence to that part of his creation whom he hath distinguished with the attributes of his own nature, regarding at the same time all other beings and things, and that he had raised up so many faithful witnesses who have set to their seals that this testimony is true.

"Yours, &c.

A. KNEELAND."

* * * * *

LETTER VIII.

Dear sir, and brother,—The particulars contained in your ninth letter, which I have selected as the subject of this, are the following:

1st. You "do not see how the miracles of the Shakers are at all dependant on the miracles of Jesus for their imposition."

2d. You think, if Jesus had remained on the earth until now, or had appeared to every generation since his resurrection, the evidence would have been much greater; and yet not so great as to preclude the exercise of our reasoning faculties.

3d. In the supposed controversy between the Unitarians and Trinitarians, you think I have failed of making the case a parallel with my subject, not considering the great change which took place in the state of the Jews in consequence of their destruction by the Romans.

4th. The argument which you rest on the supposition, that the apostles did in reality believe in the resurrection of Jesus, when in fact the thing was not true.

5th. What you say of the necessity of miracles in some future time, to confirm the belief of those which have been.

6th. The difficulty you suggest concerning St. Paul's saying that Jesus was seen, after his resurrection, by more than five hundred brethren at once.

1st. As you object to the idea that the miracles of the Shakers depend at all on the miracles of Jesus for their imposition, it may be considered sufficient, on my part, if I show that you have fully supported the proposition which you profess not to see.

I will, however, first presume, that I am not authorised to say that the miracles of the Shakers are imposition, I have not contended that they are; the ground for which I contend is this, viz. if these or any other pretended miracles among us are impositions, they depend on the miracles of Jesus for this power, as much as counterfeit money depends on the true for its imposition. That you have given sufficient support to what I have stated, you will see at once by the following passage quoted from your arguments on this subject: "They do not deny the miracles of Christ and his apostles any more than Christians in general deny the miracles of Moses and the prophets; but appeal to *theirs* as being equally of divine origin, and thereby clothe their religion with the same divine authority." Is it possible that the writer of the foregoing sentence should not see, that he established the very thing which he had just said he could not see? What is that *divine authority* with which the religion of Moses, the

prophets and of Christ is clothed? Answer, *miracles*. What authority do you pretend the Shakers make use of to clothe their religion? Answer "*the same*." How does this differ from counterfeit money, on the supposition that these miracles are imposition?

It is abundantly evident that the Jews expected that the Messiah, when he came, would establish his character by miracles as Moses did his, and as some of the prophets were enabled to do. Therefore, do we read Matt. xii. 22, 23.—"Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb: and he healed him insomuch, that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed and said, is not this the son of David?"

Jesus himself saith, Luke iv. 24, 27. "Verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow; and many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian."—See John vii. 31. "And many of the people believed on him, and said, when Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?"

By the foregoing quotations, as by many other passages, we learn that the Jews expected the Messiah would establish his character as a prophet like unto Moses and others, and also that Jesus did in reality a multitude of miracles more than the prophets did.

Now is it not evident, that if the miracles of Jesus were supposed to be impositions, they were dependant on those of Moses and the prophets for any power to impose on the people? Just so are all miracles wrought or pretended to be wrought since Christ, dependant on his miracles for any imposing power which they possess. If our religion had not been first propagated by the means of those miracles which are recorded in the New Testament, of what use would any pretended miracles be to any sect of Christians?

2d. What you say of the greater evidence of the resurrection which would have been furnished by Christ's continuance on earth until now, or by his making his appearance in every generation since his time, appears to me to be rather wanting in its merits by which it claims a reply.—Why should you neglect to delineate some special reasons for your suppositions, by showing how wide the difference would have been from the evidence we now have, and how that difference would have recommended your scheme?—You have left me to conjecture the particular features of your argument, and if I mistake them, you will reply that I understand you incorrectly. However, this is the way I must proceed.

We will suppose then that Jesus, in room of ascending into heaven, had remained on earth. Would this have done any good, unless he had made himself known to all the people? Well, we will suppose he had made himself known after his resurrection, to the whole house of Israel, would the people not have believed? They would have believed most assuredly, or his making himself known to them would have done no good. If they had all believed they would not have persecuted the religion of Christ, all would have embraced it at once being convinced by their eyes, that Jesus who was crucified, had actually rose from the dead, and was not subject to death any more. All this would have been as evident to the Roman government as to the Jewish hierarchy, and the whole would have been christianized at once. How long would all this remain a wonder? Jesus remains on earth from generation to generation. How long ago would the conjecture have arisen, that this man who has lived through so many ages, had always been here on earth, and that the tradition of his once having been mortal like other men, was nothing but a superstition gotten up in some age of antiquity beyond our reach? There would have been no occasion of preserving any records of the wonderful works of Jesus in the days of his flesh, for as the whole would become immediately connected to christianity, there would have been no necessity nor excitement to write and preserve the accounts we have in the gospel, or if they had been written, they could have had no support now but ancient tradition. Not one martyr, not one instance of persecution, not a Celsus in the second, a Porphyry in the third, nor a Julian in the fourth centuries to oppose the truth, and thereby bear testimony to the antiquity of the christian history.

This immortal man would be here on earth, and the sun and the moon and the stars would be in the heavens, the mountains and the rivers here on earth; and the same mind that would conjecture that all these visible things were from everlasting to everlasting, would make no exception of this man Christ Jesus. But now you are called on to prove your christian tradition; and what have you to convince the Deist with? Will you say my conjectures are by no means correct? Well, I expected it would turn out so. You mean then that Jesus should not only remain on earth, but that he should continue the evidences of his having been mortal, of his having died, and of his resurrection as clear as they were when they convinced the world in the first place.—Would there, in this case, be any room for any inquiry? any for doubts? Would there be as many denominations of christians as there are now? Should we get at this religion by reasoning? Perhaps you would prefer your second proposal, and have Jesus manifested in

every generation. But this would have been a regular return of the same event, and would have been placed among the phenomena of nature, and the Deist would say that there never had been any beginning to this regular operation, it has always been so from time beyond date.

Thus far, but no more. The evidences of our religion are like the religion itself, infinitely superior to any thing ever contrived by human wisdom. And it is an opinion in which I am the more confirmed, the more I examine it, that if the wisest set of philosophers which ever lived on earth had been a council to contrive a method by which christianity could have been perpetuated in the world, that scheme which they would have projected, would of itself defeated the object.

The wisdom of this great scheme corresponds with the divine power which has been manifested in it. What set of impostors, either wise or simple, learned or unlearned would ever have thought of such an undertaking as that of which we have an account in the four evangelists? Would they be likely to find one who would be their leader, the one to die, and leave the rest to make the people believe that he arose from the dead? Could a man be found now who would be willing to undertake such a piece of madness and folly? If we pretend to reason shall we not keep to human nature, and reason according to those laws by which ourselves and others are governed?

Do you believe, sir, that a man could be found who would undertake to lead a party, whose object should be to impose on the people by a pretended resurrection, and consent himself to be the hero of this imposture?

You answer, no. But then ask; if this wonderful story was not written some considerable time after that period to which the dates of the writings are assigned, and such large additions made that the whole appears entirely different from what was really true?

This brings me to consider the third particular selected for consideration, out of your epistle.

3dly. In allusion to the supposed controversy between the Unitarians and Trinitarians, you think I ought to have considered the circumstance of the destruction of the Jews by the Romans, as giving a favourable opportunity for the fabricating the books of the evangelists, and of giving them success in the world, as the old pharisees and rulers of the Jews were principally cut off in that awful destruction of their nation and city.

You will observe that by your suggestion you leave the first section of the argument to which you refer, in which no book or books were used, and notice only the last section in which you were indulged, for sake of the argument, in the supposition that the gospels were not written until after the destruction of Jerusalem, nor propagated on the miracles on which the gospels have founded it. Here, sir, have I not an occasion of some little complaint? If you really thought that the gospels were, none of them, written in the life time of the apostles, and considered it safe to predicate an argument on this ground, why should you withhold the proof of this fact? Why did you not inform me of the authority by which your argument is supported in your own mind? And furthermore, why do you try to get away from the argument as stated in its first form, without showing its want of force, or without allowing its merit? By conducting arguments in this way, in room of converging them to some definite point of conclusion, they are diverged indefinitely, and the mind seems bewildered without an object.

However, I am disposed to follow you, and will now endeavour to shew the probability of the gospel's having been written even before the destruction of Jerusalem.

The following passages are quoted from Paley's evidences from page 106 and on—

From the epistle of Barnabas, to which I have before alluded; "Let us, therefore, beware lest it come upon us, as it is written, there are many called, few chosen." Our author justly adds: "From the expression, '*as it is written*,' we infer with certainty, that, at the time when the author of this epistle lived, there was a book extant, well known to christians, and of authority among them, containing these words—'Many are called, few chosen.'" For the authority of this epistle I refer unto Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome, noticed in a former communication. If Clement were liable to mistake the author, it seems hardly probable that he would be deceived concerning the time when this epistle, purporting to have been written by Barnabas, was written; as it is no later than A.D. 194 that he quotes this epistle as an ancient work. It may be proper to remark, that although authors differ respecting the genuineness of this epistle, both Dr. Priestly and Paley acknowledge and maintain its antiquity, and place it very near to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, which gives it all the authority for which it is here quoted; for the thing now to be proved is, that it is probable that the gospel of Matthew was written before the destruction of the Jewish hierarchy. Now as this epistle of Barnabas was written soon after this destruction, and refers to the gospel of Matthew in the manner above quoted, as refering to what was an acknowledged writing of scripture authority, it seems reasonable to infer that St. Matthew's gospel had been written long enough before, to obtain its

establishment among Christian churches, which fairly throws its antiquity anterior to the destruction of Jerusalem. Sir, I see nothing to forbid this conclusion from being highly probable, and this, I expect to show, is all that is necessary to be made out in this case.

"Of Polycarp," who was appointed bishop of Smyrna by the apostles themselves, says our author, "we have one undoubted epistle remaining. And this, though a short letter, contains nearly forty clear allusions to books of the New Testament; which is strong evidence of the respect which christians of that age bore for those books." It appears from this account, that, as Polycarp was a contemporary of the apostles, and referred to the books of the New Testament in his writings, as to books of established authority, these books must have been written as early as the time in which their reputed authors lived, which places their date prior to the destruction of Jerusalem; as it is not pretended that any of the evangelists continued until after the destruction of that city except St. John who is supposed to have lived to a very great age.

One more from our author: "Papias, a hearer of John, and companion of Polycarp, as Irenæus attests, and of that age, as all agree, in a passage quoted by Eusebius, from a work now lost, expressly ascribes the respective gospels to Matthew and Mark, and in a manner which proves that those gospels must have publicly borne the names of these authors at that time, and probably long before." All this appears perfectly consistent with the idea that these gospels were written by the evangelists themselves, and proves together with the following considerations the probability of its being correct. Further considerations to be taken into the foregoing account are the following. St. Matthew, St. Luke and St. Mark, all speak of the prophesy of Jesus respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, but do not even hint that this prophesy had been fulfilled. In St. John's gospel no mention is made of this prophesy, and it is reasonable enough to suppose that this omission was on account of the prophesy's having been fulfilled before his gospel was written.

Again, if the gospels had not been written by these reputed authors, nor in the time that the evangelists lived, but some time after the destruction of Jerusalem, and these had been fabricated by designing men, they would certainly have been exposed as a fraud by the Gnostics who held many opinions so very contrary to the scriptures of the New Testament. So very contrary were some of the early heresies to the writings of the evangelists that they erased many things from them that they might the better maintain their own notions. Now this would never have taken place if these Gnostics could have proved that these Gospels were frauds, which they certainly could have done, for they existed as early as these writings are supposed to have been written. Furthermore, if the gospels had been forged books, written after the destruction of Jerusalem, it would have been an easy task for Celsus to have exposed the whole fraud. He certainly would never have admitted the truth of the miracles of Jesus if he could have proved that the books in which they were recorded were forgeries. But this neither he nor the learned Porphyry attempted to do.

I have suggested, that, if the probability of the gospel's having been written before the destruction of Jerusalem and by the evangelists themselves be proved it is sufficient for our present argument. And so, I think, it will appear to you, when you combine with this probability two more important considerations.

1st. That the internal evidences contained in the books of the New Testament, of their genuineness, are sufficient of themselves to establish their character as such; and:

2d. That the above probability of itself is to be relied on even from external evidence if no external proof can be proved against it, which is not pretended.

It should be kept in mind, that the writings of the evangelists are guarded by the early attacks of the enemies of christianity, who ever treated them as being, what they pretended to be, a faithful history of the origin of the religion they inculcated; and also by the opposition of the early sects who arose from the church, who would have demolished their foundations if they had been spurious.

4th. The argument you rest on the supposition that the apostles did, in reality, believe in the resurrection of Jesus, when in fact the thing was not true, may now be noticed.—As you would naturally expect, I shall by no means allow either your premises or conclusions.

1st. Why should I allow your premises? You have brought no argument, nor attempted to bring any to disprove what I contended for, viz. that the apostles could not have been persuaded to believe the resurrection with any evidence short of that recorded in the evangelists. "Here," you say "lies the mistake if there be any;" and to this I agree. Where then is your argument against mine, on which so much depends? You have attempted to bring none. But you say: "only suppose the resurrection to have been actually believed, by any evidence, or circumstance whatever, no matter what." What argument is there sir, in this "*only suppose*?" I contend the thing is not supposable. It was as true in that age of the world, that a fact naturally incredible requires indubitable evidence to substantiate it, as it is now. I

would allow that it is supposable, that one man might, in a sort of a delirium, which generally throws the brain into a situation, by which, what only exists in the mind, appears a reality to the sense of sight, might think he saw Jesus after his crucifixion, when in fact he did not. But I cannot allow it to be a supposable case that the whole eleven apostles should all become delirious at once and with them a number more, and all be persuaded against the prejudices of their minds, that they saw Jesus, and that at a number of times, and in diverse manners, when there was no such thing. But:

2d. Even allowing your supposition, your consequences would be very unlikely to follow. You surely would not suppose that the apostles could believe they saw Jesus when they did not, if they had the use of their reason properly. We must suppose them to have been insane then.—What then would have been the consequences? Would the authority have put these mad-men to death? Would they have been persecuted at all for their misfortune? But these mad-men preached Jesus and the resurrection to the people, and so convinced them of the fact, that multitudes believed them, and on this supposition we are now to *suppose* our religion was first established in the world! If we may suppose such things, there are no absurdities that we may not suppose. You must suppose it to be a very dangerous thing to try a man for his life by a jury of twelve men, for if the man was innocent of the murder for which he was indicted and no evidence was produced to convict him on, these men might all be made to believe, some how, by some circumstance, "no matter what," that they all saw the murder committed by this very innocent person on trial.

5th. I thought of saying something on your suggestion of the necessity of miracles in some future time to convince the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, but being a little more careful, than at first, I find you seem to give up this matter. You say: "considering the prejudices of the Jews, as a people, I cannot suppose that they will ever believe in Jesus, as their promised Messiah short of being convinced of its truth by a miracle; and should they return to the land of Palestine, and there rebuild their temple, at Jerusalem, it would be such a clear fulfilment of the prophesy of Ezekiel, that it would be equal to a miracle, and do as much towards corroborating the truth of all the other prophecies." If the return of the Jews, etc. be equal to miracles, then it may preclude their necessity. But as this particular does not immediately concern our general subject it is dismissed.

6th. As none of the evangelists have been particular respecting the meeting in Galilee, and as this was an appointment even before the crucifixion, as well as afterward, it is fairly within the reach of probable conjecture, that this meeting was sufficiently numerous to justify St. Paul's words. He does not speak of this matter as of a subject with which his acquaintance was small, for he says; "he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep." He no doubt, had seen many of this great number and had been informed of the circumstances of the occasion, and of the time when this multitude was favoured with this sight.

To conclude; I heartily join with you in grateful acknowledgements, to the Almighty disposer of events, for the manifestations of his universal benevolence to his creatures, and especially unto man whom he hath seen fit to induce with the attributes of his own nature, and constituted him an heir of life and immortality. In view of this, I can be thankful for any faithfulness discoverable in those who publish the word of life, and endeavour to defend it in the spirit of meekness and Christian love.

And I will further add, that I feel a peculiar pleasure in finding your mind to be somewhat divested of its incumberances, and that your doubts of the grounds of your precious faith, are dispersing more and more from your mind, while the evidences of divine truth find a sincere reception in your understanding.

Let us endeavour to cherish, not only the evidences of truth, but truth itself in our afflictions, and in room of being idlers in the markets, go early into our Lord's vineyard trusting the words of him who saith; "whatsoever is right, ye shall receive."

Yours, &c.

H. BALLOU.

* * * * *

EXTRACTS No. X.

"*Dear sir and brother*—In remarking on your reply to my 8th number, as in a former case I shall follow the arrangement which you have made; taking up the articles in the same order.

"1st. I did not suppose but that the method which I proposed to account for the absence of the body of Jesus would be liable to serious objections; and these objections are increased by connecting with them, circumstances which, if the resurrection be false, must be considered equally false. Because, if

the resurrection of Jesus was not a truth, whatever was the truth on which that belief was founded, must be now all mere conjecture.

"There might be persons, however, who thought that Jesus suffered death very wrongfully although he never pretended literally to perform those miracles. Yea I conceive it possible that when this language was first adopted, i. e. of his feeding the hungry, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, &c. it was not understood, nor meant to be understood literally. Therefore although the account at first might have been *literally false*, though not so much so as what it grew to be afterward, yet it might have been considered *spiritually true*; and therefore not designed absolutely to deceive. The only difficulty, i.e. the only irreconcilable difficulty, which I conceive in the case, is in supposing that the first disciples could be made to believe in the resurrection, by any evidence which could have existed, and yet the resurrection not to be true. But we must suppose this, I think, in order to raise a reasonable doubt of the truth of the resurrection. For, if the disciples did not believe it, they could have had no interest or motive, (or certainly no justifiable motive) in making others believe it; and without this, it is difficult to account even for the existence of such a report. I should not think it so strange, however, that others, after the report was once in circulation, and that even St. Paul himself should have been made to believe this, merely by some visionary scene.

"I think therefore the question may be reduced to this point. Which of the two is the most *incredible*, either that the first disciples should absolutely believe in the resurrection, by any evidence which did not grow out of this truth, or that the resurrection should have been absolutely true?

"Here is where the two propositions, when reduced to their simplicity must finally come. And I contend that when two propositions are thus clearly placed before the mind or understanding, whether the judgment be right or wrong, the mind or understanding must reject, yea it is impossible to avoid rejecting, that which to the mind or understanding, is the most incredible.

"But when we admit that the disciples did believe in the resurrection, we are not obliged to admit that they had all or any of the evidences of that fact which have come down to us. This we may suppose might have been mostly or altogether fictitious; written by later hands, and attributed to the apostles. And here we must not suppose that the account was altogether made up at once, but grew gradually; and not to come out in writing until the persons, who could either attest or deny the literal truth of these facts, were taken off of the stage. Here as it respects the records also, the same question again occurs. Which is the most *incredible* (not to *miraculous*, for one miracle is no more miraculous, than I know of than another; I therefore say which is the most *incredible*) that such histories should have been thus, or in some other way got up, and be believed, altho' the various accounts, so far as they relate to miracles, and other circumstances necessary to be taken into the account only for the sake of supporting the truth of those miracles, should have been altogether fictitious, and such parts only true as could be accounted for in a rational way, without admitting the existence of miracles; or that all those miracles, or at least the most essential of them, should have been literally and absolutely true? The answer to these two propositions, i. e. the above questions, will, and must, decide the whole controversy.

"Now, were it not for the internal evidences which the writings of the New Testament do, and ever will, possess (the external evidences falling so far short of being conclusive in my mind, as I shall show more fully hereafter, when I come to speak of those evidences) I should still be inclined, in my own understanding, to reject the latter proposition in each of the above questions, and adhere to the former.—Much of the external evidence, I am very ready to admit is perfectly consistent with the supposed truth of the internal, but after all, in my humble opinion, it does not quite come to the point. But the internal evidence, I confess, I cannot withstand. The more I investigate the subject, the more I discover its force, its clearness, and its irresistibility; and although the truth it unfolds is so august, so momentous, so astonishingly and inexpressibly sublime, that it is with the profoundest and most reverential awe I speak, when I acknowledge my faith in the divine origin of those testimonies; yet, as I cannot resist their force, so I am obliged to acknowledge them true. The illusion, however, if it be one, I know is happifying to the mind; but this is no good reason, that I know of, why we should either embrace it ourselves, or propagate it in the world. Although I have endeavoured to calm my conscience, while meditating on my doubts, with the consideration that I am not accountable for the truth or the falsity of the scriptures; yet, I must confess, this did not fully satisfy my mind; and therefore I come to a determination to be more thoroughly persuaded of their truth, if possible, or else be more thoroughly convinced of their fallacy. With this motive I entered on the present controversy; and I feel very happy in its termination, having been much strengthened in my faith thereby, and humbly pray, that should it ever come before the public, it may be blest to the benefit of others.

"2d. What you have said on the divine mission, &c. of the apostles is satisfactory. For although it has not fully come to my question, yet it has had the same good effect by convincing me that my question went a little beyond the bounds of reason; for it was too much like asking a blind man how it is that

other men see! It is not reasonable to suppose that the apostles themselves could have informed persons who were uninspired to their understanding, how or by what means, they were inspired. It was sufficient to demonstrate the fact by the works which they were enabled to perform, (admitting the account true,) in the name of JESUS.

"3d. My argument respecting a hope of future existence has been extended rather beyond my design. Without taking up time to recapitulate, I will only say I admit the truth of your argument on this subject; neither do I see how it stands altogether in opposition to mine. What I contend for is this. The idea of non-existence, i.e. of existing only in God, without retaining our individual consciousness of being, does not, like the idea of endless misery, absolutely destroy our present comforts. It only cuts short, or else prevents, future prospects. If it can be demonstrated, as I believe it can, that God is good to the animal creation, in giving them existence, on the supposition, that they have no future state, I contend that man is equally, if not more abundantly blessed, even on the same supposition.—But I never meant to contend that eternal life would not be still infinitely better, according to our conceptions of good, if true. To state a case, which will illustrate in some degree my ideas of this subject, the following may come something nigh it; viz. I should be pleased with the idea of living, say, ten years, in reference only to the blessing of this life, although I might know I should die at that time, provided that, during the ten years, I should enjoy the common blessings of life. This does not prevent my desiring to live longer; neither does a certain knowledge that I shall not prevent me from desiring to live, nor from being pleased with the idea of living, till that time. But let me know for a certainty, or, which would be the same thing to me, let me absolutely believe that I should live fifty years, and that although the ten first would be attended with all the common blessings of life, as usual, yet that the remaining forty years, which would be the remaining whole of my natural life, I should be placed in the most distressed and aggravated circumstances, of which I could possibly conceive; now, in reference to the whole fifty years, could I desire to live? No! I say, I rather choose instant death!

"When I look around on the circumstances and condition of men, I am so fully convinced that the aggregate of happiness so far overbalances the aggregate of misery, that I am firmly of opinion, yea, I do not entertain the least possible doubt of its truth, and therefore think I ever shall contend, that this life is a blessing, and we have abundant reason to be very thankful for it, without the least reference to a future state. But, nevertheless, I am very ready to admit, that, when futurity and immortality are taken into the account, and are connected with the same view of the character of the Deity, these blessings are all extended and magnified to infinity.

"But on the supposition that truth is any where connected with *endless misery*, the scene is wholly changed. On this supposition I am not reconciled to truth at all; I can find nothing in my moral nature, which I call good, but what stands directly opposed to it; Hence, the very brightest and most brilliant part of the picture is deformed by the awful idea; it takes away all the pleasure of investigation, and if this be truth, my only desire and prayer to God, is that I might be permitted to remain eternally ignorant of it! It is my confidence therefore in the goodness of the truth, and this only, which has reconciled my mind to it. You may contend that I have not obtained this confidence without the knowledge of divine revelation. Be that as it may; on this supposition only I am reconciled, and something must destroy this confidence before I can become unreconciled to truth. I think now I must be fully understood, and will therefore add no more on this subject.

"4th. What you say under the fourth article is satisfactory. Errors, no doubt, may be, and often are committed by applying instructions 'differently from their primary design.'

"5th. Your remarks under the sixth article are very judicious. Much injury no doubt is often done to the truth of divine revelation by contending so tenaciously as some do for things, which, if true, are not essential to its support.—It is often the case that, by trying to prove too much, we weaken the evidence, in the minds of many, respecting the main thing we wish to establish. Hence, the opposer, not being able, or else not disposed, to make proper distinction, considers it all of one piece; and not being able to see the propriety of many things, which are contended for with equal zeal, sets the whole down as a fallacy.

"6th. It is true, I thought you strained the argument a little too far in supposing that the apostles could not have been convinced of the truth of the resurrection by any evidence which could be counterbalanced. This induced me to state that supposed absurdity in still more glaring colors, with a hope that you would thereby be induced to take a review of your argument, and not without some expectation, that you would be able to see some defects in it. But in this I have been disappointed. You still hold on upon your argument, and turn the error wholly on your friend.

"But, as this is the turning point, I shall not blame you for straining every nerve, and holding on upon every fibre which gives you the least possible support.

"It would not do for you to give up the idea that the apostles could not have been convinced of the

truth of the resurrection by any evidence which could have existed short of the fact's being true; (which, by the way, was what I meant by the first member of my criticism, though not exactly so expressed;) for the moment this is admitted, doubt and unbelief will soon contend that they were so convinced. Imagination may soon call up such evidence in the mind, without supposing any thing miraculous, and all the rest of the account may be supposed to be fictitious. I did not mean to insinuate, however, that you have contended that the apostles must have seen Jesus rise in order to be convinced of the fact. I suppose their seeing him after he was risen was as full a demonstration to them as though they had seen him rise. And if they could not have been convinced of its truth by any thing short of this, then they could not be convinced by any thing short of the fact; i.e. what was the same to them as the fact. The second member of my criticism, viz. 'If the fact did exist there is no evidence which can counterbalance it,' does not, as I conceive, suppose that you contend 'that the fact of the resurrection could not exist without proving itself to the apostles in such a way that no evidence could counterbalance it;' but it supposes that if the fact did exist, no evidence could prove that it did not exist, as it is always difficult to prove a negative, and utterly impossible when the positive is true.—Hence my conclusion; viz. As the apostles were convinced of the truth of the resurrection, which they could not have been only by evidence which could not have existed had not the fact been true, the fact did exist. How far does this criticism fall short of my other? (for it is exactly what I meant by my other.) Or how far does it go beyond your argument?

"Finally, I cannot conceive of any evidence that could sufficiently support the fact that Jesus who was crucified, did actually rise from the dead, if nothing could be brought to counterbalance it, that could possibly admit of being counterbalanced; and again: 'Thus we are brought to the suggestion, that any evidence which could be sufficient to prove such a fact, if no evidence appeared against it, must be such as admits, of no refutation.'

"Unless it may be reasonably supposed that the apostles were not absolutely so guarded against an error of this kind as this argument suggests, I know of no way to withstand its force. And I am sure I feel no disposition to withstand it, even against probability. It is the improbability of the fact it goes to prove, i. e. in my mind, that ever induced me to oppose it.

"I shall now take notice of the external evidence in support of the truth of divine revelation, which you have quoted from Paley in his view of the evidences of christianity.

"In your reply to my seventh number, you mentioned a quotation from the epistle of Barnabas, St. Paul's companion, in the following words, 'Let us therefore, beware lest it come upon us, *as it is written*, there are many called, few chosen.' The object of this quotation is to prove that the gospel of Matthew (from which here is a quotation) was written before this epistle, and here appealed to as to a book of divine authority. And although it is perfectly consistent with such a supposition, yet there is great room to doubt whether such was the fact. Or, at least, there is room to conjecture that the gospel of Matthew might have been written before this epistle, and yet not written till after the destruction of Jerusalem.

"Speaking of the writers of this period, Dr. Priestly observes[7] 'The oldest work of the age, if it had been genuine, is that which goes by the name of *The epistle of Barnabas*. Whoever was the author of this epistle, it was probably written soon after the destruction of Jerusalem.—It abounds with interpretations of the Old Testament which discover more of imagination, than judgement.' By this you will perceive that the authority of this epistle is doubtful. I should also have gathered the same idea, from what Paley himself says, whose work I have examined, on this subject, since I wrote my last number. It might have been written at a much later period than what is supposed and palmed upon Barnabas; and therefore does not, as was supposed, absolutely prove that the gospel of Matthew was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. It seems that christians of a later period were in the habit of palming works upon their predecessors; or in other words, writing in their name. After speaking of the epistle of Clemens, Priestly observes (p. 301) there is extant another epistle ascribed to this Clemens, but it is evidently spurious, and was probably written in the middle of the third century. Several other writings were palmed upon him also, especially the *Apostolical Constitution* and the *Clementine homilies*. The epistle of Barnabas, it seems, is first quoted by Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 194. This certainly gives room for my conjecture for aught which appears to the contrary, it might have been written a whole century after the days of the apostles.

[Footnote 7: Ch. Hist. vol. i. p. 200.]

"The next which Paley mentions is an epistle written by Clement, bishop of Rome. This is the same which Priestly calls *Clemens*. 'This epistle,' he says, 'was held in the highest esteem by all christians, and, like the scriptures, was publicly read in many churches.' In this epistle of *Clement*, you say, 'he quotes Matt. v. 7. xviii. 6.' But how does he quote those passages? Not as the writing of Matthew, but as the words of 'our Lord.' Although this therefore, as I have before suggested, is perfectly consistent

with the supposed truth, it falls far short, in my mind, of proving that the gospel of Matthew, was written before this epistle. Clement or Clemens might have written this by tradition even if he had never seen the gospel of Matthew, or any other. It only proves that these words in the gospel and those in the epistle were indebted to the same original source, viz. the words of Jesus. I am not disposed to dispute, however, the genuineness of this epistle. 'It is an earnest dissuasive,' says Priestly, 'from the spirit of faction, which appeared in the church of Corinth, and which, indeed, was sufficiently conspicuous when Paul wrote his epistles.'

"Another work of doubtful authority,' says Priestly, 'is *the Shepherd of Hermes*, by some thought to be that Hermes who is mentioned by Paul in his epistle to the Romans; but by others supposed to be either spurious, or to have been written by a later Hermes, or rather Hermes, brother of Pius, bishop of Rome, about the year 140. Whoever was the author of this work (and though it was so much esteemed by many christians, as to be publicly read in their churches) it is certainly a very poor performance.' If this work therefore be of so late a date, as, according to this account, it may be, and, from all which appears to the contrary, we may presume it is, as the first quotation of it is by Irenaeus, A. D. 178, it falls short of the proof we want.

"The same observations will apply to the allusions to the gospels in the epistles of *Ignatius*, as was mentioned in regard to the epistle of *Clement*. They are not literal quotations, and therefore might have been only traditions. I consider them no certain proof that the gospels were written previous to this time, though it is very natural to suppose *that* to have been the fact. The same will apply to the epistle of *Polycarp*, as we know not exactly what was meant at that time by the scriptures; neither do allusions to certain passages in the scriptures, especially such as the words of Jesus, prove the existence of those scriptures at that time.

"In the time of Eusebius there were extant *five books of Papias*, *bishop of Hierapolis in Syria, of the interpretation of the divine oracles*. 'Papias,' says Priestly, 'was a great collector of the sayings of the apostles; and one of the traditions preserved by him was that, after the resurrection, Christ would reign upon earth a thousand years, an opinion which, from his authority, was long respected by many.' [8] Papias, it seems, is the first who speaks of the gospels by name, and he mentions only Matthew and Mark. That all the gospels, however, existed in his day, and also bore the names which they now do, I should not be disposed to dispute; neither is there any thing to contradict the idea of their being written by the persons reputed to be the authors of them.

[Footnote 8: Ch. Hist. vol. i. p. 203 Euseb. Hist. Lib. iii. Cap. 39 p. 135.]

"But, supposing a few of these first bishops had taken it into their heads, having succeeded so well, during a little respite from persecution, in consequence of those troublesome times at the destruction of Jerusalem, as to get appointed to their respective offices, and thinking it would lead greatly to their future success, I say, supposing they had taken it into their heads to write the four gospels and the acts of the apostles themselves, embracing all the traditions, which they knew, of the apostles, dressed up in the figurative style in which those things, even from the first, had been reported, together with many fictions of their own. And that they did write these books in the name of the apostles; who would be likely, or would be able, to contradict them? Or supposing, without any previous concert, some one should have written the gospel of Matthew; another, after having seen it, should write one in the name of Mark; a third, who had seen them both, should write that of Luke, and the acts of the apostles; and a fourth should write that of John.—These, of course, would make their first appearance at different times, and in different parts of the country; or, in other words, in different countries. Some story or other might have been got up, in regard to their first discovery, which should go currently with the common people, and which, after the works were received as canonical, would of course be done away.

"As a justification of the above hypothesis (which I am very sensible is not without its difficulties) in addition to what have said in regard to the writings palmed upon Clemens, I will mention the following from Priestly's Ch. Hist. vol. ii. p. 412. It appears to have been a quotation from Sozomen, by Socrates, Lib. vii. chap. 19, p. 307. '*The revelation of Peter*, which is rejected as a spurious book by the ancients, is read once every year in some churches in Palestine on good Friday, which is a religious fast in commemoration of our Lord's sufferings. The book that is called the *revelation of the apostle Paul*, which was unknown to the ancients, is greatly commended by many of the monks. Some say that this book was first found in the reign of Theodosius. For they say that in the house of Paul at Tarsus, there was a marble chest in a subterraneous place, in which this book was deposited, and that it was discovered by a particular revelation.'

"Any work of this kind, got up at so late a period as that of the reign of Theodosius, would not be likely to be generally received among the churches; yet if it could be received by any, why might not a similar work, or similar works, which made their appearance so soon after the apostles, as might well be supposed to have been written by them and when too, the churches were few in number, without the

least suspicion of fraud, have been received by all? Or if any fraud had been suspected, yet, believing in the main thing which all these were designed to support, those frauds whatever they *were*, might have been considered really *pious*!

"But, sir, you will perceive that I am not altogether pleased, nor fully satisfied, with this argument. I know it has its difficulties; but the question is, whether it has greater than the one which it is brought to oppose? The question is *not*, whether these things look probable? For I acknowledge they do not look probable. But the question is, which is the most *incredible*; either that the above hypothesis, or something like it, should be true; or else that the extraordinary miracles, related in the books referred to, should be true? If there were no better evidence in favor of the miracles than that which I have been examining, I should be obliged to decide against the latter, let me think what I might respecting the former. The most that we can say of this testimony is, it does not contradict the truth of those histories, but, so far as it goes, it is perfectly consistent with the truth of the main question. The weight of this testimony therefore, whatever it is, seems to be on the side of the truth of christianity.

"But what carries the most conviction to my mind is *not* who wrote those books; not the manner in which they have been handed down to us, nor in which they can now be traced to the apostles; but the manner in which the *story itself* is told. It must be confessed that, excepting a few things, which may be supposed to have been early interpolations, it carries in it all the internal marks of TRUTH. When this is admitted, we must also admit the propriety of bringing in these external evidences as auxiliaries; and when we find that they also, instead of being contradictory *to*, are perfectly consistent *with* the supposed truth, they add *not a little* to the weight of testimony. Hence we find that our faith is strengthened by the consideration of circumstances, which would not have been sufficient, in themselves alone, to have originated, or produced, that faith. The question may be still asked, why do you now believe? To which I give this plain and simple answer. It is because, notwithstanding the *incredibility* of the miracles of Christ, and of the apostles, and the resurrection, the truth of which these miracles go to confirm and substantiate; yet, the idea that this story should ever have been told in the manner it is, without having truth for its foundation, in spite of all my *incredibility*, is still more *incredible*! And it is my humble opinion that whoever will give themselves the trouble, to pay the same attention to the subject, must be of the same opinion: for, I am inclined to think that no one has been more predisposed to unbelief. Not that I ever felt any real opposition to the truth of the holy scriptures, as I now understand them, but I did not wish to be deceived. I had rather that my hopes and expectations should never be raised, than to have them raised upon a fruitless or spurious foundation.

"But after all, it will be perceived that I make no pretensions to a *miraculous*, or *mysterious*, conversion. My conversion, whatever it is, is altogether rational. It grows out of the evidence which I plainly have before my eyes. And it is my humble opinion that those who pretend to such conversions ought to be able to confirm the same by miracles, the same as the truth was first confirmed; and unless they can do it, it ought to be considered as nothing more than mere *pretension*.—According to the ideas of some, and of much too of that which is termed *orthodox*, every conversion is as much a *miracle* as was the resurrection of Christ. But as this is a fact, which if true, is entirely out of sight of the unconverted, and of which they can form no conception, nor judge of it in any sense whatever, is it not reasonable that they should have a demonstration of its truth, by some fact, of the truth of which they can judge, that they may know that the work is of God? And until we have such demonstration, may we not consider all such pretensions to be of men?

"With these remarks I hasten to a *CONCLUSION*.

"In taking leave of this subject, considering it probable that these letters will, at some future time, come before the public, it is but just that I should more fully avow my motives in this controversy. You will have perceived, all along, the ground on which I stood. I have endeavoured to personate an honest inquirer after truth; but one who was filled with doubts concerning every thing of which there is not positive demonstration. How far I have acted up to such a character, you and the public can best judge.

"I thought, however, I should be the most likely to do this, by bringing those objections, and these only, which, at one time or another, have occupied my own mind. But, that the controversy might not appear as a mere *farce*, or like a man raising objections against himself (in which case he generally takes care to raise none but what he thinks he can answer) and that I might engage all your interest and energy on the subject, I have carried the idea, through the whole, both by my letters and by my private conversation with you during the time (as you very well know) that those objections were now laboring in my mind with all their force. I have therefore endeavoured to dispute every inch of ground, and give way only as I found myself obliged to give way, by the force of your arguments. That I have not acted my part better must be imputed to want of ability and not to want of good will. I have endeavoured to throw every block in your way which I could think of, without deviating from the character which I had assumed; and that I have not made your task more arduous, is because I did not see how I could do it without betraying a manifest dishonesty on my part. The result is such as I

anticipated.

"My real motive must be my only apology for the part I have taken. You know that no work of the kind has ever been really and seriously attempted by any one who is avowedly of our order; that our religious opponents are continually throwing the gauntlet of aspersions at us, as being nothing more than mere pretenders to christianity, but in reality, *Deists* in disguise. To repel, therefore, those charges, as well as to let the unbelieving world know our views on this subject, I thought a work of this kind was really needed. And it appeared to me that the work, in the first place, would be more likely to be read, and, in the end, more sure of success, to have it come forth by the way of controversy, than what it would in any other way.

"It is true, I may not have brought all the objections which some would wish to have brought; but if what I have brought are so far removed as not to remain a serious obstacle in the mind of candid readers (which I conclude will be the case, with others, as it is with me) then all objections may be as easily removed.

"That this work may be an instrument, in the hands of God, of removing the prejudices from the minds of many of our religious opponents, of strengthening the faith of many who are wavering, and, as it were, halting between two opinions, and of calling up the attention of those who, like Gallis, 'care for none of these things,' is the sincere prayer of:

"Yours in the bonds of the gospel.

"A. KNEELAND."

* * * * *

LETTER IX.

Dear sir, and brother,—A careful perusal of your tenth number has given me much satisfaction, and seems to suggest that my reply may be general. You discover the rational ground on which your scruples are removed, and state no difficulty that you do not surmount.

I agree with you, that the gloomy doctrine of eternal misery, when by the imagination it becomes incorporated into the system of divine revelation, "reverses the whole scene," and renders that, which in its divine and native beauty possesses the most powerful attractions, the most deformed picture that ever repelled the human affections. It is this heaven-dishonouring doctrine, so repugnant to and irreconcilable with the known goodness of God manifested to all nations in his divine providence, that has, more than any thing else, so buffeted all the best feelings of man, as in thousands of instances to drive the heart of benevolence to lay aside the scriptures to whose authority this unmerciful doctrine has been erroneously ascribed.

But let the scriptures be once considered as free from the above horrible sentiment as in reality they are, they will then perfectly correspond with the demonstrations of universal benevolence and grace, rendered conspicuous in all the ways of God; they will also compare as a perfect transcript of that inward light and love which renders man an image of his ever adorable Creator.

As the christian church emerges from the city of mystery Babylon and its suburbs, and advances into the light of the wisdom of God, the doctrine above mentioned loses its influence and its votaries; nor will it be in the power of our self-styled orthodox clergy, long to chain the public mind to such a forbidding absurdity.

Nothing discovers the deplorable state of depravity, to which the human mind is subject, by force of tradition, more than the unnatural and absurd notion of enhancing future bliss, by beholding fellow creatures of the nearest connexion in a state of indescribable misery, there to remain time without end!

It seems to us astonishing that parents were ever capable of causing their children to pass through the fire to an idol, but what is this compared with what our pious fathers and mothers have believed concerning their children's sufferings in the eternal world, for the glory of that God who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh?

Tradition makes the most horrible things acceptable to the mind which becomes blind to their deformity, and even the most detestable things, desirable, by a certain feigned sanctity which it attaches to them. But the charm once broken, the rational mind becomes transformed into another image, totally different, and entirely repugnant to the things which it before venerated as divine. You very justly remark, that if truth be in any way connected with endless misery, you are not reconciled to it; but the time has been when you and I viewed this doctrine as an essential article of the faith of the

gospel. What an absurdity! Eternal misery an essential article of the faith of a Saviour!

And this very moment there are thousands who set their feet on this vagary, believing it to be the only rock of safety.

But we have reason to be thankful for our happy deliverance from such a pernicious tradition; a tradition which has poisoned the doctrine of the church, and hardened the hearts of Christian professors to such a degree, that cruelty of the worst kind has become habitual.

Will our *pious clergy* contend against this charge? Let them account then for all the persecutions, the anathemas, the hangings and the burnings, which owe their origin to this doctrine of eternal misery. Let them account for their own sermons, in our day, which sentence age, middle age, and infancy to endless torture, for offences they never heard of, nor will they ever be informed of them until they find themselves in hell for what a man and a woman did thousands of years before they were born, and of whom they never had heard one word in the land of the living! This they as constantly preach as they contend that man must be sensible of his fall in Adam, of the justice of his being eternally miserable for that offence, and of pardon through the atonement of Christ in this life, or be miserable forever hereafter; for thousands in all ages have lived and died who never heard this absurd story while on earth.

Sir, we have no reason to wonder that religion is so little set by, while it is held up in such a character. Let it put on the mild form of the meek and humble Jesus, let it appear in the mercy of him who said "the son of man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them," let it be represented by its own similitude, by pouring oil and wine into the wounds of an enemy, let it be heard when it declares in apostolic language, God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," let its language be strictly regarded when it informs us that charity is greater than faith or hope, then it will be pure and undefiled before God and the Father; it will engage the best affections of the human heart, and call to its devotion all the energies of man. Who can count the damages which have been occasioned by the preposterous error of setting up *faith* as a criterion of *charity*? Creed makers and creed defenders surely must have been averse to St. Paul's sentiment concerning the superiority of charity over faith; for they have set charity at defiance with undefined items in their creeds, which were acknowledged mysterious in their own minds, and evidently repugnant to reason in the judgment of those who were proscribed as heretics by their authority.

Relative to my quotations from the epistle of Barnabas and others, your argument, as far as it is intended to lessen our belief in the genuineness of these epistles, has no direct bearing on the argument which I endeavoured to support by them; for it makes no difference *who wrote* those epistles, it is their containing quotations from the New Testament which gives them the consequence for which they were quoted.

In reply to what you say respecting Clement's not quoting Mat. v. 7, xviii. 6. as the writing of St Matthew, but as the words of "our Lord," I here set down Paley's answer.

"It may be said, that, as Clement hath not used words of quotation, it is not certain that he refers to any book whatever. The words of Christ, which he has put down, he might himself have heard from the apostles, or might have received them through the ordinary medium of oral tradition. This has been said; but that no such inference can be drawn from the absence of words of quotation is proved by the three following considerations:—First, that Clement in the very same manner, namely, without any mark of reference, uses a passage now found in the epistle to the Romans;[9] which passage from the peculiarity of the words which compose it, and from their order, it is manifest that he must have taken from the book. The same remark may be repeated of some very singular sentiments in the epistle to the Hebrews. Secondly, that there are many sentences of St. Paul's epistle to the Corinthians standing in Clement's epistle without any sign of quotation, which yet are certainly quotations; because it appears that Clement had St. Paul's epistle before him, inasmuch as in one place he mentions it in terms too express to leave us in any doubt—"Take into your hands the epistle of the blessed apostle Paul." Thirdly, that this method of adopting words of scripture, without reference or acknowledgment, was, as will appear in the sequel, a method in general use among the most ancient christian writers. These analogies not only repel the objection, but cast the presumption on the other side; and afford a considerable degree of positive proof that the words in question have been borrowed from the places of scripture in which we now find them." [10]

[Footnote 9: Rom. i. 29.]

[Footnote 10: Paley's Evidences, p. 109, 110.]

I think, if we take into consideration the authority of external evidence, especially if we duly consider how easily Celsus could have overthrown the gospels, if they had not been genuine, it must be

acknowledged sufficient, even of itself, to establish any matter of fact however important, allowing no natural improbability were involved in the fact. And this is as much as we want of external evidence, of the sort referred to.

But as even the internal evidences of scripture would be insufficient to support their authority without the concurrence of external evidence, so would the external be found wanting without the internal. But these together are abundantly sufficient to establish the credibility of this gospel, which is, like every thing else of the work and wisdom of God, the wonder and admiration of the believing soul.

The purity of your motives in writing on the subject of our discussion, will fully justify the exertions you have made to draw forth such arguments as your brother has been enabled to adduce in support of our common faith. I regret that my almost constant employ on other subjects and other duties, has afforded so little time as I have been able to devote to your queries, which, together with my want of abilities to do justice to a subject of this importance is now an embarrassment on my mind in regard to giving my consent to the publication of this correspondence. And there is still another circumstance which seems to operate as an objection to the publishing of these letters, viz. the want of *extension of argument* in many instances, which would have been attended to, if the work had been written for the conviction of common readers, which was not thought to be necessary for the benefit of the mover of the queries.

However, as all human productions are imperfect and ought so to be considered, and especially those from your humble servant, I am willing to appear to some disadvantage if any considerable advantage may thereby result to the cause of Jesus Christ our Lord.

I cannot close this valedictory epistle without a solemn acknowledgement of heart felt gratitude to the merciful disposer of all events, for the ample evidence which his providence and grace have given of the truth of our religion, especially when consider the glorious hope set before us; and am permitted to anticipate the promised era when there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; when there shall be no more pain; but when tears shall be wiped from all faces, and the rebuke of the nations removed from off all the earth, and every creature in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea shall harmoniously ascribe blessing, and glory, and honor unto him who sitteth upon the throne and unto the lamb forever and ever, I loose myself in the contemplation of the transporting scene.

To conclude, as you, my brother, have laboured together with your fellow servant, to look into, and examine these things which belong to the kingdom of righteousness, and as we have been favoured with mutual satisfaction in these researches, may it please the Great Head of the church still to hold us in his hand, still to engage us in his blessed cause, and render our mutual labours promotive of his grace among men. And however distant from each other it may best suit the captain of our salvation to place us, may it be his pleasure to continue our fellowship in the bonds of the gospel.

Yours affectionately,

H. BALLOU.

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A SERIES OF LETTERS, BETWEEN THE REV. JOSEPH BUCKMINSTER, D.D. THE REV. JOSEPH WALTON, A.M. PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES IN PORTSMOUTH, N.H. AND THE REV. HOSEA BALLOU.

A SERIES OF LETTERS

LETTER I.

FROM THE REV. JOSEPH BUCKMINSTER TO THE REV. HOSEA BALLOU.

PORTSMOUTH, DEC. 28, 1809.

Dear Sir,—At the close of the interview which we had at my house, some little time since, you expressed a wish to live in habits of friendship with the ministers of this town, and I think I expressed a hope that I should be always disposed to treat you and all men with those fruits of benevolence and friendship which the law of our common nature and the spirit and principles of the Christian religion, demand of me; with this profession, without its fruits, my conscience is not satisfied. It was neither friendship nor piety that dictated that early question, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*"—There is a reciprocal responsibility among mankind, both for the interest of time and eternity. Were I to see you or

any others exposing themselves to danger, or running into situations that I apprehend would be prejudicial and destructive, friendship would require me to warn and admonish, and endeavour to restrain; and can I support my pretensions to this principle in withholding my warning and admonition, while I am verily persuaded that the present tendency and final issue of that system of sentiments which you have embraced, and which you have come among us to advocate and to support, will expose you, and those that embrace and build upon it, to danger and distress, with which no temporal calamity or ruin can bear any sort of comparison?

I know not what system of Universalism you have embraced or advocate, nor is it of any material consequence in my view; I presume I do not mistake or injure you in supposing that you publicly preach and advocate the final salvation of all mankind, their restoration and association with Jesus Christ in realms of glory. Whatever human ingenuity or plausible and sophistic reasoning may do with respect to either of these systems, they each and all of them are, in my view, destitute of divine authority, and have not a "thus saith the Lord," for their support.

There may be some little difference in the present tendency and effect of these different systems upon the present conduct of men, and so upon the interest of society; but in their general influence, and in their final results, they meet in the same point, and will be attended with the same dreadful consequences. They are neither of them true, and so can have no effect in quickening into life or sanctifying the soul, for it is the *spirit* that *quickeneth*, and the *truth* that *sanctifieth*; they may exhilarate, please, and produce triumph; but it will be a triumphing that is short, and a joy that is but for a moment; for God, to my apprehension, has been so far from giving any countenance to either of those systems, that he hath long ago pronounced them false, and their tendency destructive—these are his words: "*Because with lies ye have made the hearts of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way by promising him life.*" But it is not my intention to enter into a dispute upon this subject, neither to enlarge upon arguments to support my own sentiments, nor to disprove yours; I have no apprehension that any good would result from it; it would be a tax upon time that might be better employed.

When persons have adopted a system and are engaged in its support, when the pride of peculiarity or the influence of party views are enlisted as auxiliaries, there is little ground to hope for a conviction of its errors by formal disputation, however temperately conducted; nothing will effect a change of views and feelings but "*that still small voice*" which induced the prophet to wrap his face in his mantle. This voice is more likely to attend our calm, retired reflections, than the perusal of arguments that tend to disprove what we have been accustomed to advocate and support.

The object of this letter is not to revile, to censure, nor to dispute; but, in friendship and affection, to entreat you to reflect and consider the consequences to yourself and others of that system of sentiments which you are advocating—anticipate the day of judgment, and realize yourself called upon to give an account of your stewardship. I am not disposed, my dear sir, to impeach your sincerity and honesty. I know how far men may be deluded and deceived. I am disposed to believe that you conscientiously think the sentiments you advocate are true. But remember, dear sir, this does not make them true, nor secure you from the dreadful consequences in which they may issue. With all this moral sincerity and uprightness, if you cease to warn the wicked, that he turn from his wicked way (and how can this be more effectually done than by leading him to expect final, everlasting happiness) his blood will be required at your hands. The apostle Paul most conscientiously persecuted the christians and declared to the council before whom he was arraigned, that he had lived in all good conscience before God till that day. He verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, yet his persuasion did not acquit him from guilt, nor would it have shielded him from destruction had he not been renewed to repentance and faith in Christ, while as yet Christ was in the way with him. Christ said to his disciples, "The time will come when whosoever killeth you will think he doth God's service;" and he has added, "many will say unto me, in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity." What must be your situation in the day of retribution if the system you advocate should in final evidence prove false? of which I have not the least shadow of doubt upon my mind, and therefore have all the forebodings for my erring and deceived fellow mortals which may be supposed to be the result of such conviction.—I cannot cease to warn and to entreat you to consider, friendship forbids, my withholding the voice of warning and adjuration; and both duty and respect to my own safety require me to endeavour to save you from the issue, of which I have such awful forebodings. We must both stand before the Son of man, and each one must give an account of himself and of his stewardship to God.—From our connexion here, there will probably be some interest in each other in that day; and I cannot bear the thought of your being able to say when the scheme of Universalism shall all vanish like the baseless fabric of a vision, and all the hopes built upon it will be like the spider's web and like the giving up of the ghost, that you should be able to say, I never warned you of this issue, nor admonished you of your danger.

I know not with what sentiments you will receive this address, nor what use you may make of it; my concern is with the sentiments and spirit that dictate it. I think they are such as will induce me continually to pray that you may not pierce yourself through with many sorrows, nor be left to mourn at the last.

Your friend and humble servant,

J. BUCKMINSTER.

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LETTER II.

FROM THE REV. HOSEA BALLOU TO THE REV. JOSEPH BUCKMINSTER.

PORTSMOUTH, JAN'Y. 1, 1810.

Rev. Sir,—The receipt of your affectionate, friendly address, bearing date December 28, 1809, is gratefully acknowledged, and although I have not words fully adequate to express the satisfaction I feel arising from the circumstance and spirit of your epistle, I cannot be willing to suppress my feelings so much as not to notice, that it is with uncommon pleasure that I appreciate your favour, which, I am happy to acknowledge, is a demonstration of that friendship first reciprocated at your house, and secondly recapitulated in your epistle. This friendship founded, as you justly observe, in the *law* of our *common nature* and in the *spirit* and *principles* of the *christian religion*, is such an inexhaustible treasure of moral riches that the aggregate sum of earthly wealth is poverty in the comparison.

This friendship, sir, being founded on such principles, will undoubtedly last as long as such principles remain; and if you are my real friend on the principle of the law of our common nature, so long as you possess the law of our common nature, you will be my real friend; and if you are my real friend, on the principles and spirit of the christian religion, so long as you possess the principles and spirit of the christian religion, you will remain my real friend. And if I be, as I trust in God I am, your real friend, on those imperishable principles, I shall continue to possess this friendship for you so long as I possess those principles. If these observations on friendship be correct, as I conceive they are, you will know why I so highly prize the treasure, especially when I find it in a man capable of exercising it to so much advantage as your learning, ability and experience enable you to do. You justly observe that neither piety nor friendship dictated the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" How different must have been the spirit which dictated that question from the spirit of him who saith, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, my mother's children were angry with me, they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept?

Your next observation is highly worthy, not only of general consideration, but of particular notice; and I am the more pleased with it on account of its falling from your pen as I am sure you must understand the truths which are necessarily connected with the one expressed in the observation; your words are, "there is a reciprocal responsibility among mankind both for the interest of time and eternity." As it cannot reasonably require any argument to discover the propriety of supposing that the eternal interest of mankind is connected with eternal causes and predicated on eternal principles, so when it is acknowledged that a reciprocal responsibility exists among mankind for their eternal interest, it is evident that this reciprocal responsibility is eternal. Should any conviction of mind render it necessary that we give up the idea of the eternal nature of this reciprocal responsibility, that conviction would drive the idea of eternal interest, predicated on such responsibility from our mind. How noble are your sentiments communicated in this observation! How rich must you and I feel in the enjoyment of such reciprocal principles and in the consequent interest arising from them; not only for time, but for eternity!

You very justly observe again—"Were I to see you or any others exposing themselves to danger or running into situations which I apprehended would be destructive, friendship would require me to warn and admonish, and to endeavour to restrain." These expressions, sir, illustrate the good fruits of real friendship, and as our Saviour has told us that the tree is known by its fruits, so we are to distinguish between real and pretended friends by their fruits. Suppose, sir, we move the position a little, and say, notwithstanding you warn me and endeavour to restrain me from danger, I persist in my error, and my calamity comes upon me; in this situation you come and tell me that you are heartily glad that I am tormented, and that you are glad to think there is no probability of my misery's being any less; that you feel no pity for me now; could I look back and remember your warning, and believe that you warned me out of real friendship? We have just seen that friendship predicated on the law of our common nature and on the principles and spirit of the Christian religion must necessarily be as durable as those eternal principles. It is no less the characteristic of real friendship to endeavour to meliorate than to preserve

from sufferings.

On observing your admonitions, and believing you sincere in them, I am led to say, that had I such a friend as you are who possessed the means for making me eternally happy, I might entertain no doubt of obtaining the inestimable enjoyment; nor do I view you, sir, less a friend because you do not possess a power which is equal to the putting of all your friendly desires into full execution, but will acknowledge you my worthy friend, and accept the warnings which you give me against the system of doctrine which, as you say, I have embraced and come among this people to advocate, as a token of that friendship which would, if connected with suitable power, place me out of all final danger, or which would cause you to rejoice exceedingly, had you the evidence to believe that one who has such power possesses even stronger desires for my eternal welfare than you do.

You inform me that you do not know what system of Universalism I have embraced. Permit me, sir, to inform you, though you do not request it, that I have embraced the system of Universalism, which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob embraced, in believing God, who said, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." If this faith of Abraham were imputed to him for righteousness, it must be a true faith, and if true, worthy to be embraced by all nations and families of the earth, without the exception of an individual. Permit me further to observe that I disclaim all authors as divine guides, except the divine author of those scriptures which cannot be broken.

You rightly apprehend me in supposing that I believe and teach that all mankind will be saved, restored and associated with Christ Jesus in realms of glory; but I do not believe as you intimate, that human ingenuity, or plausible and sophistic reasoning are necessary to the support of this doctrine among men; nor will I attempt to say how sorry I am that you should declare the doctrine not true until you had produced a "*thus saith the Lord*" to prove it false; or that you should intimate that I am employing human ingenuity or plausible and sophistic reasoning to support the universal benevolence of God until the disagreeable circumstance should transpire, in which I might be justly thus charged.

Although in order to please myself, I might explain your meaning as directed against some others of the advocates of the heavenly gospel of universal salvation; I could find but little satisfaction in thus endeavoring to avoid any reproach which is directed against the true disciples of my divine Master.

You inform me that as universal salvation is not true, "it can have no effect in quickening into life or of sanctifying the soul, for it is the spirit that quickeneth, and the truth, which sanctifies." If, dear sir, you do not believe that the spirit of salvation quickeneth into life, would it not have been proper to inform me what spirit does? And I should have highly esteemed an illustration of the evidence which you have, that the truth, *that mankind will remain eternally unsanctified*, will sanctify the soul! I fully believe that as far as any proposition is capable of being proved from the written word, or of being demonstrated by logical reasoning from acknowledged facts, the doctrine of the salvation of all men is capable of being proved and substantially maintained. Does it require human ingenuity or plausible and sophistic reasoning to make it appear from the scriptures that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man; that he gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time; that he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; that it is the will of God that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth; that he worketh all things after the council of his own will?—Does it require this ingenuity, &c. to substantiate from the written word that the promise to Abraham will be fulfilled, and that all nations whom God hath made shall come and worship before him and glorify his name; that Jesus will in the fulness of time, reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth, or things under the earth; that he will gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him? If it be an acknowledged fact that God will bless all the families of the earth in Christ, that all nations which God hath made shall come and worship before him and glorify his name, that Jesus gave himself a ransom for all men to be testified in due time, that he did by the grace of God taste death for every man, that he will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, that he hath made known the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he would gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, and that he worketh all things after the council of his own will, then the doctrine of the salvation of all men is as fully acknowledged as language can possibly express, or my error lies in not understanding the force of words and sentences.

By what method, sir, would it be proper for me to express my surprise at your introducing the words recorded in the 13th chapter of Ezekiel, and at the 22d verse, as a testimony against the doctrine of universal salvation? "Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked that he should not turn from his wicked way by promising him life;"—Must I suppose, sir, that you believe, that the lies mentioned in this quotation were promises of life in the seed of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed? I

cannot believe this of a man of your understanding, and yet cannot conceive why you adduce this passage as proof that Christ is not the life of all men. Is it not evident that those who were addressed in that text were such as promised the people life in the vain traditions which they had established, by which they made void the law? And what does the Lord say that he would finally do in this case?—See verse 23d, "Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations; for I will deliver my people out of your hands, and ye shall know that I am the Lord." This is very far from saying that they should be endlessly miserable. Christ is the Lord our righteousness, and his heart was made sad by the traditions of the house of Israel and by the Rabbis who promised the people life in their vain customs which they had established for religion: and I would acknowledge this passage justly urged against the doctrine which I should vindicate, should I set up any thing but Christ and him crucified, on which to depend for life and salvation; but you leave this quotation as if you had done what you hardly meant to do, by observing that you do not intend to enter into a dispute on this subject, neither to enlarge on arguments to support your own sentiments nor to disprove mine.

You think that no good would result from the argument however temperately conducted it might be, assigning the pride of peculiarity, and the influence of party views as sufficient barriers to prevent success. In this observation may I say without offending, sir, you are inexplicit, or wanting in propriety, and premature in application. Temperate men are not governed in their religious researches by the pride of peculiarity nor the influence of party views, and a faithful trial ought to have been made in order to convince of error before the charge of *pride of peculiarity*, or the influence of party views, could with propriety have been made. I am disposed to believe when persons are candid and temperate in an investigation, they generally obtain light and edification. I will say for myself, notwithstanding I highly prize your solemn warnings, and believe them as proceeding from the most commendable sentiments of friendship, I should have been much pleased if you had accompanied them with the best and most forcible arguments of which you are master, against the doctrine which you are disposed to say in so many words "*it not true*." The small still voice to which you recommended my attention has never told me that Christ was not the Saviour of all men.

May we not suppose that this voice is uniform in its testimony? Do tell me, sir, if that voice ever told you that it was not the will of God that all men should be saved! Is it not by the influence of the spirit of this voice that you pray for the salvation of all men? And would this small still voice tell you that it is not God's will to save all men, and then induce you to pray for all men? If I be not a stranger to this heavenly voice which teaches me to wrap myself in my mantle, the Lord my righteousness, it influences me to pray in faith, nothing doubting, for the salvation of all men.

In your truly affecting entreaty you direct my mind to the day of judgment when I am called to give an account of my stewardship, and ask what my situation must be, if the system I advocate should in final evidence, prove false? I have seriously thought on this question; and this is my conclusion: My judge will know that I am, in this instance, honest and sincere; he will know how hardly I wrestled against his written word in order to avoid believing that he would save all men, and he will know that my deception was in understanding his word as a simple, honest man would understand a plain testimony void of scholastic dress. In this case I am willing to throw myself on the mercy of the judge. On the other hand, dear sir, I have made a calculation too. Suppose I adhere to your testimony, that the doctrine I believe is not true, and abandon it as a heresy, preach it down to the utmost of my ability, and the doctrine at last, when you and I stand before that judge who knows the hearts of all men, should in final evidence of the law and prophets, prove true, of which I have not the least shadow of doubt in my mind, with what a blush must I give up my account! My judge who has suffered every thing for me, asks me, why did you deny me, forsake my cause, and use the abilities which I gave you to preach that dishonourable doctrine that I did not redeem all men, or that I would not finally reconcile all men to myself, and cause them all to love me heartily in bliss and glory? I, abashed beyond description, must answer, a man, who, I conceived was my friend and who preached that God my Saviour, never intended to save all men, told me the doctrine I preached was *not true*! O, how would my soul thrill with grief when a look, such as was cast on Peter after he denied his Lord, should accompany this question, and who told you in the first place it was true?

I appeal to the searcher of hearts for the sincerity of my soul when I say, my dear sir, I feel an uncommon desire to cultivate friendship with you, and were it possible for me to gratify you in any thing that should be consistent with my duty to my God, I think I should not shrink from the service; but should the multitude, whose hearts have been made joyful in the salvation of all men, become so blinded as to renounce the sentiments, I must remain unshaken, until more than human testimony stands against the doctrine.

I am very sensible of the propriety of the observation, that the sincerity of a belief does not prove the thing believed to be true; for though I cannot say so much as you do, viz. "that I know how far men may be deluded and deceived," yet I am sensible that men may be deceived and yet be honest; and it is on this ground, that I have charity for those who believe and preach different from me.

Towards the conclusion of your epistle, you intimate that you wish not to have me say at last, when my doctrine issues in my mourning, that you had not warned me. Be assured, sir, if I may be so much at my own disposal at the last day, that I will not say, you did not warn me; but if my doctrine be false at last, and you are asked why you did not prove from the written word to my understanding that I was in an error, will you say in answer, that it would have been such a tax upon time, that you could not afford it, that you could not or did not wish to? As the passages which you quote on your last page are designed to illustrate what I believe to be a fact, I forbear, at this time, an illustration of them, in which, the impropriety of the common mode of understanding them might be made to appear. Should you be disposed to attempt to correct my ideas in this epistle, or my doctrine in general, by turning to the great touchstone, the law and the testimony, be as ample, sir, as your inclination and opportunity will admit. Every argument shall be duly attended to with prayerful solicitude to obtain conviction, if it can be found; and whatever light I gain I will gratefully acknowledge, and wherein I do not agree with you, I will give you my reasons.

Your most obliged friend and humble servant,

HOSEA BALLOU.

Rev. J. BUCKMINSTER.

P.S. If I have been so unfortunate, in the foregoing epistle make choice of any words which indicate too much freedom, please to impute it to a frankness which perhaps I sometimes indulge to a fault, and not to any want of due respect. H.B.

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LETTER III FROM THE REV. JOSEPH BUCKMINSTER TO THE REV. HOSEA BALLOU.

PORTSMOUTH, JAN. 10, 1810.

Dear Sir,—It was not my intention, in the letter which I sometime since addressed to you, to enter into a discussion of the subject of Universalism, much less, for reasons that were suggested, provoke a dispute upon it. I therefore endeavoured so to express myself that no reply should be necessary.

My object was to discharge what I thought a duty of friendship and affection, rendered more necessary by my personal declarations to you at my house, by stating to you with frankness and decision what I was persuaded would be the final result of that sentiment which you have embraced, and are advocating among us; and to fulfil a duty which I owe to myself, and to Him who has set me here to be a watchman, that I might use every proper precaution to appear before my Judge at last with unstained garments, preclude an occasion for a crimination and reproach, and give up my account with joy and not with grief.

I might have a secret hope that the apprehensions so seriously and candidly suggested might excite you to review your sentiments, and renewedly compare them with the only standard, and that this serious, calm and retired exercise might be accompanied with an influence from above, that might alter your views and conclusions upon the subject; but my principal design was to discharge what I thought my duty as above stated. You have thought it your duty to remark upon the address, and intimate an expectation that I should rejoin; your professions and candor have induced me for a time, to hesitate whether I ought not, in this instance, to depart from my general resolutions, and this hesitation has had influence in my delay to notice your letter. But the result of my hesitations, reflections and prayer, is a more full persuasion, that if the writings of Dr. Edwards, Dr. Strong and others who have discussed the subject, and which doubtless you have seen, have produced no hesitation or conviction in your mind, it would be vain and idle to expect it from any efforts of mine; and that it would be a misuse of time, which might be employed in more hopeful prospects of usefulness. This is a reason which I at present feel satisfied to give to God and my conscience for declining to enter upon a discussion of this subject, and I trust it will be accepted at the tribunal of God. To that tribunal I humbly and cheerfully refer the decision of the question that would be matter of dispute between us, from which decision there will be no appeal, and to which there will be no liberty to reply. I reciprocate the tender of every office of friendship consistent with what I think my duty to God and my conscience, and shall not cease to pray that those who have erred from the truth may be recovered from their errors, and being sanctified by the truth, may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your friend and well wisher.

J. BUCKMINSTER.

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LETTER IV.

PORTSMOUTH, JAN. 11, 1810.

Rev. Sir,—Your favour of yesterday is acknowledged with that respectful submission which your age and experience, together with the spirit and import of your note justly impose, and with gratitude also, for an obligation which I wished to be under in being satisfied of your having received my epistle of the 1st inst. This I learn by the friendly rebuke in your first section in which you speak of my reply as unnecessary, and also by your condescending to refer to it again in your fourth section. Had I, sir, viewed your address altogether in the light which you inform me you did, or had you informed me that a reply would not be expected, I should by no means have troubled you contrary to your wishes. However, as you are an experienced judge of all such matters, so you will condescend to pardon me if in your judgment my epistle is destitute of important subjects. You are so kind as to repeat the design of your address again, certifying me that your object was to discharge the office of friendship, by stating to me with frankness and decision what you are persuaded will be the final result of that sentiment which I have embraced and am advocating. No man, sir, will ever be more ready to acknowledge a friendly office with sentiments of gratitude than your humble servant; but I am sure it cannot be expected by you, that I should receive the testimony of a man, however friendly to me, as a decision against that gospel which I did not receive of man, nor by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Your precautions in warning me as they regard your final justification before God, I hope will be superceded by the acceptable atonement of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world; though that shall not render your faithfulness void of approbation in a subordinate sense. The secret hope which you entertained of exciting me, by your serious apprehensions to review my sentiments and renewedly to compare them with the only standard, would perhaps appear not altogether so necessary, did you know that my daily business is to study the law and the testimony, which increase their light as they are more examined, and furnish every hour I study them, new proofs of the unbounded goodness of God to the sinful race of Adam. O my dear friend! Could you but know the inexpressible consolation and peace which I enjoy in believing that he, who gave himself a ransom for all men, will finally see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, you could not feel concerned about the final issue of the doctrine which I believe and advocate!

I feel that my blessed Lord and kind Redeemer deserves every exertion of mine to persuade men to the knowledge of that truth which would make them free; nor can I easily forbear to express my desire that your greater experience and better abilities might be employed in shewing to poor benighted sinners the divine amplitude of gospel grace for the salvation of all mankind. I believe, dear sir, if it should please God to discover this soul rejoicing truth to you, that the angels would rejoice in heaven, and saints on earth would be made exceeding glad: yes, your church and parish would follow you with rapturous joy to the fountain which is open for Judah and Jerusalem to wash in from sin and uncleanness, and to which the fulness of the Gentiles shall be gathered.

I am not at all disposed to complain of your decision not to enter into an investigation of the doctrine against the truth of which you have opposed your testimony; though I should hardly have believed that in your judgment, such a testimony could have been thought proper unless preceded or succeeded by some colour of evidence. No man, my dear sir, is less calculated to enjoy a dry, unfruitful controversy on religious sentiments than I am—though I wish to hold myself in perpetual readiness to give an answer to every man who may ask me a reason for the hope that is within me with meekness and fear.

The arguments of Dr. Edwards and Dr. Strong being disposed to represent the divine economy of grace less extensive than the plain and positive promises of God, the testimony of the prophets, the word of life through Christ and the witnessing apostles, have declared it to be, stand forever refuted by that cloud of witnesses, as they are also by the spirit of Christ in every humble believing heart. It is far more easy for the rational lover of Christ to believe those learned doctors, deceived by the vain traditions of the schools, than to believe that the grace of God in Christ Jesus is less extensive than his word and spirit declare it to be.

If there never were a true Christian whose desires did not extend to the whole human race, that all might be brought to a saving repentance and to holy and happy life in Christ, then Jesus has never left himself without a witness in his disciples, that all the creeds of men which limit the divine favour are false. With whatsoever panics worms of the dust may have struck their fellow worms by challenging them to a decision of their weak, insignificant notions at a tribunal of an omnipotent judge, such solemn appeals can have but little effect on the humble mind who leans not to his own wisdom, and who views every thing already decided in the eternal system of that God whose tender mercies are over all the works of his hands.

The mode in which you express the circumstance of final judgment is rather indicative of what I hope you do not mean, as it intimates that too much freedom has been assumed by me in presuming to reply to your address. There is much to excite my gratitude in the assurance you give me of reciprocating offices of friendship, consistent with duty to God;—and while you, sir, give me to understand that I have an interest in your prayers, permit me to beg your supplications, that I may be faithful unto death; and to assure you of my humble desire that you may continue to be useful to your fellow pilgrims while you live, and find acceptance with God through Christ at last. Your most obliged friend and humble servant in Christ. HOSEA BALLOU.

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A NOTE FROM THE REV. DR. BUCKMINSTER TO THE REV. MR. BALLOU.

FRIDAY, P. M.

It is a duty which Mr. Buckminster owes to himself to declare that the thought of intimating that it was any assumption or presumption in Mr. Ballou to reply to his address, never once entered his mind; and he is sorry if any thing in Mr. Buckminster's communications could give ground to suspect such foolish vanity; but it confirms the correctness of the opinion, that *disputes however temperately conducted are rarely productive of any good*. All that he meant was that the decision at the tribunal of God would be final.

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A NOTE FROM THE REV. MR. BALLOU TO THE REV. DR. BUCKMINSTER, IN REPLY.

SATURDAY, P. M.

Mr. Ballou is happy to acknowledge the honour done him by the Doctor's note of Friday, P. M. by which he realizes the hope expressed in his epistle of the 11th inst, that what appeared to be intimated by the Doctor's letter of the 10th inst. in relation to final judgment was not meant. In the mean time Mr. Ballou thinks it a duty which he owes to himself to point out to the Doctor the items in his letter which were misunderstood. The Doctor's expression, "I therefore endeavoured so to express myself that no reply should be necessary," was understood to intimate that the reply was unnecessary; and the Doctor's expression, "there will be no liberty to reply," was understood to intimate that liberty had been assumed unnecessarily. In confirming the opinion, that *"disputes however temperately conducted, are rarely productive of any good."* Mr. Ballou thinks his mistake has produced but little consequence, as that opinion was so confirmed before, that even a reason for an assertion could not with propriety be given.

LETTER I.

FROM THE REV. JOSEPH WALTON TO THE REV. HOSEA BALLOU.

PORTSMOUTH, Nov. 19, 1810.

Dear Friend,—I take this method to write to you, with a desire you would receive it as a friendly admonition. You recollect, no doubt, that I have heard you make two speeches at funerals, as they are commonly called, one at the grave and the other at the house of sorrow and mourning, upon a very solemn and singular occasion. At the grave you were short, and said, if I mistake not, viewing the grave, "this is the house appointed for all living," two or three times, and then said, "what reflection shall we make from it? is it done by an enemy? has the Almighty suffered the government to be taken out of his hands?"—and spake as if death was originally designed by the Almighty for the good of mankind, and made it a very desirable thing. My dear sir, doth not the bible, which is the word of God, or the scriptures of truth say, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," Rom. v. 12, and Rom. vi. 23, "For the wages of sin is death." God who is a gracious and holy sovereign "made man upright, but he sought out many inventions." By listening unto that apostate spirit, Satan, he transgressed and disobeyed his maker and sovereign, by eating the forbidden fruit. "God made man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it; and the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Gen. ii. 15, 17. Sin is that enemy that introduced or was the cause of death, as we may further see by considering that portion of scripture, I John. iii. 8, "He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning." For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Sin is the

work of the devil; "the soul that sins shall die." If you will read the whole chapter and seriously consider it, and pray to God through Jesus Christ to open your understanding, that you may understand the scriptures, you would not misapply and pervert them as I fear you do. In your speaking at the house of mourning, you began and spake very eloquently at first upon death; then you brought forward the same ideas, with respect to death, as you did before at the grave. I do not remember that you, at either place, spake one word of the necessity or nature of repentance. Christ began his personal and public ministry by preaching repentance, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"—again, "but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 5. And after his resurrection from the dead he appeared to his disciples and confirmed them in the certainty of it, and chose them witnesses of the truth of it, and said "thus it is written, and thus it behoveth Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in my name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things," Luke xxiv. 46, 47, 48. The apostles, after Christ's ascension, practised as he commanded them, as we may see by reading the Acts of the apostles, Peter in particular, in the 2d and 3d chapters; and we do not find that they ever gave any encouragement that their hearers could or should be forgiven their sins without faith and repentance. Peter says, "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" which presupposes that if they did not repent and be turned to God by converting grace their sins would not be forgiven. Thus the apostle Paul preached, see Acts xxvi. 18, 19, 20, which I entreat you to read and seriously to consider. See likewise 20th chap. of the Acts of the apostles, how he appealed to the elders of the church; in the 17th verse it is written, "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church; and when they were come to him he said unto them, ye know from the first day I came into Asia after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations which befell me, by the lying in wait of the Jews; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostles spake of the nature of repentance that they should bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and that Godly sorrow worked repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For a minister of the New Testament to advance such doctrine as will give hopes to their hearers that all will be happy in a future state, whether they have repented or no, is not preaching as Christ and his apostles preached. If we know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, what will be the consequence? See 2 Thes. i. 8, 9. Ministers are directed by the inspired apostle Paul; see in his epistles to Timothy and Titus. See 2 Tim. 4th chap. from 1st to the end, the 5th verse, which I would entreat and beseech you to read and seriously consider. He, in some of those verses referred to, says to Timothy, "Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine; for the time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make proof of thy ministry." Paul was just about to leave the world; the time of his departure was at hand; the above were his dying words to his beloved son Timothy (in the faith.) The blessed and beloved apostle had through grace kept the faith, that is, the true faith of the gospel; he had finished his course, he had fought a good fight, and henceforth he says, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which God the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not only to me, but unto all them also, that love his appearing. You, my friend, once professed the true faith of the gospel—have you kept it? I think not. I fear you have fallen from it. You are now preaching a doctrine which pleases the world, but it makes against you, according to scripture; the apostle John says, in 1st epistle, 4th chap, 5th and 6th verses, "They are of the world; therefore the world heareth them. We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us; hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." I beseech you again, my friend, examine and seriously consider the first five verses of that chapter, and pray God through Jesus Christ that he would open it to your understanding: Solomon says, "My son, lean not to your own understanding." I could not but observe with what an *emphasis* you at the grave mentioned those selected texts of scripture which you supposed would confirm your hearers in the doctrine of Universal Salvation. Would Christ or the apostles preach Universal Salvation in one place of scripture, and in another contradict it? I believe they would not. I am an *old man*, and have studied the scriptures twenty or thirty years; yea, I may say more or less from my youth up; I find it the best way of study, to compare scripture with scripture; to consider the preceding and following context; to be self-diffident; and to be much in prayer, that it would please God, by his holy spirit, to lead and guide us into all necessary truth; and I do not think it amiss to use sound authors, for as we are in some measure dependant on one another for temporal, so I think we may, under God, be for spiritual assistance; though by no means to put our trust in an arm of flesh.

We may observe how earnest David in prayer to God was in the 25th Psalm. He was a prophet as well the royal Psalmist, yet he comes in a very humble manner to God in prayer that he would shew him his ways, and teach him his paths; and in that Psalm, 8th verse, says, "good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek he will

teach his way." But if men will undertake to explain scripture in their own strength and wisdom, what must we expect but to have them mangled and made havoc of, or explained in a mere mystical or literal sense? "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." See I Cor. ii. 14.

As you did not say any thing about the resurrection of the dead in either of your speeches, I began to query in my mind whether you believed it or no. I think, yea, I know, it was preached by Christ, and explained so as to confute the Sadducees. Our Lord says, "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." St. Paul in his defence before the Roman governor when accused by an orator, whom the Jews employed, as he was allowed to speak for himself, said, "they cannot prove the thing, whereof they now accuse me; but this I confess after the way which they call heresy; so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets, and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow; that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; and herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man." We may observe what an influence the belief of a future state of rewards and punishments had on the blessed apostle to excite him to live a godly and self-denying life. In 2 Cor. v. 10, 11, speaking of a day of judgment, "when every one must give an account for himself as the deeds have been done in the body, that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad;" and says, "knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." My friend, is there the least room for us to believe from this scripture and many others, that the wicked who have died impenitent and in a disbelief of the gospel or without the true knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent, have eternal life, in the fruition and enjoyment of God? Heaven consists in being made like God, and enjoying him: hence it is, that the pious thirst for God, the living God, saying, when shall I come and appear before him? Again, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee. My flesh and heart fail me, but God is the strength of my heart and portion forever." These pious breathings are the exercises of the children of God. O may they be ours.

JOSEPH WALTON.

PORSTMOUTH, Nov. 19, 1810.

P. S. The within, enclosed, my friend, I can assure you was not written to you in this manner, as God is my judge, from an envious and bitter spirit, for I love and esteem your person, as a friend, who has, from my first acquaintance with you, treated me with great respect. I see, on the Lord's days, great numbers of precious souls going and returning from your meeting; and, as far as I know my own heart, I do not envy you for that; but have often prayed that the gifts and natural abilities you have might be sanctified and turned into right improvements, which is the glory of God and the saving benefit of your hearers. May it please God to make you an able and faithful minister of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. From your friend and humble servant, JOSEPH WALTON, _Pastor,

Of the Independent Congregational Church in Portsmouth_.

TO MR. HOSEA BALLOU, PASTOR OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN PORTSMOUTH.

Sir,—You may observe by the date, the letter has been written some time; but by several avocations I have not had time to correct and copy it until the present date, December 7, 1810.

J.W.

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LETTER II.

FROM THE REV. HOSEA BALLOU TO THE REV. JOSEPH WALTON.

PORTSMOUTH, DEC. 11, 1810.

Rev. Sir,—It is with pleasure that I hasten to acknowledge the receipt of your "friendly admonition," bearing date December 7th, which came to my hand late last evening, which I assure you is accepted as a token of friendship, and a mark of particular attention; and merits, as I conceive, a grateful acknowledgement as well as an early answer.

Your admonition begins by taking notice of what you conceive an egregious error which you have heard me suggest at two several funerals. You say that I "spake as if death was originally designed, by

the Almighty, for the good of mankind." This statement you consider of such a dangerous nature that it renders an admonition necessary. But, dear sir, there are two important ideas contained in the above short sentence, and you have not distinguished between them, nor informed me whether it be both, or only one which is thus reprehensible.

That *God originally designed death*, is one idea; that he *designed* it for the *good of mankind* is another idea. In order to do you justice and to attach no other meaning to your communication than such as I conceive to be consistent with your real sentiments, I must suppose that you would not wish to fault the first of those ideas, as it is an item in your creed, that "God foreordained whatsoever comes to pass;" of course, you believe that God *originally designed death*. But, that God designed death for the *good of mankind*, I do not know it to be an article of your faith, and therefore, may, without doing you any injustice, suppose that you believed that God originally designed death, but *not for the good of mankind!* Here, sir, I acknowledge that my sentiment differs from yours; and as you have given me no reason why God should not have designed death for the *good* of mankind, I have only to consider the "friendly admonition," with which you oppose my idea. I would query why the idea that God should design death for the good of mankind renders me justly admonishable? Would the idea, should I avow it, that God designed death for the *damage* of mankind, render me commendable? So, it seems; but at this expense I cannot avoid admonition! I would further query what interest God could have consulted which required him to design death for a *damage* to those creatures whom he made subject to death? And I think it expedient to ask how God can be justified, in the sight of his rational creatures, if the idea be once established that he designed evil against them, even before they existed?

I feel it to be my duty, dear sir, to call on you to support this high allegation against the Father of our spirits. I would not pretend that you designed to bring an allegation against our Creator, but I am satisfied that every unprejudiced mind must see the nature of an allegation in what you are disposed to maintain. For if we say God, our Creator, designed death for the damage of those dependent beings whom he has made, it is giving him a character which, I believe, the wisest of men would find it difficult to justify.

Again, if the notion be true, that God designed death for the damage of mankind, is it not from hence evident that he was an enemy to mankind when he thus designed? Now, if God be considered an enemy to mankind even before he made them, I wish to know what reason can be given why mankind ought to love God since creation?

In relation to a number of scriptures which you have quoted, seemingly with a design to illustrate the foregoing subject, I can only say, that if any or all those passages relate at all to the subject, *that relation* is out of my sight. And I can truly say, that I am glad that there is nothing, in any part of the scripture, so contrary to good sense and reason as to support the notion that God is an enemy to the works of his own hands. I believe, sir, if I prove from scripture that God designed death for the good of mankind, it must be considered a substantial support of what you wish to oppose; and will also be considered as placing the scripture doctrine on the most reasonable principle.

1st. I will show that death is not a token of God's enmity towards mankind. As a proof of this, see Rom. viii. 38, 39, "For I am persuaded, that neither *death*, nor *life*, nor *angels*, nor *principalities*, nor *powers*, nor *things present*, nor *things to come*, nor *height*, nor *depth*, nor *any other creature* shall be able to separate us from the *love* of God which is *in Christ Jesus our Lord*." This passage is a full and positive proof that neither *death* nor any thing else, is a token of God's enmity to mankind.

2d. I will now show that *death* was designed by God for the *good* of men. Which to do, I must learn of Jesus. He is the truth. Was his *death* designed, by the eternal Father, for the good of mankind, or not? Was his death a token of God's love to the world, or was it a token of his enmity? See Rom. v. 8, "But God *commendeth* his *love* towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." This same apostle, believing in Christ, who, he says, was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification, in a short, but comprehensive inventory of the things which are ours, has placed *death* among them. See 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23, "Therefore, let no man glory in men: for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or *death*, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Again, he says, to the Phil. i. 21, "For me to live is Christ, and to *die* is *gain*." Nothing appears more evident than that the death of Christ was designed for the good of mankind; and as he is the head of every man, so his death is considered, in the scriptures, a gracious benefit to every man; as the apostle expresses it, "That he, by the grace of God, should taste *death* for every man." And again, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ, shall all be made alive." Who can impartially consider those scriptures and suppose that God designed *death* for a damage to mankind? I view *death*, sir, as an appointment of God, a friendly messenger, sent to dissolve a tabernacle of corruption and vanity, at the dissolution of which, "the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it."

Your admonition in the next place suggests, that "if" I "will read the whole chapter (meaning the 3d chapter of the 1st of John) and seriously consider it, and pray to God, through Jesus Christ, to open" my "understanding, that" I "may understand the scriptures," I "would not *misapply* and *pervert* them, as" you "fear" I "do."

Rev. Sir, are you sufficiently acquainted with my preaching and writing on the scriptures to warrant the propriety of the suggestion, that I am in the habit of *misapplying* and *perverting* the holy writings? Are you sufficiently acquainted with my retired studies and religious exercises to warrant the suggestion that I get along without acknowledging the wisdom of God? I humbly request you to reconsider this part of your admonition, and see if it do not wear the appearance of *judging another* who must stand or fall to his own master. In the mean time I wish to observe, that a friendly advice to be constant in fervent supplication and prayer would be received by me as a mark of *christian friendship* and *fellowship*. But I will ask you the question, if you would be willing to have me go into your desk with you in presence of your church and congregation, and there read the whole of the above named chapter, then in humble and solemn prayer to Almighty God, through Christ Jesus, implore a just and true understanding of his word and truth contained in that portion of his written will, and close my performance with a candid dissertation on the chapter? Grant me liberty to do this in your hearing; after which I will not object to your pointing out any *misapplication* or *perversion* which you may think you discover. By what law is a man condemned without first hearing his defence?

Again, your admonition suggests, that I did not, at either of the funerals where you heard me perform, speak one word of the necessity or nature of repentance. In this particular I believe you made a mistake at both places, which mistake, I believe I can rectify to your recollection. In the first place, I wish to observe that I as much believe in those scriptures which speak of the necessity of repentance as I do in any part of the sacred writings. But, after all, you and I may entertain very different ideas respecting the *preaching* of repentance. The opinion that repentance is preached when a public speaker tells his congregation that their eternal salvation depends on their repentance, that eternal misery must inevitably be their doom unless they repent is an opinion to which I have no reason to subscribe.

Preaching repentance, I conceive is *teaching* men and giving them such divine instructions as bring their minds to discover more glorious things than the sins and carnal vanities of this world; which *teaching* produces a returning of the mind to the things of God and his ever blessed kingdom. The word *repent* may or may not be used in the giving of such instructions. I conceive a preacher of Jesus Christ, warmed with the spirit of eternal love, breathing forth the gracious words of truth, may successfully preach repentance as well without the use of the word *repent* as with it. At both those places of sorrow, dear sir, I endeavoured to lead the mourners' minds to the consideration of *eternal things*; I endeavoured to represent God our Creator and Governor, as a friend to his creatures, and strove to the utmost of my power to fix the love, regard and confidence of our mourning friends on God our Creator. This you will recollect, and I cannot suppose that you believe that a person can truly believe in the divine goodness, and love his Creator as the greatest good, and put confidence in him, so as to draw consolation, in the day of adversity, from such confidence, and still be a stranger to true penitence.

The many scriptures which you have judiciously quoted to prove the propriety of the doctrine of repentance are justly applied, as I conceive; and I accord with you in their use and meaning as far as you have explained them. I would wish to be understood that whenever repentance is spoken of as a creature act, originating in creature agency, it is represented directly contrary to the scripture sense as expressed in Acts v. 31, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a *Prince* and a *Saviour*, for to *give repentance* to Israel and forgiveness of sins."

From the above passage it is evident that repentance is no more dependent on creature agency than the forgiveness of sins; and the idea that repentance is a grant of divine favour is plainly expressed in Acts xi. 18, "Then hath God also, to the Gentiles, *granted repentance* unto life." By the above testimonies the idea that *repentance* is a *creature condition*, on which the divine favour is bestowed, is proved erroneous.

The next particular which your "friendly admonition" occupies, is the subject of *Universal Salvation* in the following words: "I could not but observe with what *emphasis* you, at the grave, mentioned those selected texts of scripture which you supposed would confirm your hearers in the doctrine of Universal Salvation. Would Christ or the apostles preach Universal Salvation in one place of scripture, and in another contradict it? I believe they would not." In the above particular, sir, I agree with you in all which you express. I do not believe that Christ or any of his apostles ever contradicted the glorious doctrine, in which they all preached of Universal Salvation. And until this contradiction can be shewn in their preaching, you and I have full liberty to believe in God as "the Saviour of all men." Christ gave himself a ransom for all men; tasted death for every man; is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. He says he will draw all men unto him, and he also says that "him that cometh after me I will in

no wise cast out." St. Paul says that God will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. To which testimony we might add an immense number of scriptures from the Old and New Testaments; and as you agree that Christ and his apostles would not preach Universal Salvation in one place, and contradict it in another, so you must, of necessity subscribe to the *uniformity* of the scripture doctrine in the Salvation of all men.

You inform me, that you are an "*old man*;" this I was sensible of before, in consequence of which, I have more particularly endeavoured to cultivate an acquaintance with you, since I have been in this town; for I conceive that the aged are not only entitled to the respects and attention of the younger, but the younger are also entitled to the advantages of their experience and wisdom.

You further tell me, that you have studied the scriptures twenty or thirty years. On this account, sir, I covet earnestly your assistance; for although I have studied the scriptures almost constantly twenty years out of less than forty, yet I find but a few who are notable to assist me in this agreeable employment. The happy method which you recommend, I have for many years endeavoured to observe, for I am sure that most of the vulgar errors, in respect to the scriptures, are for the want of a careful examination of all which is said on the same subjects.

Wherein you recommend the pious example of the prophet David, I fully accord in it, and would humbly hope and strive to be a partaker of the benefits arising from such an example.

What you say of men's explaining scripture in their own Strength and wisdom, and of their making *havoc* of, and *mangling* them by explaining them in a mystical or literal sense, I find myself rather embarrassed about. You begin your epistle under the character of a "friendly admonition," but what you mean by accusing me of the folly of mangling and making havoc of the scriptures when you do not attempt to show wherein I ever explained a passage wrong, I must leave for you to explain when it is convenient. Nor is it easy for me to understand you when you represent both the *mystical* and *literal* explanation of scripture equally erroneous. You immediately conclude those observations with the following quotation: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." Did you mean that the natural man, supposing the things of the spirit of God to be foolishness, would say that the spirit *mangled* and made *havoc* of the scriptures? This could not be your meaning.

Your concluding query is the following; "My friend, is there the least room for us to believe from this scripture (meaning 2 Cor. v. 10, 11) and many others, that the wicked who have lived impenitent and in a disbelief of the gospel, or without the true knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ whom God hath sent, have eternal life in the fruition and enjoyment of God?" This query I will endeavour to answer as plainly as possible.

1st. Unless we grant that a man has eternal life in Jesus Christ, given him before the foundation of the world, we cannot justly call him an *unbeliever* because he does not believe he has this eternal life in Christ. Nor can we say, with the least propriety, that he does not *know* the *truth*, because he does not know that which is not.

2d. If we allow that a man has eternal life in Christ, we must allow him to be an unbeliever if he do not believe it; and that he does not know the truth as it is in Jesus, if he be ignorant of this gift of eternal life.

3d. While a man is in a state of unbelief he is not in the *enjoyment* of the truth.

I conceive, sir, these observations must appear reasonable to any reasonable man; and therefore I suppose they will appear reasonable to you.

The passage in Corinthians alluded to, fully refutes the notion of *endless* rewards and punishments; for there it is stated, that "*every one* may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Now as this same apostle tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, if he mean that all who have sinned must be endlessly punished, he cannot mean that any of the human race will be eternally blessed according to their own works, nor yet according to the grace of God. And you, sir, cannot but see if one sinner can be rewarded according to his works and yet be saved by grace through faith, and that not of himself, but by the gift of God, all the sinners of Adam's race may be thus rewarded according to what they have done either *good* or *bad*, and yet be saved by grace as above.

Your suggestions respecting the resurrection require no other answer than that I profess to believe in the doctrine of the resurrection as taught by the scriptures, though I cannot flatter myself that that opinion agrees with the opinion of what you call *sound authors*. For myself, I call the writers of the holy scriptures *sound authors*, and those who differ from them I am willing to call orthodox according to our

common schools of divinity. I join with you in a humble desire that the holy breathings of the true children of God may be yours and mine; and I am sensible if they be we shall not judge one another, nor condemn one another; but strive for the unity of the spirit in the bonds of divine peace. Yes, sir, I am confident that the true temper and spirit of the gospel, if possessed and practiced by the public ministers in this town, would lead them to open their doors to each other, to meet together and pray, preach, sing and exhort, in love and fellowship; but Antichrist's spirit is directly the reverse.

The assurance you give me in your postscript, that what you wrote to me was not written in an envious spirit is duly appreciated; nor do I much wonder that you do not envy me the numbers who attend my public ministry, while you suppose that they with innumerable multitudes of others are reprobated to endless sin and misery. Envy, in such a case, would be truly unaccountable! I will not say that I fully comprehend your meaning in calling the "great numbers" who attend my meeting, "*precious souls*." Why are they precious? To whom are they precious? If you view them the objects of divine love, of course you must suppose them to be precious in God's sight; but if not, why do you call them precious?

Your flattering acknowledgements of civilities received from me and the acceptableness of my person to you, is very gratefully considered, for it is an object with me to deserve the approbation of the pious who have treasured up much valuable knowledge by experience; and I wish to give you the fullest assurance possible that I consider my acquaintance with yourself highly worthy of further cultivation and improvement, which I shall always endeavour to promote, as opportunity may present, and it shall please you to favour.

Having noted the most important sections of your "friendly admonition" in as concise a manner as was convenient, permit me, dear sir, to make a few observations on the doctrine of Universal Salvation, that being a subject to which you allude in your epistle, though you did not see fit to plant any particular arguments against it. This doctrine I openly profess, and preach as a doctrine which I conceive is plainly taught in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; a doctrine which all good men in the world desire the truth of; a doctrine the most worthy of God of any ever published; a doctrine the best calculated to fill the soul of the believer with love to God and to our fellow creatures; a doctrine which harmonizes the divine attributes, the scriptures and every principle of reason and good sense, in a surprising and an astonishing manner; a doctrine, more than any other, calculated to destroy the hurtful animosities existing in the religious world; and to produce general fellowship and brotherly love; and in a word, I believe it to be the only doctrine which can be supported by reason or scripture, to a mind not improperly biased by tradition. Though I am sensible of your greater experience, yet I am willing to say to a man of your piety and Christian candor, that any arguments which you should see cause to lay before me, on the above subject, shall, by the blessing of God, receive an early attention and a judicious discussion.

In the spirit of the New Testament and not in the letter; in the spirit of life, and not in the death of the letter, in the spirit of salvation, and not of condemnation, I pray God, I may ever live and act according to your friendly desire; and feeling the same fervent desire for my highly esteemed and venerable friend, I acknowledge myself your most obliged and very humble servant, for Christ's sake.

HOSEA BALLOU.

Rev. Joseph Walton.

P.S. I have reserved three particulars in your "friendly admonition" for the subject of another communication.

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LETTER. III.

From the Same to the Same.

Portsmouth, Jan. 5, 1811.

Rev. Sir,—Having notified you in a postscript of my letter of Dec. 11th, that I had reserved three particulars in your "friendly admonition" for the subject of another communication, I am disposed to embrace this opportunity to fulfil my engagement. The three particulars reserved are expressed, in your letter, in the following words:

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. You, my friend, once professed the true faith of the gospel—have you

kept it? I think not. I fear you have fallen from it. You are now preaching a doctrine which pleases the world, but it makes against you according to scripture. The apostle John says in his 1st epistle 4th chapter 5th and 6th verses, They are of the world; therefore the world heareth them; we are of God; he that knoweth God, heareth us, he that is not of God, heareth not us; hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." I would not, dear sir, knowingly misapply your words, nor make a use of the above quotation contrary to their most plain and evident sense which I conceive is as follows:

1st. The doctrine which I believed before I believed as I do now, is the true gospel according to the testimony of the apostle John, in his 1st epistle, 4th chapter 5th and 6th verses.

2d. That in believing as I now do, I have fallen from that faith, and turned unto fables.

3d. My now preaching a doctrine which pleases the world is good proof that my doctrine is not of God, and that those who hear me are justly described by the apostle as heaping to themselves teachers having itching ears.

In the first place I shall agree with you in the supposition that when I first made a profession of religion, I believed the true gospel.

In the second place I shall endeavour to show that I have not fallen from that faith.

In the third place I will attempt to show that the evidence, which you think makes against me, is by no means sufficient to prove that the doctrine I now believe and preach is consistent with the *lusts* of the *world* or contrary to the true faith of the gospel.

1st. The true faith of the gospel as expressed in 1 John, 4th, &c. is as follows—see verse 2, 3, "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." The apostle here states in the most simple terms the true Christian faith, and brings it into such a short compass that none can mistake him. The belief that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is the true faith, and a denial of that fact is a false faith.

When I first professed religion I professed to believe that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh;" and this I am willing to say now is the true faith of the gospel, and the only article of faith which constituted a Christian believer in the opinion of the apostles; restricting this belief, at the same time, to Jesus of Nazareth, that he was the Christ.

2d. I as much believe now as I ever did that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. I have as clear evidences now as I ever had that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. These things being facts, the conclusion is that I have not *fallen* from the true christian faith.

3d. The above faith I preach, believing and testifying that God sent his Son to be the *Saviour* of the *world*; and I have reason to bless God that such feeble means are at all prospered, and that as you observe, "Great numbers of precious souls" adhere to the word, which I conceive is no evidence that the faith I preach is not of God, or that it is consistent with the lusts of the world. We are informed in the word of God, that the *common people heard Christ gladly*. Who did not hear him gladly? Answer, the Scribes and Pharisees. Do you think, sir, that the common people's hearing Christ gladly was a justifiable evidence to the Pharisees that he was not the true Messiah? When many thousands of men, women, and children flocked from their cities into desert places to hear the gracious words which proceeded from the lips of him who spake as never man spake, was it a justifiable evidence that he and his doctrine were not of God? To bring this matter, if possible, nearer home, should you find your meeting house crowded with hearers who expressed in their countenances an approbation of the doctrine which you preach, would it be sufficient evidence to convince you that your doctrine was not of God?

That the testimony that God sent his Son to be the Saviour of the *world* is not consistent with the *lusts* of the *world*, is shown by St. Paul to Titus; "For the grace of God which bringeth salvation to *all men*, hath appeared, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and *worldly lusts*, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world."

I have not the least doubt in my mind, that if you and I preached more like our blessed master than we do, people in general, would be more engaged to hear us, and our meeting houses would be more thronged than they are now.

Should you hear a shepherd complaining that the increase of his flock was small, or that it rather diminished, you would think *that* evidence made against *him*.

I suppose the particular idea which you had in view, which constitutes, in your mind, an *Apostasy*, is, that Jesus Christ, who was manifested in the flesh, will, pursuant to power given to him of his father,

save all men from their sins, and reconcile all things unto himself. This idea, I acknowledge, I did not see clearly in, when I first made a profession of a belief in Christ; but now am fully persuaded in it. However, I cannot see why the adopting of this particular idea should be called an *Apostasy*.

I will, sir, mention some similar cases, not wishing however, to be considered an equal subject to the personage whom I shall introduce. The apostle Peter was a believer in the true faith of the gospel, that is, he believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God: and Jesus says to him, on that confession, that flesh and blood had not revealed it to him, but his Father. This belief Peter had before he believed that Christ should suffer on the cross and rise from the dead. After many trials and dreadful temptations in which this poor, dependent brother of ours experienced the fallibility of all human strength, he was privileged with positive evidence of the resurrection of Christ from the dead.—Here I ask, was this new acquisition in Peter's faith an apostasy? Was it not an advancement? You will agree with me in this.

Again, this same apostle, even after he was endowed with power from on high, and preached and healed in the name of Jesus, did not know that the Gentiles were fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of the promises of God, in Christ, by the gospel. It was not until the angel of the Lord appeared unto Cornelius and directed him to send for Peter, that God gave to that apostle the knowledge of the fact which he acknowledged to Cornelius, that God had shewed him that he should call *no man common* or *unclean*. It is very evident that the apostle Peter had more extensive knowledge of the gospel of the grace of God in consequence of the vision of the sheet by the sea of Joppa than he had before; but would any real Christian, knowing all the circumstances, suppose that Peter had *apostatized* from the true faith, because he believed that millions would be benefited by Christ more than were comprehended in his former belief? While they who were of the circumcision remained ignorant of the revelation given to Peter, we find they "*contended* with him, saying, thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." But when Peter had "rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, they held their peace and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles, *granted repentance* unto life." Thus we see that the church in Jerusalem, who were of the circumcision, though believers in Christ were, until Peter's defence further enlightened them, ignorant of the extension of divine grace to the Gentiles through the gospel. But surely no real Christian would suppose that this enlargement of their faith in the great salvation was an *apostasy* from the true faith!

With profound deference, sir, permit me to suggest, that should the foregoing observations present yourself, to your own mind, in a similar situation with those of the circumcision, yet they acknowledge you a believer in Christ, a minister of his word and a candidate for greater manifestation of that grace of God by which Jesus tasted death for every man.

I believe I may venture to say that unless the belief that *God is not the Saviour of all men* can be maintained by positive scripture as an essential article of apostolic faith, I cannot be justly *admonished for falling* from the true faith. May I not, with great propriety, call on my Rev. friend to show, if he can, that such an article of faith was ever required by Christ or his apostles as a term of christian fellowship and charity?

Let us look into the written word of God and see what is there required of us to believe. See Rom. x. 9, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Acts viii. 37, "And Philip said if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Matt. x. 32. "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my father which is in heaven." Luke xii. 8, "Also I say unto you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God." Not to multiply quotations, permit me to query whether there be in those passages, or in any other scripture on the same point any intimations given that the candidate must believe that this precious Saviour will not, through the peace made by the blood of his cross, reconcile all things to God? Are you fully satisfied, dear sir, that you are authorised to *admonish* as an *apostate*, one who confesses with his mouth the Lord Jesus, and who believes in his heart that God hath raised him from the dead? Why did not Philip demand of the Eunuch a particular confession of a belief in *limited grace* and *salvation*? Was there not the same authority to require this article of faith then, as there is now? If Jesus hath promised, in his word, that he will confess before his Father in Heaven, whosoever confesseth him before men are you satisfied with the authority by which you denounce, disfellowship, and deny those little ones? The thought is truly solemn! I feel a *chill* in every vein of my body, when I consider the vain traditions of a corrupted church, in which it has long been a religious habit to anathematise those who confess Christ before men, because they *cannot* believe in certain tenets never required by Christ or his apostles!

Rev. Sir, I can say in the sincerity of my soul, that I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Christ, I believe him to be the Son of the living God, who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for

our justification. And though I feel myself the most unworthy of the subjects of salvation, yet I should be ungrateful not to acknowledge the goodness of God my Saviour. Whatever men may think or say of me, I know that my soul experiences joys unspeakable in sweet meditations on the glories and inexpressible beauties of my Redeemer; and the thought that I am owned as his child before the angels of God, is infinitely better than to receive the approbation of men who are disposed to judge without knowing the heart.

If the Christian clergy were once disposed to strip their creeds and confessions of faith till they were reduced to the simplicity that is in Christ, and require no other belief than Christ and his apostles required, there would be an end at once of all the discord and animosity which have wounded the character of Christianity for ages. And the prayer of the blessed Jesus would be fulfilled in the *oneness* of all who believe in him, which would convince the world that the Father sent him.

Although you have not yet found it convenient to favour me with any observations on my former letter, I have not done expecting it. And I shall endeavour to hold myself in readiness to pay an early attention to any communication which shall come from your hand. In hopes that nothing contained in this letter will be considered inconsistent with the true spirit of a humble believer in Christ, I remain, sir, your humble servant, for Christ's sake.

HOSEA BALLOU.

Rev. JOSEPH WALTON.

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LETTER IV.

FROM THE REV. JOSEPH WALTON TO THE REV. HOSEA BALLOU.

PORTSMOUTH, JAN. 11, 1811.

Sir,—I have received your answer to my letter sent you, dated Dec. 7, 1810, and now desire to answer it, in the fear of God, in as concise a manner as I am capable, agreeable to the scriptures of *truth*. Sir, I thank you for the civilities you manifest toward me, and that you received my letter in a friendly manner as I think I sent it, wishing it might be received and improved for your benefit; not that I supposed that I was capable of convincing or confuting you of what I conceive to be erroneous in your doctrine or principles, but relying on the blessing of God to make it effectual for your everlasting good, and those you profess to be over in the Lord.

I shall not take into consideration every argument you make use of, but shall give it a general answer. Since I have received it I have had a great number of scriptures occurring to my mind which I might quote if I thought expedient. In the first place you speak or write as if I thought death was originally designed by the Almighty for the damage of mankind; I say death was threatened to be the consequence, if mankind did transgress the law of their Creator; our first parents transgressed, and the penalty was executed according to the threatening, "Thou shalt surely die;" they were condemned to die; they were under sentence of death; they became spiritually dead, immediately; they lost the knowledge of their Creator; darkness covered their minds; they endeavoured to hide themselves from God among the trees of the garden; they brought misery upon themselves and upon their posterity; we feel the woeful effects of their fall and apostasy until this day; by nature we are spiritually dead; as it is written, "you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Sir, if there is a law made by our legislature, is there not a penalty annexed unto it? If that law is transgressed, is not the person who transgressed punished some way or other?—Yet the law is made for the good of the whole; the legislature is not to be impeached, as if he made it for the damage of his people, whom he governs; the law-breaker is punished either in his own person or his surety, though the pain, shame and punishment is for the damage of the transgressor, yet the law is for the good of the whole, and the law maker is not in the least to blame; the transgressor also, if he repents and is reformed, is benefited by it, &c.

I think, sir, your giving your hearers encouragement in your preaching that Christ will save them all, whether they repent and believe the gospel or no, is of a dangerous nature. Christ has said, "if ye believe not that I am he ye shall die in your sins," John viii. 24. Read, if you please, the proceeding context. The decrees of God, you say, is my creed, and that I believe that God foreordained whatsoever come to pass. I do not think I ever told you so. And so you think God foreordained, according to my *creed*, death, for a damage to his creatures. I have said death is punishment for sin, as I wrote, and I can maintain it from scripture; death was introduced by sin; the person that lives a life of sin and dies without regenerating grace, which all true believers in Christ have, will be miserable, and be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." I believe every true believer is a true penitent, is regenerated, is in Christ by a vital union is a "new creature," and that

those persons will be saved and none else, according to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles. I believe that God the Father worketh all things according to the council of his own will; that his redeemed and saved people should be to his glory. You say, in my writing to you, I said, "do you think Christ or his apostles would preach universal salvation in one place of scripture and contradict it in another? I believe they would not."—Here you designedly, I think mistake; I do not believe that Christ or his apostles ever did preach universal salvation, that is, that every son and daughter of apostate Adam, would be saved. I believe that this gospel of the kingdom is to be preached to every creature, and "whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Do me justice, sir; do not animadvert upon what I have just quoted, as if I think our Saviour is to be understood as if every individual would have the privilege of hearing the gospel. I conceive that the apostles' commission runs thus: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every human or rational creature."—What I meant by saying, do you think Christ would preach universal salvation in one place, and in another contradict it, is, that those texts which you suppose supports your doctrine, is not to be understood as you apply them; for if they prove universal salvation, as you would have them, then they will contradict many texts which Christ and his apostles improved otherwise; therefore I still assert, that the scriptures ought to be carefully examined, conscientiously improved and applied. The faithful minister of Christ will renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the *truth*, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. "For we are not as many which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ."—See 2d Corinthians, ii. 17. And I would take it as a favour, if you would read the 15th and 16th verses in the same chapter, and seriously consider them. Those texts of scripture, which you have quoted from Rom. 8th chapter, are not to be applied as you apply them, neither doth the apostle apply them so. And methinks you know they are not, if you consider the connexion from the 28th verse of the chapter to the end. And that passage of scripture quoted from 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23, is only to be applied to real Christians; and this, sir, I presume you know; but it would not suit you and your scheme of Universal Salvation to apply them so.

I would ask you, if, when I am writing a letter or an epistle to Mr. Hosea Ballou, it would be proper for me to apply what I write in particular to you, concerning your affairs or circumstances, to the whole world? Ministers of Christ should rightly "divide the word;" and should take the precious from the vile; then they would be as God's mouth to the people. See Jeremiah xv. 19, see likewise, Ezekiel xiv. 23, "The priests of the Lord are to teach the Lord's people the difference between the holy and the profane," and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean;" it is by this *general* way of preaching, errors are introduced, not only by your denomination, but by others also. I could multiply quotations from the Bible, both from the Old and New Testaments, but what would it avail, unless you will consider them and endeavour to improve them, and apply them as the Holy Ghost would have us to do? "For holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," see 2 Peter i. 25. You say, you were somewhat embarrassed in understanding what I meant when I wrote that men undertaking to explain the scriptures in their own strength and wisdom, and their making havoc of them, &c. by explaining them in a mystical or literal sense. I will endeavour to explain what I meant—1st. To allegorize the scriptures in a mere moral or mystical sense, or altogether in a figurative sense, is a degree of enthusiasm, (as to say there is no *devil* but our carnal nature, &c.) and in a mere literal sense is to understand and improve them not in that spiritual sense in which they are to be understood, but resting in the letter only; as we may observe when Christ said in St. John, 6th chapter, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you;" "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day;" "These things said he in the synagogue as he taught in Capernaum;" "Many therefore of his disciples when they heard this, said, this is a hard saying, who can hear it? Christ said, doth this offend you?"—And informed them he did not mean that they should eat his human flesh, and drink his blood literally, but he was to be understood in a spiritual sense. He informed them "it is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, the words I speak unto you they are spirit and life." Some have since misunderstood him, and, to this day, misunderstand this piece of scripture; and have from thence introduced the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation, that after the words of consecration, the bread and wine are the real body and blood of Christ. So some adhere only to the letter of the word and expound the law of God in a mere literal sense. It seems the apostle Paul, before his conversion, understood it so.—Read the 7th chapter of Romans, from the 6th to the end of the 13th verse. Paul was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a doctor of the law; yet, while in his unregenerate state, knew not the spiritual meaning of the law of God, (I mean the holy or moral law) and no doubt he spake by experience when he says, (as I wrote to you from I Cor. ii. 14) "But the natural man received not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." By the natural man, I conceive, the apostle meant the unregenerate man: yea, with the highest degree of human teaching and knowledge without he is taught of God, by his word and spirit, he cannot truly understand the things of the spirit of God; and therefore they are, as I say, misapplied, mangled and made havoc of. Faith is, by some, only held as a bare assent that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. None do truly believe that, but by the Holy Ghost.

You still will continue to maintain the doctrine of Universal Salvation, by those texts, which I said you spake at the grave with such an *emphasis*; if they are to be understood only in a literal sense as they are expressed, I can quote as many or more spoken by Christ and his apostles which will contradict them in their literal sense: Christ says, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. Then shall he say unto them on his left hand, depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal. Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me and shall die in your sins: whither I go ye cannot come." John viii. 21, 24, "I said therefore unto you that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he ye shall die in your sins." With respect to that text you quote from John xii. 32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." It is, I conceive, explained by Christ himself in John iii. 14, 15, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." By Christ being lifted on the cross the way of salvation is to be preached to all men; but it is only those that believe who will not perish and have eternal life, according to the foregoing scriptures I have quoted from Mark xvi. 16, and Mat. xxv. 41, 46. I could quote many more scriptures spoken by our Lord himself and explained by him; and I hope, sir, you will allow our Lord to be the best expositor of his own word. I conceive you think you have got a mighty argument when you mention the apostle Peter, who had a vision which instructed him in his duty to preach the gospel to the Gentiles; but remember, Peter says, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." Then he began to preach the gospel to Cornelius and his friends; he preached Christ to them; he preached Jesus and the resurrection; he shows he is ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead; and says, "To him give all the prophets witness that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Did he say that every individual of the human race would be saved? No such thing! And though he had further light concerning the Gentiles, he never, as I can find, preached Universal Salvation, but to the contrary. Read his epistles, first and second, particularly 2d epistle, 2d chapter from 1st to the end of the 9th verse. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation; and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment, to be *punished*;" not to be *liberated*! Read 3d chapter, 7th verse, "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Peter wrote these epistles after he had further light with respect to the Gentiles' having the gospel preached unto them.

As to what you write about my saying I do not envy you because great numbers go to hear you, I still say it, as far as I know my wicked and deceitful heart, and wish you might preach the pure and simple gospel, and that your hearers might desire nothing more than the sincere milk of the word, as new-born babes, preached unto them; that they might grow thereby, &c.

That place I directed you to in 1 John, iv. 5, 6, and wished you to consider, though I have in some measure already considered it, I will attempt more particular to consider it. 1st. You say, John says, "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, and this is that spirit of Antichrist whereof you have heard it should come and even now already is in the world." John in the preceding verse said, that every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; do you think, sir, that every person that assents to this truth is a true believer? But few that have been born in a land of gospel light but what assents to this; but the soul that is born of God truly believes it, according to what the same apostle writes, 5th Chapter 1st epistle 1st verse, "Whosoever believeth Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." Do all men that confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh profess to be born of God? Do they love the children of God that bear his image? No; they, if unregenerate, are of the world; they "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Who does our Lord mean when he says, "If the world hate you, it hated me before it hated you, if ye were of the world the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you?" Sir, you know that there has been many antichristian professors of this truth, *that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*, that have shed much human blood, because they hated the dear children of God. Therefore I conceive this is the meaning of the text: we must know for ourselves that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, as Peter did when he confessed him, and Christ said to him, "Blessed art thou Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven—upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." I believe that true and saving faith is wrought in the heart by the spirit of the *living God*; and the soul that believes truly, is, as I have already said, born of God, is in union with Christ, is partaker of the divine nature, and has escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, and is pressing forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. I have wrote more than I intended, having received your other epistle and have considered some of it. This remains to be considered: what you wrote concerning your having great numbers of hearers. It is true Christ had a great number which followed, and heard him, but few which followed because they loved his doctrine, and followed him from right motives. He said unto them, "Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles,

but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed," John vi. 26, 27. Our Lord says, John viii. 47, "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God." Hence you may see how our Lord and his beloved disciple John agree; it is not the truth as it is in Jesus, the populace are after; it is to gratify their curiosity, or hear something about their salvation in a way that has no cross in it. But Christ says, "If any man will be my disciple let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me." When Christ preached soul searching doctrine as he did in the 6th of John, "Many of his disciples went back and followed no more with him." And I believe when you preach repentance and faith, and shew what fruits they will produce in the true penitent and true believer, the world will not hear you and cordially like your doctrine. But they, as John says, are of the world, therefore they speak of the world, and the world heareth them; "We are of God, we that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us: hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." I have reason to think some popular preachers are good men, but the world do not like them nor their doctrine, because they are so; but because of their popularity their curiosity is fed, or gratified—and not their souls with the pure milk of the word. Sir, you answer in some way which is ambiguous to me about your preaching repentance, and say repentance may be preached without speaking the word repentance. What makes you shun speaking plainly as Christ did? Be explicit in preaching it. You cannot deny, but Christ and his apostles preached it explicitly. Christ said in plain language, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 3, 5. In your answer concerning the resurrection of the dead, you do not speak of that in a clear and explicit way, and your not mentioning it at either of the funerals, makes me doubt whether you believe it in as clear and literal a manner as it is expressed in the scriptures by Christ and his apostles. Paul says, "Seeing we have such hope we use great plainness of speech." I hope, sir, you will not be offended with me for plain dealing.

As to your apostasy, I hope I shall have an opportunity to confer with you about it. I am happy to say I feel no rancour or enmity against your person or people, as a neighbour and friend, but should be willing to assist you in, and as far as my ability and power with a good conscience will admit; and hope this will not interrupt our meeting together as usual in visiting the schools. I think we had best drop the controversy, and I think I shall no more write to you, and hope you will no more write to me on this subject. You may make what use you please of it; I hope it will be made of good use to you.

I now, dear sir, "commend you to God and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up in the *truth* as it is in *Jesus*, and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

From your friend, and well wisher in the gospel of our dear Lord Jesus Christ.

JOSEPH WALTON.

Mr. Hosea Ballou, *Pastor of a Church.*

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LETTER V.

FROM THE REV. HOSEA BALLOU TO THE REV. JOSEPH WALTON.

PORTSMOUTH, JAN. 15, 1811.

Rev. Sir,—Yours of the 11th inst. is before me, and according to my *promise* I hasten to pay *an early attention* to its contents, notwithstanding you express a *hope* that I should write to you no more on this subject. In your desire, sir, that I should write no more I believe you to be *really sincere*, for I believe you to be a man disposed to give your friends as little trouble as possible; but I have several reasons for answering your last, which, when I have stated, I presume, will fully satisfy you that my answer is required in justice to myself.

1st. I find myself accused of *baseness*, of which, were I guilty, the forfeiture would be that of *confidence*.

2d. I find my preaching misrepresented, and that in direct violation of my own declaration in the present correspondence.

3d. I find questions proposed for my discussion, which renders it reasonable that you should have an answer, as I was in hopes of obtaining to the questions which I stated to you.

4th. I find you quite off from the subjects of your admonitions, not attempting to support them, nor

yet willing to exonerate me from charges.

5th. I find the scriptures of our blessed Lord and Saviour quoted with a manifest design to limit his grace and salvation.

I might go on and state a number more reasons why I conceive it to be my duty to reply, but the five already given will undoubtedly satisfy your mind; and they furnish subjects sufficiently ample for an epistle. To them I shall conform myself, and endeavour to be as concise as is consistent with the importance of the subject.

1st. Your accusation is in the following words:—

"Here you designedly, I think, mistake." "Those texts of scripture which you have quoted from Rom. 8th chapt. are not to be applied as you apply them, neither doth the apostle apply them so. And methinks you know they are not, if you consider the connexion from the 28th verse of the chapter to the end. And that passage of scripture quoted from 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23, is only to be applied to real christians; and this, sir, I presume you know; but it would not suit your and your scheme of Universal Salvation to apply them so."

Here I am accused, 1st of *designedly mistaking* you! And, 2d of a *wilful misapplication* of the *sacred word*! To these high charges, sir, I beg the privilege of pleading *not guilty*; and, after making my defence, of submitting my cause to impartial judges.

With regard to the *designed mistake*, my defence is that no mistake was made by me either *designed* or *not designed*.—I have examined and find that I quoted you verbatim. I also find that I fully agreed with you in the sentence quoted as to what was necessarily signified by it. I applied the sentence according to my own mind; but did not pretend nor say that you applied it as I did. Where then is the *designed mistake*? Could an action lie against a man for murder if no *body* were found, on which murder had been committed?—Could an indictment for theft be supported against a man if no property were missing from the owner? Is it proper to bring an allegation thus, without pointing out some sort of *mistake*? I will not be so uncharitable, sir, as to suppose that you *designed* to bring a *false accusation* in this instance. No, sir, you are not capable of such wickedness; I have ever believed you to be an *honest, sincere christian*; and that opinion is so congenial to my feelings that I shall never give it up while I can find a reasonable excuse for retaining it.

My opinion is, that you, finding that I had made such ready use of your sentence apparently to my own advantage, thought I designed to mistake you, and feeling a little disagreeably on the occasion, did not *look minutely* to see if you had rightly apprehended me, or not.

With regard to the *wilful misapplication of the sacred word* my defence is to be made from the sacred text itself. In this defence, sir, it is sufficient if I give you reasons which induce me to apply the scripture as I do. It is not necessary that I convince you or any body else that my application is right, for we are all liable to err. What I shall aim at is to show that if my applications are *not correct* yet I am not guilty of *wilfully misapplying* the *sacred text*. 1st. Of the passage in the 8th of Rom. the following are my reasons for a general application of that scripture to mankind.

1st. The whole human family, at least, is made the primary subject of the apostle's application as may be seen by looking at the 19th verse and onward. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the *whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together* until now; and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves *groan* within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

I understand by the above quotation that St. Paul meant the same by the "*whole creation*" as he did by the "*creature*" who was "made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." And this creature which he calls the "*whole creation*" he says shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. This is the apostle's primary application of the love and mercy of God. In a *minor* sense he is *particular* as may be seen in the above quotation, "and not only they," that is the whole creation at large, but ourselves also, which have the *first fruits* of the *spirit*, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." I know of no way to understand the apostle here to mean otherwise than that the whole human race *groan* and *travail* for the same deliverance and redemption that those do who are blessed with the first fruits of the spirit. Nor do I find any expression, in relation to this subject, more significant of the deliverance of those who have the first fruits of the spirit, than of the deliverance of the whole creation, or creature made subject to vanity. By turning back only to the

5th chap, we find the apostle laboring the subject of grace and salvation in just as extensive a manner. See verse 18th, "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon *all men* unto *condemnation*, even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon *all men* unto *justification of life*." Consistently with this positive and particular declaration of the apostle's belief in the *justification of all men* through the *righteousness of Jesus Christ*, we find his following testimony. See 1 Tim. ii. 4, &c. "Who will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for *all* to be testified in due time." Heb. ii. 9. "But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Rom. iv. 25.—"who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification." v. 8. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

In the above testimony the apostle says, that Christ gave himself a ransom for *all men*, that he, by the *grace of God*, tasted death for *every man*, that he was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification, that his death for sinners is a commendation of God's love to them. Now I am willing to acknowledge to you, sir, and to all the world, that I can make no sense of the above testimony without applying it to all mankind. In the apostle's observations in the close of the 8th of Rom. of nothing being able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, there is a perfect analogy with the foregoing testimony. The love of God which is in Christ Jesus, was commended to a sinful world in that Christ tasted death, by the grace of God, for every man. If one of all those for whom Christ died can be separated from that love by which Christ died for him, I know not why the whole may not be, by the same argument.

2d. Of the passage in 1st Cor. 3d, &c. This passage, you say, you *presume* I *know* ought not to be applied to any *but real christians*! See the text. "Therefore let *no man*, glory in men; for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Are you willing, sir, to *presume* that I *know* that the apostle Paul did not mean to dissuade any but *real christians* from trusting in men? This you must *presume* in order to *presume* that I *know* the text ought to be applied to none but real Christians. Is not the sense of "*no man*" as universal in the negative, as the sense of "*all men*" is in the positive? Why did you not attempt to give some reason for such a *presumption*? I hope dear sir, you will not allow yourself to think, even for one moment, that I am so uncharitable as to suppose you *presumed* thus, contrary to impressions of your own mind, though you cannot think any worse of me than is implied in the presumption. I tell you, sir, that I seriously believe that the above text ought to be applied to all men; I believe it is wrong for any man to put his trust in man, according to that scripture; and I believe it to be perfectly right to exhort *all men* to put their trust in God who has given his son to die for us all, and who will with him freely give us all things richly to enjoy.

I do not doubt your sincerity in the above *presumption*, but I doubt your having paid a suitable attention to the subject before you thus presumed. Hasty judgments and sudden conclusions frequently make work for repentance; but the true christian will, on cool reflection, be willing to acknowledge his faults and to remove unjust accusations.— "By their fruits ye shall know them." On considering the usage with which I meet in this unsolicited and unexpected correspondence, I cannot but call to mind the very different treatment which the *devil* received from an heavenly dignitary, who dared not to bring against his opponent a *railing accusation*! As a further evidence that the text in Corinthians ought to be applied to all men, or to men in general, see the words of the same apostle to the Ephesians, chapter iv. 8, 11, &c. "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers."—Now look again to the passage in Corinthians, "For all things are yours, whether *Paul*, or Apollos, or Cephas," &c. These were the gifts given unto men. The question now is, were those gifts which were given unto men, given to any but real christians? See Psalm lxxviii. 18, to which the apostle alludes in his words quoted from Eph. iv. "Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Are you willing, sir, to *presume* that I *know* that the prophet David and St. Paul meant to apply those scriptures to none but *real christians*? I must acknowledge my surprise at such *presumption*. I will now take my leave of those accusations, just remarking that I feel no fear in submitting my case to any impartial tribunal.

The 2d general particular is that of my preaching being misrepresented, and that in direct violation of my own declarations in the present correspondence. This misrepresentation I find in your letter in the following words: "I think, sir, your giving your hearers encouragement in your preaching that Christ will save them all whether they repent and believe the gospel or no, is of a dangerous nature." In the first place I call my whole congregation to witness against this misrepresentation. In the second place I call my own testimony in this correspondence which you had before you, to witness against this

misrepresentation. The following are my own words verbatim:—"In the first place I wish to observe that I as much believe in those scriptures which speak of the necessity of repentance, as I do in any part of the sacred writings. The many scriptures which you have *judiciously* quoted to prove the propriety of the doctrine of repentance are justly applied as I conceive, and I accord with you in their use and meaning as far as you have explained them. While a man is in a state of unbelief he is not in the enjoyment of the truth." These quotations, sir, are all in direct opposition to your representation of the subject of repentance.

Here again I ought to observe, that I am far from accusing you of an *intentional fault*, or a wilful misrepresentation; though in order to suppose you clear from such a fault, I must charitably suppose that the *perturbations* of your mind were such that you did not give my letter a careful examination. I proved by plain and positive scripture that *repentance* is as much a gift of Christ as the forgiveness of sins, which is, with the passage quoted from my letter, sufficient to convince any man, who is not "improperly biased by tradition," that I do not exclude the necessity of repentance.

3d. I find questions proposed for my discussion, which renders it necessary that you should receive an answer, as I was in hope of obtaining to the questions which I stated to you.

These questions are in the following words: "I would ask you, if, when I am writing a letter or an epistle to Mr. Hosea Ballou, it would be proper for me to apply what I wrote in particular to you concerning your affairs, or circumstances, to the whole world? Who does our Lord mean when he says, 'If the world hate you it hated me before it hated you,' &c." To the first of these questions I answer, should you state in a letter to me that *no man* ought to preach the doctrine which I preach, I should suppose that your observation would apply to the whole world of mankind as well as to me; or if I should say in a letter to the Rev. Joseph Walton, *no man* ought to *presume* his *friend* to be guilty of *wilful mistakes*, and *misapplications* of scripture without the *best possible evidence* I believe you would see the propriety of applying my observation to all men, even if you should feel yourself particularly admonished by it.

The second question I conceive may be justly answered thus: The *world* which hated Christ was that religious order among the Jews who accused him of being a friend to publicans and sinners; who thought themselves so much better than their neighbours, as to say, "Stand by thyself; come not nigh me, for I am holier than thou."

Enmity to Christ grows out of a Pharisaical notion of our own righteousness, and it is an invariable mark of a Pharisee to oppose the humiliating doctrine of *equal guilt* and *equal grace*. No man ever hated Christ who felt the weight of his own sins and the need of a Saviour. No set of men ever fomented persecutions but such as thought themselves the more particular favourites of God than others.

When I hear certain characters raising such queries, I am almost induced to use the freedom with them which the prophet Nathan used with his terrible majesty the king, and say, "Thou art the man!" But I dare not assume the place of judgment; and I know my own fallibility so well that I have no need to accuse others.

4thly. I find you quite off from the subjects of your admonition, not attempting to support them, nor yet willing to exonerate me from charges. Quite off, I say, from the subjects of admonition; for you have not attempted to distinguish between the two ideas contained in what you stated as the first subject of admonition, nor have you told me whether it be one, or both which you consider thus reprehensible.— You labour some time on another subject which concerns the mode by which death was introduced, but you have said nothing about whether God *originally designed death*, or not. Not knowing your real mind from what you expressed on this subject, I queried in my mind how I ought to understand you, and supposing you consistent with yourself, and having sufficient reason to believe that your *creed* contains the belief that God foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, I explained the sentence accordingly; but you neither acknowledge me right in this particular, nor object; but you say that you do not think you ever told me so! Here again, sir, I can easily suppose you speak the truth, though I am under the necessity of charitably supposing that your memory fails, for at the first visit which I had the happiness of making you, I heard you recommend the Catechism to be taught in schools which contains this very article of faith. And now, sir, I must either believe that you would recommend that which you do not believe, or I must still suppose that you believe that God foreordained whatsoever comes to pass; and of course that he foreordained *death*. And as you *admonish* me for suggesting that God originally designed death for the good of mankind you cannot be consistent with yourself, as I can see, without believing that God originally designed death for a *damage* to *mankind*. And as you do not deny believing thus, I cannot but marvel that you should wholly neglect to answer my queries on this subject: a subject which evidently involves the moral character of God. Do you feel, sir, as if you had honourably acquitted yourself in this particular, by only exulting in your forgetfulness concerning having given me

to understand your creed? Does this look altogether like renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty? Did you believe your creed in respect to the subject of admonition was hid from me? Why then did you not openly decide either one way or the other? May I not without doing you the least injustice suppose you were straightened by the glaring inconsistency of your *admonition*? If you avowed the suggested *item* all the abominable absurdity which I posted full in sight must have been charged to your account. If you disavowed the suggested *item* then away went the *darling Catechism*, in a moment, and with it, more of the preposterous inventions of priestcraft than could be easily replaced to the advantage of the cause of superstition and ignorance! I would by no means suggest that you did any thing or neglected to do any thing from a motive which your own conscience disallowed; but I am impelled, even by charity itself, to attribute your conduct in the above case to an improper prejudice against a doctrine of which you know but very little.

Another subject of your admonition is that of my having apostatised from the true faith. On this subject, on which I was particular, you make no defence, nor yet exonerate me from the charge. You observe you hope for an opportunity to confer with me about this matter. Why were you unwilling to write your defence of this allegation, or be so kind as to withdraw it. I must use the plainness, sir, to say, if you accuse of *designed mistakes* in *writing* where no mistakes exist, if I have a verbal conference with you on these matters, I should wish to have it before a ready scribe who could produce the conversation afterwards. You are not to suppose by this precaution I mean to intimate that you would report the conversation contrary to truth, designedly; I mean if when my letters are before your eyes, you misunderstand, you might be as likely to misunderstand conversation.

You admonished me for preaching a doctrine which pleases the world, meaning the populace; and I endeavoured to defend myself in that particular: but you neither attempt to show my reasoning faulty, nor yet, acknowledge me correct. This is *admonishing*, I should suppose, in the *unaccountable* manner in which *Popes* admonish! You say that many followed Christ for the sake of the loaves. Dear sir, I did not say but they all did; and if they did, the question is, does that prove his doctrine not of God? Here, sir, you will see, if you look one moment, that you were off, far off from the subject.

5th. I find the scriptures of our blessed Lord and Saviour quoted with a manifest design to *limit* his *grace* and *salvation*.

You introduce those quotations as follows: "You still will continue to maintain the doctrine of Universal Salvation by those texts which I said you spoke at the grave with such an *emphasis*. If they are to be understood only in a literal sense as they are expressed, I can quote as many, or more spoken by Christ and his apostles, which will contradict them in their literal sense. Christ says, 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. Then shall he say unto them on his left hand depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.'—'Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way and ye shall seek me and shall die in your sins; whither I go ye cannot come. John viii. 21, 24. I said therefore unto you that ye shall die in your sins, for if ye believe not I am he ye shall die in your sins.'"

These passages you say contradict those which I make use of to prove Universal Salvation, if we understand those which I thus use in a literal sense, as they are expressed. I will state one passage only as an example, which I have before quoted. Rom. v. 18, "Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men unto condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Nothing can be said on the above text which can tend to make its meaning more plain than it is, if its most natural sense be the true sense. This, sir, I presume, you will allow: Now let us look for a contradiction of this text in the passages which you quoted. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." I ask how long the unbeliever will be damned? Answer—As long as he is an unbeliever, and no longer, according to the text. Is there any expression in the text, or context that even intimates that any will remain eternally in unbelief? No. Where is the contradiction then? There is none. The passage which you quote from the 25th of Mat. says, "And these shall *go* away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." As the word everlasting is very frequently used in the scriptures to signify ages and dispensations, is there any certainty that it has not such a meaning in this place? Answer: No. Where is the contradiction then? There is none. The very expression "*punishment*" shows plainly that what is inflicted is designed as an emendation of the punished. I have shown in a late publication,[11] that it is in direct violation of the words of Christ, to explain the above text to signify a punishment in another state of existence; and yet, if we were under the necessity of understanding it so, it would fall after all infinitely short of proving that, at some period known to a merciful God, all men will not be justified unto life.—Therefore no contradiction can be found. The passage which speaks of those who should die in their sins will fall equally short of contradicting the testimony of Universal Justification. I will ask in the first place, whether a man's being *dead* in *sin* render it impossible for him to be quickened unto life by the spirit of God? See a passage which you quote, "You hath he quickened who were *dead* in

trespasses and *sins*." If those who are *dead* in *trespasses* and *sins* can be *quicken*ed according to this passage, what is the reason that those Jews to whom Christ spake can never be *quicken*ed? You must see, sir, that the passage which you quote refutes your notion about this contradiction. You will say that Christ told the Jews "whither I go ye cannot come," but you cannot but remember that he said the same thing to his own disciples. "As I said unto the Jews so I say unto you, whither I go ye cannot come;" and afterwards explains himself to mean that they could not come immediately.—Let us now turn this subject round and ask how the text quoted from Romans can be true if your notion of endless misery be granted to be the true meaning of the passages you quote? Will you undertake to say that men who are justified unto life by the righteousness of Christ will remain endlessly in a state of death and condemnation? If you do not feel competent to the task of maintaining such palpable contradiction, why would it not be doing yourself a kindness just to examine that *soul chilling* and *heaven dishonouring doctrine* of *endless, unmerciful punishment*! One moment's examination of such an idea when brought in sight of the fountain which is opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to wash in from sin and uncleanness would abolish it forever. I acknowledge, sir, that my five particulars do not comprehend every particular of your letter; nor have I attended to all which they do comprehend so extensively as I would if I could suppose it necessary; but as you were in hopes of receiving nothing, it is not to be expected that you will find fault because there is no more.

[Footnote 11: "Candid Review," or Answer to Robinson.]

I cannot be willing to close this epistle without giving you credit of following the apostle's direction in your observation concerning my argument in respect to St. Peter. You say "I conceive you think you have got a *mighty* argument," &c. The apostle exhorts us to be *children* in *malice*, and I am sure St. Paul, nor any body else ever heard a more *childish expression* which communicated the least possible disaffection.

What you quote from St. Peter with a design to prove endless misery, without attempting to show that such was his meaning, I forbear commenting upon. If you had shown that Peter could consistently believe that no man was common or unclean considered in the sheet which he saw in vision, and at the same time believe that the greatest part of mankind would remain in sin and uncleanness eternally you would have done more than you have. I hope, sir, if you are determined to take your leave of this correspondence without supporting the subjects of your admonition, and without supporting the heavy charges you have stated against me, and, likewise, without acknowledging the impropriety of your admonition, and the incorrectness of your charges, that you will never attack another of your fellow creatures in the same way. I do not express this because I feel the least unfriendliness to you in consequence of the method you have pursued, but because I think it is contrary to the spirit of Christianity; it is not doing as we wish to be done by. I do not believe that your soul feels satisfied with it; but you have some remains of pride yet which keeps you from giving up ground which you are sensible you cannot maintain. I hope, sir, you will entertain no apprehensions respecting my cordial friendship to you, or my readiness to join you in any possible usefulness to our fellow creatures. And, as you affectionately committed me to God and to the word of his grace, please to accept the sincere desires for your present and everlasting welfare, of sir, your humble servant, for Christ's sake.

HOSEA BALLOU.

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LETTER VI.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

PORTSMOUTH, FEB. 1, 1811.

Rev. Sir,—Having taken into serious consideration the whole correspondence which has passed between us, I have felt very deep impressions on my mind arising from the following considerations.

1st. You and I are accountable beings, and must undoubtedly, sooner or later, be called to account for the propriety, or impropriety of our labours with each other.

2d. Our professional character must, without doubt, be a high consideration in our accountability.

3d. The eyes of society are ever watchful, and God has made us accountable, not only to himself, but to our fellow creatures, who have a just demand upon us.

While these important considerations were revolving in my mind, I felt a sense of my youth, compared with your age, my inexperience, the proneness of the human heart to the vanity of self confidence, the blindness of prejudice to which old and young are more or less subject, and also, the

friendship which has hitherto happily subsisted between us since our first acquaintance.

These circumstances and those considerations, led my mind to the conclusion that I ought to lay the whole matter before God, and to ask of him suitable wisdom to guide me in relation to so weighty a subject.

The result of my devotional supplications is a forcible application of the divine direction, given by St. Paul 1 Tim. v. 1, "Rebuke not an elder but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren."

How far your communications to me are consistent, or inconsistent with the apostle's direction, in the above test, I do not conceive it my duty to judge, any farther than a discharge of my own duty, pursuant to the apostle's direction, may require. On the most deliberate recapitulation of all which I have written, I cannot now say, that I could wish to recall a single idea, argument, application of scripture, or sentiment; though I will not even suggest that better information might not produce a different conclusion. I trust I have hitherto treated you, sir, and the subjects of your communications with all the propriety of which my understanding is master; and my fervent desire is, that I may complete the labours enjoined on me by the above text, in strict conformity to that most holy spirit which inspired such excellent counsel. Therefore, Rev. Sir, I *entreat you* as a *father* to consider,

1st. Whether you entreated your humble servant as a *brother* when you admonished him for important particulars which you wholly refuse to substantiate either as facts or wrongs?

2d. Whether you entreated me as a brother in refusing to decide, as to your meaning, in the first subject of your admonition, and in not giving me to understand whether I had rightly apprehended you or not?

3d. Whether you entreated me as a brother in not acknowledging an agreement of sentiment on the subject of *repentance* after I had given *you* the fullest assurance possible, that I believed in its necessity and importance?

4th. Whether you entreated me as a brother in admonishing me as an apostate from the true faith of the gospel, while I profess to believe in Christ the Son of God, as the Saviour of the world; and stand in society, in my various relation by the blessing of God, unimpeached as to morality?

5th. Whether you entreated me as a brother in admonishing me against a doctrine which commends the love and mercy of God in the final reconciliation and everlasting happiness of all unreconciled beings; and in opposing said doctrine with no other argument than saying, in effect, that if the scriptures which prove the doctrine are allowed to mean as they naturally read, other scriptures contradict them! Thus furnishing the infidel with his darling weapon against the divinity of the scriptures?

6th. Whether you entreated me as a brother in stating those heavy charges against me, in which you *accuse me* of a *designed mistake*, and of *wilful misapplications* of scriptures where neither *mistake* or *misapplications* of scriptures can be made to appear?

7th. Whether you entreated me as a brother in misrepresenting my preaching when you never heard me perform in the particular capacity of a preacher?

8th. Whether you entreated me as a brother in taking your leave of this correspondence without supporting one single particular of your admonition, or one single charge against me. And also, without acknowledging the incorrectness of your admonition, or the impropriety of your charges.

I entreat you, sir, as a father, to consider whether the spirit which you manifested, in bring such *unreasonable* charges against me, be consistent with the directions given by St. Paul to Timothy, and also with the example and precept of him who loved his enemies and commanded his disciples to do likewise?

I entreat you seriously to consider what the conduct of the Saviour would have been, if he had been disposed to *judge, denounce, reject* and *disfellowship* all those who sincerely believe in him and strove to honour him with becoming obedience to his commands, on account of their not understanding every thing as well as he did?

I entreat you to call in question your treatment of me because I do not believe in every thing as you do; and carefully examine if it correspond with the conduct of him, who, out of pity to human weakness, submitted himself to the scorn and hatred of those who considered themselves more righteous than others?

In relation to the doctrine, to which you appear so violently opposed, I entreat you, as a father, to

take into consideration, 1st. The promises of God to Abraham by which the doctrine is supported. 2dly. The corroborating testimonies in the New Testament by which we are to understand those promises. 3dly. The consistency of the doctrine with the character of *infinite goodness*. And, 4thly. The consistency of the doctrine with every benevolent and godlike desire of the human heart.

If God promised to bless all the families, nations and kindreds of the earth in the seed of Abraham, who is Christ, and if St. Paul has informed us that this blessing is *justification through faith*, I entreat you to consider by what authority you condemn the doctrine of *Universal Justification*.

If the apostle has also argued that God has made peace through the blood of the cross of Jesus, by him to reconcile *all things* to himself, I entreat you to consider by what authority you condemn the doctrine of *Universal Reconciliation*.

If in perfect conformity to the promises of God, the prophet has given his testimony that *all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God*, I entreat you to consider by what authority you condemn the doctrine of *Universal Salvation*.

If you make use of scripture to contradict such plain and positive declarations, by explaining *parables* and *doubtful sayings* for that purpose, I entreat you candidly to consider whether you can do any thing more to the dishonour of the sacred word, or more pleasing to those who wish to bring the scriptures into disrepute.

If you feel determined to maintain and inculcate the idea of God's punishing his rational offspring eternally without mercy, love, or pity towards them, I entreat you, as a father, to consider whether you can invent any idea which, applied to God, would make his character appear more contrary to the spirit of him who loved his enemies and died for them.

I entreat you to examine carefully and see if it be possible to reconcile the doctrine of endless misery with the benevolent desires of the true spiritual children of God; and consider seriously whether it be proper to pray for the salvation of all men, and then condemn the belief of it as a heresy.

I entreat you, as a father, to call into serious consideration the real cause of all the persecutions and abominable cruelties which have been practiced in Christendom, on account of religion, and see if you can find a foundation for these things except in the blasphemous notion that God is unmerciful towards the impenitent.

Endeavour, sir, to satisfy yourself how the foolish prejudices of ignorant zealots could ever have succeeded in establishing so many middle walls of partition, and in making so many pernicious distinctions in the Christian world, if the blasphemous notion of partiality in God had not been the rage of an apostatised church.

Find out, if you can, I entreat you, sir, the cause of all the madness and folly, which appear in the habitual coldness and bitterness exercised by the clergy, of different denominations towards each other, if it be not the blasphemous notion that their foolish prejudices are sanctioned by God!

Adieu, I write no more. I feel that I have done my duty. I have entreated you as a father in love and faithfulness. I leave the effects with God; humbly praying and joyfully believing, that when we are purged from our hay, wood and stubble, with the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, we shall see eye to eye and be admitted to a humble seat at the feet of our blessed Saviour, for whose sake I remain, sir, your most obedient and very humble servant.

HOSEA BALLOU

Rev. JOSEPH WALTON.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A SERIES OF LETTERS, IN DEFENCE OF DIVINE REVELATION ***

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