

A

LETTER

TO THE

REV. DR. S. CHANDLER,

FROM THE

Writer of the History

OF THE

MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART.

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A

LETTER

TO THE

REV. DR. SAMUEL CHANDLER.

SIR,

SOON after the appearance of the *History of the Man after God's own Heart*, a rumour spread abroad that you intended a reply to it. A circumstance for which the writer of it was far from being sorry; as he concluded a defence of the character of King David from so confessedly able a hand, would greatly tend to illustrate the real merits or demerits of that celebrated monarch, whose life and actions have been the subjects of such variety of opposite constructions. Eager to learn what you, Sir, had to say, in opposition to what was advanced by him, he made frequent enquiry, as opportunity offered, when your answer was to appear. Nobody knew certainly; but every one, acquainted with your former writings, ventured to predict the complexion of it: your friends were afraid that 'the Doctor would be too warm;' while those, not so well affected perhaps to your side of the question, declared with less reserve, excuse the repetition, that 'come when it might, he would scold like a fishwoman.' The writer himself, not having read any of your former productions, except the sermon which gave rise to this controversy, was naturally led to conclude, that a Protestant Divine, long exercised in the profession of the gospel, must have profited so much by the meek spirit which it so manifestly inculcates, as to manage a

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literary dispute especially, with distinguished moderation.

After near twelve months had elapsed, and expectation was tired out, gradual notices of its appearance transpired. First it was whispered that the Doctor, after submitting his performance to the correction of a friend, had very near wrote the whole anew: then it would come out speedily: and, after tracing it to one of its intended publishers, and two or three times being named, at length with due solemnity the bulky review issued forth.

It must be owned, that to the writer himself, whatever might have been the opinion of others, the external appearance of the little History, compared with the formidable size of your review of it, excited the recollection of the overgrown Goliath, clad in heavy armour, stalking forth with menacing steps to demolish the little David. It remains then to be tried whether the stripling can find a few smooth stones in his pouch, as well as a sling, wherewith to defend himself against this giant, who so proudly defies the armies of common sense.

It is a fortunate circumstance to write with the prejudices of mankind strongly interested in our favour. This, Sir, is doubly your fortune: first, with regard to the subject you have chosen; secondly, with respect to your own established reputation. With these advantages, secure of welcome reception, well may the possessor advance with confidence: arguments, from his pen, are credited with double force; specious ones are accepted as genuine; assertion stands for proof; declamation is mistaken for reasoning; small errors are overlooked, and the most considerable ones excused. Belief is counted to him for righteousness; and, like charity, is permitted to cover a multitude of sins.

Far different is the situation of the man, who is so deficient in prudence, as to call accepted notions in question! the attempt is considered as impious; and

and himself is hunted down like a wild beast, under the name of Infidel ! Thus it fared with the primitive Christians—thus it fared with the first reformers ; and even now, bating the faggot-stick, thus it fares with every one who presumes to differ in opinion from his neighbours in those points from which they say, thou shalt not differ. The arguments urged by such a one, are stiled wilful perversions—his proofs are manifestations of his ignorance—his mistakes are magnified beyond measure, and he is altogether, in mere Christian charity, held out to public detestation, as a monster in human form ! An old lanthorn is thus tied to a poor cur's tail, and he is turned out with hissing and clapping of hands ; *bow ! wow ! wow !* cry all the yelping pack, and it is by mere good luck alone, if he escapes with whole bones !

Had not this author met with treatment very unexpected in your animadversions on him, he would not again have set pen to paper on this subject. But a man must be a greater wretch than you have represented *him* to be, who, insensible to the opprobrium cast on him, can let you triumph with so high a hand, though with so questionable a pretension to victory.

The History of the Man after God's own Heart, was evidently a juvenile production ; the language of it would else have been more guarded, and not have lain open to so many extraordinary strictures, some of which shall be noticed anon : but now, Sir, that the writer of it is so fortunate as to possess the unlooked-for advantage of a thorough examen of it from your learned hand ; by which means every one will allow that he has gained the knowledge of the utmost extent of what criticism can object to it, from the fair and candid, even to that of Zoilus himself ; if ever, therefore, another edition of it appears, it shall certainly profit something from the acute notes you have bestowed upon it. And yet, methinks, the sanguine warmth of a young writer, who thought he perceived so clear a field before him, might have claimed some

good-natured toleration from one, who, though a distinguished veteran, either is, or ought to be, conscious that he has not outwrote the same fault himself.

Let us once more cast a look at the outsides of these adverse books, before we open them. What a disproportionate appearance! But if this writer hath put "forced constructions on particular passages; invidious insinuations, where there is nothing in the history to support them; improbable suggestions to eke out facts, or to supply the place of them; false assertions, contrary to the truth of history, to furnish matter for calumny and reviling; in a word, all methods contrary to truth and honour, and inconsistent with the rules of humanity, candour and justice." A heavy charge indeed! but if it is really the case, impositions so gross might surely have been exploded, to the utter confusion of this villifier, in far less compass. But, as if one instance more were wanting to confirm what was said in the preface to the *Life of David*, viz. "that the sense in which the acts of David are there understood is the most obvious and natural, appears from the amazing pains it has occasioned his champions to force another upon them:" *Ecce signum!* Here is the little history, of the size of a snuff-box, price eighteen-pence; and, after near a year's time spent in an endeavour to invalidate it, here is a bulky octavo wrote against it, price four shillings! Go on, Doctor, and prosper; though indeed many people shake their heads at the price, while many more have declared that they would not accept four shillings to be obliged to read it. But the first of these do not consider that the historian being a vulgar illiterate fellow, who has given them nothing but plain English, might well afford his paltry work for eighteen-pence; but that the *Review* of him, which is enriched with so many Greek and Hebrew quotations, could not, in conscience, be charged less than four shillings: no, not a farthing less. The others do not reflect how much trouble it demands, and how much it will swell a work, to compare the

various readings of Scripture together; so that they may think it an extraordinary specimen of brevity to see it contained within such a moderate size.

The writer could not help smiling when he stated the case, that supposing his rejoinder were to exceed the quantity of your Review, only in arithmetical progression as much as your Review exceeds that of the History itself, what a size it would swell to! as large as Cruden's Concordance at least. But the misfortune would have been, that it must then have been published by subscription; and to whom could he apply, after the terrible picture you have drawn of him? He thinks he might have flattered himself, nevertheless, with the hopes of your name.

This, however, must really have been the case, had he adopted *your* plan of reviewing: had he, with unbating malignity, tortured every sentence you have penned; and torn your very words to rags. This was a necessity to which he did not imagine himself reduced; at the same time that he found no propensity to avail himself of resources which must be considered as rather illiberal. And though, God forgive him, he is conscious of too many imperfections to warrant boasting, he yet is too candid to return the compliment of imputing a black diabolism of heart to you, merely from a difference in opinion. With how ill a grace this comes from a preacher of the gospel of the meek and lowly Jesus, he leaves you to reflect on at leisure. But however flagrant and inconsistent it may be, he notwithstanding frees you from the charge of singularity: for, too true it is, that the fault is far from being particular. In all religious contests, the bitterness of resentment is ever on the orthodox side of the question. Gracious God! confirm to us a constitution of government which confines this bitterness within the bounds of expression only!

If some method be used in the debate concerning the moral character of David, the discussion of a few leading points will, in great measure, determine the

merits of all the rest ; therefore you must not expect to be analysed page after page, which would only lead to protraction and confusion. If the writer of the Life of David can justify himself from the principal objections brought against him, all the invidious declamatory deductions which give vent to your own resentment, and are calculated to inflame that of others, as well as to swell the four shillings book ; will, by the candid, be rated at just their real worth ; and be found to be *vox et preterea nihil !*

It may just be previously asked, respecting your charging the author with copying all his censures of David from Bayle and Morgan, because you possibly read much the same observations in those writers which you find in him : what, in the name of novelty, do you require ? Did you expect a different series of facts recorded by each ? The same course of events must always be perceivable in records of the same period, unless new ones are coined. In your own words you may be asked “ What novelty can there be in any true history ? ” Facts are indelible, and constructions on them, by people whose judgment is not warped by any previous bias, will not remarkably differ. This then may help you to account for the conformity you observe among these writers : and is explained to you, Sir, who, it is to be presumed from this censure, scorn to be beholden to any author who hath written on a subject before yourself.

Moreover, to be even with this writer, whom you archly suppose* to have been present at the covenant between David and his friend Jonathan, you have in turn taken upon you to be present at the writing of his history, and can point out† what he copied from Bayle, and what from Morgan ! Here, however, he begs leave to enter his caveat against you : since, though he does not expect to be credited by a man whose zeal hath eaten him up, he hopes the moderate part of mankind

* Review, p. 111.

† Ditto, preface, p. 36, 37.

will believe his solemn declaration, that he knows no more of Morgan than the name, and that he is said to be the writer of a work called the Moral Philosopher : which work, however, or any other work of his, he never read ; nor, knowingly, any quotation from : farther, that he entertained a dislike to the conduct of King David before he had an opportunity of seeing Bayle ; whose criticism, if the expression may be allowed, he in great measure anticipated. This, therefore, to him at least, is a pregnant specimen on what degree of evidence you will hazard an assertion !

The author's deficiency in a knowledge of the oriental languages, is a continual occasion of triumph to you ; since there are not many pages of your Review in which you do not reproach him with it, with visible exultation ; and, from this circumstance, deny him every other qualification whatever, excepting such as serve to render him odious ; and these, Sir, to do you justice, you bestow on him with a liberal hand, if not from a *liberal mind*. Suppose, however, this point were a little examined into, and enquiry were made how far you can really avail yourself of the writer's ignorance in this respect ? and yet it is rather cruel to attempt it, you convert the imputation to so many convenient purposes.

The writer, Sir, it seems, doth not understand Hebrew. Be it so. Let us observe of what this is productive. First, your own importance is amply gratified by looking down, like one of the giants in Guildhall, upon him on that account : but unluckily to maintain this altitude, you are, in the second place, betrayed into the necessity of invalidating the authority of the English version of the Scriptures, which has cost the blood of so many martyrs to purchase, and which we Protestants have for so many years congratulated ourselves on the possession of ! Indeed, you are not very reserved on this point ; for though Mr. Bayle is under the same ban with the writer, you sneeringly

class Bayle with the English Bible:* and again, “Such a one, (as “the historian, ignorant of the language in which they are written,”) when he goes beyond his translation, *or keeps to it*, must necessarily blunder, and expose himself to ridicule.”† This is alarming news:—why, neighbours, we are all imposed on! and unless we understand Hebrew and Greek, the Scriptures, so far from making us wise unto salvation, will only lead us into error, and expose us to ridicule! Better, far better would it be for us to have them sealed up in the original languages, than to be deluded with a translation so baleful in its properties! To us English readers, the advice of the Evangelist carries all the force of a taunt or sneer; “Search the Scriptures, for in them YE THINK ye have eternal life:‡ Yes, yes, we think so; but it seems if we trust to them, we must necessarily blunder, and expose ourselves to ridicule!

It happens, however, rather unfortunately, Sir, that the respectable contemplators of Hebrew tenter-hooks, are as much at a loss about the precise meaning of *them*, as we little pigmies are about the consistency of our despised English translation. Pray, Doctor, are you an Hutchinsonian, or are you not? Are they not continually wrangling even about the use and meaning of *points*? Surely these learned Doctors ought, in justification of their own importance, first to agree among themselves concerning the original, before they knit their awful brows, and cry, “Stand by thyself, come not near to us, for we are more learned than thou.” Original! what original? It would be worth the knowledge, Doctor, to learn from which, among the great number of Hebrew originals, whose considerable variations the learned, among whom you, Sir, are to be numbered, have so plentifully enabled Dr. Kenicot to collate, you draw your authorities? and the reasons for preferring your own readings?

* Preface, p. 34.

† Ditto, p. 38.

‡ John v. 39.

Until some satisfaction be offered respecting these points, until some agreement appears between the Hutchinsonians and other Hebrew expositors, it is hoped some degree of credit will be granted to that translation, on which we are allowed to form our religious principles, though not to criticise from.

You say, Sir,* “A candid critic will make some allowances both for defects and redundances in books of that great antiquity, which the Old Testament books confessedly are.” True, Sir, if the Old Testament books, like other books, are left to rest upon the allowances of candid criticism: if they are not obtruded upon us with any claim or authority to influence our estimation of them, superior to those of other writings; but you, Sir, set them above such allowances, affirming † that you consider David “as revelation represents him.” What! do we need revelation to record matters of fact? Pray are all the variations of the Hebrew copies revelation? When this plea is waved, we will then do the best we can with these ancient writings. As is it is, we have only to examine into the congruity of them.

The historian had advanced in his preface, ‡ “that lest it should be imagined too great liberties are taken with the biblical writers, it may not be amiss to mention once for all, that innumerable instances might be produced to shew that the authority of the Lord, so continually quoted to sanctify every transaction related, constituted for the most part nothing more than national phrases, which obtained universally § among so bigotted a people as on all occasions the Jews appear to have been.”

* Page 234.

† Preface, p. 8.

‡ Page 12.

§ Their priests, judges, and prophets, ruled them in the name of the Lord; and the people so taught, acquired a like style of discourse. During the civil wars, in the reign of Charles I. and the usurped protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, a phraseology, in some degree similar, obtained in England: how far justifiable, must be left to the learned.

The only portion of your observations on this passage, which it will answer any purpose to attend to, is comprehended in the ensuing extract.*

“ Now if our historian, or somebody else for him, can, as he boasts, produce innumerable instances to shew that the authority of the Lord constituted, for the most part, nothing more than national phrases, it becomes him to do it in his own vindication ; for unless he can fairly support this assertion, great part of his history will appear to be falsehood and fiction, and his criticism nothing but the effect of ignorance and infidelity.”

He subscribes to the alternative.

Before these proofs are hinted at, it may not be amiss to consider another passage, *en passant*, that we may make clear way as we proceed.

You strangely assert, Sir, that † “ It is to no purpose to allege, that what was pretended to be spoken—in the name of the Lord, was unworthy him to deliver, and therefore could not be spoken or delivered in command by him. This is foreign to the argument. The sole question is about the meaning of the expressions in which the authority of the Lord is quoted ; whether they signify any thing or nothing ; or whether they who used them, and heard them, did consider them as declarative of the Divine authority or not.”

These positions are very strange indeed, considering the character of the person who advances them. You demand the solution of a question, having previously barred the only means of investigation ! What is the alternative here ? a Romish principle it is to be feared. We are to believe whatever is proposed to our belief ! for it is to no purpose to examine into the worth of it ! The conditions of *your* question reduce the reply to a mere affirmation or negation ; possibly not without design : but if we are to found our belief on the rational evidence of any point offered to our assent, it

* Preface, p. 32.

† Ditto, p. 33.

is certainly our business to examine into *possibility*, *propriety*, and *fitness*. Unless, therefore, you had laid down a rule for assenting and dissenting without reflection, the intended method of arguing must be pursued.

If Britain be really that free country we are continually flattering ourselves that it is, and which for the honour of the reformed religion it may be hoped to be, no person will run any hazard in expressing his opinion of any doctrinal point; more especially when he at the same time exhibits the authorities on which he founds his judgment: if they are valid, his tenets, however heterodoxical they may be deemed, are nevertheless just: if not, the advancer will meet that disregard, which is all the punishment he ought to incur.

As there does not appear to be the *least reason* to honour any man more than he *intrinsically* merits; and as examining the life of David is examining a *piece of history*; it is but exercising a liberty which no just reason can controul, from any regard to relative circumstances, or points of doctrine: it is therefore hoped, that the real life of David, being as to the main points what is here represented, may plead this writer's excuse for the freedom with which he has expressed his opinion of it: still professing, that wherever this appears to have been indulged with too much confidence, shall be restrained as future occasions may allow opportunity.

Now, Sir, though the writer is no great friend to subscriptions to articles of faith, yet he thinks it necessary in this place to present you with what perhaps you may consider as a curiosity; to wit, a piece of his creed! and which he humbly presumes to be a piece of your's also: as a touchstone to try whatever is affirmed concerning the Almighty! But at the same time, fearful of expressing it in his own words, from the experience of your dexterity in word-catching, he will endeavour to find some passages in Scripture suit-

able to his notions of the eternal perfections of the Supreme God! still however, apprehensive, lest by the help of the Hebrew, Chaldaic, Arabic, and Samaritan versions, with the assistance of the Greek Septuagint, you may explain away and confound every passage produced from the English translation. This being in your power to attempt or not, as inclination prompts, he must trust to.

You have passed a censure on those who quote passages from authors by halves,* with a view to perversion; this is very wrong, by whosoever practised, but will be avoided here, as complete sentences only will be extracted, and when placed together, their agreement or disagreement will be obvious. One word more, however, on this head; it is not so unfrequent to find religious writers take three words from one part of the Bible, two from another, four from another, and thus splice sentences together, which will prove a point of doctrine as clear as the sun at noon day!

With reverence, would the author produce and subscribe his assent to the ensuing propositions! which are numbered for future reference.

PROP. 1.—“The Heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handy work.” Psalm xix. 1.

PROP. 2.—“The works of his hands are verity and judgment: and his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever: and are done in truth and uprightness.” Psalm cxi. 7, 8.

PROP. 3.—“The Lord is good to ALL: and his tender mercies are over ALL his works.” Psalm cxlv. 9.

PROP. 4.—“Of a truth—God is no respecter of persons; but IN EVERY NATION, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” Acts x. 34, 35.

* Preface, p. 27.

This, Sir, is Scripture, and reason also! and gives us in few words the most exalted notions of the great God of the Universe! It is impossible, therefore, to withstand the force with which they dart irresistible conviction into a rational mind.

From these propositions another is deducible, equally valid and incontestible.

PROP. 5.—All affirmations which represent Deity as actuated by the passions, or subject to the weaknesses of humanity, are totally inconsistent with the foregoing positions; are derogatory from his perfections; and evidently point out man as their author.

What an extensive view does this open for speculation! Suffice it, however, to confine our attention to the present object of debate.

That the Lord should be offended at the Jews complaining of oppressive government and corrupt administration; that he should interpret a desire to change the administrators, into a renunciation of his Divine Providence; that he should give them a king in his *anger*, and *afterward, finding* he did not prove obedient, should *repent* of it; then take him away in his *wrath*; that he should, however, at length *reconcile* himself to the measure; then chuse them a king after his own heart, and establish the kingdom in his house: if these points should appear difficult to reconcile with the foregoing scriptural propositions: in that case,

These representations of Samuel are rather to be esteemed as dictated only by his chagrin: and though at the same time he preserved a great shew of regard for the welfare of the people, this is quite consonant with that external placidity and moderation with which persons in public stations, desirous to retain their power, often find it expedient to clothe their inward sentiments. The writer, indeed, incurs your censure, by saying, he promised “them a king with vengeance to them:” but pray, Doctor, how do you interpret his display of kingly government? He certainly intended to frighten them out of their scheme; but the people who, when they pleased, knew how to be obstinate,

were not so easily talked out of their project: and though their naturally enthusiastic dispositions sometimes caused strange transitions in their conduct, they did not at this time enter into the propriety of the Lord's interesting himself in the behalf of two corrupt magistrates.

You were guilty of a small mistake* yourself, in asserting that the ineursion of Nahash occasioned the first demand of a king; Saul being already elected at that time, and the very commander who delivered his people from the ignominious terms insisted on by the Ammonite king.

You, Sir, deliver it as your opinion,† that “in reality the demand of the people was insolent and treasonable; as it was throwing off the immediate government of God, and as it expressed a desire of being like other nations; which of all things in the world they should have avoided,‡ and which was the cause of their final ruin.” What! was it insolent to complain of oppression? Was it treasonable in the people to chuse their form of government? All government ought to spring from the choice of the people; and when the circumstances of times demand and allow it, it is undoubtedly right to claim it; even though they should mistake the means to obtain their end. As to their rejection of the superintendance of God over their affairs, it does not appear in this instance; and as to the cause of their ruin, what you so boldly assign for it, seems rather premature.

Some curious criticisms of your's in this place, are deemed undeserving notice; but those who are desirous of seeing a specimen of your talents that way, may be amply gratified in their desire, and meet with no small amusement into the bargain, in pages 11 and 12 of your Review. There, Doctor, they may find

* Preface, p. 8.

† Page 10.

‡ And yet Providence had an *end* in the appointment of David to be king, viz. ‘that God by him might accomplish the antient promises made to Abraham, in their full extent.’ Page 88.

you very busy in small craft, which no gentleman could be thought capable of descending to, and for which no plea can be offered but the sad one of your needing every little artifice to support your opposition; and a confidence that they might pass with the unthinking majority as mighty clever and dextrous.— ‘ Ah! Doctor, there you have him charmingly! Oh! what a fine thing it is to be high learned!’

But to leave cavilling at words, and attend to things; you allege, from Josephus, that “ the solicitude of Saul and his servant, to make a present to Samuel, proceeded from their ignorance.”* But, Sir, this is a very weak supposition: for ignorance could not have dictated such a measure without precedent. It is therefore, a fair conclusion that private intelligence not only used† to be given, but be paid for.‡ You say§ —“ But doth not the whole tenor of Samuel’s conduct manifest, as our author affirms, that he intended to give them a king in name, but to have one subordinate to his own will? I think not; because his allowing the people a free, impartial, and open election by lot, is one demonstration that he intended they should have a king to their own mind, and who should be subordinate to none, but that God, who was the supreme king of the nation, and by whose will the king they chose ought to be determined.”

If their king was to be subordinate to God, and to be determined by his will, it would be curious to know how this people had rejected God, by demanding a king! Again, if it was a free election by lot, it might be a *method* according to their own mind, of chusing a king; but certainly could not secure the fixing on a *king* to their own mind! as you, Sir, affirm. Once more; with regard to the freedom and impartiality of the election; you do not deny, Sir, that the king hereafter to be chosen, was previously pointed out, and allotted to this exaltation: now without entering at this time into a dispute whether the choice was made

* Page 36.

† 1 Sam. ix. 9.

‡ Ibid. ver. 7.

§ Page 15.

by God or man, yet the previous election being a fact, the popular election was intentionally managed to confirm the other: and whether over-ruled by God or by Samuel, how could it in either case be really a free and impartial election? The author, therefore, begs you would graciously be pleased to give him back the word *apparently* again; as he has still some use for it; however inaccurately it might be placed before. The means by which the lot was guided to Saul, are referred back to you to determine.

Though Saul was a king given to the Jews in anger, yet, as you observe, he was intended to be obedient to the commands of the Lord, as delivered to him by Samuel; but it seems he was not obedient! but gave "a strong specimen of that obstinate, rash, and impetuous temper, that made him unfit for the government he was raised to, and which was the true reason of his being rejected by God.* But was it not, however, a stronger reason against his being chosen by infinite wisdom? Will you, Sir, venture to say that the Lord was mistaken? indeed, Scripture† intimates something like it; but is it not more consistent with the 2d and 4th scriptural Proposition,‡ to attribute the anger, the choice, the disappointment, the repentance and rejection, to Samuel, agreeable to Prop. 5.§

It is not incumbent on the author to account entirely for the motives of Samuel's choice of Saul in the circumstances wherein he found him; though were it material, very probable suggestions might be offered on this head.

Joy to you, Doctor, on your conceit|| of the ass-shepherd! It is true he is quite a new created animal, yet—here the author was almost tempted to retort a joke on you, but no good end results from them, and other work is at hand.

* Review, p. 26.—It is to be noted, however, that in the affair of the sacrifice, he tarried "according to the set time that Samuel had appointed." 1 Sam. xiii. 8.

† 1 Sam. xv 10, 11. ‡ Page 20. § Page 21. || Review, p. 30.

You would not allow the writer, Sir, to say that the authority of the Lord was customarily quoted among the Jews; and yet yourself do not seem to have attained a precise meaning of one of these phrases; for when the spirit of the Lord is said to have come upon Saul* you expound it to be a temporary prophetic inspiration; yet, when the spirit of the Lord is said to depart from him, behold it has a different meaning quite!† You then ask: 'what spirit? not the prophetic spirit, which he received according to Samuel's prediction; which ceased instantly when his prophesying was ended: not the spirit to render him incapable of transgressing; for that he never had, and therefore could never lose it.—No. "The spirit of the Lord departed from him," i. e. God was no longer with him to prosper and guide him;‡ but left him, as the effect of his disobedience, to that evil, melancholy, jealous, envious, malicious, murderous spirit, that afterward possessed him, and seems never wholly to have left him.' So convenient is it to maintain a latitude of interpretation to serve an argument at a pinch. A latitude, Sir, that you exercise very freely in the course of this laboured work. But the author's observation respecting Saul, remains still in full force: for, when Saul left Samuel after his private inauguration, and the scripture relates what befel him, the narrative commences thus: "And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart;"§ in consequence of the promise that he should *be turned into another man.*|| A person would conclude from the premises, that this new heart given him by the Lord would have been a good one, and an extraordinary good one; and yet Saul transgressed in the estimation of Samuel nevertheless! the prophetic inspiration was moreover, and is sepa-

* Page 54, 55.

† Page 55.

‡ Yet your immediately preceding words affirm him never to have had that spirit of guidance!

§ 1 Sam. x. 9.

|| Ver. 6.

rately mentioned; both in the promise and in the relation of its completion. And yet again, if the spirit of the Lord is interpreted by prophecy; when David was anointed, the spirit of the Lord is said to have come upon David *from that day forward* :* and the spirit of the Lord to depart from Saul.† But his prophetic powers *did not* depart from him! since he is reported to have prophesied twice afterward :‡ and at the last time, Sir, you give it as your opinion, § that what he prophesied “was somewhat certainly worthy of the spirit of God, which came upon him.” All this compared together, appears as odd to the full, as the historian’s observation!

Poor Saul! what an infernal being art thou represented! thou art even reviled worse than Shimei reviled the instrument of thy misfortunes! But, it was thy fate to offend those who never forgive; || hence came thy distresses when alive, and thy magnified crimes when dead!

It is true, Sir, that the historian has ventured to hint at motives for some of Saul’s actions, which are attributed to inconsistency; but he is always considered as a *Hebrew*: and when you cite the expression, that his character doth not appear to be stained with any conspicuous fault; and ring your changes upon it; you were not generous enough to prefix what is connected with it, viz. ‘allowing for the *peculiar complexion* of the people over whom he was placed’—this includes a meaning not altogether for your purpose: but who quotes writers by halves now, Doctor? ¶

“The excision of the Amalekites,” you say, ** had been determined, and ordered by God, above four hundred years before the time we are now speaking of, upon their ungenerously, and without any cause, attacking the Hebrews at Rephidim.’ It was ex-

* 1 Sam. xvi. 13. † Ver. 14. ‡ Chap. xviii. 10. xix. 24.
§ Page 66. || Prophets and Priests. ¶ See Review, preface, p. 27.
** Pages 56. 153.

tremely natural for these nations to oppose the passage of an emigrant people marching with professed intentions to dispossess them of their habitations, property, and lives. Their continual enmity to the Jews,* is deducible from the same source.

But you plead the wickedness of these nations as an argument for their destruction; pray were not the Hebrews continually reproached with their wickedness and rebellion? and any other plea for peculiar privileges, than that of peculiar excellence, will not agree with Prop. 6. This, however, is rather a deviation; let us return.

Saul's crime included not only his preserving king Agag, but also the best of the cattle! Pray, Sir, do tell us for what crimes the cattle were proscribed? Saul, in this reservation, acted but according to the usual practice in the Jewish wars, which was to save all that was good, and appropriate it to their own emolument.

Having, however, stated the case, that the writer aimed to establish the character of Saul, as that of the hero of his piece; it was easy to play off all your small artillery against the scheme: it is pretty amusement; therefore, while you are thus diverting yourself, other points may be considered.

It is a most extraordinary prohibition that you will not allow *God's own heart* to be the height of purity by supposition! you ask† 'by whose supposition?' and answer, 'by no man's living, but one who is blessed with our author's ignorance and presumption.' This blessing, Sir, is all your own. It is, however, an ignorant presumption, of which he will never have cause to be ashamed, either here or hereafter. But he has the presumption, Sir, to tell you, that if you are able to construe your mother tongue, you are guilty of wilful perversion in *your* exposition of this supposition; as well as in another instance, where you charge the author with saying, that the intestine

* Page 181.

† Preface, p. 8.

commotions in Judea, occasioned by the revolts of Absalom and Sheba, continued three years: * neither of which feats will reflect much honour on you.

It is not worth while to analyse them, they are referred to, and that school-boy ought to be flogged, who, having read the passages in question, could not detect your exposition of them. The phrase—Man after God's own heart, was never understood by the writer as attributing positive perfection to David; but as expressive of a high relative encomium on his character.

Your limitation of this expression to a religious sense, independent of a moral reference, is a restriction not allowable: since piety toward God is inconsistent with turpitude of manners. You have, indeed, cited several passages to evince that this phrase implied a readiness to fulfil the commands of the Lord; and what then? is an obedience to the occasional commands of God, consistent with a disregard of his permanent moral injunctions? You have indeed said, † “The particular purposes for which God raised him (David) to the throne, were that, by his steady adherence to the one true God, and the religion that was established by Moses, he might be an illustrious example to all his posterity, that should reign after him;”—and you have also added, ‡ ‘If, therefore, David's moral character was worse than it will ever be proved to be, he might be a man after God's own heart, in the proper original sense of the expression; and our author's treatise is an impertinent attempt to prove David not to be what the sacred history never asserted him to be.’ How much more impertinent then is your treatise, in which you labour to make him to be, what you own ‘the sacred history never asserted him to be!’

You may, perhaps, be sincere in your opinion, but many of your readers will hardly think a pious character vested with such great latitudes of moral excep-

* Preface, page 26. Review, p. 217. † Page 88. ‡ Page 89, 103.

tions. But it was a necessary point to establish, it being all the foundation you had on which to erect your building: but credit a friend, Doctor, who assures you it is a sandy one.

As our moral obligations arise from our social connexions, and our welfare depends on the conservation of them, it is possible for a person to be virtuous who may yet have no religion; but a person *cannot* be religious to the exclusion of morality. David, therefore, to be a man after God's own heart, ought to have been of exemplary morals.

Not to mention that, if Infinite Wisdom makes a choice, and the chosen person acts by express warrant from God, something more than common knowledge and virtue is naturally expected, to evidence the fact.

In your account of David's introduction to the court of Saul,* you affect to laugh at the hint of a concerted plan for producing him. Concerning this, it need only be said that, like Saul, his destination to the kingdom was previous to the public steps taken for his advancement to it; and where history fails, conjecture steps in, and ought to be, as it is in this instance, on the side of probability.

You have also produced some Hebrew † words to prove that you do not know what is meant by David's being made armour-bearer to Saul; but as it appears to be a military appointment, distinct from his musical capacity, the wonder still remains concerning his dismissal: ‡ and more especially since Saul was not thoroughly cured of the hyp. This leads to a still farther wonder at Saul's ignorance of David, when he encountered the Philistine giant; as the interval of

* Page 89.

† Page 95, note.

‡ You suppose, p. 96, that his absence from Saul must have been for a considerable time, perhaps a year or two. But by the marginal chronology to the Bible, it appears that the time from the first anointing of David, to Jonathan's expostulation with his father on his antipathy to him, was included within the compass of a single year.

time between his dismissal and the combat, could not be considerable, since the day after the combat, David harped before the king,* “as at other times.”

So far from commending Saul for the price he asked for his daughter, after David appears to have won her,† it seems a demand very ridiculously expressed. It must have been a glorious sight to have seen David bring the foreskins to king Saul, strung perhaps on a piece of pack-thread, and dangling in his hand, or thrown across his shoulders like a sash! and if Miss Michal was present, how her pretty little heart must exult when the required number being told off, as many more were gallantly presented at her feet!

With regard to the affection between David and Jonathan, David’s expression of it is uncommonly strong‡ in his lamentation for him. But if, as you say,§ “Jonathan ever considers David as an innocent person, and pleads for him to his father, not as for a rebel, or notorious offender, to obtain his pardon; but as having never done any thing to forfeit Saul’s favour, or his own life;” yet beside this affection, Jonathan, it is possible, really thought David appointed to the kingdom, by Divine commission, which Saul, in his reasonable hours, does not seem to have done; and which no doubt was esteemed one of the symptoms of his madness: and his uneasy reflections on all the circumstances of the pretension considered together, very possibly disordered him enough to countenance the imputation.

On the whole, he appears to have been strangely irresolute and inconsistent with himself; and is perhaps represented more so than he might really have been: but the undertaking to render himself independent was too arduous for one in his situation; therefore his actions and professions might sometimes disagree. Indeed, after all, whether we attribute any thing to par-

* 1 Sam. xviii. 10.

† 2 Sam. i. 26.

‡ 1 Sam. xvii. 25 27.

§ Page 107.

tial representation or not, the Scripture history, in the form we now see it, is not well put together: we shall see how it will read when the expected collations are made. It is impossible to argue from every expression that may be produced; we must form our judgment from leading events, and corresponding expressions; and determine as they tally with probability. If Saul himself, however he is represented as subscribing to it, was really assured of David's destination to supersede him by Divine decree, there was nothing left for him but resignation: Can man fight against God? since therefore his continual aim was to destroy David, it argues against this assurance: and if Saul himself was mad, surely his soldiers were not; and how came he to find his army as mad as himself,* to persecute the Lord's anointed?

It was thought that Saul's massacre of the priests at Nob had been sufficiently censured, when his resentment was declared to have 'exceeded not only the bounds of humanity, but also of good policy.' But that this resentment was causeless, does not follow from any thing you have urged.† It was indeed a barbarous action; but humanity must not be understood as an impediment in human politics: and were we to start at every massacre that occurs in the Jewish history, the pen must be employed in little else than notes of exclamation!

You will not allow‡ that when David retired from Judea to Achish king of Gath, the first time; he intended to enter into a treaty of alliance with him against the Hebrews; than which nothing can be more evident. You ask, "had he any quarrel with

* You say David's claim was universally known, page 164.

† In so small a territory as Judea, the difference between the king and his son-in-law, so popular a man, could not be unknown to persons in any measure removed from the vulgar. Therefore Abimelech and your interpretation of his defence, are not to be implicitly credited.

them?' No! he had not, but he had with their king. Again you ask,* 'would not such an alliance with the Philistine prince against them, have been a sure means of cutting off every expectation of ever coming at the Hebrew throne!' No! it *did not*, which is still more. You may perhaps reply, that he did not enter into a treaty with him, especially against the Hebrews. It is true we have no treaty handed down to us, neither perhaps did they sign and seal: but he afterward did enter into such a connexion with this Philistine prince as his situation warranted, he asked refuge with him, obtained it, and acknowledged the obligation by a present out of his plunder; he promised his assistance to him against the Hebrews, and yet came to be king of Judea nevertheless! So that you gain little by this question.

In your remarks on David's collecting partisans at Adullam, you produce some Hebrew and Greek, † to shew that you knew how *men in difficulties*, and *bitter of spirits*, were expressed in those languages; which really is all the purpose your quotations appear to serve: and having affirmed these difficulties to be such, 'that the most worthy men *may* be in,' we are left to infer the *ergo*, that these adherents to David were the most worthy of men. But without contesting the private merit of these worthy men, it may just be hinted that *distress*, *debt*, and *discontent* against the government in being, are the most favourable circumstances to give birth to sedition. Such were the situations of the men who resorted to David, *and he became a captain over them*. You look upon David as only solicitous for his personal safety; but by what inducements did these men resort to him? it should seem that they had all disquiets enough of their own, why should they all quit their own concerns, and unite to protect him? If he was "the well-known successor ‡ to the crown," and Saul a mad tyant, it would

* Page 116.

† Page 117.

‡ Page 118.

have been more in character had the powerful and respectable part of the people patronized this persecuted youth against his impious oppressor; he would thus have appeared respectable himself. But without this sanction, what could he do to render himself of consequence? why he allured men desperate in their circumstances to embark in his projects; and aided the alleged purpose of Divine will, by an arm of flesh.

You indeed, Sir assert* that 'we read nothing of their plundering and murdering others:' an assertion which is rather premature! their 'good discipline and order' will not prove it; and employment in 'services of a friendly and beneficent nature,' did not enable these distressed men to make presents to king Achish!

Their pretensions to the sovereignty over Judea, being derivable from the same authority; you argue† that 'it was equal rebellion in Saul to oppose David, as in David to oppose Saul: and David had as good a right to dispute the title of Saul and his family, as Saul had to dispute his.' Possibly he might, Doctor, had they started fair. But the appointment of Saul had already taken place, and had received a popular confirmation: David disturbed a quiet government, and therefore it must be by some new discovered rule in logic that he 'is at once exculpated from all rebellion against Saul:' and not—'by the doctrine of our biographer.'

You prove the innocence of David against the charge of intending to contest the kingdom, from the professions of himself, of Jonathan, and of Saul: none of which will be admitted as valid evidence, for some reasons before mentioned. You own‡ at the same time, 'there were in those days evil-minded persons as well as in ours, who insinuated that David was a rebel, and had a design on Saul's life.' Evil-minded to be sure they must be to insinuate any such thing; but unless they were arrant fools, as well as evil-mind-

* Page 118.

† Page 121.

‡ Page 123

ed, we must take it for granted their insinuations were deduced from circumstances which rendered them probable: many of which we may suppose not to have reached our times ; so that the melancholy disorder of Saul was not without external causes, to excite the evil spirit within him.

David rescued Keilah from the philistine invaders : this exploit, you think,* ‘ might have drawn one word of commendation from this very candid historian.’ It shall have all the commendation to which it is entitled, from *your own* representation of the action ; and what can be fairer ?

Dissatisfied with the writer’s saying that David hoped to make it a garrison for himself, you add,† ‘ I believe David was in hopes to have dwelt in safety there, after the deliverance he had obtained for the citizens, as he had thereby purchased their friendship and protection. But he could not hope to make it a garrison, because he knew he had not men enough for that purpose, as appears from his conduct ; because when he had sure information of the treachery they intended him, he abandoned the city, as not able to curb the inhabitants, and retired to the wilderness.’

This passage alone is amply sufficient to confirm the reality of David’s rebellious intentions : it is therefore worth analysing. That he delivered this city from the depredations of the Philistines is granted ; that he by this action thought to purchase the friendship of the inhabitants, you acknowledge ; the use he intended to convert this friendship to, is the point to be ascertained. Saul was advancing to suppress him. You Sir, say, that he hoped to have dwelt in safety at Keilah : but that, not having men sufficient to awe the inhabitants, their concurrence was necessary. Had he seduced them from their allegiance, and obtained the expected protection, he would have deprived Saul of this city ; which city the author humbly imagined

* Page 126.

† Page 127.

might have been considered as a garrison. You will undoubtedly again urge the old plea of his providing only for his personal safety, against his malignant persecutor. But, Sir, his intended retention of a city to secure that safety, was a flagrant rebellious intention. Had he gained this one city, as his strength increased, he would have concluded as many more as he could have procured, necessary for his preservation; until he had monopolized the whole country, agreeable to the grant of Samuel, which would then have justified the usurpation. But balked in the first step by the loyalty, miscalled treachery, of the Keilites, he evacuated the town, having lost the recompense of his labour, and with his men *went whithersoever they could go.**

Not to insist on the hint that the invasion of the Philistines just after the raising the siege of Keilah was of David's procuring; the supposition is not of that marvellous nature in which you triumphantly represent it†. For though David had just done them an ill turn, yet his aim in it being disappointed, and himself destitute of any place of security for a retreat; by what rule in politics will you deny, that David thus circumstanced between two enemies, might negotiate a pacification to draw off one of them? and this supposition is far from being discredited, by considering that when David found he could not maintain any footing in Judea, the next step of importance taken by him, was to retire among those very Philistines.

First, however, happened the adventures at Engedi and Maon. On what account Saul entered the cave‡ is not worth much Hebrew: your exposition may stand undisturbed by the writer, if you think the discourse

* 1 Sam. xxiii. 13.

† Page 127.

‡ It is impossible to pass your judicious note on the word *uncover*, p. 128. without doing honour to your abilities! where you will not permit *uncover* to signify an act opposed to that of *cover*!—'because uncovering my feet signifies pulling off my shoes and stockings; therefore, putting them on signifies going to bed.'—Pray, Doctor, put them on and go to bed; the sooner the better.

between David and his men in so quiet a recess, and the cutting off a piece of Saul's robe, (hardly performed with the neatness of a taylor's shears) might not disturb a man with all his senses awake. To invalidate the motive alleged by the writer for David's not killing Saul, founded on the unlikelihood of the Jews accepting for their king a man who should embrue his hands in the blood of the Lord's anointed, you reply*, 'But surely if this be a good reason, it will hold as strongly against his rebelling against Saul, and by force of arms disputing the crown with him; for what reasonable hopes could he entertain, that the Jews would receive for their king, a man who should dare to rise up in rebellion against the Lord's anointed, and with a company of banditti and ruffians, by disputing the crown with him, endeavour to snatch it impiously from his head? Especially as a rebellion against a prince is an actual attempt upon his life, and when successful, generally issues in his destruction.' There is one consideration which will obviate this plea, which is, that though successful rebellion, which then changes its name, generally terminates in the destruction of the vanquished; yet that destruction is greatly altered in appearance, when a prince falls in the common distresses of open warfare, and when by private assassination. This, Sir, you insist on, in a notable manner, in the case of Uriah. †

There may be yet another motive hinted for his not killing Saul. You will not allow ‡ the supposition that Saul strayed far from his men when he entered the cave: think then, Sir, what chance for escape David and his small corps would have had, if Saul had been missing! if he had been observed to enter the cave without coming out again! and if upon search he had been there found murdered!

David's mercy to Saul is therefore to be naturally accounted for, without contradicting the Scriptures§.

* Page 131. † Page 210. ‡ Page 135.

§ 1 Sam. xv. 26. 28. xvi. 1

by asserting, 'that he was anointed not to supersede him while living, but to succeed him after his death;' or in plain facts either, by saying, that he was 'determined to wait that event, in the course of providence, and not to hasten it by any act of his own.' Let circumstances decide this point.

The personal character of Nabal, considering the affair of his return to David's demands, as delivered down to us; is hardly more material, than the motive for which Saul retired into the cave: not to be an implicit admirer of this adventurer, is sufficient even at this day to stamp infamy on a person's character. He had preserved his possessions without *a wall* hitherto; and did not conceive himself under such obligations to David as he was represented to be: with the bluntness of a rustic he spoke his sentiments without reserve, which excited a resentment suitable to the character Nabal viewed him in. Like Saul, Nabal must no doubt be a madman, to differ with David; but your inferring a brutality in his conduct more than appears, or is probable; arguing from the degree of David's resentment*, is rather weak than acute.

It would be doing great service to David's character if you could prove any possible behaviour of Nabal, sufficient to justify such savage intention, especially from a person peculiarly pious. But as you own † David's resolution '*by no means* to be vindicated,' why do you use any means for that purpose?

The fair Abigail averted the execrable deed! The acknowledged ‡ defects and redundancies in the old Testament books, render it impossible for you, Sir, or any one else, to say absolutely what did, or did not pass at this meeting. Thus much we know; that the lady was beautiful, the soldier young, and very susceptible of amorous impressions; that she obtained her suit, but that her husband, instead of rejoicing at his deliverance, and approving his wife's conduct, broke

* Page 139.

† Page 141.

‡ Page 234.

his heart on the occasion; and to close the story, that David immediately took her to wife; and not only her, but another also. Contineny was not his virtue.

These circumstances are thought to justify the reflections they excited: and moreover, that if they had occurred in any other history, you, Sir, would have drawn conclusions not much different. Indeed, you must pardon the writer, who while he considers you as under the necessity of justifying many transactions, yet imagines you may sometimes secretly wish they had been otherwise than they are.

The peculiar elegance, purity, and precise difference of accepting *faces*, instead of *persons*: does not appear, for want of your having been more explicit. Though *faces* may be a more literal translation of your Hebrew, yet *person* seems more intelligible and agreeable to the meaning of the present passage. Why you recommend these favourite *faces* to the writer's remembrance as long as he lives*, is another hint too learnedly obscure for him to receive the benefit intended by it.

You produce next, Sir, what you call reasons †, to disprove the supposition that the two instances of David's sparing the life of Saul, were but different relations of the same fact. These reasons might have passed for good ones, perhaps, and have been credited with furnishing fresh hints of information, did they appear to be any more than a bare enumeration of the already known and acknowledged differences between the two relations; numbered and contrasted together. But since the case is no otherwise, since the writer shewed himself already apprized of them, and since you have not added to the strength of them, it would have been as well if you had not congratulated yourself so much on the merit of transcription.

These different circumstances, however, though not altogether reconcilable, are not altogether so variable as you intend they should appear. To instance the

* Page 144.

† Page 149.

first in your contrast: you oppose David's being in the wilderness of *Engedi* in one relation, to his being in the wilderness of *Ziph* in the other. While we remain satisfied with names, to be sure *Ziph* and *Engedi* are not the same: nothing can be clearer. But it would be of advantage to your argument to give the distance of these two places; for in the maps and accounts* of Judea, *Ziph*, *Hachilah*, *Maon*, *Carmel*, and *Engedi*, appear to have been in the neighbourhood of each other. Now in England, where any forest or heath is common to several bordering towns, it will have several local names at each, respectively. It is therefore *more* than probable, that the wilderness between *Ziph* and *Engedi*, might at each place obtain each name; and be generally known by either. Though David, therefore, is represented at this period, as making several movements†, in the *strong holds* in the wood, &c. they appear to have been within the compass of this wilderness of *Ziph*, or *Engedi*.

Your third reason, in the *Engedi* column, of Saul's being alone and strayed from his men, had been previously denied ‡ by you, and termed a 'silly supposition;' it therefore cannot now be very wise. The author does not pretend to harmonize any more of them: the identity of place; the general similitude of the actions; differing only in relative circumstances; the small interval of time that must have been between them, occupied only by the story of *Nabal*; the abrupt introduction of the second relation, after this story, without proper connection; and the total silence in it of all reference or allusion to a recent adventure so strikingly similar, still seem to argue a strange repetition.

You indeed undertake to account for the entire omission of all reference to the former adventure in the

* Particularly "Wells' Sacred Chronology," vol. III. p. 35, 36. second edit. The maps of Judea, indeed, are very vague, though sufficiently satisfactory as to this point.

† 1 Sam. xxiii. 14, &c.

‡ Page 135.

latter*. But your imputing it to David's *politeness*, and to Saul's consciousness, is not supported by any thing stronger than your *apparent* † persuasion.

David's conduct, while protected by Achish king of Gath, is the next subject of your panegyric. You, Sir, who are as intent upon abusing Saul, as either Bayle, Morgan, or this writer, or an association of all three could possibly contrive to bestow on David; take every occasion to draw parallels between them, resulting constantly in a new imputation on the memory of Saul! In this place you say ‡, that according to this writer, 'It was no crime in Saul to do what David did; and he shall pass unreprieved for the same action that shall mark out David as a free-booter and murderer.' You are again to be told, Sir, that you are mistaken (if it really is a mistake) in supposing that the character of Saul was patronised in that little history, Not being the principal object of attention, he was no farther insisted on, than the connection he had with the story, required. With regard to the present question, it is to be noted that Saul, in his expedition against the Amalekites, acted in obedience to that authority, to which in your opinion he was bound to have yielded. David, on the contrary, produces no commission for his inroads on the Amalekites, Gezrites and Gessurites, but appears actuated only with a desire of plunder. You add §, indeed that these three clans were not confederates with Achish, but in a state of hostility with him. It is not supposed that there was any settled amity maintained among these different tribes, but how valid the proofs you have not produced may be, to prove the alleged hostility in question, cannot be determined: what you have cited ||, only alludes to the particular *retaliatory* incursions on Ziklag, which was in the land of the Philistines. Had David considered them as enemies to his patron king Achish, tell us, Doctor, why "David saved neither man nor woman

* Page 147.

‡ Page 152

† Only this once, Doctor?

§ Page 153.

|| 1 Sam. xxx. 16.

alive, to bring tidings to GATH, saying, lest they should tell of us, saying, so did David, and so will be his manner, all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines !”

Such, however, was the reason that David gave for his massacre of these poor wretches, which contrary to Scripture and common sense, you say was in reality doing king Achish service.* But his excuse neither agrees with this plea nor with another, which you are kind enough to lend† him: namely, ‘that the Amalekites were many ages before doomed to destruction; and the Gessurites and Gezrites, who were old inhabitants‡ of the land, Canaanites, were commanded to be extirpated by God himself, for such reasons, as renders such a command worthy his character.’

The true cause of the antipathy between these people and the Hebrews, has already been hinted;§ but is the *verbal denunciation* of such cruel dooms by the Creator, agreeable with Prop. III.? The Lord is able to fulfil his own decrees in the ordinary course of his providence, and they are thus less liable to be questioned, that when effected by *men*, evidently interested in such extirpations.

But if we assume the supposition that David, contrary to his own express words, had in view the fulfilment of this old sentence of death; yet it was surely an ill-chosen time for a man persecuted, and just escaped from danger of his own personal safety, to undertake the execution of purposes requiring great power! but this being nevertheless granted to be the case, what meaneth this bleating of sheep, braying of asses, and lowing of oxen? and these camels loaden with wearing apparel?¶ Surely David has not been guilty of the crime¶ which Saul is so heavily charged with? Yet this appears to be the case, and is no crime now! So

* Page 153.

† Page 153.

‡ The Doctor is desired to turn to Joshua xiii. 13. or to any other place where the Geshurites are proscribed.

§ See page 31.

¶ 1 Sam xxvii. 9.

¶ 1 Sam. xv. 9, &c.

true is that English proverb, that *one man may better steal, &c.*

The expedition being over, David returns to Achish; and to his interrogations where he had been making his inroad, returned him an answer, which you justify and affirm* to be 'true but ambiguous.' Pray, Sir, if it was ambiguous, that is, if it had more meanings than one, what was the precise truth affirmed by it? and if it was rendered ambiguous with intention to deceive the person to whom it was addressed, can it be honoured with the sacred name of truth? Think well before you return an answer. You indeed accuse† him of even too much condescension 'for giving an ambiguous answer to a question, which he was not obliged to give a direct reply to.' But this is no less absurd than all the rest. For, as David obtained an hospitable protection from Achish, he was certainly, in every sense of the word; accountable to his benefactor for his public behaviour, while he remained in his territory.

David is next summoned to perform suit and service to his patron, and march with him and the rest of the Philistine princes to the invasion of Judea, which he had before beguiled Achish into the opinion of his having ravaged himself. To ward off the charge of his compliance, you again bring *ambiguity‡* to your assistance, the merits of which have already been examined.

You have now, however, no right even to ambiguity, for he actually obeyed! from whence do you infer his insincerity? from the Philistine princes refusing to accept his assistance? this only argues their distrust; as they did not hear his reply to Achish: David's expressions on his dismissal will not bear citing for this purpose. If you think they will, they are entirely at your service. But as it so happens that you cannot deny the fact of his really marching with them, you proceed to argue from suppositions too futile to be seriously attended to. Do not accuse the author of

* Page 153

† Page 154.

‡ Page 155.

wanting to smother them, such are to be found in the page of the last reference.

You ask the author* ‘ what a character he himself would have given David, had he betrayed his country for the sake of Achish?’ He replies, from a review of his situation, that David would not have deserved a much better character, had he betrayed his benefactor for the sake of his country.

In short, David was now in such a situation, that it was lucky for him the Philistine commanders concluded he would act treacherously; (he had, like every one else, a general character, it is to be supposed) for had he not been thus extricated, it was impossible for him to have performed an honourable part, let him have acted how he would. But, as you say; ‘ fortunately for David, his prudence, gratitude, and integrity, were not put to so severe and difficult a trial.’

While David was absent from Ziklag, in the Philistine army, the Amalekites seized the opportunity of revenging the former injury he had done them; which, notwithstanding his pious precaution, cannot be supposed to pass without being known, by them at least. Here, because you will not leave this poor author a rag to his back, you will not suffer his remark on the different conduct of David the aggressor, and the Amalekite retorters, to pass unmolested; though it was too obvious to be unnoticed. David in his inroad, “ smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive!” The Amalekites, whether actuated by revenge, or only a like disposition to plunder, it avails not; though you may possibly urge it; “ slew not any either great or small!” How striking the contrast! If they came to avenge so savage an insult, it shewed great consideration in them to spare the innocent, the guilty being absent: if they only came on the common thieving principle, the bare comparison of the different treatment of the sufferers in each instance, speaks for-

cibly without amplification. You, Sir, too unguardedly, think proper to lose sight of David's aggression, and enlarge on the heinous nature of the Amalekite proceedings. 'The women and children,' say you,* 'they spared and took captives, not out of compassion and moderation, as this writer insinuates; but because they wanted slaves, either for their own use, or to make money of them, by selling them for slaves to any that would purchase them. And this I should think a greater cruelty than the putting them to the sword, and that the moderation was on David's† side, rather than the Amalekites.'—The author intended here to hint that women captives probably met better fates by being made wives of; but waved it from an apprehension that it might give you an advantage over him by your insisting on the aversion women have to pronounce the word *obey* in the marriage contract, to prove that even this would have been making slaves of them; more especially in the east! However, from the premises you have laid down, it is apprehended that David's treatment of his vanquished enemies,‡ in another instance, had better been left alone by you; since the deaths he is there supposed to have put them to, however shocking they may appear, are thus more moderate than that slavery into which you endeavour§ to moderate them! This is handing him deeper into the mire, under pretence of helping him out. 'What evil genius tempted the man to turn critic!'

You proceed.|| 'I affirm lastly, that he (David) did well in extirpating them (the Amalekites) as they were proscribed by God himself; and condemned to be utterly cut off.' Had David been then in a situation to put such decrees in execution, with respect both to character and ability; had he urged this proscription to authorize the butchery; and lastly, had not plunder been the sole actuating motive, as appears both by the

* Page 160. † Meaning in the consequent pursuit and slaughter.

‡ 2 Sam. xii. 31.

§ Page 187, &c.

|| Page 160

specification of it, and by his alleged reason for the massacre; the massacre might be justified upon Hebrew principles: but from the circumstances of the transaction you are deprived even of them! So that the badness of your reasoning is not at all to be wondered at.

The author is unwilling to ascribe your apologies for Jewish cruelties, to a natural barbarity of disposition in you: it is rather deducible from another source: you have read these annals until blood is familiar to you; and your ideas of right and wrong are absolutely confounded!

This error, however, it might have been hoped the amiable precepts of Jesus Christ would have corrected; but even these are ineffectual antidotes: for you threaten the author with personal peril* for considering this adventure in any other than the accepted light. How different this behaviour is from that of the great founder of the religion you have so long taught, need not be insisted on: it is much too evident!

David's treatment of the Amalekite, who brought him the welcome news of Saul's death, and claimed the merit of it, is agreeable to the customary rules of politics; and has nothing therefore remarkable in it, farther than it was rendered by peculiar circumstances. Saul was said to be rejected by God, and David was the pretender to his throne; it was therefore imagined this man might have had some claim to his private gratitude, especially considering the account the Amalekite gave of the matter. However, it is not insisted on. David's lamentation over Saul, still appears with all the marks of insincerity it did before; his grief for Jonathan, whose love toward him was *wonderful, passing the love of women*, was perhaps suitable: though the figure expressing this love, without any uncharitable inferences, is certainly not well chosen.

On the death of Saul, when David repaired to Hebron, and was there anointed king over Judah; the author had remarked, that he did not seem to claim in right of the sacred unction bestowed on him long since by Samuel: to this you reply,* ‘this is a very injudicious observation, to say the least of it; for David had no other title to the succession, but the appointment of God by Samuel; and this claim on which he founded his pretensions, was universally known to the people of Israel, and the avowed reason why they advanced him to the throne.’ To this it may be answered, that he claimed his title as soon as he could make it out, by the law of force. If his divine title to the Hebrew crown was universally known, and if, as you say, Ishbosheth had none at all,† how came David’s title not to be universally acknowledged? Did only one tribe believe in it? Yet David with the divine grant was obliged to obtain the sovereignty by arms and intrigue! just for all the world, like the wicked, who attain ends by the same means to all external appearance! It is true, Abner at length interested himself in the accomplishment of this grant, but observe, it was not until his zeal was excited by a personal affront relating to a concubine! so that it is doubtful whether he really believed in it or no.

The appellations pretender and usurper, you say,‡ belong more properly to Ishbosheth:—yet there is no irregularity hinted at in Ishbosheth’s succeeding his father; nor any commotion on his accession §; which is rather uncommon under such circumstances.

Your observations on David’s conquest of the city of Jerusalem ||, if they prove any thing, prove that you, with the assistance of Hebrew, are as far from ascertaining doubtful points, as the author can be with only plain English.

In treating of the wars of David, you must, though it is hard to know wherefore, drag Saul in again; with

* Page 164.

† Page 165.

‡ Page 172.

§ Except what David excited.

|| Page 173, &c.

whom we now have nothing farther to do. If Saul did wrong, you know he was rejected, and no one will perhaps interest himself in defending his reputation. Yet you take so many occasions to impeach him, that it were as easy to review your History of him, as you have done this of David: be this, however, the task of some one else, and resume we the review of David. Your reason* for supposing David to shew favour to Gath in his wars with the Philistines is not sufficient to establish the fact, or even the extraordinary probability of it; all these people being frequently introduced, after mention of total slaughter: the invasions were partial, and fugitives no doubt returning to their settlements, when the marauders were gone. You are likewise, Sir, very earnest to alter the proportion in which he slaughtered the Moabites†, from two-thirds to one-half: you are extremely welcome to the difference, if it will do David any material service. You alledge, to justify his wars with the Philistines and Moabites, a league‡ among these neighbouring nations against Israel. If so, as may be very naturally supposed, it was a very justifiable compact; Israel being a common enemy, who ravaged them *ad libitum*, not from the common misunderstandings among states, but from an insatiable appetite for blood and plunder.

When you get particular notions in your head, you swell your book greatly with the parade of numerous citations, either dwelling upon, or digressing from, the point in hand, frequently to very little purpose; as may be seen in p. 182, 3, 4, now open before the writer: and in many others.

To palliate David's cruel treatment of the Ammonites, you insist on their king's ill usage of David's ambassadors sent to congratulate him on his accession, after the death of his father. 'Hanum,' say you§, 'instead of receiving them as the ambassadors of so

* Page 178.

† Ibid.

‡ Page 181.

§ Page 185.

great a prince, and sent on so polite and humane an errand, was prevailed on by his princes, to regard them as spies, and treated them with the vilest indignity.'—Ambassadors are spies by the very nature of their employment, but tolerated among states by mutual consent. These, however, were considered as such in a much more particular manner: the princes say to Hanum *, “thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? Hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?” Credit these representations with having some foundation in truth at that time; the Jews being a people always to be suspected; and then these ambassadors are but treated accordingly; considering the times.

You are carefully intrenched, Sir, in your expositions; you first endeavour by various trials to alter the meanings of passages: and lest they should fail you, frequently, as in this instance †, attempt a justification of the literal acceptation; arguing again, as in the case of Nabal, an improbable degree of provocation measured from that of the revenge: for you are engaged to defend at all adventures.

Bringing his wars together into one section, you, from justifying his barbarities, proceed to prove him merciful; and remark concerning the civil war headed by Absalom, thus. ‡ ‘After the civil war between David and Absalom, we read of no bloody executions for treason and rebellion.’ The reason, Sir, speaks for itself; though it has escaped your penetration. This revolt was so general, that David was obliged to fly even from his capital: and when it was suppressed, it was immediately succeeded by another, so that David no doubt thought it advisable to sit down contented with his re-establishment. Recrimination at this season would have been scarcely less than a general proscription: and was too hazardous to attempt. This

* 2 Sam. x. 3.

† Page 189. 190. 191.

‡ Page 191.

plea of inability, which you urge for his not calling Joab to account for the murder of Amasa,* is equally valid in the general sense in which it is here applied; where you would ascribe to his mercy and forgiveness, what flowed from policy, considering the precariousness of his situation.

Following the order in which you have introduced your facts, we now attend to the return of the ark. The strange crime of Uzzah, who, poor man, some how or other lost his life for his good-nature, is thus considered by you in the ensuing words; † which will perhaps be made to read, by the introduction of a word or two to render it intelligible. ‘Doth he (this author) think that the Lord of Hosts, to whom it belonged; could not have saved it, without his (Uzzah) doing what it was absolutely unlawful for him to do?’ If the Lord would have saved it, because he could, it may in the same manner be argued, that he would have brought it to any place where he intended it to be: and that therefore David was impertinently officious. But with respect to Uzzah, if “the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart;” ‡ the man’s intention was indisputably good; and the alleged crime surely pardonable: the seeming exigency precluding all hesitation and reflexion. Had the ark been really overturned for want of this careful prevention, Uzzah might with greater plausibility have been smote for his omission, than he was for his commission. But you say, the Levites should have carried it on their own shoulders; that in their neglecting it, they consulted their ease more than their duty; and, that this was an offence of no small aggravation. § Was Uzzah then to be punished for the laziness of the priests?

You clothe David, in this procession of the ark, in a complete priest’s habit: but David was not a priest;

* Page 195. † Page 197. ‡ 1 Sam. xvi. 7. § Page 197.

either by office or tribe: the ephod it is true, was part of the priest's dress: there were, you know, two kinds, one peculiar to the High Priest; and a common one, worn by the priests in general: but from the case in hand, it is probable it was worn by others on peculiar solemn occasions. David wore one now; together with a robe of fine linen: which, that you may effectually secure him from being liable to the indecencies his wife Michal was witness to, you will have to be the priest's robe, close down to the feet. The linen robe was, as you allow,* put on by David for coolness, and the ephod was probably put over it to give it something of a solemn appearance: but had this robe been *that* robe, which was close round, flowing down to the feet, it would have been very inconvenient for a man dancing "with all his might."

You ascribe the ridicule his wife Michal cast on him to his being divested of his regal attire.† But if, as you say, he appeared as a priest, she would not have scoffed at him in that manner, though you can maintain such a supposition;‡ for we have no other instance of an ill disposition in her, farther than what is generally inferred from this; David had been indebted to her affection for his life:§ neither would she in that case have alluded to the vain fellows who openly uncovered themselves. The parallel would not hold, Sir; unless it were in virtue of your new theory of uncovering,|| which may first adorn these vain fellows with kingly robes; and then by uncovering them, signify the putting them off and the putting on the habits of a priest! If she meant all this, she certainly deserved to be excluded from child-bearing.

When David deprived Mephibosheth of his possessions, on being accused by his steward Ziba; and upon discovery of the calumny appears to have restored him but half the penalty of his supposed guilt, you say,¶ 'there might be reasons of state, reasons of

* Page 199, 200.

† Page 201.

‡ Page 202.

§ 1 Sam. xix. 11—17.

|| Page 128, note.

¶ Page 205.

great prudence and equity, that might induce David at that time, *to give this check to the house of Saul*; especially as Shimei, one of Saul's family, had used him with peculiar marks of indignity, and discovered that they wanted only the opportunity to revenge themselves on him, and place one of Saul's house upon the throne of Israel.'

This is one of your pleas. The might be, however is not to be understood as your real opinion; for here, as in your review of David's treatment of the Ammonites, you rather start a number of suppositions guarded against every judgment that may be formed of a transaction, than seem to have any settled opinion of your own. Thus in the present case, lest the politic check to the house of Saul should fail, you back it with a confirmation of the charge against Mephibosheth, supposed by Mr. Hallet*. Not quite confident of the weight of this opinion, however, you confuse us with a third contained in these words †. 'We have already seen that David, by the original grant, gave the property of the whole patrimony to Mephibosheth, but so as that Ziba, his fifteen sons, and twenty servants, were to be maintained out of it for cultivating the estate; which was a proper division of it between Mephibosheth and Ziba.' If a person undertakes the stewardship of an estate, it is true the estate is understood to subsist him; but what steward was ever understood to divide the estate with his master? Granting however, any division to be made, and the entire property afterwards to be vested in Ziba, on his treacherous slander; by what rule in morals or politics was Ziba continued on the estate, on the original compact, when his villainy was discovered? You affirm indeed ‡, that 'it was not as the reward of his treachery, but out of respect even to Saul, of whose house Ziba was, and as a recompence for that seasonable and noble supply that he brought him (David) when he was forced to

* Page 205, note.

† Page 206.

‡ Page 207.

abandon the capital.— Surely, respect to the house of Saul would have been better shewn by favour to the injured Mephibosheth, than to his servant; especially when that servant proved so vile a traitor! and were the designing kind offices of a traitor to blind all attention to the crime to which they were owing; when that crime was manifested? But having just before supposed this partition intended to give a check to the house of Saul, you here represent it as a deed of respect toward it! You now possibly may have some other exposition of it ready, which you are heartily welcome to supply, if you are so disposed.

You are next, Sir, attended to the memorable story of the unfortunate Uriah! Little need be said by the author respecting this complicated crime of David, as it is condemned in the relation, and therefore by every one beside. Some observations, however, which you have made relating to it, could not be overlooked, and your attention is requested on their account, for a few moments.

Adulterers, as you say, were to be punished with death. True. Will a holy person then, deliberately influence another with him to incur this penalty? Deliberation is insisted on: since had David and Bathsheba been casually together, a sudden gust of passion might, as you say it did*, hurry him away without allowing him time for deliberation. But this was not the case. The temptation was distant, so that, though his passion was fired with the sight, he had not only time for recollection, but was also amply provided with the means of cooling it again, at home. But neither did he make use of either of these opportunities!—he sent and enquired after this woman whom he saw bathing;—found she was the wife of one of his officers, but—nevertheless caused her to be brought to him, as every one knows! Let any impartial person decide what right David has to the excuse of being hurried

* Page 208.

into a precipitate gratification of his passion! and whether this was not a crime ‘peculiarly aggravated by previous deliberate steps!’

Even after all that you have hitherto urged in justification of David’s character, it was thought hardly possible, Sir, for you to extract a compliment to it, out of this greatest acknowledged crime he ever committed! Yet have you address enough to perform it! You trace the necessity of Uriah’s death, as the only means to save the other parties; and then ask*, ‘But how was Uriah to be got rid of? Poison, assassination, or a false charge of treason, or some secret way of destruction, were the methods that the eastern princes were well acquainted with. David was above them all, and had a kind of generosity even in his very crimes. He causes him to fall in the bed of honour, gloriously fighting against the enemies of his king and country.’ Generous David! Incomparable apologist!

“And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the fore-front of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten and die.” What an amiable quality is generosity!

As you esteem David’s delivery of seven of Saul’s posterity to be hanged by the Gibeonites, to be ‘one of the most unexceptionable parts of his behaviour as a king, and an illustrious proof of the generosity of his temper, &c.’ † it deserves some examination.

That Saul *might* have injured these Gibeonites, was not denied; so that your reflexions on this supposition ‡ are nothing worth. It was then, and is still, thought remarkable, that there was no chronological record of a fact, which after such a length of time demanded an expiation so awfully hinted, and so extraordinary in its circumstaues! The history said §, that after many years, God ‘punishes—whom? a whole nation; with three years famine: which, by the bye, was not sent as a punishment neither; but merely as a hint

* Page 210. † Page 215. ‡ Page 224. § Page 74.

‘of remembrance’—but it was a calamity nevertheless: so that your sneering enquiry whether, as it was not a punishment, it might not be a blessing, or something between both? * is, like many other archnesses of a similar nature, hardly becoming the character of a doctor in divinity!

Among these is the quibble by which you affect to make the author intend the duration of the civil wars, when he expresses that of the famine †, But away with such children’s play of *make believe!*

There is no reasoning positively about facts so obscurely referred to. ‘The crime, you say, ‡ was enormous and highly aggravated; a crime, if any could be so, that was—*Deo vindice dignum*,—and which, though the punishment of it was long deferred, through a train of intervening unavoidable circumstance, was nevertheless worthy to be retaliated by providence, upon the first opportunity that was favourable for the purpose.’ In verity, Sir, you make very free with Providence! What must your notions of Providence be, that can plead a train of intervening *unavoidable* circumstances, as impediments to its operations; and can represent it as taking the first *favourable* opportunity to resume them?

A three years famine over a country, to procure the hanging of seven men, may be very reconcileable with your conception of Providence, though hardly with some propositions before laid down: however, the oracle is said to have answered, “It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he § slew the Gibeonites.” From this you infer, || that ‘The persons employed with Saul in perpetrating these murders, were those of his “own house.” He thought the destruction of these Gibeonites so popular a thing, as that he was resolved himself, his family, and relations should have the whole credit of it.’ And therefore, unassisted

* Page 222.

† Page 220.

‡ Preface, p. 26. Review, p. 217.

§ Not *they*.

|| Page 221.

either by particular record, or reason, you think it is probable, from the choice that David made, that the very persons he gave up were employed in this butchery.* — These are represented† to be ‘the two bastard sons of Rispah his concubine, and the five sons of his eldest daughter.’ — Here probability decides against you, unless you can account why Saul, who, according to you, resolved that himself and family should have the credit of this action, chose two of his bastards to assist him in it without associating his legitimate sons, particularly Jonathan; an able warrior, in the the commission: and can prove that five of his grandsons were then born, and of an age to lend an hand also. Not to mention the inconsistency of supposing a prince to associate himself and children to commit actions always referred to soldiers as their proper office.

There is, however, another reason why you select Saul’s bastard children and grand-children as help-mates in this odd massacre. After establishing that by *the seed* expressed in the oath between Saul and David, the male line is to be understood, as if Saul relinquished all care for the female, you add‡—‘But David gave up only the sons of Saul’s concubine who were not the legal seed of Saul, and those of his eldest daughter, who could only keep up Adriel’s name and not Saul’s; and hereby conscientiously observed, without the least violation, his oath to Saul.’ Yes, Sir, with the help of that mental reservation in all his expressions with which you so often credit him. The reasons, therefore, appears now, why Saul’s bastards and *grandchildren* were so strangely pitched upon by you for his instruments in the massacre, lest your system of expiation should be overturned.

It is to be supposed, Sir, from your continued method of arguing, that you never read of commotions excited in a state by illegitimate children; or by descendants in a female line; else you might possibly have

* Page 221.

† Page 217.

‡ Page 227.

allowed now as you did once before,* that reasons of great prudence '—might induce David to give this check to the house of Saul; as Shimei, one of Saul's family, had used him with peculiar marks of indignity, and discovered that they wanted only the opportunity to revenge themselves on him, and place one of Saul's house upon the throne of Israel.'

Mephibosheth, whom David took care to keep under his own eye, having such a shocking scene to contemplate, might, as he really was, considering his decrepitude, with little hazard be preserved; as an evidence of probity in this pious king. Your table of his decendants †, is of no farther use than as it serves to countenance the declamatory string of ironical scoffing, and panegyric sentences which close this section of your work: since you have no clearer evidence of Mephibosheth having any grandchildren born at that time, than you have to prove that Saul and his grandchildren massacred the Gibeonites.

David's numbering the people, is the next subject for the exercise of your critical powers! The author of the history, after stating the circumstances of this fact, chose to decline any farther discussion of it, as surpassing any abilities he can boast, to reconcile with our present sceptical and depraved conceptions. Now, however, that he is assisted with your mature reflexions, he will hazard a few cursory observations on them.

The translation by comparing two passages together, affirms David to have been moved both by God and Satan, to number his people. You seem to be clear, that it could not be God who tempted him: and as to the Devil you make any body of him, but rather suppose him to have been one of David's courtiers! ‡ It is pretty clear that this same courtier was frequently whispering in his royal master's ear. Upon farther enquiry, however, the crime imputed to David on

* Page 205.

† Page 228.

‡ Page 235.

this occasion, was his remitting the head-money always to be paid at such general reviews.* This calls for divine punishment; and who was the proper object for punishment is the question. If we say it is hard, David thus actuated by invisible agency, should suffer as a principal; you reply,† ‘But doth he not know that a man may be hanged for a crime, to which his indictment says: *he was moved by the Devil*; and because the Devil moved him, is he therefore a passive instrument, and free from guilt? Doth he really think, that the Devil ought to be tried and hanged, instead of the man whom he tempted?’ In answer to these queries it may be hinted, that by human laws we hang the man, because the man perpetrated the fact; but for *God* to punish the instrument of a purpose, confessedly over-ruled to the execution of that purpose by supernatural influence; would be just as if *we* should convict the *knife* or the *pistol* at the Old Bailey, and discharge the criminal! If it appears odd that the people (one remove still farther from the author of the crime) should be punished for the fault of their king; you answer,‡ ‘Perhaps it may help to set the thing a little even with him [the writer] when I put my reader in mind; that kings are no otherwise to be punished in their regal capacities, nor oftentimes to be brought to correct the errors of their administration, but by public calamities: by famine, pestilence, foreign wars, domestic convulsions, or some other like distresses that affect their people.’—Perhaps it would set the subject still more even, were you to establish this position by authority more convincing than mere *ipse dixit*. Your logic however, is seen in the immediately ensuing words to the former: ‘and if it be right at all for *God* to animadvert on the conduct of princes, or to shew his displeasure against them for the public errors of their administration, it must be right and fit for him to

* Page 237.

† Page 236.

‡ Page 238.

afflict their people: and indeed this is nothing more than what continually happens in the common course of providence.'—If then, as you say, from ordinary occurrences, *and from nothing more*, it is evident God punishes and admonishes princes by those occurrences; it is no wonder they profit so little by these lessons given to others, and which they now have no infallible oracle to interpret for them. For, as oracles have been long since discredited, and *therefore* not continued, the common course of providence must either go on in vain, respecting this main purpose of its movement, or else intirely stop.

The opinion of Grotius cited by you,* that *acerbissimum est delinquentibus regibus supplicium id quod populis infligitur*; can be determined only by fact, whether they themselves really think so: and it is pretty evident that Grotius was not a king.

You have, however, other causes to urge for this pestilence; namely,† that it might be a judgment on the people for not remonstrating against the numeration crime of their king; or for their not pressing the payment of the capitation tax, though not demanded of them; or for their other transgressions! In truth, there is no end of following you through all your shifts, turnings and windings: these suggestions being your own, and no crime being charged on the people in the Bible, the writer does not think himself under obligation to be farther troubled with them.

As to Nathan the prophet, he was certainly nettled at the slight put on him, and some others; in not being invited to Adonijah's feast: else he would not have insisted on that circumstance: which had better been waved. You have been at some pains to render the supposition ridiculous, but the probability of Nathan's being corrupted, was not surely less than that of David's sons;‡ who yet all of them, except Solomon, (who, had he been invited, had some private reasons

* Page 239, note..

† Page 239.

‡ 1 Kings i. 9. 19. 25.

to the contrary, which their proceedings shew them to have been aware of) were agreeable to settling the succession on their elder brother; though certainly as much interested in the disposal of the kingdom as Nathan could be.

It must be owned, that you have fairly caught the writer off his guard, when he quoted a verse from a psalm, which happened not to be the production of David. It was in the collection under his name and was carelessly pitched on without due thought of the general tenor of it. *Humanum est errare*, Doctor, and though you have here an advantage *over the writer*, it can be converted to but small use toward a general exculpation of David; and inaccuracies of expression still less so: though by you greatly insisted on.

You plead,* that 'there are so many traces of a benevolent spirit in David's conduct and psalms, as leave little room for the accusation of his being of a rancorous and implacable spirit even to his worst enemies, for whom he frequently prayed; and to whom he often rendered good for evil.'—The benevolence of David's conduct has been sufficiently examined into, and the good which he returned to his enemies, reasoning from his conduct, was most probably confined wholly *to his prayers*; like the mercy of the Holy Courts of Inquisition.

The book of psalms being a collection of various composition, many of which have no name prefixed to them, and their expressions so general; little positive can be affirmed about them: at least, if we attended to commentators, among whom we might hope to find agreement, and therefore from whom, if from any, we might expect to gain satisfaction.

Many of those ascribed to David do not, however, warrant your character of them; and there is no arguing against facts to ward off the charge of inconsistency.

But, say you,† 'it should be remarked, that in the

* Page 254.

† Page 253,

far greater number of those places, where there appear to be direct imprecations in our version, there are none in the original;* in which the verb is in the future tense, instead of the imperative; and so is only declarative of what should be the consequence, instead of the Psalmist's wish of what he would have it be.' What a strange translation then are we amused with, if this is universally the case! and if the meaning of the psalms is so injuriously perverted, how can we pretend even to guess at the meaning of any other part? And yet, Doctor, the *acceptance* and *use* of our translation through so many generations of Hebrew critics, seem to argue its imperfections not to be quite so gross as, for the sake of your hero, you now choose to represent them.

This argument, though it may be thought sufficient of itself, if established, to clear David from the charge of vindictiveness; yet, as in other cases, you are careful to provide against its failing you, by urging the wickedness of David's enemies, to countenance his bitter denunciations against them; and refer us to David for a character of them.† But it is hardly fair to accept any person's character of his enemy; since resentment makes us see through a wrong medium. The expressions in which wickedness is imputed to these people in the psalms, flows naturally enough from a people who esteemed themselves a nation peculiarly favoured by God; but ought to be looked upon rather as expressive of their own superiority in that respect, and hatred and contempt for their neighbours, than as indications of the real wickedness of these people.

But, you say, no charge of barbarity can lie against

* You refer particularly to the 109th Psalm; as 'a most remarkable instance:' other Hebrew critics, however, say that those contained in that psalm *are imprecations*; but that they are only there related by David as those of his enemies on him! What therefore, in the name of criticism, are they?

† Page 252.

David for many descriptive passages of the horrors of war in his Psalms: * for that, if this author wishes his country success against its enemies, he wishes destruction to them, which destruction is attended with all those calamitous consequences mentioned by David. True, Sir, very true; but then it shews a propensities to cruelty to *dwell so minutely*, and with seeming pleasure, upon circumstances of horror in our songs, like the North-American Indians; which a humane generous mind feels pain in thinking of, and is pleased with being relieved from.

Your next apology for David respects his behaviour to Shimei. You tax him with false accusation against David, in calling him *a bloody man*: it being, as you observe, before the affair of the Gibeonites: asking † ‘in what other respect could David be guilty of the blood of Saul’s house?’ Sir! he took up arms against Saul, in virtue of a claim to supersede him: he associated with, and promised assistance to, the enemies of his country; by whom Saul and three of his sons perished: he contested the dominion with Ishbosheth, whom he harassed to the grave. Foundation sufficient to charge him with guilt of the blood of Saul’s house. But you add, ‡ that Shimei ‘retracts all he had said, owns himself a slanderer and a liar, and begs pardon for his abusive impudence.’ He did so, and upon the change in the fortune of David, is in that as justifiable in point of prudence, as he was censurable before in point of rashness. To give David the disinterested merit of sparing his life, you ask, § ‘what there was in the season to prevent David from punishing a treasonable reviler as he deserved?’ Enough! David was rather in a disagreeable plight at that time, and Shimei a man of some consideration; as appears afterward: both which considerations rendered it unadvisable to silence this brawler then.

Consequences proving that in David’s oath there

* Page 249.

† Page 261.

‡ Page 262.

§ Page 265.

would need some equivocation to excuse him in his dying charge to Solomon; you limit the extent of the obligation he laid himself under, to the day in which he made it*: from which you establish that David violated no oath, if he actually ordered Solomon to put him to death. But, Sir, probity is greatly wounded by such excuses. *Tantum religio potest suadere!*

To justify David still more in this instance, you paraphrase his order to Solomon, making him say†—‘clear him not, therefore, as I did, *if thou findest him guilty of any male practices*; but his hoar head bring down unto the grave with blood’—But there appears no conditional clause in David’s speech, the injunction is positive. However, as you love amplifying, the author will supply a far more suitable paraphrase of that part of his speech, as follows:—‘It is true, I promised not to put him to death, but thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do: thou knowest thyself not to be bound by that obligation; therefore his hoar head, &c.’—which is far more explanatory of his right meaning.

You confirm your paraphrase, from Solomon’s different treatment of Joab and Shimei. You allow the injunction to be positive respecting Joab, because he immediately put him to death; whereas he only confined Shimei to Jerusalem, under the penalty of death‡. But this was owing to a different cause. Joab, by joining the party of Adonijah, had furnished that pretence, which Shimei does not appear to have done§; notwithstanding you have asserted his readiness to join any measures to disturb David’s government||. Joab, therefore, was assassinated, and Shimei watched. The writer has the satisfaction to find his opinion not discountenanced by the learned Houbigant, in the passage you have quoted¶. *EXPECTAVIT Solomon do-*

* Page 272. † Page 268. ‡ Page 270. § 1 Kings i. 8.

|| Page 268. You here indeed suppose him to have been in Absalom’s rebellion, but this is unsupported by any authority excepting your own. ¶ Page 269, note.

nec Semei reus esset, ut eum morte plecteret: and he took care not to lose the first specious pretence to effect it.

Were it possible to establish the doctrine of temporal judgments from those instances, wherein the chance medley* of human occurrences has fulfilled the *lex talionis*; the case of Joab might certainly be produced as evidence: that assassination, by which he cut off Abner and Amasa, being at length his own lot! You say†, ‘I allow David’s dying order in this instance to be peremptory and absolute.’ From what premises do you allow it? your allowance can only be drawn, without due consideration, from Solomon’s conduct in obedience to this notable testament. It is, however, a condescension not to be overlooked; since, in granting one to be absolute, you grant the other also; the terms dictating each, being equally strong; nay, almost in the very same words.

After mentioning Joab’s crimes, David proceeds: “Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.”

After his accusation of Shimei, and giving his son the reason why he had not put him to death himself, he adds: “Now therefore hold him not guiltless; for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.”

Joab, however, though far from being a good man, yet on the whole deserved a better legacy from David. His services had been long and important; and though concerning his killing the false Abner, you not only charge him with revenge for his brother’s death, but allege‡ his probably envying him the glory of settling David on the throne of Israel: yet this admits of a doubt. For he was apprehensive of a different consequence; and hearing that Abner had been with David, expostulates§ with him on the imprudence of

* Matthew v. 45. Luke xiii. 4.

† Page 274.

‡ Page 273.

§ 2 Sam. iii. 24, 25.

trusting such a man among them: saying, "he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou dost." Probably Joab did not know the story of the concubine. He therefore appears (uniting his revenge with the deed) to have acted basely for David's service.

Joab was really ill used in the affair of Amasa: which yet is not said to exculpate him. Even here, however, he confined his resentment to his rival: and though he must be justly provoked at David's ingratitude, yet he still continued faithful to his king. His defection at last may perhaps admit of being interpreted into a patronization of that particular plan for the succession, rather than into a rebellion against the superannuated monarch.

David in his lamentation for Abner, had declared the Lord to be the rewarder of the evil doer*: by this expression referring the punishment of Joab to the Lord. Having; therefore, enjoyed the benefit of Joab's services through his life, he having been his right hand all along; gratitude, after such a long attachment, ought to have influenced him to have then left him to that justice of God; and not have bequeathed him death as a legacy for his long friendship!

The panegyric at the close of your Review, on the piety of David, is little worth, after the discussion of the foregoing points. That part of it insisting on his always adhering to the religion of his country †, is still less so; a bad man not being an honour to any religion. No convulsive argument for his goodness can be drawn from his poetic compositions ‡, experience proving the best poets to be frequently very far from being the best men.

You, Sir, and the world, now see the authorities and principles from which the History of the Man after God's own Heart was deduced; which in a second edition, may possibly appear still less liable to objec-

* 2 Sam. iii. 39.

† Page 282.

‡ Page 283.

tion in particular places : and an appeal is hazarded to the candid, even of all persuasions, whether it merits the verbose abusive character* you have given it: as ‘ putting forced constructions on particular passages ; invidious insinuations, where there is nothing in the history to support them : improbable suggestions to eke out facts, or supply the place of them ; false assertions contrary to the truth of history, to furnish matter for calumny and reviling ; in a word, all methods contrary to truth and honour, and inconsistent with the rules of humanity, candour and justice.’ What may be your latent motive for throwing out such inflammatory expressions is left to yourself to brood on ; but unless they had been better supported in point of verity, they are not very indicative of the gentleman, not to mention you by any other character.

It has been urged, that this writer has but revived old objections long since refuted. It is true, that such of them as have appeared before, have been often replied to ; but a reply does not necessarily imply a refutation. Objections of this nature have been replied to from the beginning, and are likely so to be to the end : and what is worthy noting, many dogmas are now exploded, the objections to which have heretofore been thought to be entirely refuted !

You have been pleased, Sir, to attribute to the writer a latent intention of subverting the Gospel constitution † : and have indeed framed an ingenious chain of deductions for that purpose ; which however will not be employed, unless by yourself. The Lord Jesus Christ, it is true, is frequently termed *the son of David* : but with what degree of propriety yourself shall judge. You establish ‡, that—‘ the seed is always reckoned by the males, and not the females of a family, and (that) the name in a father’s house could only be preserved by the male decendants.’—in

* Page 295. † Preface, page 29. ‡ Review, page 227.

which respect Jesus Christ was *not* a son of David* : therefore this connection is destroyed.

The doctrines of Christianity, especially the preceptive ones, taken from his own mouth, cannot to all appearance be affected by insisting on the character of David, whether good or bad ; right sorry would this author be if they rested on any such dependance. The tendency of these doctrines is so manifest ; and many of them are so refined in their own nature, that they will ever claim the most exalted reverence from mankind, to them and to their publisher, independent on all foreign contingencies, on all former narrow tenets, and superstitious rites : which he has so totally superseded among his professors : and that they ever may, is the sincere prayer of this abused writer.

He therefore hopes an acquittal from this part of his indictment.

Who this writer is †, does not concern the dispute ; he does not remain concealed from any consciousness of deserving the reproaches you have scattered in the dark ; but because it is rather inconvenient for objectors and enquirers to declare themselves, while any are liable to be inflated with that holy zeal (not according to knowledge) with which orthodox writers labour to puff them up. He never before was so inadvertent as to run his head into a wasp's nest, and does not perceive the least inclination ever again to repeat the

* Matthew i. 18, &c.

† The author, through misinformation from persons whom he had all reason to credit, was induced to publish an advertisement reflecting on a gentleman in Worcestershire, falsely accused of industriously claiming the production of *the History*. This report, like all other reports grew, from the circumstance of that gentleman being known to have a manuscript by him, on the same subject, and of the same nature. The writer having received full satisfaction as to this point, takes the present opportunity to acknowledge it : and to ask that gentleman's pardon for being misled by reports which certain persons are ever ready to propagate, to the prejudice of the *proscribed*.

experiment : but the humane can never surely blame him for endeavouring to heal the stings he has already received ; and he has the pleasure to assure them, that the smart is entirely subsided.

Religious contest is most disagreeable of all others : since it has ever been least decisive ; and most incentive of those propensities which the genuine dictates of pure religion directly tend to suppress. The writer therefore, at the same time that he drops this controversy, has no present intention ever more to engage in any of the like nature.

With regard to you, Sir ! the author, by whom you have dealt so sharply, retains not the least trace of resentment on that account : he is too well acquainted with the nature of religious zeal, not to make allowances for the violence of its operations, even in the most worthy breasts. Fatal indeed to mankind is the violence of it, wherever it extends itself, and infects the government of a country ! He is only sorry that you reduced him to the necessity of recriminating in a manner in which personal regard could not be preserved. But he, nevertheless, hopes you will have the charity to believe his assurance that, with the greatest esteem for your learning and character,

He remains, your sincere,

March 12, 1762.

Though unknown Friend.

POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE writing the foregoing letter, the author has read a Vindication of David, in the name of Dr. Thomas Patten, of Oxford. This reverend gentleman is for having the character of King David protected by the authority of the clergy in convocation.* A very ill-judged hint, to say no worse of it: and far from being capable of answering the purpose of this mistaken writer. The character of King David would have remained in as good a situation if Dr. Patten had excused himself this labour: for, notwithstanding his addressing it to his Grace of Canterbury; notwithstanding the assistance of a superabundance of staring capitals; it is doubtful whether the one or the other will stamp a currency on opinions above the standard of their intrinsic value.

His weakness is in no instance more apparent than in his contemptuous mention of the English dissenting ministers. The historian, he says,† ‘Pretends to offer his performance to the public under the notion of a vindication of his late Majesty from the insult which, as he contends, hath been offered to his memory by some reverend panegyrists, *so he stileth certain dissenting teachers*, who it seems have been fond of com-

* Patten, page 3.

† Page 25.

paring him with King David; 'a monarch' saith he, 'in no respect resembling him.'

This gentleman, among other needful information, is to be told, that these dissenting teachers are a very respectable body of men: men whose studies are more suited to their profession, and whose improvement in them have in general manifested them deserving the epithet *reverend*, as much, to say the least, as many collegians, himself in particular; who (bigots to establishment) fondly conceive all sense and learning confined within the limits of universities.

All that is contained in this pamphlet worthy notice, will be found considered in the foregoing letter; indeed some advantages might be gained here if attended to, of no small importance: such as his supposition that the Jewish prophets might perhaps have had no subsistence but from providential presents for their intelligence: * see how Doctors can differ! his comparison of David to Shakspeare's Macbeth: † 'whose circumstances were somewhat similar to those of David:' his judicious and delicate comparison ‡ between reasoners in religion, and urine doctors! his mistake in the price of admission into the worshipful Robin Hood Society, which is a halfpenny more than he has affirmed it to be: || all these, and many more which might be specified, would furnish a commentator with sufficient matter for animadversion. But it is lost labour to argue with a divine who, through the whole tenor of his performance, has taken professed pains to shew that he is not a protestant upon protestant principles: who, on the least appearance of difficulty in exposition, continually holds up the authority of a letter as yet unsettled, to crush the exertions of private judgment! a

* Page 34.

† Page 102.

‡ Page 127.

|| Page 130, note. Possibly a penny, since the late rise of porter.

a conduct, which will support the exploded doctrine of Transubstantiation? We shall never convince unbelievers by methods which even a Mussulman may adopt in justification of his persuasion.

From these premises, the writer declines the second task of analysing the contents of this vindication. Since, having undergone the toil of examining a far more elaborate work,* he will not spend more time on a person, who, like the frog in the fable, after much puffing and straining, fancies himself an ox!

After what has been pleaded against the charges contained in the most capital performance on the defensive side of this dispute, it is hoped that the Rev. Messrs. Porteus and Cleaver, will not continue to think this writer *quite* so unfair and abandoned as they have represented him to be.

The greatest instance of moderation and generosity of mind on the part of King David, is to be seen in a candid pamphlet just published, under the title of 'The Conversion of a Deist.' In some general reflections at the end of this piece, Mr. Harwood, the writer, takes occasion to insist strongly on the necessity of distinguishing between what is Christianity, and what is not †: in order to the burning without ceremony those loads of hay and stubble under which profane hands have overwhelmed the Christian religion: as our undiscerning zeal for some peculiar nostrums does but rivet prejudices the stronger against it. 'Who, for instance,' says he, 'that valued his character as a rational and well-instructed Christian, would sit down to vindicate David from every charge advanced against his moral character in the late celebrated History of

§ It is probable from more tokens than one, that Dr. Patten has condescended sometimes to plow with Dr. Chandler's heifer.

† Page 71.

the 'Man after God's own Heart?' Now, however, this gentleman differs from the writer of that history, in some points, it is hoped that by this time, whatever may be ascribed to his ignorance, he will be acquitted of malice; with which all animadverters unite to accuse him: and he sincerely rejoiced to find Mr. Harwood join with him in considering Christianity as entirely unconcerned in this dispute.

“What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” 2 Cor. vi. 14.

THE END.