

A  
C H A R G E  
DELIVERED TO THE  
C L E R G Y  
OF THE  
DIOCESE. OF LONDON,  
AT THE  
VISITATION  
OF THAT  
D I O C E S E  
IN THE YEAR MDCCXCIV.

By BEILBY LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

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THE SECOND EDITION.

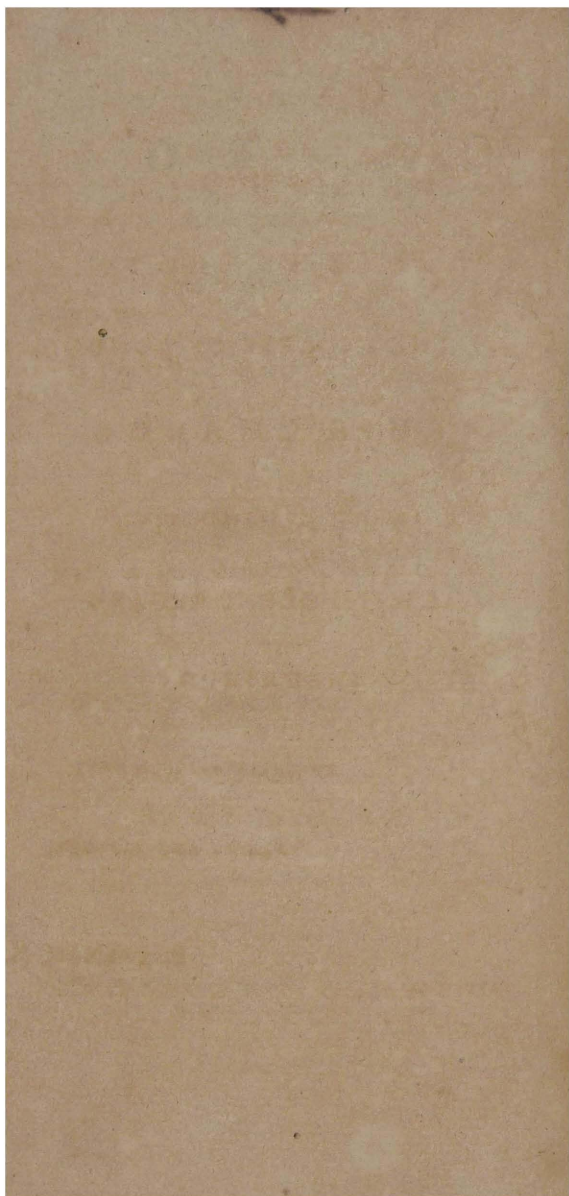
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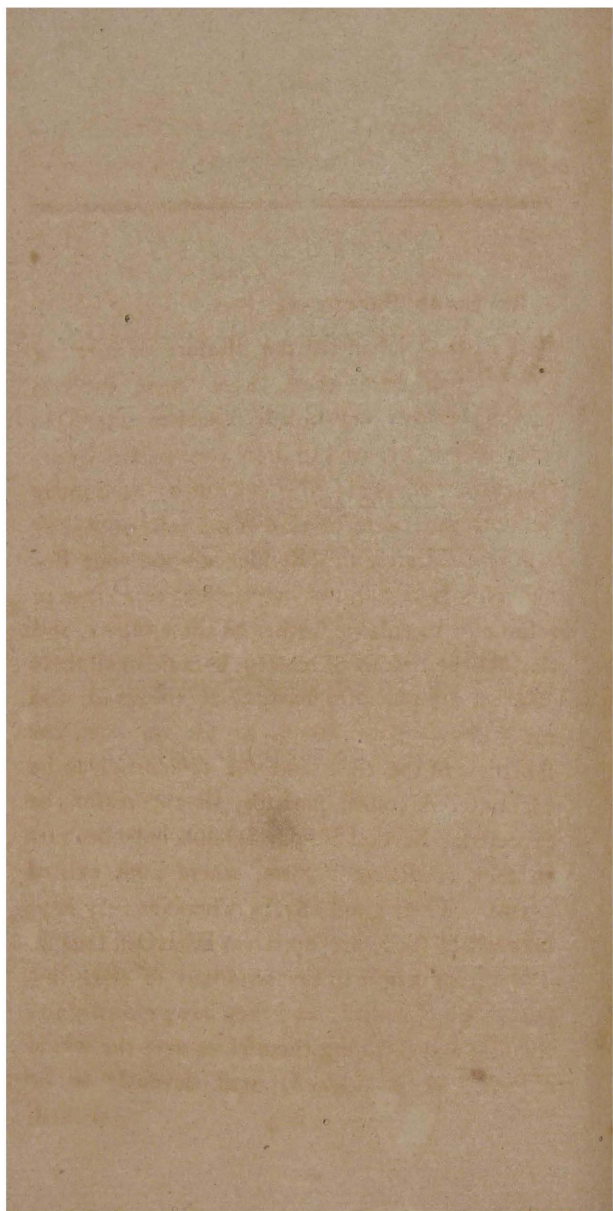
TO THE REVEREND  
THE CLERGY  
OF THE DIOCESE OF LONDON,  
THIS CHARGE,  
PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST,  
IS WITH GREAT REGARD  
INSCRIBED

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE

FRIEND AND BROTHER,

B. LONDON.

SEPT. 1794.



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REVEREND BRETHREN,

WHEN I had last the pleasure of meeting you here there were three subjects (among others occasionally touched upon) to which I endeavoured to draw your particular attention: these were, the Institution of Sunday Schools, the Augmentation of the Salaries of your Assistant Curates, and Residence upon your Benefices. It is not my intention at this time to resume or to enlarge further on these topics, and that for the best of all reasons, because in all these respects my purposes have been answered, and my wishes accomplished, as far as, from the shortness of the time and the difficulties to be encountered could, perhaps, in any reason, be expected. Several Sunday Schools have been set on foot, in different parts, where none existed before. Their good effects, wherever they *have* been established, are apparent and considerable. The Clergy begin to be convinced of their importance and utility; and they are gradually increasing and diffusing themselves over the whole diocese. It is, indeed, most devoutly to be



wished, that they should become universal throughout the kingdom. For when we know that in other countries Schools of *Irreligion* have actually been established, and children regularly trained up, almost from their infancy, in the alphabet and the grammar of infidelity; when we know too that the utmost efforts have been made, and are now making here, to shake the faith of the lower orders of the people, and to render Christianity an object of contempt and abhorrence to them; surely it behoves us to counteract and to guard against these nefarious attempts by every means in our power; and more especially by diffusing, as widely as possible, among the infant poor, the opportunities afforded by Sunday Schools, of acquiring the soundest principles and the earliest habits of Morality and Religion.

Some progress has also been made, and I trust will continue to be made, in improving the situation and augmenting the Salaries of the Assistant Curates, especially in those unwholesome districts where it seemed to be most necessary. As to myself I can truly say, that their welfare, and their comfort, have always been among the objects nearest to my heart. I see with peculiar pleasure the prosperous state, the judicious management, and the liberal application of those

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noble

noble funds, which have been raised in the Diocese, for the relief of their immediate and most urgent necessities, and those of their families. Whenever further assistance is requisite, I shall be always ready to afford it to the utmost of my power; and to convince you that this is something more than words, it is my intention, after making proper enquiries in the course of this Visitation, to give some immediate pecuniary aid to those Curates whose wants are the greatest, whose families are the largest, and whose characters are the most respectable.

With respect to the last article mentioned, that of Residence, although it is not yet become so universal in this Diocese as it ought to be, and as by degrees I hope and believe it will be, yet still considerable advances have been made in it; and it is in a state far more promising and auspicious than it was four years ago. In this, indeed, and in every other instance, I have (with a very few exceptions of little moment) received the most flattering proofs of the obliging and friendly disposition of the Clergy in general, and of their constant readiness to comply with every reasonable requisition I had to make. Actuated by this motive, as well as by motives of a still higher nature, by a sense of duty and of conscience, and a conviction of the infinite utility and

importance of parochial Residence, especially in times such as these, considerable numbers of the Clergy in this Diocese have, of late, become resident either in the whole or in part, who never were so before; and it is but justice to add, that some of them have, in this instance, given proofs of disinterestedness, of magnanimity, and of self-denial, which are rarely to be met with, and which do infinite honour to them and to the profession at large.

There is another circumstance which has, I own, given me peculiar pleasure, and that is the much greater degree of attention which Candidates for Orders, in this Diocese, have lately paid to their studies, and to their preparation for that sacred office, than they formerly did. Nothing can be more different, or more creditable to them than the appearance they now make in their examinations for Orders, compared with what I remember a few years ago. This improvement seems to have arisen from various causes: among which may, I think, be numbered the directions that have been given them respecting the general course of their preparatory studies; the greater length of time afforded them for those studies, by fixing the age for their first ordination at twenty-three years compleat; and their attendance on the public lectures in Theology, given by the learned

Pro-



Professors of Divinity in both our Universities, which I have for some time past required. I have now the greatest encouragement to *persevere* in requiring it; and I take this opportunity of declaring, in this public manner, that I shall hereafter consider an attendance on these academical lectures, and a certificate of such attendance, as an essential qualification for sacred Orders.

I must also avail myself of this occasion to repeat a precaution relating to another point which I have formerly recommended to you, and which I must now beg leave once more to impress very strongly upon your minds. The precaution I allude to relates to the persons you employ, either as constant Curates, or as occasional Assistants, in your respective churches. It becomes every day more and more necessary that you should take the utmost care respecting the character and conduct of those whom you thus employ. More persons than one have lately been detected officiating as clergymen who were never ordained to that sacred office, from whence very mischievous consequences have arisen. I must therefore again and again reiterate my intreaties, that you will never engage any persons, as your Curates, without my knowledge, that I may inspect their Letters of Orders and Testimonials, and enquire minutely

minutely and critically into their real history. You may, indeed, to a certain degree, do all these things yourselves. But permit me to say that you have not, and cannot have, such opportunities of information as our situation and experience afford us. You may sometimes be, and some I know have been, imposed upon by forged Letters of Orders, and forged Testimonials, which we, by knowing the seals and the hand-writing of the several Bishops, can easily detect. It is therefore very properly and very wisely enjoined by the 48th Canon, that no Curate, or Minister, shall be permitted to serve in any church without the knowledge and licence of the Diocesan: and with respect to those whom you call in only as occasional Assistants, to perform any part of your duty, it is indispensably necessary, and it is expressly ordered by the 50th and 52d Canons, that you should suffer no stranger to officiate in your church without first requiring him to produce his licence to preach, and entering his name in a book provided for that purpose. This provision relates more particularly to the cities of London and Westminster; and a want of attention to this rule has, in some late instances been, to my knowledge, productive of very serious evils.

Having

Having stated these few particulars relating chiefly to the discipline and order of the church, I now proceed to a subject of more general import, a subject highly important and interesting to us, as Ministers of the Gospel, and immediately and intimately connected with our business and our profession; I mean THE PRESENT STATE OF RELIGION IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES; the influence it may have on the principles and the morals of this, and the new duties and obligations which this new situation of the Christian world brings along with it respecting ourselves.

Among the great variety of most extraordinary and unexampled events which have taken place since we last met here, there is none more singular and astonishing than the success which has attended a new sect and description of men, who have of late made their appearance in Europe, and assumed the style and title of PHILOSOPHERS. These men, after having waged open war with the Gospel for near half a century; after having all that time deluged Europe with their writings against it; after having assailed it with all the powers of wit, genius, eloquence, ridicule, calumny, and invective, and by these means considerably increased the number of their proselytes, and the boldness of their pretensions, have at length, from small beginnings, risen into consequence;

sequence; have established a regular system and school of infidelity on the Continent; have avowed their grand object to be the extirpation of Christianity from the earth, and the substitution of philosophy in its room; and, to the astonishment of all the world, have actually found means in one part of Europe to carry this most singular project (to a certain degree) into execution.

If you ask what the meaning is, of that thing called Philosophy, which has thus in one country nearly supplanted Christianity, and hopes to do it in others, I must refer you to the writings of all the great leaders of this new sect, of Helvetius, of Voltaire, of D'Alembert, of D'Argens, of Raynal; but above all, to that recent, most curious, and most authentic publication, the Posthumous Works of a late illustrious monarch on the continent, Frederick the Second. You will there see a faithful delineation of the real tenets and opinions of the most celebrated philosophers of Europe, of the founders and legislators of the great empire of infidelity, with the philosophic monarch himself at their head; you will see every secret of their hearts laid open in their familiar and confidential correspondence with each other; you will see that the grand object they had in view was, what I have already stated, the entire extinction



inction of the Christian Religion; you will see that they were pretended deists but real atheists; that although the *name* of a Supreme Being was sometimes mentioned, yet it was seldom mentioned but with ridicule and contempt; and that they never conceived him to be any thing more than the intelligent principle that animates all nature, the source of life and motion, the sensorium of the universe; but in other respects totally unconnected with this earth and its inhabitants, having no kind of direction or superintendence over them, and “as little disturbed (these are their own words) at what may happen to them as with what may happen to an ant-hill which the foot of the traveller may crush, unperceived by himself.”

In consequence of this doctrine these philosophers of course rejected all idea of a providence and a moral governor of the world. They ascribed every event to fate or fortune, to necessity or chance; they denied the existence of a soul distinct from the body; they conceived man to be nothing more than an organized lump of matter, a mere machine, an ingenious piece of clock-work, which, when the wheels refuse to act, stands still and loses all power of motion for ever. They acknowledged nothing beyond the grave, no resurrection, no future existence,

no future retribution: they considered death as an eternal sleep, as the total extinction of our being; and they stigmatized all opinions different from these with the names of superstition, bigotry, priestcraft, fanaticism, and imposture.

These are the principles uniformly diffused throughout the whole of that voluminous and extraordinary work to which I have alluded; and what name should be given to principles such as these no one can entertain a moment's doubt\*.

But

\* I should have felt some difficulty in referring the reader to a publication so full of impiety as this, had I not been perfectly convinced, that there can hardly be a more effectual antidote to modern philosophy than this very book, which was intended to disseminate it through the world, and may justly be considered as the grand code, the *opus magnum* of infidelity. The extreme weakness of the arguments advanced in it against the Christian religion, whenever any thing *like* argument is made use of; the wretched sophistry of all the metaphysical reasonings in it on a supreme intelligence, on the nature of man, on the organization of matter, on free-agency, necessity, the eternity of the world, &c. &c; the gross and fulsome adulation with which the several parties in this correspondence load their royal patron; the opprobrious epithets, and unbounded ridicule, which they constantly apply to religion, and every thing held sacred by men, not sparing even the DEITY himself; and the shameful profligacy which some of the principal characters concerned in it openly charge upon each other, cannot fail to shock and disgust every serious mind.

And

But what then are we to infer from all this? Is there any ground to apprehend that these principles will ever be generally received; that atheism will finally establish itself in that nation where it made its first grand effort; that it will from thence spread itself over the whole continent of Europe, and at length make its way into this island?

There are, I know, those that have entertained these fears, but I must confess myself not to be one of that number. I can never bring myself to believe, that any thing so contrary to nature and experience can ever happen\*.

The ideas of a God, of a Providence, of a future state, are so natural, so congenial, so consolatory to the human mind, so necessary to support a frail being through the toils, the cares, the distresses, the calamities, the afflictions of the present life, that it is almost impossible to stifle them to any considerable degree, or to any great extent, among large bodies of men. It is not a very easy matter to take away at once the religion of a whole nation, even when another

And they present to us altogether such a picture of philosophy and philosophers, drawn by their own hands, as must for ever disgrace and sink them in the eyes of mankind, and confirm and strengthen the attachment of every thinking man to the Christian faith.

\* This part was written before there had been any public disavowal of atheism by the French government.

is offered in its room. We know that in the early ages of Christianity, a great Prince at the head of a mighty empire, and of a powerful army, I mean the Apostate Julian, failed in the attempt to annihilate the religion of Christ, and to restore paganism, although he exerted all the force of his wit, all the powers of his eloquence, and all the weight of his influence and his authority for that purpose; although he employed alternately menaces and arguments, persecution and persuasion; and although he tempted his subjects with what a late celebrated historian somewhere calls, "the elegant and chearful  
"divinities of Greece and Rome;" that is, in plainer terms, with all the licentious festivities and sensual indulgencies of idolatrous worship.

But there was a power working against him which he felt too strong for him. He felt it as impossible to reconstruct the ruins of paganism, as to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem. In both cases he was overruled and baffled by a superior Agency; by him who said, "that in Jerusalem  
"not one stone should be left upon another;" and who also said, "that his church was founded  
"on a rock, and that the gates of hell should  
"not prevail against it."

If then it is so arduous a task to make a whole nation pass at once from one religion to another,  
it



it must certainly be more difficult to make them rest satisfied without any religion at all ; a circumstance which never yet happened since the world began. And, in fact, we find that the present governors \* of the new commonwealth begin to think that their predecessors went a little too far. They find that mankind *will* have *some* religion, and are therefore gradually relaxing a little in that article. They have opened some of the churches that were before shut up ; they profess to acknowledge a supreme Being, and the immortality of the soul, and have ordered a festival to be observed on certain days in honour of THE ETERNAL †.

There

\* Mr. Robespierre and his friends. End of May, 1794.

† This new confession of faith, introduced by M. Robespierre, has been considered by some as a great improvement in the religious system of our neighbours, and represented as a compleat change from Atheism to Deism. That it has the name and shape of Deism is most certain. But what *kind* of Deism the author of it intended to establish, and what it was he meant by A SUPREME BEING, may tolerably well be collected from the following passage in one of the most popular and authentic papers of Paris, published during the administration of M. Robespierre.

“ Provided the idea of a supreme Being be nothing more than a *philosophical abstraction*, a guide to the imagination in the pursuit of causes and effects, a resting place for the curiosity of enquiring minds, a *notion merely speculative*, and from

There is therefore no reason to apprehend, that Atheism will finally be established in any nation upon earth, much less that it will ever force itself upon this country, which, thank God, is not a soil fitted for so rank a weed; where scarce one solitary Atheist has appeared like a comet once in a century, and after appalling and terrifying the inhabitants with a tremendous but momentary blaze, has sunk at once into obscurity and oblivion.

which no *practical consequences* are to be applied to human life, there can be *no great danger* in such an idea. But if it is to be made the foundation of *morality*; if it is to be accompanied by the supposition, that there exists a God, who presides over the affairs of the world, and rewards or punishes men for their actions on earth, according to some principle of retributive justice, *there can be no opinion more prejudicial to society.*" *Courier Universel*, 29th Frimaire (Dec. 19) 1793.

The reader will observe in this very curious extract, a plain and a just distinction made between the *Supreme Being*, of philosophers, and the God adored by Christians, a distinction which he ought always to keep in mind; and when he is invited (as he now is) to exchange Christianity for Deism, he will remember the *sort* of Deity he is to acknowledge. It is the *Supreme Being* of M. Voltaire\*, of M. Robespierre, and Mr. Paine: and is the very same that the last of these gentlemen has taken so much pains, in a recent publication, to commend to this country.

\* See above, p. 13 and 14.

But though there is no ground for apprehending the introduction of Atheism amongst us, yet we must not think ourselves secure from the inroad of *every* species of infidelity. It is not to be supposed, that THE PUBLIC REJECTION OF CHRISTIANITY, by the governing part at least of a country so near our own, can possibly take place without *some* risque to ourselves, without *some* danger that our own people may catch the contagion of infidelity from their neighbours. For when we hear them (as we did repeatedly under their first rulers) representing our religion as a gross and palpable imposture; loading it with the most opprobrious appellations; treating it with every possible mark of ignominy and insult; and holding up its divine Author, his laws, his ordinances, his institutions, his ministers and his altars, to universal abhorrence and contempt; when we know that these bitter invectives against revelation have been circulated in the publications of the day, through every town and every village in this island, can we suppose it possible that all this should have made no unfavourable impressions on the minds of the people, especially of the illiterate, the ignorant, and the uninformed; that it should not have corrupted the religious principles of some, who were before untainted; that it should not have con-

firmed the infidelity of others that were wavering and irresolute; and that it should not have lessened in still more, that respect, that reverence, that veneration for their Maker, their Redeemer, their religion, and every thing connected with it, which they had before been accustomed to entertain?

For these reasons it will be highly necessary for every one intrusted with the care of a parish, to guard his people, with the utmost care, against these dangers; to pay a more than ordinary degree of attention to their instruction in the great fundamental truths of religion, both natural and revealed, more especially the doctrines of a moral Governor of the world, of a Providence, a Redeemer, a resurrection, a future state, and a future distribution of rewards and punishments; and to repel, with vigour and with effect, all those charges of fraud, falsehood, and fanaticism, which have been so liberally thrown on our religion. We must, my reverend Brethren, at this perilous crisis, contend with *peculiar* earnestness for the faith once delivered to the saints, and show that christianity is not, as our enemies affirm, "a cunningly devised fable," but a REAL REVELATION FROM HEAVEN, supported by such a body of evidence, as it is impossible for any unprejudiced mind to resist; by a long train of pro-



prophecies, by the most astonishing and best attested miracles; by strong internal marks of truth; by the purity of its precepts, the sublimity of its doctrines, the perfect and unspotted character of its divine Author; by an innumerable company of confessors, saints and martyrs, who have sealed their testimony to it with their blood, and by the visible good effects it has produced in promoting the welfare, comfort, and happiness of mankind.

All these evidences, it is well known, with many other important and collateral proofs of the truth of our religion, have, at various times, been stated to the world with great ability and great force of argument by men of the first distinction for talents and learning in this country, both of the laity and the clergy, both in the establishment and out of it\*. Their mode of reasoning and of writing, it is true, is in general better suited to readers of a higher class than to the lower ranks of men: but the principal and

\* Bishop Taylor, Stillingfleet, Locke, Clarke, Addison, Bentley, Butler, Doddridge, Leland, Lardner, Soame Jenyns, Beattie, Bryant, and Paley. The *Horæ Paulinæ*, and the *View of the Evidences of Christianity*, by the last mentioned author, are works of a very original character, and very distinguished excellence, and come most seasonably at this time to check the progress of modern philosophy in this part of the world.

most striking arguments in each may easily be drawn out from the rest, may be cast into a more popular form, and brought down to the understandings of the common people. And if this, or any thing of a similar nature, was thrown into a regular course of sermons or lectures, and delivered in easy, intelligible, familiar language, to your respective congregations, I know nothing that would, in these philosophic times, render a more essential service to religion, or tend more to preserve the principles of those entrusted to your care, uncorrupted and unshaken by those most pernicious and dangerous publications, which I have too much reason to apprehend, will very soon be disseminated, with dreadful industry and activity, through every quarter of this island \*.

But

\* The apprehensions here expressed, have been since verified by the appearance of certain publications, the most offensive, and in some respects the most dangerous, that, perhaps, ever before insulted the religion of any Christian country. It is true, that in point of composition and of argument, they are most contemptible; but the very meanness of their style, and the homeliness, the plainness, and the gross familiarity of their manner, are but too well adapted to the taste and apprehensions of those readers whom they are meant to captivate. This is a *new* species of infidel-writing, very recently introduced amongst us. Hitherto we have had to contend only with the Tolands, the Tindals, the Bolingbrokes, and

But besides all this, there is another argument  
for a steady adherence to our divine religion,  
both

and the Humes of the age; men, whose writings could fall only into the hands of a few in the higher ranks of life, and were not likely to make much impression on well-informed and well-cultivated minds. But the pieces to which I allude are addressed to the *multitude*, and are most dexterously brought down to the level of their understandings. They compress the whole poison of infidelity into the narrow compass of an essence or an extract, and render *irreligion easy* to the meanest capacity. They are, in short, most artful snares, laid for those numerous and valuable classes of men, who have hitherto escaped the contagion either of Atheism or Deism, the mechanic, the manufacturer, the tradesman, the farmer, the servant, the labourer. On these (to whom the subject is quite new, and who have neither time nor talents for examining questions of this nature), the bold assertions, the intrepid blasphemies, and coarse buffooneries, which constitute the whole merit and character of these productions, are perfectly well calculated to impose and to stand in the place of argument and proof. It was by small tracts of this sort, disseminated among the lower orders, in every part of France, that the great body of the people there was prepared for that most astonishing event (which, without such preparation, could never have been so suddenly and so generally brought about), the public renunciation of the Christian faith. In order to produce the *very same* effect here, and to pave the way for a general apostasy from the gospel, by contaminating the principles, and shaking the faith of the inferior classes of the people, the same arts have been employed, the same little breviates of infidelity have, to my knowledge, been published and dispersed with great activity, and at a considerable expence, among the

both in principle and practice, which may, at this moment, be pressed with redoubled force on the attention of your hearers.

It has been uniformly and constantly maintained, by the best writers, and by the greatest men in all ages, and in all nations, that without *some* religion, some acknowledgment of a supreme Governor, and some public mode of testifying our dependence upon him, no civil union, no political community, no form of government, could long subsist. This position has been supported by arguments unanswerd and unanswerable; and the invariable practice of all the great legislators in the world, who have constantly made religion a component and essential part of their new institutions, has been always appealed to as a proof of the universal opinion of all wise men on this subject. It has also been affirmed, and has been found by actual experience to be true, that of all the religions that have ever yet appeared in the world, none were ever so well adapted to promote the welfare of society, and the

middling and lower ranks of men in this country. It behoves, therefore, every minister of the gospel, who has the honour of his divine Master, and the interests of his religion at heart, to *watch most carefully* the progress of such pestilential writings; which though perhaps not much known, or talked of in public, may be *secretly* and *silently* undermining the foundations of religion, and weakening its hold on the public mind, at a time when we stand most in need of its aid and support.



great ends of civil government, as the Christian revelation; and that therefore it is the obvious interest, as well as the indispensable duty of every state, to support and encourage this religion, to the utmost of their power.

On the contrary, it has been asserted by those who dignify themselves with the name of philosophers, that all this is nothing more than the language of priestcraft, bigotry, and superstition; that religion, especially the Christian religion, instead of being an advantage, is a real incumbrance to the state, and has been productive of nothing but mischief, misery, and desolation: that the true ally, the true support of government, is PHILOSOPHY; that to this every improvement, every blessing we enjoy, in civil and social life, is entirely owing; and that if religion was proscribed, and philosophy substituted in its room, and advanced to a proper degree of pre-eminence, we should soon see a most astonishing and most happy change in the face of human affairs.

Here then is the great question between CHRISTIANITY on the one hand, and PHILOSOPHY on the other. The parties are fairly at issue together, and the point in contest between them is the most interesting and the most important that can possibly engage the attention of mankind.

It

It has so happened, that this contest has been decided, most compleatly decided, in our own times, and under our own eyes. A new government has suddenly arisen in Europe; and this government had the courage to try an experiment at its very first outset, which has never once, since the beginning of time, been tried before. It actually tried to govern mankind without any religion at all; to make reason the only object of worship, and philosophy the only guide of life. What the consequences of this experiment have been we all know too well. I will not wound your ears, nor pain your hearts, with a recital of those scenes of complicated misery which this new system produced; nor need I recall to your minds those blessings which this country derives, and that unbounded humanity and benevolence which here continually flow, from a *contrary* system, from the doctrines and the precepts of our divine Master. I shall only observe, that never was any thing so compleat and perfect as the TRIUMPH OF RELIGION on this occasion, and that the question respecting the comparative utility, and the national importance of philosophy and of christianity, is now set at rest for ever.

Here then we have an advantage which none of our predecessors ever possessed, and which it will be our own fault if we do not press to the utmost.

utmost. We have the advantage of proving, *by fact and by experiment*, by events passing immediately under our own observation both at home and abroad, this most important truth; that the Christian Religion is, in the highest degree, conducive to the prosperity of the state; and that whenever it is publicly and generally renounced, that moment the peace, the order, the comfort, the security of civil government are for ever gone, and a door is opened to the admission of every thing most dreadful to human nature, and most destructive to human happiness.

A proof so obvious and so demonstrative as this cannot fail to operate most forcibly on the minds of men, cannot fail to convince them, more than a thousand speculative arguments, that by a firm belief in the divine truths of the Gospel, and a uniform obedience to its laws, they are not only promoting their own individual happiness here, and hereafter, but are doing the most essential service to THE STATE; and that therefore they are bound by the most sacred ties, public as well as private, to cultivate every Christian grace and virtue; as the surest test of a genuine love of their country, and as the only certain security against those terrible calamities and evils, which a rejection of the gospel, and a violation

violation of its most sacred commands never fail to bring along with them.

Upon the whole, my Brethren, the present times and the present scene of things, in almost every part of the civilized world, are the most interesting and the most awful that were ever before presented to the inhabitants of the earth; and such as must necessarily excite the most serious reflections in every thinking mind. Perhaps all those singular events to which we have been witnesses, unparalleled as they undoubtedly are in the page of history, may be only the *beginning* of things, may be only the first leading steps to a train of events still more extraordinary; to the accomplishment possibly of some new and unexpected, and at present unfathomable, designs hitherto reserved and hid in the counsels of the Almighty. Some we know there are who think that certain prophecies, both in the New Testament and the Old, are now fulfilling; that the *signs of the times* are portentous and alarming; and that the sudden extinction of a great monarchy, and of all the splendid ranks and orders of men that supported it, is only the completion in part of that prediction in the gospel, that  
 “ the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall  
 “ not give her light, and the stars shall fall from  
 “ heaven,” before the second appearance of the  
 Messiah,



Messiah, to judge the earth; all which expressions are well known to be only figurative emblems of the great powers and rulers of the world, whose destruction, it is said, is to precede that great event. As to myself I pretend not to decide on these arduous points; I pretend not either to prophecy or to interpret prophecy: nor shall I take upon myself to pronounce, whether we are now approaching (as some think) to the Millenium, or to the Day of Judgment, or to any other great and tremendous and universal change predicted in the sacred writings. But this I am sure of, that the present unexampled state of the Christian world is a loud and a powerful call upon all men, but upon us above all men, to take peculiar heed to our ways, and to prepare ourselves, as well as those committed to our care, for every thing that may befall us be it ever so novel, ever so calamitous. If in the midst of those clouds that gather round us we can sit perfectly tranquil and composed; if we can be altogether unconcerned and indifferent to the indignities offered to our Holy Religion, and to the effects they may have on the minds of our own people; if in so critical a moment we can desert our proper stations and plunge into the cares, the business, the pleasures, or the amusements of the world; if we can rest easy and satisfied *at a distance* from our parishioners,

ners, furrounded as we must see them to be with the most imminent danger to their souls, from which it is our bounden duty to protect them; above all, if instead of edifying and reforming others by the sanctity of our manners, and the purity of our conversation, we lead them by our own example into vice and irreligion, what a load of indignation are we treasuring up for ourselves against that solemn day when we must render an account of the sacred charge committed to us by our Almighty Judge! But cases such as these are, I trust, very rare amongst us indeed: and I can with difficulty bring myself to believe, that there is a single individual of our order (be his *general* character what it may) that does not feel the awful pressure of the present hour; that does not feel the powerful obligations it imposes on him to exert his utmost care and diligence in the discharge of all his sacred functions, and in an unremitted attention to all the spiritual wants and necessities of his people. There never was, I will venture to say, in the history of this island a single period in which the personal Residence, and personal Exertions of the Parochial Clergy were ever more wanted, or more anxiously looked up to, and expected and *demanded*, by the general voice of the whole nation, than at this moment; in order to fortify the faith and sanctify the manners

ners of the great mass of the people; and to press upon them repeatedly and forcibly, those divine precepts of Holy Writ, which contain the best rules for every part of their conduct, private, public, political, and religious. It is to these exertions, my Brethren, properly directed and prudently conducted, that we must principally owe that order, that quietness, that dutiful subjection to all lawful and constitutional authority which the Scriptures most peremptorily enjoin, and which are indispensably necessary to the security and stability of this and of every other government upon earth.

THE END.