

## CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY.

### ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY AND CHRISTIANITY CONTRASTED.

THE virtues of Zeno and Epictetus were in themselves very unnatural, and by no means accommodated to man. They may suit philosophers to speculate upon in the Porch or in the Academy, but they can never suit the active life. It will not be easy to persuade men, that there is no such thing as pain, and that therefore there ought to be no complaining; that we are to be insensible to the charms of friendship; that we are to root out the natural affections, and partake of none of the enjoyments of society, or the endearments of pure love.

The virtues, again, of Epicurus were founded upon the pursuit of pleasure, as the supreme law to man. In fact, there was no settled system of virtue agreed upon among the philosophers.

Now, read the virtues recommended by Jesus Christ; they are the most perfect, both in their nature and degree. They are all natural: they are accommodated to the great bulk of mankind: the knowledge of them requires no depth of research: the foundation of them is plain and simple: they are all the commands of our Maker. In this statement, it is easy to determine which of these systems is the most likely to provide for our happiness: and that system which promotes best the happiness of mankind, has the preferable claim to the title of philosophy.

But the systems of the philosophers were also greatly defective in the number of their virtues.

Among them, you meet with nothing like that humility, meekness, pardon of offences, and forgiveness of injuries, which are so conspicuous in the morals of the Gospel; and which are recommended by the precepts and example of its great Author. On the contrary, we see among them austerity, a harshness of manners, a pride that tempts them to look down with contempt on all who were not initiated in their principles. Their manners were unamiable and forbidding; and their system, in all these respects, opposite to that recommended and practised by Jesus Christ.

The virtues of the Gospel are also perfectly natural, easy, and well accommodated to man. There you meet with no unreasonable or absurd commands. You are not enjoined to be insensible to pain, to reproach, to injury, and to oppression; but you are to bear them with propriety, and even with dignity. You may complain: you may express your sense of pain and injury; but you are not to give way to despondency; and you are to mourn as those that have hope.

Modern philosophers have been enabled to present to the world a very pure and rational system of natural religion. This they call the discovery of reason, and upon this principle they have taken upon themselves to declare that revelation is unnecessary. But from what source have they derived this knowledge of God and his perfections and providence? With respect to all these, all the philosophers of the world, even the greatest and the most perfect of them, before the coming of Christ, were grossly ignorant. Every thing excellent in natural religion, that is found in their systems, is borrowed from the book of revelation.

## The Christian Mirror.

MONTREAL, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1841.

### BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY.

WE have been kindly favoured with a copy of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of this noble Institution, and have been much gratified by the hasty glance which we have been enabled to give its contents. The interesting and well selected extracts from the correspondence of the Society's Agents in different parts of the world, furnish the most cheering and encouraging accounts of the increased success which every where attends the circulation of the Holy Scriptures. The mighty God of Jacob is eminently with his servants, in the numerous toils and difficulties which they are called to endure, while distributing the bread

of life to a perishing world. Extracts will be found in another column.

There are at present connected with the British and Foreign Bible Society, in Great Britain, her Colonies, and dependencies, 478 Auxiliaries, 530 Branches, 2,203 Associations—total, 3,211.

The number of Foreign Societies, formerly or at present assisted by the British and Foreign Bible Society, amounts to 62.

The Holy Scriptures are now distributed, printed, and translated, in whole or in part, in 136 languages or dialects—directly or indirectly by the Society.

The issues by the Bible Society since its commencement, (March 7, 1804) amount to 5,098,815 Bibles, 8,124,568 Testaments—total, 13,223,383. The number of issues during the past year are 327,811 Bibles, 573,101 Testaments—total, 900,912: being 124,552 more than that of the previous year.

The total expenditure of the Bible Society in this great and glorious work, since its commencement, is £2,774,095 12s. 1d.; that of the past year, £133,934 18s. 9d.

Whilst we rejoice in the delightful fact, that Protestant Christians of every name contribute of their influence, labour, or property to the great and good cause of sending the everlasting Gospel to earth's remotest bounds; we, nevertheless, fully agree with the Committee, in acknowledging "that one of the besetting evils of the day is, a disposition (aided by many causes) to retire within our own circles, and to see no good beyond the limits of those circles. A desire for peace and quietness fosters such a disposition. An idea that more good may, in this way, be accomplished, adds strength to the feeling; in which, indeed, there is certainly some measure of truth, if charity be but maintained. But those who so keep themselves exclusively to themselves, having no opportunity of beholding what is lovely in others, and hearing, it may be, many a report of things that are unlovely, are in danger of imagining that in no other circle but their own does or can any good thing dwell. Oh, that such persons could be persuaded, in the spirit of love, to meet their differing, and, as they possibly judge, their erring brethren; how often would they be refreshed with the sight of excellence, the existence of which they had never so much as supposed! Oh, say whether, with all the infirmities that may attend the union existing in the Bible Society, there be not still many days in the course of its years, which are not unworthy to be called "days of the Son of man,"—"days of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,"—"days in which Christians of different names are enabled to recognise in each other the grand distinguishing, the alone essential, evidences that they are subjects of the kingdom of God—"Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?"

Of all the sins which disgrace human nature, no vice is more prevalent than that of taking the Lord's name in vain. This awfully wicked practice is not, like many other vices, confined to the most abandoned and profligate portion of the community; but is practised alike by high and low, rich and poor, the learned and the illiterate—and, however astounding it may appear, even the professors of religion—those who may be seen regularly occupying their seats in the house of God, and professedly engaging in His worship—are not all innocent of this most daring offence against the Majesty of Heaven! We know of no terms sufficiently strong to express our abhorrence of the

practice of blaspheming, or irreverently using the sacred name of a just and holy God. Truly, He is long-suffering and merciful, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved. A very celebrated female writer justly observes, that "It is utterly inexcusable; it has none of the palliatives of temptation which other vices plead, and in that respect stands distinguished from all others, both in its nature and degree of guilt. Like many other sins, however, it is at once cause and effect: it proceeds from want of love and reverence to the best of Beings, and causes the want of that love both in themselves and others. This species of profaneness is not only swearing, but, perhaps, in some respects, swearing of the worst sort: as it is an express breach of a direct command, and offends against the very letter of that law, which says, in so many words, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.' It offends against politeness and good breeding, for those who commit it little think of the pain they are inflicting on the sober mind, which is deeply wounded when it hears the holy name it loves dishonoured; and it is as contrary to good breeding to give pain, as it is to true piety to be profane. It is astonishing that the refined and elegant should not reprobate this practice for its coarseness and vulgarity, as much as the pious abhor it for its sinfulness. I would endeavour to give some faint idea of the grossness of this offence by an analogy, (oh! how inadequate!) with which the feeling heart, even though not seasoned with religion, may yet be touched. To such I would earnestly say: Suppose you had some beloved friend—to put the case still more strongly, a departed friend—a revered parent, perhaps—whose image never occurs without awakening in your bosom sentiments of tender love and lively gratitude; how would you feel if you heard this honoured name bandied about with unfeeling familiarity and indecent levity: or, at best, thrust into every pause of speech as a vulgar expletive? Does not your affectionate heart recoil at the thought? And yet, the hallowed name of your truest Benefactor, your heavenly Father, your best Friend, to whom you are indebted for all you enjoy: who gives you those very friends in whom you so much delight, those very talents with which you dishonour him, those very organs of speech with which you blaspheme him,—is treated with an irreverence, a contempt, a wantonness, with which you cannot bear the very thought or mention of treating a human friend. His name is impiously, is unfeelingly, is ungratefully singled out as the object of decided irreverence, of systematic contempt, of thoughtless levity. His sacred name is used indiscriminately to express anger, joy, surprise, impatience, and, what is almost still more unpardonable than all, it is wantonly used as a mere unmeaning expletive, which, being excited by no temptation, can have nothing to extenuate it—which causing no emotion, can have nothing to recommend it, unless it be the pleasure of the sin."

We believe that were the professors of religion more consistent in their conduct, and more faithful in reproving sin, that this and other glaring vices unhappily too prevalent, would, with the Divine blessing, speedily give way before their powerful influence and example.

A PRINTING PRESS has recently been established by the Missionaries at Tananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. Four of the natives have been trained as compositors.