

educated by a justly revered and exemplary father. Such a predilection is interwoven with the best as well as the strongest feelings of our nature. Moreover we would listen with especial caution and reserve to the overtures of a proselyte, 'did there appear any emolument, honor, comfort, or any other secular advantage probable to accrue to him from a change of his religion.

But to say that the religion of a father must necessarily be right, is to make that father infallible; and to assert that at *no* period, under *no* circumstances, and on *no* grounds ought *any* man to change from that religion, or to dare to investigate and to decide for himself,—so to assert, is to oppose ourselves to the precepts and examples recorded in the unerring word of God;—it is to oppose *all* spirit of inquiry,—the principle of *all* moral and religious reformation and improvement;—it is to oppose that powerful principle by which, under God, the glorious light of the gospel was poured forth on the darkness of Paganism, and rose with meridian splendor on the dim twilight of Judaism.

Even during the days of Christ and his Apostles, when the preaching of the word was accompanied by a *MIRACULOUS demonstration of the spirit*, we found first the disciples long labouring under strong hereditary prejudices, concerning the nature of the Messiah's person and kingdom; and though our Lord finally removed, and occasionally condemned those prejudices, yet he removed them *gradually by powerful reasoning* and application of the Old Testament prophecies, and by exhortations to *patient investigation and searching the scriptures*. Nor did he ever condemn the *person and character* of those whom he sought to turn away from the erroneous opinions of their forefathers which they held in *simplicity and godly sincerity*. When, inflated by hypocritical self-righteousness, or fired by the spirit of ambition, they blasphemously opposed the Holy Ghost, then indeed he hurled forth his anathemas with the wrath and power of an offended and omnipotent God. But on other occasions he appears to have respected scruples, though erroneous scruples of conscience. In like manner, we find St. Paul in his labours to convert unbelieving souls, *reasoning mightily*, and endeavouring on all occasions to adapt his reasoning to the peculiar prejudices and situations and capacities of the various classes of hearers with whom at various periods he was called on to argue, addressing himself to their judgments as well as to their passions. With the Athenians and other heathen audiences, he borrowed his arguments from their own writers, or pursuits, or customs. But with the Jews, who believed in the ancient scriptures, he *reasoned mightily, proving from those scriptures that Jesus was Christ*. And of the Bereians, it is recorded, as a notice conferring especial honor, that they were more noble than some other hearers,—for why?—because they not only received the word with all gladness, but also searched the scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Here then we find recorded, (even in the days of *miraculous conversions*, recorded)