

pages, ought not the direct consequence to be,—and is it not the dictate of common sense to suppose it,—that they should, therefore, be competent to understand them? Such consequence is, no doubt, palpable:—else, the reading, and examination, become nugatory and unavailing. Well; and do they, then understand,—or are they competent to explain the mysterious volumes?—This is, indeed, a question, which requires no discussion whatever. They do not understand them.—Even the learned themselves, left to their own talents, do not understand them. The truth is,—and it is the concession of the most enlightened scholars,—that, amongst all the variety of books in the whole order of literature, there is not one single work that is more obscure, more perplexing, and difficult to be understood, than the sacred Scriptures; proof, this alone, that they never were designed by the eternal wisdom to be subjected to the interpretation of each private individual. ‘Open your bibles, take the first page that occurs in either Testament, and tell me, without disguise, is there nothing in it too hard for your understanding? If you find all before you clear and easy, you may thank God for giving you a privilege which he has denied to many thousands of sincere believers.’ Accordingly, referring to the opinions of even the most learned Protestants, we constantly find, that, whenever they pretend, or attempt, to interpret the holy pages, by the light of their own private reason, and the dictates of their own feelings, they not only, all, differ amongst themselves, just equally as do the ignorant, and the simple, but they plunge, many of them, into errors, which are, sometimes, as pernicious as they are absurd. Their opinions are as various as their respective characters; and as numerous, almost, as their persons. Yes, and not only this,—but even the creeds, and symbols, of the reformed churches,—although composed by the wisdom and policy of the learned; and reposing professedly upon the plainest texts of Scripture;—and designed to create a something like unity amongst the public;—even these are, all, at variance with each other. So that, no where, amongst all the innumerable sects of Protestantism, do any two of these important, but singular, instruments agree together.

TESTIMONY CONCERNING CHRIST.

The sublimity of the gospel, and the purity and excellence of its maxims, and of the person of Jesus Christ, of whose life it is a summary, are described by one of the greatest infidels of the age, John James Rousseau, in the following words:—
 “I must acknowledge that the majesty of the scriptures fills me with astonishment, the sanctity of the gospel speaks to my heart. Look at all the books of the philosophers, with all their pomp, and you will find them little and mean, if compared with this. Is it possible that a book at once so sublime and so simple, can be the production of men? Is it possible that he, whose history is here given, should be nothing more than man? Is this the tone of an enthusiast or an ambitious sectary? What swiftness, what purity in his morals! Whatunction in his instructions! What dignity in his max-

ims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind, what wariness and exactness in his answers! And what command over his passions!—Where is the man, where is the sage, who knows how to act, to suffer, and to die, without either weakness, or ostentation? When Plato describes his imaginary just man laden with all the ignominy of guilt, though really deserving all the honors and rewards of virtue, he draws Jesus Christ at every stroke. The resemblance is so striking, that all the fathers have taken notice of it, and it is not possible for any one to be deceived by it.—How great must be the prejudices, how great the blindness of the man, who durst compare the Son of Sophronisca with the Son of Mary? How great a difference is there between the one and the other! Socrates dying without pain, and without ignominy, easily supported his character to the last; and if this easy death had not crowned his life, we might doubt whether Socrates with all his wisdom, had been any thing more than a mere sophist. They say, he invented the rules called Moral Philosophy. But others had first reduced those rules to practice, he did nothing more than say what they had done, and turn their examples into lessons. Aristides had been just, before Socrates had said what justice was. Leonidas had died for his country, before Socrates declared it a duty to love it. Sparta was sober, before Socrates praised sobriety, and before he had defined virtue.—Greece abounded in virtuous men. But from whom did Jesus learn that pure and sublime morality, of which he alone has given both the lessons and the examples?

The death of Socrates, peacefully philosophizing in the midst of friends, the easiest, one can desire; and that of Jesus, expiring in torments on the cross, insulted, scoffed at, and blasphemed by a whole people, is the most horrible one can fear. Socrates taking the poisoned cup, blesses the man who presents it to him with tears! Jesus, in the midst of the agonies of a most cruel death, prays for his savage executioners. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates be those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God.—Shall we then say that the Gospel History is a fiction? No, my friends this cannot be, for the facts of Socrates, of which one doubts, are not half so well attested as those of Jesus Christ. And at best this would be only evading the difficulty, not answering it. For it would be more difficult to convince, that many should combine to write such a book, than one should furnish the matter. Jewish authors would never have been able to hit upon either this manner of expression, or this sublime morality; and the Gospel has characters of truth, so great, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that the inventor would have been more astonishing than the hero.”

ORIGINAL.

ON THE WORD OF GOD.

Speak, Lord: for thy servant heareth—1 King i. 11.
 WERE any earthly prince or potentate to do us the honour of conversing with us, as his intimate friends

and familiars, especially about whatever tended most to our own honour and advantage; with what attention and respect, with what lively sentiments of gratitude and love, would we listen to the words of so good and gracious a sovereign? And how readily would he not perform whatever he were pleased to enjoin? But in point of dignity, what earthly prince can be compared to the God and Sovereign Lord of all things! The greatest monarch is but a mere worm in his presence; a glittering insect, the being of a day; who borrows all his grandeur and importance but from the relation he bears to his fellow-creatures: but who dwindles into a mere nothing, when compared with the Deity, that great, eternal, all-wise, and omnipotent being; compared with whom this whole universe and all nature is but like an almost imperceptible atom floating within the boundless sphere of his immensity; who, in the sublime language of the prophet Isaias, has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand; and weighed the heavens with his palm. Who has poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance, ch. xl. v. 12.

Such is that great God, who deigns to address himself to us, poor worms of the earth. Nor did ever earthly prince shew himself so familiar and affectionate towards any of his subjects, as the Deity has done towards us. He admits us to an audience as often as we please. He never tires of our company and conversation. He exhorts us to ask with confidence for whatever we need, and assures us that he will grant it, if it be for our good. And when he himself vouchsafes to converse with us, it is always about our own concerns, in so much that he seems to have nothing but our good at heart, and to consult nothing so much as our welfare and happiness. And yet with what inattention do we hear his sacred word announced to us by the pastors of his Church, or read to us from the inspired writings and pious books! How seldom do we profit, as we ought, of his admonitions, and with what reluctance do we perform what he is pleased to enjoin! The reason doubtless why his word thus communicated to us, makes so little impression on our minds, is because we do not sufficiently consider that it is not the word of man, who is but the echo and the organ, through which he is pleased to converse with us, but of God himself, who deigns to speak with us concerning the most important of all concerns, our eternal salvation. It is because we consider the meanness of the visible speaker, who is but a fellow creature, and whose voice can only reach the corporeal ear; more than the dignity of the invisible inspirer, whose words can find their way to the innermost recesses of the heart, and communicate themselves in secret whispers to the soul of the attentive hearer. Our Lord has given us to understand that we are to hear his word when spoken to us by our spiritual directors, with the same respect and deference, as if it were addressed to us by himself in person. He who hears you, says he to his apostles, hears me; and he who despises you, despises me.

The profound respect and attention, with which