

**"THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE
CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION WITH
REFERENCE TO THE SALVABILITY OF THE
HEATHEN", IN REPLY TO AN ARTICLE IN
THE SIXTH NUMBER OF THE BRITISH CRITIC
AND QUARTERLY THEOLOGICAL REVIEW**

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"The nature and extent of the Christian dispensation with reference to the salvability of the heathen", in reply to an article in the sixth number of the british critic and quarterly theological review by Edward William Grinfield

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EDWARD WILLIAM GRINFIELD

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J. N. 1728.

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OF THE HEATHEN."

IN

REPLY

TO AN

ARTICLE IN THE SIXTH NUMBER

OF THE

BRITISH CRITIC

AND QUARTERLY THEOLOGICAL REVIEW.

"It should be decidedly understood, that this work is offered as an argument for the *salvability of all men*, and not as a presumptuous enquiry concerning the *number of those who shall be saved*." P. 420.

BY

EDWARD WILLIAM GRINFIELD, M.A.

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1828.

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R E P L Y,

§c.

HAVING been arraigned by a writer in "the British Critic and Quarterly Theological Review," as the most arrogant and presumptuous of modern divines, as "pretending to the capacity of looking on the splendours of the Divine Majesty without oppression or confusion," and as professing to be "able to decide infallibly what particular features of any system or doctrine were abhorrent from the dignity and beauty of that faultless pattern," (p. 335.) as "deciding in a tone of arrogant dogmatism," equal to that of Warburton, while "he has summoned to his aid such a multitude of feeble or treacherous arguments that his services have a tendency to weaken, for a time, our respect for the cause he has felt himself impelled to maintain;" (p. 352.) I think it due to my character, not merely as an author, but still more as a man, a Christian, and a Clergyman, to repel this atrocious attack on my religious principles, and to clear myself from this

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imputed impiety, and to make it evident that the threat held out by my reviewer can have no terror to my conscience. "They who approach too nearly the light, which is in the dwelling-place of Omnipotence, will assuredly be struck down and overpowered by its glory." P. 335.

The spirit and temper in which this review is drawn up may be judged of from its introductory sentences. "We have in this work a notable exemplification of the injury which may sometimes be inflicted on a good cause by the exertions of an indiscreet and vehemently zealous advocate. The passionate earnestness with which this author has addressed himself to this disquisition may be sufficiently collected from the language of his preface. He there avows that 'the extreme delicacy as well as magnitude of the argument caused him frequently to lay it aside;' till, at last, the immense importance of the subject overpowered all apprehension of difficulty. 'The consequent conviction of his own duty' seems to have become like a *burning fire shut up in his bones, so that he was weary of forbearing and could stay no longer.* The impatient element has now burst forth, and finds fuel in almost every thing which crosses it in its course." P. 326.

Such is the amiable and elegant language in which this reviewer has been pleased to commence his impartial critique of a work which has been the

theme of my meditation for more than twenty years; to which all my previous studies have been directed; and which has at last been drawn up in a form which even this writer allows to be "unexceptionable." (P. 339.) "It affords by its arrangement an easy access to the scriptural authorities that bear on the question, and from its inductive method, it enables a judicious reader to separate and throw aside those attestations and those arguments on which he thinks no safe reliance can be placed." P. 353.

To shew that this work was not the result of "passionate earnestness," but of the most calm and deliberate consideration, I beg leave to reprint the two following sections from my "Connection of Natural and Revealed Theology*," a work at which I had diligently laboured for more than ten years, and to which my late treatise is but a corollary and conclusion.

PART I. SECT. 34. P. 111.

"On the supposition of any Revelation, would it not probably be intended for the benefit of the whole human race?"

* "The Connection of Natural and Revealed Theology; being an attempt to illustrate the evidences and doctrines of Christianity by their relation to the inductive philosophy of the human mind, with notes and authorities from the most eminent ancient and modern writers. 8vo. London, 1818."

“ If we admit that the Creator of the world from some extraordinary circumstances relative to our species, should interfere to save and rescue his offspring, it certainly appears most consonant to our reason and to our conceptions of the Divine attributes that he should interfere for the sake of all, rather than for the exclusive advantage of a few. Though it would, perhaps, be too much to affirm that this is essential to our notions of God's justice, (for the whole being matter of grace and favour, it could hardly be brought under the consideration of strict right,) yet it must be allowed that we could scarcely reconcile such extreme partiality to our sentiments of infinite wisdom and unlimited goodness. There is a grandeur in the attempt also, as relative to the whole world rather than to a limited number of individuals, which would and which ought to prepossess us in favour of the more comprehensive scheme of mercy. Nor upon looking abroad on the creation, should we feel disposed to think that any were devoted to certain and inevitable destruction. For though it be true, that some are placed in more favourable situations, both for virtue and happiness, than others; yet it would be impossible to shew that any individuals are entirely cut off from all means of self-improvement, and from all capability of temporal happiness. The blessings of creation and preservation extend universally to

all mankind; and though dealt out in various degrees, yet there is a principle of compensation discoverable in nature which goes far to equalize our sufferings and enjoyments. Thus even savage life has some pleasures and advantages which are peculiar to itself; so has a life of poverty and labour compared with one of ease and affluence. The acutest pain is generally accompanied with some intermissions of pleasurable ease, and there is compassion discoverable even in the circumstances of our death. These, with many observations of the like nature, might lead us to expect that if any Revelation were afforded, it would be afforded for the benefit of all, rather than of a few. And though we should not, I think, be justified in rejecting a Revelation because it did not correspond with such hopes and views, yet it would be a considerable presumption against it, so that some strong counteracting evidence would be requisite to overcome our prejudices arising from such disappointment of our natural expectations."

PART II. SECT. 32.

"Does not Christianity profess to be a Revelation designed for the benefit of the whole world?"

"Although the considerations which have been already urged seem already sufficient to point out the universal nature of the Christian religion, yet

it may be proper to shew that this Dispensation is unlimited, even whilst its knowledge is but partially diffused, and its temporal benefits extended only to a small proportion of mankind. Now that the language of Christianity admits of the most wide and universal interpretation, may be seen from the following arguments: First, Its author is described as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" as "having given himself a ransom for all" as "having tasted death for all men." He is styled "the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for those of the whole world." His death is described as being of equal extent with the universal evils arising from the Fall; and he must often have suffered, it is argued, since the foundation of the world, had not his atonement been of inestimable and unlimited importance. Secondly, The strongest proof of this universality arises out of the character of the founder of Christianity, as "the Mediator between God and man," and from the office which he will discharge over all "as the judge of quick and dead." This being a doctrine admitted by all Christians, there is no appeal from its consequences. If Jesus is to be the judge of all men, then it is in the highest degree improbable that the whole human race is not, in some degree or other, connected with Him as a Redeemer. The same conclusion will also arise from those passages of Scripture in which we are