

# VIEW OF RELIGIONS,

## IN TWO PARTS.

### PART I.

CONTAINING AN ALPHABETICAL COMPENDIUM OF THE VARIOUS

## Religious Denominations,

WHICH HAVE APPEARED IN THE WORLD,

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA TO THE PRESENT DAY.

### PART II.

CONTAINING A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE

## DIFFERENT SCHEMES OF RELIGION

NOW EMBRACED AMONG MANKIND.

THE WHOLE COLLECTED FROM THE BEST AUTHORS, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

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BY HANNAH ADAMS.

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THE *THIRD EDITION*, WITH LARGE ADDITIONS.

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PROVE ALL THINGS, HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD.  
APOSTLE PAUL.

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## TO THE *READER*.

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IT will be easily perceived, that the compiler of the following work has, with great labour and pains, ransacked the treasures of ecclesiastical history, ancient and modern, to bring into view what is here presented to the public.

She claims no other merit, than that of having honestly and impartially collected the sense of the different sects, as it is given by the authors, to whom she refers; nor was it a vain ambition of appearing as an author, that put her upon writing; her own satisfaction and amusement being the only object. Having yielded however to its publication, at the desire of several judicious friends, she has also done violence to her own inclination, by prefixing her name.

The world has been absurdly accustomed to entertain but a moderate opinion of female abilities, and to ascribe their pretended productions to the craft and policy of designing *men*; either to excite admiration or screen their weakness from censure: whereas unbiaſſed reason must allow, if an invidious comparison between the sexes is in any respect justifiable, it cannot be grounded upon a defect of natural ability, but upon the different, and perhaps faulty mode of female education; for under similar culture, and with equal advantages, it is far from being certain, that the female mind would not admit a measure of improvement, which would at least equal, and perhaps in many instances eclipse, the boasted glory of the other sex.

There have been female writers, and historians, who have been deservedly honoured in the literary world.— The celebrated Mrs. Maccauley Graham, who has lately

lately honoured our country with her presence, is a living example.

The writer of this compendium having been from her youth fond of books, has made herself acquainted with the Greek and Latin tongues, which may sufficiently account for so frequent a use of terms in those languages.

However the volume may be received by those, who are versed in the historic page, it may at least be useful and entertaining to those, who have neither leisure nor opportunity to peruse the numerous volumes, from which the whole is collected.—With regard to many of the ancient sects, it is well known little has been preserved, and therefore little can be here expected.—With respect to others, such as desire further information, are directed by references to the volumes, and generally to the pages, where their inquisitive minds may be satisfied.

It is truly astonishing, that so great a variety of faith and practice should be derived, with equal confidence of their different abettors, from one and the same revelation from heaven: but while we have the lively oracles, we are not to adopt any of the numerous schemes of religion, further than they have a manifest foundation in the sacred pages. To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, however specious their systems may appear, “there is no light in them.”

With cordial wishes for the divine illumination of the Holy Spirit, by which the sacred scriptures were indited, and a universal prevalence of the knowledge and practice of pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father,

I am the reader's most obedient

Humble servant,

THOMAS PRENTISS.

MEDFIELD.

# DEDICATION.

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MEDFIELD, AUGUST 3, 1801.

SIR,

IMPRESSED with a sense of your condescension, in permitting me to prefix your name to a second edition of this work, I am ambitious, that the present should make its public appearance under the same dignified and respectable patronage.

I AM the rather induced to avail myself a second time of the honour, which your name hath conferred on my Compendium, since your important talents and commanding virtues have become more conspicuous, by having been displayed from a station of greater eminence.

NOR can I forbear to boast, as an additional motive, the personal acquaintance, with which you have honoured me, and which hath brought to my own knowledge the justice of your exalted reputation, and given me a striking view of the union of moral and intellectual excellence.

LONG

LONG may your country be blest with the salutary influence of your example, while you enjoy the grateful benedictions of the virtuous and enlightened part of your fellow-citizens, and the smiles of an approving conscience, in reflecting on your disinterested and persevering exertions for the welfare and honour of the American republic.

I AM, with profound respect,

SIR,

Your much obliged,

and very humble servant,

HANNAH ADAMS.

JOHN ADAMS,

*late President of the United States.* }

## *Advertisement.*

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THE reader will be pleased to observe, that the following rules have been carefully adhered to through the whole of this performance.

1st. To avoid giving the least preference of one denomination above another: omitting those passages in the authors cited, where they pass their judgment on the sentiments, of which they give an account: consequently the making use of any such appellations, as Heretics, Schismatics, Enthusiasts, Fanatics, &c. is carefully avoided.

2d. To give a few of the arguments of the principal sects, from their own authors, where they could be obtained.

3d. To endeavour to give the sentiments of every sect in the general collective sense of that denomination.

4th. To give the whole as much as possible, in the words of the authors from which the compilation is made, and where that could not be done without too great prolixity, to take the utmost care not to misrepresent the ideas.

land, and Prussia,\* tolerate and protect them. Spain, Portugal, and some of the Italian states, are still, however, totally averse to their dwelling among them.†

The office of priest, among the Jews, is still confined to the family of Aaron; but they know not of any lineal descendants of David.‡

The creed of the Jewish nation appears to be the same as it was, when their famous Moses Mamonides, six hundred years ago, abridged the Talmud, which contained the body of their canon and civil law. They are as numerous as they have been for many centuries past. The most of them reside in the eastern continent, and in the adjacent countries.§

David Levi, a learned Jew, who, in 1796, published “*Dissertations on the Prophecies of the Old Testament*,” observes, in that work, that “*Deism and infidelity have made such large strides in the world, that they have, at length, reached even to the Jewish nation; many of whom are, at this time, so greatly infected with Skepticism, by reading Bolingbroke, Hume, Voltaire, &c. that they scarcely believe in a revelation; much less have they any hope in their future restoration.*”

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## DEISTS.

THE Deists are spread all over Europe, and have multiplied prodigiously among the higher rank, in most nations: but the sentiments, which are distinguished by this title, were formerly rarely embraced among the common people.||

The

\* In Berlin, the Jews are now enjoying singular honours, as men of genius and study. The late Moses Mendelsohn, by the force of his reasoning, has been surnamed the Jewish Socrates; and by the amenity of his diction, the Jewish Plato. Bloch, a Jewish physician, was the first naturalist of the age: Herz is a professor, with four hundred auditors; Mainon, a profound metaphysician. There are Jewish poets, and Jewish artists, of eminence; and, which perhaps exist no where but in Berlin, a Jewish academy of sciences, and Jewish Literary Journal, composed in Hebrew. See Vaurier, or the Sketches of the Times, vol. ii. p. 249.

† Encyclopedia, vol. ix. p. 143.

‡ Monthly Magazine, vol. viii. 1799, p. 615.

§ See a Century Sermon, by the Rev. Mr. Backus of Sommers.

|| Voltaire's Universal History, vol. ii. p. 259.

The name of Deists is said to have been first assumed, about the middle of the sixteenth century, by some gentlemen in France and Italy, in order to avoid the imputation of Atheism. One of the first authors, who made use of this name, was Peter Viret, a celebrated divine, who, in a work which was published in 1563, speaks of some persons in that time, who were called by a new name, that of Deists. These, he tells us, professed to believe a God, but shewed no regard to Jesus Christ, and considered the doctrines of the apostles and evangelists, as fables and dreams.

The Lord Edward Herbert, baron of Cherbury, who flourished in the seventeenth century, has been regarded as the most eminent of the Deistical writers, and appears to be one of the first, who formed Deism into a system; and asserted the sufficiency, universality, and absolute perfection of natural religion, with a view to discard all extraordinary revelation, as useless and needless. He reduced this universal religion to five articles, which he frequently mentioned in his works.

I. That there is one Supreme God.

II. That he is chiefly to be worshipped.

III. That piety and virtue are the principal parts of his worship.

IV. That we must repent of our sins; and if we do so, God will pardon us.

V. That there are rewards for good men, and punishments for bad men, in a future state.\*

The Deists are classed, by some of their own writers, into two sorts, *Mortal* and *Immortal Deists*. The latter acknowledge a future state; the former deny it, or, at least, represent it as a very uncertain thing.

The learned Dr. Clarke, taking the denomination in the most extensive signification, distinguishes Deists into four sorts. The first are, such as pretend to believe the existence of an infinite, eternal, independent, intelligent Being; and who, to avoid the name of Epicurean Atheists,

\* Leland's View of Deistical Writers, vol. i. p. 2, 3.

ists, teach also, that this Supreme Being made the world ; though, at the same time, they agree with the Epicureans in this, that they fancy God does not at all concern himself in the government of the world, nor has any regard to, or care of, what is done therein.

The second sort of Deists are those, who believe not only the being, but also the providence of God, with respect to the natural world ; but who, not allowing any difference between moral good and evil, deny that God takes any notice of the morally good and evil actions of men ; these things depending, as they imagine, on the arbitrary constitution of human laws.

A third sort of Deists there are, who believe in the natural attributes of God, and his all-governing providence, and have some notion of his moral perfections also ; yet deny the immortality of the soul ; believing, that men perish entirely at death, and that one generation shall perpetually succeed another, without any future restoration or renovation of things.

A fourth, and the last sort of Deists, are such as believe the existence of a Supreme Being, together with his providence in the government of the world, as also all the obligations of natural religion ; but so far only, as these things are discoverable by the light of nature alone, without believing any divine revelation.

Some of the Deists have attempted to overthrow the Christian dispensation, by representing the absolute perfection of natural religion. Others, as Blount, Collins, and Morgan, have endeavoured to gain the same purpose, by attacking particular parts of the Christian scheme ; by explaining away the literal sense and meaning of certain passages ; or by placing one portion of the sacred canon in opposition to the other. A third class, wherein we meet with the names of Shaftsbury, and of Bolingbroke, advancing farther in their progress, expunge from their creed the doctrine of future existence, and annihilate among them all the moral perfections of the Deity.

Many

Many of the modern Deists in Europe are said to be of that class, who deny the immortality of the soul, and any future state of existence.

The Deists of the present day are distinguished by their zealous efforts to diffuse the principles of infidelity among the common people. Hume, Bolingbroke, and Gibbon, addressed themselves solely to the more polished classes of the community; and would have thought their refined speculations debased by an attempt to enlist disciples among the populace. But of late, the writings of Paine and others, have diffused infidelity among the lower classes of society:\* and Deism has even led to Atheism, or a disbelief of all superior powers.

Leland's View of Deistical Writers, vol. i. p. 2, 3.

Broughton's Historical Library, vol. i. p. 316.

Voltaire's Universal History, vol. ii. p. 259.

Ogilvie's Inquiry, p. 57.

Hall's Sermon on Modern Infidelity.

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## SKEPTICS.

THIS sect derive their name from the Greek verb, *σικπτομαι*, *to consider*, from their leading character, which is, to call in question the truth of every system of opinions adopted by other sects, and maintain, that every thing is uncertain. †

It

\* President Dwight, in his Centennial Sermon, delivered January 7, 1802, energetically describes the various attempts, which modern infidels make use of, to spread their sentiments. "Their writings," says he, "have assumed every form, and treated every subject of thought. From the lofty philosophical discourse, it has descended through all the intervening gradations to the newspaper paragraph; from the sermon to the catechism; from regular history to the anecdote; from the epic poem to the song; from the formal satire to the jest of the buffoon. Efforts in vast numbers have also been made, to diffuse infidelity in a remark, unexpectedly found in a discourse, where a totally different subject was under consideration; in a note subjoined to a paper on criticism, or politics; in a hint in a book of travels; or a stroke in a letter of civility. In these, and the like cases, the reader was intended to be taken by surprise, and to yield his judgment, before that he was aware that he was called to judge. The number and variety of the efforts have also been increased beyond example; have poured from innumerable presses, and from all civilized countries; have been sold at the lowest prices, and given gratuitously; and have been circulated with vast industry, and by innumerable hands, through christendom. The intention of this amazing multitude of exertions, has plainly been, to astonish and discourage their adversaries, to amaze and overwhelm their readers, and to persuade insensibly the mass of mankind, that the world was converted to Infidelity."

† Gale's Court of the Gentiles.