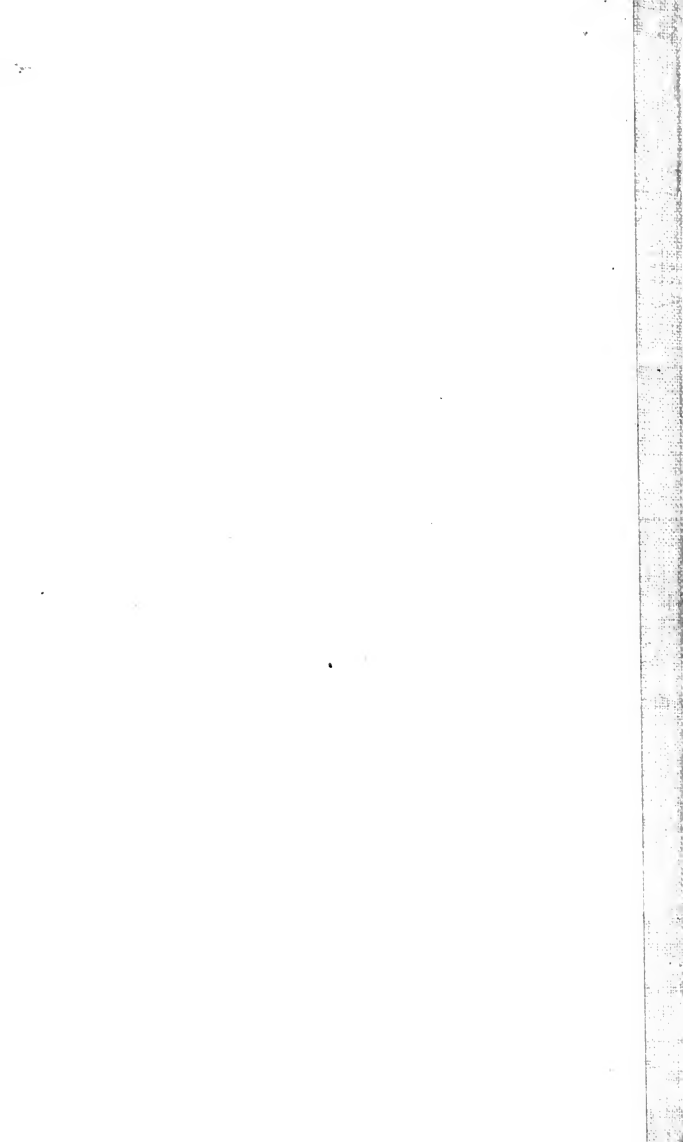


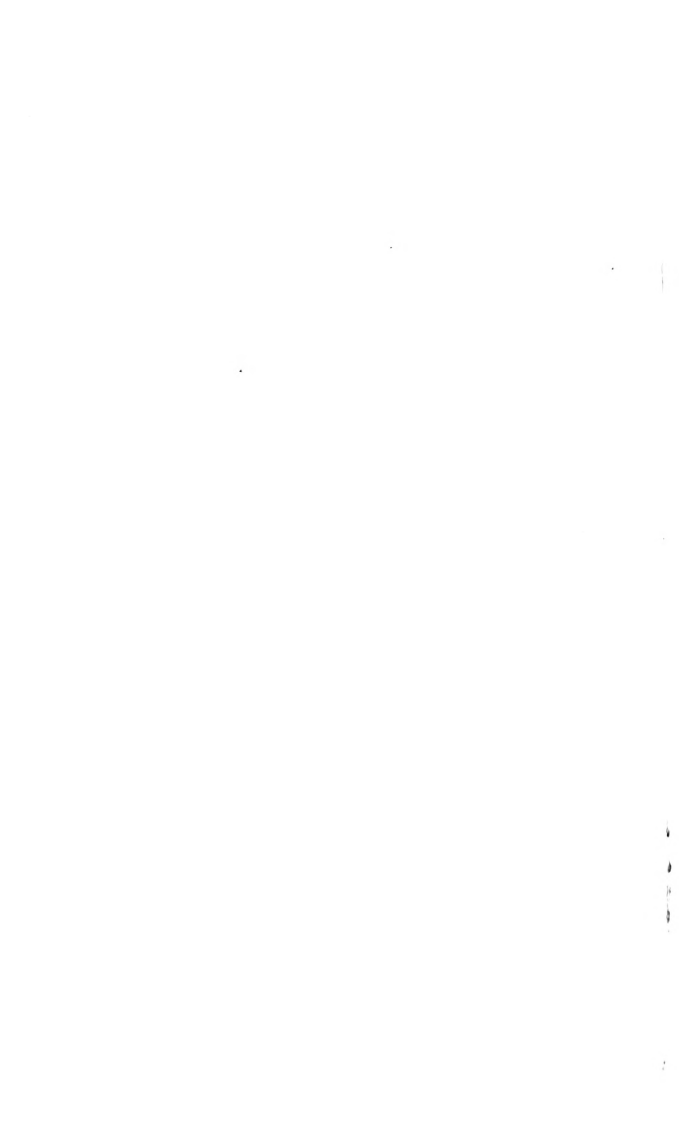
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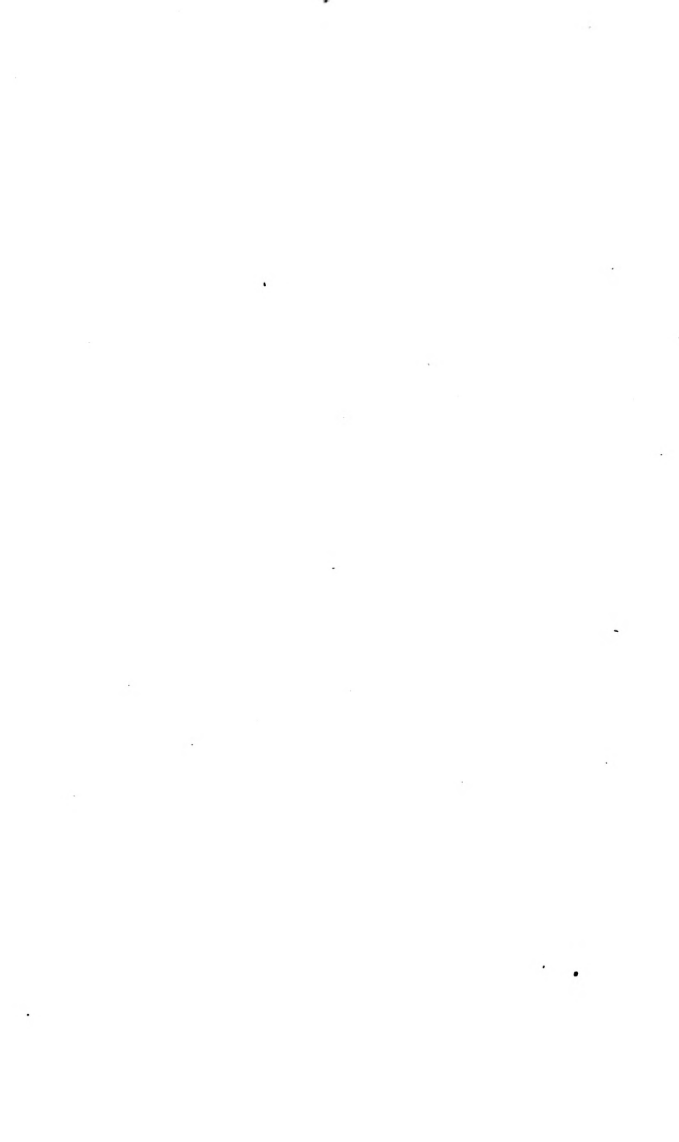








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A  
COLLECTION  
OF  
ESSAYS AND TRACTS  
IN  
THEOLOGY,  
FROM VARIOUS AUTHORS,  
WITH  
BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL NOTICES.

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BY JARED SPARKS.

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VOLUME I.

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TO  
THE REVEREND  
JOHN THORNTON KIRKLAND.  
D. D. LL. D.  
PRESIDENT OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY,  
AND  
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES,  
THIS  
COLLECTION OF ESSAYS AND TRACTS,  
DESIGNED TO PROMOTE THE CAUSE  
OF  
SACRED LEARNING, OF TRUTH AND CHARITY, OF RELIGIOUS  
FREEDOM, AND RATIONAL PIETY,  
IS INSCRIBED,  
AS A TOKEN OF GRATITUDE,  
AFFECTIONATE REGARD, AND RESPECT,  
BY HIS MOST OBLIGED,  
AND MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,  
THE EDITOR.

NOV 1961  
OLSON  
YSA 1961



## PREFACE.

SINCE the commencement of the Reformation, books have been multiplied to a very great extent in almost every department of theology. No science has laid a heavier tax on the industry of the learned, or contributed more to fill the shelves of libraries. The Scriptures have been examined, and their meaning illustrated, by all the aids which talents and erudition could command. Philology, criticism, rhetoric, logic, and, indeed, all the arts of defining language and analyzing thought, have been employed to establish the foundation and ornament the structure of theology.

In a science, which runs so far into the deep and uncertain things of metaphysics, and which allows so wide a range for the imagination, it is no wonder, that much should be written, which is neither calculated to instruct the plain inquirer, nor edify the practical christian. It is no wonder, that reason should sometimes be misled, the judgment perverted, and truth obscured. The topics of theological discussion are exhaustless, and christians of every form

of belief have applied themselves with equal zeal, if not with equal ability, to the task of developing and enforcing their peculiar sentiments. The consequence has been, that the labours of many great and wise men are now useless to the world. Lives have been passed in decorating gaudy and unsubstantial theories, or wasted in the barren fields of metaphysical controversy, or idly expended in the wild dreams of enthusiasm.

From general causes like these, and from others of a particular and local nature, theology has too often been rendered cumbersome, unintelligible, and unprofitable. But after all, amidst a prodigious waste of intellect and labour, some treasures remain worthy of the great minds, which bequeathed them to posterity, worthy of the religion of Jesus, and worthy to be studied and admired by every sincere believer. Among the numerous works on theological subjects, a few may be found, which have an intrinsic value distinct from the speculative opinions contained in them, and from the dogmas, which it may be their primary or subordinate object to inculcate. Practical religion is the same every where, and with all persons. Truth is uniformly the same, and so are the principles of human nature, of reason, and of conscience. Wise and enlightened men, however they may differ on points of speculation, will think nearly alike on all that is fundamental or important in religion, when they submit to be guided by their understanding.

In forming the present Collection of Essays and Tracts in Theology, it is the purpose of the Editor to select such articles from different writers, as in some degree at least bear this uniformity of character. Neither the particular tenets entertained by any author, nor the sect with which it may have been his pleasure to associate himself, will be taken into consideration. The only undeviating rule of selection will be, that every article chosen shall be marked with rational and liberal views of christianity, and suited to inform the mind, or improve the temper and practice. Nothing will be introduced, which violates the protestant principles of christian liberty, free inquiry, toleration, and the exercise of private judgment in all the concerns of religion. If there be a right more sacred than any other, it is that, which gives every man an unlimited control over the operations of his own mind, especially in those inquiries, for the result of which he is accountable only to God.

The work will be composed chiefly of pieces from English authors. Many articles of merit, written by men distinguished for learning and piety, have become rare, and are not to be obtained without difficulty. They are either concealed in voluminous works, or their fame is passed away with the memory of the events in which they originated. Bishop Watson's excellent Collection of Tracts has done much to rescue some treatises of this descrip-

tion from the state of unmerited forgetfulness into which they were falling. But his plan was widely different from the one here contemplated. It was his aim to form several treatises into a methodical arrangement, in such a manner that together they should constitute a general system of divinity. In pursuance of this design he took into his collection some elaborate works, and he was therefore limited in number and variety. The plan here instituted allows a greater latitude, and will enable the Editor to receive from any quarter whatever is deemed valuable.

Some persons, who have assumed the liberty to think for themselves, have written with a freedom and independence on religious subjects, which have not always been acceptable to those of a more timid spirit and yielding temperament. Men of the first eminence, and of unblemished character, have deviated from the common track, and dared to make their way by the light of reason and the Scriptures, preferring the simple instructions and commands of Christ to the intricacies of human creeds and systems. They have believed with Paley, that "whatever makes religion more rational, makes it more credible;" and with Young, that "when faith is virtue, reason makes it so." It is not surprising, that such men should not think in the same train as those, who adopt the enthusiast's short rule of believing a thing, because it is

impossible, or who look upon mysteries as constituting essential parts of a christian's faith.

It is a maxim, as true in religion as in every thing else, that opinions are as various as men. *Quot homines tot sententiae.* These opinions some christians are fond of dividing out into two classes, under the general heads of orthodox and heterodox. A classification so arbitrary, one would think, ought to be made on the most exact and rigid principles; but, when we come to the reality, nothing is more loose and indefinite. It was a correct saying of Locke, that "every man is orthodox to himself;" and hence every one may range in the class of heterodoxy all opinions which do not agree with his own. In some cases a majority have harmonized so far, as to assent to general formularies and confessions, and then whoever followed them was orthodox to all the rest, and whoever refused to follow was heterodox to the same extent.

It has happened, nevertheless, that among these dissenters from established creeds have been some of the greatest and best men, who have adorned the christian church. Their writings have done much to establish the truth, authority, and consistency of the Scriptures, and to fix just rules of criticism and interpretation; they have done much to recommend christianity by proving its simple and divine character, and to encourage religious practice by founding it on its proper basis of charity, toleration, and

personal goodness. There is no reason why a name or an opinion, the narrowness of bigotry or the tide of popular prejudice, should exclude such writings from the publicity to which their merits give them a claim, or from the good influence, which they are eminently qualified to exercise.

It is intended not only to draw from the best English authors, but also to translate occasionally from divines, who have written in Latin, German, or French. Several valuable articles may, it is thought, be obtained from these sources, which have never been presented to the English reader. Something, no doubt, may be gleaned from the first Reformers sufficiently free from the spirit, and violence, and jargon of those times, to be read with interest and profit at the present day. Whenever christians have been attacked as avowing an erroneous faith, they have defended themselves in nearly the same way. Equally indignant at oppression, they have asserted the right of inquiry, judgment, and belief, with equal earnestness and sound reasoning. They have usually maintained the true principles of scriptural christianity.

Even Calvin, in his expostulation with the king of France, was moved to plead the cause of liberty and toleration most eloquently, while he was suffering in exile under the odium of being a heretic. So it was with Luther, Melancthon, and their associates. When defending themselves against the common

adversary, they took rational grounds. It was only on things of doubtful import, that they became enthusiasts, bigots, dogmatists, and persecutors. They deserted reason, and then reason deserted them. When they attempted to enforce what they could neither explain nor understand, they quarrelled, became furious, called names, excommunicated, anathematized. With the voluminous repositories of these feuds, we have no occasion to be acquainted; yet we may still listen with pleasure and advantage to the eloquence and arguments of the first Reformers, in support of the common principles of religious truth and liberty.

Some good articles in theology are moreover contained in the writings of the Polish Brethren. For ability and learning they have never been surpassed; but it is to be regretted, that so large a portion of their works is taken up in discussing the abstruser points of controversy, and that they were so much addicted to the school dialectics in use at the time in which they wrote. This objection, however, does not apply to their commentaries, which are perspicuous and natural, and manifest great critical acumen and sound judgment. They have served as a storehouse from which all sects and parties have drawn with more freedom, than they have found it convenient to acknowledge. Few commentaries on the Scriptures have appeared during the last century, which have not profited either directly or indirectly

from these sources. Orthodox and heterodox have been equally dependant, and equally cautious how they gave credit, where credit was due. Archbishop Tillotson was more ingenuous; but he paid dearly for his honesty and frankness, by being branded as a heretic and a Socinian. Many were ready to inflict this censure, who were not ashamed to be plagiarists and pilferers. But the time has happily come, when names have lost their terror, and a man may confess without fear through what channels he receives knowledge and truth.

The celebrated theologians among the early Arminians, such as Grotius, Episcopius, Wetstein, Le Clerc, and Limborch, were the authors of valuable works, founded on the broad principles of a liberal and rational faith. Of these writers, perhaps, a few pieces may be published, which will afford light and assistance to inquirers at the present day. Le Clerc, especially, among other works of formidable magnitude, has left several short treatises, which bear testimony to his piety, learning, and genius, as well as to his enlargement of mind and charitable spirit. The Arminians, like the first Reformers, wrote in self defence. They maintained the liberty of conscience, and used the weapons furnished by reason and the Scriptures. The Calvinists had combated the Catholics with the same weapons, but they were now grown strong, and came down upon the defenceless Remonstrants with the artillery of creeds and



confessions, synods and councils, imprisonment and civil penalties. Having no means of physical resistance, the Remonstrants relied on their intellectual strength and the justice of their cause. In this respect they gained a conquest as complete and honourable, as it was on the other part ignoble and unchristian. Their works written on this occasion, and afterwards, contain excellent specimens of theological discussion and criticism, which are in strict conformity with the spirit and original simplicity of the Gospel.

In drawing from so large a number of writers, whose opinions were various, it cannot be expected, that a perfect consistency will be preserved in the religious sentiments advanced in different parts of this work. Much less can it be supposed, that the Editor's opinions accord with all that may be published. It will be a general rule to give the articles entire, nor will an alteration or abridgment of them ever be made in consequence of the sentiments, which they express. Sometimes such parts may be omitted, as are local, and have no immediate bearing on the subject at large; but this will seldom happen, and never unless it be notified to the reader. It is deemed highly important that the language of the authors should be faithfully and exactly retained.

The Editor will endeavour to comprise, in the biographical and critical notices, such incidents and facts, as may add to the interest and value of the

work. Suitable remarks will be annexed for explaining the object of each article, and for making its purport and meaning clearly understood. If any topic should be introduced, which, in the progress of theological science, has received new light since the article was written, an attempt may perhaps be made to bring the subject down to the present state of knowledge. In short, if proper discretion be exercised in selecting articles, and the plan here proposed be judiciously executed, it is confidently believed, that the work will be an acceptable and useful acquisition to the libraries not only of theologians and biblical students, but of every class of readers.

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**THE FIRST VOLUME.**

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JOHN ALPHONSUS TURRETIN.

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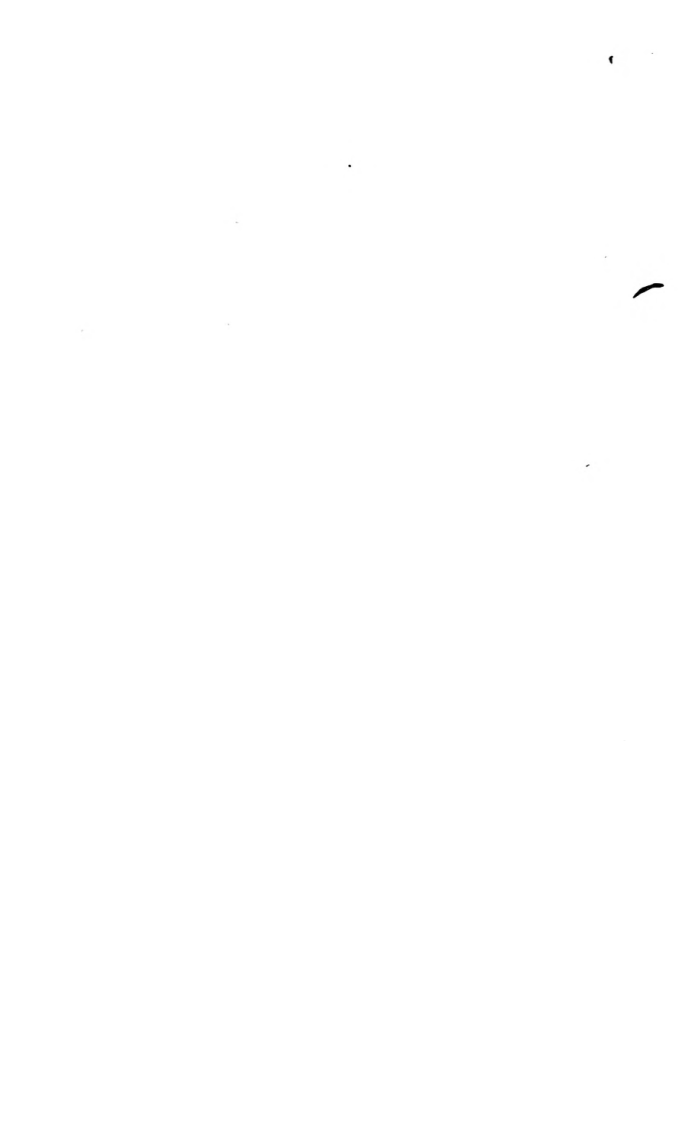
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## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE public is here presented with the first number of the Theological Collection, the plan of which is described in the preceding Proposals. This number will serve as a specimen of the work, both in regard to its character, and the style in which it will be executed. The Editor has received warm encouragement to engage in the undertaking from gentlemen on whose judgment he can rely; but, as the time has not yet come, when a work, whose professed object is to promote free inquiry, liberal sentiments, and a spirit of toleration in religion, can be hoped to gain an extensive patronage, its success must ultimately depend on the active zeal of those, who feel a particular interest in its objects. Although the publisher has not ventured on a large edition, yet the expense will be considerable, and the work cannot be continued beyond the first volume, unless a subscription be obtained adequate to the amount.

The next number will complete the first volume, and will contain a title page, table of contents, and preface.





Turretin

John Turretin

TURRETIN

ON

**FUNDAMENTAL ARTICLES**

IN

**RELIGION.**

1. Theology.

## TURRETIN.

**T**HE name of TURRETIN was long conspicuous in the theological school of Geneva. Three persons of this name, Benedict Turretin, Francis Turretin, and John Alphonsus Turretin, father, son, and grandson, were successively professors of theology in that place. The last of the three was the most distinguished, and was the author of the *Discourse on Fundamentals in Religion*, with which the present work commences.

He was born at Geneva, 1671, and after making, with close application and under the best teachers, extraordinary proficiency in his studies at home, he went to Leyden, where he attended the lectures of Spanheim, and completed his education. In this place he wrote a treatise, pointing out the great varieties of opinion in the Church of Rome, which was intended to counteract the influence of Bossuet's work on the *Variations in the Protestant Churches*. From Leyden he went to England, where he became acquainted with Tillotson, Burnet, and Wake, and is said to have done much towards correcting the erroneous

impressions under which the English clergy laboured respecting the Genevan Church. He next visited Paris, and held public disputations with the doctors of the Sorbonne.

On his return to Geneva, he engaged in the ministry, and so much was he esteemed by his countrymen, that the magistrates, to testify their sense of his merits, created for him a professorship of ecclesiastical history. He was afterwards appointed rector of the Academy of Geneva, and then professor of theology, which latter office he held till his death in 1737. He filled several other public stations, the duties of which he discharged with fidelity and credit.

His theological writings are numerous, and equally remarkable for their learning and their moderation. It was a favourite project with him to unite all the Protestant Churches in one communion. He deprecated the differences, which churches and individuals were fond of thrusting forward as causes of separation, and laboured to show, that the violent controversies about metaphysical and abstruse points in theology, which prevailed in his time, had no alliance with the true spirit of christianity. He endeavoured to inculcate moderation and rational inquiry, and to convince the contending parties, that the religion of Jesus was designed to be a bond of peace and union. In the prosecution of this purpose he wrote his treatise on **Fundamentals in Religion.**

This treatise was originally written in Latin, and constituted part of a work, entitled *Nubes Testium*, or *Cloud of Witnesses*, which was dedicated to the Archbishop of Canterbury. It gained great applause among the learned, and the part, which is now offered to the public, was translated into English and published in London in the year 1720. The greater portion of the work, from which this article is taken, is made up of copious extracts from ancient and modern writers of high authority, which the author adduces as testimonies, that his opinions respecting fundamental articles are not new or rash, but have been supported by the most enlightened men in all ages of the church. These testimonies are arranged in four classes. The *first* contains the sentiments of the ancient Fathers; the *second* embraces extracts from Luther and Lutheran divines; the *third* from Zuinglius, Calvin, and their followers; the *fourth* from the Acts of Synods and Councils. "Yet," says the English translator, "our author complains under each class, that, for the most part, men have not been so uniform and consistent with such expressions as might be wished; but produces them as testimonies extorted by the force of truth, which has darted into men's minds with irresistible light, when they have calmly and impartially considered these things." And in regard to the decisions of Synods and Councils, he argues, that their failure has not been owing to any defect

in the plan, but to the want of a proper disposition in the parties concerned.

As these testimonies would add little weight to the author's reasonings, in the estimation of the English reader, they have not been translated. Few persons at the present day, and especially in this country, will respond to the zeal manifested against Popery in the eighth chapter ; yet we must remember, that the author wrote in other times, and under the influence of many exciting causes, of which we can at present have but an imperfect conception. We must, also, give credit to his own declaration, that principles and not men, were the objects of his remarks. But after all, it must be allowed, that it is not easy to reconcile some of the sentiments advanced in this chapter with the liberal and tolerant spirit, and rational views, which pervade all the other parts of this treatise.

The translation here published is the one mentioned above ; and if it sometimes fails in elegance of style, it is seldom without the greater merit of being simple and perspicuous.

DISCOURSE  
ON  
FUNDAMENTAL ARTICLES  
IN  
RELIGION.

---

*Introduction.*

THE subject of *Fundamental Articles*, being as weighty and important as any in religion ; either that our notions herein may be just and right, and that we may be able to distinguish what is of the essence of religion, from things which are not essential, nor of equal importance ; or that we may know how to conduct ourselves with a pious and christian moderation towards those who differ from us in things which are not necessary ; and not venture to condemn them, to exclude them from our communion, or, as is usual with many, to send them to the very pit of destruction ; that we may treat of it as briefly and clearly as possible, we shall divide this discourse into the following heads. *First*, we shall show what is com-

monly understood by fundamental articles, and such as are not fundamental. *Secondly*, that there is really such a distinction. *Thirdly*, we shall reject some false marks of fundamentals, and such as will not hold. *Fourthly*, we shall produce those which to us seem the best and fittest. *Fifthly*, we shall consider, whether it be possible to fix a certain and determinate number of fundamental articles. *Sixthly*, how we ought to conduct ourselves towards those who differ from us in fundamentals. *Seventhly*, how we should behave towards such as differ from us in things not fundamental. *Eighthly*, we shall bring an instance of a fundamental difference in our separation from the church of Rome. *Ninthly*, an instance of a difference not fundamental, in the differences among Protestants. *Tenthly*, we shall offer some pacific and healing advices, which may be useful to promote union among christians, leaving them to the consideration of all good men, and lovers of peace.



## CHAP. I.

*What we are to understand by Fundamental Articles,  
and such as are not Fundamental.*

FUNDAMENTAL *Articles* are those principles of religion, which so relate to the essence and foundation of it, and are of so great importance, that without them religion cannot stand, or at least will be destitute of a



chief and necessary part. Thus, *There is a God*, is a fundamental article, nay the first of all ; for take away the existence of God, and all religion must needs fall to the ground. In like manner, *God is a beneficent Being, and will certainly reward his worshippers*, is also a fundamental article ; for take away the goodness and munificence of God, and by far the greatest motive to piety and virtue is destroyed ; and therefore, the Apostle teaches, that “ he that cometh to God,” that is, worships him in any wise, “ must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”\*

And since religion, if we are wholly destitute of it, or at least if we are deficient in any principal part of it, cannot yield us its proper fruits, which are, to render us acceptable to God, and to bring us to eternal salvation ; therefore, fundamental articles are such as are necessary to be known, and believed, in order to obtain the favour of God, and the salvation of our souls.

Again, since religion with all its essential parts is the bond of Church Communion, hence we may conclude, that fundamental articles are such as are necessary to be professed, in order to hold communion with any particular person, or with any religious society ; for it would be absurd to admit any into such a society, who did either directly deny, or in effect destroy the essentials, or, as one may call them, the very vitals of religion.

\* Heb. xi. 6.

These are the commonly received notions, that are by the generality of divines fixed to the name of fundamental articles. Some, indeed, the better to distinguish them, make two sorts ; fundamentals with *respect to things*, or to religion itself ; and fundamentals with *respect to persons*. Others make three sorts, and divide them into things necessary to *salvation*, things necessary to *religion*, and things necessary to *the church*. But though these distinctions may sometimes be well grounded, and have their use, as we shall see afterwards ; yet, for the most part, and in the ordinary course of affairs, they all centre in one point, and signify only the different properties and consequences of fundamental articles. For those which are fundamental with *respect to things*, or to *religion itself*, are also fundamental with *respect to such persons*, to whom religion is duly proposed, and who are endued with sufficient capacities to understand and receive it ; so that without them, in the ordinary course of affairs, such persons cannot be entitled to the favour of God, nor obtain salvation, nor be accounted true and sound members of the church. Nor indeed can it better be known what is essential in religion, or what is requisite in order to admit a person into Church Communion, any other way, than from those places of scripture where the terms of salvation are laid down, as will be more fully shown in the sequel of this Discourse. Therefore, passing by these, let us

rather premise some other distinctions more pertinent to the present purpose.

1. Since the revelations, which have been granted to us by God, have been very different ; some whereof have been more clear and full than others, as is evident, by considering the revelation, which is purely from nature, the revelation granted to the Patriarchs, the revelation delivered by Moses, and lastly the Christian Revelation ; in like manner, fundamental articles must be understood to differ, according to the difference of these revelations. But our design is principally to treat of the Christian Revelation, and consequently of such articles as do, or do not, belong to the essence of christianity.

2. As the revelations made by God have been various, so the state and conditions in which he has placed men have been so likewise. The capacities, the endowments, and the circumstances, which have been allotted to them, have varied almost infinitely ; all which things must necessarily be regarded, and allowed their due weight, in describing fundamental articles.

3. We must also observe, that persons may offend against some points of religion two ways ; either by mere *ignorance*, or by a direct *denial* or *opposition* ; and both these may take their rise from different causes, and be attended with different circumstances and effects ; some whereof may be more criminal, and others more innocent.

4. Persons also may err fundamentally two ways; either by expressly denying something that is fundamental, or by joining something to the foundation, that does really destroy it. In the former manner, they stumbled at the foundation, who denied the resurrection, of whom St. Paul speaks;\* and in the latter, those teachers of the Galatians, whom the same Apostle does so sharply rebuke in his Epistle.

5. When we say that fundamental articles are such as are necessary to be known and believed, in order to obtain salvation, we would not be so understood, as if we thought that none, who is ignorant of any one of these articles, or mistakes concerning it, can possibly arrive at salvation; for as in crimes and evil actions, so likewise in ignorance and mistakes, there is a twofold remedy; the one on our part, which is *repentance*, either general or particular; the other on God's part, *mercy* or *forgiveness*; by means whereof, as we may hope for pardon of the greatest crimes, so it cannot be denied, but we may also of the most grievous errors.

6. This whole matter may be considered in a double respect; either as it relates to the *ordinary* course in which things generally proceed, and which God has made known in his word; or to those *extraordinary* ways in which God may, and it can hardly be doubted but he oftentimes does act. But here we only speak of the ordinary way, and leave the other to the wisdom and good pleasure of God.

\* 1 Cor. xv.

These things being premised in the general, the use whereof will appear in what follows, we are next to show, that this distinction of truths and errors into fundamental, and not fundamental, is not a vain and empty distinction.



## CHAP. II.

### *Some Articles in Religion are Fundamental, and others not Fundamental.*

THAT there are really some articles in religion *fundamental*, and others *not fundamental*, may be demonstrated two ways; from the nature of the thing, and from scripture.

1. *From the nature of the thing.* And truly, unless we will allow this distinction, we must say one of these two things; either that no truths in religion are fundamental, and necessary to be known; or that all are so; neither of which can be allowed. That no truths are necessary to be known, none but an atheist can venture to affirm; and they who own the being of a God, can do no less, surely, than grant that the knowledge of him is necessary. The subjects of any kingdom or state cannot be ignorant without blame, that there is a prince, or some civil magistrate under whom they live, and whom they are bound to obey. Nay, further, they ought to

have a knowledge of the laws of that kingdom or state ; for every one knows, that ignorance of the law is no excuse. But now, how much more necessary is it for us to know, as well as we are able, the Lord of the universe, and the laws that are given us by him ? And if it be necessary to know him, who is Lord of all, then it cannot but be displeasing to him, for us to entertain dishonourable notions of him, or to charge him with the most detestable crimes, to place him upon a level with the meanest of creatures, and to pay him a worship that consists of wickedness or cruelty. Neither is it to be thought, that in doing thus, we can possibly be innocent, and free from blame. And since all this might be said, though we had no revelation, how much more are these things necessary to be known, now we have one, wherein God has manifested the certain knowledge of himself, and appointed certain worship to be paid to him ?

But on the other hand, that all truths of religion are fundamental, and necessary to be known, is so absurd an imagination, that no man who seriously considers, can admit of it ; for who can suppose, that God does necessarily require all truths of religion, without exception, to be known of every individual man ; and consequently that all these truths are equally to be esteemed and regarded by us ? Who can imagine, that all truths, which depend upon chronology, geography, criticism ; that all proper

names in scripture, and that all circumstances, even of the minutest events, which concern religion, are necessary to be known? Certainly the design of religion is not to exercise the wit and understandings of men, nor to burden and overwhelm their memories with so vast a number of all sorts of truths; but to implant in their minds the fear and love of God, and excite them to certain duties. Those truths, therefore, that tend most to this end, are certainly of the greatest importance; and they, that have little or no tendency hereunto, are undoubtedly of less moment, and so by no means to be accounted necessary.

Again, they who say all truths of religion are fundamental, and necessary to be known in order to obtain salvation, must either be tormented with endless doubts and perplexities, or imagine themselves to be infallible, so as certainly to know all truths without exception, and be sure, that they do not err in the least point. And what man in his wits can possibly pretend to this? Finally, he who says all truths of religion are fundamental, and all errors damnable, ought to prove it; but the thing will admit of no sort of proof; nay, on the contrary, the goodness and wisdom of God do most directly oppose such an assertion. Since, therefore, it cannot be affirmed on the one hand, that no truths are *fundamental*, nor on the other, that all are so; hence it follows that a difference must be made between

truths that are *fundamental*, and truths that are *not fundamental*.

2. *This is also evident from scripture.* For it cannot be denied but the Apostle\* does make a plain distinction between the *foundation*, and *things built upon the foundation*, and proceeds to show, that things built upon the foundation are of two sorts; some of them are good and profitable to men; these he calls *gold, silver, precious stones*. Others are useless, and really hurtful, such as vain and idle disputes, rash and hasty conclusions, and ceremonies that lead to superstition; which he calls *wood, hay, and stubble*. The former will *stand* and abide the fiery trial, that is, the judgment of God; but the latter shall be *burnt up*; yet the authors or promoters of such things may be saved themselves, *though so as by fire*, that is, not without difficulty.

In like manner, the Apostle distinguishes between things wherein christians agree, and according to which they ought to walk, and things wherein good men may differ without any prejudice to piety or mutual love. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded;" namely, with regard to what he had before laid down concerning the privileges and ceremonies of the law. "And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us

\* 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11, 12.



mind the same thing ;”\* or be affected in the same manner, and preserve peace and union among ourselves. And accordingly the Apostles, in many places of scripture, teach us, that some things are of so great moment, that he who errs in them, and departs from the doctrine of Christ, is not only to be sharply rebuked, but to be removed from the communion of the church.† And these important points are signified to us by various appellations in scripture ; they are called, *the foundation ; the principles of the doctrine of Christ ; the first principles of the oracles of God ; wholesome doctrines ; the form of sound words ; the word of truth ; the doctrine which is according to godliness.* And so, on the contrary, in other places,‡ we are told, that there are some things in which persons who do err, ought nevertheless to be borne with as brethren ; of which we shall speak more hereafter.

Neither is this distinction of the points of religion a new thing, or a notion peculiar to us ; but has been allowed in all ages, and by divines of all parties. The Jews undoubtedly had their fundamental truths, as appears from the writings of their rabbies. So Moses Maimonides, the most learned of them, entitles the first book of his treatise, called, *The Strong Hand*, thus ; *Of the Foundations of the Law ;* and

\* Phil. iii. 15, 16.

† Gal. i. 8. 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4, 5. 2 John, 10.

‡ Rom. xiv. and xv.

begins it with these words; “The Foundation of Foundations, and the Pillar of Wisdom, is to know that there is one First Being, which gave being to all others.”

And among the ancient Fathers of the Church, nothing was more common than to use those words, *the principles, the elements, the necessary things*, to signify the primary and fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. This is what Tertullian means, by “the rule of faith, the only immoveable and unchangeable rule, which it is sufficient for a man to know, though he knows no more.”\* And from these primary articles, wherein “the foundation of all catholic doctrine did consist, they distinguished the lesser questions of the divine law,”† concerning which, persons might have different sentiments, without destroying the unity of faith. And Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Austin, and others, give testimonies concerning this matter, which would be too tedious to recite.

Hence also creeds and confessions of faith, and then catechisms took their rise; which contained the first principles of religion, such as it was thought proper for catechumens, or beginners, to profess their belief of. And in the first ages, these things were short and plain; but afterwards, through the dissensions that arose in the church, they were exceedingly multiplied and enlarged; insomuch, that Hilary

\* De Virginibus velan. cap. 1.

† Vincentius Lirinensis.

complained, that *confessions were framed at every one's pleasure.*

The papists do carefully distinguish questions which are *of the faith*, from questions which are *not of the faith*; and pretend that the power of determining the former lies in their church; and therefore that she may increase or diminish the number of articles of faith at pleasure. And besides an *implicit* faith, by which persons are bound to believe whatever the church believes, they say that some things are also to be believed *explicitly*; and, accordingly, dispute among themselves about these articles of faith, which are to be believed *explicitly*, some making them more, some fewer; but others say that the number of them cannot be determined. All which things do plainly show, that though they do not use the same terms as we do, yet they do not reject or condemn the common distinction, of *fundamentals* and things *not fundamental*.

This distinction is so obvious among protestant divines of different parties, and has been so generally received among them, that it would be needless to mention any. Therefore, without any further confirmation of this famous distinction, let us see what are the marks or criterions by which we may be able to distinguish *fundamentals*, from things which are *not fundamental*. And we shall first of all separate the false marks, and then offer some rules which appear to us more just.

## CHAP. III.

*False marks of fundamental articles rejected.*

THE opinion of the papists here first presents itself, who pretend that all things which their church determines, *as of the faith*, do immediately become articles of faith; and consequently that the church may, by her determinations and decrees, increase the number of them at pleasure. But this notion is easily destroyed. For, *first*, such an authority was never granted by God, to any assembly of men, nor to any private teachers whatever. *Secondly*, the Apostles themselves confess, that they had no dominion over the faith of christians, and that they delivered nothing to them but what they had received of the Lord.\* *Thirdly*, all christians are commanded to examine whatever their pastors teach them, to beware of false prophets, to try all things, to hold fast that which is good; and if an angel from heaven, or the Apostles themselves, should preach any other Gospel, to pronounce them accursed.† So that pastors of the church have no power to add even the least point to the christian faith, much less to increase the number of its articles at pleasure. *Fourthly*, the church herself, or her pastors, are so far from having a power of altering them, or adding to their

\* 2 Cor. i. 24. 1 Cor. xv. 3.

† Mat. vii. 15. 1 Thes. v. 21. Gal. i. 8, 9.

number, that the true church, and true pastors thereof, can no otherwise be distinguished from others, than by considering whether they hold the foundation, or depart from it. This mark, therefore, which the papists bring, is altogether precarious, nay, tyrannical and antichristian ; for it is certainly the greatest tyranny, and pride, to assume a power of determining what is necessary to be known in order to salvation, and, in a matter of so great consequence, to add to the word of God.

2. Others are of opinion, that whatever is delivered in scripture, is upon that very account fundamental ; and to this purpose they urge the words of St. Paul ; “ Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning ;” and also, “ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”\* But, as has been already observed, who can imagine that all things found in scripture, of whatever sort, as proper names of men, places, animals, plants, and all circumstances of the most minute actions, are so necessary to be known, that none can be saved without the knowledge of them ? The words of the Apostle carry no such meaning ; for the sense of those places is not that each sentence, word, or syllable of scripture, does contain something in them of the utmost consequence to christianity, and so that all these are necessary to

\* Rom. xv. 4. 2 Tim. iii. 16.

be known ; but only that the doctrine contained in that book, and the principal things delivered there, are to be for our instruction above all other things ; and that whatever is necessary for our instruction, exhortation, or correction, is fully contained in it. Yea, the Apostle does largely shew in another place that we ought “ to bear the infirmities of the weak.”\* And those words, “ for whatsoever things were written,” &c. are added for no other purpose, but to show us, that by the instructions of scripture we are to learn a christian meekness and forbearance ; which very thing does prove that disagreement in matters of less importance, although they are things contained in scripture, ought not to be accounted fundamental.

3. Another mark, which many make use of to distinguish fundamentals from such as are not so, is taken from what they call the *analogy of faith*, or, which is the same thing, systems of divinity, in which some take one method, and some another. We shall only bring an instance or two out of them, to illustrate this matter. Some, therefore, talk after this manner. Those things, which contain the causes of salvation, are for that very reason necessary to be known, in order to salvation ; but, say these men, in the causes of salvation, three things are to be distinctly considered,—the *design*, the *purchase*, and the *application* of it. The design is laid in God’s

\* Rom. xv. 1. and all the xivth chap.

eternal predestination ; the purchase is made through the merits and satisfaction of Christ, and the application by the power and operation of the Holy Spirit ; and then they proceed to infer, that not only these things themselves, but all questions appertaining to them, are necessary to be known in order to salvation. Others argue thus ; Christ is the Foundation, according to the Apostle, “ Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”\* But say they, in Christ there are several things to be distinctly considered ; as, his person, twofold nature, different states, his offices, and benefits. To which heads it is very plain, that innumerable questions, if not all in divinity may easily be referred. But they who argue in this manner, though they say nothing but what is true, and indeed of very great moment, yet their mistake lies in this ; they confound what was necessary to be done in order to procure salvation, with what is necessary to be known ; which two things are very different, as is plain by considering the case of infants, of persons that are deaf, or distracted, and of the patriarchs in the Old Testament. The thing may be illustrated by a similitude taken from our food ; every one knows, that abundance of things are requisite to the digestion and separation of our food ; and yet nobody ever said that these things were necessary to be known, in order to receive nourishment from it.

\* 1 Cor. iii. 11

Hitherto we have rejected those marks, which to us seem faulty, by containing too much. There are others no less faulty, for requiring too little. From these therefore the next mark is taken.

4. Those things only are fundamental, which have been received by all christians, and in all ages. If this rule be right, I fear it will utterly destroy all fundamentals at once ; for, from the very times of the Apostles, there have been teachers who have called themselves christians, and yet have attempted to overthrow some of the principal and most necessary things in christianity. Thus some have denied the Resurrection of the Body, and some that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh ;\* some have affirmed, that the ceremonies of the law are necessary to salvation, and others have even denied the necessity of good works ; as is evident from many places in the Epistles. So that many of the teachers of those times, even of those who called themselves christians, are said to be *antichrists, liars, false prophets, denying the Lord that bought them*. And every one knows, that not long after, there arose many pestilent sects among christians ; as the Gnosticks, the Marcionites, the Manichees, who denied some doctrines of the utmost importance, as the Unity of God, the necessity of good works, and of suffering martyrdom in defence of the truth when called to it. If this rule, therefore,

\* 1 Cor. xv. 2 Tim. ii. 18. 1 John iv. 3.



which we now oppose, be true, it will hardly leave any thing at all that is fundamental.

5. Some limit the foundation of religion within such narrow bounds, that they allow nothing to be a fundamental, but to obey the divine precepts, and to trust in the promises of the Gospel ; which is another mark that we reject. We own, indeed, that obedience is the end, and therefore a principal part of religion ; for as Christ told his disciples, “ if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them ;” and St. Paul testifies, that “ the end of the commandment is charity ;” and St. James, “ Pure religion and undefiled, is to visit the fatherless and widows, and to keep one’s self unspotted from the world.”\* But if we would speak accurately, we cannot say, that the whole essence of religion does consist in obedience, and trust in God, and in nothing else ; for there must be some truths known by the light of nature, and others revealed by God, upon which our obedience and trust must be founded ; which do therefore make part of the foundation, according as St. Paul teaches us in the forecited place. “ He that cometh to God, must believe that he is,” &c.† And Christ, “ This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.‡

6. Some will have the Apostles’ Creed, as it is commonly called, to be the standard and measure of

\* John. xiii. 17. 1 Tim. i. 5. James i. 27.

† Heb. xi. 6.

‡ John xvii. 3.

fundamentals ; and we do not deny but this hypothesis comes the nearest to truth, of which more hereafter ; yet for some reasons we cannot entirely acquiesce in this opinion. For, *First*, it is agreed among learned men, that this creed was not composed by the Apostles, but long after their time, and that the copies of it differed in some articles ; there is, therefore, no reason why so much authority should be given to a human composure, though ever so ancient and venerable, as that the terms of salvation should be thought to depend upon it.\* *Secondly*, neither

\* Ambrose was the first, who is known to have attributed this Creed to the Apostles about four hundred years after Christ ; and Ruffinus not much later ascribes to it the same origin. Leo Magnus, Jerom, John Cassian, and many other writers of celebrity at that period, gave credit to Ambrose and Ruffinus, and spoke of the Creed as the work of the Apostles. It even became a popular notion, that every Apostle contributed a part ; and in a sermon ascribed to Austin, the Creed is divided into twelve articles, and each article is assigned to its particular author.

But these accounts have long been known to be fabulous ; and although some articles of the Creed were early in use, no evidence remains of any part having been the work of the Apostles, or that it was considered as such before the commencement of the fifth century. This Creed underwent many variations from in to time, and in different churches it was usually clothed with a different dress. There was the Grecian Creed used by Irenæus, the Creeds of Carthage quoted by Tertullian, that of Aquileia mentioned by Ruffinus, that of Ravenna, and that of Turin explained by Maximus, and many others scattered through the ancient writings. Each of these was called the Apostles' Creed, although they differed essentially among themselves. Ruffinus states, that the *Descent into Hell* was neither in the

does every thing inserted into this Creed seem to be of so great importance, that a man cannot be saved without the knowledge thereof. Thus, if a person should be ignorant of what is there said of Christ's descent into hell, of the name of Pontius Pilate, and some other things, which were put in, in opposition to some errors that are now out of date, it cannot be thought that his salvation would be hazarded hereby. *Thirdly*, on the other hand, there are some things no less necessary to be known than to be done, which yet are wanting in this Creed, namely, those principles of religion, which direct and inform our practice. Therefore, passing by these and such like criterions, which are not founded upon sufficient reason, we shall endeavour to produce some rules, which seem to be better grounded, and may more safely be depended upon.

Roman nor Oriental Creeds; and bishops Burnet and Pearson affirm, that this clause was not inserted till the fifth century. Nor was the *Communion of Saints* found in any copy of the Creed till about the same period; and the clause, *Life Everlasting*, was omitted in many copies while it was contained in others. The *Holy Church* was first mentioned as an article of the Creed by Tertullian in the third century. It was not till after the time of Tertullian that this article was enlarged by inserting the word *Catholic*.

These are some of the more prominent changes in the Creed, after it became a symbol in general use among the churches. Many others of minor importance might be enumerated, but these are enough to prove its uncertain origin, and that it can have no authority in settling the articles of Christian faith. See King's History of the Apostles' Creed, Chap. ii, and v.—Pearson on the Creed, Vol. i. p. 341; Vol. ii. p. 287.      Ed

## CHAP. IV.

*Principles by which we may be able to distinguish  
Fundamental Articles.*

1. OUR first principle is this; *That we are not under a necessary obligation to know, or believe any truth, but what is clearly revealed unto us, and for the belief of which, God hath indued us with necessary abilities.* This is a principle of the most undoubted truth; for who can conceive, that a most righteous God, who has the tenderest concern for his creatures, should require them to believe any thing, which he has not revealed to them, and that clearly too, or which they are under a natural incapacity of believing? It is reported indeed of Caligula, among other horrible cruelties, that he ordered his laws to be writ in such small characters, and to be hung up at so great a distance, that it was almost, if not altogether impossible to read them; and this he contrived on purpose, that a greater number of offenders might fall into his hands. But far be it from us, to ascribe such a cruel and injurious way of proceeding to the best and most righteous Being.

From this principle we may draw an inference which is of very considerable weight, namely, *That fundamental articles are not the same to all men, but differ according to the different degrees of revelation, and according to the different capacities and circum-*

*stances of men.* The reason is plain ; for since God has made very different revelations of himself, and has given very different capacities to men, and has placed them in stations and circumstances that most widely differ ; it is therefore impossible that all men should be obliged to the same measure of knowledge, or the same standard of faith.

2. Our second principle is this, *That he alone, who is Lord of life and death, that is, God, has power to determine what is necessary to be believed in order to obtain salvation, and what error shall certainly exclude men from it.* This also is a very plain principle, and none who seriously considers it, can call it into question ; for who, I pray, has the least pretensions to settle the terms of life and death, but that “only Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy ?”\* From whence the Apostle makes this demand, “Who art thou that judgest another ?”†

But since God has made known his will two ways, by the light of nature, and by revelation, nothing therefore ought to be reckoned a fundamental, but what God has determined to be so, one of these two ways.

And the light of nature discovers but very few things in this matter ; little more than what the Apostle takes notice of as a thing sufficiently known thereby, That “he that cometh to God, must believe

\* James iv. 12.

† Compare Rom. xiv. 10.

that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”\* And should a man be well established in these two principles, and the things which are plainly connected with them, and sincerely endeavour to know the will of God, and to put in practice what he did know; I very much question whether such a one could remain ignorant of any principle, which can be proved necessary from the light of nature.

But revelation goes further, and enjoins some points to be believed as things necessary to salvation, and dissuades us from believing others upon pain of damnation. It tells us, that eternal life is placed in the knowledge of certain truths; that he who believes them, does please God, is blessed, and shall be saved; but he, who does not believe them, shall be damned, cannot please God, is yet in his sins, and the wrath of God abides upon him; from which places we may conclude, that these are fundamental articles, and necessary to be known of all, to whom the gospel is preached, and who are endued with sufficient faculties to receive it.

3. But besides those points, which are expressly, and in so many words, declared to be necessary; *Those things likewise which flow from these principles, by plain and necessary consequence, must be added to the catalogue of Fundamentals, or things necessary.* For plain and necessary consequences are of the same

\* Heb. xi. 6.

nature with their principles ; they are to be ranked with them, and allowed to be of equal importance ; nay, they are, as it were, contained in them, and properly speaking do not differ from them. Thus, upon granting the being of God, the chief attributes of the deity do so plainly and necessarily result from it, that they cannot but be thought to be of equal moment with the principle itself.

But let it be observed, that we speak only of *plain and necessary consequences* ; for it would be very unreasonable to rank doubtful, or obscure, or remote consequences, with the principles themselves, and to show an equal regard to them ; for at this rate, all things would be put upon the same bottom, and there would be no end of fundamental articles.

And this seems to us the true and only way, by which we may clearly and safely distinguish fundamental articles from others, namely, by the discovery of the divine will, and the declarations of God himself, either in express words, or by plain and necessary consequence ; for, as has been already observed, who shall pretend to settle the terms of salvation and damnation ? Who shall pretend to make laws concerning these things, but he, and he alone, who has power to save, and power to destroy ? And, therefore, they who impose upon christians, things as fundamental, which God has not revealed, or which are doubtful and obscure, as the church of Rome does, and others who follow her steps ; these,

whoever they are, act tyrannically, and arrogantly claim that authority to themselves, which belongs to God only.

But though this be the chief, if not the only mark of fundamental articles, yet, that we may more easily and certainly distinguish them, we shall subjoin some other principles.

4. *Fundamentals are plain, adapted to common capacities, and free from all the subtile and intricate distinctions of the schools.* The reason is evident; for since religion does equally concern all men, and is no less designed for common people than for the learned, yea, it may be more; whatever therefore does exceed the capacity of the vulgar, is upon that account not to be reckoned fundamental, or necessary. Religion certainly differs from scholastic niceties as much as any thing; the scripture was given by poor plain men, and it is given to such. Christ gives thanks, that “these things were hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes;” and St. Paul tells us, that there were “not many wise” among the Corinthians; by which he diligently admonishes us to distinguish carefully the doctrines of heaven from the wisdom of the world. So that, to use the words of Hilary, “the faith lies in great plainness of speech; for God does not call us to happiness by difficult and knotty questions, nor does he persuade us by various turns of oratory and eloquence. Eternity lies in a plain and narrow com-



pass ; to believe that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and to confess that he is Lord.”\*

5. *Fundamentals are few in number.* This principle is founded upon the same reason as the former ; for the minds of common people would be as much confounded by a multitude, as by the difficulty of articles. Therefore it has pleased divine goodness to comprise them in a narrow compass ; that, as St. Austin says, “The plainness of them might suit the simplicity of the hearers ; that the shortness of them might be accommodated to their memories, and that the fulness of them might make amends for their want of learning.” And so Casaubon, in the name of king James I. of Great Britain, writes thus, “The king thinks it very right, in the explication of things simply necessary to salvation, to say, that the number of them is not great.”†

6. *Fundamentals are very often and various ways repeated and inculcated in scripture.* This is a rule that we infer from the goodness and condescension of God ; for since scripture is given for this end only, to make us wise to salvation, it cannot be doubted but those things, that chiefly tend hereunto, are frequently proposed in scripture, and strongly urged upon us. In any other sciences, honest and skilful masters do not use to pass over slightly and hastily the first principles ; but frequently repeat

\* Hilarius de Trinitate, L. 10. in fin.

† Casaub. Epist. ad Card. Perron.

and inculcate them, till they find they are clearly understood, and have taken fast root in the minds of their scholars. And who can doubt but God, the supreme and infinitely wise instructor of men, does use the like caution and prudence in giving them his heavenly precepts ?

7. *Fundamentals are principles of piety : that is, they do not only not contradict the practice of godliness, but, on the contrary, are useful, and even necessary to promote it.* And, truly, the end of religion is nothing else but to make us holy. This is the design of the whole gospel ; herein the mysteries, the precepts, the promises, and threatnings of it do all centre ; upon which account the gospel is called, “The mystery of godliness, a doctrine which is according to godliness ;” and we are assured that nothing else will avail us but *the new creature*, or obedience to the commandments of God. Hence then it follows, that whatsoever is of no use to promote godliness, for that very reason is not a fundamental truth ; and on the other hand, that whatever destroys godliness, or is inconsistent therewith, is a fundamental error. But let it be observed, we do not say, that whatever may conduce to godliness, is therefore a fundamental ; for there are many things which may be pious, or at least have the appearance of piety, that are not at all essential to christianity ; nay, and if thoroughly examined into, some of them would not be found true, of which sort are the many

fables and figments of men's brains; which the experience of all ages abundantly shows.

8. *A thing may often be fundamental itself, though the mode and circumstances of it are not so.* This follows from the foregoing principles; for when a thing is only revealed to us in general, and enjoined us by God as necessary, then the thing itself only is to be accounted a fundamental without its mode and circumstances, which are not revealed with equal evidence, or the like marks of necessity. And, indeed, there are very few things, especially in divinity, the mode and circumstances of which we can thoroughly understand. If, therefore, the mode and circumstances, the causes and adjuncts of a thing, are to be accounted fundamental, it will follow that abundance of things, of which we can have no clear perceptions, and which do far exceed our capacities, are nevertheless fundamental, contrary to what has been observed in principles first and fourth.

9. *Persons may err fundamentally two ways; not only by expressly denying a thing that is fundamental, but also by adding to, or building something upon the foundation that does really weaken and overturn it.* This principle we have already treated of in chapter first, and the reason of it is evident; for it is not sufficient to acknowledge fundamental truths with our lips, if we actually overturn them by positions or actions contrary to them. Thus, what can it signify for a man to profess that God only is to be

worshipped, if at the same time he does actually worship creatures, as saints and angels, images, crosses, and the like, after the manner of the heathens themselves?

10. To these principles, which seem to contribute not a little towards a right distinguishing of fundamentals, let us only add one more, which may serve as a rule to manage and form our judgments, both of ourselves and others; namely, *With respect to ourselves, our safest way is to beware and guard against all, even the smallest errors, as if they were fundamental; and to make the utmost progress in the knowledge of divine truths; but with regard to others, we ought to pronounce nothing but with the utmost caution, the greatest charity, and meekness.* For, as prudence directs men to use the greatest care and diligence in providing for their own safety; so, on the contrary, christian charity will not suffer a man to condemn others, and charge them with damnable errors, till he is compelled to it by the irresistible evidence of the thing itself, and of the oracles of God; and then not without unwillingness and great reluctance.

## CHAP. V.

*On the exact number of Fundamental Articles.*

THIS question is a very perplexed one, yet ought not to be wholly omitted by us, namely, *Whether the exact and precise number of fundamental articles can be determined?* We doubt not, but those articles may be sufficiently distinguished by every one for his own private use and instruction; and, accordingly, have laid down rules in the foregoing chapter, which will help us to a knowledge of them; but to reduce them to a certain and definite number, so as to be able to say there are neither more nor less, is more than we, together with all protestant divines, think to be either necessary or possible, for the following reasons.

1. Because these articles are not the same to all men; some were fundamental under the Old Testament, others are so under the New. Some are fundamental to those, who have the use of their senses and reason; others to infants, children, deaf persons, and those of a weak understanding. Some are fundamental to those who enjoy a perfect liberty of hearing the word of God; others are so to multitudes in the world, from whom the gospel is in a great measure hid, as thousands of peasants inhabiting the villages of Spain and Portugal. Some are fundamental to beginners, and as it were children in Christ:

others to persons of a greater proficiency, such as those Jews ought to have been, whom the Apostle reproves for their dulness in learning.\* So that, as it would be absurd to expect that one common garment should suit all statures, or the same portion of food all appetites, or the same degrees of labour all artists; so it is impossible to fix a certain number of articles necessary to be known of all men.

2. Because these articles are sometimes fewer and more general, sometimes more numerous and particular; which depends upon the different method of conceiving and distinguishing things. Thus in scripture we find, that things necessary to salvation are sometimes reduced to a single head, sometimes to two, sometimes to more. In one place we are told, that nothing is necessary to be known by us, "save Christ crucified"†; in another, that eternal life consists in knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.‡ Sometimes all things are referred to *Christ's resurrection alone*; at other times only to *his coming in the flesh*. Sometimes *faith* alone is required; at other times *faith and repentance*; sometimes *faith that works by love*; sometimes a *new creature*; and sometimes the whole law is said to be fulfilled in *charity* only. All which sufficiently shews, that things necessary to salvation are sometimes reduced to fewer heads, and at other times divided into more; and therefore cannot be fixed to

\* Heb. v. 12.

† 1 Cor. ii. 2.

‡ John xvii. 3.

a certain number, which shall always necessarily remain the same.

3. Because it may oftentimes be justly questioned, whether any particular doctrine ought to be placed among fundamentals, as a consequence drawn from an important place of scripture, or a particular exposition of some general doctrine. Examples might be brought from moral subjects. Thus, many difficult questions have been started about usury, lying, gaming, of the measure we ought to observe in giving alms, and many other such things. And if so many difficulties arise about subjects of a practical nature, how should it be otherwise in matters that are speculative? And who, but a person of consummate assurance, would venture to determine the exact weight and importance of each of these questions, and to settle their precise bounds, with respect to our salvation or damnation?

4. As it cannot certainly be determined, what is the exact pitch of virtue, or just how many sorts of duties, what number of good works, pious discourses, and almsdeeds, are necessarily required of every man, that he may be saved; so neither can such weak and imperfect creatures as we are, without the utmost arrogance, pretend to determine precisely, what degrees of knowledge are absolutely requisite hereunto. Let them tell us what are the farthest lengths allowable in these things; let them mark out the exact bounds of things necessary, and unneces-

sary, who can comprehend the divine perfections, and know the utmost limits of the justice and mercy of God. For our part, we freely own it is far above our reach to do it. And here, to use the words of the famous Witsius, "Sometimes divine grace does join the elect to Christ, by a very slender thread; and yet the brightest flames of love to God, and the most sincere desires to please him, may be kindled in those souls that have but a very poor knowledge of articles of faith. And who is he, that without the determinations of God, can himself exactly determine that least single point in each article, by which the divine tribunal is indispensably obliged to proceed."\*

5. What has been said concerning religion, and the necessary articles of it, may be illustrated from other arts and sciences. Who, for instance, ever told us precisely, how many truths are necessary to be known, to get a man a reputation in logic, or mathematics, or law? Or who has ever determined the precise quantity of food, and no more, that is necessary to support life? And yet there is no great danger of our being starved for want of this knowledge. Or who has ever told us how many sorts of food, and how many sorts of poisons there are in the world? And yet without knowing it, we may take our food safely enough, and sufficiently guard against being poisoned. And why may not

\* Wits. in Symb. Apost. Exercit. II. § 15.



the same judgment be allowed concerning saving truths, and poisonous errors ?

But, perhaps, some will say, how can the conscience of a christian be easy, without being satisfied in this inquiry, How many truths precisely he ought to know, that he may be saved ? I will answer in a word. Let a man but sincerely love truth, and seek it heartily, begging help from God, and making use of those who are capable of giving him light ; and let him not omit, or neglect any proper means, that he may make continual progress in the ways of truth and holiness ; and such a one may certainly conclude, that God will not be wanting to him, nor suffer him to continue ignorant of any thing necessary for him to know ; or if he is ignorant of any matter, or does err and mistake in some things, God will graciously pardon him, even as a father does his children.

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## CHAP. VI.

### *On Church Communion between those who differ in Fundamentals.*

WE are now to consider how we ought to conduct ourselves, either towards those who differ from us in *fundamentals*, or towards those who differ in things *not fundamental*.

As to the former, there is no doubt but that all just and proper means ought to be used with them, to convince them of their errors, and to bring them to a sound mind; but if these prove ineffectual, and we cannot converse with them, without apparent danger of being infected ourselves, we ought not only to abstain from the private conversation of such persons, but also from their Church Communion.

There are several express commands in scripture to this purpose, besides many weighty reasons, which might be brought to confirm it.

Among other places of scripture, these are very evident. “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”\* “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?”† These words are indeed primarily meant of unbelievers and heathen idolaters; but yet, they may equally be understood of those, who imitate the heathen in their idolatry and superstition. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.” “If any

\* Gal. i. 8, 9.

† 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.

man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine, which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing; from such withdraw thyself." "An heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that bid-deth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."\*

And there are several weighty reasons, which might be brought to confirm this matter; from the nature of the church; from the regard we owe to God; from the decency and order of divine worship; from the care we ought to take of our own souls; from the obligation we are under to do all we can towards recovering the erroneous, and to give a good example to others. But these things we can but barely mention, consistent with our designed brevity.

\* Rom. xvi. 17. 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4. 5. Tit. iii. 10. 2 John, 10, 11. Rev. xviii. 4.

## CHAP. VII.

*On Church Communion, and mutual forbearance,  
between those who differ not in Fundamentals.*

THE case is much otherwise with respect to those who differ only in points *not fundamental*. It were indeed greatly to be desired, that there was no disagreement at all among christians, and that the truths of God were equally discovered and known of all men; but since this is never to be expected, because of the variety of men's minds, the different methods of education, and the frailty of human understanding; that which comes the nearest to it, is, that we should endeavour to secure the essence of religion, and then patiently bear with one another in all the rest; and that persons, who differ in things not fundamental, should regard each other as brethren, and maintain church communion together, and shew a christian forbearance on all sides. To this purpose there are plain texts of scripture, and many other arguments of the greatest force.

And among other places of scripture where such forbearance is enjoined, the fourteenth chapter and part of the fifteenth of the Epistle to the Romans, deserve our greatest regard; where the Apostle, taking occasion from the differences that arose among the primitive christians, about the ceremonies of the law, and the distinctions of meats and days,

commands that *the weak in faith*, that is those who had not right sentiments of these things, should nevertheless be received by the rest as brethren, and admitted as true members of the church, not *despised* nor *condemned*, but *their infirmities* tolerated.\* And that he might bring the Roman christians to such a temper, he argues with them so affectionately, so strongly and copiously, and draws such odious consequences from the contrary practice, shewing them that hereby the authority of God himself would be invaded, that those for whom Christ died would be destroyed, and that the work of God would be destroyed, as plainly shows how much he had this at heart, and that this forbearance of disagreeing parties ought to be ranked among the first, and most important duties of the christian religion.

And not only in that place, but in several parts of his Epistles, he earnestly recommends the same duty. Thus in Chap. viii. 9, 10, of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, discoursing of things sacrificed to idols, he shows that christians, who had not right sentiments, ought not only to be patiently borne with, but that others ought to accommodate themselves to their weakness; and testifies of himself, that this was his own practice; "For though I am free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more; and unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews;

\* Rom. xiv. 1, 3, 4, 10. xv. 1.

to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law; to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."\* And in the following verses he signifies that he was obliged thus to act, in order to his being partaker of the heavenly reward. Whence it follows, that let a man be ever so religious, and take ever so much pains in preaching the gospel, yet if at the same time he wants this gentleness and forbearance towards his brethren, who differ from him, he can neither be accepted of God, nor obtain salvation at last.

And who that reads the excellent commendation of charity, with which the whole thirteenth chapter of that Epistle is taken up, can choose but be excited to practise this duty of forbearance? Some of the chief characters there given of charity, are, "that it suffereth long, that it beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."† And if this description be given with respect to the vices of men, and their defects in goodness, it is certainly no less applicable to errors, especially to light ones, and such as do not at all affect the foundation of religion.

It is true, indeed, that the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians, is very severe against some false

\* 1 Cor. ix. 19, 20, 21, 22.

† xiii. 4, 7.

teachers; which yet does not weaken, but really confirm the necessity of this forbearance and toleration. For those teachers were themselves against tolerating others, and would have the ceremonies of the law imposed upon all christians, as things necessary to salvation; by which means the christian faith would have been greatly corrupted. And at the same time, that he so sharply inveighs against these teachers, he is very large in recommending charity and forbearance, even so great a diversity of opinions as this was,\* and commands, that they who were overtaken in a fault, should be restored in the spirit of meekness; and that they should bear one another's burdens.† And at last, when he had told them that the essence of christianity did not consist in circumcision, or uncircumcision, that is, in observing or omitting the ceremonies of the law, but in the *new creature*, that is, in true and real holiness; he adds these words, wherein he most affectionately desires, as well as commands, a mutual forbearance among persons, who differ in things not fundamental; "and as many as walk according to this rule," that is, that agree in the essentials of christianity, and form their lives according to this rule, "peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."‡ If, therefore, the Apostle does pray for peace, and promises mercy to such persons, is it not unreasonable to condemn them, to

\* Gal. v. 13, 14, 15.    † Gal. vi. 1, 2.    ‡ Gal. vi. 15, 16.

send them to the pit of hell, or to exclude them from the Communion of the Church ?

But there is no place where this forbearance or toleration of persons disagreeing only in things not fundamental, is more plainly enjoined, than that which has been already cited out of the Epistle to the Philippians,\* where every one may see that the Apostle would have christians walk by the same rule in things whereto they have attained, that is, in fundamentals ; and to mind the same thing ; but if in any thing they were otherwise minded, to wait till God should please to reveal it to those, who were in an error, and bring them to a more perfect knowledge of the truth ; yet, in the mean time, holding fast the bond of christian fellowship and charity with one another. In like manner, that pathetic exhortation to love and unity, which we have in the beginning of the second chapter of the same Epistle, is given for the same end. And lastly, the Apostle enjoins it upon christians, “ *to let their moderation be known unto all men ;*”† that is, their meekness and gentleness in bearing the infirmities and deficiencies of others.

And no doubt these exhortations “ *to forbear one another with all lowliness and meekness, to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, to speak the truth in love, to put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and to put on bowels of mer-*

\* Phil. iii. 15, 16.

† Phil. iv. 5.



*cies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, that so they might forbear one another, and forgive one another ;*"\* no doubt, I say, but these, and such like exhortations, of which all the Epistles are full, were principally designed to lay the heats and contentions between the judaizing and other christians, with which the churches of those times were greatly molested ; the proper remedy for which, if we regard the Apostles, was nothing else but mutual forbearance, which christians ought to exercise when differing from one another.

And if we turn our thoughts to the following circumstances, we shall plainly perceive of how great weight these things are, to recommend the like forbearance among christians in these days. *First*, the Apostles were infallible, and if they would not attempt to compose these differences, by exerting their authority, but chose to recommend forbearance on both sides, how much more should we take the like course, who have not the least pretences to infallibility ? *Secondly*, the dispute was not about a trifle, but a very weighty affair, even the difference between the law and the Gospel ; a thing that did not consist in mere speculation, but had a great influence both upon practice and worship. Alas ! how many trivial controversies, in comparison of this, do sour the minds of christians in these days ? *Thirdly*, both sides were furnished with very considerable

\* Ephes. iv. 2, 3, 15, 31, 32. Col. iii. 12, 13.

arguments, the one a law given by God, the other the defence of christian liberty. *Fourthly*, St. Paul himself, who so strenuously urged this forbearance, had before such a flaming zeal for the law, that he was even mad for it. *Lastly*, these precepts of forbearance were given after the vision from heaven to Peter, and after the Apostolic synod ; so that these controversies had been sufficiently determined already by this vision, and by the decree of the Apostles. Whoever, therefore, shall seriously consider these circumstances, and weigh them impartially, cannot surely but conclude, that these Apostolical precepts of forbearance, if they had any weight in their times, ought to have much more in our times, and in the present controversies.

In short, wherever Christ and his Apostles recommend charity, meekness, or the love of peace ; and on the contrary dissuade us from contentions, quarrels, and schisms ; in all those places, it is most certain that this forbearance is enjoined upon us. But that the necessity of it may more clearly appear, we shall add to these testimonies of scripture, some reasons of very great weight which we shall but just mention, and leave the fuller explication of them to the judicious and pious reader.

1. It is our duty to cultivate communion with all the disciples of Christ ; for Christ will have all his disciples to be one,\* and the church is represented

\* John xvii. 21, 22, 23.

as *one body*, in several places of scripture. Therefore, communion ought to be maintained with all those whom we do not know to be unworthy of the name of christians; and certainly they cannot be accounted unworthy of it, who hold all the fundamentals, and differ from us only in things which are not fundamental.

2. Those things wherein christians do agree, who are united in fundamentals, are things of so great importance and dignity, that all other things are not considerable enough to disturb their peace, and to separate them from one another. This argument the Apostle pursues with a great deal of life and spirit, in the Epistle to the Ephesians; and nothing, I think, can more effectually press this duty of forbearance, than what he there saith; "I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness, and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." For, adds he, "There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."\* If persons agree with us in such things as these, and are impressed with the weight and importance of them as they ought to be, we

\* Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

shall be injurious to ourselves, and reflect dishonour upon Christ, if we refuse to own and esteem them as brethren.

3. Without this forbearance, which we recommend, it is impossible that any peace or unity should continue long in the church ; for there are but two ways of obtaining peace, either by *uniformity of opinion*, or by exercising *forbearance* towards those who err in smaller matters. The former is an impracticable thing ; for such is the variety of men's minds, their education and capacities so different, and things themselves do often appear in such different views, that for all persons to have just the same sentiments in all points, is a thing utterly to be despaired of. It has never yet been seen from the first beginnings of the church unto the present times, nor ever will to the world's end. We must, therefore, have recourse to forbearance of those, who err in lesser matters, if ever we desire to see the church enjoy peace and tranquillity.

4. Either we are to break off communion for all and every diversity of opinion, or for some only. No one will say the former ; for, at this rate, there would be as many churches and sects in the world, as there are private christians. But if for some only, what other bounds or distinction can be settled than this, that those things, which belong to the essence and foundation of religion, should be inviolably adhered unto ; but those things, which do not

concern the foundation, should be left as matters of forbearance ?

5. Either we believe, that those who differ from us in things not fundamental, are odious to God, and shall be damned, or we do not. And, certainly, it would discover a very bitter spirit, and the utmost rashness, to judge the former ; but if we believe the latter, why should we hate and reject them ? If we believe that God does accept them as children, why should not we regard them as brethren ? If we believe they will praise God with us in heaven, why should we be unwilling that they should worship him with us on earth ?

6. Either we believe, that all things in religion are at present fully made known, and that there is no room left for any further discoveries ; or we believe, that there may be some improvements of knowledge, and that it is possible some amendments may be made to the common received opinions. To say the former would be exceeding rash, and a supposition not consistent with the state of human affairs ; nay, such a piece of intolerable pride, as has always met with indignation from men truly learned ; for *now we know but in part*, and *prophecy in part*, as the Apostle says. If, therefore, improvements may yet be made, we ought by all means to bear patiently with those that offer us any thing new ; for otherwise we suppress all improvements, and stifle the gift of prophecy, and bring in sloth and

barbarity; for who will attempt any thing of this kind, when it becomes dangerous to do it?

7. The want of this forbearance does not really remove differences of opinion, but only makes persons, who differ from the received notions, conceal their sentiments, yea, and very often speak contrary to the sense of their minds; which is such a reproach to good men, and especially to ministers of the gospel, as can never be sufficiently lamented. But it will be said, that this is their fault who do so; and undoubtedly it is; but yet they can never be thought innocent, who, by rigorous severities, lay such strong temptations before men to hypocrisy.

8. Toleration is the greatest friend to truth, and the contrary its greatest enemy; for if the strong will not bear with the weak, neither will the weak bear with the strong; for every man counts himself strong, and thus all will come to condemn, and to execute one another; by which means, truth itself will be banished out of many parts of the world. On the contrary, if toleration did every where prevail, truth would have its full scope, and easily gain ground, by the force of its own arguments.

9. Gentleness and forbearance are the most likely method to bring those that err, to an acknowledgment of the truth, and the contrary method no less likely to hinder both their instruction and amendment; for by condemning and banishing them from our communion, we make them hate us, and

suspect every thing whatever we offer to them ; but if we deal gently with them, and cease not to own them as brethren, they will regard us as their friends, and more readily and impartially consider what we propose for their conviction.

10. From want of this forbearance, arise hatred, strife, quarrels, and schisms in churches and universities, and tumults in civil society. Perhaps it may be said, that schisms are more likely to arise from the toleration of different opinions ; but if the thing be duly considered, it will appear that all these evils have arisen not from toleration or forbearance, which is in itself a meek and harmless thing, but from a contrary spirit, which, if once laid aside, persons might at any time entertain different sentiments, and yet preserve a hearty love for one another.

11. Private christians, but especially ministers, who are engaged and taken up in these controversies, are obliged to neglect several things, wherein their labour might be employed to much better purpose, and where it is more needed ; but especially the life of religion does greatly suffer and decay by this means.

12. Want of this forbearance does make the different sects of christians forget to stand up for one another, and so to disregard, and even give up the common interest. Therefore, the emperor Julian, that he might engage christians in their

mutual destruction, sent for the chief heads of the different sects, and set them on quarrelling together ; knowing well enough, as Ammianus Marcellinus testifies, “ That no savage beasts are more cruel to men, than most christians are to others.”\* And, surely, no one can be ignorant, how much the protestant cause has been weakened by intestine divisions.

13. These differences and animosities give great offence. Wicked men take occasion from them to scoff at christianity, and say that christians have no such thing as certainty in what they believe ; but are continually quarrelling, and tearing one another to pieces, upon controversies of every kind. It is sufficiently known, with what boast and insult, a late sceptic attacked the various schemes concerning predestination, and made his use of the too great rigor with which that argument is generally treated.

14. They, who are against tolerating errors, which are not fundamental, must think themselves infallible ; for, if they thought themselves liable to err, they would also think, that they stood as much in need of forbearance as other persons ; and, therefore, would readily allow the same privilege to others, and say with the poet, *Hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim.*†

\* Ammianus Marcellinus, Lib. xxii. cap. 5.

† Hor. Ars Poet. Ver. 11.



15. If indulgence ought to be allowed to faults and crimes of a lesser nature, which none will deny, why not also to errors of equal degree? What! are moral vices and crimes of a less heinous and offensive nature, than inaccurate notions about things sublime and obscure, which sometimes only reside in the understanding, without having any evil influence upon practice?

16. Besides, the necessity of this forbearance is confirmed from the example of God himself, who does, with such admirable patience and goodness, bear with the infirmities of men, and who has manifested remarkable gentleness and forbearance in all his revelations and dispensations. When he accommodated himself to the gross notions of the Jews, and treated and argued with them after the manner of men, what was this but the most gracious condescension, in bearing with their childish notions, till he had brought them to more manly thoughts? And every considerate person will find more instances than one, of this nature in the christian revelation.

17. This forbearance is also enforced by the example of Christ. How many errors did he bear with in his Apostles and disciples, until the spirit descended like fire upon them, and purged them away? As their errors about the nature of his kingdom, about his death, ceremonies, and the calling of the gentiles. The Apostles in many cases

had but *little faith* ; and yet with admirable gentleness and patience, he bears with their weak faith.

18. This forbearance is also recommended to us from the example of the Apostles, who, though they were infallible, as we have seen before, yet exercised forbearance themselves, and enjoined the practice of it upon others.

19. And herein they were imitated by their successors, the fathers of the primitive church, at least by the best and wisest of them, whose many differences of opinions, and rites, did not disturb the peace of the churches ; as particularly Socrates has shown.\* And, therefore, if any arose, who too rigorously condemned their brethren, and refused them communion ; as Victor about the observation of Easter, and Stephen in the dispute concerning the baptism of heretics ; others stood up and opposed such unchristian attempts, and never scrupled to rebuke them sharply for such things. I confess persecution gained ground, with other evils that sprung up in the church, till at last anathemas and excommunications were thundered out for the merest trifles, without end ; and what innumerable evils arose from hence, every one knows. But Christ never gave his disciples any such instructions ; and the first and best teachers of christianity took no such methods.

\* Hist. Eccles. Lib. v. cap. 22.

*Lastly*, to add no more, the divines of latter times, who have justly been reputed men of learning and wisdom, do all agree with us in this matter. I shall only mention two out of abundance, the one of Zurich, the other of Bern. The former is the famous John Wirtzius, who, in the middle of the last century, was professor of divinity in the university of Zurich. He says, "The foundation of the fellowship and communion of saints upon earth, is 'the one God and Father, one Lord, one faith, one baptism;' and consequently, a consent and agreement in fundamental articles of faith. So that where this foundation is not, or where this agreement in fundamental articles is wanting, there cannot be that fellowship and communion of saints which we make profession of in the Apostles' creed; but the words of St. John do then take place, 'If any come unto you, and bring not this doctrine,' &c. But where the unity of the foundation, and of christian faith does stand firm and unshaken, there is a communion and fellowship of saints, and there it ought to be, and to continue firm, and not at all be shaken, by a disagreement in this or the other point, which do not directly overturn the foundation; as also in rites and ceremonies. For as all differences do not utterly destroy the church, but only those that overturn the foundation of faith; in like manner all differences do not dissolve the fellowship and communion of saints, but only those that directly shake and weaken

the foundation of faith in whole or in part." And presently after ; " In short, agreement in fundamentals, or doctrines necessary to salvation, is requisite to the communion of saints ; also in things not fundamental, in difficult questions, nay, even in rites and ceremonies, agreement would be amiable, and greatly to be desired. But in this imperfect state, and in so great a variety of particular churches, of the customs of places, and of human capacities, it is not to be expected ; yet the communion of saints may continue firm, as long as their consent in fundamentals does so continue."\* Whence he concludes, that the reformed churches may, and ought to come to a union among themselves.

The other is also a man of great note, Benedictus Aretius, a divine of Bern, who lived at the age of the reformation. He, speaking of the unity of the church, tells us, " That it consists in an agreement in the chief articles of true religion, notwithstanding diversity of gifts ;" and repeats it again, " That the unity of the church consists in an agreement in the chief articles of faith ;" and goes on thus ; " We call those the chief articles of faith, which are necessary to salvation, and which are expressly contained in the creed. To come to an agreement in these, is what we call union ; in other things, where persons cannot come to an agreement, diversity of opinions must be allowed ; yea, further,

\* *Disquis. Theol. de Sanctorum Communionem*, § 61, 62, 67, 70.

we may freely own our ignorance in these matters, as St. Austin says, 'It is no reproach to a christian to confess his ignorance in abundance of cases;' which makes against those, who insist upon universal consent, even in the most minute questions, and unless a person will subscribe to every point, are prepared with their thunderbolts, heresies, sects, excommunications, nay, prisons, and death. It were easy to produce proper instances hereof, if there was need; but we know this was never the method approved of by the true church, only some malignant spirits have kindled such flames, that they might obtain the pre-eminence. But let them consider, what an absurd and impossible thing they require; for there never was so perfect and finished a genius in the world, to whose judgment all learned men could see reason to subscribe, and to conform their own private sentiments. And the diversity of gifts seems to speak the same thing; for what if I have not that light that you have, or you that I have, or neither of us what a third hath, shall we therefore go to persecute one another for our different apprehensions of things? No! Religion allows no such thing. But if we examine the thing more thoroughly, this diversity of opinions sometimes has its advantages; for hereby men's abilities are excited, the reason of things is more duly considered, scripture is more carefully examined and compared with itself, arguments are more impartially weighed, and

posterity comes to understand and believe what at first was thought to be absurd.”\* Thus excellently well does he argue.

But we are not insensible, that several things may be objected against this forbearance of persons, who disagree with each other, that we have been pleading for ; which yet may so easily be confuted from what has been already said, that we need not stay particularly to answer them. We shall only observe two things in the general ; one is, that whatever is objected against toleration, or forbearance, is objected also against scripture itself, and particularly against the Apostle Paul, who so earnestly maintained and recommended it to us ; the other is, that if any inconveniences should happen to attend such a toleration, or forbearance, let it be remembered, there are more, and greater by far, that attend the contrary ; which is not an ungrounded assertion, but abundantly confirmed by the experience of all ages, as all who are acquainted with the state of the church in ancient or latter times, will readily own.

\* *Problematum Theologicorum parte III. cap. de Concordia Ecclesiarum.*

## CHAP. VIII.

*Fundamental difference between Protestants and the Church of Rome.*

WHAT has been hitherto said, has been mostly in generals ; we will now briefly propose an instance of a *fundamental* difference, and another of a difference *not fundamental* : both which we shall take from the neighbouring and most considerable societies of christians in the world. And hereby the use and application of the rules, which we have laid down, will be made to appear.

There is not a more striking instance of the former any where to be met with, than in our separation from the Church of Rome, which before we go about to explain, there needs a few things to be cleared. *First*, to form a right judgment of the Romish religion, we are not to regard the sentiments of this, or that private man, or of this or that private doctor ; but we are to regard public acts, decrees of councils, which, in their account, have the authority of law ; and the constant usage of their church, which has never been condemned, but carefully enjoined and applauded. *Secondly*, it must be owned, the papists do admit all the fundamental points of the christian religion, but yet by another way, which has been already taken notice of, do effectually strike at the foundation itself, by adding

to, or building such things upon the foundation, as do loosen, and in a great measure destroy it. *Thirdly*, yet all the errors of the papists are not of the same consequence ; some, indeed, are tolerable, but others cannot by any means be borne with. *Fourthly*, we must also distinguish between different times ; for some things might very well be borne with, at a time when there was less light, and errors were not so thoroughly established, and a greater liberty was allowed men to differ ; which things at another time, and in other circumstances, would be perfectly intolerable, after greater light had shined forth, and greater advantages were given to discover the truth ; and after those things, which formerly were left free and undetermined, were passed into the form of a law. *Fifthly*, we must make a great difference between our judging of men, and our judging of things ; and, indeed, the best way is to pass no judgment at all upon men, but to leave them to the judgment of God, unless we have uncontestable evidence to go by. But we are allowed to judge freely of things, of doctrines, of worship, and discipline, from the word of God.

These things being premised, we shall briefly offer the following arguments to show that our dissent from the church of Rome is fundamental, and consequently that we can have no communion with her, as matters now stand.



1. Since they require us to believe, and to profess, as articles of our faith, things, which we do not believe, which we know to be false, yea, which we are fully persuaded are absurd and contradictory, certainly, we cannot, with a safe conscience, communicate with them, but must be hypocrites in a matter, which of all others is the most weighty and important, and in which persons cannot dissemble, without incurring the greatest guilt. Thus, they require us to believe *transubstantiation*, though we know it is attended with endless absurdities and contradictions. They require us to believe *purgatory*, and the interest and intercession of their saints in heaven, besides many other things, which at least are doubtful, nay, and some of them plainly false, and contrary to scripture. Let a man but read the *Confession of Faith* of Pope Pius IV. which is drawn up according to the determinations of the *Council of Trent*, and joined to its decrees, and he will presently see, that all who differ from it, are condemned, anathematized, and, consequently, that they cannot live in that communion without hypocrisy.

But, it may be said, all persons are not obliged to believe these things; it is sufficient only to submit to the church. But besides many reasons against submitting to the church, which we shall see hereafter, all they that do so submit, are by that very act bound to submit to all the decrees of their councils.

and consequently to those doctrines, of which we have been speaking.

It will be replied, that the Council of Trent hath not been received in all places, namely, in France. But *first*, in those very places, where the decrees of the council concerning discipline, are not admitted, as in France, yet their decrees concerning matters of faith are ; which are the things we are now speaking of. *Secondly*, most of those things, which were determined in the Council of Trent, had been determined before in some preceding councils ; as the *worship of images* in the second Council of Nice, and *transubstantiation* in the Council of Lateran, in the year 1215.

2. Another insuperable reason, why we cannot hold communion with them, is the doctrine of the Church of Rome concerning the supreme rule, or the supreme judge of controversies of faith. If any thing is important, or fundamental in religion, this is undoubtedly so, namely, What is the rule of faith ? Who is the supreme judge in religious matters ? Where is the supreme authority lodged, which ought to determine and regulate all our belief ? There, if any where, we may apply the words of Lucretius,\*

————— in fabricâ, si prava est regula prima,  
Normaque si fallax rectis regionibus exit,  
Et libella aliquâ si ex parti claudicat hilum ;  
Omnia mendose fieri, atque obstipa, necessum est,  
Prava, cubantia, prona, supina, atque absona tecta.

\* Lib. iv. ver. 516.

For if any thing is admitted as a rule of faith, which is fallacious, and liable to mistake, a door is hereby opened for all errors, and the greatest absurdities ; but such is the rule, such the judge, and such the principle, which the Church of Rome holds, when she makes the *Church*, meaning herself, the infallible rule of faith, and supreme judge of controversies, to whom all are bound to submit.

Now, lest they should say we reject this principle, without giving any reason, we shall briefly offer two or three things only which seem to be unexceptionable. And,

1. If any proof is valid, that a person is not infallible, this undoubtedly is so ; if it be certain that he has actually erred, and that in a very gross and palpable manner, and very often too ; but especially, if he has decreed those things which are absurd, impossible, and imply many plain contradictions. But the Church of Rome did so decree in the case of *transubstantiation* ; and consequently this instance alone is sufficient utterly to overthrow that principle.

2. There is no need of taking any great pains to overthrow the popish rule of faith ; we may sit still, and at a distance behold them opposing one another. For if the church is infallible, this infallibility must reside either in the Pope, or in Councils ; or in Pope and Councils both together. But the Gallican Church hath abundantly shown, that the Pope is not infallible ; and the Italians, on the other hand, have

as plainly shown, that Councils are not. And each side frequently rejects the decrees of Pope and Councils together ; so that we may hold our peace, and be quiet, and they themselves will destroy one another, and sufficiently demonstrate the defect of their own rule.

And that these intestine divisions amongst them are not a light and trivial matter, is abundantly evident, from innumerable other quarrels, which have been carried on with great warmth in former times ; but especially from the present dispute about the Constitution *Unigenitus* ; for great part of the Gallican Church does charge the Pope, in their public writings, with grievous errors in matters of faith, and moral principles, and in matters of discipline too. On the other hand, the Pope takes frequent occasion to anathematize those that oppose him. Some bishops take part with the Pope, others are against him, and it is not yet known what will be the issue of so warm a contention. Now, what madness and folly would it be for us to involve ourselves in controversies of so great importance, about the most important question of all others, namely, the rule of faith ; whereir, to speak the truth, both sides seem to conquer in attacking their adversary's cause, and both to be conquered, when they come to state and defend their own ?

3. We have yet greater reason to reject their rule, when we consider that it destroys all certainty of

faith, and necessarily introduces skepticism ; for that we may be certain of the authority of the church, it must be discovered to us, either by the light of nature, or by scripture, or by the determinations of the church herself. But it cannot be known by the light of nature, for there is no such principle in nature, that there is an infallible church ; nor from scripture, as may be inferred from their own confession, for they say, that the authority and sense of scripture itself, does depend upon the church, and cannot be known but by her assistance ; and those texts, that are brought to prove this matter, are very foreign to the purpose. Nor, lastly, can it be known from the church herself ; for, to say that we are to believe the church, because the church has so determined, is ridiculously to take for granted what ought to be proved.

Nor is it sufficient to know, that there is a church, yea, an infallible one ; but we ought to know which and where that is, and by whom she makes known her mind. Concerning which things, we have already shown how greatly they differ and contradict one another.

And if we were certain thus far, we ought to know further, in what things the church cannot err ; whether in matters of *fact*, as well as in matters of *right* ; and in matters of *discipline*, as well as of *doctrine*.

Moreover, we ought to know all that is necessary to make the determinations of the church valid, that they may have the force of a law. If they are Pope's Bulls, we ought to know when they are to be esteemed authoritative, when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra*. If they are the Decrees of Councils, we ought to be informed, when they are lawfully assembled, who are the true members that ought to be present, what is the due form of proceeding, and when they are truly General Councils, which things make the popish rule of faith the most uncertain thing in the world. And, hence, every one may see what reason we have to reject it.

4. But one of the principal reasons, which make us call our difference with the papists a fundamental one, is taken from the business of worship, which is not only very different from, but such as can never be reconciled and brought to the same form with ours. For that worship, which is used in the Church of Rome, and which she enjoins upon pain of excommunication, and for the neglect of which she inflicts the greatest temporal punishments, the same we count sinful, unlawful, contrary to the word of God, and full of superstition and idolatry; as the adoration of the host, images, reliques, and the cross; and the invocation of saints and angels. We do not now enter into the debate whether we herein mistake or not; this, however, is certain, that as long as we are of this mind, we cannot possibly join with a

church that ordains such worship; for, as the Apostle says in a like case, "What communion hath light with darkness? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"\* From whence he immediately draws this inference, in the words of the prophet, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch no unclean thing, saith the Lord."

The force of which reasoning will be increased by the following observations, which we shall only mention. *First*, this difference is not speculative, but altogether practical; for the whole affair of divine worship turns upon it, and, therefore, nothing can be of greater weight and importance than this matter. *Secondly*, the design of christianity, nay, the very essence and foundation of it, is to reclaim mankind from the worship of creatures, and things which by nature are not God, to the worship of the only true God. Whence it appears to be presumption in those, who, contrary hereunto, attempt to call us off from the true God to the worship of creatures and dumb idols. *Thirdly*, however this worship may be palliated, and speciously defended, yet it is so evident in fact, and the practice of it so publicly allowed of, that it cannot be called into question. *Fourthly*, this argument is as plain as can be; nothing can be more evident and obvious to the capacity of every one; there is no need of acuteness and

\* 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 16.

sagacity to discern it. The rule of God's word is very plain on the one hand, and the contrary practice is as obvious on the other.

5. As their errors in doctrine are exceeding gross, and their superstitions in worship not to be borne with, so the tyranny of their government is so great, that we can by no means submit to such a yoke. For here we see the papal monarchy obtained by mere usurpation; laws enacted in perfect opposition to the laws of Christ; dispensations from the divine law readily granted, as in the case of marriages; and absolutions from oaths indulged to kings and princes, to the subversion of all society; such a mass of laws about ceremonies, as does effectually bring us back again to judaism and heathenism; christian liberty entirely abolished, anathemas denounced against those who differ from them even in the most trifling things, as in the number of the sacraments; fines and imprisonments, gibbets, stakes, the inquisition, with the like wholesome severities; all which give us such an abhorrence of the popish communion, that as long as the authority of the Pope continues, we can never think of submitting to his discipline, or of leaving our lives, and the comfort of them, our faith and conscience, at his mercy.

In a word, let them shake off the popish yoke, which the papists themselves begin to be sufficiently sensible is intolerable; let no violence be ever offered to conscience; let all men judge of religion from the



word of God only ; let every thing that savours of idolatry be banished from their worship, and then we shall not be backward, but readily concert measures towards a reconciliation and union with them.

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CHAP. IX.

*Differences between Protestants not Fundamental.*

WE have seen an instance of a fundamental difference ; but the difference of those, who have agreed in shaking off the papal yoke, is quite of another nature ; some of whom, for distinction's sake, are called *Lutherans*, and others *Reformed*. And whosoever calmly and impartially considers the differences amongst them, will easily perceive, that they are by no means such as should hinder mutual forbearance and christian harmony, which has been always greatly wanted, but is more especially necessary to both sides in the present juncture.

And, that we may make our way the more easy, we shall premise three things. *First*, we do not mean that persons should be required to change their opinions, which, as it would be unjust to insist upon, so it would be impossible to accomplish ; but, only that those, who entertain different sentiments, should bear with one another ; which to persons of piety and

moderation ought not to be reckoned any great difficulty. *Secondly*, we are not in this matter to regard the too rigid determinations, or the imprudent writings and expressions, or the odd opinions of particular persons, but only public records, or confessions by princes, or churches, which, whatever authority they may have, yet in the opinion of protestants are not infallible, but are to be judged of by the rule of scripture. *Thirdly*, the opinions of each side are never to be confounded with the consequences of them, whether they be truly or falsely deduced; and consequences ought never to be charged upon any, who do not own them, but it may be abhor them, unless the case be so plain and palpable, and so universally acknowledged, that no one, who owns the principle, can possibly deny the consequence.

These things being premised, let us see in short how far protestants agree with one another, and in comparison hereof, how small their disagreement is; whence it will appear how easy, yea, how reasonable and necessary it is for them to come to that forbearance and unity of which we speak.

How considerable and important their agreement is, may be understood by comparing together their *Confessions of faith*; yea, it is very evident, by considering the *Augsburgh Confession* alone, which both sides receive and acknowledge. Both sides agree that the Word of God contained in the Scriptures, is the only rule of faith, by which rule all

human traditions and sanctions are to be judged of; that the only true God is the object of all religious worship, and that the least show of devotion is not to be paid to angels, or saints, to crosses, or reliques, or to any images of wood, or stone, or the like. Both sides place all their hope of pardon and salvation in Christ alone; in his merits, and promises. Both agree, that the benefits purchased by Christ, and consequently eternal salvation, are not to be obtained but by faith and repentance, and that not by a dead faith, but such as works by love, and by repentance, that is sincere, and demonstrated by a life of good works. Both solemnize the sacraments of baptism, and the Lord's supper, according to the command of Christ, without those many inventions of men, by which these holy mysteries have been greatly abused and corrupted; and so conform themselves to the wholesome institution of Christ, by which his love is ratified to us. Both acknowledge, that prayers and praises, thanksgivings and almsdeeds, our bodies, and even our whole selves, are the true offerings and sacrifices which we are to present unto God, and renounce that unbloody sacrifice, which others have added, as impious and absurd. Both believe, that there are but two ends of all men, eternal glory and eternal misery, and reject that middle state of purgatory, which some, contrary to the Word of God, have devised merely to support their avarice and superstition. And in short, all the principles of the christian

faith, without exception, are received in common on both sides, together with an abhorrence of the errors and superstitions of popery. Nor, indeed, can it be imagined how persons, who seriously consider these things, and are suitably affected, with the importance of them, can be satisfied to break the bond of fellowship, and refrain from worshipping God together, upon account of some few and trivial differences about things that are obscure.

Such is their agreement; in comparison of which, as is now evident, and may easily be proved, their disagreement is small and inconsiderable. We shall not stay here, to take notice of some small differences in ritual matters, as about the use of tapers, images, confession, and exorcism in baptism, which are not the same every where, and ought to be no obstacle to a hearty union; for every church may enjoy its own particular usages, and the observation of these things be left at liberty, and not be obliged to a constant invariable form herein, as is acknowledged in the confessions of both sides; nor shall we touch upon some less differences in matters of opinion, which are either disputes about words only, or peculiar tenets of private divines rather than of whole churches; or, it may be, only consequences drawn from some principles, which are by no means to be charged on the churches themselves. All these things we shall pass over for the present, and briefly give our judgment, and that with freedom

and a desire to promote peace, concerning three principal controversies only, which seem to be all that are of any moment, and which alone use to be regarded in this matter.

The first question, therefore, is, Whether the body of Christ be truly and substantially present in the eucharist ?

Though this at first sight may seem to be a controversy of very great moment, yet, if we look more narrowly into it, and consider what is granted on both sides, we shall have different apprehensions of it ; for both sides grant, that the bread and wine are truly present, and continue all the time of the celebration ; and, therefore, are not converted or transubstantiated into the body of Christ. On the other hand, both sides agree that Christ is truly present, yea, that his body and blood are truly exhibited, and are so far present as the nature of a sacrament requires. They both agree, that the body and blood of Christ are not present in a gross and sensible manner, so as to be included in that place ; that they are not present after the manner of bodies, but after the manner of spirits, or in a spiritual manner ; yea, are no more nor less present than as the nature and end of a sacrament require, and therefore only in a *sacramental manner*, which is an expression admitted and used on both sides. Further, both sides equally condemn the abuses and superstitions of the Church of Rome, as transubstantiation, the

sacrifice of the mass, withholding the cup from the laity, the procession, elevation, and adoration of the host. Finally, both sides are fully satisfied that bodily eating, such as is performed by good and bad men alike, does not avail us to salvation, but only that which is performed by faith. To which purpose one might bring a plain testimony from Luther,\* and a no less remarkable one from Brentius;† which, for brevity's sake, we omit. What difference does now remain? Not any concerning the presence itself; for both sides confess, if we would speak accurately, that the body of Christ is only so far present as the nature and end of the sacrament require. All the difference, therefore, is concerning the manner of his presence, one side contenting themselves with believing such a sort of presence as is plain and easy to be conceived, and agreeable to the style of scripture, the other imagining that Christ is present in some wonderful and incomprehensible manner, which to the former seems to be of no manner of use, and attended with unsurmountable difficulties, and therefore they cannot admit of it. This is the whole subject of difference; and what there is in this that affects the foundation of faith in the least, we cannot see, or what should hinder such persons from bearing with one another, till God

\* In Catechismo minori.

† In Syngrammate Suevorum; tum in exegesi in Joannem.

grant greater light to those who are under a mistake in the matter.

Neither is there any greater weight in that other question, which arises out of the former, concerning the person of Christ, Whether the divine perfections, such as omnipresence, omnipotence, and the like, are communicated to his human nature? For each side owns all, that is important in this matter, namely, the two natures of Christ, and the union of both, to be without any change, or division, or mixture of either; that the properties of both natures are ascribed to Christ; and, finally, that this mystery of godliness, concerning "God manifest in the flesh," is a thing very sublime, far above the comprehension of men. Other things, which remain doubtful, are so obscure in themselves, and come to little more than a debate about words, that it must be a very hard case, as that excellent man and divine, John Lewis Fabricius,\* has observed, and proceed from great want of charity, if persons, who do not exactly agree in such things, cannot regard each other as brethren notwithstanding.

There remains a third controversy, concerning predestination; a matter that was never brought into dispute in Luther's time, nor many years after, but seems to have broke out first in the quarrel between Zanchy and Marbachius, about the year 1561. However, Zanchy did not deny a general will in God

\* In Meditatione circa Personam Christi.

to save all men if they believed, as may be seen in his writings;\* neither did he teach any thing more rigid about election and reprobation, than Luther himself has done.† This controversy afterwards increased, and is now reckoned by most persons to be the chief of all. But though some branches of it may be greatly magnified, as those questions which are concerning universal and particular grace; Whether election depends upon foreseen faith? Whether the grace of God be resistible or irresistible? And whether believers may fall from grace or not? Yet those, who diligently consider the matter, will see, that upon the whole there is a great agreement between them; and that such as are herein mistaken, though we do not now inquire who they are, may nevertheless be very good christians. For both sides agree, *First*, that God is the author of every good thing; but that all evil comes from ourselves. *Secondly*, that man is a free agent, worthy of honour or reproach, and inexcusable whenever he sins against God. *Thirdly*, that every man, who believes and repents, is readily accepted of God; and that it is very pleasing to him for any one thus to believe and repent. *Fourthly*, that all, who perish, do so through their own fault; that God is not at all wanting to them, or any way accessory hereunto; and, therefore, that their destruction is no way

\* Depuls. Calumn.

† In Lib. de Servo Arbitrio, aliisque in locis.



to be charged upon him. *Fifthly*, that nothing comes to pass in time, but what was determined or permitted to be in the eternal decrees of God. *Sixthly*, that God did by one most simple act thus decree all things. *Seventhly*, that God will render to every man according to his works, and proceed in the judgment of all with the greatest equity, wisdom, and clemency. And, *lastly*, that in all these questions concerning the ways and counsels of God, there are many things, which are far above our comprehension, many things, the reasons and manner of which we cannot account for. And here both sides are ready to cry out in the words of the Apostle, "O the depths," &c. and acknowledge that they are very well adapted to this controversy.

To all which if we add the following things; *first*, that Luther has spoken as harshly of these things, if not more so, than any of the reformed. *Secondly*, that Melancthon, who had far more moderate sentiments in these things, and whom the Lutherans do now follow, did nevertheless maintain great friendship with both Luther and Calvin as long as they lived. *Thirdly*, that many of the reformed divines, as Bullinger, that great man, and superintendent of Zurich, did plainly approach to Melancthon's judgment,\* for which reason he was said to *melancthonise*. *Fourthly*, that a great part of the

\* As may be seen in several of his works, but especially in his Oration "de Moderatione servandâ in negotio Prædestinationis," &c.

reformed at present, namely, almost all the English bishops, the divines of Brandenburg, and many others, do either agree with the Lutherans in these points, or come very near them. *Fifthly*, that those of the reformed, that are most rigid in their notions of predestination, abhor every impious consequence, that may be deduced from thence, and follow after holiness themselves, and urge it upon others as much as any. If all these things were considered and duly weighed by a pious and peaceable mind, it would appear, that arduous and sublime questions about predestination ought by no means to separate men in affection from one another, and to hinder love and concord; but every man should enjoy his own opinions without raising jealousies, and molesting others upon such matters; much less would one expect, that the communion of the church, and the common rights of christians, should be suspended upon so perplexed and obscure a point.

What has been said concerning the small importance of such controversies, and the reasonableness of exercising forbearance in these things, will receive further confirmation by observing what follows, which we shall but mention, and leave to the pious and peaceable christian to consider and enlarge upon; *first*, that all these questions reside in the understanding only, and have little or no influence upon our worship and practice; for which reason we easily may, and certainly ought to bear with one another's dif-

ferent sentiments. *Secondly*, that they are things above common capacities, and indeed little more than scholastic questions. *Thirdly*, there are many christians on both sides, who, it may be, have never heard of these disputes, or understand very little of them, or are mistaken about them, or who are doubtful, and never could assent either way; and whether these are to be debarred the hope of salvation, or to be excluded from the communion of the church, we desire our Lutheran brethren calmly to consider. *Fourthly*, the dispute is not so much about things themselves, as the mode and circumstances of them; as has been already observed. *Fifthly*, these questions do not so much concern good men as bad, that is, the admission of persons unworthy, and God's decrees concerning the reprobate. Why should not we therefore pass by them, and make it our business to be found in the number of the faithful? *Sixthly*, both sides design well; therefore if they do not merit praise, they ought however to be excused. *Seventhly*, too much of human frailty has been very visible in these disputes already, preposterous zeal, intemperate anger, and too plain instances of ambition and vainglory. These passions have too much prevailed, and it is high time now to allay and suppress them. *Eighthly*, there are exceeding great and almost insuperable difficulties on both sides, especially about the doctrine of predestination. *Ninthly*, the controversy about predestination has

been debated in all ages, in all places, and by persons of all persuasions. *Tenthly*, there have been great and considerable men on both sides, men that we cannot easily condemn, and should be loth to reject from our communion ; such as St. Chrysestom, and the fathers of the first ages on one side, and St. Austin, with a vast number of followers on the other. Should these men be raised, and live again in our day, how readily should we embrace them ! At least, we could not think of casting them out of the church, and debarring them the offices of it. *Eleventhly*, we may learn wisdom in this matter from our very adversaries, the papists, who, though they are generally very rigid, and the greatest enemies to toleration, yet, in this very affair, and in things of greater moment too, bear with one another's different sentiments, and retain both parties in their communion. *Twelfthly*, the questions, which are now the matter of debate, were quite left out of the Augsburgh Confession, as was acknowledged by divines of both sides in the conference at Leipsic. *Thirteenthly*, there are many other differences of opinion, not only of equal importance, but far greater, which yet are patiently borne with on both sides ; and why should not the like moderation be used in these ? *Lastly*, to add no more, I would only ask one thing ; can it be any where shown, that God, the "only Lawgiver," and "who alone has power to save and to destroy." has ever determined that those

doctrines, which are controverted among protestants, are necessary to be known, in one or other determinate sense, in order to salvation? Or that the opposite errors do exclude men from salvation? To say that he has, would show great rashness, and betray a mind blinded with party zeal. But if the great Judge of the world has determined no such thing, what arrogance is it for such as we to desire to be thought more righteous and more rigid than God himself?

Hitherto, therefore, it has been plainly shown, that there is so great an agreement among protestants, and that their disagreement is so inconsiderable, that they may very well exercise mutual forbearance, and enter into a hearty union with one another. But we shall go a step further, and venture to assert, that this is not a matter left to our liberty, but of the utmost necessity and most strict obligation, whether we regard conscience or prudence. And first, with regard to conscience; for, if this disagreement does not hinder but persons, who so differ, may be good christians, and true members of the church, communion must necessarily be held with them; which, if we deny, we are guilty of violating the great law of charity, and of rending asunder the body of Christ; for Christ has declared that all his disciples *should be one*; and St. Paul directs, that the “*unity of the spirit be kept in the bond of peace* ;” as we have endeavoured to show

in chapter seventh, by a great number and force of arguments. But no one has pressed this matter more strongly, as far as it concerns the controversies that are among protestants, than the most pious and great lover of peace, Samuel Werenfels, to whose excellent treatise we refer the reader.\*

But such a union is no less necessary from the laws of prudence, than from the obligations of duty and conscience; for, who can be ignorant how many evils have sprung up from the violation of it? What hatred, strife, and wars; what a pernicious custom of endless debates and slander; what loss of time; what a visible decay of piety and charity; what a hindrance to reformation; and what triumphs of the papists and other adversaries; when all the good effects, contrary to these evils, might be procured by the agreement we have been recommending.

However, lest any one should pretend that what we have been proposing is indeed an excellent and laudable design, and greatly to be desired, but no more likely ever to be accomplished, than squaring the circle, or finding the philosopher's stone; this difficulty, though it be not altogether imaginary, yet we shall remove it in a few words. For what hinders, but that which has formerly and elsewhere been often accomplished, if not in all churches, nor perhaps upon a lasting foundation, yet in many

\* *Considerationes generales de Ratione uniendi Ecclesias Protestantas.*

places, and at divers times, may be effected again, nay, and become universal? There are several known instances of such a union, which are before every one's eyes, namely, at Marpurg, 1529; at Wittenburg, 1536; at Sendomir, and other places of Poland and Bohemia, 1570 and the following years; at Leipsic, 1631; at Charenton the same year; at Cassel 1661; and at Koningsberg in Prussia not long since. To these we may add many acts of the diets in Germany, from the beginning of the reformation, even to the present times, in which the reformed have been acknowledged as brethren of the Augsburg confession, and are still so accounted. To all which may be added innumerable writings of princes and states, churches and universities, as likewise pious and moderate men on both sides, who have endeavoured to persuade to such a union, to promote and recommend it, and laid down proper methods to effect it. And the famous and learned Christ. Matth. Pfalfius, a divine of Tubingen, has very lately professed himself to be of the number of such pious persons, and lovers of peace, with great honour, and the applause of all good men, for as to any small difference that remains, it is not worthy to be regarded; who declares, "That the coalition of protestants has hitherto been prevented, not through any defect in the thing itself, but through the faults of men."\* And elsewhere

\* *Dissert. de Articulis Fundamentalibus.*

he judiciously examines into the importance of those controversies that are among protestants, and shows they are not fundamental.\*



## CHAP. X.

### *Advices to promote Agreement and Forbearance.*

WHAT remains, is only to add some short advices, which may be of use towards effecting this agreement and forbearance; which we shall submit to the examination of all pious readers, and lovers of peace.

1. It is necessary for all to preserve a true and just sense of christianity continually in mind; not such as is made up of some obscure notions, or scholastic niceties, but which consists in the new creature, that is, in true piety and real virtue.

2. The importance of all doctrines and controversies ought to be carefully examined by the word of God, and by the laws of prudence, that a mountain may not be made of a mole hill, nor hay and stubble be made the foundation of christianity.

3. When matters are really obscure and doubtful, our assent ought to be withheld; we should not be wise above what is written, but use caution and

\* Instituti. Theologic. Dogmat. & Moral.



sobriety, according to the measure of light, which God has granted us.

4. It is to be desired, that we may never suffer that first, and truly fundamental principle of the reformation, *That the Holy Scripture is the only rule of our faith*, to be forgotten ; and consequently, that we may never subject our faith to any assemblies of men, or to any human decisions, whatever authority or learning they may be possessed of ; but that we may try all things, whatever they may be, by the rule of God's word.

5. We ought always to bear in mind, that we ourselves are very liable to err ; and so we shall not be too tenacious of the opinions we have formerly entertained, but be always ready to receive further light, and hearken to the admonitions of others.

6. All those questions, that are disputed among protestants, which surmount the capacities of common people, and contribute nothing towards promoting piety, or holiness, ought never to be referred to them.

7. And when such questions are disputed in schools, it ought to be with the utmost modesty and humility ; and at the same time it ought to be shown that these things do not belong to the foundation of faith.

8. In such questions, and all that are equally intricate, the very words of scripture ought to be used, as much as possible, and the notions and terms

of the schoolmen ought with equal care to be avoided ; by which method we shall proceed with greater safety to ourselves, we shall stop the mouths of gainsayers, and make the way to the union of the church more plain and easy to all.

9. Our moderation should be uniform towards all men, and in all places alike ; that it may not be objected to us, that we are disposed to peaceable measures with our fellow christians abroad, but rigid and morose towards those with whom we live.

10. Let us continually endeavour to obtain further measures of piety and holiness, and to grow confirmed therein ; and also, to instil the same into others, which is the crown of all ; by which means we shall find no time for vain and unprofitable questions, “ which minister nothing to edification.”

11. We ought to have that fundamental precept of Christ our Lord always before our eyes, whereby he has so strictly enjoined all his disciples *to love one another*, and to put it into practice towards our dissenting brethren. For we must not imagine that these little diversities of opinions among us, are a sufficient excuse for the breach of charity.

12. Our charity must not be shown by speaking and acting in a private manner only ; but when occasion offers, and our brethren consent, we should readily join with them at the holy communion. For why should not this solemn commemoration of our Lord’s death, and this peculiar expression of chris-

tian charity, be left in common to all, who agree with us in the principal parts of christianity, though they differ in some minute and circumstantial articles.

*Lastly*, as it is incumbent upon us to behave ourselves in such a manner, so we ought in our several stations, and according to the influence we have, both by our words and actions, to instil the same spirit of meekness into others. Let princes, magistrates and ministers, do each their part, and then we may hope, that these seeds of moderation and forbearance, being watered by the dew of heaven, will happily spring up, and bring forth the most pleasant fruit, to the glory of God, the edification and union of the church, and our own eternal salvation, according to the Apostle, "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."\*

\* James iii. 18.



ESSAYS OF ABAUZIT. T



## ABAUZIT.

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FIRMIN ABAUZIT, the author of the following Essays, was descended from an Arabian family, which settled in the south of France as early as the ninth century. He was born at Uzes, in the Department of Gard, November 11th, 1679. His father died during the son's infancy, and he was left to the charge of his mother at a time of great trouble and peril. His parents professed the protestant faith, and he was only six years old when the memorable revocation of the edict of Nantes threatened to extinguish the flame of religious liberty, and to crush all the Protestants in France under the weight of an ecclesiastical tyranny, or to torture them with the iron rod of persecution.

The Roman Catholic priests of his native town wished to force him from his mother, and to educate him in their college. She at first eluded their attempts by sending him secretly from home. His place of residence, however, was discovered, and he was brought back and compelled to reside in the

college, till his mother found means effectually to release him from the hands of her persecutors, and remove him beyond their reach. After wandering for a long time in concealment among the mountains of Cevennes, he at length found an asylum in Geneva. His mother was seized, in revenge of his escape, and confined in the castle of Somieres where she was treated with such severity as to be thrown into a fever, which nearly terminated her life. After suffering in confinement two years, she gained her liberty, and hastened to Geneva, where she had the joy of meeting her son, and the happiness of retaining her religious opinions unmolested.

During her persecutions in France, she had been deprived of almost all her fortune, which was once considerable, and she was left with a scanty provision for the education of her son. By practising a rigid economy, however, and teaching him to copy her example, she contrived to procure for him all the advantages, which the schools of Geneva afforded. He engaged with such eagerness in his studies, as ensured him a rapid progress, and soon made him master not only of polite learning and literature in general, but of several branches of science and philosophy. For a time he was particularly devoted to theology, but antiquities, the exacter sciences, natural philosophy, mathematics, and natural history, were his more favourite topics. He also made great proficiency in the ancient languages.



After having thus successfully pursued his studies at Geneva, he travelled into Holland before he was twenty years old. There he became acquainted with some of the first literary men of the age, especially Bayle, Jurieu, and the Basnages. From Holland he went over to England, where he also had the good fortune to enjoy the society and esteem of men of great eminence, among whom were St. Evremond, and Sir Isaac Newton. So favourable an impression did he make, that King William wished to retain him in England, and proposed to him very advantageous conditions. But his mother was in Geneva, and filial affection called on him to reject every offer, which would deprive her of his immediate protection. He went again into Holland, and, after a short excursion in Germany, returned to Geneva where he fixed his permanent residence. The freedom of the city was presented to him, and he was solicited to accept a professor's chair, which he declined. He consented, however, to fill the office of librarian. At different times he was member of the legislative body of the little republic of Geneva, the duties of which office he discharged with great wisdom and discretion.

But the departments of knowledge, to which he seemed to be more peculiarly devoted, were the natural sciences. He was well known to all the distinguished mathematicians and philosophers in Europe. The philosophical principles of Newton

early engaged his attention, and found in him an able and zealous advocate. He defended them against the attacks of Fontenelle and Castel, and even detected an error in the *Principia* at a time when very few men in Europe could understand the work. This error was acknowledged by Sir Isaac Newton himself, and corrected in a subsequent edition. He had so high an opinion of the merits of Abauzit, that he held a correspondence with him, and in one of his letters pays him this compliment; "You are a very fit man to judge between Leibnitz and me."

Abauzit was, also, profoundly versed in ancient history, geography, and chronology; and drew several maps and charts, which threw much light on these subjects. Sir Isaac Newton altered an important date in his chronology in conformity with the opinion of Abauzit. His knowledge, indeed, was extensive in the whole circle of antiquities, and in almost every branch of human attainment. In proof of this a remarkable instance is mentioned by his biographers. Soon after Rousseau had written the article on the Music of the Ancients in the Encyclopedia, for which purpose he had consulted the books in the French king's library, he had an accidental conversation with Abauzit, whom he found so well informed on the subject, that he supposed him to have just finished an investigation. "It is ten years," replied Abauzit, "since I quitted this branch of science." This is an evidence, among many others, that his memory

was not inferior to his ardour, his judgment, or his industry.

In theology his researches were deep. His knowledge of the ancient languages qualified him to be a critic ; and his good judgment, moderation, and love of truth, enabled him to throw off the trammels of prejudice, and enter upon his inquiries with a fair mind. The results, for the most part, were rational views of the christian religion, and a spirit of toleration and forbearance rarely to be found at that period. His theological writings consist chiefly of short articles on various subjects. They were collected and printed in a volume separate from his other works. The longest of these is on the Apocalypse, which was drawn up at the request of William Burnet, Governour of New York, who was one of Abauzit's correspondents. In this article the author inquires into the manner in which the canon of the New Testament was formed, and states at some length the opinions of all the ancient Fathers respecting the authenticity of the Apocalypse. The same volume contains a treatise on Idolatry, and a letter on the Doctrine of the Romish Church, both of which manifest much depth of research, and close reflection.

From this volume, which was translated by Dr. Harwood, and printed in London, 1774, the Essays here given to the public are selected. It is unnecessary to remark on their object, or their merits, as every reader can judge for himself. They exhibit

the views of a great and a good man on some of the most important topics of christian theology.

It would be unpardonable, perhaps, not to introduce here the glowing portraiture, which Rousseau has drawn of Abauzit, more especially as it is said to be the only eulogium, that ever escaped this author's pen upon a living person.

“Not that this age of philosophy,” said Rousseau, “will pass without having produced one true philosopher. I know one, and only one, I confess; but what I consider the highest point of happiness is, that he dwells in my native country. Shall I dare openly name him, whose true glory it is to have remained unknown? Wise and modest Abauzit, let your sublime simplicity pardon in my heart a zeal, which has not your fame for its object. No, it is not you, that I would make known in this age so unworthy to admire you; it is Geneva, which I would make illustrious by your residence there; on my fellow citizens I would bestow the honour, which they render to you. Happy is the country where the merit, which conceals itself, is the most esteemed; happy the people where presumptuous youth ceases to dogmatize, and blushes at its vain knowledge, before the learned ignorance of the wise. Venerable and virtuous old man, your fame has never been sounded by empty wits; no noisy Academician has attempted your elogy. You have not, like them, deposited all your wisdom in books; you

have displayed it in your life for an example to the country, which you have adopted and loved, and by which you are respected. You have lived like Socrates ; but he died by the hand of his fellow citizens, while you are cherished by yours.”\*

Such was the tribute bestowed by a man of genius, who was by no means accustomed to overrate the merits of others.

Abauzit died on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, 1767, at the advanced age of eighty seven, deeply lamented by his friends and the republic. Through his whole life he sought retirement and quiet. It was his delight rather to communicate pleasure to his friends, than to gain the applause of the world ; his conversation was animated and instructive, and his deportment affable and engaging. He was amiable and modest, generous and kind, without any selfish interests to promote, or dreams of ambition to realize. He was simple in his manners, frank and independent in his intercourse with men, decided in his opinions, a lover of liberty, and a friend to universal freedom and toleration in religion. If, indeed, it can be said of any man, that in him were combined the characters of a true philosopher, a profound scholar, and a sincere christian, this may with the strictest truth be said of Abauzit.

\* Œuvres de J. J. Rousseau, Genève, 1782, tom. v. p. 258



## ESSAYS OF ABAUZIT.

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### *On Mysteries in Religion.*

MYSTERIES are a source of disputation and of division among christians. Some would totally banish them from religion ; others, not content with those which it may admit, create themselves a pleasure in augmenting the number of them, and multiply them to infinity. What side ought one to take in this dispute ? Is there no middle path to pursue, between these two opposite extremes ? This is what I design to canvass in the ensuing discourse. To this purpose we will first observe the different senses which this word *mystery* may admit. Secondly, we will examine in what sense we may say that there are mysteries in religion ; and in what manner one is obliged to submit to those which it contains. In the last place, we will deduce from the principles laid down, some general reflections on the conduct which christians ought to observe with regard to mysteries.

The word *mystery* in general signifies a *thing concealed* ; but as a thing may be concealed from

us different ways, this name is attributed to various things which are not equally concealed from us, and which have not, with regard to us, the same degree of obscurity.

1. The sacred penmen gave the name of *mystery* to those truths, which revelation discovers to us, and which would have been unknown to men had they enjoyed only the guidance of reason. Thus the doctrine of the vocation of the Gentiles to the privileges of the Gospel is called a mystery ; because that before Jesus Christ had commanded his Apostles to preach the Gospel through the whole world, this design, which God had formed, of manifesting himself to all men, was a thing unknown, a thing concealed. In this sense it is that St. Paul, informing the Christians that all mankind shall not be dead when Jesus Christ shall descend to judge the world, calls this doctrine a *mystery*, because that was a particular circumstance, with regard to the last judgment, which mankind had been ignorant of till that time ; it had been a thing concealed from them till the time that St. Paul informed them of it. It is in this sense that the word *mystery* is most frequently employed in the books of the New Testament.

2. The name of *mystery* is also given to those doctrines of religion, which acquaint us but imperfectly with those subjects, which they present to our minds ; which only communicate to us insufficient



ideas. It is in this sense, that one may say, that the conduct of Providence is a *mystery*; because, though we know various things concerning the manner in which Providence governs this universe, we are very far from knowing all the rules, which it observes in this great regard.

3. We give the name of *mystery* to what is obscure and unknown to us in the things that relate to religion. We do not know, for example, in what time God will make his Gospel known to those nations, which hitherto have been plunged in the darkness of paganism; this to us, we say, is a *mystery*. We are ignorant also, for instance, in what manner God will judge those who shall have fallen into this or that error, which appears dangerous to us; in this we acknowledge a *mystery*. We are ignorant what motive influenced the Deity to communicate his Gospel to one nation rather than to another at a certain time; on this subject we say, with St. Paul, O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

4. Divines give the name of *mystery* to certain doctrines, which are, say they, above reason, and which reason cannot comprehend. In this sense they style the doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation a *mystery*.

5. There are divines, who make use of this word to denote doctrines, which are not only incom-

prehensible but even contradictory. It is in this sense that the Roman Catholics call their transubstantiation a *mystery*.

In fine, the word *mystery* is sometimes employed to denote in general the truths of religion. It seems even that the scripture sometimes makes use of it in this sense. Thus Christ said to his disciples; "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," that is, to know the truths of my Gospel, which remain concealed from the rest of mankind. "Let every one regard us," says St. Paul, "as stewards of the mysteries of Christ," meaning of those truths, which Jesus Christ came to teach men, and of which the greatest part of men are ignorant. "We speak to you the wisdom of God in a mystery;" that is, we publish an excellent institution, which God has revealed to us, and the greatest part of whose truths was before unknown to the world. These are things, which eye hath not seen, as he afterwards adds, nor ear heard, and which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

The Jews and Pagans were fallen into such dreadful darkness of ignorance and error, that the greatest part of the truths, even the most plain and obvious, which the Apostles preached to them, were mysteries to them; truths which they had been ignorant of till that time, and for the knowledge of which they were indebted to the Apostles. For which reason it is, that these last sometimes give the

name of *mystery* to the truths which they deliver, whatever may be their nature; because being unknown, they were *mysteries* to the people to whom they were communicated. To take the word *mystery* in this general sense, all religion will be full of *mysteries*, since in this sense they give the name of *mystery* to all the truths which it contains, even to the plainest, and to those which are the most level to our capacity. But this is not the business in hand. The question is to know, if, by taking this word in the other senses which we have indicated, we can aver that there are mysteries in religion. This is what we shall immediately examine.

1. First, then, if by *mysteries* are understood truths which revelation discovers, and which were unknown to us by reason, it is certain that there are various mysteries of this kind in the Christian religion. Those truths, for example, that Jesus Christ is the saviour of men; that he passed his life in an abject condition; that he died upon a cross; that he is risen again; that he ascended into heaven; that he shed from thence the effusions of the spirit upon the Apostles; that he will come one day to judge the whole world; that all the dead shall rise to make their appearance together at his tribunal; and several other truths of this nature, are things of which our reason could not inform us, and which we have learned solely from christianity. They are therefore all of them so many *mysteries*, which the Gospel

hath revealed to us. But it ought to be remarked, that *after* this revelation these *mysteries* cease to be mysteries; they are no longer things concealed; they are things which we know as accurately as those truths, which are best known to us by reason; they are secrets which cease to be secrets to us, from the moment that God has been pleased to impart them to us. One ought not to make any difficulty in receiving mysteries of this kind, which one may find in the books of the New Testament. The divinity of these books once proved, we ought to receive all the truths in which they instruct us in a clear and accurate manner, though reason of itself would not conduct us to those truths.

2. If by *mystery* we understand doctrines, which only give us inadequate ideas of the subjects, which they present to our minds, it is certain that there are diverse *mysteries* of this nature in religion. All the perfections of God, all his works, our own nature, are in this respect *mysteries*. We have only very imperfect ideas of all these things. What the scripture delivers to us on these topics, is not sufficient to give us a perfect knowledge of these great objects. At present, says St. Paul, we see but in part, we see through a glass darkly. There is in almost all things, which are the objects of religion, a bright and dark side. In this respect then, there are almost every where *mysteries*. But what ought to be remarked is, that we are obliged to receive of these

mysterious doctrines only what is clear in them, and what is level to our capacities. We are obliged to view them only on the luminous side, which they exhibit to us. We ought not, neither can we contemplate them on the dark, by which they are inaccessible to us. I will render this reflection perceptible by an instance. One may regard eternity as a *mystery*. In eternity there are circumstances we cannot comprehend. How is it possible, for example, to add always to a duration which is already infinite? If a being hath existed from all eternity, it seems that he must have existed an infinite number of years, an infinite number of days. Are there then as many years as days in the immense extent of his duration? These are difficulties which extremely embarrass us on this subject. This is the dark side of this doctrine, on which we are not obliged to pronounce. But there is in the eternity of God something clear, and of which we easily form an idea; that is, that God hath always existed, and that he will always exist; that he hath had no beginning, and will never have an end; and this is all we are obliged to believe on this subject. With regard to *mysteries* of this nature, therefore, we ought to receive what they exhibit to us clearly, and to suspend our judgment in acknowledging our ignorance in regard to what is obscure in them.

3. If by *mystery* is understood what is obscure and unknown to us in the things of religion, it is very

certain that there are, as we have just remarked, various things which are unknown to us, among those things in which religion is conversant. But those things which are unknown to us, make no part of religion. They have not been revealed to us. Since they continue to be unknown and concealed from us, they constitute no part of the revelation, which hath been granted us ; they ought not, they cannot be the object of our faith.

4. If one understand by *mystery*, incomprehensible doctrines, there are no *mysteries* of this kind in revelation. It is even a contradiction to say that a doctrine is revealed, and that it is incomprehensible. To say that God reveals to us incomprehensible doctrines, is to say that he gives us ideas of things of which we can form no idea, and of which he does not really give us any idea. This is absolutely impossible. If there were doctrines of this nature in religion, it would be altogether impossible to believe them. For to believe a doctrine, is to connect the ideas which can be formed concerning this doctrine. But one has no idea of an incomprehensible doctrine ; one cannot therefore connect the ideas, which constitute this doctrine, nor consequently believe it.

We must make the same judgment concerning contradictory, as concerning incomprehensible doctrines. It is a sort of pretended *mystery*, which cannot have place in a divine revelation. It is impossible that God, who is the author of our reason,

should teach us by his word, things directly contrary to those, which he teaches us by clear and evident reasonings. It would not even be possible for us to receive these kinds of doctrine. For to believe, as I have just said, is to connect ideas. Now the ideas, that one pretends to unite in a contradictory doctrine, cannot be connected. They destroy one another. If one affirmed, for example, that one and the same body is at Paris and at Rome at the same time, it would not be possible to believe it. I may, indeed, through weakness, through complaisance, through the little attention which I give to what is proposed to me, say, that I give my consent to this proposition. I can join together the words of which it is composed, but my mind cannot connect the ideas, which these words express. It cannot connect the idea of a body existing at Paris at a certain time, with the idea of this same body existing at the same instant at Rome. In asserting that this body is at Rome, one denies that it is at Paris; in asserting that it is at Paris, he denies it to be at Rome. These two ideas, which one pretends to connect, destroy each other.\*

\* The difference between the sense of the word *μυστηριον*, *mystery*, as used by the Apostles, and its popular sense, is clear and easily defined. The Apostles always meant by the word something that was *concealed*, but which might be made known; whereas, in its vulgar signification, it is employed to denote a thing, which is not only concealed, but *incomprehensible*. This difference is broad and important, and deserves the careful atten-

The principles, which we have just laid down, obviously suggest the following reflections, on the conduct which we ought to observe, with regard to mysteries.

1. It appears by what we have advanced, in what manner we ought to receive doctrines, which men present to us under the idea of *mystery*; that if they give us clear ideas of what they are desirous we should believe, and make us evidently see that these ideas are contained in the word of God, we ought not to hesitate in receiving them, though they should be things, which our reason of itself could not have discovered to us. The scripture says, for example, that the dead must one day rise again. We easily form ideas of what the scripture has taught us in this regard. We ought to believe it, though our reason of itself cannot lead us to this truth. But if people propose to us as *mysteries*, doctrines that are incomprehensible or contradictory, we ought not to suffer ourselves to be dazzled with the specious title with which they clothe them. We

tion of every one, who would attain just conceptions of the Apostles' instructions. It may be stated as a rule, which is without exception, that they never used the term to express any truth or doctrine, which was in its nature incomprehensible, or impossible to be understood. On the contrary, it is uniformly employed by them to denote something, which had been obscure, or unknown, but which was made clear by revelation, or would be made so by the means that were employed to diffuse a knowledge of truth, and of divine things. ED.



ought to reject them without any scruple. It is not possible in truth to receive them. One must only examine carefully if the doctrine in question be in reality incomprehensible. Sometimes this title is imprudently given to doctrines, which are not of this order. For example, people say that the doctrine of the incarnation is incomprehensible, but they are mistaken. If it were, it could not be received. The doctrine is briefly this; That the Deity in a very intimate manner was united to the man Christ Jesus, insomuch that one may regard all those excellent lessons, which Jesus Christ communicated to mankind, all the astonishing and miraculous operations, which he displayed before their eyes, as the language and actions of God himself, who was in him, who spoke by him, who acted by him, who manifested himself by him. Here is nothing but what is easily comprehended. It is true, one does not comprehend what was precisely the nature of this union of the Deity with humanity; but as we are not obliged to form distinct ideas of it, we are not obliged to believe what we do not distinctly comprehend of it.

2. It appears from what we have said, that it is injurious to accuse moderate divines of being enemies to *mysteries*. One may see by what we have advanced agreeably to their ideas, that they reject not those *mysteries*, which in reality belong to religion. They acknowledge, in the strongest manner, that

there are in the nature of God many things which transcend our weak capacity. They receive with devout regard every thing which revelation hath added, which reason could not discover. But they do not blindly submit to the decisions of men, who would often vend those doctrines for mysteries, which have no other foundation but their own imaginations. It is against *these* pretended mysteries that they declare war, and not against *those* which religion contains. Penetrated with gratitude and esteem for the truths which the Gospel teaches them, they cannot suffer that men should contaminate their sacred purity, by associating with them doctrines which are absurd, replete with difficulties and contradictions. One might with much more justice accuse the rigid divines with being enemies to *mysteries*. It is doing great injury to true *mysteries*, to unite with them, as they too often do, abstract speculations, loaded with difficulties and contradictions, which render religion contemptible, which make real mysteries to be questioned, which, exhibiting religion under a disadvantageous form, weaken the esteem which men ought to cherish for it, and occasion doubts to arise concerning its credibility.

Besides, it appears from the facility with which these divines pronounce on all kinds of subjects, that they own much fewer *mysteries*, than those whom they reproach with being enemies to mysteries. Is it asked, for example, in what manner God hath

predestinated mankind to salvation? A moderate divine will tell you, that the only thing that he knows upon this subject is, that God hath determined to save those who shall believe in Jesus Christ, and to condemn those who shall refuse to receive him. He will confess that he knows no more than this concerning it, that this affair is to him a *mystery*. But the rigid divine will not be content with such a concise account; he will gradually unfold to you all the most hidden secrets of this *mystery*; will tell you which is the *first* decree which God formed in this respect, which the second, and which the third, fourth, and fifth. You would suppose he had known the secret counsels of the Almighty, so little is he embarrassed with this subject, and with such facility he pronounces on what creates to others the greatest difficulties.

Is it inquired, what shall be the final condition of the heathens, who have not the happiness of knowing Jesus Christ? What shall be the everlasting state of those, who have fallen into such and such an error? A moderate divine will say, that he leaves them to the equitable judgment of God, the sole legislator, who can save and who can destroy; he will say, that he hath not sufficient light to decide, in any peremptory manner, the fate of the erroneous; that this is to him a *mystery*. But a severe divine, far from adopting this *mystery*, will directly pronounce the sentence, which they shall assuredly

receive at the last day, and condemn them all without mercy. An observer of characters will find, that the moderate divine suspends his judgment on an infinite number of subjects, and freely owns that they are *mysteries* to him; whilst the rigid, by his temerity in determining every thing, annihilates divers *mysteries*, which the weakness of his understanding ought to make him acknowledge.

3. A third reflection, which presents itself on this subject, is, that the more mysterious a doctrine is, full of obscurity and difficult of comprehension, the less important it is to salvation. In effect, a doctrine is not important in religion, but in proportion to the influence it may have on our sanctification. But a doctrine, full of obscurity, can have but very little influence on our hearts. As it presents to us but few ideas, and those ideas very indistinct, it can make but a very slight impression upon us. One may even assert here, that if there were among the doctrines of religion, *mysteries* incomprehensible, these mysteries would be of no importance; that not presenting any distinct idea to our mind, they could not act upon it, nor, consequently, contribute to its sanctification, and its happiness.

4. A fourth reflection, which we ought to make here, is, that one ought to be very circumspect in the judgments, which he delivers concerning mysteries in religion. We ought to assert nothing but what reason and scripture teach us in a clear and accurate

manner. To give here free scope to imagination, to be eager to decide every thing, is to put one's self in evident danger of being deceived. One then walks in a dark region ; he has no light to direct his steps. If he refuses to stop, he runs a risk of wandering from the path, of stumbling every moment, and being precipitated into error.

5. Another reflection, which naturally follows from our principles, is, that we ought to entertain great candour towards those who fall into any error with regard to *mysteries*. They are in truth guilty of imprudence and temerity. They are wrong in hazarding a decision on these matters, without having a sufficient light by which to form a clear judgment. But still, the subjects, on which their opinions are erroneous, are very difficult ; it is not easy to gain clear and exact ideas of them. The difficulty of the matter in question requires, that we should exercise indulgence and charity towards them. If the point were concerning things obvious and evident, on which it was easy to determine, one would have some reason to censure them for the bad use they made of their understanding. They have no excuse, who suffer themselves to be deceived on subjects, which have nothing in them but what is simple and level to our capacity. But the more difficult a matter is, the more easy is it to be deceived in our judgments concerning it, and the more lenity and candour ought we to cherish towards those, who have the misfortune

to wander from the truth, on subjects so susceptible of error and misapprehension.

6. Another reflection, which we will add on this subject, is, that they are not the difficult and abstract doctrines of religion, which ought to attract most of our attention and study. Such doctrines are but of little use and importance. Though we should meditate on them from morning to night, they would contribute but very little to the illumination of our minds, and the satisfaction of our hearts. We should become neither much wiser nor much better. That, which ought most to occupy us, is the meditation of those plain and clear truths, which our religion contains. It is the study of these truths, which, by the light they diffuse in our minds, are efficacious in sanctifying our hearts; it is the study and practice of our duties; it is this which ought to constitute our principal study, and our principal employment. In this regard we ought to follow that excellent maxim recorded in Deuteronomy; "Secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things that are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever, in order that we may observe all the words of this law."

But men have too much passion for *mysteries* easily to acquire the moderation we here request of them. They will have *mysteries*, that may serve to occupy, to exercise, and to call forth their genius. To cure them of this affection, which they have for speculative doctrines, the contemplation of which is

a very useless employment, one must point out to them subjects better suited to their capacities, and on which they may exercise their understandings with profit and advantage. Several of this kind we might indicate to them. There are, for example, in morality several nice and abstruse points, on which we can acquire but imperfect ideas. These are *mysteries*, into which it would be proper to make deep researches ; it would be very useful to labour assiduously here, in order to gain precision and accuracy, that we may not be embarrassed on the part we are to take, when we shall find ourselves in situations, which require a clear perception of these things. There are in the heart of man many depths, which it would be useful for us frequently to sound. "The heart of man," says the scripture, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; who can know it ?" In general we know ourselves but very imperfectly. We ought to labour to acquire as accurate a knowledge of ourselves as possible. We ought to endeavour to discover what is the situation of our hearts ; what are the passions that commonly agitate them ; what are the objects which make the deepest impression upon them, and which serve to excite the passions. We ought to endeavour to discover the vain illusions which we cherish, and by which we confirm ourselves every day in bad habits. These are *mysteries of iniquity*, which merit all our attention.

There are in the different bodies, which compose this universe, infinite vestiges of the wisdom of their Creator, which, through the slight attention which we pay to them, make no impression upon us. These are mysteries of nature, which well deserve our most sedulous study. We ought to make it our highest entertainment to survey, in the various objects that surround us, the traces of divine skill, which they exhibit to all attentive minds, in order to be elevated by these means to those sentiments of admiration, which we ought always to cherish for the perfections of the supreme Being.

There are in the conduct, which God hath observed in regard to his church, there are in the favours which he hath lavished on mankind by the mission of Jesus Christ, *mysteries* of wisdom, of benevolence, of goodness, of holiness, of power, which we can never sufficiently admire. St. Peter informs us, "that the angels themselves desire to look into these things." We ought not to be possessed with less of this sacred ardour than they, in order to furnish ourselves with just ideas of the wisdom, goodness, and power, which God Almighty hath manifested in the great work of our salvation. We can never entertain ideas of it too exalted, or enter into all the sentiments of admiration and gratitude, which are adequate to the benefits which God has conferred upon us. What idea soever we form of the benevolence, which God has testified to us by Jesus



Christ, there will always be a great number of circumstances that will escape us, and which a second meditation will make us perceive. There will always be in the love of God mysteries, which will exercise our minds. We ought frequently to meditate on this important subject, in order to endeavour to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth and length, the depth and height of the love of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge. These are *mysteries*, very worthy of our attention; which deserve much better to employ us, than those abstract and metaphysical *mysteries*, which exercise so unprofitably the understanding of divines, and produce so frequently acrimony, animosity, and divisions.



*Honour due to Jesus Christ.*

WE use the term *adore* to express the honours, which are due to the Divinity; and this term is so confined and restricted in our language, at least in the mouth of Protestants, that it instantly awakens the idea of the Supreme Being. This is not the case with the Greek and Hebrew languages, in which one finds no expression that is peculiar and appropriated to this usage. They have only vague terms, which mean in general every honour that is paid to any one. The ordinary word, which they employ, signifies prostration; and this token of

respect was so common, especially amongst the Easterns, that, not only they prostrated themselves before their kings, but even before persons very far from being considerable.

The thing is acknowledged by all the critics, and on this fact they establish this principle ; that in order to determine the degree of honour, we ought to consider the quality of the persons, and the different relations, which they may support. For example, if Lot prostrates himself before the two angels, it is a civility which is paid to strangers ; if Jacob prostrates himself before Esau, it is the deference which a younger brother has for an elder ; if Solomon prostrates himself before Bathsheba, as a son he honours his mother ; if Nathan prostrates himself before David, as a subject he pays this homage to his prince ; if the Magi prostrate themselves before Jesus Christ, in quality of new converts to Christ, they pay their veneration to the Messiah ; in fine, if Jesus Christ himself prostrate himself before God, it is then a created being, who adores his Creator. There is, therefore, nothing so general, nothing so ambiguous as the act of prostration ; and when interpreters have translated it by *adore*, they have been determined, not by the precision of the original, but by the nature of the subject. In truth, they have abused this rule more than once, by making it militate for their particular opinions. But this is not the business in question ; it is sufficient that the rule

is incontestible ; the manner of applying it only is disputed.

If, then, the opinion of prostration is very equivocal, it cannot constitute the essence of adoration. In effect, the soul cannot adore without the body, and in vain doth the body bow itself, if the soul be not directed towards the object of its worship. God is a spirit, and it is his will, that those who worship him should worship him with the devotion of the mind ; and this interior adoration discriminates what the exterior act appears to confound. When, therefore, the body prostrates itself, God does not take this homage to his own account—thus far all is common between him and princes. But if at the same time the mind contemplates its Creator, acknowledges him for the sole arbiter of its condition, reposes an unreserved confidence in him, then it is that true devotion is formed, the sole worship which God appropriates to himself, and of which he appears to be jealous when he says, “ I will not give my glory to another.” It is his will, indeed, that his ambassadors should be honoured, and in proportion to the character which he impresses on them ; but he cannot suffer that his own proper attributes should be ascribed to them, and that men should substitute them in the place of the Supreme Being.

This being laid down, it is asked what sort of honour ought to be paid to Jesus Christ, and if he ought to be worshipped with what is properly called

adoration? Sacred History informs us, that men prostrated themselves before him, that they addressed to him certain kinds of homage; but it ought not to be inferred from hence, that he is essentially and by his own nature the supreme adorable Being. The multitude, who wanted to make him king, prostrated themselves before him; yet they did not look upon him as God, they only saw in him a prophet, and at most the Messiah. One ought then to have recourse here to our principle, and see under what quality the scripture considers Jesus Christ, when it orders us to pay him our homage. This we shall do by examining the following passages.

“Jesus Christ humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; wherefore hath God highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

This passage is the clearest and most extensive of any relating to this subject; it furnishes us with a kind of key to discover the meaning of others. It is not the present business to indulge airy speculations, and draw consequences till we lose sight of the subject. The great concern is to adhere religiously to the precise and exact words. No subtilty can evade their evidence; they appear written with a sun-beam. It is not for us to frame the objects of our

worship, but it is for us to receive those which God presents to us as such ; and we are commanded to bow our knees before Jesus Christ, merely for this reason, that God hath highly exalted him. The Apostle doth not say, that Jesus Christ is the adorable being of himself ; if he had been of this opinion, would he have forgotten the greatest of all the motives ? Would he have diminished so much, or rather, would he have annihilated the glory of Jesus Christ ? For, in fine, he who does not receive honours, but in consequence of God's exalting him, is nothing, in comparison of that Being, who is adorable by his own nature. If then one prostrates himself before Jesus Christ, he acknowledges thereby that he hath been exalted above all the creatures ; and if every tongue confesses that he is Lord, it is always with this restriction, that he is only Lord to the glory of God the Father. So true is it, that the glory of the Son is dependent on that of the Father ; it flows from God as its source ; it is just that it should return to God as its end. The moment it misconceives its original, it is dissipated and lost. " I seek not my own glory," says the Saviour of the world, " but the glory of him that sent me ; if I glorify myself, my glory is nothing."

" The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honour the Son, as they honour the Father."

Our Lord here complains of the Jews, who treated him with contempt, and endeavoured to take away his life. It is not the concernment of his own glory, which wrests from him this complaint; but he sees with grief the Divine Majesty attacked and outraged in his person; “for whosoever honoureth not the Son,” adds he, “doth not honour the Father who sent him.” The insult which is offered to an ambassador recoils upon his master. If then Jesus Christ commands, that all should honour the Son as they honour the Father, it is not that he means to equal himself to God; he had just protested the contrary in the nineteenth verse; he only assumes here the title of God’s Envoy; and far from aspiring to the same honours, he only appears sensible of what wounds the glory of his Father.

The particle *as*, which he employs, does not denote equality, but a mere resemblance. Ordinarily it expresses the motive or example, and it only exhibits the fact without determining the manner of it; for example, “Be ye perfect *as* your Father who is in heaven is perfect,” not in the same degree of perfection, but be ye perfect *since* your heavenly Father is perfect. “Love one another *as* I have loved you;” not in the same degree of love, that is impossible; but love you one another, since I have also loved you. “I have given to them the glory which thou hast given to me, that they may be one *as* we are one;” not in the same degree of union, but that

they may be united together, since thou and I are united. “Forgive us our trespasses, *as* we forgive those who have offended us ;” that is, Lord, we hope from thy mercy that thou wouldst forgive us our sins, since through that goodness, which is essential to thee, thou desirest that we should forgive the faults of others. There are a thousand examples of this kind, which it would be tedious to collect together.

In like manner, “the Father hath committed all judgment to the the Son, that all should honour the Son as they honour the Father, for he that honour-eth not the Son honoureth not the Father who sent him.” This doth not import the same degree of honour ; and Jesus Christ intended to convey this sentiment ; the Father hath invested his Son with the power of judging the world ; and, therefore, you ought to honour the Son, since you make a profession of honouring the Father ; for in honouring the Son, you honour the Father who sent him ; and in despising the character of the Son, you outrage the majesty of the Father. But, further, he who *sends* is always more honourable than the person *sent* ; he who hath in himself the power to judge, ought to be honoured in quality of Judge supreme ; and he who hath received from another this power, cannot be honoured but as subordinate judge. The thing speaks of itself. Jesus Christ does not arrogate to be honoured, but because he is sent of God, and hath received from him the power of judging man-

kind. He does not even exact this honour but because the glory of his Father is interested in it, and by no means on his own account ; so far is he from setting off himself here for that Being, who is adorable in his own nature.

And again, when he bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, he saith “ Let all the angels of God worship him.”

The author had just said with regard to Jesus Christ, that he was made as much more excellent than the angels, as he had by inheritance a more excellent name than theirs. This is afterwards proved, *first*, from the circumstance of God’s having consecrated and constituted him king ; *secondly*, from the angels prostrating themselves before him ; and the Apostle, according to the custom of his time, expresses his thoughts in scriptural language, by accommodating to his subject three passages. The first, “ Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee ;” the second, “ I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son ;” the third, “ Let all the angels of God worship him.” However, two things appear to me incontestible ; the one is, that God is here really distinguished from Jesus Christ,—God, who consecrates and who introduces his first-born Son, from Jesus Christ, who is consecrated and afterwards presented to the angels. The other is, that it is in quality of a man, and of a man more excellent than the angels, that Jesus Christ is repre-



sented to us in this place ; “ He was made as much more excellent than the angels, as he hath obtained by inheritance a more excellent name than theirs ;” and to illustrate this proposition, the writer alleges the testimony of scripture. For God saith, when he introduceth his first-born Son into the world, “ Let all the angels of God worship him.” Now, he who was made more excellent than the angels, and who inherited a name more excellent than theirs, could only be a created being ; and consequently it is as a created being exalted above them, that the angels consider Jesus Christ, and render him their respect and homage.

It does not follow from their prostrating themselves before him, that they regard him as the self-adorable Being. When the herald, who preceded Pharaoh and Joseph, cried out to the Egyptians, “ Bow the knee,” they did not fail distinguishing their sovereign from the new minister, though the honours they paid them were confounded in one and the same act. And the angels, who are still more enlightened, are far from incurring a mistake here. When God introduces his first-born Son, undoubtedly they distinguish the Supreme Being from a man ; him who gives the authority, from him who receives it. And they are so far from taking this new King for the self-adorable Being, that they had no knowledge of him before, and did not address their homage to him till after God had presented him to them.

The Being, who by his own nature is adorable, has no need of an introducer ; he has only to show himself, in order to draw upon himself the respect which is due to him. With regard to this first-born Son, it was necessary that God should introduce him to his court ; it was not till after an order from him that the angels worshipped him. By this act of submission, they therefore acknowledge that God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name ; they confess that Jesus Christ is their Lord, but with this reserve, they are not ignorant that, if he hath been constituted Lord, it is solely to the glory of God the Father.

“ To Him, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, be praise, honour, glory, and power forever and ever.”

These words were pronounced in a vision which St. John had. It will be proper to relate the principal circumstances of it. “ A throne was erected in heaven, and there was one who sat upon the throne. The four living creatures ceased not to cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, who art, and who shalt be. And the four and twenty elders fell down before him who sat upon the throne, and worshipped him who liveth forever and ever, saying, Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and by thy will they subsist. Then I saw a book in the right hand of him who sat upon the throne ; and

an angel proclaimed with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book? Now no one had power to open or to read it. And I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the book. Now there was between the throne and the four living creatures a Lamb, as if he had just been slain. He advanced, and took the book out of the right hand of him who sat upon the throne; then the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, because thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. I heard also every creature say, To him who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb be praise, honour, glory, and power, forever and ever."

It is evident, that he who sat upon the throne is an object really distinct from the Lamb; and it would be unnecessary to insist upon a thing so clear. God holds then here the first rank, as a King sitting upon a throne; and after him Jesus Christ, under the figure of a Lamb who hath been slain. The first of these two images suits extremely well to the Supreme Being; and the second describes to us, very naturally, a man who died for the salvation of the world. Here you see the Deity essentially support himself, and secure, by his own proper nature, homage and adoration. Here, a Lamb, favoured of God, presents itself, and receives not honours but only because it is found worthy to open the book.

This distinction is one of the principal foundations of the vision, and it is upon it we will erect the following explication.

The text describeth him who sat upon the throne as being exalted above the Lamb; and it does not follow that they are equal in dignity because their praises are combined together, and because they receive the same external homage. Two objects, in other respects very different, may possess something in common, and preserve, however, their natural subordination. When the sacred history says of the Israelites, that they worshipped God and the king, after David had finished his prayer, it is not that they confounded the Almighty and the king, though the external homage was the same; but in prostrating themselves before the Almighty, they adored the Creator of the world; and in prostrating themselves before their prince, they acknowledged him for their lawful sovereign. When it is also said of the Israelites, that they believed in God and in Moses, this doth not import that they had in Moses precisely the same confidence that they ought to have in God; but they believed in God, because he is truth itself; and they believed in Moses, because he spoke to them on the part of God. When the Apostles say, "It pleased us and the Holy Ghost," it is not that they presumed to equal themselves to the Holy Ghost; but it pleased the Holy Ghost, because he is the Supreme Arbiter; and it pleased the Apostles, because they

were animated by the Holy Ghost. When St. John himself utters this devout wish, "Grace and peace be unto you from him who was, who is, and who shall be; from the seven spirits who stand before the throne, and from Jesus Christ," his design is not to erect the seven spirits into as many divinities; for even by that circumstance *standing* before the throne, they manifest their dependence in regard to God, and the attention they pay to execute his commands. But St. John wishes peace to the faithful from him who was, is, and shall be, as the sole and eternal source of true felicity; and he wishes them peace from the seven spirits, as these were to be the instruments and scourges with which God was going to punish the enemies of his church.

When, therefore, the creatures say here, "To him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, be glory and praise," it is not that they confound the Lamb with him who sat upon the throne; but they render to God what appertains to God, and to the Lamb what appertains to the Lamb. They praise and honour them conformably to our principle; that is, each according to his nature and according to his qualities. They praise and honour God as their Creator, and the sole adorable Being; for they had just said to him, "Lord, thou art worthy to receive glory and honour, because thou hast created all things, and by thy will they subsist." But they praise and honour the Lamb as him who redeemed

them by his blood, and who was found worthy to open the book ; for they had just said to him, “ Thou art worthy to take the book and to unseal it, because thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God.” Such is the striking distinction which they observe even amidst their confused and mingled acclamations. And this subordination, which obtains between God and the Lamb, subsists so entirely, that the Lamb himself, when praising God is the concernment, joins his voice to the voices of the living creatures. Whilst he was upon earth, and after he is glorified in heaven, he never ceased to bless the Creator, and to pay his profoundest gratitude. “ I will declare thy name to my brethren, and I will sing praises to thee in the midst of the church. Him that overcometh I will make a pillar to the temple of my God, that is, of the God whom I invoke and whom I adore.” A few verses after, there is mention made of the Song of Moses and the Lamb ; “ Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty. Who is there who will not fear and celebrate thy name, for thou alone art holy.” What Moses had sung after the departure from Egypt, the Lamb applies to our spiritual deliverance. In fine, as the adorations had begun with him, who sat upon the throne, and without the Lamb having any part in them, they also terminate in God alone ; and St. John, after having heard the concert of the living creatures, perceived the four and twenty elders, who fell down and wor-

shipped him who liveth forever and ever. And even he is always worshipped singly in the sequel of the vision, which evinces that he is essentially adorable ; whilst they did not prostrate themselves before the Lamb, but on the day that he was installed and deemed worthy to open the book. Consequently, the honours, which he receives, are attached to his employment, and by no means to his own nature.

From all these passages it is easy to conclude, what sort of honour we owe to Jesus Christ ; they teach us, with one unanimous consent, that it is in virtue of his exaltation, and not of any right which he essentially possesseth. On the other hand, we see not in any respect that he is the self-adorable Being ; and for myself, I confess, that such silence very much strikes me ; at least it merits some attention ; and that one should suspend for a moment his prejudices, before he incurs a rash and precipitate adoration. We ought, therefore, carefully to consult the scripture, for fear of worshipping we know not what. Every time that it commands me to pay my homage to Jesus Christ, it always adds certain restrictions ; it saves so evidently the rights of the Creator, that they cannot receive from it any derogation. On the contrary, they only appear to be better established ; for it tells me, that I ought to honour Jesus Christ, sometimes, because God hath highly exalted him, and invested him with a dignity superiour to the angels, and sometimes because the glory of the

Supreme is here interested ; in that he sees himself honoured, when we respect the character of his Ambassador. Thus, I regard Jesus Christ as the great and infallible teacher ; I admire his power, his virtues, his extraordinary talents ; I acknowledge him for my superior, and as the person who is one day to be my judge ; I acknowledge that, after God, he is the author of my salvation ; I am penetrated with gratitude towards him ; I celebrate his memory ; and the honours which I render him keep pace with the measure of my praises. I abase myself before the king of kings ; I respect in him the image and capital production of the Deity ; above all, I honour him when I strive to obey him, and when I take his precepts for the rule of my life. This is the manner of honouring Jesus Christ, at least it appears to me to be the true one ; and it is permitted to every one to follow those sentiments, which, after diligent inquiry, he believes to have the sanction of revelation.

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*Power of Jesus Christ.*

THE Jews had generally this opinion, that maladies, especially if they were inveterate and incurable, were ordinarily the punishment of some sin, whether they were a natural consequence of it, or were sent supernaturally. They even believed with the Pythagoreans and several Eastern nations, that souls were



created before God united them to bodies ; and in order to punish them, or to recompense them, he lodged them in vigorous and well made bodies, or plunged them into infirm and deformed ones. Witness what the Author of Wisdom makes Solomon say ; “ I was a goodly child, and a good soul fell to my lot ; or rather, being good, I came into a body exempt from every blemish.” Witness the Apostles, who, in regard to the man, who was blind from his birth, inquired of our Lord, “ Who had sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind.” Witness also the Pharisees, who say to this same person ; “ Thou wast born in sin, and dost thou teach us, thou, who wast born with this defect, but on account of the sins which thou committedst in another life, or because those who were the instruments of thy birth, were actually sunk in depravity.”

Let us now proceed to the immediate consideration of this passage. The paralytic desired to be cured, and our Lord replies to him, “ Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.” To pardon sins, is properly to deliver from the punishment which they have merited, and this is the signification of the Greek term. We have seen, that the Jews regarded certain maladies as a consequence of sin, and a chastisement of God. Perhaps this man had lost the use of his limbs by his having lived in debauchery and irregularity. As if Christ had said to him ; Cease, my son, to afflict and deject yourself ;

you have obtained the pardon of those sins, which have drawn down upon you this just punishment of heaven, and you are going to be delivered from your malady. The question then is not here of a general pardon of all his sins, which is never offered but on condition of repentance ; nor of deliverance from the punishments of the other life, which depend on the immutable laws of justice.

To be convinced of the truth of our interpretation, it suffices to attend to the sequel of the story. The Jewish doctors, full of envy against Christ, and always ready to give an invidious turn to his words, treated them as blasphemous, as if he usurped a right which only appertained to the Deity. But in a spirited manner he repels the calumny ; “ Why,” says he to them, “ do you form such a rash judgment ; for which is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee ; or to say, Rise up and walk ?” If I can cure this man, and deliver him from the punishment of his sins, cannot I say to him, without violating the glory of God, The sins which have drawn upon thee this punishment are forgiven thee ? Does not the one suppose the other ? And to show you in fact that I have power to pardon sins on earth, or to take away the punishments with which they are often followed in this life, Rise, said he to the paralytic, and go to thy home.

But let us make the greatest concession, and suppose, that one must understand here the general

pardon of all his sins ; does it follow from this, that Jesus Christ is equal to the Deity ? By no means ; for does not he himself say to the Apostles, “ Whosoever sins you forgive, they shall be forgiven ?” It remains therefore to know, if he pardons them by his own pure authority, which he neither here nor any where else asserts ; or if he pardons them only in virtue of a power received from God, which the Gospel clearly intimates, “ The multitude,” it continues, “ glorified God, who had *granted such power to men.*”

This further appears from the words of our Lord. According to him, it was as much permitted to say to the paralytic, “ Thy sins are forgiven thee ;” as to say to him, “ Rise and walk.” He lays it down as a principle, which the Jewish doctors could not contest, that it was permitted him to say, “ Rise and walk ;” whence he concludes, that he could say without blasphemy, “ Thy sins are forgiven thee.” Now this consequence would not be just, if the absolute power of forgiving was attributed to him ; for this right does not appertain but to God alone, and the gift of healing may be found in a mere prophet.

Add to this the perpetual language of Jesus Christ, who refers every thing that he did to the influence and support of his father. “ All power is *given to me,*” and, consequently, this of pardoning. “ The Father *hath committed* all judgment to the

Son," that is, the power of condemning and of absolving. "I judge as I hear;" he could not then absolve of his own mere suggestion. "To sit on my right hand or on my left, is not mine to give;" this distinction is only for those for whom my Father hath prepared it. If he has not the privilege of glorifying, he has not that also of justifying; for the one is a consequence of the other. If from the master you pass to the disciples, they will tell you, that if he pardons sins, it is in virtue of his exaltation and not of his divine nature; for it is he whom God hath raised by his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give to Israel repentance and remission of sins. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews will tell us also, that no one attributes to himself the honour of offering for sins, if he is not called of God; and that also Jesus Christ did not glorify himself to be high priest. If he could not himself offer for sins, much less could he of himself pardon them.

I shall conclude with this argument; he who is our interpreter with God, to obtain of him the forgiveness of our sins, has not originally and of himself the power of forgiving us. Now the Scripture every where represents to us Jesus Christ as our intercessor with God, to obtain from him the forgiveness of our sins; Jesus Christ therefore cannot have originally and of himself the power of forgiving them.

See a remarkable note of Diodati on that passage in the Hebrews; "Thou, Lord, hast laid the founda-

tion of the earth." The sense of this place, as it is here alleged, is no other but that the kingdom of Christ which is manifestly spoken of in that passage, Psalm cii. 26, is eternal, and not perishable like the state of the world. Observe how peremptorily he excludes every other sense.

I felicitate myself on having the concurrence of this most excellent man, one of the brightest luminaries that shone in the Synod of Dort.



### *On the Holy Spirit.*

THE Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, in the primary and natural sense, signifies only the power of God, or the virtue by which he operates. To be convinced of this, it would be sufficient to attend to the etymology of the word, which in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, means the *breath of God*, and which seems to denote rather a quality, than a person distinct from God himself.

1. Various passages of scripture put this beyond a doubt. "When thou hidest thy face," says the psalmist, "the creatures die; but if thou sendest thy *spirit*, they are immediately created." "The *spirit* of God made me," says Elihu, "and the *breath* of the Almighty quickened me." "God," says Job, "made the heavens by his *spirit*," that is, by his power and agency, as the sequel shows.

This term hath preserved the same signification in the books of the New Testament. “The Holy Spirit,” says the angel to Mary, “shall come upon thee from on high, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.” The Holy Spirit, and the power of the Most High, as is here evident, are one and the same thing in the style of the angels. “I am going to send you,” said Christ to his Apostles, “what my Father promised me, but do you stay in Jerusalem till you be endowed with *power from on high* ;” this is what our Saviour calls the Holy Spirit, which was to descend on the Apostles upon the day of Pentecost. “You know,” says St. Peter, “how God animated Jesus of Nazareth with the *Holy Ghost* and with *power*.” “My discourse and my preaching,” says St. Paul, “consisted not in those persuasive words, which human wisdom employs, but in a demonstration of *spirit* and of *power*.”

From all these passages it is evident, that *Holy Spirit*, *power*, and *agency*, are terms of the same import in the New Testament. And this virtue resides essentially in God, as in its source and only principle, from whence it hath been diffused as it were into several small rivulets in the prophets and Apostles.

2. But by a figure, very customary in all languages, and principally in the Eastern languages, it frequently happens, that they personify what are merely simple qualities, and speak of them as they

would of a person. For example, when we say that the Supreme Wisdom is admirable in every thing that it does, we understand the Creator considered under the quality of Wise. Thus the Holy Spirit, though it is only the power and influence of the Deity, is sometimes taken for the person of God himself, in as much as it works, as it operates ; and sometimes even for holy men, to whom God communicates his power and his influence. I say that it is taken for God himself ; witness the words of St. Peter to Ananias ; “ Whence comes it that Satan hath filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit ;” that is, to God, as it is directly after explained ; “ Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”

3. I assert, also, that it is sometimes taken for those holy men to whom God communicates his power and influence. “ Believe not *every spirit*,” says St. John, “ but try the spirits whether they be of God ;” that is, believe not every teacher lightly, who says he is inspired of God, but examine if he be truly so. “ Hereby know we,” adds he, “ that a spirit is from God ;” every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. “ It seemed not good to us and to the Holy Spirit,” say the Apostles, that is, to us who are inspired of God, and invested with his power and his authority. “ Baptize the nations into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ;” that is, in order to be called the disciples of the Father, who was revealed

under the Old Testament; and of the Son, who teaches under the Gospel; and of the Apostles, who are inspired of God, and whose determinations ought to be regarded as oracles.

4. By a signification, which approaches very near to the preceding, it is also taken for the spirit of man, but then it is a spirit that is enlightened, sanctified, renewed, and endowed with gifts both ordinary and extraordinary; such, in a word, as the spirit of the Apostles became in the day of Pentecost. This is that spirit, that Jesus Christ had promised them a little before his death; not that, properly speaking, it was not the same spirit which they had before; but one may say, that they then received a new spirit, by the sudden and surprising revolution, which was made in their persons. A spirit of consolation, of force, and of courage, instead of that timid and dejected spirit, which they discovered at the appearance of the least danger. A spirit, which was to recall to them every thing that Jesus Christ had said to them, while before they were but little attentive to the discourse of their master. A spirit of truth, which was to lead them into all the truths, in opposition to the errors and prejudices with which their minds were filled. A spirit, which would no longer speak its own private conceptions, but faithfully declare every thing it had learned, very different from that rash spirit which hazarded its opinions too lightly, and often apprehended for truth. what had only the ap-



pearance of it ; in fine, a meek, charitable, moderate spirit, in opposition to that spirit, with which they were animated when they wanted to make fire descend from heaven to destroy the unbelieving Samaritans.

5. The Holy Spirit also signifies, very frequently, the holy dispositions or qualities of the spirit, which the gospel gives us. This is so clear and so little contested, that we will not stay to give illustrations of it.

6. Behold here five different significations of the term Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God. It signifies, *first*, the power or influence of the Deity, whether it be considered in God, or in holy persons to whom God communicates it ; *secondly*, it is taken for the person itself of the Deity ; *thirdly*, for men who are animated with this spirit ; *fourthly*, for the spirit of man, as being enlightened and renewed by an extraordinary grace ; *fifthly*, for those dispositions of spirit, which the Gospel requires. To which one may add a *sixth* sense, which is not different from the second, only as it is supported on a different reason. It is this ; the Scripture sometimes representing God under the idea of a man, attributes to him also a soul or a spirit ; and it speaks of this spirit of God, as we speak of the spirit of man. “Who knows,” says St. Paul, “what is in man, except the spirit of man which is in him ? Even so,” adds he, “no one knoweth what is in God, except

the spirit of God ;” that is to say, God himself. “Take heed,” says he in another place, “that you grieve not the spirit of God.” This signifies, oblige not God to repent of the favours he hath bestowed upon you ; as it is said of St. Paul, that he grieved at the view of the idolatry of the Athenians.

All the rules which have just been established are very conformable to scripture and the genius of language. They also accord extremely well with the unity of God, which is here a kind of fixed point, from which, in this dispute, one ought never to deviate. One cannot say the same of a seventh sense which is very frequent with divines, which is, to understand by the Holy Spirit, a person really distinct from God the Father ; or, to speak of their art with more exactness, the third person of a Trinity in the Divine Essence. This new sense, if it is true that one can call it sense, of words which are totally strangers to it, besides that it is useless and superfluous in explaining sacred scripture, appears to me to contain insurmountable difficulties.

For if the Holy Spirit be a person distinct from God the Father, whence comes it that the Scripture does not say so in express terms ? And the more, as it seems to intimate the contrary, and precipitate us into error, when it speaks of the Holy Spirit, as if it was nothing but the agency of God. Is it for this reason divines allege, that there must be in mysteries a mixture of light and darkness : light

enough to illuminate those, who have the disposition to believe, and darkness enough to blind the unbelievers; as the cloud, which was luminous on one side to the Israelites, but was nothing but darkness on the side of the Egyptians?

If the Holy Spirit be a divine person, whence comes it, that the Scripture never calls him God, and seems even to distinguish him from the Deity every time that it calls him the Spirit of God? For when we say the will of man, by this itself we distinguish it from the man.

Whence comes it, that it hath never commanded us to worship the Holy Spirit, to invoke him, to render him our homage, since he hath so great a part in the work of our salvation?

Why ask the Father for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, instead of addressing him, who on this scheme is the author and source of them?

Whence comes it, that the scripture omits the Holy Spirit in those passages where, on these principles, he ought to have been mentioned? "This is eternal life, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Why not speak of the Holy Spirit? St. Paul always introduces at the head of his Epistles, "Grace and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ;" why not here also mention the Holy Ghost? "We have fellowship with the Father and with the Son;" why not also add the Holy Ghost, of which we are

the temples? And an infinite number of like passages, where the Holy Ghost is always omitted. But what is more, the sacred writers often put angels in his place. “I conjure you in the presence of God, of Jesus Christ, and his elect angels.—Him who shall overcome, I will proclaim his name before my Father and before his angels.—But he, who shall be ashamed of me, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and glory of his Father and the angels.—Grace and peace be from him who is, who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits, who are before the throne and before Jesus Christ.” Why introduce angels into the third place, where the Holy Ghost should naturally have come, if it were true that he is a Divine Person, and the third in the Trinity?

Whence comes it, that Jesus Christ is always called the Son of God, and never the Son of the Holy Ghost, though he was conceived of him? When the angel says to Mary, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, wherefore that which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God;” whence comes it, that it is not rather said, the Son of the Holy Ghost? And consequently there will be two Fathers and two Sons in the Trinity; but whence comes it, that according to scripture, there is one Father only, and one Son only?

*Christ's Charge to his Apostles.*

“Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” These words, which Jesus Christ spoke to his disciples, before he ascended to heaven, contain two principal things; *first*, a command to spread throughout the whole world the doctrine of the Gospel, “Go, and teach all nations;” or, according to the proper signification of the Greek term, make disciples among all nations; *secondly*, the establishment of baptism, with the design of that ceremony; “baptizing them in, or rather, for, the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” In effect, the preposition in the original expresses the end and design which one proposes to one’s self. Let us attempt, then, to discover what was the view of our Lord, when he ordered his disciples “to baptize for the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus Christ, who lived among the Jews, ordinarily makes allusions to their customs, frequently even borrows their own terms, as might be proved from an infinite number of examples. This expression of *baptizing for the name of a thing* is found in their formularies or liturgies. When they admitted a pagan into their religion, they baptized him *for the name of proselyte*, that is, to be henceforth called

proselyte, and to enjoy privileges annexed to this denomination. If he was retained in the service of any one, *he was baptized for the name of servant*; and if he was set free, *he was baptized for the name of free*, that is, to be called servant or free, accordingly as it pleased his master to favour him.

St. Paul also uses the same phrase in the same acceptation, when he reproaches the Corinthians with their schisms and divisions, a prelude of that party spirit, which hath for a long time reigned in the Christian Church. "One said, I am the disciple of St. Paul; another, I am of Apollos; a third, I am of Cephias;" pretty much as they now say, I am a Lutheran, I am a Calvinist. The Apostle condemns, as a bad thing, this extravagant attachment to particular teachers; he wants to crush the evil in its birth, and to abolish those odious titles, which serve as a standard to religious mutiny. With this design he calls back the Corinthians to their baptism; Were you baptized, says he to them, *for the name of Paul*, that is, to bear my name, and to call yourselves my disciples? You were baptized for the name of Christ, and you ought to denominate yourselves Christians and not Paulinists.

At present it is easy to understand these words, "Go, and make disciples among all nations, baptizing them for the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." They signify; Baptize them to be denominated disciples of the Father, the Son, and

the Holy Spirit ; the disciples of the Father, who was revealed in the Old Testament ; disciples of the Son, who had just spoken to them in the Gospel ; disciples of the Holy Spirit, which was to instruct them by means of the Apostles. The Jews only received the old revelation, and could only be called the disciples of the Father. But the faith of Christians is of much larger extent ; they embrace also the doctrine of Jesus Christ ; and besides the character of disciples of the Father, they moreover call themselves the disciples of the Son. In fine, as the Son had not time to regulate all things, and, after his ascension into heaven, the church had still need of a living authority upon earth, we are called to hearken to a third Instructor, the Holy Spirit, which speaks to us by the mouth of the Apostles. Wherefore it is, that when they decide a contested point, they say, " It pleased us and the Holy Spirit ;" and those who submit to their doctrine make a profession of being the disciples of the Holy Spirit.

These are the three great and infallible authorities which in our baptism we solemnly protest to follow ; but, ultimately, it must not be thought, that there is any distinction among them. They all three constitute but one and the same authority. As the Israelites, who believed in God and in Moses,\* had not two different objects of their faith, and only

\* The Fathers, under the old dispensation, were baptized into Moses, or acknowledged themselves the disciples of Moses.

believed in God alone, who spoke to them by the ministry of Moses ; we Christians also do not believe but only in one and the same God, who first spoke to us by Moses and the prophets, afterwards by his Son, and last of all by the Apostles.



*General View of the Lord's Supper.*

NOTHING is more clear, nothing more simple, than the Eucharist or Lord's supper, in the manner in which it was established by Jesus Christ. What it offers to our senses is nothing else but bread and wine ; and what it exhibits to the mind under these tokens is an event very easy to comprehend.

But in proportion to its farther and farther remoteness from its original, it lost much of this amiable simplicity. It was imagined, that in order to render it more august, it had occasion for ornaments ; and to conciliate more respect to it, it ought to be rendered mysterious.

At last it hath undergone the same fate, which almost all things in religion have experienced. Divines, according to their custom, have monopolized it, though it was instituted particularly for the people ; and by a thousand subtleties, which they have contrived to weave around it, they have appropriated it to themselves in such a manner, that it is inacces-



sible to the greatest part of understandings, even of those who value themselves on being better instructed than the vulgar.

Happy too would it have been for the world, had divines contented themselves with this, and if this abuse had not produced consequences so deplorable; hence have arisen those differences, and animosities, which incessantly cause new disorders; hence those schisms so ruinous to the church, which tear and divide it so cruelly. Thus it is, that the Eucharist, which ought to conciliate and harmonize mankind, produces a quite contrary effect, and serves, so to speak, as a standard to their religious dissensions.

Instead of extinguishing all their discords, or at least suspending them for one day; instead of all then regarding themselves as the disciples of the same master, whose memory they unite to honour, and as children of the same family, who all cherish the same hopes; it is precisely then, that they are split into divisions, and the spirit of party summons all its forces; every one ranks under the banners of his sect; they vehemently clamour one to another, "No communion to-day;" they erect altar against altar, they fulminate anathemas from all sides; and if the sentence was ratified in heaven, God knows what would be the consequence. Happily he hears not the prayers of those men, who know not what spirit they are of.

Strange! What was destined in its nature to cement union, is itself become the signal of war! That which was a festival of love and benevolence among the primitive Christians, and which they called, for this purpose, by the name of *Agape*, that this should have thrown among their descendants an apple of discord, and with it all the horrors of division.

One cannot, therefore, militate more directly against the genius and design of the Eucharist. In general, nothing can be farther from religion than subtilty; it will never in itself give occasion to contests; and the ceremony now in question is the only thing in the world, that ought to be the least subject to them. Considered as a practice merely external, there was a necessity for its being very simple, and exempt from refinement; otherwise the Gospel, whose character it is to be spiritual, so far from introducing it, would never have suffered it. Thus it proposes it in a plain, natural manner, which makes us suspect nothing of the marvellous; it proposes it even in two or three words, which exhaust the subject.

After this, how could it open such a vast field to divines, so as to furnish them with two or three hundred very knotty questions? There would, indeed, be occasion for astonishment, if they flowed naturally from scripture, and one did not know, upon other occasions, the fruitfulness of the human imag-

ination, to which it is best to yield all the honour of these discoveries. But such a source as this, does it not beget some distrust, and form some prejudice against these speculations? Thus we shall abandon them with less regret to ascend to the primary institution of the true Eucharist, such as it is described by the sacred historians.

Jesus Christ came into the world to banish from thence ignorance and superstition, to teach mankind a doctrine which would lead them back from vice to virtue, from the misery, in which they lived, to a true and solid felicity. A doctrine, which needs only appear, methinks, to be received with avidity, such are its attractions and dignity, such power has it to win the hearts of men; but excellent as it was, prejudices, aided by passions, strove to crush it in its birth, and at last cost the life of its divine author.

Instructed in the motives, which actuated his enemies, he might have withdrawn himself from their cruel pursuits; but this conduct, of which self-love would have availed itself, would have proved fatal to the establishment of the Christian religion. Either he must brave the danger in supporting what he had advanced; and the disinterestedness which he showed imparted a new eclat to truth; or he must in some manner recede, which would have been an irreparable injury to a doctrine so salutary. It would have been suspected of imposture, and error

would have triumphed over truth, which would never have found zealous disciples from the moment they should have seen their chief intimidated by menaces. Touched, therefore, with the fatal state to which depravity had reduced the world, convinced that by sacrificing himself he gave the last blow to sin, he saw the necessity of such a sacrifice, and took the generous resolution of shedding his own blood, rather than put any obstacle to the salvation of man.

With this view he assembles his disciples in order to prepare them for this event ; and, seeing them overwhelmed in profound grief, he addresses to them the most tender and consolatory discourse. Sometimes he explains to them the reasons of his undertaking, and the advantageous consequences it was going to produce. He had said to them a little before, predicting the manner of his death, " If I be lifted up above the earth, I will draw all men after me." He also makes them look upon his own death as a sure means of vanquishing the world. Sometimes he exhorts them to patience, and not to suffer themselves to be shaken by persecution. Sometimes he recommends to them the important duty of benevolence, repeats it, and enforces it by his own example. " This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." Greater love can no one have than to lay down his life for his friend. And in order to preserve the memory

of this signal benefit, amidst all these discourses he establishes the ceremony of the Eucharist.

The circumstance of the time was favourable. It was then the day of the Passover, the grand festival of the Jews. Jesus Christ celebrated it with his disciples, with the design of making it serve to another usage. As they were yet at supper, he took bread, and agreeably to the custom of the Jews, observed especially in the Paschal solemnity, he gave thanks to the Deity that he had given men bread for their nourishment; after which he parted it into several morsels, which he distributed to the Apostles, saying to them, "Take and eat, this is my body, which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me."

As if he had said, It is necessary that I should be sacrificed in order to accomplish the work with which I am charged; it is a payment which I owe to God, who hath entrusted me with the salvation of the world; the interests of truth require a victim—lo here it is—it is my body. This news afflicts you, but it ought to be to yourselves an example of courage and firmness. And in order to represent to you my body which is going to be broken, eat of this bread which I have cut into morsels for you. I now do not say to you; This is the bread of affliction, which your Fathers eat in Egypt; I say to you, "This is my body which is broken for you." This ceremony is no longer to celebrate the departure

out of Egypt, but affectionately to perpetuate the idea of your Saviour; "At all times, therefore, that you shall be together, do this in remembrance of me."

He afterwards took a cup full of wine, which he presented to his disciples, with a command to them all to drink of it. "For," says he, "this is my blood, the blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many, to obtain the remission of their sins." They seldom made a solemn treaty, but they slew a victim, in order to render it in some measure more sacred, and thereby confirm it the more. Thus Moses did, and made himself a sprinkling of blood upon the Israelites; "This is the blood of the Covenant," said he, "which the Lord makes with you." In like manner, the blood, which Jesus Christ shed, established the truth of his Gospel, serves as a foundation to the New Covenant; and this effusion of his blood is figuratively represented to us by the wine in the Eucharist. Wherefore *drink you all of it*, if you have any regard for the sacrifice which I offer to God, and to truth; for this wine is the symbol of my blood which I am going to shed in favour of men, to the end that being confirmed in the profession of my doctrine, they may obtain the pardon of their sins.

Such is the origin of the Eucharist, such the end which its Author assigns to it. One perceives nothing here that savours of mystery. Every thing in it

is clear, simple, and natural. If we consider the air of the assistants, one observes in them no surprise, except the grief which they witness at seeing themselves shortly to be separated from their master; and to search for the marvellous under a pretended veil, is certainly to want to be more subtile than they. Here is a person, who takes leave of his friends, who eats with them for the last time, who gives them a token that they may remember him.

Besides, it appears from all the circumstances that this ceremony is an imitation of the Passover, except that it represents another event. The Passover recalled to the mind of the Jews the miraculous deliverance from the Egyptian captivity. "When your children," says Moses, "shall ask you what means this ceremony, you shall tell them, that it is the Passover of the Lord, when he smote Egypt." It is the same with regard to the Eucharist. It exhibits to Christians the death of Christ, who delivered them from spiritual Egypt; it preserves the memory of this grand event, and transmits it from age to age. If you here consult the infallible Teacher, he will answer you, that you should do this in remembrance of him. If you address yourselves to the disciples, St. Paul informs you, that "every time that you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show forth the Lord's death till he come."

*Remarks on John xiv. 28.*

WHEN the Arians object, that Jesus Christ, in various passages, is represented as inferior to his father, the Trinitarians reply, that these passages ought to be understood of Christ as man; but that though Christ be inferior to his Father as man, yet at the same time he has in him a divine nature, by which he is God, blessed forever, with the Father. If they urge, for example, this passage of St. John xiv. 28. where Christ says, "The Father is greater than I;" and that of St. Matthew xxiv. 36. where it is said, that "the son does not know the day of judgment," they reply, that it is as man that Jesus Christ says, that the Father is greater than he; that it is as man that he does not know the day of judgment; but that as God, he is equal to his Father, he knows all things, he searches the hearts and reins. These answers do not appear satisfactory to the Arians; they frame various difficulties against them, which merit examination, and which we are going to exhibit to the reader.

1. They say, that in order to apply this answer to the passages which represent Jesus Christ as inferior to his Father, it ought to appear very clearly from scripture, that there are two natures in Christ, one divine, and the other human. But this is what does not appear from the sacred writings. There is



not a single passage which obliges us to regard Jesus Christ as the Supreme God. There is nothing, therefore, which authorizes us to make this distinction.

2. One cannot apply this distinction to the passages of scripture in question, without doing violence to them, without attributing to them a mode of speaking, unknown to all languages, contrary to all the rules of language. In effect, by these rules, one may indeed attribute to an whole, what agrees to some one of its parts; but one cannot deny of a whole, what agrees to one of the parts which compose it. For example, I can say of a man, that he thinks and that he is extended, because there is in him something that thinks and that is extended; but I cannot say of a man, he does not think, he is not extended, under pretence that there is in him something that does not think, and something that is not extended. Thus, supposing that Jesus Christ be the Supreme God, he cannot say, that he knows not the day of judgment, as on this supposition he knows it in an infallible manner by his divinity. He cannot say in a general manner, and without any limitation, that this day is unknown to him, without violating truth. The language which they have made Jesus Christ employ, in supposing that he had present to his mind this imaginary distinction, resembles that which I might hold, if, when interrogated by a judge concerning facts which are very well known to me, I should

reply, that they were unknown to me, under pretence that my body had no knowledge of them. It is as if, when one asked me if I had seen such a person, I should answer, no ; because when I saw him I had one of my eyes shut, and did not see him with that eye. It is as if, when one should desire me to write upon some subject, I should reply, that I was not able to write, because my mind could not hold a pen. There is nobody who does not see how absurd such a mode of speaking would be. There is no absurdity a man might not advance, if he were allowed to employ similar reservation. A man might say that he neither eats nor drinks, because his mind properly does not eat or drink. He might say, that he does not think, that he has not an idea of any one thing, that he remembers nothing, that he cannot reason, because all these operations do not belong to his body. One might say, in speaking of Jesus Christ, that he was not born ; that he did not suffer ; that he was not crucified ; that he did not die ; that he was not raised again, or ascended into heaven, because all this is not true of him with regard to his divinity. We easily see that this would be to institute an egregious abuse of language ; we ought therefore to be cautious of attributing it to Jesus Christ, in supposing that he adopted this mode of expressing himself, in pretending that he declared to the world his ignorance of the day of judgment, because he

knew it not as man, though at the very time, as God, this day was perfectly known to him.

3. This distinction, which they have framed, is incompatible with the ideas which the orthodox espouse of the divinity of Jesus Christ. If they acknowledge two persons in Jesus Christ, it might perhaps take place ; they might say, that these two persons in Jesus Christ take their turns in speaking, and that it is the human person that speaks, when, for example, Jesus Christ says that he knew not the day of judgment. But the orthodox do not acknowledge but one sole person in Christ ; that which constitutes his person according to them, is his divine nature ; the human nature of Christ is, with regard to his person, only what *clothes* are in respect to a *man* who is invested with them. It is therefore always the divinity which speaks in Jesus Christ ; for it is this nature, which constitutes his person, which ought to speak ; it is therefore the divinity, according to their system, which was to speak, when they asked Jesus Christ when the day of judgment would happen. Agreeably to their system, therefore, they cannot say, that it is as man that Jesus Christ speaks on this occasion.

4. If one examine the passages to which the orthodox apply this distinction, he will find, that it cannot take place. In effect, Jesus Christ is most frequently represented here as the Son of God, that is, according to the system of the orthodox, as God.

One cannot therefore say, that it is as man that Jesus Christ speaks on these occasions ; for example, in the passage we have already quoted, Jesus Christ says, “ As for that day, and that hour, no man knoweth it, not the angels who are in heaven, nor even the Son, but the Father.” *No man knows it*, neither the angels, nor even the Son, that is, not Christ himself, considered as exalted above the angels, considered as the Son of God, as God, according to that system ; one cannot therefore say, that it was as man that Jesus Christ speaks in this passage ; he excludes even this, when he says *no man*. In effect, when the disciples addressed this request to Jesus Christ ; “ Tell us when these things shall come to pass ;” they did not merely ask him what he might know of them by lights natural to humanity ; they addressed themselves to him as the Son of God ; they wished to enjoy a share of that knowledge which Jesus might possess in this regard, in consequence of his intimate union with the Deity. It follows, therefore, that Jesus Christ must be absolutely ignorant of the time of the last judgment to answer as he did, that there are not in Jesus Christ those two natures which serve for the basis of that distinction they have systematically framed, and that this distinction must be vain and chimerical.

5. Though the mode of speaking, which they attribute to the Scriptures, were not as contrary as it really is to the uniform rules of language, one ought

at least to own that it is far from being natural, far from being customary ; that the expressions, which the Scripture employs, would naturally and obviously enough denote, that Jesus Christ does not know all things, that Jesus Christ is not equal to his Father. Now if Jesus Christ was God, is it conceivable that the Scriptures would have chosen to make use of expressions so equivocal ; expressions, which would have a tendency to overthrow a doctrine of this importance, which would put men in imminent danger of being deceived ? What would the orthodox say of a man, who, in his discourse, would very frequently declare, that Jesus Christ is not eternal ; that Jesus Christ is not omnipotent ; that Jesus Christ does not know all things ; that Jesus Christ did not create the Heavens and the Earth ? It would be in vain for him sometimes to ascribe to Jesus Christ attributes of divinity, he would not fail to pass for a heretic ; they would pretend, that if he were thoroughly convinced that Jesus Christ was God, he would talk in a different strain. Why do they not make the same judgment in regard to the Scripture ? If Jesus Christ was God, would it speak so frequently of him as a man inferior to his Father ; as a man who holds every thing at his hands ? The scripture, in using the language of the Unitarians, does it not authorize their principles ? Why blame so heinously in individuals expressions which occasion no trouble when one finds them in the Scripture ? Why study to

elude, by an unnatural distinction, the clear and natural sense which exhibits itself in these passages. They ought at least to grant, that from the reflections which they make to justify these expressions of scripture, which represent Jesus Christ to us as inferior to his Father, they ought, I say, to grant, that the Unitarians are authorized in speaking as they do of Jesus Christ; they will be able to say that Jesus Christ is not omnipotent; that Jesus Christ does not know every thing; that Jesus Christ did not create the Heavens and the Earth. They will follow herein a mode of speaking approved by the orthodox; they will adopt the style of scripture; no one will have any reason to be offended with this language. One must perhaps say on this subject, something like what a famous orthodox man said with regard to the subjects of *Grace*; *One must preach like an Arminian, and believe like a Calvinist*; so here, one must speak with the Unitarians, and believe with the orthodox. Who does not see, however, whither sentiments of this kind lead!

To conclude, what shows the little foundation that this distinction hath, which they employ in order to accommodate those passages which represent Jesus Christ as inferior to his Father, is, that the ancient Fathers, even the most orthodox of them, never made use of it. They took a different way to answer these passages; they owned that Jesus Christ, considered even as God, was in some respects subordinate to his

Father; that as it was from him that he derived his being, in this regard he depended in some measure on his Father; in this respect he might say, *My Father is greater than I*. Several also of the most zealous divines for the Trinity employ this expedient, to answer the difficulties which are proposed to them, and do not apply to all sorts of passages the distinction I have been examining.





BLACKBURNE

ON

**CONFESSIONS OF FAITH.**



## ARCHDEACON BLACKBURNE.

FEW persons have written with more ability, or engaged with a warmer zeal, in the cause of religious liberty, than FRANCIS BLACKBURNE, Archdeacon of Cleveland. His long and active life was passed within the pale of the established Church of England, but his liberal spirit and comprehensive charity were restrained by no barriers, either of forms or names. The right, which he had exercised in choosing his own mode of worship, he cheerfully granted to others. With him the Bible was the only proper formulary of faith, and the true christian church was the whole body of sincere believers and faithful followers of Jesus.

He was born at Richmond, Yorkshire, 1705 ; and, after a preparatory course of classical education in the neighbouring schools, he entered the university of Cambridge, 1722, as a pensioner of Catherine hall. He remained at the university five years, during which period he took his bachelor's degree, and at the expiration of which he was ordained a deacon in the church. He had already gained a high repu-

tation for his attainments and devotedness to study ; but, being disappointed in his expectation of a fellowship, by reason of the sentiments, which he had openly avowed, concerning church power and civil liberty, he left the university and lived nearly ten years in retirement with his uncle in Yorkshire.

He had early acquired a fondness for the writings of Locke, Hoadly, and others of the same character, who were distinguished for the freedom and power with which they spoke of a general toleration and religious liberty. The sentiments derived from these sources were strengthened by his own vigorous understanding, and confirmed by a course of reading, in which he was soon afterwards accidentally engaged. Several volumes of the old Puritans fell into his hands, which he perused with eagerness. He admired the independent principles of these writers, their plainness of manner, their simplicity, and unaffected piety. The spirit, which he imbibed from works of the above description, gave a tone to his future character, and was the groundwork of that toleration and love of liberty, which he ever after manifested.

In the year 1739, he was settled as a clergyman in Richmond, his native place ; and eleven years after, he was appointed archdeacon of Cleveland by the archbishop of York. His residence was always at Richmond. At no distant date from his first settlement he commenced his labours as an author, and, as would be natural to expect, was soon drawn into

the field of controversy. A translation of Erasmus's preface to his paraphrase of Matthew was made at his request, and one of his first publications was a discourse prefixed to this translation. The tendency of this discourse was rather practical, than controversial, and was chiefly designed as a preservative against the influence of popery, and an encouragement to study the Scriptures.

The two or three succeeding pieces, which he published, were chiefly aimed at the abuses of church power, faults of discipline, errors of systematic forms of worship and faith, impropriety of certain ceremonies, and, in short, all the ecclesiastical encroachments, which had grown bold and strong with time, and all the unmeaning and cumbersome additions to the original church of Christ, which ignorance had invented and custom sanctioned. On these subjects he took the Bible for his guide, and did not hesitate to follow his principles to their proper consequences.

His next subject of controversy was the intermediate state of the soul. Bishop Law, in the Appendix to his Theory of Religion, had defended the doctrine of the unconscious being of the soul between death and the resurrection. This appendix was attacked with vehemence. Blackburne defended it, and attempted to show, that the Scriptures afford no proof of an intermediate state of happiness or misery. The controversy was protracted, and Blackburne came forward several times to meet the arguments of his

opponents. In the progress of the discussion, he published remarks on certain passages in Warburton's *Divine Legation*, and on the account given by that writer of the opinions of the Jews concerning the soul. He at last wrote a historical view of the whole controversy.

But the work, which has gained him greater celebrity than any other, is "*The Confessional* ; or a full and free Inquiry into the Right, Utility, Edification, and Success of establishing systematical Confessions of Faith and Doctrine in Protestant Churches." This was published in 1766, and passed through three editions in four years. Its object is well expressed in the title. The author first traces the history of Confessions of Faith in protestant churches ; he next considers the right to establish them as tests of orthodoxy ; and then examines their expedience and utility. This branch of the inquiry occupies the three first chapters, and these constitute the portion, which has been selected for the present work. They embrace a distinct topic, and contain the clearest views and best reasoning, perhaps, which can be found within the same compass, on the subjects of which they profess to treat.

These three chapters do not make more than one fifth of *The Confessional*, but the remainder, although written with equal learning and ability, has a particular and exclusive bearing on the English church. It goes into a full and ingenuous examination of the va-

rious opinions, which have prevailed respecting the terms of subscription to the articles, and searches for the reasonings and casuistry by which it came to pass, that they were conscientiously subscribed in different senses. This investigation is pursued with much acuteness, and with no little severity against the modes by which the consciences of some churchmen had been satisfied.

This work was the beginning of a controversy, which sent many publications into the world, and did not terminate for several years. The following is the language of the author in his preface to the second edition.

“The favourable reception, which The Confessional hath met with from the public, though it will not be admitted as an argument of the merit of the book, is undeniably an argument of something of much more consequence. It is an argument, that the love of *religious liberty* is still warm and vigorous in the hearts of a considerable number of the good people of England, notwithstanding the various endeavours of interested and irreligious men, in these latter as well as in former times, to check and discourage it; and notwithstanding the desponding apprehensions of some good men, that these stiflers had well nigh succeeded in their unrighteous attempts.”

“The Confessional hath likewise had the good fortune to make another valuable discovery; namely, that encroachments on religious liberty in protestant

communities, by whatever specious pretences they are introduced, can never be defended upon protestant principles."

A little before this period he expressed corresponding sentiments in a memoir of his own life. Mr. Theophilus Lindsey had married his step-daughter, and he writes on the occasion as follows. "The friendship between Mr. Lindsey and Mr. Blackburne was not nearly so much cemented by this family connexion, as by a similarity of sentiment in the cause of christian liberty, and their aversion to ecclesiastical imposition in matters of conscience. In the warfare on these subjects they went hand in hand."

About the same time that the Confessional was published, a vacancy happened in the congregation of dissenters at the Old Jewry, London, by the death of their pastor, Dr. Chandler. From the sentiments, which Blackburne was known to entertain, it was thought by some persons, that he might be induced to leave the established church, and accept an invitation to take charge of this society. The proposal was encouraged by some of the friends of the archdeacon, and he was consulted; but, for reasons which satisfied both parties, he declined the offer.

Blackburne's opposition to the established church, and his continuance in it, have been considered an anomaly not easily to be explained. It is certain,



however, that he explained it satisfactorily to his own conscience. Nor will it admit a reasonable surmise, that he was actuated by motives of interest. Had he been ambitious of power and influence, these possessions, with his commanding talents, would have been much more within his reach among the dissenters. That to improve his fortune was not his purpose is most evident; for he absolutely refused preferment in the church, which required a renewal of his subscription; and the income at the Old Jewry, which he declined accepting, was nearly three times as large, as that which he received at Richmond. We have no need to inquire by what process he reconciled himself to a church, whose forms and government in his opinion were so defective; it is enough to know, that the whole tenour of his life proved him to be a man of high and unwavering integrity, that he acted from principles of conscience, and that whatever course he pursued he believed it to be right.

It was one of Blackburne's projects to write a life of Martin Luther, after the manner of Jortin's *Life of Erasmus*. Materials to a considerable extent were collected for prosecuting this excellent plan, but the work was never commenced. It seems to have been set aside for a time by the labour of compiling two weighty quartos, as a memoir of his worthy friend, Thomas Hollis. His eyesight failed soon after, and the burden of years

pressed too heavily to allow him to engage in an undertaking, which required not more the experience of manhood, than the vigour and enterprise of youth. He died on the 7th of August, 1787, in the eighty-third year of his age. His works have since been collected and published by his own son in several volumes.

In private life Blackburne was amiable and kind, affectionate to his family, dignified in his manners, and warm in his friendships. He was an earnest and persuasive preacher, and assiduous in his public as well as private duties. By a rigid temperance and good natural constitution, his health was preserved through a long and studious life, which he devoted to the cause of virtue and liberty. His compositions discover a strong and well cultivated intellect; they are animated and forcible; they seldom fail to exhibit a lucid train of thought, and marks of a discriminating judgment. The warmth of controversy may sometimes be perceived, but it is the warmth of sincerity, of conviction and argument, and not the consuming fire of passion, nor the corroding heat of ill nature. In his numerous writings on theology, morals, and politics, no traits of the author's character are more conspicuous, than his independence and firmness, his love of truth and sense of duty.

## CONFESSIONS OF FAITH.



### CHAP. I.

#### *Rise, Progress, and Success of established Confessions of Faith in Protestant Churches.*

WHEN the Protestants first withdrew from the communion of the Church of Rome, the principles they went upon were such as these.

“JESUS CHRIST hath, by his Gospel, called all men unto liberty, the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and restored them to the privilege of working out their own salvation by their own understandings and endeavours. For this work of salvation sufficient means are afforded in the holy Scriptures, without having recourse to the doctrines and commandments of men. In these Scriptures all things needful for spiritual living and man’s soul’s health are mentioned and showed. Consequently, faith and conscience,

having no dependence upon man's laws, are not to be compelled by man's authority ; and none other hath the Church of Rome to show for the spiritual dominion she claimeth. The church of Christ is congregated by the word of God, and not by man's law ; nor are the king's laws any farther to be obeyed, than they agree with the law of God."

Private Christians being thus left at liberty, by the original principles of the Reformation, to search the Scriptures for the grounds of their religion, and to build their faith on this foundation *only*, a very moderate share of sagacity would enable the leading Reformers to foresee, that diversity of opinions concerning many points of doctrine would be unavoidable ; and that from hence frequent occasions of offence would arise among themselves, not without some advantage to the common adversary.

Whether they might not, in a good measure, have prevented any very ill consequences of this liberty without departing from the simplicity of the scripture plan ; that is to say, whether they might not have kept the terms of communion sufficiently open for pious and reasonable Christians of very different opinions to have complied with them, without abridging their christian liberty, or doing violence to their consciences, cannot now be determined. Certain it is, that such an experiment was never tried, nor perhaps ever thought of, till the distemper was gone too far to be cured.

Instead of making this experiment, the Reformers, having unhappily adopted certain maxims as self-evident, namely, that “there could be no edification in religious society without uniformity of opinion,” that “the true sense of Scripture could be but *one*,”\* and the like, presently fell upon the expedient of *preventing* diversity of opinions, by contracting their original plan in agreement with these maxims. The *one* sense of Scripture was determined to be the sense of the primitive church, that is to say, the sense of the orthodox Fathers for a certain number of centuries. From these they took their interpretations of Scripture, and upon these they formed their rule of faith and doctrine, and so reduced their respective churches within the bounds of a theological system. The consequence of which was, that every opinion deviating from this system, whatever countenance or support it might have from a different sense of Scripture, became a declared heresy.

Hence it came to pass that many Protestants of very different characters and tempers, finding these encroachments on their christian liberty, and themselves not only excluded from communion with their brethren, but stigmatized with an invidious name, were provoked to separate from their leaders, and set up for themselves ; which many of them did on

\* See Mosheim's Compend. View of Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 159, and Maclaine's note [a].

grounds sufficiently justifiable ; whilst others, whose pride, passion, and self conceit knew no bounds, and whom probably the most reasonable terms of communion would not have restrained, under the pretence of asserting their liberty against these dogmatical chiefs, formed themselves into sects, which afterwards made the most infamous use of it.

That some of these sects were scandals to all religion, and nuisances to all civil society, was but too visible. That they were the offspring of the Reformation, was not to be denied. The doctrines which afterwards distinguished the sober and serious protestant churches, were not yet made public, nor perhaps perfectly settled. They were yet only to be found in the writings of some private doctor, whom his brethren were at liberty to disown, or in catechisms for youth, or directories for ministers within their several departments. A concurrence of unhappy circumstances, which afforded the Papists a most favourable opportunity of calumniating the whole Protestant body as the maintainers of every heresy, and the abettors of every sedition, which Europe had heard of or seen in that generation.

It was to no purpose that these hotheaded irregulars were disowned, and their doctrines reprobated, by some of those eminent doctors, on whom the credit and success of the Reformation seemed chiefly to depend. These might speak their own sense ; but it did not appear by what authority they undertook to

answer for the whole body. The nature of the case called for such apologies as these, that their defection from Rome might not fall under a general odium ; and it might still be true that all Protestants thought in their hearts, what these indiscreet sectaries spoke out. A suspicion which was not a little confirmed by the leading principle of the most outrageous Anabaptists, which was expressed in the very words of Luther himself.\*

These circumstances laid the Protestants under a necessity of publishing to the whole world explicit confessions of their faith and doctrine, authenticated by formal attestations of the leading members of their respective churches. That of the protestant Princes of Germany led the way ; being solemnly tendered to the Emperor Charles V. in the diet held at Ausburg in the year 1530. This precedent other protestant states and churches thought fit to follow on different occasions ; and by this means acquitted themselves, at least among all equitable judges, of the scandal of abetting the schismatical and seditious enthusiasts, who about that time infested different countries under the pretence of promoting reformation.†

\* A christian man is master of every thing. See Bayle's Dictionary, art. Anabaptists, rem. [2].

† [It must be remembered, however, that the protestant principles of the sufficiency of revelation, and the right of private judgment, were objected to by the Papists at the very outset of the Reformation. It was argued by the Catholics, that a unity of

These confessions, being laid before the public with this formality, very soon became of more importance than just to serve a present turn. They were solemnly subscribed by the leading men of the several communions on whose behalf they were exhibited, as doctrines by which they would live and die; and were consequently to be defended at all events. And, therefore, to secure the reputation of their uniformity to all succeeding times, an unfeigned assent to the public confession, confirmed either by sub-

faith was absolutely essential to a true church, and that the liberty allowed by Protestants would destroy this unity by introducing a variety of opinions. So often was this position repeated, and so strongly urged, that some of the protestants, who had not yet acquired sufficient confidence in their own principles, conceived that it would be the best mode of preserving a true church, and silencing their adversaries, to fix on a public form of faith. It follows that they were prompted to adopt the maxims, of which the author justly complains above, and to sanction Confessions of Faith, as much from timidity and unwise caution, as from the abuses of enthusiasts and schismatics.

Instead of resorting to this expedient to keep up a true church, and remove the objections of their adversaries, a proper argument would have been, that a unity of faith is not enjoined in the Scriptures, that it did not exist among the first disciples, that peace and love are the bonds of Christians, that no such unity has been known in the Roman Catholic Church itself, but, on the contrary, this church has been the theatre of perpetual divisions and controversies; and last of all, that such a unity is not consistent with the laws and conditions of human nature. If they had kept to this ground, they might have maintained the spirit and purity of the Gospel, without imposing shackles on liberty and conscience by constructing and prescribing artificial rules of faith. EDITOR.]



scription or a solemn oath, became, in most of the protestant churches, an indispensable condition of qualifying their pastors for the ministry, and, in some, of admitting their laymembers to church communion.

But this expedient, intended to prevent division in particular societies, unhappily proved the means of embroiling different churches one with another, to a very unedifying degree. Some of these confessions, in their zeal to stigmatize the heresies of the most obnoxious sectaries, had made use of terms which no less reprobated the doctrines of their orthodox brethren; the immediate consequence of which was, that several controversies which had arisen among the respective leaders of the Reformation at the beginning, and had been partly composed, and partly suspended, in regard to their common interest, were now revived, not without much heat and bitterness.

On this incident, the Papists changed their method of attack, and readily took this occasion not only to insult the Reformed on their want of unity, but to turn many doctrines to their own account, which particular men had advanced in conformity to their own confessions.\*

\* "The Lutherans and Calvinists," says a very competent judge, "by cherishing some errors of their respective principals, were altogether hindered from rightly answering the Papists." See *Phoenix*, vol. ii. p. 315. At length arose the immortal Chillingworth, who disclaimed the defence of the protestant religion, as it lay in systems and confessions, and appealed to the Bible

Against these objections the Protestants had a variety of defences, some of which, it must be owned, had more strength as they were applied to the Papists, than merit in themselves. They said, that "a want of unity was no greater reproach to them from the Papists, than it was to the primitive church from the Jews and Heathens, and that the same apologies would serve in both cases." They

only. By this means many cavils were cut off at once, and many confessions of systematical doctors rendered of no use to the Papists at all; who, being well aware of the advantages the Popish cause would lose by this expedient, were accordingly extremely provoked at it. They called it a *novelty*, which the Protestants in general would not approve. And it appeared, in the event, that they were not *totally* mistaken. For the application of this rule by a liberal-spirited English Prelate on a certain occasion, put another English Prelate [bishop Hare] extremely out of humour; a Prelate who, when the force of *episcopal* prejudice was out of the way, had ridiculed systematical attachments in a much admired irony, which however owed all its beauty and all its force to this very principle of Chillingworth. Mr Desmaizeaux (Chillingworth's biographer) thought it necessary to exculpate Chillingworth from this popish charge of *novelty*, and, as it seems to me, has succeeded very ill. He says, "All Protestants had declared in their confessions, or articles of religion, that the Scriptures are the only rule of faith by which those confessions themselves are to be tried." But the question was not, what *all* Protestants had *declared*, but whether *any* protestant church had *acted* conformably to that declaration, and ventured to defend the protestant religion on scripture principles, even at the expense (if so it should fall out) of its own established confession? His answer to bishop Hare's peevishness is much better. *Life of Mr Chillingworth*, p. 169, and 198.

might have added, that divisions in the Christian church had been for the most part occasioned and fomented by the peremptory decisions and intolerant spirit of those particular doctors, who happened to have the lead for the time being. But this, being too much the case of the Protestants themselves, was not to be insisted on. Some advantage, indeed, they had in the way of recrimination; but here the Papists found the means to parry the blow; alleging, what indeed was very true, that the most considerable of the points in dispute among them had never been decided *e cathedra*, and so were left open to amicable debate without breach of unity; whereas the doctrines controverted among Protestants were solemnly established in their several confessions, and the confessions themselves ratified by oaths, subscriptions, &c. and the belief of them thereby made an indispensable condition of communion.\*

\* Thus, with respect to the famous five points concerning which the synod of Dort was so untractable, the disputes in the church of Rome were bitter enough; but then, "the council of Trent had drawn up her decrees, on these heads, with a *neutrality* which pleased all, and disobligeed none." *Heylin's Quinquarticular Hist.* p. 26. Grotius made use of this circumstance in pleading with the magistrates of Amsterdam for a toleration of the Remonstrants. "The doctrines disputed in Holland," said he, "have not been decided by the church of Rome, though she is extremely fond of decisions." *Abridgment of Brandt's History of the Reformation, &c. by La Roche*, p. 344.

After much mortifying litigation concerning this want of unity among Protestants, it so happened that the Belgic and Gallican churches, in the name of themselves and their orthodox sister churches, thought fit to deny the fact; and, in the year 1581, exhibited what they called *A Harmony of the Confessions* of no less than eleven protestant churches, which they intended as an ample testimony of the unanimity of Protestants in their principal doctrines, and a full and satisfactory confutation of the popish calumnies on this head.

This work, however, was not equally approved of by all the churches, whose confessions it harmonized. It was even affronted by the church of England;\* for, being translated into English in the year 1586, Archbishop Whitgift, who at that time had the control of the press, would not allow it to be printed in London, and employed his authority likewise to have it suppressed in other places.†

\* The English confession, exhibited in this Harmony, consisted of extracts from Bishop Jewel's Apology; a book, in those days, of equal authority with our thirty-nine articles. *Strype's Annals*, vol. i. chap. xxv.—xxvii. and *Life of Parker*, p. 179.

† The Harmony was, however, printed at Cambridge that year, notwithstanding Whitgift's express prohibition. *Strype*, u. s. vol. iii. b. ii. ch. 8. Mr Strype has not informed us why the Archbishop disallowed the Harmony; but the Belgic and Gallican churches having expressed notions of church government, ceremonies, &c. in some short observations at the end of the book, not very favourable to Whitgift's principles, his Grace's distaste for the work is not wholly unaccountable.

There were, indeed, some considerations naturally suggested by the manner in which this work was executed, that would greatly obstruct the good effects expected from it, whether with respect to composing differences among Protestants, or obviating the reproaches of the common adversary.

1. In the first place, the compilers made no mention of the confessions or doctrines of any Protestants, who dissented from the public forms, in those countries where the reformed religion had gained an establishment. They were indeed hardly charitable to such dissenters; censuring with particular severity the authors of the Book of Concord, which had appeared about this time.\*

\* And indeed not without reason, if these censures could have been passed consistently with their design of exemplifying the *Harmony* subsisting among Protestants. By this Book of Concord, the work of some rigid Lutherans, all those churches were excluded from christian communion, who would not subscribe it. For which schismatical presumption, the reformed divines of the Low Countries expostulated sharply with these authors, alleging the scandal and mischief of such peremptory decisions, seeing that the Lutherans and Calvinists differed only about two articles, the Lord's supper, and the two natures of Christ. Blondel indeed observes, "that they differed about two articles more, viz. "predestination and grace; yet, believing these to be of *no importance*, they [the Low Country divines] made no mention of them." *La Roche*, u. s. p. 197. Would these divines have believed a prophet, who should have foretold, that their successors, in the space of forty years, would certainly treat all, who differed from them in these two articles of *no importance*, just as the authors of the *Concord* had treated themselves for differing with them on the other two? Mr La Roche has given a pretty long extract of this

2. All the world knew very well, that not one of these eleven churches would allow any man to minister in it, and hardly perhaps to communicate with it, who should refuse to subscribe the confession of that church, even though he should offer to subscribe or swear to every other system in the collection.

3. The *short observations* at the end of the Harmony, the design of which appears to have been to accommodate the awkward expressions in some of these confessions to the orthodox sense of the Belgic and Gallican churches (a liberty, which the harmonizers seem to have taken without any sort of commission,) plainly show, that some of these churches were at too great a distance from each other to be reconciled by any such equivocal expedients.

If the reader would know what was the reputation of these public confessions in other respects, he may be referred to a Lamentation, which appeared about thirty years after the publication of this Harmony, setting forth, "That these confessions were read by few; that they were hardly to be found in booksellers' shops; that men rather chose to provide themselves with the writings of private doctors, and to determine religious matters by any other testimonies, rather than these public forms."

Remonstrance of the Low Country divines, and says, *he inserts it with pleasure, because it is very glorious to those divines.* But to have perfectly achieved this glory for them, he should have suppressed his account of their persecuting Hubert Duifhuis, because he and his party refused to subscribe *their* Book of Concord. See p. 194, 203, 207.

This complaint is taken from the preface to the *Corpus Confessionum*, printed at Geneva, 1612; the design of which work was to revive the credit of these established formularies, and to recommend them as “authentic tables and standards of the old and primitive faith.” For this purpose the confessions of sixteen different churches are here exhibited, not in detached and selected portions, as in the Harmony, but whole and entire, as they were published and acknowledged by the churches to which they respectively belonged.\*

But though the professed design of this *Body of Confessions* was to accommodate divines and students in theology with a commodious and comprehensive view of the whole doctrine of the reformed churches, yet was not the expedient of harmonizing their several confessions quite overlooked. But finding, it is likely, that the method taken in the old Harmony was justly exceptionable, these editors contented themselves with referring their readers to a kind of

\* This, however, the famous Peter Heylin, disputing for his doctor's degree at Oxford, 1633, denied to be true; alleging on the part of the church of England, that the first clause of her twentieth article, concerning Church Authority, was, in this collection, feloniously secreted; appealing to another edition of the Articles, which was on that occasion fetched from a neighbouring bookseller's, and in which the aforesaid clause stood fair and legible *Vernon's Life of Heylin*, p. 58—61. See the editors of the *Corpus Confessionum* well vindicated, in *An Historical and Critical Essay on the Thirty-nine Articles, &c.* printed for Francklin, 1724. *Introduction*, p. 22.

Synopsis, where the agreement or harmony of particular churches on different articles is exhibited, without attempting to reconcile them on those articles, concerning which they did not appear to be unanimous.

In this Synopsis two things are more especially remarkable.

1. On the article of *Justification* and *Faith*, which is the fifth in this Index, the editors observe, that "All the confessions of the [protestant] churches teach this primary article of the christian religion with a most holy consent."\* Does not this note, with which this article alone is honoured, seem to imply a consciousness in the editors, that this was the single article, in which *all* these confessions *did* agree?

2. According to this Synopsis, there is a dead silence in many, sometimes in the majority, of these confessions, concerning some of the fundamental articles of the christian religion. Thus only six of

\* This fact, however, has been lately denied by a vehement advocate for confessions and subscriptions. "The doctrine of justification," says he, "is explained with much greater nicety in the French Confession, (Article eighteenth,) than it is in ours (Article eleventh); and with such nicety, as occasioned a long dispute between the French and some German divines, of whom Piscator was one." *Church of England vindicated, in requiring Subscription, &c.* p. 52. But in truth these disputes were of much longer standing. "Osiander, in his Confutation of the book, which Melancthon wrote against him, observes, that there are twenty several opinions concerning *Justification*, all drawn from the Scriptures, by the men only of the Augustan Confession." Bp Taylor, *Lib. Proph.* p. 80.



them are referred to as speaking of *the Providence of God*, in which number (I am loath to observe it) the English confession is not reckoned for one; though both Jewell's Apology and the thirty-nine Articles are inserted in this collection.

Again, eleven of these sixteen confessions take no notice of *Resurrection of the Dead*. I mention these omissions for the sake of those gentlemen, who would have it believed, that churches cannot be sure of the orthodoxy of their ministers in the most important points of the christian religion, without obliging them to subscribe to their established confessions.\* How many excellent ministers have there been in different protestant churches, who never gave those churches any security by way of subscription, that they believed either *a resurrection of the dead*, or *the providence of God*?

It is not at all necessary to carry this disquisition any farther. How particular churches in subsequent times have been embroiled on account of their established confessions, is well known. In some of these churches the inconveniences of insisting on these tests of orthodoxy have been so great, that they have found it the wisest way either entirely to drop them, or to content themselves with some general declaration, or promise from the minister, that he will not openly oppose them. In some churches a formal subscription

\* See Dr Stebbing's Rational Enquiry into the proper Methods of supporting Christianity.

is still required, even where the inconveniences of it have been no less, and where the most serious, conscientious, and useful ministers, are still groaning under the burden of such subscriptions. It is chiefly for the sake of such as these, that this disquisition is undertaken, if by any means our present governors (who, if they had had the original work of reformation in their hands, together with the light and experience, which the present and past ages have afforded, would, it may be presumed, not have imposed it) may be prevailed with to remove *a yoke, which neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear.*\*

But to proceed. Upon this short view of the tendency and effects of established confessions in protestant churches, the following reflections seem to be very natural.

1. It was a great misfortune to the Protestants, that their confessions should abound with explications of so many minute points of scholastic theology, which, without stopping one popish mouth, with respect to the general accusation of *heresy*, tended so manifestly to narrow their original foundation, and to give their common adversaries so great an advantage, by rendering their breaches among themselves, occasioned by these explications, utterly irreconcilable.

2. It was a greater misfortune still, that they should think of establishing these explications as tests of or-

\* This was written in the year 1755.

thodoxy, by requiring their ministers to swear to them, or subscribe them, as an indispensable condition of admitting them to the pastoral office. Had they been contented with a solemn declaration on the part of teachers and pastors, "that they received the Scriptures as the word of God, and would instruct the people out of those *only*," leaving them at liberty to disown whatever, after proper examination, they judged inconsistent with them; in all human probability the interests of Popery would have declined more visibly, and the true ends of reformation have been more speedily, as well as more effectually promoted.

But, after all, they who are extremely out of temper with the first Reformers, for their mistaken and unseasonable zeal in thus prescribing religious opinions to their fellow Christians, without sufficient warrant of Scripture, would do well to consider in what situation they were.

Many abuses in Popery lay open to the observation of men of *all* sorts. But it could hardly be credited of a sudden, by men of *any* sort, that the greatest part of that astonishing structure, called THE CHURCH, which pretended to have for its foundation the Apostles and Prophets, and Christ himself for its corner stone, should be a mere heap of antichristian rubbish. It is, therefore, no wonder that the most enlightened of our first Protestant Fathers should be afraid of demolishing too much. It was visible with what props and supports the most eminent saints and doctors of

former ages had accommodated the edifice. And these, it might well be imagined, would hardly have been placed there by such venerable hands, without some good reason, and apparent necessity. In those days, nothing was thought to be sufficiently confirmed by scripture testimonies, without additional vouchers from the ancient worthies of the church; and accordingly Tertullian, Chrysostom, Austin, and Jerome regularly took their places on the same bench of judgment with Paul, Peter, James, and John.\*

In process of time some particular persons began to see into this mistake. In our own country the learned Cartwright, in his dispute with Archbishop Whitgift, about the year 1573, took the courage to appeal from the authority of the Fathers, and to prescribe them narrower limits in the province of determining religious controversies. How this would be received in those days, might easily be conjectured without particular information. The terms, in which Cartwright had characterized these venerable doctors, were collected together in a book of Bancroft's, and set off with tragical exclamations, as if they had been little less than so much blasphemy.† ‡

\* See the *Catholicus Veterum Consensus*, at the end of the *Corpus Confessionum*.

† Strype's *Life of Whitgift*, p. 51.

[‡ Cartwright was an able and zealous Puritan, and one of the most learned men of his age. He was an eloquent and popular preacher, and in 1570 was chosen Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, where he had been educated. To the high church

Some few years after this, Erasmus Johannes, a schoolmaster at Antwerp, took still greater liberties with antiquity. "He affirmed, that all the councils which had met, and all the books of the Fathers, which had been written since the death of the Apostles, were infected with antichristian errors, not excepta, however, he soon made himself obnoxious by the liberal sentiments delivered in his lectures respecting church government and discipline. When Whitgift became vice chancellor of the university, he had sufficient influence to deprive Cartwright of his professorship. A long controversy ensued between them, in which Cartwright opposed the hierarchical establishment, and the peculiar ceremonies of the Church of England.

At length, to escape the persecutions, with which he was threatened, he was obliged to leave his country. He visited many universities on the continent, and was treated with great respect. Beza wrote to a friend in England, "Here is now with us your countryman, Thomas Cartwright, than whom I think the sun doth not see a more learned man." When the excitements of the occasion had subsided, he returned to his native country, but was not suffered to remain long in peace.

Whitgift was the vigilant and persevering enemy of every one, who did not yield humble obedience to the authority of the church. Cartwright again felt the weight of his persecution combined with that of the ruling party, and a second time sought an asylum in exile, where he remained five years. When he ventured back, he was charged with being a promoter of sedition, arraigned, and imprisoned. Notwithstanding these harsh proceedings, he continued boldly to publish and defend his sentiments; nor did he remit his zeal and exertions during the remainder of his life, although he was often thrown into prison for bearing testimony to the dictates of his conscience and judgment. He died in 1603, aged sixty-seven years.

The history of the church reveals to us the names of few persons, who were more remarkable for a spirit of independence, firmness, talents, and learning, than Cartwright. He had the

cepting the famous council of Nice." He proposed, therefore, that, in order to a perfect reformation, the new phrases and new ways of speaking, invented by the Fathers, should be wholly suppressed and laid aside, and all religious propositions expressed according to the simplicity of Christ and his Apostles. "If any man," says he, "finds himself obliged to use new terms to express the articles of his faith, so that the words of the Prophets and Apostles are not sufficient for him, that man's doctrines and religion are

courage to promulgate sentiments of the most unpopular kind, at a time when doubt was heresy, and disaffection to establishments was rebellion. From the beginning he denied, that civil authority could lawfully interfere in the affairs of the church, and that the power of bishops was no more than that of the other clergy. He insisted, that every minister ought to be chosen by the church, or congregation, over which he is to preside, and that the Gospel gives him no authority beyond his own congregation. The sign of the cross in baptism, festivals, and many other forms and ceremonies of the Episcopal Church, he affirmed to be unscriptural additions; and in all his labours he aimed to bring back church discipline and the modes of worship to what he believed to be the simplicity of apostolical times. In private life he was amiable, pious, and benevolent.

To show something of the spirit of the age, as well as the temper of Whitgift, the following passage is quoted, which was the language of this prelate when Cartwright and his friends petitioned for some indulgence, because they were brethren. Whitgift replied, "What signifies their being brethren? Anabaptists, and Arians, and other heretics, would be accounted brethren; their haughty spirits will not suffer them to see their error; they deserve as great punishment as Papists, because both conspire against the church." *Strype's Annals of the Reformation*, vol. i. chap. 57; vol. ii. chap. 1.—*Neal's History of the Puritans*, vol. i. —*Biographia Britan. Art. Cartwright.* EDITOR.]

certainly new as well as his terms ; for otherwise he would easily find, in the Scripture, language proper enough to express his notions.”\* But the times were not yet ripe for the toleration of these sentiments ; and the poor man, who was hardy enough to venture them with the public, was obliged to fly his country.

From these days, the authority of the Fathers hath continued gradually to decline among all reasonable and consistent Protestants, and more particularly since the publication of Mr Daillé’s famous book, *De Usu Patrum*, in 1631. But none, that I know of, ventured so far as the schoolmaster of Antwerp, till, about thirty years ago, an eminent prelate of our own church, advanced pretty much the same doctrine, concerning the explication of points of faith, by new and unscriptural phrases ; for which his Lordship underwent the discipline of several orthodox pens ; † but without any loss of reputation among those who considered things with less prejudice. For, when it was seen that his lordship had reduced his antagonists to the disagreeable necessity of holding, that “*new and unscriptural* words would better fix the sense of scripture doctrine, than the words of Christ and his Apostles,” the clamour subsided. Reasonable men began to see the inconvenience of adopting a principle, which would go near to justify the worst im-

\* La Roche, Abridgment, vol. i. p. 218.

† See Dr Stebbing’s Rational Enquiry, p. 25.

positions of Popery ; and the practice of requiring subscription to human explications of Christian doctrine, is now considered and treated, by many different sorts of sensible writers, as an unwarrantable encroachment on christian liberty ; from which, there is reason to believe, all who are capable and willing to examine the subject *without partiality and without hypocrisy*, heartily desire a happy deliverance.

Upon this state of the case, it appears, that the matter of complaint does not affect the *Fathers* of our Reformation by far so much as their *Sons* and *Successors*. Our first Reformers were beset with their own and other men's prejudices, to a degree that rendered them, in a great measure, incapable of conviction. It was next to impossible to convince them, that their established confessions of faith were unchristian impositions, for which there was no just authority, when they had the early practice of the Christian church to appeal to, long before the tyrannical spirit of Rome prevailed. Their veneration for antiquity prevented their seeing that these very precedents were some of the steps by which the papal power ascended to its height, and arrived at the plenitude of its usurpation.

But, since it has been made to appear, that some of the *Fathers*, who lived nearest to the times of the *Apostles*, were greatly mistaken in the sense they put upon some *Scriptures*, with respect to points of



no small importance, we have reason to hope, that our superiors will no longer bind either themselves or us to an implicit acquiescence in an authority, which may occasionally be extremely inconsistent with our original obligations as Christians, as well as with the distinguishing principles of our profession as Protestants. Whatever expedients of peace and order their own sort of prudence, or the exigencies of the times they lived in, might suggest to these venerable Fathers, they certainly had no right to prescribe articles of faith to *us*. And, should either they themselves, or any other in their name, pretend to it, we beg leave to remind them of a capital maxim, to the truth of which the Fathers themselves have occasionally born their testimony, namely, *The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain all things necessary to salvation, and are the sole ground of the faith of a Christian.\**

Upon this principle, all imposed subscriptions to articles of faith, and religious doctrines, conceived in unscriptural terms, and enforced by human authority, are utterly unwarrantable, and not to be defended but by arguments and pretences highly dishonourable to the sacred writings, and, in many

\* For a compendious view of the testimony of the Fathers to the sufficiency of the holy scriptures as a rule of religion, the reader may consult a book entitled, *The Divine Oracles*, written by the learned and candid Mr John Brekell, printed for Waugh, &c. 1749.

cases, contradictory to the express contents of them.

But, forasmuch as there never yet was any instance of a prosperous usurpation destitute of advocates to lay in for it a claim of right and justice, it would be strange if this matter of subscription, wherein such large and opulent bodies of men are interested, should be left to shift for itself. What the orators of the church have offered on this behalf we shall now briefly consider.

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## CHAP. II.

### *On a Right to establish Confessions as Tests of Orthodoxy.*

THE fundamental position, on which the authority of established confessions in protestant communions depends, is this. “Every particular church, considered as a society, has a *right*, as other societies have, to secure its own peace and welfare, by all lawful means; and, consequently, to prescribe such terms of communion as appear to be the most expedient for the purpose; provided that nothing be required, under this pretence, which is contrary to the word of God, or inconsistent with the liberty of other churches.”

To this it has been answered in short, “That, by admitting the principle of self defence and self

preservation in matters of religion, all the persecutions of the Heathens against the Christians, and even the popish Inquisition, may be justified.\* If the church of England, for example, has a right to fix her own terms of communion, and, in consequence of that, to secure the obedience of her members by temporal rewards and penalties; the church of Portugal must, upon the same principles, have an equal right to secure herself by the discipline of an *holy office*, or how otherwise she thinks proper.

The proviso, that, “church ordinances be agreeable to the word of God,” will not in the present case help the protestant churches at all. *Established* confessions, being human compositions, must either be subject to examination by the private judgment of those who profess, as all Protestants do, to make the written word their only rule of religion; or else the church must claim a right of interpreting the Scriptures for all her members, exclusive of the right of private judgment.† The former of these princi-

\* See Bishop Hoadly’s Speech for the Repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts, in Tindal’s Continuation of Rapin Thoyras, 8vo. vol. xxvii. p. 237.

† The late Bishop Conybeare, in his famous Subscription Sermon, argues from the *consent* required by the Apostles to their doctrines, to the *consent* required by succeeding church governors to *human* articles. This fallacy has been too apt to pass without examination; but the supposition upon which it is supported, is indeed neither more nor less than this, “Scripture truths and the church’s explications stand upon the same authority.”

ples manifestly precludes the right of the church to establish *any thing* as a condition of Christian communion, without the previous consent of *all* her members; that is to say, of all who, without that condition, would have a right to Christian communion.\* The latter, indeed, vests the church with a full measure of authority to establish what she pleases; but then it is an authority which every protestant church most expressly disclaims, and condemns in the church of Rome as an impudent and groundless usurpation.

There is, indeed, nothing more evident, than that every Christian hath a right to search the Scriptures; a right which he cannot transfer, either to any church or to any single person, because it is his indispensable duty to exercise it personally for himself. And if it is his duty to *search*, it must also be his duty to *determine* for himself; and, if he finds just cause to dissent

\* Honest old Rogers, by *the church which hath authority in controversies of faith*, understands not only the *aggregate body*, but *every member of sound judgment in the same*. Cath. Doct. Art. xx. Propos. 3. well knowing that every intelligent Christian, with the scriptures before him, is, upon protestant principles, and in decrees of this nature, *a church to himself*. This leaves no room for Bishop Burnet's distinction between an infallible authority, and an authority of order, which last he faintly insinuates, might be safely intrusted with the body of the clergy. But his Lordship, to do him justice, qualifies this with a *proviso*, that this body is *properly disposed* for the province. Perhaps it might be as difficult to find such a body of men, as to find single persons without mistakes. See Bishop Burnet's Exposition, fol. p. 195.

from any or all the human establishments upon earth.

Some writers on this subject discover an inclination to deny the right of private judgment in *every case* where it is opposed to church authority. These we leave to reconcile their principles with their separation from Rome. Others attempt, by various arguments, some of which will occur hereafter, to prove that the authority of the church to frame and settle confessions of faith and doctrine for all her members, is perfectly consistent with the right of private judgment. But, to discover the fallacy of all arguments to this purpose, it is only necessary to consider, that, if this supposed authority was vigorously exerted, and applied in *all* cases, as it ought to be, if the authority is *real*, and if, on the other hand, the people were diligent and careful in searching the Scriptures every one for himself, as all Protestants agree they ought to do, the consequence would most probably be, that the far greater part of honest and sensible Christians would be excluded from the communion of every church which has an established confession. For where is there one of these confessions which does not contain some very material decisions, from which an intelligent Christian, who hath duly examined the Scriptures, may not reasonably *dissent*? I had almost said, where is there one of them to which a knowing and thinking Christian can *assent* in all points, without prosti-

tuting his understanding and conscience to the doctrines and commandments of men? I say, a *knowing* and *thinking* Christian; for he must have considered the case before us very superficially, who does not perceive, that the adherence of such numbers to the peculiar doctrines of the church from which they receive their denomination, and even to some doctrines common to the creeds and confessions of all churches, which call themselves orthodox, is owing to their ignorance, their indolence, their secularity, or the early prejudices of education, which are known to be the unhappy circumstances of the common people, all over the Christian world.

Some zealous men have, indeed, inferred a necessity for confessions, and consequently an authority in the church to establish them, from these very indispositions and incapacities of the people to examine and judge for themselves. But, though this is perhaps the best plea of *right* which the church has to allege, yet wiser and cooler advocates for confessions choose not to abide by an argument, which would equally vindicate the church of Rome with respect to many of her impositions. Not to mention, that these indispositions and incapacities in the clergy would be but an awkward reason for making *their* assent and subscription to confessions an indispensable condition of being admitted into the church as teachers.

These prudent gentlemen, therefore, seem inclined to acquit the laity of all concern with established confessions, and to confine their authority to the clergy; insomuch, that, if I understand some of our modern casuists on this subject, a layman, if he can get over his own scruples, may pray, hear the word, and even communicate with what protestant church he pleases. If this be really true, we have reason to be thankful for better times; for undoubtedly some of us have remembered worse.

But, however this matter might turn out upon the experiment, certain it is, that, in so far as the laity are allowed not to be bound by these church confessions, the point of *right* to establish them as tests of orthodoxy is fairly given up, as well for the clergy as the laity; since whatever rule is sufficient to direct the faith and practice of the layman, must likewise be sufficient to direct the teaching of the clergyman, unless the clergyman may be obliged to teach doctrines, which the layman is not obliged either to believe or to practise.

“But,” say some men, “if there be really an *expedience* and *utility* in these public formularies, called Confessions of Faith, we may well infer a *right* to establish them, although concerning such right the Scripture should be silent. Many things, relating to public worship and public edification, must be left to the prudence and discretion of church governors for the time being; and, if confessions are manifestly

useful and expedient for the church, there must be an authority lodged somewhere to prepare and enforce them.”

The *expediency* and *utility* of confessions will be very particularly considered in the next chapter ; for which reason I shall forbear to say any thing farther to this plea at present, save only a word or two concerning this method of arguing from the probable expedience or utility of any thing in religion to a right or authority to employ or introduce it.

No wise man, who hath duly considered the genius and design of the christian religion, will look for much utility or expedience, where the church or church governors go beyond their *plain commission*. And, whatever may be left to the prudence and discretion of church governors, there is *so much more* left to the conscience of every Christian in his personal capacity, that it greatly behoves such governors to beware they encroach not on a province, which is without their limits. This consideration has always disposed me to reason in a manner just contrary to these gentlemen, namely, from the authority to the utility of religious measures. My opinion is, that, where the methods of promoting Christianity are matter of scripture precept, or plainly recommended by scripture precedents, there such methods should be strictly followed and adhered to, even though the *expediency* of them should not be very evident *a priori*. We can have no pretence of *right* or *authority* to alter such



methods for others seemingly more expedient, while so very much of the effect of religion, or, in other words, of its utility, is made by our blessed Master to depend on the inward frame of every man's heart, into which ordinary church governors can have no farther discernment than other men. On this account those means of edification, public or private, will always, in my esteem, bid the fairest for success, which are the truest copies of apostolic originals. Notions of expedience in any thing more than these, when there is nothing to judge by but superficial appearances, have frequently led men to interfere very unseasonably with the dictates of other men's consciences ; and no greater mischief has ever been occasioned by any thing in the christian church, than by those very expedients of human prudence, from which the best effects have been expected.

Among other instances, which might be given to verify this observation, we have one at home, in which all those, who are called to the ministry are too nearly concerned not to be capable judges. After some progress had been made in the reformation of the church of England, it was thought to be a great defect, that a public confession of faith and doctrine should still be wanting.\* To supply this defect, the *Articles of Religion* were compiled, published, and enjoined to be subscribed. These Articles, with some alterations, which passed in those days for improvements,

\* Burnet's Hist. Reform vol. ii. p. 166 ; and vol. iii. p. 210.

are still subscribed by, at least, one hundred of our ministers every year. That above one fifth of this number do not subscribe or assent to these Articles, in one uniform sense, we have great reason to believe ; and yet the avowed purpose of this general subscription is *to prevent diversity of opinions*. And, indeed, considering to what sorts of men this test is made indispensable, it is, I think, as much as can be expected, if another fifth subscribe them in *any* sense, but the sense they have of wanting preferment in the church, if they should not.

It is true, all these persons minister in their several congregations by one common form, framed, for the general, on the model of the confession they have subscribed ; and so far all has a fair and honest appearance, and, while they keep their thoughts to themselves, is consistent enough. But no sooner are many of them at liberty to deliver their own or other men's sentiments from the pulpit, but the established system is laid aside, or, perhaps, if it comes in their way, quite upset,\* and many things written and uttered with all freedom, by different persons, equally irreconcilable to each other, as well as to the orthodox confession.

\* " All those who write and preach in this nation are not her [the church of England's] sons, any more than they of Geneva, or Scotland, or New England, are," says Bishop Rust, *Defence of Origen, &c. Phoenix*, vol. i. p. 83. So that this is no new complaint. See, likewise, Dr Hartley's *Observations on Man*, vol. ii. p. 354 ; and a remarkable instance in *A Defence of the Essay on Spirit*, p. 24.

What now is the *utility* or *expediency* in this affair of subscription, which will atone for the scandal brought upon the cause of Christianity by this unscriptural article of church discipline? To say nothing of the distress of many a conscientious minister under the unhappy dilemma of, *subscribe* or *starve*; is it possible that the ignorance, the indolence, or the insincerity of the rest should not make considerable impressions, both upon the friends and enemies of revelation? Suppose the herd of mankind were too much employed in other business to turn their attention of themselves to remarks of this nature, yet the zeal and eagerness of the litigants to expose this prevarication on either side, by casting their subscriptions in each other's teeth, will not suffer the most incurious mortal to be long uninformed of it, if he should only look into some of the commonest books of controversy for his mere amusement.

The sum of the whole matter then is this. Lodge your church authority in what hands you will, and limit it with whatever restrictions you think proper, you cannot assert to it a right of deciding in controversies of faith and doctrine, or, in other words, a right to require assent to a certain sense of scripture, exclusive of other senses, without an unwarrantable interference with those rights of private judgment, which are manifestly secured to every individual by the scriptural terms of christian liberty, and thereby contradicting the original principles of the protestant reformation.

This point being settled, the squabbles among particular churches concerning their supposed liberty within their respective departments, in so far as these confessions come in question, is about a thing of nought. For none of them having a right to establish or to prescribe such doctrinal confessions for the whole body, it is matter of great indifference, setting aside the scandal of it, in what degree they exclude or make room for one another.

But, to give this matter a little consideration with respect to the present effects of it upon christian societies, let us suppose that protestant churches *have* such a right, each within its own confines; the question is, how shall one church exercise this right, without encroaching on the right of another? Upon the genuine grounds of separation from the church of Rome, all particular churches are co-ordinate;\* they have all the same right in an equal

\* The protestant churches every where set up on this principle; what regard they have paid to it since is another affair. One remarkable instance may be worth mentioning. "The refugees," says Mr La Roche, "who were driven out of the Low Countries by the duke of Alva in the year 1571, held a synod at Embden, and their first canon was, that no church should have dominion over another church." And, to testify their sincerity herein, they put the French and Dutch confessions upon the same footing, by subscribing them both. *Abridgment*, vol. i. p. 141. But N. B. The Dutch confession was not then established, and these were poor, friendless refugees. 'Tis pity but some of them had lived to see how sacredly this canon of Embden was observed in the synod of Dort.

degree ; and the decisions of one are, in point of authority, upon the very same level with those of another. This being so, I do not see how it is possible for any church to *exercise* this right in those instances where she establishes doctrines *peculiar to herself*, and inconsistent with the doctrines of other churches, without abridging those churches of their right to establish their own doctrines. No church can have a *right* to establish any doctrines but upon the supposition that they are *true*. If the doctrines established in one church are *true*, the contrary doctrines established in another church must be *false* ; and, I presume, no church will contend for a *right* to establish *false* doctrines. And, indeed, whatever may be pretended, this is the very footing, upon which all protestant churches have, occasionally, treated the churches that differed from them, and from whence the conclusion to a disinterested by-stander is obvious ; namely, that, in consequence of these co-ordinate powers, none of them had a right to establish any doctrines, but with the unanimous consent of all the rest.

It is true, Protestants of one state or country have been tender of condemning the confession of those of another, by any public sentence ; and reason good ; their powers are limited by their situation, and extend not beyond their own departments, nor would their censures be regarded elsewhere. But what instance is there upon record, where this liberty has been allowed, as the co-ordinate principle manifestly re-

quires it should be, to more than one church in the same protestant state? Every party, in every protestant state, has, by turns, made some attempts to have their religious tenets established by public authority. In every state, some one party has succeeded: and, having succeeded, imposes its own confession upon all the rest; excluding all dissenters from more or fewer of the common privileges of citizens, in proportion as the civil magistrate is more or less in the mood to vindicate or distinguish the system he thinks fit to espouse.

This has been the case, at different periods, with different churches in the same country. And, what is chiefly remarkable to our present purpose, the party defeated has constantly exclaimed against the practice, as an unreasonable, unchristian, and wicked tyranny; the very practice, which they themselves, in their prosperity, endeavoured to support by every claim of right, and to defend by every argument of utility and expedience.\*

\* "It belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience." *Assembly's Confession*, ch. xxxi. art. 3. This hath given occasion to apply some words of Isaiah, viz. *Look unto the rock from whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged*, to certain dissenters, who have scrupled to subscribe the first clause of the twentieth article of our church. At present this wit would be misapplied. In the year 1718, some of the wisest and most eminent among the dissenting ministers made a noble stand against some imposers of tests in their own fraternity. And in the year 1727, more of them refused to subscribe this very Westminster Confession.

Of this many remarkable examples might be given, in the complaints of churchmen of different denominations in adversity ; who, in the day of their exaltation, had carried church power as far as it could well stretch ; and who, when the severities of the adverse party forced these lamentations from them, were obliged to plead their cause upon principles, which made no reserve of authority with respect to one sort of religious society more than another.\*

Among others to whom established confessions had been particularly grievous, were the Remonstrants in Holland, after the synod of Dort. Their assemblies were prohibited, and their ministers silenced and banished, for no other offence but contradicting certain doctrines, which, as we have seen above, the forefathers of their persecutors held to be of no importance ; and which had gained no new merit but that of being established by law.

One would have imagined that this usage would have cured the Remonstrants of all good liking to *confessions* for ever. And so perhaps it did of their

\* Thus the ingenious Bishop Taylor, pleading for *the liberty of prophesying*, at a time when, to use his own expression, *the vessel of the church was dashed in pieces*, found it necessary to assert against the taskmasters of those days, that, "If we have found out what foundation Christ and his Apostles did lay, that is, what body and system of articles simply necessary they taught and required of us to believe ; we need not, we cannot go any further for foundation, WE CANNOT ENLARGE THAT SYSTEM OR COLLECTION." p. 17.

good liking to *all* confessions, but *one of their own framing*; which Episcopius and his fellows actually composed, subscribed, and published, in this state of exile.

This step was so very extraordinary for men in their condition, whose distresses had been occasioned by enforcing a system drawn up in the same form, that they rightly judged the world would expect some satisfactory account of it, which therefore they attempt to give, in a long Apology prefixed to their Confession; wherein, not contented with alleging such inducements as might well be supposed to oblige men in their situation to explain and avow their principles to the public, they enter into a particular detail of arguments in favour of confessions in general; dropping indeed the point of *right* to establish them as tests of truth, but insisting largely on their *utility* and *expedience* in a variety of cases; and, as they seem to me to have brought together the whole merits of the cause on that head of defence, I shall attend them in the next chapter, with some particular considerations on the several articles of their plea.



## CHAP. III.

*On the Expedience and Utility of Confessions.*

It had been objected to confessions in general, that “they derogated from the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures; that they encroached upon the liberty of private conscience, and the independency of protestant churches; and that they tended to nothing better than separation and schism.”

The Remonstrants reply, that “these objections did not affect confessions themselves, but only the *abuse* of them.” But, however, as the objectors had so many instances to appeal to, where confessions had been, and still were thus *abused*, and the Remonstrants so few, if any, where they were not, the latter were obliged to set out with very ample concessions.

“Undoubtedly,” say they, “those phrases and forms of speaking, in which God and Christ delivered themselves at first, for the instruction of unlearned and ordinary men, must needs be sufficient for the instruction of Christians in all succeeding ages; consequently it is possible that the church of Christ may not only *be*, but also that it may *well be* without those human forms and explications, called Confessions.\*

\* Preface to the Remonstrants’ Confession, published in English, at London, 1676, pp. 12, 13.

One would wonder now, what the Remonstrants could find to say for the support of their side of the question. For, if the phrases and forms of speaking, made use of in the written word, are sufficient for the instruction of unlearned or ordinary men in all things which concern the worship of God, and their own and others' everlasting salvation; and if, as the objectors insisted, and the Remonstrants could not deny, many and great evils were, *for the most part*, occasioned by such phrases and forms of speaking in confessions, as are not to be found in Scripture, the objectors were fairly authorized to conclude, not barely for the *possibility* that the church of Christ might *well be*, but for the *certainty* that it might *better be*, without such human forms, than with them.

The Remonstrants, however, attempt to recover their ground as follows. "If prophesyings, or interpretations of Scripture," say these apologists, "are not unprofitable, yea rather, if they be sometimes in certain respects necessary, when proposed by teachers and pastors in universities and churches, or other christian assemblies, for the information of the ignorant, &c. in familiar, clear, and usual expressions, though not in the very words of Scripture; it cannot seem unprofitable, much less unlawful or hurtful, if *more* ministers of Jesus Christ do, by mutual consent, joint studies and endeavours, for the greater illustration of divine truth, removing of slanders, edifying the christian community, or other

holy and pious purposes, publicly open and declare their judgments upon the meanings of Scripture, and that in certain composed forms.\*

It is no easy matter to discover the drift of this argument. Do the Remonstrants mean to insist on the superior influence and authority of *more* ministers, in the business of expounding the Scriptures, in comparison with single pastors, or professors? By no means. Upon any supposition of this nature, the Belgic Confession had an authority which rendered their revolt from it inexcusable. Would they be understood to say, that Confessions composed by the joint studies of several ministers, are as useful as ordinary sermons and lectures in churches and universities? No, they make no such comparison; they only infer, with much ambiguity, from the premises, that Confessions, with the circumstances mentioned, *cannot seem unprofitable*.

But, be their meaning what you will, the cases of interpreting Scripture in occasional prophesyings, and in stated confessions, are dissimilar in so many respects, that nothing can be inferred from the *utility* of the former, in favour of the latter; but rather the contrary.

If prophesyings, or interpretations of Scripture in christian assemblies, are not delivered in familiar, clear, and usual forms of speech, they are neither necessary nor profitable; nor can any thing be infer-

\* *Ibid.* pp. 13, 14.

red from the utility of *such* prophesyings at all. On the other hand, if the Scriptures are opened and explained to the people in easy and familiar expressions, by their ordinary pastors, what possible use can you find for a systematical confessional? unless you think fit to establish it as a necessary supplement to the holy Scripture, and then you once more return the question to the point of *right*.

Again; what the preacher delivers from the pulpit, or the professor from the chair, they deliver as the sentiments and conclusions of single men, who have no authority to enforce their explications, any farther than their own good sense, integrity, accuracy, and judgment, make way for them. For the rest, their doctrines may be questioned, the men themselves called upon to review them, and, if they see reason, correct, and even retract them, not only without offence, but, in some cases, with advantage to the common faith. But doctrines, opinions, and explications of Scripture, reduced to a fixed form, and avowed by the public act of many subscribing ministers, (who, by the way, are full as likely to be fallible in a body, as in their personal capacity) put on quite another aspect. In that case all examination is precluded. No one subscriber is empowered to explain or correct for the rest. Nor can any of them retract, without standing in the light of a schismatic and a revolter from his brethren.

It is to little purpose that the Remonstrants would limit the stress to be laid upon confessions, to their agreement with truth, and reason, and scripture. The matter of complaint is, that this agreement should be predetermined by the decision of these leading subscribers, in such sort, as to discourage all free examination, and constrain the people to acquiesce in a precarious system, by the mere influence of great names and respectable authorities, which, without any additional weight, are too apt to overawe the judgment of all sorts of men, even in cases of the greatest importance.

The *expediency* of Confessions in no wise appearing from these general considerations, let us now see what particular uses the Remonstrants have for them.

And here they tell us “of times when gross and noxious errors prevail in the world; when necessary heads of belief are neglected, and many points of faith urged and insisted on, which are not necessary; when no distinction is made between doctrines that are barely profitable, and those which are absolutely necessary; when human inventions are bound upon men’s consciences; and, lastly, when many false and groundless doctrines are palliated and clothed in scripture language. In these times, they think it not barely expedient, but in a good measure necessary, that pastors of churches should advise and consult together, and, if they perceive that *blind, miserable mortals* may be assisted in their searches

after truth, in such days of danger, by a clear elucidation of divine meanings, then may they profitably set forth the same, &c.”\*

But, in the first place, how does it appear that Confessions have more of this *elucidating* property than other sorts of Rescripts? It is a common complaint, that these formularies of doctrine, abounding in artificial and scholastic terms, are rather apt to perplex and confound things that are otherwise clear and plain, than to illustrate any thing with a superior degree of perspicuity. And I am really afraid there is no room to except the very confession to which this apology is prefixed.

But to let this alone; there occurs another difficulty, with respect to this *elucidation*, not so easily got over. It is well known that some opinions have been formally condemned by the framers of creeds and confessions, as gross and noxious errors, which, however, have been maintained by very solid reasoning, not to say considerable authorities, from the Scriptures themselves.

“There are few heresies,” says Dr Stebbing, “which great learning and good sense have not been called in to countenance; he, therefore, that would effectually crush them, must take away these supports.”† That is to say, he must, if he can; and that has not always proved an easy task, even when

\* Pages 14, 15.

† Rational Enquiry, p. 47.

attempted by the accumulated skill and learning of Councils or Convocations. These are difficulties, out of which *blind, miserable mortals* are rarely extricated by confessions, which are rather of the dogmatical, than the didactic strain; and oftentimes leave the reader to guess at the reasons, why the compilers are so positive in some of their assertions, for which they do not condescend to offer any proof. These *noxious errors*, too, have sometimes procured themselves to be established by another party of Confessionists and Creedmakers; in which case, these authorized formularies are so far from being of any real *utility* to an unprejudiced inquirer, that they only serve to destroy the force and virtue of each other.

Again, if confessions are really profitable towards suppressing those gross and noxious errors, it must be profitable, and, in the same proportion, needful, to enlarge and amplify them as often as such errors arise, and the birth of every new heresy should always be attended with a new article in the confession.\*

\* One article of difference between K. Charles I. and the Scotch Protesters, anno 1638, turned upon the necessity of renewing and applying confessions of faith to every present emergency of the church. This the Scots compared to the riding of Marches, or boundaries, upon every new "Encroachment." And, indeed, supposing the utility of confessions to be what the Remonstrants say it is, King Charles's whole Convocation could not have furnished him with an answer to this argument of the North Britons in behalf of their new formulary. See Rushworth's Collections, vol. ii. p. 774.

Perhaps there is scarce a year passes over, in any country where the presses are open and men's tongues at liberty, without bringing forth some new opinion or reviving some old one with new circumstances, contrary to, or at least different from the approved and orthodox system ; and, consequently, within the description of a gross and noxious error. Suppose the requisite strictures on these heterodoxies had been added to the confessions of the several churches, where they have appeared for the last two hundred years ; to what a comfortable bulk would a *Harmony* of these confessions have amounted by this time ? What plenty of elucidation might such a *Harmony* have afforded to *blind, miserable mortals* ? And what a field is here opened for declaiming against the indolence and drowsiness of our appointed watchmen, who, during this long and perilous interval, have been silent upon so many important subjects ; suffering this multitude of heresies to pass uncorrected by any public censure, even while their partisans have been incessantly preaching up to us the great *utility* of confessions, as the only sovereign antidotes against them ?

But, instead of inveighing against our superiors for any omissions of this kind, let us make use of this very circumstance to point out to them the *inutility*, perhaps something worse, of our present established formularies of faith and doctrine. What is become of all those heresies, against which none of these



public provisions have been made? Why, many of them are dead and sunk down into utter oblivion, as if they had never been; others, being left open to free debate, have had no worse effect in religion, than other harmless, and innocent, and even edifying problems, are allowed to have in literature and philosophy. Whence the conclusion seems to be inevitable, that the malignity of other heresies, and perhaps the very existence of some of them, has been perpetuated, *only* by the respectable notice, that some church or other has thought fit to take of them in an established confession.

I will presume to support the justice of this remark, by an instance or two in our own establishment.

In the forty-second of King Edward's Articles, a formal censure was passed upon the restorers of Origen's opinion concerning *the temporary duration of future punishments*. But in the Articles of 1562, this censure is not to be found. Undoubtedly the question is of great importance with respect to the influences and sanctions of the christian religion; nor is there any point of theology upon which churches may be supposed to *decide* more reasonably, than this. And yet, had the negative of this problem, *whether future punishments shall be eternal?* still been stigmatized with this heretical brand, we should probably have wanted several learned and accurate disquisitions on the subject, from some of our most eminent writers, such as Rust, Tillotson, Hartly, &c. By whose

researches we have gained at least a clearer state of the case, and a more accurate insight into the language of the Scriptures relative to it, than the compilers of the article had before them; without laying any invidious prejudice on the judgment or conscience of any man living, or precluding the right, that every Christian has to determine for himself, in a case where his interest is so great and important.

Again, the fortieth of these original Articles “affirmed it to be contrary to the orthodox faith, to maintain, that the souls of men deceased do sleep, without any manner of sense, to the day of judgment,” &c. This was likewise dismissed in 1562; since when, the doctrine condemned, and, some few faint efforts excepted, all controversy concerning it have lain dormant, till very lately, that something very like a demonstration, that our first reformers were mistaken on this head, has been offered to the world;\* which probably had never seen the light, if an assent to this fortieth article had still remained a part of our ministerial subscription.

As to what the Remonstrants say of the neglect of necessary heads of belief; urging and insisting on

\* In a sermon on *the Nature and End of Death*, and a curious appendix subjoined to the third edition of *Considerations on the Theory of Religion*, &c. by Dr Edmund Law, the reverend, learned, and worthy Master of St Peter's College, Cambridge. How many doctrines are *defended*, how many are *not opposed*, not because they are to be found in the New Testament, but because they are *established* in a Liturgy, or *decided* in an Article?

points of faith, which are not necessary ; binding human inventions on men's consciences ; misapplications of scripture expressions and authorities, and the like ; if these are not to be prevented or corrected by the current labours of able and honest pastors, joined to the justice, which every man owes to himself, in searching the Scriptures for satisfaction in all doubtful cases ; it is in vain to expect any relief from confessions ; many of which, if not all, are accused on some side, of these very abuses, which the Remonstrants propose by their means to reform.

2. Another use, which the Remonstrants have for confessions is, “ to obviate foul and dishonest slanders, calumnies, and suspicions, with which those honest and upright divines, who undertake to set *blind, miserable* mortals right, may be soiled by their adversaries. In which case, say they, who is there, that will not think them constrained to inform the christian world, what manner of persons they are in religion, by an ingenuous confession of their judgment ; especially if they see that, unless they do it, all good men will be estranged from them, their proselytes return to their vomit, and, consequently, the truth of God be wounded through the sides of their wronged reputation.”\*

The Remonstrants had here an eye to their own particular case, and therefore we shall do no wrong to their argument, if we determine the value of it by

their particular success. One of the calumnies complained of in this preface is, that “the Remonstrants concealed some things, of which they were ashamed to give their judgment in public.” How do we obviate this calumny by their confession? How does their publicly *confessing some* of their doctrines prove that they had *concealed none*? They do not venture to say, that in this formulary they had declared their judgment on *every* point of theology. On the contrary, they admit, that they had purposely waved certain thorny and subtle questions, *leaving them to the idle and curious*. Might not the doctrines relative to *these* questions be the very things they were ashamed to confess? And, if so, what is their apology for waving them, but mere subterfuge and evasion?

But, indeed, it was worse with the poor Remonstrants, than all this came to. No sooner was their confession made public, than their adversaries fell upon them with a fresh load of calumnies, taking occasion from the confession itself; accusing it of “swarming with dreadful heresies from the beginning to the end, not excepting the very title page.\*

What is now to be done? Shall the Remonstrants

\* Bayle's Dict. Art. EPISCOPIUS, Rem. F. See likewise La Roche, Abridg. p. 685, who mentions, indeed, only the censures of two private ministers on the Remonstrants' Confession, an effect, I am afraid, of his extreme and too visible partiality for their cause. They, who will take the trouble to turn to Bayle, loc. cit. will see, that the words, transcribed above, are part of a censure of this confession, published by the professors of Leyden.

go to work again, and publish a second confession to confute these new calumnies? And after that, if future occasion should be given, as they might be sure it would, a third, and a fourth? No, common sense would tell them, it was all labour in vain, and that there is but one way of refuting these endless calumnies effectually, namely, by confronting the accusation with matter of fact, and appealing, from time to time, to a sort of evidence, which formularies of confession will not admit of.

The Remonstrants seem to have been aware, that it might be thought sufficient to obviate all charges of heresy, if the accused parties were only to express themselves in scripture language. But they tell us, "that this very thing is charged upon them as a crime, that, under the words of Scripture, they cherish in their bosoms the worst meanings, and most prejudicial to the glory of God, and the salvation of man; which reduces them to a necessity, whether they will or no, by some public declaration of their judgment, to purge themselves, and to maintain and defend the sincerity of their belief."\*

Well, then, let us consider how this case stands. The Calvinists charge it upon the Remonstrants as a crime, that, under scripture words, they cherish the worst meanings. The Remonstrants say it is a calumny, and appeal to their confession. The same Remonstrants bring the same accusation against another set

\* Pages 17, 18.

of men, as we have seen above. May not these men say too, it is a calumny? May not they too defend themselves in a confession? And at what does all this futile reasoning aim, but at proving, that whatever is once got into a confession must of necessity be infallibly true?

Where, indeed, any particular church can procure an establishment for its confession, in such sort as to make it a rule of teaching, and a test of orthodoxy for all her pastors and professors, a bridle upon the tongue, and a shackle upon the pen-hand of every man who is disposed to speak or write against it, formularies of this kind *may* have their *use* and *expediency*, in *securing the privileges, interests, and emoluments of that particular church*; and, being armed with coercive penalties, may likewise operate in the several cases abovementioned. But, according to our apologists, these are the circumstances in which the abuses of confessions do chiefly consist. “They are not for allowing confessions to be the limits and bounds within which religion is to be shut up; the indices of straight and crooked, or the anvil to which all controversies of faith are to be brought; nor would they have any man tied to them, but just so far, and so long, as he is convinced in his conscience, that the doctrine of the confession accords with the Scripture.”\*

This is just and reasonable; and it would be both

\* Pages 20, 21.

unjust and unreasonable, to deny the Remonstrants their due praise for their moderation, tenderness, and honest regard to the rights of private judgment. But, however, nothing is more certain, than that, by these limitations and concessions, they give up all the peculiar *utility* and expedience of these systematical forms, for which they profess themselves advocates in other parts of this preface; leaving them no more virtue or efficacy in instructing the ignorant, confuting errors and heresies, or silencing calumnies, than may be reasonably claimed by, and ascribed to, the writings and discourses of any particular divine of judgment and learning.

There is, indeed, little doubt, but that, in bringing down confessions so very low, particularly in their threefold caution concerning the use of them, the Remonstrants took a particular aim at the synod of Dort, by whose *proud cruelty* they had suffered so much. In *their* situation, to have put any high value upon public confessions, had been to preclude themselves from all reasonable apology for their conduct. And yet who knows, in what all this moderation and lenity would have ended, had the Remonstrants been fortunate enough to have engaged the civil powers, and, with them, the majority on their side? For my part, I should have entertained no worse opinion of their integrity, if, instead of this trimming apology, wherein they dexterously enough fetch back with one hand, what they had appeared

to give with the other, they had fairly and honestly told the world, what was certainly the truth of the case, that their circumstances required they should have a religious test as a cement of their party, and to put them upon the respectable footing of a church.

In the midst of all their moderation, we have seen them above expressing their concern, lest their *proselytes* should *return to their vomit*. In other passages they speak of confessions, as *watchtowers*, *ensigns*, and *standards*. On one occasion they have unwarily dropped this observation; "There are some things of so great weight and moment, that they cannot be gainsaid without the extreme hazard of our salvation. Freely to contradict these, or *quietly to suffer them to be contradicted by others, would be the farthest from prudence and charity possible.*" What, may we suppose, would the gentle Episcopius have done with the *gainsayers* of these things, invested, as he might possibly have been, with a commission from the secular arm? All this moderation and forbearance might, after all, have amounted to no more than what all protestant churches *profess*; namely, to assert the sovereign authority of the Scriptures, with a commodious saving to themselves of a concurrent privilege, of providing for the *utility* of their own *wellbeing*, by an orthodox test.\*

\* [The author's reasoning in this chapter to prove the inexpediency and inutility of Confessions of Faith, is clear and forcible; but his remarks on the Remonstrants, or Arminians, are



Let no man say, that, considering the temperate language of the Remonstrants, a surmise of this kind cannot be justified. In this verbal deference for the authority of the Scriptures, no church has ever gone farther than our own, nor consequently left greater latitude for private judgment.

“We receive and embrace,” says the church of England by the pen of Bishop Jewel, “all the canonical Scriptures, both of the Old and New Tes-

more severe than the merits of the case will justify. It cannot be correctly said, that they had a “religious test as a cement of their party.” The Confession of Faith, drawn up by Episcopius, was considered as exhibiting the outlines of their belief, but was never imposed as a test; it was never made a condition of church communion; clergymen were never required to subscribe it, nor to profess, either by a covenant or declaration, that they received it as a rule of faith by which they would abide.

Such a test, indeed, would have been in pointed opposition to their fundamental principles. It was the fond purpose of Arminius to unite sincere christians of all denominations and shades of opinion in the bonds of peace, charity, and christian fellowship. He desired to establish the terms and laws of communion rather in piety and good practice, than in any particular declarations of faith. Conduct he thought a better criterion of character than professions. It was another first principle with him, that every man should enjoy, without limitation, the right of judging for himself. In these sentiments he was followed by Episcopius and Grotius, and afterwards by the constellation of divines, who adorned the Arminian church in Holland, by Limborch, Le Clerc, and Wetstein.

With these principles as the foundation of their whole system, they never could have adopted a formulary of faith, which should be a medium, or a condition of fellowship. A confession which serves as a test, either by subscription or covenant, ex-

tament ; we own them to be the heavenly voices by which God hath revealed his will to us ; in them ONLY can the mind of man acquiesce ; in them all that is necessary for our salvation is abundantly and plainly contained ; they are the very might and power of God unto salvation ; they are the foundations of the Apostles and Prophets upon which the church of God is built ; they are the most certain and infallible rule, by which the church may be reduced, if she happen to stagger, slip, or err, by which all ecclesiastical doctrines ought to be tried ; no law, no tradition, no custom, is to be received or continued, if it be contrary to Scripture ; no, though St Paul himself, or an angel from heaven, should come and teach otherwise.”\*

This was once the sense of the church of England, whatever authority she may have since pretended to, upon other principles. Be this as it may, it excludes all who do not comply. No such test existed among the Remonstrants. After their rude treatment at the Synod of Dort, and during their sufferings in prison and exile, Episcopius drew up a Confession, which was generally received by the churches, but was never recognized as having authority. Every person was allowed to interpret its articles according to his own sense of Scripture.

In this view, the Arminian Confession cannot be considered in the nature of a test, nor as having thrown any obstructions in the way of christian liberty, and free inquiry. *Mosheim*, vol. v. p. 461. EDITOR.]

\* “ *Contra eas nec legem, nec traditionem, nec consuetudinem ullam audiendam esse,*” says the Latin Apol. sect. 27.

such of her divines as have asserted this authority with the utmost zeal, and in the highest terms, have yet, in the same breath, extolled her moderation, in laying no greater stress upon her Confession, than the Remonstrants themselves seem to contend for.

“Our church,” says Bishop Bull, “professeth not to deliver *all* her articles (*all* I say, for some of them are coincident with the fundamental points of Christianity) as essentials of faith, without the belief whereof no man can be saved; but only propounds them as a body of safe and pious principles, for the preservation of peace, to be subscribed, and not openly contradicted, by her sons.”\*

Nay, even the rigidly ecclesiastical Dr Stebbing allows, that, “when we speak of a *right* to determine what is the true sense of any article of faith, we do not propose the explication, given in virtue of this *right*, as a rule for the faith or conduct of christians; but only as a rule, according to which they shall either be admitted or not admitted to officiate as public ministers.”†

It is true, the obscurity of these concessions is such, that no man can tell what is intended to be given up by them, and what reserved for the church. In my opinion, they are hardly sense. But this likewise is the misfortune of the Remonstrants, who oscillate the question backwards and

\* Vindication of the church of England, p. 178.

† Rational Enquiry, p. 36.

forwards, till no mortal can find out what they mean to ascribe to, or what to detract ~~from~~, the virtue and merit of a public Confession.

The Remonstrants, however, have had thus far the better of us ; they *believed* their Confession at least when they made this Apology for it. We are driven to make Apologies for, and even to defend, subscription to a Confession which many subscribers do not believe ; and concerning which *no two thinking men*, according to an ingenious and right reverend writer, *ever agreed exactly in their opinion, even with regard to any one article of it.\**

\* Dedication to the Essay on Spirit, p. vi.

SELECTION

FROM

BISHOP HOADLY'S

WORKS.



## BISHOP HOADLY.

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JOHN HOADLY, grandfather of BENJAMIN HOADLY, the subject of the present memoir, emigrated to America about the year 1639. His son, Samuel Hoadly, was born two years after at Guilford, Connecticut. The family remained in that place fourteen years, and then went back to England. From that period little is known of the grandfather, except that he became chaplain to the garrison of Edinburgh Castle.

His son Samuel was educated at King James's College, Edinburgh, and at an early age commenced the employment of schoolmaster. He followed this vocation in different places, till he was called to be head master of the public school at Norwich, which station he held during the remainder of his life. He was the friend and correspondent of Graevius, and several of his letters to that eminent critic have been preserved.

BENJAMIN HOADLY, son of Samuel Hoadly, was born at Westerhaven, Kent, November 14th, 1676,

while his father was teacher of a private school in that place. He continued under his father's tuition till he entered the University of Cambridge, as a pensioner of Catherine hall. We hear little of him at the University, except that he took his degrees in due course, was elected a fellow, and discharged the office of tutor with much credit for two years.

During the first years of his life he was of a sickly constitution, and seldom in good health. By an accident also at the University he contracted a lameness, which never left him. He always walked with a cane, or a crutch, and then with difficulty. But his constitution gained vigour as he advanced in age. It was a custom, which he rarely omitted, to exercise daily by riding in the open air. This practice preserved his health and cheerfulness to the close of a long and sedentary life.

He took orders in 1700, and was appointed lecturer at St Mildred in the Poultry, London. This appointment he retained for ten years. The income was very small, and through the kindness of Dr William Sherlock, Dean of St Paul's, he obtained in addition the Rectory of St Peter's Poor, Broadstreet, in 1704. Already he began to be distinguished by his writings and sermons in vindication of natural and revealed religion, and of the principles of civil and religious liberty. So valuable were his services accounted, that, in 1709, he was complimented by a vote of approbation in the House of



Commons, and recommended to the Queen as worthy of advancement in the church. The Queen promised to comply with the wishes of the House, but she never found an opportunity to fulfil her promise.

By Mrs Howland he was presented to the Rectory of Streatham, Surry. As a qualification for this appointment, he became chaplain to the Duke of Bedford. The degree of doctor of divinity was conferred on him by Archbishop Wake, and, when George I. came to the throne, he was appointed king's chaplain. He had warmly espoused the cause of the Hanover succession, and deserved the patronage of a family, whose interests he had so earnestly defended. In 1715 he was advanced to the bishopric of Bangor, and, in the course of the twenty years following, he was appointed successively bishop of Hereford, Salisbury, and Winchester. He died, 1761, at his residence in Chelsea, aged eighty five years.

Bishop Hoadly was twice married, and had five children. One of his sons became an eminent physician, and was the author of several works of merit in his profession, as well as of the popular comedy, called the Suspicious Husband. He died before his father. Another son, John Hoadly, obtained considerable preferment in the church, and after his father's death published a complete collection of his works in three folio volumes. It is remarkable,

that, on the death of this person, the name of Hoadly became extinct. The younger brother of bishop Hoadly, who was Primate of Ireland, left no male descendants.

Justice could hardly be done to a biographical notice of Hoadly without detailing many of the most important events in England, both ecclesiastical and civil, for nearly half a century. His writings had a wide and powerful influence, and contributed much to give a tone to public sentiment and feeling. They were admirably suited to the times, and in the multitude of topics, which they embrace, we always discover the same strong intellect, clear perception, forcible argument, and plain, practical sense. In religion, he admitted no authority but the Scriptures; in civil government, he built every thing on the foundation of liberty and right. This was a bold stand to take at the end of the seventeenth century; and to maintain it with dignity required a firmness and zeal, as well as a weight of talents, not among the attributes of a common mind.

Hoadly's earliest writings are chiefly devoted to a defence of the reasonableness of conformity to the church of England. On this subject he was engaged in a controversy with Calamy, an able and learned divine among the dissenters. Hoadly argued for conformity on protestant principles, and not from the traditionary notion of hereditary right, nor from the pretence of any authority in the church, except what it

derived from the good conduct and worthy character of its ministers. He desired peace and union, and attempted to show, that, whatever might be the abuses of the established church, they were not such as to interfere with the essentials of religion, nor as ought to drive any serious christian from its outward forms and usages. He did not make it his object so much to prove the truth of doctrines, or the propriety of particular ceremonies, as to show, on the ground assumed by dissenters themselves, that no doctrines or ceremonies of the church were a necessary bar to such a conformity, as would ensure peace and harmony among christians.

This was stating the argument on broad and liberal principles. It was pursued with candour and forcible reasoning; but it will scarcely be denied, that the author sometimes lays a heavy tax on his ingenuity, and refines upon his subject in a manner more plausible than convincing. The discussion, however, was serviceable to the interests of religion. It excited public attention, and proved to both parties, that the differences between them were much fewer in number, and less in importance, than they had imagined. It had a tendency to promote inquiry, remove prejudice, and encourage mutual respect and esteem. There is no better method of subduing the rancour of party spirit, than to make men perfectly acquainted with each other's sentiments. They will always discover, that they are not so far asunder,

as a lively fancy and a few exaggerated representations had induced them to suppose.

Hoadly next entered the lists of controversy with bishop Atterbury, respecting the tendency of virtue and morality to promote the present happiness of man. In a published sermon, Atterbury had maintained, that, if there were no life after the present, the condition of man would be worse than that of the brutes, and that the best men would often be the most miserable. Hoadly considered this a dangerous doctrine, and opposed to the nature and true dignity of virtue. He proved it to be a sound position in morals, that virtue will always be in some degree its own reward, and that, under any conditions of human existence, the best men will be on the whole the most happy. The controversy took a wide range, and several of Atterbury's sentiments were attacked as unscriptural, and inconsistent with themselves. In short, there were but few points of agreement between these eminent men. They disputed on passive obedience, and other topics peculiar to the religious and political state of the times. Hoadly was in favour of the sentence of perpetual exile passed against Atterbury by the House of Lords, on a charge of being engaged in a conspiracy to restore the Stuart family.

In the year 1717 Hoadly preached before the king his celebrated Sermon on the *Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ*. With this discourse

commenced the famous *Bangorian Controversy*, so called from the circumstance of the author's being at that time bishop of Bangor. As this sermon embraced all the important topics then pertaining to the relations subsisting between church and state, it brought into action, on one side or another, many of the most able and learned men in the kingdom. No controversy, probably, ever attracted so much attention for the time it continued, nor enlisted so large a number of combatants. Hoadly was attacked from every quarter. He was put upon his defence against Sherlock, Snape, Hare, Potter, Wake, Cannon, Law, and a host of others. In all these contests he acquitted himself with great dignity and credit.

It was the purpose of the author, in the sermon which gave occasion to this controversy, to make it appear from the Scriptures, that the kingdom of Christ is in all respects a spiritual kingdom, in which Christ himself is the only king and lawgiver. Temporal governments and laws have no just control in this kingdom. The authority of Christ and his Apostles demands our undivided respect and submission. Human penalties and encouragements to enforce religious assent are not consistent with the principles of the Gospel. They may produce a unity of profession, but not of faith; they may make hypocrites, but not sincere christians.

These sentiments were thought by many to be a direct attack on all religious establishments, and especially on that of the church of England. They were not intended as such by the author. He approved establishments under certain conditions and modifications, and defended most ably all that was defensible in the English church. Yet we cannot wonder, that tenets like these should have met with strenuous opposition from the credulous and timid on the one hand, and from the discerning, bigoted, and suspicious on the other.

So great was the offence taken by the body of the clergy at the sentiments contained in this sermon, that it was resolved to proceed against the author in Convocation, as soon as it should be convened. The Lower House appointed a committee to draw up a Representation, which was unanimously accepted. But, when the king saw to what unreasonable lengths the clergy were suffering themselves to be carried, he exercised his royal authority, and prorogued the Convocation, before the subject was brought into the Upper House. At this period may be dated the downfall of the Convocation. It has never met since, except on business of form; and if the Bangorian Controversy had resulted in no other good, it would have been no trifling achievement to destroy the power of this engine of persecution and ecclesiastical tyranny.

A short time before this controversy commenced, Hoadly wrote a *Dedication to the Pope*, which, for a deep knowledge of human nature, for wit and grave satire, has seldom been surpassed. It was prefixed to a short treatise by Sir Richard Steele, entitled, *The Romish Ecclesiastical History of late Years*. This work professes to be a translation of an Italian manuscript, giving an account of the ceremonies attending a canonization of saints at Rome. The original narrative is occasionally broken by humorous descriptions and pointed reflections of the translator, designed to place in a strong light the absurdity and imposture of those ceremonies. The *Dedication* appeared in Steele's name, and went out to the public as his own, although some few persons were in the secret.

When the real author was generally known, Steele was severely censured, particularly by Hare and Swift, for shining in this borrowed dress. Hare, as the account says, "looked with an evil eye on this piece, as if his own province of wit were invaded;" and Swift could not let so good an opportunity pass without taking his usual mode of revenge by hooking the matter into a rhyme, in which he holds up Steele as one,

— who owned what others writ,  
And flourished by imputed wit.

The *Dedication* never was published in Hoadly's name during his lifetime, but it is contained in the

folio edition of his works. The following is an extract from a letter written by Hoadly to Lady Sundon nearly twenty years after the Dedication first appeared. "I remember, when I last waited on you at Kensington, you were willing to see a certain Dedication, which you could not find among your books. Be pleased to accept of this; and, as you read it, remember that it had never been printed, if it had not been first read over, and received the approbation of some of the best judges, in your parlour. Call to mind the excesses of joy with which Dr Clarke then received it." This extract, the testimony of his son, and the general consent of his friends, are a sufficient proof that he was the author of the Dedication, although he never published it with his name.

Besides his controversial and political writings, Hoadly published several works of value as aids to practical religion and a right understanding of the Scriptures. His discourses on the Terms of Acceptance with God are founded on the rational and scriptural principles of moral ability in man, and of human freedom and accountableness. He portrays the danger and folly into which some christians are prone to run by indulging a secret hope of divine favour on other terms, than a holy life and absolute obedience. He rejects all substitutes for practical virtue and piety, whether they are supposed to be excessive zeal, a capacious faith, or imputed righ-



teousness. The scripture motives are urged with earnestness and perspicuity, and every man is called on, as a free agent, to comply with the terms of salvation, and render himself a worthy object of divine favour.

At an early period of his life he wrote, besides pieces in defence of miracles and prophecy, four excellent sermons on impartial inquiry in religion. He published two or three volumes of discourses, and many single sermons at different times ; and also a life of Dr Samuel Clarke, prefixed to an edition of his sermons.

But one of his most celebrated and laboured performances was, *A Plain account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*. The character and objects of this work may be understood from the following remarks of the author. "As, for the sake of one sort of christians," says he, "I never ceased to inculcate the necessity of universal obedience to the will of God, that there might be no hope left to them of acceptance without this ; so, for the defence and support of others in their sincere endeavours to please God, against all those uneasy impressions of superstition, which they had a right to be freed from, I made it my care to state and explain the commands peculiar to christianity, from the first declarations of Christ himself and his Apostles, in such a manner, as that they might appear to honest minds to have as little tendency to create distress and uneasiness, as they were designed in their first sim-

plicity to have." Of the same work, Dr Middleton observes, in a letter to Lord Hervey, "I like both the design and the doctrine, as I do every design of reconciling religion with reason, or, where that may not be done, of bringing them as near together as possible. His enemies will insult him with the charge of lessening christian piety, but the candid will see, that he only seeks to destroy a superstitious devotion by establishing a rational one in its place."

As the Plain Account is elaborate and not well adapted to common use, it was abridged and put into a more popular form by Dr Disney.

The last publication of Hoadly was a very spirited letter, written after he was eighty years old, vindicating himself from misrepresentations, which had gone abroad by reason of an impostor having forged a note against him. This letter was considered a remarkable performance, both in regard to its ability, and the knowledge it discovered of the technical mysteries of the law. Horace Walpole said, in alluding to it, "the bishop has not only got the better of his adversary, but of his old age." The humanity and kind temper of the writer towards the person, who had attempted to deceive and defraud him, are not the least striking excellences of this vindication.

We have to regret, that no good biography of Hoadly has ever appeared. The sketch in the *Biographia Britannica*, which is copied into the folio edition of his works, is meagre beyond description.

It is rich only in dates and genealogies. His character was drawn in his lifetime with considerable fidelity, discernment, and elegance, by Balguy in a dedication prefixed to a volume of tracts. An anonymous hand, in another dedication, passed a high encomium on the bishop's virtues, and on his zeal and labour in the cause of liberty. But even from these sources we can derive no more than imperfect hints, and gain but a feeble perception of his true character as displayed in his works and his life.

Dr Akenside wrote an ode to Hoadly, in which he has not been unsuccessful in portraying some of the bolder features of his character. The lines quoted below may not be thought unappropriate in the present connexion.

O nurse of freedom, Albion, say,  
 Thou tamer of despotic sway,  
 What man among thy sons around,  
 Thus heir to glory hast thou found?  
 What page, in all thy annals bright,  
 Hast thou with purer joy surveyed,  
 Than that where truth, by Hoadly's aid,  
 Shines through imposture's solemn shade,  
 Through kingly, and through sacerdotal night?

For not a conqueror's sword,  
 Nor the strong powers to civil founders known,  
 Were his; but truth by faithful search explored,  
 And social sense, like seed, in genial plenty sown.  
 Wherever it took root, the soul restored  
 To freedom, freedom too for others sought.  
 Not monkish craft the tyrant's claim divine,  
 Nor regal zeal the bigot's cruel shrine,

Could longer guard from reason's warfare sage,  
Not the wild rabble to sedition wrought,  
Nor synods by the papal genius taught,  
Nor St John's spirit loose, nor Atterbury's rage.

The influence, which such a mind as Hoadly's must have had, in destroying the delusion and power of a false religion, and in establishing the principles of a rational faith and freedom, cannot be realized without going back and taking a minute survey of the times when he commenced his career, and following him step by step through all his arduous labours and noble designs. Christianity has profited by his wisdom and talents, his judgment and resolution. What he gained was durable; it has never been lost; and he gained much. No man has been more successful in restoring reason to its true office, and in proving the religion of Jesus to be adapted to the human understanding and practice. He gave a new impulse to the cause of the Reformation. Those who have come after him in the same work have been strengthened by his achievements, and encouraged by his success.

If all christians had the same love of truth and liberty, as Hoadly, the same aversion to bigotry, superstition, and prejudice; if all were as firm and resolute, as zealous and active in correcting abuses and resisting encroachments; if all were as ready to defend the universal right of private thought, judgment, and belief, and to recognize a true christian in

every sincere believer ; we might safely and joyfully anticipate the time, when the religion of the Gospel would be restored to its primitive truth, purity, and power. The example of such a man is an honour to human nature ; it is a pattern which cannot be too much admired and imitated. His name is bright in the annals of departed time ; it is adorned with the trophies of wisdom and the emblems of virtuous action ; let it be revered by the wise and the good.



## DEDICATION TO THE POPE.

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TO HIS HOLINESS CLEMENT XI.

YOUR Holiness will be surprised at so uncommon a thing, as an address of this nature, from one, who is, in your account, and in the language of your church, a schismatic, heretic, and infidel. But, as I think it my duty to make this public restitution of the following treatise, which I acknowledge myself to have clandestinely procured; so I will restore it fourfold, with all possible advantage to you and your church.

I find that all the infallibility, with which your Holiness is illuminated, doth not disdain the help of human information; and that your accounts of the religious, as well as civil, state of this kingdom, are in a particular manner defective; and therefore I have resolved to act the part of a generous adversary, and without reserve to lay before you, out of the fulness of my heart, such things, as will give you a juster information of the state we of these

nations are in, than any of your predecessors in the Holy See ever enjoyed ; and this, without any further ceremony, just in the order in which they shall arise in my own mind.

Your Holiness is not perhaps aware, how near the churches of us Protestants have at length come to those privileges and perfections, which you boast of, as peculiar to your own. So near, that many of the most quicksighted and sagacious persons have not been able to discover any other difference between us, as to the main principle of all doctrine, government, worship, and discipline, but this one, viz. that you *cannot* err in any thing you determine, and we never *do*. That is, in other words, that you are infallible, and we always in the right. We cannot but esteem the advantage to be exceedingly on our side, in this case, because we have all the benefits of *infallibility*, without the absurdity of pretending to it ; and without the uneasy task of maintaining a point so shocking to the understanding of mankind. And you must pardon us, if we cannot help thinking it to be as great and as glorious a privilege in *us* to be always in the right, without the pretence to infallibility, as it can be in *you* to be always in the wrong with it.

Thus the Synod of Dort, for whose unerring decisions, public thanks to almighty God are every three years offered up, with the greatest solemnity, by the magistrates in that country ; the Councils of



the Reformed in France ; the Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland ; and, if I may presume to name it, the Convocation of England, have been all found to have the very same unquestionable authority, which your church claims solely upon the infallibility which resides in it ; and the people, to be under the very same strict obligation of obedience to their determinations, which, with you, is the consequence only of an absolute infallibility. The reason, therefore, why we do not openly set up an infallibility, is because we can do without it. Authority results as well from power, as from right ; and a majority of votes is as strong a foundation for it, as infallibility itself. Councils that *may* err, never *do* ; and besides, being composed of men, whose peculiar business it is to be in the right, it is very immodest for any private person to think them not so ; because this is to set up a private corrupted understanding, above a public uncorrupted judgment.

Thus it is in the north, as well as the south ; abroad, as well as at home. All maintain the exercise of the same authority in themselves ; which yet they know not how so much as to speak of without ridicule in others.

In England it stands thus. The synod of Dort is of no weight ; it determined many doctrines wrong. The assembly of Scotland hath nothing of a true authority, and is very much out in its scheme of doctrines, worship, and government. But the church

of England is vested with all authority, and justly challengeth all obedience.

If one crosses a river in the north, there it stands thus. The church of England is not enough reformed; its doctrines, worship, and government have too much of antichristian Rome in them. But the kirk of Scotland hath a divine right, from its only head, Christ Jesus, to meet and to enact what to it shall seem fit, for the good of his church.

Thus we left you for your enormous, unjustifiable claim to an unerring spirit, and have found out a way, unknown to your Holiness and your predecessors, of claiming all the rights that belong to infallibility, even whilst we disclaim and abjure the thing itself.

As for us of the Church of England, if we will believe many of its greatest advocates, we have bishops in a succession as certainly uninterrupted from the Apostles, as your church could communicate it to us. And upon this bottom, which makes us a true church, we have a right to separate from you; but no persons living have any right to differ or separate from us. And they again, who differ from us, value themselves upon something or other, in which we are supposed defective; or upon being free from some superfluities which we enjoy; and think it hard, that any will be still going farther, and refine upon their scheme of worship and discipline.

Thus we have indeed left you ; but we have fixed ourselves in your seat ; and make no scruple to resemble you, in our defences of ourselves and censures of others, whenever we think it proper.

We have all sufficiently felt the load of the two topics of *heresy* and *schism*. We have been persecuted, hanged, burnt, massacred, as your Holiness well knows, for heretics and schismatics. But all this hath not made us sick of those two words. We can still throw them about us and play them off upon others as plentifully and as fiercely, as they are dispensed to us from your quarter. It often puts me in mind, (your holiness must allow me to be a little ludicrous, if you admit me to your conversation,) it often, I say, puts me in mind of a play which I have seen amongst some merry people ; a man strikes his next neighbour with all his force, and he, instead of returning it to the man who gave it, communicates it with equal zeal and strength to another ; and this to another ; and so it circulates, till it returns perhaps to him who set the sport agoing. Thus your Holiness begins the attack. You call us heretics and schismatics, and burn and destroy us as such ; though God knows there is no more right any where to use heretics or schismatics barbarously, than those who think and speak as their superiors bid them. But so it is, you thunder out the sentence against us. We think it ill manners to give it you back again ; but we throw it out

upon the next brethren that come in our way ; and they upon others ; and so it goes round, till some perhaps have sense and courage enough to throw it back upon those who first began the disturbance, by pretending to authority where there can be none.

We have not, indeed, now the power of burning heretics, as our forefathers of the reformation had. The civil power hath taken away the act, which continued that glorious privilege to them, upon the remonstrance of several persons, that they could not sleep whilst that act was awake. But then every thing on this side death still remains untouched to us ; we can molest, harass, imprison, and ruin any man who pretends to be wiser than his betters. And the more unspotted the man's character is, the more necessary we think it to take such crushing methods. Since the toleration hath been authorized in these nations, the legal zeal of men hath fallen the heavier upon heretics, (for it must always, it seems, be exercised upon some sort of persons or other ;) and, amongst these, chiefly upon such as differ from us in points, in which, above all others, a difference of opinion is most allowable ; such as are acknowledged to be very abstruse and unintelligible, and to have been in all ages thought of and judged of with the same difference and variety.

Sometimes we of the established church can manage a prosecution (for I must not call it a persecution) ourselves, without calling in any other help.

But I must do the dissenting Protestants the justice to say, that they have shown themselves, upon occasion, very ready to assist us in so pious and christian a work, as bringing heretics to their right mind; being themselves but very lately come from experiencing the convincing and enlightening faculty of a dungeon, or a fine. The difference between these two sorts of persons is this. The one differ from us about ceremonies of worship and government; but they boggle not at all at the doctrine settled for us by our first reformers; it is all with them right and good, just as Christ left it at first, and Calvin found it above fifteen hundred years afterwards. The others, unhappy men, look upon this to be straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel. However, the former sort, having a toleration for their own way upon subscribing all our doctrines, can the more easily come to persuade themselves, that the christian world is unhinged, if the latter should be tolerated in their opposition to doctrines which have been called fundamentals, even by Protestants, for so many years.

This hath been experienced particularly in Ireland, by one who could not see exactly what they saw about the nature of Christ before his appearance in this world. For, as with you, a man had better blaspheme Almighty God, than not magnify the blessed Virgin; so, with many of us, it is much more innocent and less hazardous, to take from the glory

of the Father, than of his Son. Nay, to bring down the Father to a level with his own Son, is a commendable work, and the applauded labour of many learned men of leisure ; but to place the Son below his own Father, in any degree of real perfection, this is an unpardonable error ; so unpardonable that all hands were united against that unhappy man. And he found at length that he had much better have violated all God's commandments, than have interpreted some passages of Scripture differently from his brethren. The Nonconformists accused him ; the Conformists condemned him ; the secular power was called in ; and the cause ended in an imprisonment, and a very great fine. Two methods of conviction, about which the Gospel is silent.\*

In Scotland, let a man depart an inch from the confession of faith and rule of worship established by the assembly there ; and he will quickly find,

\* [The person here alluded to was the Rev. Thomas Emlyn, who was several years settled as a dissenting minister in Dublin. He was an Arian in sentiment, and so violent did the popular feeling become against him on account of his religious opinions, that he was arraigned before a judicial tribunal, tried, and condemned to suffer imprisonment and pay a heavy fine.

He remained in prison two years ; and, when released, he went over to England, in 1705, about ten years before this *Dedication to the Pope* was written. He preached to a small congregation in London till age and infirmities compelled him to retire. He was a friend of Whiston and Clarke, and highly respected for his learning and virtues. He died 1743, aged seventy eight. EDITOR.]

that, as cold a country as it is, it will be too hot for him to live in. Infants are baptized there, not only into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; but into the pure doctrine professed and settled by the church of Scotland. To suppose, therefore, any point of doctrine to be erroneous, or so much as a subject for a new examination, in so unspotted a church, is a token of malignity and infidelity ; and the man, who doth it, must be content to escape out of their hands as well as he can.

In England, it is not all the other excellencies in the world, united in one man, that can guard him against the fatal consequences of heresy, or differing in some opinions from the current notions of our world, especially if those opinions are such as are allowed to be mysterious and inexplicable. We have now an instance of one or two learned and otherwise good men, who have thought it their duty, as they themselves say, to step aside out of the common path. And what their fate will be, time must show. At present, the zeal, as it is called, of their adversaries prevails. The fire is kindled, and how far it will consume or where it will stop, God only knows. But the case of one of them, which will give your Holiness some notion how we stand affected, is very remarkable.\* For, not to mention his

\* [Rev. William Whiston. He was educated at Clare hall, Cambridge, and succeeded Sir Isaac Newton as professor of mathematics in that university. He took orders in the church,

good life, which is looked upon but as a trifle, common to almost all modern heretics ; though his religion is mixed up with a good deal of Kalendar and Rubrical piety ; though he hath his stated fasts and feasts, which he observes with the greatest devotion ; though he is zealous for building of churches in the Apostolical form of a ship with all accommodations for order and decency ; though he is for the use of oil and the trine immersion in baptism, and for water mixed with wine in the other sacrament ; though he is very warm for believing in Christ towards the east, and renouncing the devil towards the west ; though he hath laid them a foundation for independent church power in the decrees of the Apostles themselves ; nay, though he joins with them in beating down human reason when it would pretend to judge in matters of religion ; and resigns to them all the preferments in the land from Dover to Berwick upon Tweed ; yet all will not do.

and was appointed a lecturer. But in 1706 he embraced Arian sentiments. This change in his opinions caused him to be expelled from the university, and deprived of his professorship.

After this he took up his residence in London, where he published from time to time a great number of books on mathematics, philosophy, and theology, and gave public lectures on various subjects. He died 1752, at the advanced age of eighty five. He was a man of amiable temper, goodness of heart, and great simplicity of manners. Some of his opinions were visionary and whimsical. His writings discover originality of genius, but more fancy than judgment, and more erudition than sound reasoning. EDITOR.]



He holds the Son to be inferior to the Father, and created by him, though a being of most glorious perfections; and upon this account he must not enjoy even the poverty, which he hath chosen, in quiet. And, if this be his case, what has another to expect who has not these advantages on his side, though he should be found armed with unspotted integrity and unequalled learning and judgment?\*

Your Holiness will judge from hence, how the matter of heresy stands amongst us; and how it must stand, unless my lords the bishops, who have with an unexampled courage preserved our liberties

\* [Dr Samuel Clarke. After publishing his *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* in 1712, he was charged with entertaining heterodox opinions, and a formal complaint was made against him to the bishops by the lower house of convocation. Much violence was at first manifested on the occasion, but the good sense and moderation of the bishops quelled the storm. The affair was suffered gradually to subside.

To objections urged against some parts of his book, Dr Clarke wrote a reply, the spirit of which was by no means consistent with his usual manliness and independence. A controversy was kept up for some time on the general subject of the work, in which Dr Waterland took an active part in opposition to Dr Clarke. The convocation was prudent enough to meddle no further in the affair, but left it to the scrutiny and judgment of the public.

Not long after this, Dr Clarke gave great offence to the bishop of London, by making an alteration in the doxologies usually sung in the church. A warm dispute ensued, but no other censure was inflicted, than a circular letter from the bishop, forbidding the clergy of his diocese to use any new forms of doxology. EDITOR.]

in civil matters, with equal resolution step in, and oppose that spirit which, from such beginnings at first amongst you, proceeded farther and farther, till it broke out into fire and massacre for God's glory and the good of his church.

And, as I observed before, that there was no need for your pretending to infallibility; that it is better taken in the world, and as easy, to establish the same authority without it; so, here, it will be obvious to those of your church to observe, that there was no manner of necessity upon them to discard the Scriptures as a rule of faith open to all christians, and to set up the church in distinction to them; because they may see plainly now that the same feats are to be performed and with more decency, (though not with more consistency, of which few are judges,) without carrying things to such extremity. For, at the same time that we are warmly contending, against *your* disputants, for the right of the people to search and consider the Gospel themselves, it is but taking care, in some other of our controversies, to fix it upon them, that they must not abuse this right; that they must not pretend to be wiser than their superiors; that they must take care to understand particular texts as the church understands them, and as their guides, who have an *interpretative authority*, explain them.

This we find to be as effectual with many, as taking the Scriptures out of their hands. And,

because it is done in this gentlemanlike manner and gives them an opportunity of showing their humility, it passeth very smoothly off, without their considering once the absurdity it leads to ; that, as doctors differ and councils too, this method layeth a necessity upon two different men, nay, upon the same man in different circumstances, to understand the same text in two different and often in two contradictory senses.

And here again, with submission, I think we greatly surpass you in our conduct. For *we* have the same definitive authority, which *you* have, without the reproach of depreciating the word of God ; the people all the while being fully satisfied that we allow the Scripture to be their rule and to lie open to them all. And we do indeed in words preserve all authority to the Scripture ; but with great dexterity we substitute in fact our own explanations, and doctrines drawn from those explanations, instead of it.

And then, one great privilege we enjoy above you ; that every particular pastor amongst us is vested with the plenary authority of an ambassador from God ; very much different from the maxims of your church.

For my own part, I have always been an advocate for all that reverence and regard, which can with any justice be claimed by them ; and shall ever pay them all the respect which their character and conduct, compared together, can admit of. But the

demands of those, who talk loudest amongst them, seem to increase upon us every day. For, upon inquiry, I find, what I was not before acquainted with, that what was spoken to the Apostles, was spoken to every one of them; that it is a crime not to attend to them, even without excepting the case of self-contradiction, mutual contradiction, and, what is of much more importance, of contradiction to all the precepts of peace and love in the Gospel; that they are at length of an angelic order; nay, that to despise them, not excepting any cases in which contempt is as natural as hunger or thirst, is, if I may repeat it, to despise God himself. And all this, because fallible men, in whom that trust is reposed, have admitted them, according to the best of their judgment, to officiate in holy things.

Every one, who thinks of himself in this light, needs no infallibility or impeccability, to make him as great as ever your Holiness pretended to be. His character will do without those or any one other accomplishment.

These last four or five years, our pulpits have in a particular manner echoed with the sound of dignity, rule, preeminence, and the like. There are, indeed, amongst the best and most learned of our divines, who disclaim all this, and disdain all respect but what results from the sincerity of their labours for the good of mankind. But the noisy make most noise every where, and few care to contradict them.

This privilege I thought worth recording in the account I am giving you of our religious affairs, because it is very considerable in itself and seems to be of a growing nature. It is a point, which, when once carried thoroughly and universally, will make every single presbyter or pastor an absolute Pope to his own congregation.

And this alone is sufficient to convince you, that at present, notwithstanding any intelligence you may have of their good inclinations towards you, they mean not you, but themselves. They may be surprised, indeed, at last, to find it all end to your advantage. But I acquit them of the guilt of any such design; and, indeed, of any other view but that of securing an immoderate respect to a particular set of themselves. Which I would not say, were it not too plain from hence, that, let a presbyter or a bishop or even an archbishop differ from them in any matter of speculation or of state; they have shown the world by their example that all this pretended veneration is to be turned, whenever the signal is given, into personal contempt and ignominy. So that to say and unsay, to do and undo, to declare absolutely that the profoundest reverence is due to the clergy, and at the same time to raise a storm of ill treatment against any of their own body who displease them; and all the while to keep their countenances and look as if all was consistent, is one

signal privilege, which many amongst us have to boast of.

It is very true, what your Holiness may have been informed of, that in many instances both of doctrine and ceremony we have been, of late years, rather drawing nearer to you than departing farther from you.

It is a common maxim, and propagated very politicly by the agents of your church with the help of some of the zealots of ours; 'better be a papist than a presbyterian.' This, being allowed by many churchmen and rightly managed among the populace, exceedingly diminishes the horror and aversion, there used to be in our people against the very name of popery. And this works by insensible degrees; till many a man, who at first feels himself a hearty enemy to popery, finding it to be allowed to be better than something else of which he knows nothing, begins to think with more patience about it; first, as not near so bad as it used to be represented, and then as an innocent matter, and then as a very tolerable religion, and, at length, as better than any thing set up against it; and all by the help of this general principle rightly managed, which takes off the edge of his former passion for the protestant religion, and so by degrees reconciles his thoughts to its contrary.

To the same purpose tends the revival of some matters of doctrine and practice of your sort amongst

us. The power vested in priests to absolve men from their sins, hath been declared by many in such sort, as hath in effect made the will of God himself to be determined by their will, or even their humour. It may be summed up in these two points; ‘that men can have no hopes of a pardon from God, but by absolution from the mouth of a priest, and a priest ordained to a nicety according to a particular notion of regularity; and that God must pardon those whom a priest pronounces to be pardoned;’ that is, that they are not so much obliged by almighty God’s will, as almighty God is by their’s, and that God is never so much honoured, as when weak and fallible men are placed in his throne.

Some have changed this absurdity of an *authoritative absolution*, which they see they cannot so easily defend, into an *authoritative intercession* of the priest, who is now become with us a mediator between God and man; still securing to themselves the same power and privilege in a less scandalous manner. This creates the same dependence of the laity upon the priests, and shows again how dexterous we are in changing words, when there is occasion, without changing things at all.

But your Holiness will easily guess the meaning of all this, when I let you know that the same persons declare, that auricular confession, and a particular unburthening the conscience of all its secrets, must precede the great benefit. And this, you well

know, is an engine of an unmeasurable influence, that can rule families, and overturn states, and govern the world.

Add to this another point greatly contended for of late, and very much to your advantage in the issue ; that all baptisms, unless by Episcopal priests in a regular line from you, are declared invalid and of no effect to instate men in God's *peculium*.

We have, indeed, openly declared against your doctrine of making the sacraments depend upon the intention of the priest ; but we are doing a much worse thing, if the doctrine of some men can prevail, and that is, making them depend upon what neither priest nor layman can ever come to any satisfaction about, viz. the Episcopal ordination of the priest in a regular, uninterrupted line of succession from Christ himself. This, indeed, sweeps whole parishes away at once, which perhaps have had preachers never ordained, and unpeoples the christian world without mercy. But it is supposed it must make the poor distressed laity adore the men, who have this privilege of entitling them to God's favour, or debarring them from it.

Yet, with some, it may be turned another way ; and they may begin to ask, if the clergy of our church, which received all through the hands of the Romish, be vested with this glorious prerogative ; how much more sure is it in that church which communicated it to ours ? If we are so positive we had it from



them, by whom we were ordained, and could not have it otherwise, how much more must it be in them who ordained us ?

After this, why should I mention, what must be known to you, the zeal of many for the multiplying of ceremoniousness and bowings in public worship ; for the cathedral pronounciation of prayers (which is the protestant unknown tongue to such as are not accustomed to it ;) our altars and the never-lighted candles upon them ; the decorations of our churches which, you have experienced, never stop where the honest men, who first begin them, design they should ; the consecration of our church yards, and the like ; in which you find this benefit ; that several, who take the impression of these things deep into them, are easily inclined, with a little art and management, to believe that church must be the best, which hath the greatest number of these good things.

We have not, indeed, many images or pictures left in our churches besides Moses and Aaron, whose figures, though they have nothing to do in our places of worship, give me the less concern, because christians are in no danger of idolizing Jews.

But we have one very common and very scandalous representation, in multitudes of our churches, which, in my opinion, comprehends all possible absurdities of that sort ; and that is, of the trinity in unity, figured in a triangle, and generally inclosed in

a circle, over our altars, as it is in the pictures which are now become fashionable in our common prayer books. This is justly esteemed the most inexplicable and unintelligible mystery of our faith. And yet it is suffered by those, who so esteem it, to be set forth even to men's eyes by a mathematical figure, which always supposeth the clearest and fullest ideas possible ; and the eternal Father of all things is represented to christians as one side of an equilateral triangle. In this point I am almost ready to give up the cause to you, and to own that all your crucifixes, and all the figures of your saints, who were once men and women and therefore representable, put together, have not any part of the monstrous absurdity of this single representation.

The preaching, as it is called, of our popular men, upon which we used to value ourselves exceedingly, is now come to that degree of offence, that in many places persons of sense and seriousness stay at home out of piety, and absent themselves from our assemblies for fear of hearing. For the truth of what I affirm, I appeal to the intelligence sent you by the agents of your church amongst us, who have of late been seen to take notes from the mouths of some of our followed preachers. For my own part, I have imagined myself sometimes to be at the late negotiations at Utrecht, and to hear one of the French king's plenipotentiaries setting forth the glorious and advantageous terms of peace, which

his master hath yielded to us ; sometimes to be in the midst of commissioners of trade, hearing the terms of our commerce extolled to heaven ; sometimes at the funeral of a late princess, and my ears filled with the sound of fulsome panegyric ; sometimes, in a cabal of malecontent jacobites, disburthening all their spleen, as far as they dare, in invective and satire and insinuation, against the late revolution and their present superiors ; sometimes in one of the meetings of some of our old rigid separatists, inveighing against their bishops ; sometimes in one of your Holiness' courts of judicature amidst the thunderings of wrath and damnation denounced against all heretics and schismatics ; in a word, sometimes at the Bear Garden, and sometimes at Bedlam ; but at last I have roused myself up, and found myself where I should least of all expect to hear either such subjects or such language.

About the end of January and the beginning of February, we are, in a more than ordinary manner, called upon to knock one another on the head, because our forefathers, and particularly the forefathers of many of our modern high church champions, happened to be great villains above sixty years ago ; and this is thought an excellent topic to be insisted upon from generation to generation ; nay, it is esteemed by many to be seasonable all the year round.

But there is another topic which seems to be in great repute again at this time, and that is, the danger of the poor church; a danger, which constantly is seen to increase in exact proportion, as the hopes and interest of your Holiness' friends in these parts decrease. So that, to know whether this subject be in fashion, no one need to inquire any thing but how it stands with the Roman Catholics in England, whether they are pleased or displeased. Some advantage, I can assure you, your church reaps from it; that it hath created a nauseous disgust in many of the best members of our's, and hath furnished some of our dissenters with this reason against uniting with us, *that they never will be of a church that is almost always in danger.*

One thing more I must here mention; that the church, I mean that part of the churchmen I am speaking of, is now in full possession of the privilege of applying God's judgments to their neighbours; which our forefathers so justly condemned, and took such pains to ridicule, in the worst of our separatists.

Thus, the death of our late queen is a judgment upon a nation, unworthy of so much goodness; though some weak fanatics on the other side have showed them how easy it is for any to interpret judgments in their own favour, by observing that she died the very day upon which the late schism act, designed, as they think, to rob them of a natural right, took place.

After king Charles the Second's restoration, the fire which destroyed the whole city, immediately following the plague which consumed vast numbers of its inhabitants, furnished matter for this humour. How easy was it found to make these to be great judgments upon account of that very restoration. Now the same impious humour, which is the very essence of fanaticism, let it be in what church it will, can do with a thousand times smaller matters. A fire not to be named with that, a mortality amongst our cattle, which all Europe hath felt much more grievously; these are not only declared to be God's judgments (as without doubt they are;) but it is sufficiently and plainly insinuated that they are judgments, not for their own sins, their own private enormities, or public ingratitude to heaven for their security, (for they never think of themselves in this view,) but for *something at court, which should not be there*; which all the world knows how to interpret.

Thus hath fanaticism its vicissitudes, like the other things of this world; sometimes reigning in the church, and sometimes out of it, sometimes against it, and sometimes for it. And thus is it come to pass amongst us, that preaching their own passions and indignation and resentment, under their disappointed expectations, is called, by too many, preaching the gospel and delivering messages from heaven.

Your Holiness must not judge from hence that this is universal. I can assure you, we have some

still amongst us, who truly deserve the name of preachers of the Gospel ; some still left, of whom the world is not worthy, and of whom the world seems to think itself not worthy ; for those, whom I have before described, are the mighty men of popularity, that draw the affections, and raise the passions, of the multitude. This disadvantage, however, they have, which your Holiness' agents, who help to move the machine, would do well to put them in mind of ; that the times are changed, and that there is not now one at the helm, who will either support them in their exorbitances, or betray the administration into their hands.

I return now to other subjects. One great privilege we acknowledge there is, which you enjoy above us, that your material churches, as soon as they are consecrated to the service of God, are exempt from all human power whatever. They become immediately the refuge of the worst part of mankind, they fling open their doors to robbers and murderers, and cut-throats and assassins feel their salutary influence, and find, within their walls, safety from force or justice. In this manner, and in this sense, do you invite and receive sinners into the bosom of Christ's church ; and such a charm is there in that sacred ground, that no man can attack them in their asylum without being destroyed by your thunder.

But then, to set against this, we have some advantages of a like nature, which you are not aware of.

I have known the time, when the figure of a material church, cut out in pasteboard, placed upon a long stick so artfully that it might seem to totter and represent the danger our poor church is in, and carried with an awful air before a reverend dignitary at an election for parliament men, hath been thought a sovereign remedy against its enemies, and of force enough to drive them headlong and spiritless out of the field. Nay, I have known the very word *church*, or *high church*, pronounced with a loud emphasis and a proper accent, and repeated a due number of times; I have known it change the countenances and voices of a numberless crowd into something fierce and horrid more than what is human, blow up their hearts and swell all their veins into a sort of phrenzy, (which they called zeal because it felt hot,) and have the very same operation exactly upon them, and push them upon the very same exploits, as if they had taken an excessive quantity of wine or opium. At the same time I have known the same word, pronounced movingly and tenderly with the eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, turn falsehoods into truths, a sinner into a saint, and a disturber of the common peace into a tutelar deity.

These are privileges, which I think it worth your while to be acquainted with. But there is one more advantage I will not omit, because we seem to depend very much upon it, and have already received much good from it. and you, as I am informed by

travellers, have nothing like it. And that is, ‘that we never fail to remember our church in all our cups, to drink her health, and to allow her prosperity a liberal share in all our merriments.’ Thus we sanctify our wine with our zeal for the church; and the wine returns the civility by keeping alive and increasing the warmth of our zeal.

This, many persons esteem to be a truer characteristic of a good churchman, than even the doctrine of passive obedience itself; because it is known, that many other churches have espoused that doctrine; but no other church in the world ever pretended to this practice but ours. No wonder, if your Holiness hears sometimes of disadvantages or disappointments in the affairs of your church, when this custom hath been so much neglected or discouraged amongst your people. And, if the word *church*, alone, hath been found to perform wonders; what may we not expect from it, when it is made a toast, and hath all the strength and warmth of generous wine added to it?

It is very entertaining to observe how the authority of the church, the articles of the church, the liturgy of the church, the homilies of the church, shall all be urged, by many of our loudest churchmen, and pleaded against others, whilst their force shall be disallowed and totally neglected in points disagreeable to themselves.



The authority of the church is the voice of God himself ; but it is nothing to them, if they happen to have bishops whom they dislike or suspect.

The articles of the church are irresistible arguments against others ; but they beg leave to except two or three unnecessary ones, which border too much upon Calvin, or press too hard upon your church.

The public service is, beyond all example, irreprehensible ; but then care must be taken to interpret the plainest passages in it by the most obscure, and particularly that the expressions of Scripture and ancient creeds be faithfully understood in the sense of modern schoolmen.

And as for the homilies, they are good or bad, of undeniable authority, or of none, just as they themselves please. Those against rebellion are particularly good against all tumults and disorders and treasons but their own ; and are to be urged home against the men whom they dislike. But those against your idolatry and antichristianism, and against many of your doctrines, I assure your Holiness, are of no account amongst the same men, but as the warm, overhasty efforts of ignorant zeal in the first reformers ; not fit to be urged against any true churchman, (any more than those of the Calvinistical strain,) since the time of archbishop Laud.

And all this passes smoothly with such as are under their direction ; though it be so plain, one

would think, to the most ordinary capacity, that all such matters are fixed with equal infallibility; that authority is the same when it is against them, as when it is for them; and that either all points of human decision are settled so as to admit of no dispute, or that none are. There is no medium. And, unless this be allowed, without any empty distinctions where there is no difference, I believe, in time, no man of sense will be able to see any difference between your popery and that of many amongst us, but that ours is protestant popery and yours is popish popery.

Learning hath been deservedly looked upon, in polite countries, as the great support and ornament of human life and true religion. But the state, in which it is now amongst us, is hardly to be described. It seems as if not only learning, but even curiosity itself and all pretence to it, were vanishing from amongst us. Our education is, of late, framed to heat our young men into faction, rather than to animate them into learning; and boys, as soon as they are taught any thing, are seen to be entered into violence, and prepared for all the impressions of a party.

Our universities have been deservedly styled fountains of literature. But I wish I could say, there were not those in them, who industriously poison those fountains, or who employ all their capacity and credit to make it become a more

laudable character to be a furious zealot, than a good governor or a hard student ; and more reputable learning, to be thoroughly versed in the half-sheets and pamphlets of party scandal, than in all the good sense of the best authors of antiquity. And I wish I had not occasion to add, that from hence it comes to pass, in them, that sound learning and good manners, and industry in promoting these, are often seen to expose a man to a series of discouragements, opposition, and ill treatment ; whilst party zeal shall recommend persons, of whose tempers or capacities or morals I shall say nothing, to all the regard and honour that can be showed them.

Your Holiness need not, indeed, much fear any prodigious advances farther, on our part, towards learning or truth ; which, unless we have it already in our possession, may lie eternally at the bottom of the well, for all that we are likely to do to draw it up ; no buckets being allowed to be let down for it, but what are stamped, and no ropes to be used to let them down, but what are of just such a measure and strength. For by this means, how can it be, but that the capacities and application of the greatest souls must be exceedingly cramped and stinted, when the whole method of procedure is so exquisitely fitted, not to enlarge the views and enquiries of men, but to determine the mind to one certain set of thoughts already fixed to the truth ; and the tongue to one

certain set of sounds for their eternal defence and security ?

The public exercises are not indeed exactly what they were, when the bare word of Aristotle, or Aquinas, passed for truth as currently as a bank-note passes for money. But the method they are in, is still the same in quality, though not in quantity ; for, though we have discarded many particulars, yet we retain, in the whole, much the same forms and modes which you left with us at parting, for the better securing of what we have not discarded.

We dispute still, in a constant round, as you, our predecessors, used to do, *de omni ente, scibili, and non scibili*. We have still the same *quoad hoc* and *non quoad hoc* ; the same *quatenus* and *non quatenus*, which we inherited ; and many other auxiliary words, of great importance to refresh the disputants, and to keep a dispute going ; but of none at all, towards the discovering or recommending any one single truth to the world.

This method may be called the art of wrangling as long as the moderator of the dispute is at leisure ; and may well enough be supposed to be a game at learned racket. The question is the ball of contention ; and he wins, who shows himself able to keep up the ball longest. A syllogism strikes it to the respondent ; and a negation, or a lucky distinction, returns it back to the opponent ; and so it flies over the heads of those, who have time to sit under it,

till the judge of the game strikes it down with authority into rest and silence.

This is the state of things with us; and that chiefly in cases, in which all generations and all men are equally concerned. What is truth, is determined for us, and settled before we are born by forefathers and superiors, in the ages of illuminated understandings and unprejudiced judgments. And our learned education doth not so much as pretend to be designed for further discoveries of truth in the most important matters; but is all framed to teach us the art of defending that which is already found out, and decreed to be truth, before our time; and the great duty of being thoroughly humbled into contentment with what is already provided for us; and into an abhorrence of all vain thoughts of improving the intellectual estate left us by our careful ancestors. The voice of authority is this, 'hitherto shalt thou come and no further.'

After this manner is every thing, in our schools of literature and theology, established within unmoveable limits. We have established questions, out of the number of which it is not allowed to wander. And this creates a round of established syllogisms to carry on the attack, and established distinctions for the defence. From hence it comes to pass, that even the youngest disputants are often heard, in their first public exercises, to debate about God's prescience, and future contingencies, in one fixed method of

difficulties and solutions; and with full as much learning and as clear light, as is to be found amongst the labours of the weightiest of the scholastic writers themselves.

But the good effect is much more visible, and much more remarkable, in the theological schools, where the method is equally in one uniform, unvaried course; and where, by that means, it is not quite so uncommon a thing, as some persons wish it were, to hear St Athanasius' or St Austin's word go farther than an Apostle's; and an idle distinction, or incomprehensible definition, of one of your schoolmen, decide a difficulty, much more to satisfaction, than a plain, intelligible expression or affirmation of our Saviour's.

If it were in any degree better, either in the established universities of North Britain, or in our dissenting academies in the south, I would freely own it. But take my word for it, it is, of the two, rather worse. In the north, there being a temporal kingdom of Christ, as well as a spiritual one, settled by law, ordination and preferments are by consequence rigidly and inseparably tied to one certain scheme of opinions; and this naturally determines the public education, and makes the rising generation conscientiously avoid the least tendency to any design of being wiser than their forefathers.

And in the south, amongst our non-conformists, it is much the same. The same logics and the same

bodies of theology, as they are called, descend from generation to generation. The same systems and syllogisms, definitions and distinctions, pass on current for divinity ; and Calvin and the Gospel go hand in hand, as if there were not a hair's breadth to choose between them.

There may be exceptions ; but this is generally the case ; and the more unlikely soon to be otherwise, with them, upon two accounts ; first, because their toleration is founded upon their mighty boasts of adhering more strictly to the doctrinal articles of the church in the sense of the first reformers, than the churchmen themselves ; the defence of which, therefore, is pretty much left to them, to pride themselves in ; and, secondly, because their very catechisms are systems of all the deep points, and common places, and hard words, in divinity ; by which means, their people being all systematical divines, keep them strictly to the received scheme ; and raise very great clamours, and very little contributions, upon the least deviation from what they have hitherto valued themselves upon understanding better than their neighbours, and have been taught, from children, to embrace as the very essence and life of the Gospel.

To this method of literature it is, that we owe (what is of the greatest service to your cause) such a multitude of writers, on all sides ; who, when they come abroad into the world, defend the sub-

limest points, by the bare repetition of words ; to which, when they are pressed, they are not ashamed to own, that they have no such meaning, as they fix to them, upon any other single occasion, in the whole compass of speaking ; that is, none at all.

And to this it is, that we owe, at length, the blessed discovery, and candid profession, that it is not fit that we should have any meaning to our words, when we speak about God, the Supreme Being, whom we are to worship in spirit and truth ; a profession, which, if it doth not turn to your Holiness' account, it is not their fault, who own it, amongst protestants.

The three great impediments to any advances towards a reformation, in your church, have been always found to be these ; a false learning ; a real ignorance ; and a system of preferments, fixed and tied down to a particular system of opinions or words.

The two first often go together. There is often, in the uneducated, a real ignorance, without a false learning ; whereas, in the others, there cannot be a false learning, without a real ignorance. But both put together would have little effect against the nature of things, and the irresistible force of truth, without the last of the three. Were it not for that, you would quickly find that the mask would drop from the face of things ; and the clouds, which false learning had wrapt about the most important points.



would be dissipated, and leave truth, in its lovely simplicity, naked and open to every honest eye.

But your security, you find, lies in the last. Whilst the church and the world are so closely and vitally united, and the immense riches of your archbishoprics, bishoprics, deaneries, canonries, abbies, monasteries, cardinalships, and popedom, are all confined to the worship of the mass book, and to the creed and decrees of the council of Trent; the sons of your church find little occasion for any such learning, as may tend to poverty; but a great deal of comfort in another sort of it, which carries as big a sound amongst the vulgar, and turns to a much better account, as it brings along with it defence and riches, both; and serves to support those opinions, which support that church, which is endowed with those riches.

I do not mention this with a view to your affairs only; but to remind you, that you have so much of this yourselves, and find so prodigious a benefit in it, that you have the less occasion to wonder at, or envy, the something like it, amongst us protestants.

Your Holiness needs not, I think, call in the assistance of your infallibility, to judge, from all this put together, in what a condition we really are; whilst, all the while, we are boasting of our glorious separation from you; and deafening the by-standers, and tiring ourselves, in our several ways, with loud cries about our own apostolical purity and perfection.

As far, indeed, as we are, in practice, separated from you, in what we ourselves condemn in your church ; so far we may, consistently enough, boast. But, as far as we are united to you in our practice, though irreconcilably separated in words ; methinks, to confess the truth, you have rather a handle of boasting against us, that we ourselves think fit to practise, in some instances and some degrees, what we profess so severely to cry out against in your church.

I forget that your Holiness hath the affairs of the world upon you. But I cannot persuade myself to make any apology, when I consider it is your interest that I should go on in this odd, unusual way of speaking truth.

I have freely laid before you, what may reasonably enough give you and your cardinals a sensible pleasure. I have, without reserve, showed you many of the follies, weaknesses, unhappinesses, inconsistencies, and wickednesses, of us protestants. It is but just to ourselves now, that I should change the scene a little, and take down your satisfaction, a few degrees, from that height, to which it may, by this time, be raised. I scorn to flatter you, any more than ourselves ; and how should you know the true measures, either of your hopes, or of your fears, about Great Britain, if you be not truly informed of our advantages and happinesses, as well as of the contrary. Nor is it any thing more than what is

reasonable, that I, who have, in the former part of this address, made no scruple to give myself pain, in order to give your Holiness pleasure, should now be permitted to give you pain, in order to give myself pleasure ; especially since I promise, that, if any thing offers, which it may be a satisfaction to you to know, I will without reserve intermix it, to mitigate the affliction.\*

The old primate still breathes ; and breathes the same spirit of christian liberty, which he ever did ; and the same hatred of all spiritual usurpation and tyranny that bears any resemblance to yours. May he long breathe. And may his last days be made serene and easy, by the returns of all that regard and deference, which his former labours and constancy have merited.†

He sees himself surrounded by a bench of brethren, who have stood the shock of the day of trial, and brought off immortal glory. I forbear, out of tenderness, to tell you, what excellencies they are

\* [A few paragraphs are omitted here, which relate to king George, and to the local politics of Great Britain at that time. However applicable and pointed they may have been when written, they have little to interest readers in this country at the present day. EDITOR.]

† The Most Reverend Dr Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury, called by all friends of liberty, *Old Rock*, from the steadiness of his conduct in this time of trial, in spite of all the arts of tories, agreeably with his motto. *Rupe Immobilior.*

possessed of; or what a confidence all true Britons place in them.

One, indeed, is removed from us; and one, to whose services this nation owes an eternal monument. I have a passion for his great name; but no words of mine ought to be joined to it.

I would pay some tribute to a memory, dear to liberty and religion, if any thing I could say could add to a reputation and character, acquired, supported, and enlarged, by pastoral labours uninterrupted from his earliest youth to his latest old age; and by writings, which will give life to the name of BURNET, long after the names of his enemies shall cease to be remembered.

Your church hath ever paid him the respect of fear; and the world will, in ages to come, pay to his memory that love and admiration, which the ungrateful of the present age denied to himself.

Were there no other reason to think so, I should be certain, that this news will give you, and your friends abroad, some joy; because it hath given it to that party of Protestants, as they call themselves, amongst us, who always partake in your Holiness' pleasures.

I will hasten from this unpleasant subject; and take leave of your Holiness, with a proposal, as odd and romantic, in appearance, as this whole address may seem; but, in reality, neither odd nor romantic, any otherwise. than as all justice, and simplicity,

and plain dealing, are esteemed to be so, in a degenerate and corrupted age.

But, if it be so, that I am, in this, transported beyond due bounds, let all the fault be imputed to the subject I have been upon.

The state of religion, on all sides, is a scene of astonishment; and the surprise of things, to which I have been heretofore a stranger, hath, I confess, filled me with an enthusiasm, too warm to be contained.

Descend, Holy Father, from your seven hills, and disdain not to tread upon the level plain. Unrobe yourself of all the gaudy attire of a pompous superstition. Lay aside all the embarrassments of worldly grandeur. Turn your eyes from the coffers of gold and silver, of which your great predecessor, St Peter, and his greater master, had none. Acknowledge religion to be something more, than being wrapt up in a heap of fine vestments, or being skilled in a dexterous performance of antic gestures.

And then look inwards. Divest yourself of your infallibility; and own yourself to be like one of us. As to renounce a kingdom for your church, hath been accounted the height of honour and saintship; so now, it will be your glory, in the most exalted degree, to renounce, in the name of your church, a double kingdom, for Christ; that temporal kingdom, which, in his name, and to his reproach, you have erected over the bodies and estates: and that spir-

itual one, which you have established over the consciences of mankind.

Remember, in the midst of all your luxury, and delicacy, and ostentation, what ground you stand upon. The bowels of the earth are armed against you. The shocks of earthquakes and the eruptions of volcanos, besides the common calamities of nations, are the beginnings of that day of vengeance, which will come, unless you prevent it by a speedy conversion to christianity.

Renounce, therefore, your golden keys, and your fruitful kingdoms. Throw away your fopperies, and your indulgencies, and your processions, and your canonizations. Show yourself in the nakedness of simplicity ; and take the Gospel into your hand, and into your heart. Call in your emissaries, and your missionaries, from all parts of the world ; and let them receive instruction, themselves, before they pretend to convert others.

Trouble the world no more with quarrels about the holy sepulchre ; but believe that he is risen, who once was laid in it. Let the wood of his cross cease to be magnified to an immense bulk ; and his natural body cease to be multiplied to an infinite number. Restore the heads of holy men and women to their bodies, if they can be found. Let the bones of the dead saints be at rest, and their blood be released from the perpetual fatigue of working wonders.

Throw up all your legends ; discard all your miracles, stated and unstated ; and make over all your tricks to the jugglers of this world. Declare to the Jesuits, that their game is at an end ; and restore the inquisition to hell, in which it was forged.

And, for the conclusion of this great work, celebrate an open and solemn marriage between faith and reason ; proclaim an eternal friendship between piety and charity ; and establish an agreement, never to be dissolved, between religion, on one side, and humanity, forbearance, and good nature, on the other.

I would not have you think, that I propose all this to your Holiness, and nothing from our own quarter. So far from it, that I am free to acknowledge, that it cannot be expected, that you should thus far recede from your present pretensions, unless others are ready to give up every thing of the same sort and the same nature.

If your Holiness parts with infallibility, it is but equitable, that the protestant churches should part with indisputable authority. If you give up the decrees of the council of Trent ; let them, in Holland, give up the synod of Dort ; and others, every where, throw off all manner of human decisions, in religion. If you discard the inquisition, let them discard classes, and judicatories, and consistories, and fines, and imprisonments, and the whole train of secular artillery, and the whole armory of the weapons of this world.

If you make all your great names bow and pay homage to Christ, let them bring forth their army on the other side ; and let Calvin, and Luther, and Zuinglius, and Knox, and Laud, and Baxter, and all other idols, bow down to the same Christ. Let Christians cease to be called by their names ; and let them, who have one master, have but one common denomination.

And let the whole be sealed with the kiss of charity, and with all the tokens of benevolence and love.

But whether you, or they, will hear, or will forbear ; whether any thing of this sort shall be done, or not done ; I have delivered my own soul.

I had an impulse upon me, to say all this. I have followed that impulse ; and, what I have said, I have said.

I have opened my heart to your Holiness ; and you may make what use you please of it.

If you think fit to accept of my correspondence, I faithfully promise to give you, from time to time, an exact account of the state, in which we protestants are, or are like to be.

For the present, without any farther ceremony or apology, I kiss your Holiness' feet, not in a religious, but a civil manner ; and am,

Your most faithful friend,

or generous adversary,

RICHARD STEELE.



# SERMON

ON THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM, OR CHURCH,  
OF CHRIST.

---

ST JOHN xviii. 36.

*Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.*

ONE of those great effects, which length of time is seen to bring along with it, is the alteration of the meaning annexed to certain sounds. The signification of a word, well known and understood by those who first made use of it, is very insensibly varied, by passing through many mouths, and by being taken and given by multitudes, in common discourse; till it often comes to stand for a complication of notions, as distant from the original intention of it, nay, as contradictory to it, as darkness is to light. The ignorance and weakness of some, and the passions and bad designs of others, are the great instruments of this evil; which, even when it seems to affect only indifferent matters, ought in reason to be opposed, as it tends, in its nature, to confound men's notions

in weightier points ; but, when it hath once invaded the most sacred and important subjects, ought, in duty, to be resisted with a more open and undisguised zeal, as what toucheth the very vitals of all that is good, and is just going to take from men's eyes the boundaries of right and wrong.

The only cure for this evil, in cases of so great concern, is to have recourse to the originals of things, to the law of reason, in those points which can be traced back thither ; and to the declarations of Jesus Christ and his immediate followers, in such matters as took their rise solely from those declarations. For the case is plainly this, that words and sounds have had such an effect, not upon the nature of things, which is unmoveable, but upon the minds of men in thinking of them ; that the very same word remaining, which at first truly represented one certain thing, by having multitudes of new inconsistent ideas, in every age, and every year, added to it, becomes itself the greatest hindrance to the true understanding of the nature of the thing first intended by it.

For instance, *religion*, in St James' days, was virtue and integrity as to ourselves, and charity and beneficence to others ; before God, even the father.\* By degrees, it is come to signify, in most of the countries throughout the whole world, the performance of every thing almost, except virtue and

\* James i. 27.

charity ; and particularly, a punctual exactness in a regard to particular times, places, forms, and modes, diversified according to the various humours of men ; recommended and practised under the avowed name of *external religion* ; two words, which, in the sense fixed upon them by many christians, God hath put asunder ; and which, therefore, no man should join together. And, accordingly, the notion of a *religious* man differs in every country, just as much as times, places, ceremonies, imaginary austerities, and all other outward circumstances, are different and various ; whereas in truth, though a man, truly religious in other respects, may make use of such things, yet they cannot be the least part of his religion, properly so called, any more than his food, or his raiment, or any other circumstance of his life.

Thus, likewise, the *worship* of God, to be paid by christians, was, in our Saviour's time, and in his own plain words, the worship of the Father *in spirit and truth* ; an' this declared to be one great end proposed in the christian dispensation. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship him."\* But the notion of it is become quite another thing ; and, in many christian countries, that, which still retains the name of the worship of God, is indeed the neglect and the diminution of the Father, and the worship

\* John iv. 23

of other beings besides, and more than the Father. And this, performed in such a manner, as that any indifferent spectator would conclude, that neither the consciences nor understandings of men, neither spirit nor truth, were at all concerned in the matter ; or rather, that they had been banished from it by an express command. In the mean time the word, or sound, still remains the same in discourse. The whole lump of indigested and inconsistent notions and practices ; every thing that is solemnly said or done, when the worship of God is professed, is equally covered under that general name ; and, by the help of using the same original word, passeth easily for the thing itself.

Again ; *prayer*, in all our Lord's directions about it, and particularly in that form, which he himself taught his followers, was a calm, undisturbed address to God, under the notion of a Father, expressing those sentiments and wishes before him, which every sincere mind ought to have. But the same word, by the help of men and voluminous rules of art, is come to signify heat and flame, in such a manner and to such a degree, that a man may be in the best disposition in the world, and yet not be devout enough to pray ; and many an honest person hath been perplexed, by this means, with doubts and fears of being incapable of praying, for want of an intenseness of heat ; which hath no more relation to the duty, than

a man's being in a fever hath, to the sincerity of his professions or addresses to any earthly prince.

Once more ; the *love* of God, and of our Saviour, was at first, in his own words and those of St John, many times repeated, the "keeping his commandments, or doing his will."\* But the notion of it was, it seems, left very jejune ; and so hath been improved by his later followers, till the same name, still kept up in the language of christians, is far removed from the thing principally and first intended ; and is come by degrees to signify a violent passion, commotion, and extacy, venting itself in such sort of expressions and disorders, as other passions do ; and this regulated and defined by such a variety of imaginations, that an ordinary christian, with the utmost sincerity in his heart, is filled with nothing but eternal suspicions, doubts, and perplexities, whether he hath any thing of the true love of God, or not.

I have mentioned these particulars, not only to show the evil itself, and to how great a degree the nature of things hath suffered, in the opinions of men, by the alteration of the sense of the same words and sounds ; but to give you occasion to observe, that there can be no cure for it, in christians, but to go back to the New Testament itself ; because there alone we shall find the original intention of such words ; or the nature of the things, designed to be

\* John xiv. 15, 21, 23. xv. 10. 1 John ii. 5. v. 3. 2 John 6.

signified by them, declared and fixed by our Lord, or his Apostles from him, by some such marks, as may, if we will attend to them, guide and guard us in our notions of those matters, in which we are most of all concerned.

It is with this view, that I have chosen those words, in which our Lord himself declared the nature of his own kingdom. This *kingdom* of Christ is the same with the *church* of Christ. And the notion of the church of Christ, which, at first, was only the number, small or great, of those who believed him to be the Messiah, or of those who subjected themselves to him, as their king, in the affair of religion; having since that time been so diversified by the various alterations it hath undergone, that it is almost impossible so much as to number up the many inconsistent images that have come, by daily additions, to be united together in it; nothing, I think, can be more useful, than to consider the same thing under some other image, which hath not been so much used, nor, consequently, so much defaced. And, since the image of his *kingdom* is that, under which our Lord himself chose to represent it; we may be sure that, if we sincerely examine our notion of his *church*, by what he saith of his kingdom, that it is *not of this world*, we shall exclude out of it, every thing that he would have excluded; and then, what remains will be true, pure, and uncorrupted. And

what I have to say, in order to this, will be comprehended under two general heads.

I. As the church of Christ is the kingdom of Christ, he himself is king ; and in this it is implied, that he is himself the sole lawgiver to his subjects, and himself the sole judge of their behaviour, in the affairs of conscience and eternal salvation. And in this sense, therefore, his kingdom is not of this world ; that he hath, in those points, left behind him no visible, human authority ; no vicegerents, who can be said properly to supply his place ; no interpreters, upon whom his subjects are absolutely to depend ; no judges over the consciences or religion of his people. For, if this were so, that any such absolute vicegerent authority, either for the making new laws, or interpreting old ones, or judging his subjects, in religious matters, were lodged in any men upon earth ; the consequence would be, that what still retains the name of the church of Christ, would not be the kingdom of Christ, but the kingdom of those men, vested with such authority. For, whoever hath such an authority of making laws, is so far a king ; and whoever can add new laws to those of Christ, equally obligatory, is as truly a king, as Christ himself is ; nay, whoever hath an absolute authority to interpret any written, or spoken laws, it is he, who is truly the lawgiver, to all intents and purposes ; and not the person who first wrote, or spake them.

In human society, the interpretation of laws may, of necessity, be lodged, in some cases, in the hands of those who were not originally the legislators. But this is not absolute, nor of bad consequence to society; because the legislators can resume the interpretation into their own hand; as they are witnesses to what passes in the world, and as they can, and will, sensibly interpose in all those cases, in which their interposition becomes necessary. And, therefore, they are still properly the legislators. But it is otherwise in religion, or the kingdom of Christ. He himself never interposeth, since his first promulgation of his law, either to convey infallibility to such as pretend to handle it over again; or to assert the true interpretation of it, amidst the various and contradictory opinions of men about it. If he did certainly thus interpose, he himself would still be the legislator. But, as he doth not, if such an absolute authority be once lodged with men, under the notion of interpreters, they then become the legislators, and not Christ; and they rule in their own kingdom, and not in his.

It is the same thing, as to rewards and punishments, to carry forward the great end of his kingdom. If any men upon earth have a right to add to the sanctions of his laws; that is, to increase the number, or alter the nature, of the rewards and punishments of his subjects, in matters of conscience or salvation; they are so far kings in his stead; and



reign in their own kingdom, and not in his. So it is, whenever they erect tribunals, and exercise a judgment over the consciences of men; and assume to themselves the determination of such points, as cannot be determined, but by one who knows the hearts; or when they make any of their own declarations or decisions, to concern and affect the state of Christ's subjects, with regard to the favour of God; this is so far, the taking Christ's kingdom out of his hands, and placing it in their own.

Nor is this matter at all made better by their declaring themselves to be vicegerents, or lawmakers, or judges, under Christ, in order to carry on the ends of his kingdom. For it comes to this at last, since it doth not seem fit to Christ himself to interpose so as to prevent or remedy all their mistakes and contradictions; that, if they have this power of interpreting, or adding laws, and judging men, in such a sense, that christians shall be indispensably and absolutely obliged to obey those laws, and to submit to those decisions; I say, if they have this power lodged with them, then the kingdom, in which they rule, is not the kingdom of Christ, but of themselves; he doth not rule in it, but they; and whether they happen to agree with him, or to differ from him, as long as they are the lawgivers and judges, without any interposition from Christ, either to guide or correct their decisions, they are kings of his kingdom, and not Christ Jesus.

If, therefore, the church of Christ be the kingdom of Christ, it is essential to it, that Christ himself be the sole lawgiver, and sole judge of his subjects, in all points relating to the favour or displeasure of Almighty God ; and that all his subjects, in what station soever they may be, are equally subjects to him ; and that no one of them, any more than another, hath authority, either to make new laws for Christ's subjects ; or to impose a sense upon the old ones, which is the same thing ; or to judge, censure, or punish, the servants of another master, in matters relating purely to conscience, or salvation. If any person hath any other notion, either through a long use of words with inconsistent meanings, or through a negligence of thought ; let him but ask himself whether the church of Christ be the kingdom of Christ, or not ? And, if it be, whether this notion of it doth not absolutely exclude all other legislators and judges, in matters relating to conscience, or the favour of God ; or whether it can be his kingdom, if any mortal men have such a power of legislation and judgment in it. This inquiry will bring us back to the first, which is the only true account of the church of Christ, or the kingdom of Christ, in the mouth of a christian ; that it is the number of men, whether small or great, whether dispersed or united, who truly and sincerely are subjects to Jesus Christ alone as their lawgiver and

judge, in matters relating to the favour of God, and their eternal salvation.

II. The next principal point is, that, if the church be the kingdom of Christ, and this kingdom be not of this world; this must appear from the nature and end of the laws of Christ, and of those rewards and punishments, which are the sanctions of his laws. Now his laws are declarations, relating to the favour of God in another state after this. They are declarations of those conditions to be performed, in this world, on our part, without which God will not make us happy in that to come. And they are almost all general appeals to the will of that God; to his nature, known by the common reason of mankind; and to the imitation of that nature, which must be our perfection. The keeping his commandments is declared the way to life; and the doing his will, the entrance into the kingdom of heaven. The being subjects to Christ, is to this very end, that we may the better and more effectually perform the will of God. The laws of this kingdom, therefore, as Christ left them, have nothing of this world in their view; no tendency, either to the exaltation of some, in worldly pomp and dignity; or to their absolute dominion over the faith and religious conduct of others of his subjects; or to the erecting of any sort of temporal kingdom, under the covert and name of a spiritual one.

The sanctions of Christ's law are rewards and punishments. But of what sort? Not the rewards of this world; not the offices, or glories of this state; not the pains of prisons, banishments, fines, or any lesser and more moderate penalties; nay, not the much lesser negative discouragements that belong to human society. He was far from thinking that these could be the instruments of such a persuasion, as he thought acceptable to God. But, as the great end of his kingdom was to guide men to happiness after the short images of it were over here below; so he took his motives from that place, where his kingdom first began, and where it was at last to end; from those rewards and punishments in a future state, which had no relation to this world; and, to show that his kingdom was not of this world, all the sanctions, which he thought fit to give to his laws, were not of this world at all.

St Paul understood this so well, that he gives an account of his own conduct, and that of others in the same station, in these words, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;" whereas, in too many christian countries, since his days, if some, who profess to succeed him, were to give an account of their own conduct, it must be in a quite contrary strain; "Knowing the terrors of this world, and having them in our power, we do, not persuade men, but force their outward profession against their inward persuasion."

Now, wherever this is practised, whether in a great degree, or a small; in that place there is so far a change, from a kingdom which is not of this world, to a kingdom which is of this world. As soon as ever you hear of any of the engines of this world, whether of the greater or the lesser sort, you must immediately think that then, and so far, the kingdom of this world takes place. For, if the very essence of God's worship be spirit and truth; if religion be virtue and charity, under the belief of a Supreme Governour and Judge; if true real faith cannot be the effect of force; and if there can be no reward where there is no willing choice; then, in all, or any of these cases, to apply force or flattery, worldly pleasure or pain, is to act contrary to the interests of true religion, as it is plainly opposite to the maxims upon which Christ founded his kingdom; who chose the motives which are not of this world, to support a kingdom which is not of this world. And, indeed, it is too visible to be hid, that, wherever the rewards and punishments are changed from future to present, from the world to come, to the world now in possession; there, the kingdom founded by our Saviour is, in the nature of it, so far changed, that it is become, in such a degree, what he professed, *his kingdom was not; that is, of this world;* of the same sort with other common earthly kingdoms, in which the rewards are worldly honours, posts, offices, pomp, attendance, dominion;

and the punishments are prisons, fines, banishments, gallies, and racks, or something less, of the same sort.

If these can be the true supports of a kingdom which is not of this world ; then sincerity and hypocrisy, religion and no religion, force and persuasion, a willing choice and a terrified heart, are become the same things ; truth and falsehood stand in need of the same methods to propagate and support them ; and our Saviour himself was little acquainted with the right way of increasing the number of such subjects, as he wished for. If he had but at first enlightened the powers of this world, as he did St Paul ; and employed the sword which they bore, and the favours they had in their hands, to bring subjects into his kingdom ; this had been an expeditious and an effectual way, according to the conduct of some of his professed followers, to have had a glorious and extensive kingdom, or church. But this was not his design ; unless it could be compassed in quite a different way.

And, therefore, when you see our Lord, in his methods, so far removed from those of many of his disciples ; when you read nothing, in his doctrine about his own kingdom, of taking in the concerns of this world, and mixing them with those of eternity ; no commands, that the frowns and discouragements of this present state should in any case attend upon conscience and religion ; no rules against the

enquiry of all his subjects into his original message from heaven ; no orders for the kind and charitable force of penalties or capital punishments, to make men think and choose aright ; no calling upon the secular arm, whenever the magistrate should become christian, to enforce his doctrines, or to back his spiritual authority ; but, on the contrary, as plain a declaration as a few words can make, that his kingdom is not of this world ; I say, when you see this, from the whole tenor of the Gospel, so vastly opposite to many who take his name into their mouths, the questions with you ought to be, whether he did not know the nature of his own kingdom, or church, better than any since his time ; whether you can suppose, he left any such matters to be decided against himself and his own express professions ; and, whether, if an angel from heaven should give you any account of his kingdom, contrary to what he himself hath done, it can be of any weight or authority with Christians.

I have now made some such observations, drawn from the church being the kingdom of Christ, and not of any men in that kingdom ; from the nature of his laws, and from those rewards and punishments, which are the sanctions of those laws ; as lead us naturally into the true notion of the church, or kingdom, of Christ, by excluding out of it every thing inconsistent with his being king, lawgiver, and judge ; as well as with the nature of his laws, and of his

promises and threatenings. I will only make two or three observations, grounded upon this ; and so conclude.

And, *First*. From what hath been said it is very plain in general, that the grossest mistakes in judgment, about the nature of Christ's kingdom, or church, have arisen from hence, that men have argued from other visible societies, and other visible kingdoms of this world, to what ought to be visible and sensible in his kingdom ; constantly leaving out of their notion the most essential part of it, that Christ is king in his own kingdom ; forgetting this king himself, because he is not now seen by mortal eyes ; and substituting others in his place, as lawgivers and judges, in the same points, in which he must either alone, or not at all, be lawgiver and judge ; not contented with such a kingdom as he established, and desires to reign in ; but urging and contending that his kingdom must be like other kingdoms. Whereas he hath positively warned them against any such arguings, by assuring them that this kingdom is his kingdom, and that it is not of this world ; and therefore that no one of his subjects is lawgiver and judge over others of them, in matters relating to salvation, but he alone ; and that we must not frame our ideas, from the kingdoms of this world, of what ought to be, in a visible and sensible manner, in his kingdom.

*Secondly*. From what hath been said it appears, that the kingdom of Christ, which is the church of



Christ, is the number of persons who are sincerely and willingly subjects to him, as lawgiver and judge, in all matters truly relating to conscience or eternal salvation. And, the more close and immediate this regard to him is, the more certainly and the more evidently true it is, that they are of his kingdom. This may appear fully to their own satisfaction, if they have recourse to him himself, in the gospel; if they think it a sufficient authority, that he hath declared the conditions of their salvation, and that no man upon earth hath any authority to declare any other, or to add one tittle to them; if they resolve to perform what they see he layeth a stress upon; and if they trust no mortal with the absolute direction of their consciences, the pardon of their sins, or the determining of their interest in God's favour; but wait for their judge, who alone can bring to light the hidden things of darkness.

If they feel themselves disposed and resolved to receive the words of eternal life from himself; to take their faith from what he himself once delivered, who knew better than all the rest of the world what he required of his own subjects; to direct their worship by his rule, and their whole practice by the general law which he laid down; if they feel themselves in this disposition, they may be very certain, that they are truly his subjects, and members of his kingdom. Nor need they envy the happiness of others, who may think it a much more evident mark

of their belonging to the kingdom of Christ, that they have other lawgivers and judges, in Christ's religion, besides Jesus Christ; that they have recourse not to his own words, but the words of others who profess to interpret them; that they are ready to submit to this interpretation, let it be what it will; that they have set up to themselves the idol of an unintelligible authority, both in belief, and worship, and practice; in words, under Jesus Christ, but in deed and in truth over him; as it removes the minds of his subjects from himself to weak and passionate men; and as it claims the same rule and power in his kingdom, which he himself alone can have.

But, *Thirdly*. This will be another observation, that it evidently destroys the rule and authority of Jesus Christ, as king, to set up any other authority in his kingdom, to which his subjects are indispensably and absolutely obliged to submit their consciences, or their conduct, in what is properly called religion. There are some professed christians, who contend openly for such an authority, as indispensably obliges all around them to unity of profession; that is, to profess even what they do not, what they cannot, believe to be true. This sounds so grossly, that others, who think they act a glorious part in opposing such an enormity, are very willing, for their own sakes, to retain such an authority as shall oblige men, whatever they themselves think, though not to profess what they do not believe, yet to fer-

bear the profession and publication of what they do believe, let them believe it of never so great importance.

Both these pretensions are founded upon the mistaken notion of the peace, as well as authority of the kingdom, that is, the church, of Christ. Which of them is the most insupportable to an honest and a christian mind, I am not able to say; because they both equally found the authority of the church of Christ upon the ruins of sincerity and common honesty, and mistake stupidity and sleep for peace; because they would both equally have prevented all reformation where it hath been, and will forever prevent it where it is not already; and, in a word, because both equally divest Jesus Christ of his empire in his own kingdom; set the obedience of his subjects loose from himself; and teach them to prostitute their consciences at the feet of others, who have no right in such a manner to trample upon them.

The peace of Christ's kingdom is a manly and reasonable peace; built upon charity, and love, and mutual forbearance, and receiving one another as God receives us. As for any other peace, founded upon a submission of our honesty as well as our understandings, it is falsely so called. It is not the peace of the kingdom of Christ, but the lethargy of it; and a sleep unto death, when his subjects throw off their relation to him; fix their subjection to

others ; and even in cases, where they have a right to see, and where they have a power to see, his will, as it really is, shall shut their eyes, and go blindfold at the command of others ; because these others are pleased to make themselves the sole judges of the will of their great Lord and Master.

To conclude ; the church of Christ is the kingdom of Christ. He is king in his own kingdom. He is sole lawgiver to his subjects, and sole judge, in matters relating to salvation. His laws and sanctions are plainly fixed ; and relate to the favour of God, and not at all to the rewards or penalties of this world. All his subjects are equally his subjects ; and, as such, equally without authority to alter, to add to, or to interpret his laws so, as to claim the absolute submission of others to such interpretation. And all are his subjects, and in his kingdom, who are ruled and governed by him. Their faith was once delivered by him. The conditions of their happiness were once laid down by him. The nature of God's worship was once declared by him. And it is easy to judge, whether of the two is most becoming a subject of the kingdom of Christ, that is, a member of his church ; to seek all these particulars in those plain and short declarations of their king and lawgiver himself ; or to hunt after them through the infinite contradictions, the numberless perplexities, the endless disputes, of weak men, in several ages, till the enquirer himself is lost in the labyrinth, and

perhaps sits down in despair or infidelity. If Christ be our king, let us show ourselves subjects to him alone, in the great affair of conscience and eternal salvation ; and, without fear of man's judgment, live and act as becomes those who wait for the appearance of an all-knowing and impartial Judge ; even that King, *whose kingdom is not of this world.*



## DIVISIONS AMONG CHRISTIANS.

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[THE following article is composed of the three first parts of two sermons, entitled, *Two Sermons concerning the Divisions and Cruelties of which the Christian Religion has been made the Occasion.* The text is from Matthew, x. 34. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." The parts of these discourses here selected, are printed in the exact language of the author, and contain all that he said on these heads, except one short paragraph, which reflects with undue severity on the Catholic Church, and is therefore omitted.]

I. I SHALL observe the truth of what is here predicted by our Lord; that the christian religion hath been made the occasion of much disturbance, of many sad divisions, hatreds, and persecutions in the world.

It is, indeed, a very moving and uneasy consideration, that, from the time of its first appearance to this very day, such an use hath been made of it, or

of something or other supposed to belong to it, as hath tempted some to think that the mischief it hath given rise to, in the world, is not countervailed by all the good it hath ever hitherto brought forth. And there needs but a very little knowledge in the history of former times, or the transactions of these later ages, to make one wish that there were much less reason to think so, than there appears to be.

What our Saviour chiefly had an eye to, in the text, was probably that persecution, and those instances of malice, which he saw it would occasion in the world at its first appearance ; that hatred of christians it would produce in the breasts of unbelievers ; and those storms of persecution, which the profession of it would raise against them. But, as he could not likewise be ignorant of those hatreds and animosities it would, in after ages, raise amongst christians themselves, against one another, to the disturbing and ruining their common peace and quiet ; so, he did not, we may be sure, exclude these, but had an eye to them all, in the words of the text.

When christianity first appeared, and first was preached, the prejudices and passions of men ran high against it ; as it was a contradiction to their received ways of worship, to their former and settled principles, to the dictates and practices of their forefathers, and to their own indulged lusts and evil habits. And so the very profession of it, much



more the bold preaching of it, alarmed all mankind against the men who professed and preached it. They were hated by their nearest relations; they were exposed to the greatest evils in life; and they were persecuted even to death. All countries were disturbed at them; and all princes and magistrates made it their business to extirpate them. This was their case almost constantly, till their numbers increased; till christianity became the established religion of whole nations, and princes became the temporal patrons of the church. And thus did this religion, which Jesus came to plant in the world, give an alarm to the kingdoms of it; and was made the handle to unspeakable disquiet and disturbance, malice and persecution, in it.

But, when it came to be the settled religion, to have the approbation and countenance of princes, and to enjoy the favourable look of the great men of this world; what a glorious scene would any one expect, who seriously looks into the design, nature, and precepts of it? What a scene of calmness and serenity of mind, of mortification and conquest of those passions and lusts, from whence proceeds all the mischief in the world? What a scene of love and beneficence to one another; of joy and delight in one another's happiness; of openness and freedom; of sincerity and kindness; of humility, condescension, humanity, and meekness? What could any one expect who searcheth into the Gospel, more than

the humours and actions of mankind, but that peace and holiness should have kissed each other; that contentment and happiness should have flourished in the earth; that all, that could contribute to the quiet and satisfaction of the world, should from this time have abounded in it?

Would you think, that, as soon as the christians had rest from the world about them, their passions ran as high against one another, as the passions of the unbelieving world had done against them before? Would you imagine that they turned from suffering gloriously, to biting and devouring, to hating and condemning one another? That their strongest and most avowed hatreds, their most fatal divisions and animosities, took their rise from, and had their foundation in, some point of religion, some point of faith or worship? And that they were often more concerned for some insignificant matter, or some point of speculation, that the Gospel had not so absolutely determined as to leave no room for diversity of opinions; that they were too often, I say, much more zealous to defend or oppose these, than to preserve the obligation, and secure the practice of the weightier matters of the Gospel? Yet thus it was; and thus it hath been ever since, to that degree, that it is now hardly a question whether more unkindness and inhumanity, more malice and hatred, more violence and barbarity, were heretofore shown by the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles towards

christians for the sake of their religion ; than have been since shown by christians towards one another, on the score of some religious differences.

The contending with the sword of the spirit, the word of truth and meekness, for the purity of faith and worship once delivered to the saints, was truly commendable and praiseworthy. This sort of contention for the Gospel, in the spirit of the Gospel, hath ever tended to the increasing of charity, as well as to the manifesting of truth. But a false zeal quickly devoured it, and took its place ; and very soon prompted men of ill tempers and worldly designs, to make a greater distinction amongst christians, than need ; to stigmatize honester men than themselves with hard names and odious appellations ; and, then, to treat them contumeliously, and as persons unfit to be dealt with in the ways of humanity and candour. And, on the other side, this same pretence gave occasion to men of parts and passion, when they saw themselves likely to be oppressed, to strengthen themselves in their opinions ; to form parties upon a foundation distinct from that of the flourishing party ; to enter into close designs and combinations ; and so to help forward the disturbance and disquiet of the christian church.

If we pass from these first ages downwards, who can speak or hear of such things, as have been publicly transacted amongst christians, on religious accounts, without a very sensible commotion within ?

We may read it in histories, and we may see it with our eyes, that there is an immortal hatred, an uneasiness not ever likely to cease, between christians of several denominations. There are inquisitions and torments designed, and made use of, by christians against christians, beyond the example of former ages, and beyond the cruelty of either Jewish or Heathen persecutors. We have known men tortured and persecuted, murdered and massacred, banished from their possessions, deprived of their estates, expelled their native land, separated from their children and friends, or their friends and children torn by violence from them ; for the sake of religion, and under pretence of doing service to the church of God, by extending and propagating the faith and worship of a particular set of men. And how exactly hath the account of this matter given by our Saviour been verified, in several countries, in these last ages, as well as the first times of the Gospel ? “ A man hath been at variance against his father ; and the daughter against her mother ; and the daughter in law against her mother in law ; and a man’s foes have been those of his own household.”\* “ There have been five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father divided against the son, and the son against the father ; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother ; the mother in

\* Matth. x. 35, 36.

law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.”\*

We of this nation, indeed, read and hear, at a distance, of greater barbarities and cruelties, than we have ourselves experienced, or seen with our eyes ; but yet we, amongst others, may help to prove the truth of what I am now observing. For what heats and passions, what unkindnesses and incivilities, what hatreds and variances, what parties and distinctions ; nay, what projects and designs are there often seen amongst us, which, if the bottom of things be searched into, owe their original, or their prosecution, to some real or pretended difference in religious opinions, or modes of worship ? Names are invented to distinguish some from others, and make them odious and suspected ; and these names are commonly taken from something that bears a relation to religion and the worship of God ; and the church is too often hooked into designs, in which it hath little to do ; and sacred words are made to serve the purposes of projecting men. For this is laid down as certain, that, though true religion be little regarded, but rather trampled on, by the generality of the world ; yet the pretences taken from thence are moving, and never fail to alarm the multitude, and to forward a design. Any doctrine, manifestly framed to serve a purpose, can at any time easily be made the distinguishing mark of a true

\* Luke xii. 52, 53.

christian, or the true church ; and all, that will not yield to the truth of it, shall presently be branded with some religious nickname or other. Heretic and schismatic at the head, and multitudes of other opprobrious names ranked under them, have all been taken from some difference in the holding and professing the same religion. And they have been used so freely, and after such a manner, as that they have often effectually contributed to the destruction of christian charity, to the overthrow of peace and concord, to the ruin of many excellent designs, and to the promoting many bad ones.

It is a shame to speak of these things ; but it is too plain to be dissembled, that it hath fared thus with christianity ever since it appeared ; that it hath not only been made the occasion of the bitterest persecutions from the infidel part of the world, but also of the bitterest hatreds, and strongest malice, and most irreconcilable divisions, amongst christians themselves ; and these, at length, rooted in the hearts of men, to that depth and with that firmness, that it appears next to impossible to extirpate them, or to restore the world to the spirit of meekness, and quiet, and to the temper of reasonable creatures. *Next to impossible*, I say ; for what can we think, when all the attempts Almighty God hath seen fit to make towards it, have hitherto proved ineffectual ; when even his last dispensation by the hands of his Son, sent from heaven, hath been so far from healing

the wounds and breaches in the love and regards of men to one another, that it hath been abused to the inflaming and widening them? When God himself *speaks to them of peace*, and yet *they make themselves ready to battle*? When they have taken occasion from this last trial of his, designed to plant peace and unity in the earth, to be the more quarrelsome, and the more incensed against one another; when they search into the bowels of this very revelation, and fetch fuel out of this most peaceable institution, to set themselves, and the world about them, in flames; what small hope, I say, can we have of the restitution and re-establishment of quiet and harmony in the minds and actions of men; whilst they are ever finding something in religion itself, to exasperate their minds against one another, to make their lives unquiet, and society unharmonious?

The prophets have in vain described the golden age of their Messiah, and in vain extolled his glorious and pacific reign, unless God himself interpose. “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,” saith the prophet Isaiah, “and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor

destroy in all my holy mountain ; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”\*

If this be a description which relates to the reign of Christ, and to the glories of his kingdom, when it should be set up in this world ; we must with grief remark, that either the prophet speaks only with respect to the nature and tendency of Christ’s doctrine ; that, if men would heartily receive and practise it, a glorious peace and happiness would be diffused over the earth ; or, else, that he prophesies of some happy times, unknown yet, which future ages are to be blessed with. For the earth is, indeed, full of the knowledge of the Lord, in this sense, that the profession of christianity is very widely spread. There is opportunity enough for knowledge ; but there hath been yet but little of this universal charity seen, or felt, in the world. *The earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord ; and yet the wolf dwelleth not with the lamb ; nor doth the leopard lie down with the kid ; nor do the cow and the bear feed together ; nor doth the sucking child play upon the hole of the asp ; nor doth the weaned child put his hand upon the cockatrice den ; nor have these rapacious and terrible creatures left off to hurt or destroy in God’s holy mountain. Nor hath any thing of what was intended by this come to pass ; that is, men’s tempers have not been*

\* Isaiah xi. 6—9,



universally tamed and subdued ; but the wild and wicked are still wild and wicked, still bite and devour the innocent ; and still a war is carried on amongst men.

Nay, for what appears, and for all those advances that have been hitherto made towards a firm union and a sincere and universal friendship amongst all men, every one of these figurative expressions of the prophet may be literally fulfilled, before an universal calmness reign through the earth. And the wolf, and the lion, and the leopard, and the bear, may sooner enter into terms of reconciliation and amity with the milder beasts and with mankind ; than the passionate and violent, the hurtful and venomous, the cruel and malicious part of mankind shall suffer themselves to be tamed and subdued into good nature and charity, or be bound up by any rules of quiet and harmony. But, though we see so little sign of this hitherto, yet we know that not a tittle of all that is spoken shall fail.

In the mean while, that it may be no objection against christianity itself, and no matter of scandal and offence to us, that it hath proved the occasion of so sharp swords and so much division upon earth, it becomes us to inquire, as I proposed,

II. Whether the Gospel itself be not wholly free from all the guilt of this great unhappiness ; or whether it be possible, with the least degree of justice, to attribute this to the doctrine, or design of

Jesus Christ; to the nature or tendency of any thing contained in christianity. A very few words will suffice upon this head. For let any person, of never so little capacity, look into the account of our Saviour's life, his actions and his words, recorded in the Gospels; or into the sermons and epistles and behaviour of his Apostles; and see if they find, through the whole, any the least encouragement given, either by example or precept, to any, even the lowest degree of that temper of mind, or manner of deportment, which doth so much as border upon ill nature, or cruel usage of our fellow creatures.

Did not our Lord himself condescend to all the offices of love and beneficence to all the world of sinners about him? Do not all his precepts, which respect human society, manifestly tend to the peace and quiet of it? And would they not effectually procure and establish it, were they thoroughly attended to, and universally practised? Doth not he command, upon pain of God's eternal displeasure against those who neglect it, the practice of all the peaceable and quiet virtues; and forbid the harbouring the very thoughts and surmises, that may possibly tend to break in upon the happiness of the world about us? Meekness, humility, condescension, forbearance, forgiveness, tenderness, and the like, are they not indispensably enjoined? And the vices contrary to these, haughtiness, pride, revenge, unmercifulness, malice, and ill will, are they not strictly forbidden;

their punishment declared to be certain and intolerable? They are forbidden, in all cases, and at all times. Nothing can ever justify them; nothing is supposed in the Gospel ever to excuse those who are guilty of them. Nay, love, and beneficence, and a readiness to be reconciled to our greatest and most violent enemies, are made the shining and distinguishing characters of a true christian. And could he, who came to institute such a religion, full of such precepts, and constantly recommending such sort of virtues above all others, be supposed to come on any other design, but to compose the jarring tempers and actions of men into concord and harmony? And can any one charge such a religion, that seems to be calculated in all its parts, chiefly for the planting, maintaining, and increasing peace and love in the world; can any one, I say, charge this religion with the guilt of those heats and dissensions, which it hath been by accident made the occasion of? No, it must be plain, beyond contradiction, to all who will look into it, that christianity itself hath not the least part in this guilt; but that we must seek for the true source and foundation of all this unhappiness somewhere else. This is what I now design, namely,

III. To consider, whence this great unhappiness hath truly proceeded, and where the guilt of it is justly to be fixed.

And, *First*. This unhappiness manifestly proceeded, in the first ages of the Gospel, from the prejudices and passions of the unbelieving world, both Jews and Gentiles. This I mention first, because the disturbance and disquiet that sprang from this original was first in order of time, commencing immediately with the Gospel itself; and was what our Lord chiefly respected in the text, which was spoken to the persons, who were themselves to be the first propagators of his religion and the first witnesses to this fatal consequence of it. A scene of violence and fury immediately attended the opening of the Gospel to the world. The preachers and propagators of it were persecuted beyond what had been known in the world before; and all the sincere professors of it hated by their very friends and relations, and pursued by all the evils of this world, and all that is terrible to flesh and blood. Indeed, this persecution and these dissensions had not happened in the world, if christianity had not been preached to the nations of it.

But shall not God do his part to the reforming and amending the world, because there are some in it that will make this very attempt of his an occasion of their growing worse? Shall not God send a divine person into the world to preach a pure and holy religion, full of charity, humility, and peace, because some will make this an opportunity of their increasing in fierceness and inhumanity? Had the

christian religion, indeed, given the unbelieving world any reason to be so incensed against it and so inhospitable to its professors, somewhat might be said in vindication of their practice, and some blame justly laid at the door of christianity. But wicked men raised this terrible scene of persecution against it, not because they had no reason to receive it, but because they would not. And they would not receive it, because it was against their interests, or their lusts, or their humours, to receive it. Not that it divested any of the magistrates of this world of their lawful authority, or dissolved the obligation of obedience in their subjects. Not that it concerned itself with the rights and privileges of kingdoms and civil societies; or brake in upon the government, or discipline, of nations. Not that it tended in its nature to render society disagreeable; to make men ill natured, or morose, or uncharitable, or unjust, or cruel, or hypocritical; or recommended any thing to mankind contrary to the peace and quiet of the state. Nothing of this could be laid to its charge by its greatest adversaries.

But the truth of the case was this. They hated and derided it, because, if it had universally taken place, the follies and superstitions of their received forms of worship must have vanished, and the whole fabric of their forefathers' religion been shaken and ruined. Let a form of worship be never so tedious with pompous ceremonies. never so full of sop-

peries and ridiculous circumstances, never so unworthy of reasonable creatures to offer, or of God to receive ; yet there is I know not what fondness for it, riveted in the minds and affections of men, if it descended down to them from their forefathers, and can but plead age and prescription.

But perhaps christianity, with the evidence that at first accompanied it, might have got over this difficulty, and have borne down this blind and senseless veneration of antiquity. But this was not all it had to encounter. It opposed the passions, and lusts, and present worldly interests of men. The Jews saw, it condemned and opposed that course of sensuality and covetousness they were generally engaged in ; and that it put an end to their hopes of temporal prosperity, and fleshly pleasure, and triumphs over their enemies, under the reign of their Messiah. The great men of the world found it most opposite to the main design of their lives ; and irreconcilable with that ambition, and pride, and insatiable love of riches and grandeur, which they had entertained, and could not part with. A very small part of the world, as things went then, found any the least comfort or satisfaction in any of its proposals. These were the reasons why both Jews and Gentiles made it their business to crush it in its infancy ; and to persecute, even to death, the first preachers and professors of it ; because they carried such evidence along with them, in the miracles they

every where wrought, that they judged it must presently gain ground, if not thus heartily and inhumanly resisted. This is a plain account how it came to pass, that the christian religion was at first the occasion of much disturbance, and of bitter persecutions, in the world. And whether this proceeded from any thing blameable in itself, or from the unreasonable prejudices and deep-rooted vices of the unbelieving world, may be left to any one of common sense to judge.

Let us now turn our thoughts from the unbelieving to the believing world ; from the men, that persecuted christianity, to the men, that have embraced and do profess it. And, as we have before observed how much hatred and division, how many barbarities and persecutions, amongst christians themselves, have taken their rise from religion, and been founded on a sacred principle ; so let us now consider whence this unhappiness, amongst the disciples of the same master, hath proceeded, and from what root it hath sprung.

*Secondly.* Therefore it is very plain that much of this unhappiness hath proceeded from the projects, and designs, the ambition, or pride, or covetousness, of the wicked part of the christian world. Christianity never pretended to reform those, that are resolved to be wicked ; and no wonder that such as these, who have no conscience, and no principles of religion, when they have any of their own con-

trivances to bring to effect, make use of the properest means to accomplish them. They know that there is no better, nor more moving pretence, than the care of religion and the church of God ; and, therefore, this must be the engine to set forward their undertakings ; and their unhallowed lips must profane holy words, that these holy words may sanctify their unhallowed actions. Thus, for instance, if the bounds of power are to be enlarged beyond right and just ; if a number of men must be extirpated, banished, or depressed ; something in religion and the church is often brought in, to colour over the vile wickedness, to shelter it from scandal, and ripen it for success. If a prince's favourable smile be to be obtained for one sort of men, and his displeasure to be kindled against another ; it is often seen that nothing will more effectually do this, than some consideration taken from their difference in opinion, or practice, with relation to religion and the worship of God.

This method is frequently made use of by those, who mean nothing more than the compassing their own designs, the enlarging their own credit and interest, the ingratiating themselves with some whose favour may turn to good account. And so the peace of human society, the quiet of the world, and the satisfaction and contentment of their neighbours, are sacrificed, at all adventures, to their own private covetousness, or ambition, or pride. or revenge, or



some wicked humour or other. And, because nothing better can be pretended, religion must be drawn into the quarrel; whilst these men themselves, who are the forwardest to hide their designs under the mask of something holy, are of all others the most ready to reproach religion itself on this very account, and the first to object against it the many disturbances and disquiets it hath occasioned in the world.

It is indeed absurdly ridiculous, to hear men of notorious looseness, men of profane and atheistical conversations, solicitous about the honour of God; and to see how men, who have either never appeared at the public worship, or never appeared there with decency, can, upon occasion, conceive a mighty concern for the credit and beauty of it; how their breasts can labour with the heat of a pious zeal; and all their designs and endeavours, on a sudden, be directed to the maintaining and supporting the church of God. But this must be expected, we see plainly, whilst there are wicked and designing men, under the covert of the christian profession, in this world. For they that have selfish and unchristian designs, they that make no scruple of cherishing ambition, or pride, or covetousness, or revenge, will never make any scruple of using religion and the church, as instruments to promote the designs such tempers of mind will put them upon.

Add to this, *Thirdly*, that much of the unhappiness we are now speaking of, may have proceeded from

the passions, and weaknesses, and imprudences, of sincere christians; christians that truly design well, and desire to promote the honour of their master and their religion. A good christian will never indeed knowingly interpose in the promoting any design, or advancing any cause, to the destruction of the peace and quiet of the christian world; but a good christian is not always secure, or out of danger of being imposed upon, when this cause is varnished over and painted before his eyes, so as to appear quite another thing. Honest men are often led by knaves; and made the tools of those, whom they would abhor, if they knew their insides. They are often drawn in to give credit to a cause, which, without their presence, would not be tolerable; that so their example may be urged in defence of what wants better arguments.

Christianity doth not make men more discerning, or more learned in the wisdom of this world, than it finds them. But yet, it neither commands, nor disposes men to be cheated and imposed upon by every pretence. It doth not instruct them to put on an air of unconcernedness or indifference in what respects the happiness of mankind or the society they belong to; nor doth it educate them in stupidity, or a disregard of every thing but their own private devotion and piety. But, as it is far from sending them into deserts and solitudes, into places unfrequented by human society; as it chiefly commends to them the

practice of those virtues, that adorn conversation and make the world about them happy ; so it recommends to them somewhat of the wisdom and cunning of serpents, as well as the harmlessness and innocence of doves ; lest the wicked and designing part of the world should manage their innocence and simplicity to the mischief of others and the ruin of peace, and render their harmlessness as fatal in its influence upon the world, as if they were clothed with barbarity and cruelty. It is no advantageous part, therefore, of a good man's character, who is obliged to act in society, that he sees with other men's eyes, or hears with other men's ears ; or that he is, out of an affected negligence, or fond opinion of another's abilities, or want of resolution, led blindfold by others ; because he may often be surprised into things of very ill consequence ; and, when he little thinks of it, bring a scandal upon that religion he heartily loves, by an unwary helping to make it serve the purposes of hatred and division.

What I have said under these two last heads is, that there are wicked and designing men in the world, who will, if it be possible, contrive their designs so, as that religion and the church shall be drawn in, to bear no inconsiderable part in them ; and that there are good and pious men, who will not be at the pains to examine their designs thoroughly ; or who cannot see through all the colour they can lay upon them ; or who are too easily cheated and

alarmed by their pretences ; and that upon these accounts it must so happen, that something in religion will be too often made the occasion of disorder, and uncharitableness, and dissensions, and persecutions, in the world of christians.

But, *Fourthly*, much of this unhappiness hath proceeded from men's not being contented with the simplicity of christianity, as it is to be found in the Gospels ; from their making new creeds ; their adding new articles of faith to those laid down in the New Testament ; and laying new impositions upon the rest of christians, unknown to Christ and his Apostles. This I may safely affirm, that, had christians been always content with a mutual agreement in the fundamental doctrines of their religion, as they lie in the Gospel itself, and the indispensable obligation of the practice of all the duties commanded in it ; much of this fatal consequence of it might have been hindered, and very much of the scandal redounding from it, have been prevented. But there hath ever been an itch, in some or other of power and authority, to alter the terms of love and concord settled by Christ, by framing some new character, and some fresh note of distinction, among christians ; and this hath ever begot opposition and controversies, managed, on all sides, with aggravations and provocations ; and this hath brought forth variances, and passion, and hatred, in the breasts of those who are sure to be condemned by their own

law for want of love and charity. And it ever so happens, as it hath been manifested by constant experience, that more violence, which hath now for many ages passed for zeal, that more violence, I say, is shown for these additions, and for these lesser and undetermined matters, in which the difference lies, than for the most fundamental points of faith, or the most necessary points of practice. In the practical duties, especially, men seem easy enough; and would fain have it thought, that the vilest and most enormous crimes are more tolerable in themselves, and more inoffensive and harmless to public society, than a difference in the least of their additions.

The greatest (I would to God I could say the *only*) instances of this, are to be seen where the Romish religion is spread. But we must not be so partial to ourselves, as to confine this observation to that church, or to such additions, or points not essential, as have been determined by it. I fear it will be found, that too many, who profess to have reformed from that church, still retain too much of the spirit of it, and too often make their own systems and notions the measure of their affections, and confine their cordial love and christian charity within the bounds of their own creed or manner of worship. It is certainly true, that there have not been greater hatreds, or more unchristian malice, amongst christians, than what have sprung from this root; and,

therefore, this unhappy consequence of christianity must be charged, in great part, upon those christians, who, not being content with the simplicity of christianity as they found it in the Gospel, have been perpetually making additions to it according to their own various opinions or designs.

*Fifthly.* Another consideration, near akin to this, is, that this unhappiness amongst christians hath chiefly proceeded from men's mistaking the nature and main design of christianity. Did men but understand and consider, that it was not the great design of the christian religion to make all the world of one opinion in things of little moment; but that it was revealed from heaven, chiefly to restore the worship of the *one Supreme God, in spirit and in truth; and to teach men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this world;* they could not act the part they so often do. Did men but consider, that the great branch of christian duty is love, and good nature, and humanity; and the distinguishing mark of a christian, an universal charity; they could not but own that Jesus Christ came to plant and propagate these in the world. And, then, they would abhor the thoughts of making any thing in his institution an engine of strife, and malice, and inhumanity. Then, they would not think all things lawful against those that differ from them, nor themselves obliged to crush and ruin them. Then, the contention between

men of various minds would not be, who should have the power of oppressing their brethren ; but the contest would be, who should love most, and who should give the most expressive demonstrations of an unconfined good nature and an unbounded charity. But these, I fear, are but dreams and wishes.

It would sound something strange, to say that the chief design of christianity is too plain to be understood, and too evident to be seen ; and yet it is true, that the very plainness of this makes it the less attended to. Such a love there is in men to something not so easy to be understood, nor of such importance ; and such a readiness to find out other designs of christianity, more agreeable to their own worldly projects.

Can any of all the fiery zealots in the world show us any design more worthy of the Son of God's descending from heaven, than the planting of love and peace on earth ? more beneficial to the whole race of mankind ; more for the ease and internal quiet of our own breasts ; or a better preparative for the calm and serene joys of heaven ; for the fruition of that God who is love, and of the company of those blessed spirits who are the witnesses and ministers of his love ? Can they show us any design more plainly revealed in the Gospel ; or any one duty there laid upon us, to which this must at any time give place ? If they cannot, then nothing can ever release us from our obligation to love and

charity ; or ever excuse the least degree of hatred, and malice, and violence ; much less of barbarity and cruelty. Nay, how can it possibly be thought by any christians, that a religion, which lays such stress upon peace and love, which dwells so eternally upon them ; which was founded in love, and so manifestly designed for the propagating and establishing good nature in the world ; how can it be imagined, that there is any thing in this religion, that can give them occasion to hate, or disturb, or persecute, any of their brethren ? Unless they can think that itself is so framed as to destroy its own design ; to oppose its own main end and purpose ; and to dissolve the obligations of its own precepts. These things are inconsistent, and too absurd to be fastened upon Jesus Christ by any who believe him sent of God. And, would men seriously attend to the design of the Gospel, they could not fix such absurdities upon it ; religion would be free from the scandal of being the occasion of hatred, and disturbance, and persecution, amongst men ; and the world would be free from the trouble and plague of them ; society would be happy, and God would be glorified, in the universal practice of love and peace.

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