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COLLECTION
 OF
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 ON
 VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

Written by THOMAS CHUBB.

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T H E
Equity and Reasonableness
O F T H E
D I V I N E C O N D U C T,

In Pardoning SINNERS upon their Repentance,
E X E M P L I F I E D :

O r a D I S C O U R S E o n t h e
P a r a b l e o f t h e P r o d i g a l S o n .

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Which those Doctrines, *viz.* that Men are rendered acceptable to God, and that Sinners are recommended to his Mercy, either by the perfect Obedience, or the meritorious Sufferings, or the prevailing Intercession of Christ, or by one, or other, or all of these, are particularly considered, and refuted. Occasioned by Dr. Butler's late Book, entitled, *The Analogy of Religion natural and revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature.* Offered to the Consideration of the Clergy, among all Denominations of Christians.

T o w h i c h a r e a d d e d t w o D I S S E R T A T I O N S , *viz.*

- I. Concerning the Sense and Meaning of St. Paul's Words, *Titus* iii. 10, 11. *A man that is an heretick, after the first and second admonition, reject: Knowing that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*
- II. Concerning the Time for Keeping a Sabbath. Offered to the Consideration of the Sabbatarians. In a Letter to Mr. Elwall.

T o w h i c h i s l i k e w i s e a d d e d ,

The Case of Pecuniary Mulcts, with regard to Dissenters, particularly considered. In a second Letter to the Rev. Dr. Stebbing.

B y T H O M A S C H U B B ,

L O N D O N :

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Equity and Reasonableness

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DIVINE CONDUCT

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BY JAMES CHURCH

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE SECOND VOLUME

LONDON: Printed and Sold by J. DODD, Strand, 1741.

T H E

Equity and Reasonableness

O F T H E

D I V I N E C O N D U C T,

In Pardonning

S I N N E R S upon their Repentance,

E X E M P L I F I E D.

L U K E X V. 31, 32.

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine; it was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

AS the doctrine of *repentance* and *remission of sins* is strictly and properly the *gospel*, or the *good news* which Christ was in a particular and special manner sent of God to acquaint the world with, *Luke xxiv. 26, 27*: so Christ relates

three parables, (*viz.* that of the *lost sheep*, of the *piece of silver*, and of the *prodigal son*,) in the chapter here referred to, in order to *justify* the *divine conduct* in this particular. St. Luke informs us, *verse 1.* *Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.* This gave an occasion for the scribes and Pharisees (who were watching for an opportunity to reproach him) to murmur against him, saying, *This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them,* *verse 2.* Our Lord, in order to *justify* his *own conduct* in this matter, and also to *justify* his *principal*, *viz.* his *Father*, who had sent him into the world for this very purpose, *viz.* to *call sinners to repentance*, appeals to them, and makes them judges whether what he did was not right and fit to be done, seeing it was what they themselves did, or would do in like cases, *verses 3, — 10.* *And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman having*

ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it: And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth. Man was originally intended, and therefore was fitly constituted to make a virtuous, and in consequence thereof a happy creature: but many men, by their voluntary depravity, have disappointed the kind intention of their Maker, and thereby have rendered themselves the proper objects of his displeasure, and they, in this their depraved state, may (by a figure of speech) be said to be dead, and lost, with regard to the end and purpose of their creation. God, as a tender parent to his creatures, and the natural guardian of their happiness, kindly interposed for the recovery of lost sinners, by sending his Son into the world to apprize them of their danger, and to point out to them the sure and only way by which they might escape it, viz. by repentance and reformation of their evil ways. And when sinners are thus prevailed upon to repent and return to their duty, that is, when they are convinced of, and are concerned for their having acted wrong, and undo, as far as it is in their power, what they have done amiss, and for the time to come act that part in

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the creation which their wise and kind Creator originally intended them for; then they, by this means, *recover* themselves out of that *dead* and *lost* state, which they, by their apostasy from their duty, had before fallen into; and then they, thereby, *cease* to be the objects of God's *displeasure*, and become the proper objects of his *mercy* and *forgiveness*, of his *approbation* and *affection*. And as God thus kindly interposed for the recovery of lost sinners, by the ministry of his son Jesus Christ: so his conduct in this particular is *fully justified* by the behaviour of *mankind*, who do, or would act the like part, in all like cases. And that this is the truth of the case, our Lord appeals to those very men, who were become his accusers, by relating to them, the two parables before recited. For, saith he, *what man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which was lost, until he find it? Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?* Now if this Man and this Woman *behaved properly*, by using their utmost care and diligence in endeavouring to find that thing which each one had lost; then how much more is the conduct of Almighty God, and of his Son Jesus Christ *justly approvable* in the present case, by their using proper means for the recovery of
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lost sinners; as a man, when he behaves as he ought, is of greater importance in the creation, and therefore of more concern to the Creator, than a sheep, or a piece of silver can be to the owner thereof. When a wicked man is convinced that he has done what he ought not, and in consequence of that conviction reforms his life, by undoing, as far as it is in his power, what he has done amiss, and by acting, for the time to come, agreeably to that rule of action he ought to be governed by; in this *reformed state*, he may, by a figure of speech, be said to be *found*, as he is brought back to that state in which he ought to have been, and would have been in, if he had not apostatized. And as God, by sending his Son Jesus Christ into the world to prevail upon sinners to repent and amend their ways, did no other, nor no more, than pursue his own original design in the creation of mankind: so this *fully justifies* his conduct in this particular; and also the conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ in his keeping company with publicans and sinners; as hereby, he did no other, nor no more, than pursue the great end and purpose of his mission. And as benevolence disposes men to be *pleased with*, and *rejoice* in each other's good, and therefore the man, when he had found his sheep, called together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, *Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost*; and the woman, when she had found the

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the piece of silver, called her friends and her neighbours together, saying, *Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost*: so the recovery of a lost sinner, by bringing him to repentance and reformation of his evil ways, ministers just ground of joy and pleasure to the intelligent world, as hereby, the injury done in the creation is, as far as it can be, repaired; and the dead, or lost member is restored. *Likewise I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.* This, I think, is the sense, and the design of the two parables before recited.

But that this matter might appear yet plainer, our Lord related another parable, viz. that of the prodigal Son, in which the point he had in view is more largely considered, and more fully exemplified, *vers.* 11, 12. *And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me my portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.* In this first branch of the parable is set forth that distribution of gifts and abilities which God in the general course of his providence is pleased to give to every man, in order to render him a useful part of the creation. Every wise and provident father does, according to his circumstances, make such a distribution of his fortune to his children, when they are capable of making a proper use of it, as is necessary to enable them,

them, by trade or otherways, to make a provision for themselves, their offspring and dependents; that thereby, their passage through life, may be *comfortable* to themselves, and *useful* to others. In like manner, Almighty God, who is the common parent of his creatures, and who has a much greater regard for the happiness and wellbeing of mankind, than any earthly parent can possibly have for the well being of his children, has, in the general course of his providence, *distributed gifts and abilities* to each individual of our species; that in a right and proper use of them, each one might act the part assigned him in the creation, by pursuing and carrying on the general end of being, *viz.* a general happiness; and thereby, might render himself both a useful and a happy creature.

Verse 13. *And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.* In this branch of the parable is set forth the *ill use* that many of our species make of their power and those abilities providence has blessed them with; and that whilst they indulge themselves in a vicious course of life, they keep themselves as far as possible from all *restraint or control*. As a *general happiness* must be the general end of creation to a wise and kind Creator: so this globe (with all its furniture and inhabitants) is wisely constituted to answer *this valuable purpose*. And as man is

the *chief* or *principal inhabitant* of this globe, and thereby is qualified for, and rendered capable of contributing *greatly* towards the general end of creation, (and which indeed is likewise the general end of being to intelligent beings) *viz.* a general happiness; so those very abilities render him capable of contributing *greatly* to the contrary. Those abilities which render him capable of pursuing their own good, in conjunction with the happiness of others, do likewise render them capable of pursuing their own pleasure, in distinction from, and in opposition to the common felicity. And in that composition of selfish and benevolent affections, which was wisely placed in the human constitution, in order to dispose each individual, not only to pursue his own good, but also that of others, the *selfish part* is capable of being *indulged to excess*, by which means, men, instead of being virtuous and useful, which was what their wise and kind Creator originally intended, and therefore qualified them for, become vicious and hurtful, and thereby disappoint the end and purpose of their creation. And indeed it is a too great indulgence of the affections of self-love, which is the *great corruption of human nature*, and is the ground and foundation of all our miscarriages, as it is the *root* from which every evil action springeth. For, tho' vice may appear in various shapes, and men may be hurtful to others in a variety of ways; yet,

I think, it may truly be said that it is mens paying too great regard to themselves which is at the bottom of all, or at least, that this is generally the case. And therefore what *St. Paul* said of the love of money in particular, 1 *Tim.* vi, 10. may more justly be said of covetousness at large, or a vicious self-love, *viz.* that *it is the root of all evil.* When self-love becomes the *sole principle* of action in men, or at least, when the affection becomes *greatly viciated*, it then renders them greatly injurious to the common felicity, by disposing them to gratify their appetites and passions at all hazard, and then they run into any extravagancy, even tho' it be greatly to the hurt and damage of their neighbours. And tho' such pursuits seldom or never answer; yet as this is what they will not learn from any former experience with regard to themselves; so they seldom look abroad to observe the final event of such pursuits with regard to others. And tho' men are endued with reasoning faculties, to direct and guide their behaviour; yet when the affection of self-love is become viciated as aforesaid, then reason becomes only an handmaid to mens vices, by guiding them in the pursuit of those pleasures they have immediately in view, and by helping them the more speedily, and effectually to obtain them; whereas its aid is seldom or never called in, to inform them of the nature, or the consequences of their actions. And when men are thus determined

to gratify their inclinations whatever they be; then they keep themselves, as far as possible, from all restraint or control; then they carefully avoid the place, the company, and every thing which may check, or restrain their desires, or disturb their enjoyment. *The younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.*

Verf. 14, 15, 16. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his field to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.* In these verses is intended to be shewn the great unhappiness which very often attends a vicious course of life in this world; and the certain misery which will follow it in another, if the sinner's *repentance* and *reformation* does not prevent it. This is represented by the distressed and unpitied condition, which the prodigal's riotous living had brought him into; *he began to be in want*, and desired *to be fed with the husks which the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.* As man was made a social creature, and consequently was designed and constituted, not to be happy alone, but in and with society; and as the happiness of each individual does in great measure result from, and is bound up with the happiness

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of the whole: so whoever *inverts this order of nature*, by attempting to monopolize happiness to himself, and by pursuing his own pleasure in distinction from, and in opposition to the common felicity, such an one is very often his own greatest enemy even as to this life, by his disappointing himself of that abundance of pleasure which he proposed to taste, and by his bringing upon himself that unhappiness which he chose to avoid. This, I say, is often the case with regard to a violent and extravagant pursuit of pleasure, or a vicious self-love, in what way so ever the passion may shew itself. And as a vicious course of life naturally leads to, and is very often attended with great unhappiness in this world: so certain misery will follow it in the next, if the sinner's repentance and reformation does not prevent it. For as a general happiness, must needs be the great and general end of creation to a wise and good Creator; and as man is so constituted and circumstanced as to be rendered capable of contributing greatly to this end, or greatly to the contrary, (tho' some more, some less:) so when a man pursues the great end of creation, by employing that power and those abilities he is possessed of in promoting the common good, then such an one must, in the nature of the thing, render himself *highly approvable*, and *justly rewardable* to his Maker; and therefore we may be assured, that when the scene of action is over

as to this life, he will most certainly be greatly rewarded in another. And on the other side, when a man does what in him lies to frustrate and disappoint the great end of creation, by imploying that power and those abilities he is possessed of in disturbing and hindering the common tranquillity, and viciously and wickedly contributes greatly to the unhappiness and misery of others, such an one must, in the nature of the thing, render himself *greatly displeasing* to God, and worthy of the *divine correction*; and therefore we may be assured that God will call him to an account for his behaviour, and punish him as he justly deserves, if his repentance and reformation does not prevent it. And it is the *equity* and *suitableness* of such a conduct, upon which the *certainty* of a future judgment and retribution is grounded. God will most certainly call men to an account, and reward or punish them in another world, according to their behaviour in this; because it is suitable and proper, it is highly just and reasonable that he should do so.

Vrs. 17, 18, 19. *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.* As a vicious course of life naturally leads to, and is often attended

attended with great unhappiness in this world: so that unhappiness, sometimes, has a proper effect upon the sinner, by leading him to *serious reflection* and *consideration*. When the prodigal had brought himself to poverty and want, by his profligate life, he then *came to himself*; or he then behaved like himself; *viz.* like a man, by making not his appetites or his passions, but his *reasoning faculty* the director and guide both of his judgment and practice. Hitherto he had acted the part of a *brute*, rather than a man, by suffering his appetites and passions to have the rule over him; but when he came to himself, when his reasoning faculty assumed its office, then the case was otherwise; then both his judgment and practice took a quite different turn. When the prodigal was brought to reflect seriously upon, and to consider fairly and impartially the state of his own case, then he not only perceived that he had justly merited his father's displeasure; but he also perceived what was proper to be done in order to recommend himself to his father's mercy, *viz.* to repent of his evil ways, to humble himself to his father, and return again to his duty. As a vicious course of life justly exposes a man to the displeasure of Almighty God, and to future punishment in another world: so in this branch of the parable is set forth the sure and only way by which a wicked man may escape it, *viz.* by *repentance* and *reformation* of his evil ways. For

as God will not be displeas'd with any of his creatures upon any other account, or from any other motion, than their having behaved ill, than their being personally and in themselves the suitable and proper objects of his displeasure: so he will not remove his displeasure from such a creature, and receive him into favour upon any other account, or from any other motive, than that creature's being *so personally changed*, as to cease to be the proper object of his resentment, and becomes the suitable and proper object of his mercy and forgiveness, of his approbation and affection. And when such a change is wrought, then God will most certainly remove his displeasure from that creature, and receive him into favour; because it is right and fit, it is suitable and proper, that he should do so. These are truths, of which it is here hinted, that they are taught in the *school of reason*. When the prodigal came to himself, then, he said, *How many hired servants of my fathers, have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*

Verf. 20, — 24. *And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Fa-
ther,*

ther, *I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.*— But his father said to his servants, *bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.*

In these verses it is intended to be shewn, not only that God will pardon and receive to favour true penitents, (and that this is a matter of pleasure and satisfaction to him, if I may so speak,) but also what is the *ground* or *reason* upon which he acts in so doing. The prodigal resolved, not only to return back to his father, and consequently to his duty; but he also put his resolution in practice, and this evinced the *truth* and *valuable-ness* of his repentance. Many wicked men, when groaning under the burden of some heavy affliction, or under the fear and apprehension of death, so far repent, as to be sorry that they have, by their past behaviour, brought those evils upon themselves, and make fair promises of living virtuously for time to come; but when the affliction is removed, or the grounds of their fear cease, then they return to their wicked courses, like the dog to his vomit, and as the sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire. This is the case, when mens repentance, when their professions and promises of amend-
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ment, spring only from what they either *feel* or *fear*; and not from a through conviction of the wrongness and viciousness of their past actions, and from a change of disposition consequent upon it. This is such repentance, as will be repented of; because it does not render men the proper objects of God's mercy and grace, and therefore it will prove insufficient for that purpose. But when a wicked man, is so convinced of the evil of his ways, as that in consequence of such conviction, he becomes a *new creature*, he puts away the evil of his doings, and brings forth fruit suitable to, and worthy of such a change; then God mercifully forgives his past offences, receives him into favour, rejoices over him, and behaves towards him, as if he had never transgressed. This is set forth by the father's seeing the prodigal afar off, by his having compassion, running to meet him, falling upon his neck, and kissing him, ordering his servants to deck, and entertain him in the best manner, and rejoicing with them at his son's return. And the *sole ground* or *reason* upon which God acts in the present case, is here declared to be the *personal change* that is wrought in the *sinner*. When men, in the general course of their lives, act contrary to that rule of action which they ought in reason to be governed by, and by their vicious actions render themselves common enemies to the common good, and thereby disappoint the gracious purpose of their kind

Creator towards his creatures; then they become the proper objects of divine resentment, and worthy of the highest displeasure of Almighty God. But when they are so changed, as to cease to be evil and vicious, and are become really and truly good and virtuous creatures, when they are concerned for, and undo, as far as it is in their power, what they have done amiss, and thereby, as far as possible, repair the injury they have done in the creation, and for time to come, act such a part as they ought, then they cease by such a change, to be the objects of God's displeasure and divine resentment, and become the proper objects of God's mercy and forgiveness, of his approbation and affection. *For this my son was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found; and they began to be merry.*

Verf. 25, — 30. *Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what those things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy command, and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:*

But as soon as this thy son was come, that hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. In this branch of the parable, the elder brother is represented as shewing his dislike of his father's behaviour toward the younger brother; which dislike was grounded upon the appearance of *partiality* in his father, in that he had never shewed such a signal mark of respect to him, the elder son, tho' he had been *always dutiful and obedient* to him, as he now did to the younger son, who had *devoured his living with harlots*. This is not introduced to shew the spirit and temper of good men, because their true character is quite the reverse; they are so far from envying the favours which true penitents obtain from the hand of God, that on the contrary, it ministers just ground for pleasure and delight to them. There is *joy*, not only in the presence of the angels of God, but of every good mind thro' the intelligent world, (where the knowledge of it reacheth,) *over one sinner that repenteth*. This murmuring of the elder brother, therefore is only brought in, to introduce the answer which follows.

Verf. 31, 32. *And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.* Which is the same as if the father had said, Son, I acknowledge what thou sayest

sayest to be true, thou hast been ever dutiful and obedient to me, and therefore the utmost that I have, or can do, is at thy service. And tho' I have never made such an entertainment for thee, as I do this day, because nothing has happened to give occasion for it; yet it is *suitable* and *proper*, it is perfectly *just* and *reasonable* that I should behave as I do, with regard to thy brother, because of the *great change* that is wrought in him. Thy brother, in times past, was a most wicked profligate creature, abandoned and given up to every thing that is evil, and dead and lost to all the valuable purposes of life; and whilst he was in this depraved state, he was the proper object of my highest displeasure; but as he is now so changed, as to be quite the reverse of what he was, therefore he must, in the nature of the thing, and by parity of reason, be the proper object, not only of my compassion and mercy, but of my complacency and delight; and therefore *it was meet and right that we should make merry and be glad, for, or because this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.* In this last branch of the parable it is intended to be shewn, not only that repentance and reformation is the *only ground* of God's shewing mercy and favour to sinners; but also to *justify* the *divine conduct* in this particular, by insisting that it was *fit* and *reasonable* he should do so. This is the only reasoning

reasoning offered by the father, to take off the force of the objection made to his conduct, by the elder son; (*it was meet or fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again, &c.*), which objection seems to be introduced on purpose to make way for it. The father did not attempt to take off the force of the objection, by urging, that as it was in *his power*; so he would dispense his favours arbitrarily, he would shew mercy and kindness to his son, either *with, or without, or against reason*, as he pleased. Neither did he urge, that tho' his younger son had been greatly defective in his duty; yet now he was become *acceptable*, by the *perfect obedience* of his elder brother. Nor did he pretend to justify his conduct, by observing, that tho' his son had been greatly criminal, and had thereby rendered himself worthy of a severe correction; yet he would forgive him, because another person, who was near and dear to the father, had *suffered* in his son's stead; or that he was prevailed upon to shew mercy to his son, by the *importunity and intercession* of another, which otherways he should not have done. There is *no such kind of reasoning* offered by the father, to take off the *force of the objection* made to his conduct, by the elder son; nor indeed if it had been offered, would it have been sufficient for that purpose; because if the younger son had continued on in his wicked course of

life, then he would have *continued* to be the *proper object* of his father's *displeasure*, notwithstanding any obedience, or suffering, or intercession which might be made in his behalf, and under these circumstances, it would have been *greatly improper* for the father to have received and treated him in the manner he did, and the elder son would have had *just ground for complaint*. But if the younger son was so changed and reformed, as to cease to be a wicked vicious man, and was become a real virtuous good man, which is supposed to be the case; then he *ceased* to be the *object* of his father's *displeasure*, and was, *in himself*, the *proper object* of his *mercy and kindness*, and therefore did not need either the obedience, or suffering, or intercession of any other person to make him so, and under these circumstances it was *greatly proper* that the father should receive and treat him as he did; and this *takes off* the *force of the objection* made to his conduct by the elder son. And indeed repentance and reformation must be the only proper ground for God to shew mercy and receive to favour any creature, who had by his past behaviour rendered himself the proper object of his displeasure; because it is that change alone which can possibly make such a creature cease to be the object of his displeasure, and which can render him the proper object of God's mercy and kindness. And it is greatly absurd to suppose, that God will be either pleased,

pleased, or displeased, with one agent, for what is pleasing, or displeasing, in the person of another; because that would be to run cross to nature, to be affected by, and to act from wrong and improper motives, and would be a manifest moral imperfection in the Deity, and therefore cannot possibly be the case.

The use that I shall make of this discourse, is to desire and intreat the clergy among all the denominations of christians, that they would take this matter into their most serious consideration, it being a point of the utmost concern. I have here shewn what it is which Christ hath declared to be the *true* and *only ground* upon which *sinners* will obtain *God's mercy*, viz. by repentance and reformation of their evil ways, or the being so changed, as to cease to be the objects of God's displeasure, and to become personally and in themselves the proper objects of his mercy and kindness. This is *the gospel* or *good news*; this is the only way given and declared by Jesus Christ, by which sinners can be saved. Whoever therefore points out to sinners any other way to God's mercy, than *this way* given and declared by Jesus Christ, such an one in effect preaches *another gospel* than Christ hath preached; and points out to sinners *another way* to God's mercy and life eternal, than Christ hath pointed out unto them; which as it must be greatly *wrong* in itself, so it may be greatly *injurious* to the souls of men.

I shall not take notice of the gross corruptions of christianity, which have taken place in the church of *Rome*, with regard to this point, but only of those more *plausible ones*, which have prevailed as well among *protestants* as *papists*, viz. that men are rendered acceptable to God, and that sinners are recommended to his mercy, either by the *perfect obedience*, or the *meritorious sufferings*, or the *prevailing intercession of Christ*, or by one, or another, or all of these. These are doctrines which carry with them a *shew of piety*, as they are grounded on a pretended *veneration* for the *person*, the *performances*, and the *sufferings* of the Son of God; but as they are such doctrines as Christ never taught, so they are naturally, and necessarily, and unavoidably excluded out of the case. Every man is what he really is in himself, viz. either *personally pleasing*, or *displeasing*, when considered simply in himself, and abstractedly from all other considerations; and neither the performance, nor the sufferings of Christ, nor any thing else, can possibly so alter the nature of things, as to make a man to be otherways than he is in himself, in these respects. And as every man is what he really is in himself, either personally pleasing, or displeasing, when considered abstractedly, as aforesaid, and nothing external to him can possibly alter the case: so what he is in himself, he will unavoidably *appear to be* to his Maker, and will be esteemed of him, and

treated by him as such. This, I say, must and will be the case, if God is a *perfect being*, which he is known and allowed to be. For if God is a perfect being, then he must be so, as well in all *moral*, as in all *natural perfections*; and then as he cannot possibly be *imposed upon* by any *false appearances*, but must necessarily perceive every thing to be what it really is in itself; so he cannot, consistently with that character, love nor hate, like nor dislike, be pleased nor displeased with any agent, upon any other account or consideration than that agent's being *personally*, and *in himself*, lovely or hateful, pleasing or displeasing, and the proper object of God's approbation or dislike; because were he to do otherways, he would be affected, and would act *improperly*, which supposes that he is clothed with the weakness and imperfection of his creatures. And as the performances, the sufferings, and the intercession of Christ, cannot possibly make any agent appear otherways to God, than what that agent is in himself, nor lead God in any instance to act improperly; therefore they cannot possibly affect the case at all. Every man must therefore be more or less pleasing or displeasing to God, and will be esteemed of, and treated by his Maker, according as he is personally, and in himself more or less the suitable and proper object of it. Christ indeed in the whole course of his life, paid an exact obedience to God's will,

will, and suffered greatly in the execution of his office, as the minister of God, and in the faithful discharge of that trust which was reposed on him by his father; but then he did no more in this case than was his duty to do, under those circumstances; and consequently there were no works of *supererogation* even with regard to *Christ*, no *surplus* of good works to be transferred to others, supposing such a transfer were possible in nature, when in truth it is not. And tho' the performances, and the sufferings of *Christ*, when considered as done and suffered in obedience to God's will, and to answer a great and good end, *viz.* the setting forward the salvation of mankind, were greatly valuable in themselves, and rendred him highly pleasing and most acceptable to his father; yet as it is impossible in nature, so it is grossly absurd to suppose, that they can render any other agent more or less so. Besides, what *connection* or *relation* is there betwixt the performances and the sufferings of *Christ* and any other agent? Why truly none at all; and therefore no other agent can possibly become *more* or *less* acceptable to God upon their account.

I am sensible it may be urged, that *Christ* was not only a preacher of righteousness, who represented to sinners the true grounds upon which they might obtain God's mercy; but he also became an *offering for sin*, by which he rendred repentance *efficacious* for obtain-

ing the sinner's pardon, which otherwise it would not have done; and that this is the *Scripture* account of the matter.

In answer, the *inherent intrinsic valuable-ness* of that change which we characterize by the term repentance, cannot possibly admit of any addition, diminution, or alteration by any thing *external* to it; because nothing external to it can possibly make it more, or less, or otherways *valuable*, than what it really is in itself. And as repentance cannot possibly be made more or less valuable by any thing external to it; so it cannot possibly be made to *appear* more, or less, or otherways valuable to *God*, than what it really is in itself, and consequently *God* cannot be more, or less, or otherways *affected* by it. So that if repentance, when considered simply in itself, and abstracted from all other considerations, be not efficacious for obtaining the sinner's pardon, or in other words, if it be not the ground or reason of *God's* shewing mercy to sinners; then it cannot possibly be made so, or be made more so by any thing external to it; because it cannot possibly be made more, or less, or otherways valuable, than what it really is in itself, nor can it possibly be made to appear otherways to *God*. Again,

Propitiousness, or a disposition to *shew mercy* to the suitable and proper objects of it, is one of the *moral* perfections of the Deity, and as such, it does not admit of any addition,
diminution,

diminution, or alteration, but has and will continue the same thro' all eternity; and consequently God cannot possibly be made *more*, or *less propitious*, by any thing *external* to him. And tho' God may exercise propitioufness at one time, or in one instance, and not in another; yet this does not arise from any real change or alteration in the Deity, or from his being made more or less propitious by any thing external to him; but it arises only and wholly from his sinful creatures *being*, or *not being*, the suitable and proper objects of it; or from their *not being so* at one time, and their *being so* at another. God may exercise his power at one time, and not at another; and yet he is not more powerful at one time, than at another, nor is he made more, or less so, by any thing external to him. The case is the same, with regard to the divine propitioufness. Again,

Sin-offerings and propitiatory sacrifices were ordained, and intended to be *signs* and *tokens* of God's being *propitious* to *penitent sinners*, but were not intended to make him so; the former of these they were capable of being, the latter it was impossible they should be. And tho' the divine propitioufness to penitent sinners, was intended to be pointed out by the propitiatory sacrifices under the *Mosaick dispensation*; yet this was so *weakly* and *faintly* represented by them, as not generally to reach the end proposed, *viz.* the purging

purging the conscience of the sinner, but served only to the *purifying of the flesh*; and therefore they were justly stiled, *weak and beggarly elements*. Whereas the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, or his blood being once shed in the *defence and confirmation* of the doctrine of *repentance and remission of sins*, (which is strictly and properly the gospel of Jesus Christ,) it became a *proper ground or reason* to sinners to *repent and amend* their ways; and upon many it had its proper effect, by *purging their consciences from dead works to serve the living God*; and therefore when the sacrifice of Christ, and the propitiatory sacrifices appointed by the law, are put in competition, the preference is very justly given to the former; and the sacrifices under the law, are, by a figure of speech, said to be *types and shadows* of it, as they *weakly and faintly* represented what is more *plainly and strongly* shewn forth by the sacrifice of Christ. And this, I think, was all that the Writers of the *New Testament* could intend, when they treated of this Subject. Thus we read, *Hebrews x. 4. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins*. That is, it is not possible that the shedding the blood of bulls and goats should render a sinner *less a sinner*, or *less the object of God's displeasure* than he was before; neither is it possible that the shedding the blood of those creatures should render God *more propitious*, than otherways he would be; and therefore

therefore it is an impossibility in nature for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Now if this be the truth of the case, with respect to the shedding the blood of bulls and goats, (as this author maintains;) then it must be equally the same with respect to the shedding the *blood of Christ*, or any other blood whatsoever; it being as much an impossibility in nature for the shedding the blood of Christ to render a sinner *less a sinner*, or *less the object of God's displeasure*, than he was before, or that it should render God *more propitious*, than otherways he would be, as it is that the shedding the blood of those creatures should do it; and therefore it is equally as impossible, that the shedding the blood of Christ should, in a *strict and proper sense*, take away sins. But then the question will return, *viz.* that if the shedding the blood of bulls and goats did not take away sins, to what purpose did it serve? I answer as before, that the purpose it was *intended* to serve, was to *point out the divine propitiousness to true penitents*, and thereby to *purge the consciences of sinners*; but this being weakly and faintly represented by those sacrifices, it did not generally reach the end proposed, and served only to the *purifying of the flesh*. Whereas the blood of Christ being once shed in the *defence and confirmation* of the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, it became a proper ground, or reason, and a prevailing argument with many sinners, to repent and
 turn

turn to God, and to bring forth the fruits of newness of life, and thereby it rendred them the proper objects of God's mercy; and thus the sacrifice of Christ may be said, (not in a proper, but in a figurative sense,) to render *God propitious*; and to *take away sins*; and this, I think, was all that it could possibly do. And,

Here, I would beg my reader to observe, that as to the doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ's taking away sins, in a *strict* and *proper sense*, it is not so much pretended to be founded on the sayings and declarations of *Christ himself*, nor on those writings which contain the *history* of his *life* and *ministry*, but rather on the sayings and occasional writings of his *apostles*, and particularly on what has been said by the *author of the epistle to the Hebrews*: so those writers, and that author in particular, does *sometimes* use such *strong* and *lofty* expressions, as when taken *strictly* and *literally*, express *much more* than they intended. Thus that author, *chap. vii. v. 3.* speaking of *Melchisedeck* (supposing the text to be rightly translated) saith, *without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life: but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.* By this account of *Melchisedeck*, the author cannot reasonably be supposed to mean, that he was strictly and properly *eternal*, which the author's words, when taken *literally*, plainly set forth: but only, that as
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the history is *silent* with regard to the birth, parentage, and death of *Melchisedeck*; so the author speaks of them in *such terms*, as if there really had been no such thing. *Melchisedeck* was one of the kings of *Canaan*, and as such, (according to the custom of the age and place in which he lived,) he executed the priests office; and therefore he must have been one of our species, he must have had a father and a mother, he must have been descended from parents who were before him; (as at *verse 6*,) he must have had a time to be born, and a time to die like all other men, tho' there be no mention of these facts in the history; and when our author only intended to set forth the *want* of his *genealogy*, he used those *high* and *lofty* expressions before mentioned; which words, when taken *strictly* and *literally*, express *much more* than he can reasonably be supposed to intend by them. And as the author, we now have under consideration, did *sometimes* express himself in such *high* and *lofty* terms as aforesaid; therefore not any terms which he makes use of, when taken *alone*, can be a *proper foundation* to build any doctrine of importance upon; especially when that doctrine is *repugnant* to the most plain and evident principles of reason, which is the present case, as I have shewn above.

But farther, I think, the *sum* and *substance* of what Christ delivered in his discourses, parables or otherways, with regard to the will

of God, concerning mankind, is justly and fully expressed in the following particulars. *First*, That nothing but a conformity of mind and life to that eternal and unvariable rule of action, which results from and is founded in the natural and essential differences in things, will render men pleasing and acceptable to God. *Secondly*, That if men have greatly departed from this rule, by leading wicked and vicious lives; then nothing but repentance and reformation of their evil ways, will recommend them to God's mercy and acceptance, and that such a personal change will be sufficient for that purpose. *Thirdly*, In order that the forementioned truths might have their proper effect and influence upon the minds and lives of men, Christ hath assured us, that God hath appointed a time, in which he will judge the world by him, (*viz.* Christ,) and that then every man will be acquitted or condemned, rewarded or punished, according as he has, or has not conformed his mind and life to that righteous rule before mentioned; or as he has, or has not repented and amended his evil ways. * This is that revelation of God's will, which was once made to mankind by the ministry of Jesus Christ. And as it has nothing *mysterious* or *difficult* in it, it being exactly *conformable* to our *natural* notions of things,

* This is more fully considered in my discourse, entitled, *The true gospel of Jesus Christ asserted*; which discourse may perhaps sometime or other be offered to publick consideration.

and level to the *meanest capacity*: so were I to argue from *analogy* in its favour, then, I think, I might justly insist on it, that the whole frame of nature is analogous to it, as one great and generous design, *viz.* a common and most extensive good, is constantly and uniformly pursued thro' both. Tho' to attempt to get clear of those *made difficulties*, that arise from what has been annexed to, and blended with the christian religion, by arguing from analogy in their favour, or shewing that there are difficulties in nature which are analogous to them, may, possibly, prove a very *dangerous experiment*; because, perhaps, the same kind of reasoning, may answer the same purpose, to every scheme of religion that now takes place in the world, by clearing them, in like manner, of all those difficulties which may be supposed to incumber them. For what difficulty is there that attends either the *Popish*, the *Mahometan*, or the *Pagan religion*; but artful and inquisitive men may find out something or other in nature which they may call a *difficulty*, and represent as *analogous* to it? And perhaps the application may be as *just* as in the former case.

These are truths which probably will be greatly *distastful* to the zealots of this age, as they run counter to the current and received opinions of the times; and yet, I think, they are such as the most *subtile* and *crafty* in argument will not be able to gainsay nor re-

fist. And now, Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of, and for this world? Let him come forth and try his skill in sophistry, and see, whether he can baffle and set aside the propositions before laid down; only I beg leave to remind him, that the collecting together any number of lofty or figurative and borrowed expressions, which lie scattered up and down in the *New Testament*, will be insufficient for that purpose.

From what I have observed, I think, it plainly appears, that the forementioned doctrines, *viz.* that *men* are rendred *acceptable to God*, and that *sinners* are recommended to *his mercy*, either by the *perfect obedience*, or the *meritorious sufferings*, or the *prevailing intercession of Christ*, or by one, or other, or all of these, are *repugnant to truth*; and that they are *corruptions of christianity*, our Lord hath as plainly shewn, in the *parable* I have been considering; and these things, I presume, will *plead my excuse*, for calling upon the clergy, to take this matter into their most serious consideration. The clergy are, or at least they consider themselves to be the *ministers* of Jesus Christ, and *preachers* of his gospel, that is, they are persons who, *under Christ*, are to assist and help men in the great affair of their salvation. And as Christ hath plainly shewn, that *repentance and reformation* is the *only ground* upon which God will *shew mercy to sinners*; so it must be

be the *business* and *duty* of the clergy, (considered as ministers of Jesus Christ,) to deliver this truth *plainly*, and *clearly*, and *undisguisedly* to the people; and not blend any thing with it, which may render the gospel *ineffectual* for the saving of mankind. Alas! Wicked men would rather *any thing* were the ground of God's mercy, than the *change* before mentioned; and therefore they readily entertain any doctrine that gives them ground, or that encourages them to hope or trust in God's mercy, whilst they continue in their sins. And as the forementioned doctrines have plainly *such a tendency*, therefore it must be the *business* and *duty* of the clergy to *guard against this evil*, by shewing the people the *falseness*, and *groundlessness*, and *danger* of them. And it will not be sufficient for the clergy to urge, by way of excuse, or in justification of themselves, that they teach the people, and insist upon it, that repentance and reformation are *necessary qualifications* for, tho' not the ground or reason of God's shewing mercy to sinners; I say, that this will not be a sufficient justification of the clergy, because it may not *prevent* the damage to men's souls, which those doctrines are *liable*, and *likely* to do, as wicked men will be apt to reason too justly upon the point. They will be apt to think, that if repentance and reformation be not the ground or reason of God's shewing mercy to sinners, that is, if repentance and reformation

tion does not in itself render sinners the proper objects of God's mercy, then it is not necessary to that end; presuming, that God will not needlessly lay such a burthen upon them, as the *condition* of his mercy, which mercy, (upon the present supposition,) may as well be shewn without it; and therefore they readily, and too justly (upon this principle) excuse themselves from it. This I fear has been *too often* the case; wicked men have trusted and relied upon God's mercy from those *false grounds*, while they have continued in their vicious courses, and thereby have continued to be the proper objects of his highest displeasure. And here I dare appeal to the clergy themselves, with regard to their knowledge of wicked men, when brought upon a *sick and dying bed*, whether their *hope and trust* in God's mercy, has not been grounded upon the forementioned doctrines; whether their expectation of *acceptance* with God, has not arisen from a sense of what *Christ* hath done; and *suffered* for them; and not from any *personal valuableness* in themselves, the latter of which, perhaps, they have been taught to exclaim against.

If therefore the forementioned doctrines are *absurd*, and *false* in themselves, and are *corruptions* of *christianity*, as they most certainly are; and if they are *liable*, and *likely* to be greatly *injurious* to the souls of men, which most certainly is the truth of the case; then surely, it becomes the clergy, as
they

they would be *true* to the interest of their Master, to do their utmost towards the *reforming* of christianity in this particular, in order to *prevent* and *remedy* the aforesaid evil, *viz.* *of mens relying* upon Christ to their *destruction*. I shall proceed no farther, but only renew my address to the clergy, that they would be *honest*, and *careful*, and *diligent*, in this matter; as they regard the *salvation* of mankind; as they tender their *allegiance* to our common Lord; and as they will *answer* it at the great and dreadful day of Judgment.

I 00 1

A SHORT
DISSERTATION,
CONCERNING

The Sense and Meaning of *St. Paul's* Words,
Titus iii. 10, 11. *A man that is an heretick,*
after the first and second admonition, reject :
Knowing that he that is such, is subverted,
and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

THE great and ultimate end of the christian revelation, or that revelation of God's will which was made to mankind by the ministry of Jesus Christ, is the *saving of sinners*. The immediate end, or the end to which it is immediately directed, and by which it becomes a means to the former, is the *reforming the vices, and rightly directing and governing the affections and behaviour of mankind*.* And by this means the gospel becomes the *ministry of reconciliation* betwixt God and his sinful creatures, by rendring all those, who are so wrought upon by it as to answer the true intent and purpose of it, the proper objects of God's mercy and kindness. And whoever

* And that the gospel of Christ is excellently adapted to answer this purpose, is fully shewn in my discourse, entitled, *The true gospel of Jesus Christ asserted.*

under the profession of the christian religion viciously and wickedly, that is to answer vile purposes to himself or others, teacheth such doctrines, or annexeth to and blendeth with that religion such principles, as naturally and apparently tend to render the gospel of Christ *inefficacious*, for the reforming the vices, and rightly directing and governing the minds and lives of men; such an one is not only subverted, or turned out of the right way himself, but he also subverts the gospel of Christ, by turning it away from that end, which was designed to be answered by it, and to which it ought to be immediately directed, and by making it subservient to other and contrary purposes, for which it was not intended. And this was the case of some of those, who professed and taught christianity in the isle of *Crete*.

The inhabitants of *Crete* had rendered themselves justly contemptible, by that gross hypocrisy and dissimulation, which had prevailed among them. And this had been so notorious, that it had given occasion for a writer of their own to give them the following character, *viz. The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies*, Titus i. 12. This charge St. Paul acknowledged to be just, not only of the *Cretians* in general, but also of some of those, who professed and taught christianity among them in particular; and therefore he exhorted *Titus*, to rebuke them (that is, the blameable christians) sharply, in

order to their reformation, *verse 13*. And as this was the case at *Crete*, *viz.* there were there *many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision, who had subverted whole houses, teaching things that they ought not, for filthy lucre sake, vers. 10, 11*: so *St. Paul's* epistle to *Titus* seems to be occasioned by it. *St. Paul* had not only been instrumental in converting the *Cretians* to christianity, but he had also left *Titus* with them to assist them in settling the affair of christian association among them. And as there were risen up among them men of perverse minds, who, to answer vile purposes to themselves, had subverted christianity, by teaching such false doctrines, as tended to render the gospel of *Christ* inefficacious for the saving of mankind: so *St. Paul* wrote this epistle to *Titus* in order to remedy the aforesaid evil, by directing him what to do, and how to behave towards the *Cretian* christians under those circumstances.

St. Paul begins his epistle by addressing himself to *Titus* under the high characters of servant of *God*, and the apostle of *Jesus Christ*: he also professes his strong hope in *God's* promises, which promises he had been employed in the promulgation of: he likewise represents himself as a spiritual parent to *Titus*, and wishes him the participation of all heavenly blessings, *vers. 1, 2, 3, 4*. *Paul a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the*
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acknowledging of the truth, which is after godliness: In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lye, promised before the world began; But hath in due time manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me, according to the commandment of God our Saviour: To Titus mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

St. Paul having addressed himself to *Titus* in the manner before mentioned, reminds him for what intent he had left him in *Crete*, *viz.* that he might assist and help the *Cretians* in forming their christian societies, by appointing a person (whom the apostle afterwards characterized by the term bishop) to be a guardian, or watchman, and a common instructor to each particular congregation of christians in that island, and by doing whatever else was necessary towards the answering all the valuable ends of christian association among them, *verse 5.* *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.*

Next the apostle sets before *Titus* the proper qualifications of a person, who should be thus set apart to watch over, and to be an instructor to the rest of his brethren, *viz.* that he ought to be of an unspotted and blameless character; one, who has a due government of his appetites and passions; one, who is not wrathful nor dogmatical, but of an easy and a peaceable

ble disposition; one, who is not avaritiously inclined, but full of compassion and benevolence; one, who is well instructed in the doctrines of the gospel of Christ, and who makes that gospel the governing principle of his mind and life; one, who is capable of distinguishing and separating true christianity from all corrupt and false doctrine, that might be annexed to and blended with it, that so he might be both capable and disposed to exhort and convince gainfayers, *vers. 6, 7, 8, 9.* *If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre: But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

St. Paul having set before Titus what those qualifications are, which a bishop or overseer of a christian congregation ought to be endowed with, informs him then what was the occasion, and the ground or reason of this advice, *viz.* for, or because there were risen up among them at *Crete*, men of perverse minds, who had so corrupted the gospel of Christ, as to turn it away from that end, to which it was designed, and ought to have been directed; (namely, the reforming and saving of mankind) and had made it subservient

vient to their covetousness. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was the founder of the christian sect and the christian religion, represents personal valuableness in men to be the sole ground of their acceptance with God, and a personal change from bad to good in sinners, as the sole ground of God's mercy to them. Whereas these new teachers, these false apostles *St. Paul* complains of, had represented, not personal valuableness in man, but submission to the painful rite of circumcision, and a strict conformity to the ceremonial part of *Moses's* law, and such like things, to be the ground of God's favour; and external sacrifices to be the ground of the divine mercy to sinners. So that according to these men it was not the work of regeneration, nor the true circumcision of the heart; it was not the practice of virtue, nor a conformity to the divine image in righteousness, and true holiness; but the circumcision of the flesh, and a conformity to rites and ceremonies and external observances, which christians were to ground their hope of salvation upon. And thus the gospel of Christ was rendered inefficacious for the saving of mankind. And that the false doctrines delivered at *Crete* were these, or of like kind, is evident not only from what *St. Paul* says of the broachers of them, namely, that they were of the circumcision, but also from the strict charge he afterwards laid upon *Titus* to preach up the practice of moral virtue, which he proposed as an antidote against the

poison of them. This was a matter of great concern, as it effected the gospel of Christ, and the salvation of mankind; and therefore *St. Paul* told *Titus*, that the mouths of these deceivers must be stopped; that is, *Titus* and every good man was concerned to undeceive the people as to these matters, and thereby to stop the mouths, or put to silence such gainfayers. And as the false doctrines *St. Paul* complains of, were introduced for the sake of lucre, or the worldly advantage of those who taught them, and were perfectly reconcilable to the viciated affections of men; so they met with a ready acceptance among the *Cretians*; whole houses became subverted by them, *vers. 10, 11.* *For there are (viz. at Crete) many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre sake.*

But then it may be asked, how could *St. Paul* know, or how could he expect that *Titus* should know, what was the spring of action to the persons referred to, *viz.* that what they did, was for filthy lucre sake, except they were capable of discerning the secrets of mens hearts; that is, except they had the gift of discerning of spirits? I answer first, that what *St. Paul* intended by the discerning of spirits, *1 Cor. xii. 10.* I think cannot certainly be determined from any thing, that is written in the *New Testament*

ment concerning it. St. *John* advises his disciples to try the spirits, 1 *John* iv. 1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* Here by trying the spirits St. *John* seems to intend a careful examination and trial of the doctrines, which were then taught, in order to see whether they were agreeable to the gospel of Christ; because there were then many perverters of christianity gone out into the world. In like manner St. *Paul*, by discerning of spirits, may intend no more, than an ability to distinguish and separate true christianity from those false doctrines, which had been annexed to and blended with it. And this (agreeable to the language of that writer) may have been called a gift of the Spirit. And this seems rather to have been the meaning of St. *Paul*, because it is mentioned next after the gift of prophecy, and is the same as to say, *to one is given ability to prophesy; to another of discerning true prophecy from false. To one is given diverse kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues, &c.* Again I answer, *secondly*, that the way, which Christ has proposed for his disciples to discern and judge of men, and consequently of the springs of action in them, is from their actions and general behaviour; *By their fruits ye shall know them*, Matthew vii. 20. And thus St. *Paul* did know, and *Titus* might have known, that some in *Crete* taught things, which they ought not,

not, for filthy lucre sake, by observing that the doctrines they taught were not only false and groundless themselves, and were likely to be greatly injurious to the souls of men, but also were culculated for, and made subservient to the worldly interest of those, who taught them.

St. *Paul* having informed *Titus* of the occasion of his writing, and what was the ground or reason of those councils he had given him, namely, because there were some, who had either been appointed, or else who had voluntarily undertaken to preach christianity in *Crete*, who had most grossly corrupted the gospel of Christ, by annexing to and blending with it such false doctrines, as tended to render it inefficacious for the saving of mankind; I say, the apostle having done this, he next advises *Titus* what to do, or how to behave towards these false teachers or blameable persons before mentioned, and also towards those who had been seduced by them, *viz.* he was to rebuke them, and not only so, but he was to do it with sharpness. *Titus* was not only to represent to these men the vileness and wickedness of their actions, and what bad things their tenets naturally led to, but he was also to shew the greatest concern in the doing of it, as it was an affair in which the gospel of Christ, and the salvation of mankind, were nearly concerned. And as the end and design of such rebuke was to reclaim the offenders, and to bring back the seduced to
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their christian obedience, who had been turned away from the truth and their duty, by giving heed to *Jewish* fables, and the commandments of men; so if once rebuking them did not obtain the end proposed to be served by it, then *Titus* (agreeably to the direction given by Christ, *Matt.* xviii. 16, 17. and which is likewise supposed in St. *Paul's* farther advice to him, *chap.* iii. 10, 11.) was to repeat it, in order to reclaim the forementioned persons if possible. And this is introduced by St. *Paul's* taking notice, what an infamous character had been given the *Cretians* by a writer of their own, *vers.* 12, 13, 14. *One of them, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always lyars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true: wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be found in the faith; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.*

The apostle, having set forth the bad state of affairs with regard to christianity at *Crete*, and having likewise directed *Titus* how to behave towards those that were blameable, he next observes what those evils sprang from, *viz.* the vicious and wicked dispositions of men. For as a virtuous mind will generally be productive of good actions, and a right behaviour, or, as our Lord expresses it, *Matt.* vii. 17, 18. *Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; — a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit;* so vicious, evil minded men will generally bring forth evil or vicious actions; or, as

our Lord expresses it in the verses before mentioned, *A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit; — neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.* The outward behaviour of such men will in the general be suitable to the wicked disposition of mind that takes place in them; *vers. 15, 16. Unto the pure all things are (or will be) pure, but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure, (or nothing will be pure:) but even (or rather for or because) their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*

St. Paul having thus discovered the disease, he then applies the remedy, by calling upon and charging *Titus* to preach up true christianity to the people at *Crete*, viz. the practice of all moral virtues. The christian revelation represents a conformity of mind and life to that eternal and unvariable rule of action which results from, and is founded in the natural and the essential differences in things, or in other words, the behaving properly under all circumstances and in all the relations of life, to be the ground of mens acceptance with God. But this grand principle, which is the sum and substance of all true religion, both natural and revealed, had been set aside by those new teachers in *Crete*, who had substituted *Jewish* fables, and the commandments of men, in the room of it: and therefore St. Paul, by way of antidote to this poison, charges

charges *Titus* to teach the things which became sound doctrine; that is, which are consistent with, and grounded on the forementioned principle; and this he exemplifies by a large induction of particulars in his second and third chapters.

And that the practice of moral virtue is true christianity, and the only solid ground of hope to a christian, *St. Paul* proves from its being the sum and substance of that revelation of God's will, which had been made to mankind by the ministry of *Jesus Christ*, *chap. ii. 11, 12, 13, 14.* *For the grace of God, that bringeth (or that sheweth the true way to) salvation, hath appeared unto all men; Teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world: Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* To which *St. Paul* adds, that these were the sound doctrines which *Titus* was to preach and inculcate at *Crete*, in opposition to the false doctrines that had been taught among them, *verse 15.* *These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all authority.*

But then, tho' *St. Paul* had represented to *Titus* the occasion of his writing to him, and the ground or reason of those counsels he had given him (with regard to the proper qualifica-

tions of a christian pastor) *viz.* the false teachers which had taken place and prevailed at *Crete*, and had likewise directed him how to behave towards those that were blameable in order to reclaim them, and also had shewn what had led those men into such practices, *viz.* a vicious and wicked mind, and tho' he had directed *Titus* what to do by way of remedy to the evils complained of; yet there was one thing wanting, which it was proper for *Titus* to be instructed in, *viz.* supposing these false teachers would not have been reclaimed by all proper means that might have been used for that purpose, then the question was, What ought to have been done, or how *Titus* and the *Cretian* christians ought to have behaved towards those persons under such circumstances? And the answer to this question *St. Paul* reserved as it were to the last place, and which I am more particularly to consider, *chap. iii. 10, 11. A man that is an heretick, after the first and second admonition, reject: Knowing that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*

In this advice are two things observable, *viz.* first, what *Titus* was to do, or how he and the *Cretian* christians were to behave towards the blameable persons before mentioned, under the circumstances there specified. Secondly, the reason is assigned why he should behave thus.

Before I proceed to consider these particulars, I beg leave to observe, that whatever may

may be the meaning of the word heretick, when taken in its most strict and proper sense; yet as it is here used by *St. Paul* it is applied, not *first*, to a man considered simply as *erring* in his *judgment*; this I say could not be the case, because the persons complained of, by the apostle, in this epistle, were not considered as having weak and erroneous judgments, but of *vicious dispositions* and *wicked lives*. They were men who taught what they ought not *for filthy lucre sake*; men whose *minds* and *consciences* were *defiled*; men, who tho' they made great profession of *knowing God's will*, yet notwithstanding were *abominable*, and *disobedient*, and to *every good work reprobate*. These were the persons *St. Paul* complained of, and therefore these were the men whom he characterized by the term heretick, when he came to give *Titus* directions how to behave towards them. Again, *secondly*, *St. Paul* in this place did not apply the term heretick to a person considered as the *founder* of a *new sect*, but rather to one who had so corrupted both the principles and practices of some of the *christian sect* already founded, as to render the gospel of Christ of none effect to them; it were such as these the apostle complained of, and with respect to whom he directed *Titus* what to do, in order to guard against the evils that were likely to be introduced by them. And tho' these men did not set up a new sect at *Crete*, in *opposition* to the christian sect; yet as what they

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did was in effect the same; and as bad in its consequences, therefore the apostle might characterize them by the *same name*, (supposing the term be not most properly applied,) like as he called the corrupting of christianity, or those false doctrines taught at *Galatia* another *gospel*, when at the same time he acknowledged, that strictly speaking, it was not another gospel, but only that some among the *Galatians* would have subverted the gospel of Christ, *Gal.* i. 6, 7. Again, *thirdly*, the word heretick was not in this place applied by St. Paul to a *sectary* considered simply as such; that is, it was not applied to a man considered as an adherer to a *sect* or party in religion, and on that account. This was the case of all the christians at *Crete*, they were adherers to a sect or party in religion, *viz.* the *christian sect*; which sect was also a *new sect*, as it had been lately founded. The use that I make of this is to observe, that the *bare name of heretick only*, as used in this place, was not intended by St. Paul to be a sufficient guide and direction to *Titus*, who those persons were which he was to reject; and that in this case, he must have been guided, not so much by the name, as by the *plain description* given of the persons referred to, in other parts of this epistle; which persons, if they persisted in their wicked courses after all proper means had been used to reclaim them, then, as they became the proper objects of rejection, so the apostle required *Titus* to reject them. But to return,

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St. Paul's advice to *Titus* is expressed in the following words, "A man that is an heretick, after the first and second admonition, reject." These words I think are justly and truly paraphrased in the following manner. [*A man that is an heretick,*] that is, *Those men at Crete of whom I have been complaining, who to answer vile purposes to themselves have subverted the gospel of Christ, and thereby have rendered it inefficacious for the saving of mankind, which persons I here characterize by the term heretick, such an one [after the first and second admonition,] that is, after all proper means have been used to reclaim him, and he notwithstanding continues unreclaimed, [reject,] that is, shun and avoid him, have no company nor friendship with him, but esteem him, and behave towards him as if he were not a christian **. This, I think, is the meaning of the apostle's words, or the behaviour he advised *Titus* to put on towards the blameable person before mentioned: the reason for which behaviour is expressed in the following words, *Knowing that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*

Here perhaps it may be thought, that the apostle assigned three reasons why *Titus* should behave as above towards the person referred to, *viz.* first, because he is subverted; secondly, because he sinneth; and, thirdly, because he is condemned of himself: tho' I think that these are only several ways of expressing or exem-

* See my letter to Dr. Stebbing.

plifying the same thing, namely, the apparent unreclaimableness of the person referred to, which unreclaimableness St. *Paul* makes the sole ground or reason, with regard to the offender, why *Titus* should behave towards him as above. And this, I think, will plainly appear to be the case, when I have examined and shewed the sense and meaning of each particular.

[Knowing,] that is, *it is a thing known* or *it is apparent*, or *thou knowest*, or *thou mayest know* [that he that is such] that is, *that he who has not only viciously and wickedly corrupted the words of eternal life, but who also continues so to do, after he has been again and again admonished to the contrary*, is subverted and fineth, being condemned of himself. But then the question is, How was it known, or how was it apparent, that he that was such was subverted and finned? And the answer is evident, that he was known to be so, from his [being such] that is, from his persisting in his wickedness, after all proper means had been used to reclaim him; by this it was known, or might have been known, that he was subverted and finned. Again,

Knowing that he that is such [is subverted] that is, *is so subverted as to be irreclaimable*. Barely *to be subverted* was not a proper ground for rejecting a person in St. *Paul's* account, but rather the contrary, according to his former advice given to *Titus*, in which he directed him to hold conversation, not only
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with persons, who were subverted or turned out of the right way themselves, but also who had subverted whole houses, teaching things that they ought not for filthy lucre sake; with these *Titus* was to converse, and to rebuke them sharply in order to their reformation. But when all proper means had been used to reclaim the subverted person, and those means had proved unsuccessful, then from hence it might justly be inferred, that he was so subverted as to be past reclaiming by those means, and therefore was the proper object of rejection and ought to be rejected. Again,

Knowing that he that is such is subverted [and finneth] that is, *continueth or persisteth in his sin, and therefore is irreclaimable*. Barely to sin is not a proper ground for rejecting a person, but rather the contrary; as every christian is in reason obliged to use his endeavour, whether by intreaty, by admonition, or otherwise, to reclaim and reform his offending brother. But if the offender shall go on and persist in his sin, after all proper means have been used to reclaim him, then from hence it may fairly be concluded, that he is such a sinner as is past reclaiming by those means, and therefore he is the proper object of rejection, and ought to be rejected. Again,

Knowing that he that is such is subverted and finneth [being condemned of himself] that is, *being known by his behaviour, by his persisting in his wickedness after he had been again and again admonished to the contrary,*

to be such a person as the apostle (in the words immediately preceding) had declared him to be, viz. an irreclaimable sinner. The apostle in those words [being condemned of himself] makes good what he had just before asserted, viz. that the person referred to was [known] to be subverted and finned, that is, he was [known] to be so subverted, and to be such a sinner, as was past reclaiming. I say the apostle makes good what he had thus asserted, by observing, that what he charged the heretic with evidently appeared to be his case, it was known, or it was apparent, by or from his own behaviour, viz. by his being deaf to all intreaty, to all admonition and advice, and from his persisting in his wickedness after all proper means had been used to reclaim him. This seems to me to be the most natural and obvious meaning of those words [being condemned of himself] as they stand connected with, and are an exemplification of the words preceding. It is the same as if the apostle had said, *Whosoever among you, from a wicked and vicious mind has so subverted the gospel of Christ, as to render it inefficacious for the saving of mankind, and who having been duly admonished of his fault continues in the same wicked practice, shun and avoid him, have no society nor friendship with him, but esteem him, and behave towards him, as if he were not a christian; as knowing by his behaviour, by his being deaf to all admonition and advice, that he is so subverted, and such a sinner, as is past*
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reclaiming; and therefore ought neither to be esteemed nor treated as one of the christian brotherhood, but to be rejected by every faithful christian.

I am sensible it is thought by some, that by those words [being condemned of himself] *St. Paul* meant, that the heretick stood condemned in his own mind. Now tho' this was true, yet I think this was not the meaning of the apostle, because it was not so much to his purpose as the sense I have given above. A man may be said to stand condemned in his own mind, or to sin against his conscience, in a less or in a greater degree. In a less, when he does that which, upon mature consideration and supposing the case were not his own, his judgment would condemn. Thus *David* by slaying *Uriah* the *Hittite*, with the sword of the children of *Ammon*, and by taking the wife of *Uriah* to be his wife, sinned against his conscience, not by acting against the immediate conviction of his own mind, but by his doing that which upon mature consideration his judgment would have condemned; as is most evident from the judgment he gave upon the parable which *Nathan* the prophet related to him. And thus robbers and pick-pockets sin against their consciences, or are self-condemned, by doing that which, upon a fair and impartial consideration of the case, and supposing it not to be their own, their judgments would condemn. And thus the heretick referred to sinned a-

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gainst his conscience, or was self-condemned, as he did that which, upon mature consideration, and when considered abstractedly from his covetousness, his judgment would have condemned. And indeed men thus sin against their consciences in every blameable action, not by sinning against the immediate conviction of their own minds (which perhaps is very rarely the case) but by their sinning against such conviction, as would unavoidably take place if they attended to the case as they ought to do. Again, men sin against their consciences in a greater degree, when they continue to practise a bad action, after their attention has been called in, and the viciousness of the action has been again and again plainly represented to them; and thereby they have been as it were necessitated against their inclination, to see or be convinced of the unfitness of it. In this case men not only do what their judgments would condemn, were they fairly to consider the case, but they also do what their judgments must have condemned antecedent to the action, as their attention has been called in as aforesaid; and thus they sin against their consciences, or are self-condemned in a greater degree. And this likewise was the case of the blameable person *St. Paul* referred to, supposing him to have been admonished as the apostle directs; then he not only did what upon mature consideration his judgment would have condemned, but also what his judgment must have con-

condemned antecedent to the action, as his attention was again and again called in, by the repeated admonitions which had been given him. But then, tho' this was true of the person *St. Paul* referred to, that he stood condemned in his own mind, or sinned against his conscience even in the greater degree, yet, I think, *St. Paul* did not intend to express this in the words we have now under consideration; because the sense of those words, which I have given above, seem to have been more to his purpose, as the point he had in view was to represent to *Titus* the apparent unreclaimableness of the offender (which unreclaimableness was or might be discovered from his actions and behaviour) and thereby to shew, that he was the proper object of rejection, and ought to be rejected. Besides, as the heretick's standing condemned in his own mind must itself ordinarily have been known and judged of by his actions, and by those circumstances that attended the case, and as it does not appear that *Titus* was endowed with any extraordinary ability to answer such a purpose, so it seems to have been more to the point in hand for the apostle to observe to *Titus*, that the heretick stood condemned by his own actions, rather than that he stood condemned in his own mind; because the latter (ordinarily at least) became apparent by or from the former. This being the state of the case, I think it is not likely that *St. Paul* should represent the heretick as standing condemned

in his own mind, in the words I have now under consideration, but rather, or it is more likely, that by these words the apostle intended to observe, that as he had declared the heretick to be irreclaimable, so this plainly appeared to be the truth of the case, from his own behaviour, from his being deaf to all admonition and advice, and from his persisting in his wickedness, after all proper means had been used to reclaim him; and therefore he was the proper object of rejection, and ought to be rejected.

The use that I shall make of this discourse is only to observe, what a prevailing influence a vicious self-love has upon the minds and lives of men, and of what fatal consequence it has been to christianity. This was sadly exemplified in the isle of *Crete*, the produce of which, upon the inhabitants of that place, was the most gross hypocrisy and dissimulation. And tho', when St. *Paul* wrote his epistle to *Titus*, the christian religion was professed at *Crete*; yet it was so far from proving a universal remedy to this evil, that on the contrary, christianity itself became corrupted thro' its influence; the preachers of Christ's gospel in *Crete* subverted that gospel, by teaching things that they ought not for filthy lucre sake. And happy had it been, if this could have been justly and truly said of christianity, and its teachers in *Crete* only: but, alas! the influence of a vicious self-love, in these respects, has abundantly shewn itself ever since that

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time; as it has led the preachers of Christ's gospel to subvert that gospel, and to render it inefficacious for the saving of mankind. Here then are two things to be lamented, *viz.* *first*, that christianity has been subverted; and, *secondly*, that its teachers have brought this evil upon it. And,

First, It is a thing much to be lamented, that christianity hath been subverted. Christianity, or that revelation of God's will which is commonly called the gospel of Jesus Christ, was kindly intended and excellently calculated to reform the vices, and rightly to direct and govern the affections and behaviour of mankind. And thus it was ordained to be a favour of life unto life unto all those, who should so receive it as to answer the true intent and purpose of it. But, alas! instead of its being a favour of life unto life, it has become, thro' the vicioufness of men, a favour of death unto death, that is, men thro' a vicious self-love have been led greatly to corrupt christianity; by which means it has been so far from reforming the vices of men, that it has been the occasion of their continuing and abounding in them; and it has been so far from rightly directing and governing the affections and actions of men, that on the contrary, it has been the occasion of their being greatly misled in these respects. True and uncorrupted christianity represents personal valuableness in men to be the sole ground of their acceptance with God, and a personal change from bad to good

in sinners to be the sole ground of God's mercy to them: Whereas corrupted christianity represents, not personal valuableness in men, but either something external to them, or else something that is not valuable in them, (such as the captivating their understandings to a set of mysterious and unintelligible propositions) to be the ground of their acceptance with God; and it represents, not a personal change from bad to good in sinners, but something external to them (such as the good works or sufferings of others) to be the ground or reason why God shews mercy to them. And thus corrupted christianity becomes a means, not to reform mens vices, but of their abounding and continuing in them; and thus it serves, not rightly to direct and govern, but greatly to corrupt and mislead the affections and actions of men: And thus the gospel of Christ is rendred inefficacious for the saving of mankind. And as christianity has been greatly corrupted, so that corruption has appeared in various shapes, according as the power, or the passions, or the different interests of men have directed. Infomuch that what has been deemed sound and orthodox christianity in one age, or in one country, has been deemed and treated as arch heresy in another. May we not then take up a lamentation in the words of the prophet *Jeremiah* and say, How hath the Lord covered the daughter of *Zion* with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven to the earth the beauty of *Israel*? How is the gold become

become dim, How is the fine gold changed? How is the precious ointment of the apothecary made to send forth a stinking savour? How is that that was ordained to life become the ministration of death? How is that revelation of God's will, which was kindly intended to reform and save mankind, become subservient to their destruction? And that which renders the case still more lamentable, is,

Secondly, That the teachers of christianity have been its corrupters; that those who have been the preachers of Christ's gospel have subverted it by teaching things that they ought not for filthy lucre sake. The christian ministry was intended for the furtherance of the gospel; that is, men were appointed and set apart to minister in, and to, and for christian societies, that they might keep alive in the minds of Christ's people a just and an affecting sense of his gospel, and might assist and help them in the great affair of their salvation. But, alas! this has been so far from being generally the case, that on the contrary, it has been quite the reverse. Those appointed to watch over christian societies for their good, thro' a vicious self-love, have subverted the gospel of Christ, and made it subservient to their own worldly power, dignity and wealth. This has been most notoriously the case in the church of *Rome*, and perhaps it has been more or less so in all other churches. The christian ministry, or those appointed to minister in christian societies, have been so far from an-

fowering their characters, as faithful preachers of Christ's gospel, and as ministers or servants to Christ's people, that they have generally answered the contrary character, by perverting the words of eternal life, and by lording it over God's heritage. I have already observed, that the gospel of Christ has been most grossly corrupted, and what I would now observe is, that it has not been the open enemies, but the preachers of christianity who have brought this evil upon it. It has been those false brethren who, thro' a vicious self-love, have subverted the gospel of Christ, and rendred it inefficacious for the saving of mankind. And also by this means christianity itself has been rendred contemptible, and a by-word to strangers and foreigners, and an hissing to every one that passeth by. And the reason of all this is evident: for as filthy lucre was at the bottom of all, so whilst christianity continued uncorrupted, whilst personal valuableness in men was considered as the sole ground of divine acceptance, and a personal change from bad to good in sinners, was considered as the sole ground of God's mercy to them, there was nothing for lucrative men to ground their schemes of wealth and power upon, and therefore the corrupting of christianity became absolutely necessary to answer those purposes. But when avaricious men had corrupted the gospel of Christ, by teaching things which they ought not for filthy lucre sake; when men were led to believe, that it was not personal valuableness in them, nor a personal change

change from bad to good in sinners, but something without them; something external to them, or something not really valuable in them, which they were to ground their hopes of salvation upon; then there became an open and clear stage for lucrative men to act their parts upon; then a door was opened for the introduction of any thing and every thing into christianity, which would best answer the purposes aforesaid; then christianity became filled with mysteries, which gave the preachers of Christ's gospel (or the priests or clergy as they are now called) both the opportunity and the pretence for having the direction of the understandings and consciences, and consequently of the purses and possessions of the people. And as hereby wicked men had the means and opportunities of compounding for their vices, so hereby the clergy had the means and opportunities of gratifying their most avaricious desires. And not only so, but they claimed a right of dominion or lordship over their brethren, and made themselves masters of those whom they were appointed to serve: in consequence of which many of the preachers (or at least the pretended preachers) of Christ's gospel, have been guilty of every act of fraud and oppression towards Christ's people. And in order to support and justify their unjust claims of sovereignty over Christ's servants, those advices and counsels which have been given by Christ and his apostles, in order to guide christians into the ways of peace, truth and holiness, have been subverted by them.

Thus they have subverted that plain, honest, wholesome advice given by St. *Paul* to *Titus*, which I have been considering, by making it the ground and foundation of such power to themselves, as Christ hath declared that none of his servants are fit to be entrusted with, *viz.* a power of disfranchising or casting their brethren out of Christ's church. And tho' those invested with civil power ought (as the guardians of the society's welfare) to have restrained those men from every act of violence towards Christ's servants, yet, alas! this has been so far from being always the case, that on the contrary, sometimes the civil power has been drawn in to support those claims, and to execute the wicked sentences grounded upon them; in consequence of which (thro' a very great breach of trust) great waste has been committed upon the labours and properties of the people, and sometimes the lives of Christ's servants have fallen a sacrifice to the pride and malice of those spiritual governors, when backed with civil power as aforesaid; yea sometimes those invested with civil power have felt the sad effects of those claims themselves. May we not therefore take up a lamentation, and say, How have the servants of our Lord betrayed the cause of their master? How have they corrupted the word of truth, and made the Lord's people to transgress? How have they darkned counsel by words without knowledge, and quenched the light of *Israel*? How have these traders in spiritual merchandize made themselves rich by a false balance, and

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by a bag of deceitful weights? How have they fallen upon the spoil, and made themselves fat with offerings and oblations? How have they decked themselves with silk and scarlet and fine linen, and waxed wanton as in a day of slaughter? How have they lifted up their voices like thunder, and spoken great swelling words of vanity? How have they been puffed up with pride as the fallen angels, and exalted themselves above all that are called gods? How have the mighty fallen before them, and princes at their feet? How have they trampled upon the necks of the Lord's people, and washed their foot-steps in the blood of his servants? How has the ministry of reconciliation become, thro' their means, the ministry of strife, and contention of wars and desolation, and of every evil word and work?

Moreover, the preachers of Christ's gospel have been not only the corrupters of christianity, but also the supporters and maintainers of such corruption; wherever it has taken place and prevailed. This has been the case in all ages of the christian church, and is particularly so at this time: every prevailing error, every received corruption, being warmly contended for and defended by them. Witness the great and general opposition that has been made by the clergy, to an attempt for restoring the institution of Christ, commonly called the sacrament of the Lord's supper, to its original plainness and simplicity. Behold, what great concern, yea, what zeal, yea, what indignation has been shewn upon this occasion!

sion! and indeed the case cannot well be otherwise: where religion is made the engine of worldly policy, and men become preachers of Christ, merely to serve the purposes of this world to themselves, the means will be made to give place to the end. It must needs therefore have been well judged by *St. Paul*, when he made one of the qualifications of a bishop, or watchman to a christian society, to be this, namely, that he should not be given to filthy lucre; well knowing that such a disposition would lead a man to preach, not Christ but himself, or rather, that he would so preach Christ as to make it subservient to his worldly interest. Great care therefore ought to be taken that none be admitted into the christian ministry, who are tainted with this vice. Tho' indeed as things now stand, this is an evil which cannot easily be prevented or remedied, as christianity is generally become a national affair, and is interwoven with the civil constitutions of those countries where it is professed. For in such constitutions men generally commence preachers of Christ, before they have engaged in any other profession, by which their tempers and dispositions might have been tried and discovered, and upon which alone a judgment can be formed, whether they are given to filthy lucre or not. And as in such a state of things the christian ministry will be in great measure a political thing, so men of avaricious dispositions are likely to have the greatest share in directing that policy; the truth of which has been too often verified by experience.

A SHORT
DISSERTATION,

CONCERNING

*The Time for keeping a Sabbath. Offered to
the Consideration of the Sabbatarians. In a
Letter to Mr. Elwall.*

S I R,

I AM sensible, that our christian brethren the sabbatarians, or at least those of them who are in low and streightened circumstances, fall under a *hardship*, by their differing in *judgment* and *practice* from the rest of their fellow christians, with regard to the *time* for keeping a sabbath. For as they are obliged, in point of conscience, to rest from their labour one day in seven, and as they are restrained by the laws of the land from labouring on another: so this breaks in too much upon the labour of those whose present support, and that of their families, depend upon it. And tho' you have in their behalf humbly besought the legislature to grant them an indulgence, by permitting them quietly, and peaceably, and without molestation to work on all those six days on which, upon their principles, they think themselves obliged to labour, in order to get a maintenance for themselves and families, (which seems to be a just and reasonable request;) and tho' such indulgence should

should be granted; yet, I fear, it would not be a relief to some of those, whose circumstances oblige them to work with and for others, who are contrary minded to them. Their working on the day commonly called *sunday*, may introduce such *disorder* and *inconvenience* in the trade and business of those they labour with and for, as may render it very improper for those to employ them under such circumstances; and this may effectually prevent their receiving any benefit from the forementioned indulgence. And as at present we have no great reason to expect, or even to hope that such indulgence will be granted; so in the following reflections I have endeavoured to remove the aforesaid hardship another way, by shewing the *weakness* of those *grounds* upon which the sabbatarians rely, for keeping the *seventh* day from the *creation* as their sabbath; and thereby I hope to convince them, that they will pay full and true obedience to the *fourth commandment*, if they keep the same day for a sabbath which the rest of their christian brethren do. However, if what I have to offer should not be effectual to obtain that end, it may notwithstanding serve to convince the sabbatarians, that it is not without ground that we differ from them both in judgment and practice, with regard to this matter. And,

The reason why I address myself to you, Mr. *Elwall*, in this dissertation, is because you have lately republished your opinion to the world upon this subject in such a manner, as if you thought, that in point of argument,

nothing could be offered against it; and therefore I apply myself to you, in hope that what follows will not only convince you of the contrary, but also be a just ground to you to alter your judgment and practice in this particular; provided you will be prevailed upon to make, not your *zeal*, but your *reason*, the guide and director both of your judgment and practice with regard to it. But before I enter upon this question, I think it proper to state the case, and shew what I apprehend you mean by keeping the seventh day from the creation as a sabbath. God performed the work of creation in six days, and at the point of time on which the *sixth* day ended, at that point of time the *seventh* day, or the *sabbath*, (according to the sabbatarians,) began. And reckoning the same portion of time for the seventh day, as had been reckoned for each of the six days before it, that portion of time constituted the *first* sabbath day. And at the point of time when the first sabbath day ended, then began the reckoning for six days to succeed it. And when those six days were ended, then the day following was the *second* sabbath. And at the point of time when that day ended, then began the reckoning for a *third* sabbath; and so on down to this time. So that to keep the seventh day from the creation for a sabbath, is to begin a reckoning for a seventh day from the point of time when the *first sabbath day ended*, and the *seventh day* from that reckoning was the *second sabbath*; and to continue that reckoning, by an arithmetical progression, down

to this time; and that portion of time which is the *seventh part of time* by such a reckoning, is a *seventh day*, or *the seventh day from the creation*; and this, I think, is the seventh day which the sabbatarians pretend to keep. This being premised, I proceed to observe,

I. The sun, according to sacred history, was created on the *fourth day*, and has been the common measurer of time ever since; that is, the sun making its circle once round the earth, or the earth turning once round on its own axis, (which comes to the same,) measures out or constitutes a *natural day*. And as God performed the work of creation on *six* of those parts of time called days, and ceased to create on the *seventh*; so, (to speak after the manner of men,) that seventh day on which he ceased to create, may be called the *Lord's sabbath*; because, (to speak after the manner of men,) on that day God *rested* from all his work which he had done. And as the day on which God *ceased* to create, was called *the seventh day*: so that name was applied to it, only on account of the *six* days in which God performed the work of *creation* that preceded it, the Lord's sabbath immediately succeeded in order of time those six days, and therefore was called the seventh day with regard to them. And as the Lord's sabbath began at a *particular point* of time all over the world; so, at that particular point of time, it must have been *different* with regard to day and night upon all the parts of it; that is, it must have been *sunrising* at one place, *noontide* at another,

ther, *sunſet* at another, and ſo on different at all other places, according to their different ſituations on this globe, and according to the different denominations that the parts which day and night are uſually divided into, and are diſtinguiſhed by, whether it be that of watches, or hours, or minutes, &c. For example, ſuppoſe that at the point of time when the Lord's ſabbath began, it was *ſunriſing* at *London*, and that the ſun was in the *equinox*; then on all other parts of the globe, the Lord's ſabbath began ſo many degrees, (dividing 24 hours into 360 parts,) *before* or *after* ſunriſing, as each place is degrees of *weſt* or *eaſt longitude* from the meridian of *London*. To which I may add, that thoſe places which lie a certain number of degrees from, and are neareſt to each pole, have neither *ſunriſing* nor *ſunſetting* at two ſeaſons of the year; at which ſeaſons, when the heavenly bodies, (by the interpoſition of clouds, or any other way) are eclipsed, it does not appear, that then there is any proviſion in nature for a common meafurer of time to them. From what I have obſerved, I think, it muſt appear plain, (to all who underſtand the ſubject I am treating of,) that it muſt have been impoſſible for any of the inhabitants of this globe, at any time, to have known what *minute*, or even *hour*, whether of *day* or *night*, the Lord's ſabbath began with them, at the particular place where they reſided; and conſequently it muſt have been impoſſible for them to have *began their reckoning for a ſabbath from it*; which yet they muſt

have known and done, if they would have kept the *seventh* day from the *creation* as the sabbath. This, I say, was impossible to be known or done, without a particular revelation from God; but no such divine revelation has been given, that has come to our knowledge, and therefore, for any thing that appears to the contrary, all our species, in all ages, must have been perfectly *ignorant* and *uncertain* with regard to these things. And from hence also it plainly appears, how weak and vain the pretence is, of keeping the *seventh* day from the *creation* as a sabbath; that is, it is exceeding weak to pretend to begin a reckoning for a sabbath from the creation, seeing it is impossible to be known, whether at the point of time in which the Lord's sabbath began, it was day or night at any particular place on the globe, and therefore it must be impossible for any of its inhabitants, at any particular place, to begin their reckoning for a sabbath from it. But tho' what I have observed above, I think, must be plain and evident to those who understand the subject I have been treating of; yet, I fear, it will not be so to many of the sabbatarians, for want of such understanding; neither can I find any other way to render this matter clear and intelligible to them.

II. *Adam*, according to sacred history, was created on the *sixth* day. Now supposing *Adam* was obliged from the beginning of his being, (tho' we see no ground for such a supposition,) to keep the sabbath day according to the commandment which was afterwards given

given to the children of *Israel*; then he must have begun his reckoning, not from the time of *God's* working, but his *own*, (except he had been particularly directed to the contrary, which does not appear to be the case;) that is, as God worked *six* days, and rested the day which immediately followed, and therefore is called the *seventh* day, so in *obedience* to the divine command, and in *imitation* of the divine example, *Adam* must have worked, or at least existed *six* days, and then it must have been his duty to rest, or to sanctify the *seventh* as a sabbath to God, this being as truly and as properly the seventh day to *him*, as the other was the seventh day to his *Maker*. So that the *seventh* day with regard to God, was but the *second* day with regard to *Adam*. And if men were to begin their reckoning for a sabbath, from the point of time in which God breathed into *Adam* the breath of life, and he became a living soul, then they would be as *ignorant* and as *uncertain* when to begin such reckoning, as if they were to reckon from that point of time on which God ceased to create, as aforesaid; because it is impossible to discover either the particular place, or the particular point of time when *Adam* was called into being, and therefore it must be impossible to begin a reckoning for a sabbath from them.

III. When *Adam* was created, he was put into the garden of *Eden*, and whilst he was there, he could not properly be said to be in a state of *labour*, but rather of *pleasure*, as he depended,

depended, not upon his labour, but wholly upon the bountiful hand of providence for his subsistence. And in this state, there could be no place for a *sabbath*, or day of rest; because there could be no place for *six* days of labour to precede it; which yet was supposed to be the case of all those to whom the *fourth* commandment was given. God had furnished this garden with every thing that was proper to render life agreeable to *Adam*, and gave him leave to enjoy what was thus provided for him, only under one restriction, *viz.* that he should not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil: so that he had nothing more to do than to be continually partaking of the divine kindness, and living under a just and grateful sense of it; and consequently whilst *Adam* was in this state, every day must have been a *sabbath* to him, and there could be no place for the *fourth* commandment, whilst *Adam* was under such circumstances. Indeed, when *Adam* had rendered himself unworthy of so great favour by his disobedience, then he was condemned to labour for his subsistence, God having pronounced the following sentence upon him, *Gen. iii. 17, 18, 19.* *Because thou hast hearkned unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying; Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee: and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou re-*
turn

turn unto the ground: for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And if we suppose that from the time *Adam* was condemned to labour, he was obliged to keep the *fourth* commandment, by labouring *six* days, and resting or keeping the *seventh* as a sabbath to God, and that we are to begin our reckoning for a sabbath from that time; then we are under the same *ignorance* and *uncertainty* as abovementioned; because it is impossible for us to know at what point of time *Adam* was condemned to labour, and consequently it is impossible for us to begin a reckoning for a sabbath from that time.

IV. There is a strong presumption that there was no sabbath kept, nor commanded by God to be kept, till the time when the children of *Israel* sojourned in the wilderness. And this presumption, is fairly grounded, upon the sacred history's being perfectly silent with regard to this matter. For tho' the *piety* of the patriarchs, which was shewn in other instances, such as their building of *altars*, offering of *sacrifices*, making of *vows*, and the like, were entered upon record; yet it is not once mentioned of their keeping a sabbath; and yet surely in so long a space of time, many things and circumstances must have happened, which would have given occasion for the mentioning of it, if any such time had been set apart, and kept by them for that purpose. So that the presumption is exceeding strong against a sabbath's being kept, or commanded to be kept, until the time above mentioned.

tioned. And tho' *Moses*, when he gave a history of the creation, assigned the *reason* why God separated and sanctified the *seventh* day, or the seventh part of time to be kept as a sabbath; yet it will not follow that such a separation of time for a sabbath was made *at the creation*, even tho' the creation was the subject which *Moses* had then under consideration; because it is greatly probable that the history was written *after* the command for a sabbath was given; and if so, then it was very natural for *Moses*, when he gave the *history*, to assign the *reason*, why God appointed the seventh part of time for a sabbath to his people the *Jews*, seeing the reason assigned was taken from the *divine conduct*, at that *very creation* which he was then giving the history of. As *Moses* was brought up at the court of *Egypt*, under the care, and at the expence of *Pharaoh's* daughter; and as his time was spent in acquiring all that learning and knowledge which the court of *Egypt* could furnish him with; so it is very unlikely that the sacred history should be written by him at that time. After this, *Moses*, on account of defending one of his brethren, and slaying an *Egyptian*, was forced to fly from *Egypt*, and consequently to leave all his brethren in their state of bondage, without any prospect of ever returning to them. And as he went into the land of *Midian*, so he had the good fortune to be taken into the service of *Jethro* the priest of that country, whose daughter he married, and he served *Jethro* his father-in-law, and kept

his flock. And as he was in this state of servitude, being banish'd from his brethren, without a prospect of ever returning to them; so it is not likely he should have any motive or inducement to write the history we have now under consideration, nor any convenience, or opportunity for so doing; and therefore, it is probable it was not written at that time. But when *Moses*, by the order of God, returned again to his brethren the *Hebrews*, and became their leader and head, and gave them a body of laws, in order to their settlement and good government in *Canaan*, which country they were soon to possess, and in it become a great people; and when he journeyed with them full *forty* years in the wilderness, which long space of time gave him leisure, and opportunity, and every other circumstance concurred to qualify him for, and engage him in such a work; it is probable that *then*, and under *these circumstances*, he wrote the fore-mentioned *history*, for the use and benefit of that people. And as the command for keeping a sabbath, was given very soon after the children of *Israel* went into the wilderness; so this renders it greatly probable, that the history of the creation was written by *Moses* after that commandment was given, as I observed above. Now if this was the case, which is highly probable it was, then it was very natural for *Moses*, when he gave an historical account of the creation, *viz.* that God performed it in *six* days, and rested, or ceased to create on the *seventh*, it was very natu-

ral for him then, to assign the *reason*, why God, in *after-times*, preferred the *seventh* part of time to the *sixth*, or *eighth*, or any other *part* which time might have been divided into, and separated, or hallowed it to be a *sabbath*, or day of holy rest to his people; seeing the *reason* assigned, was taken from the *creation*, which he then had been giving the *history* of, as I have already observed. So that tho' *Moses*, when he gave the history of the creation, did then, and on that occasion give the reason why God appointed the *seventh* day rather than the *first*, or *tenth*, or any other *part* of time; yet it will by no means follow that a sabbath was kept, or appointed to be kept, at, and from the creation. Besides, supposing a sabbath had been appointed to be kept at the creation, and that it was kept by the people of the *first* ages of the world; yet as the knowledge and sense of a sabbath had been *long lost* amongst mankind, before the command for keeping it was received; therefore it must have been the same to the people of those after-ages as if there never had been any such thing. They must have been perfectly *ignorant* and *uncertain* with regard to any part of time, which might have been assigned to begin a reckoning for a sabbath day from; and therefore they could not begin their reckoning for a sabbath, from any such point of time.

V. The distinction of a *seventh* day, and *the seventh* day, used by the *sabbatarians*, and upon which they seem chiefly to rely, is perfectly

fectly *groundless*; that is, it is a distinction without a difference. For as any day which is pointed out, or set apart to begin a reckoning for any number of days, is *a first day*, or *the first day*, with regard to the days which immediately *follow it*, until that reckoning ceases: so any day, is *a seventh day*, or *the seventh day*, with regard to the *six days* which immediately preceded it, the terms *a first*, and *the first*, or *a seventh*, and *the seventh*, being used to express the very same thing in either case. In nature there has been but *one first day*, and *one seventh day*, strictly speaking, with regard to this globe; and therefore when any other day is called *a first day*, or *the first day*, beside the *one first day* before mentioned, it is so denominated only with relation to any number of days which immediately follow it, the reckoning for which number began at *that day*, and therefore it is called a first day, or the first day, only with regard to it. Or if any day is called *a seventh day*, or *the seventh day*, beside the *one seventh day* above mentioned, it is so denominated only with regard to the *six days* which immediately preceded it. When Almighty God exerted his power in framing and disposing of this globe, to answer the wise and good purposes for which he intended it, he caused light, and he divided the light from the darkness, and upon that division, the evening and the morning made or constituted the *first natural day*. And this was properly *a first day*, or *the first day*, because there had been no other

day before it; that is, there had been no such portion or division of time which we call a day, which had preceded it. And this is the *only* first day, strictly speaking, this globe has ever had; because every other day beside, has had *a day*, or such a portion or division of time which we call a day, that has preceded it, and consequently there has been no other first day beside this, in the sense above mentioned. And as the evening and the morning made the *first* day; so the same portion and division of time, which immediately succeeded, it made the *second* day; the next the *third*; the next the *fourth*, in which the sun was created, and that has been the common measurer of time ever since; the next the *fifth*; the next the *sixth*, on which God finished the work of creation; the next the *seventh*, on which, (to speak after the manner of men,) God rested from all his work which he had done. And this is the *only seventh day*, this globe has ever had, because, properly speaking, the day which immediately succeeded the seventh was the *eighth*; and the day which immediately followed the eighth was the *ninth*; and so on thro' that large number of days which has ever since succeeded one another down to this time. And if any other day, beside the seventh day before mentioned, has been called *a seventh day*, or *the seventh day*; it has been so denominatèd, not from its being so in nature, but only from the *six* days which immediately preceded it, with regard to which it was a seventh day, or the seventh day, as a-

foresaid,

foresaid, each of these terms being used to express one and the same thing.

VI. When the sabbath was *first* instituted, or (if that will not be allowed) when the command for keeping a sabbath was *renewed*, there is no mention that the day appointed for a sabbath, was the *seventh* day from the *creation*, (according to the sabbatarians,) but only, that when the people had gathered manna *six* days, then the day which followed, (and was with regard to those six *the seventh* day) was appointed to be the sabbath; and from thence they began their reckoning for a sabbath for the time to come. Neither is the reason assigned why the *seventh* day, that is, the seventh part of time was appointed to be the sabbath, rather than the *sixth*, or *twelfth*, or any other part which time might have been divided into. But when the sabbath was *first* appointed to the people of *Israel*, it is considered as *God's gift* to them, and as a favour vouchsafed to them *only*. Exod. xvi. 29. See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath; therefore he giveth you on the sixth day, the bread of two days, &c. Man, by his disobedience, had drawn upon himself a *curse*, viz. that in the sweat of his face, he should get his bread, until he did return to the dust, from whence he was taken. But God, in his great goodness to the people of *Israel*, in part *redeemed* them from this curse, by giving them *one day in seven* to be a sabbath, or a day of rest to them. And not only so, but this institution of a sabbath, was wisely intended to answer

swer several other valuable purposes to them; viz. to be a *spur* to their *industry*, by obliging them with care and diligence to pursue their labour on *six* days, and thereby have leisure to keep the *seventh* as a day of rest. It also gave them an opportunity of assembling themselves together, to pay their *publick* acknowledgments to God; and of performing *kind offices* one to another. It likewise gave an occasion of entertaining their minds with *serious reflections*, as by it they were disengaged from their worldly affairs, and were required to apply it to *holy* or *religious* uses; and this served to raise and preserve in them a just and an affecting sense of *God*, and to remind them of their *duty*, in order to engage them in the constant practice of it. These valuable ends were intended to be answered by God's appointing *one* day in *seven* to be kept as a sabbath; but that God intended that this sabbath should be kept on that very *seventh* day from the *creation*, which the sabbatarians contend for, this does not appear to be the case. Nor does it appear that the appointing that *particular* branch of time to be a sabbath, could answer any wise and good end, but rather the contrary, as it would lay a foundation for doubts and difficulties, and an endless perplexity with regard to it.

VII. The *seventh* day, as expressed in the *fourth* commandment of the decalogue, I think, can signify no more, nor no other, than the *seventh* part of time, as the *seventh* is distinguished from, and stands opposed to the *sixth*,

or *eighth*, or any *other part* of time. And as to the particular time when the *Jews* were to begin their reckoning for a first day, and a *second*, and so on to the *seventh*, this is not pointed out by the commandment, but it is supposed to be known before, by those to whom the ten commandments were given.

Exod. xx. 8. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Here the keeping a sabbath, or day of rest, is rather *supposed*, than commanded; and what is here required, is, that the sabbath, which had been before instituted, should be applied to *holy* or *religious* purposes, and that the people should keep this *always in remembrance*. But then, what portion of time, or what particular day, should be set apart for this purpose, or when they were to begin their reckoning for a sabbath, is not discoverable from this branch of the command.

Verse 9. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work. As in the *first* branch of the command, the *Israelites* were required to have this *strongly* impressed upon their minds, *viz.* that the time of the sabbath was to be applied to *holy* or *religious* uses: so, in *this* branch, they were required to make a *proper provision* for it, by diligently performing on the *six* days, which immediately preceded it, all that work and business which each ones circumstances and condition of life rendered necessary and fit to be done, that so the sabbath might be kept *holy* according to the true intent of this command, and yet not to be *injurious* to them in their worldly affairs. But then, here is no direction given

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when to *begin* a reckoning for those six days, and consequently not for the seventh day which was to succeed them.

Verse 10. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. This branch of the command seems to be an *inforcement* of what was required in the *first* branch, and shews the *extent* of it, *viz.* that the sabbath was intended to be a day of holy rest, not only to *parents* and *masters*, but also to *children*, *servants*, &c. and consequently that it was to be applied to holy or religious uses, by *all* who are capable of so applying it. It likewise shews what *portion* of time is to be thus applied, *viz. one day in seven.* *But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God.* The term [But] with which this sentence begins, is put in opposition to the sentence which immediately preceded it; *viz. six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work;* and consequently the sabbath is here called *the seventh day*, in distinction from, and in opposition to the *six* days of labour that preceded it. It is the same as if it had been said, I have here required thee to labour and do all thy work on *six* days, but then thy behaviour must be *quite different* on the day that follows, which day, with regard to the *six* days of thy labour, is to thee *the seventh day*; *this seventh day is the sabbath* of the Lord thy God, or rather, this seventh day has been set apart for a sabbath

bath by a *precedent command*, and is now appointed by the Lord thy God to be a day of *holy rest*; therefore in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, &c. And as each sabbath was to consist only of one day, so when they had rested that *one day*, then they were to begin their reckoning for a second sabbath, by working *six* days as they had done before, and then to keep the day that follow'd as a *sabbath* to God. This seems to be the full sense of this branch of the commandment, in which is shewn, that it is *one day in seven*, and not the *seventh* day from the *creation*, which is appointed for a sabbath, or day of holy rest, by the Lord our God; because the sabbath day is here called the *seventh* day, not with regard to the *creation*, but in distinction from, and in opposition to the *six* days of labour that preceded it.

Verse 11. For in *six* days the Lord make heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the *seventh* day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. In this last branch of the command is shewed, *first*, the *space* of time in which God performed the work of creation, *viz.* *six* days, and that he *rested*, or ceased to create on the *seventh*; *secondly*, the divine conduct, in this particular, is here assigned as a *reason* why God appointed the *seventh* day, or the seventh part of time to be a *sabbath*, or a day of holy rest unto his people, rather than the *sixth*, or the *eighth*, or any *other part* which time was equally capable of being divided into; God worked *six* days,

or six of those parts of time called days, and rested the *seventh*. And as time was thus divided into seven parts, by the divine conduct; so man is required by this command to *imitate* his Maker in this particular, by working *six* of those parts of time called days, and to keep the *seventh* as a sabbath to God. *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.* It being this last branch of the command, in which the *sabbatarians* chief strength seems to lie, it requires a more particular and minute examination. The *seventh* day, with regard to the *six* days on which God performed the work of *creation*, was only that *one single day* which immediately followed, on which day God ceased to create, and therefore on it he is said to rest. But then, this is not the *very day* which God is here said to bless and hallow, because that was *blessed* and *hallowed*, if I may so speak, by God's *resting* on it, as aforesaid. And if that was the case, then to bless and hallow that day, would be to make the thing, and the reason for doing that thing, the same, which is greatly absurd. Neither could that *single day* be appointed for a day of *holy* rest to God's people the *Jews*, because that day had been *past* many ages before the *Israelites* had a being. Neither was it *any other* one single day, which God is here said to bless and hallow, because no such single day is here pointed out, and because, if that had been the case,

case, then there would have been but *one single* sabbath day thro' all ages of the world; but this is a point which, I think, is not contended for, nor indeed the former. Now if the day which is here said to be hallowed, was not the single seventh day on which God *ceased* to create, nor yet *any other* one single day, and yet it was *a seventh* day, or *the seventh* day; then, I think, it must have been the seventh *part of time*, or *one day in seven* which was so hallowed; because there is *no other* a seventh day, or the seventh day, which such hallowing is applicable to. So that the appointing the seventh day for a sabbath, was no other, nor no more, than appointing the seventh part of time, a reckoning for which must begin at some particular time for a *first* day, and a *second*, and so on to a *seventh*, (with regard to which reckoning this command is perfectly silent,) and which *seventh* day was the *first* sabbath; at the end of which a reckoning began for a *second*; and so one sabbath or seventh day followed another, by an arithmetical progression from time to time. This is farther evident, from the words themselves of this last branch of the command. *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed, (not the seventh day which is here referred to, but) the sabbath day, and hallowed it.* God blessed the sabbath day, that is, the seventh *part of time*, which he had appointed for a sabbath by a *precedent command*, and hallowed it; that is, the

time which he had before appointed to be a day of rest, he here required should be applied to *holy* or *religious* uses; *the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.* And as the sabbath day had been appointed to be kept, by a precedent command; so, God had before required the *Israelites* to *begin* their reckoning for it, from their *first* gathering of the manna.

But tho' God's working *six* days, and resting the *seventh*, is here assigned as a *reason* why he appointed the seventh *part of time*, rather than *any other*, to be the sabbath: yet, I think, it may be fairly presumed this was not the only reason why he did so. God commanded the *Israelites* to till their land *six* years, and to let it rest the *seventh*. And tho' the *reason* for so doing is not expressed; yet, I think, it may fairly be presumed, *viz.* because this *best* answered the purposes which such a rest was intended to serve: For tho' the arable land in *Canaan* was so good, as that it would bear tilling several years successively, yet it was not so good, as to bear it always without any rest; and therefore *one year in seven* was appointed for it, because that proportion, probably, *best* answered the purpose of tillage to them. So in like manner, God appointed the *seventh* part of time for a sabbath, not only because he had performed the work of creation in *six* days, and rested the *seventh*; but also, and more especially, because such a proportion of time, probably, *best* answered the purpose of that institution: For as the *return* of a sabbath every *seventh* day was sufficient, (when kept as

it ought,) to preserve in mens minds a just sense of *God* and their *duty*, and to answer every other valuable purpose, which the keeping of a sabbath was intended to serve; so its returning *no quicker*, rendred the labouring part of mankind capable of making a suitable and proper provision for life, by which means the keeping a sabbath was not *injurious* to them in their worldly affairs.

VIII. The obligation which christians, considered as christians, are under to keep the *ten commandments*, does not arise from God's having required the *Jews* to keep them, who were likewise required to keep the ceremonial law; but it arises from those commands being founded in *reason*; and from christians being required to keep them by *Christ* their Master; and from his declaring obedience to them to be the *ground* of God's favour. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*, Mat. xix. 17. And as the *Jewish* dispensation was *temporary*, and intended to last but till Christ had introduced another, and better in its stead; so when he had introduced another, then that may very justly be said to have *ceased*, or to have been at an end, and Christ, by a figure of speech, may be said to have *nailed* it to his *cross*, as it ended at his *death*. And as the *Mosaick* dispensation ended at the *death* of Christ; so the Christian began at his *resurrection*. At which time, the *Christians* were at liberty to begin their reckoning for a sabbath, from the *beginning* of that new and better dispensation they were then entered into, (which according-

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ly they did,) as they were not obliged to continue a reckoning for a sabbath from a time, and in obedience to a command, which was only related to, and obligatory upon the *Jews*. But this is what the christians, at the beginning of the christian dispensation, did not thoroughly understand, but thought that their obligation to *Judaism* still remained; and accordingly they mixed and blended *Judaism* and christianity together. And as this was the case in many instances, so it was the same with regard to the *sabbath*; the very first christians, not only kept the *christian sabbath*, a reckoning for which began at the *resurrection* of Christ; but they also kept the *Jews sabbath*, in obedience to the *Jewish* law, a reckoning for which began at the *first* gathering of the manna, according to the command given the *Jews*, which command the christians were not obliged to be governed by, and therefore in this they plainly judaised. And tho', for distinction's sake, when two sabbath days were kept one following the other, one (*viz.* the *jewish*) was called the *sabbath day*, and the other the *Lord's day*; yet this does not alter the case, because it is not the name, but the thing which we are enquiring about. Each day was strictly and properly a *sabbath* day, or *the sabbath* day, as each day was kept as a day of *holy rest*; tho' probably the severities of *Judaism* were annex'd to one of these sabbaths, and not to the other. In like manner, the *Jewish* sabbath had, by long custom, obtained the name of the *seventh day*; and therefore the
christian

christian sabbath day was by way of distinction called the *first day*, which custom is not yet worn out; whereas *one* is as *truly* a seventh day, or the seventh day as *the other*, because the denomination of *seventh* day, is taken from the *six* days that precede it, and it is as applicable to *one* day, as to *another*. And as some remains of *Judaism* continued long among christians; so this of the *Jewish sabbath* was of *long duration*, tho' probably it must have been greatly *injurious* to the laborious and poorer part of them, whose time for labour, by keeping two sabbath days in seven, must have been too much broken in upon. However, in time, the keeping *one* of these sabbaths (*viz.* the *Jewish*) was *dropped*, by the greatest part of christians, if not by all of them. And in this they acted very justly, for any thing that appears to the contrary. For as they were not obliged to keep *two* days in *seven* for sabbaths; so the *fourth commandment* was as fully and truly obeyed, with regard to *time*, by their keeping the *christian*, as it would have been if they had kept the *Jewish sabbath*; that is, the command was as truly obeyed by their keeping that day for a sabbath, which, according to custom, was called the *first day*, as it would have been if they had kept that day, which, according to custom, was called the *seventh day*. And in this case there was no change of a sabbath from one day to another, as is pretended; but only when two sabbath days were kept one following another, one of them, *viz.* the *Jewish* was dropped.

Thus,

Thus, Sir, I have laid before you, with great plainness and freedom, and I trust with equal fairness, my thoughts on this subject. A subject which you seem to consider of *great importance*, tho' I must acknowledge it does not appear to be so to me; because it is the *main design* of a command, which is a matter of importance to me, and not any circumstance that may be related to it, upon which that main design has no dependence; especially if that circumstance be *dubious* and *doubtful*, which, to say the least, I think, is the present case. Supposing that christians were more divided in their judgments and practice, with regard to the time for keeping a sabbath, than they really are, and that the christians in *Britain* kept the day commonly called *sunday*, those in *Holland* kept the day commonly called *saturday*, and those in *France* the day commonly called *friday*; and supposing my business required that I should be sometimes in each of those countries, the question is, How I ought to act under such circumstances, so as for my conduct to be *justly approved* by every wise and good being? Whether I ought to keep the same day in all those countries, and thereby join with my fellow christians in one country, and keep a day by myself in the other two? Or, Whether I ought, in each of those countries, to keep the same day for a sabbath, as the christians in those several countries do, tho' different with regard to time, as aforesaid? And the answer to me is plain and obvious, *viz.* That in each country I ought to join

join with my fellow christians, and keep the same day for a sabbath as they do; and that for these reasons, *First*, Because the point contended for, (*viz.* whether it be that the *seventh* day from the *creation*, or from the *first* gathering of the manna, ought to be kept as a sabbath day by christians,) is, to say the least, of doubtful disputation. *Secondly*, Because the true *end* and *design* of the institution is as well and as fully answered, and consequently *obedience* to the fourth commandment with regard to time, is as effectually secured, by my keeping one of those days for a sabbath, as another; that is, whether I keep *sunday*, *saturday*, or *friday*. *Thirdly*, Because, in the present case, no wise and good end can possibly be answered, by *dissenting* from my christian brethren, but the contrary; as such dissent, in point of practice, introduces confusion, and great inconvenience to christians, and to society, which inconvenience our brethren the sabbatarians do sadly experience; and therefore *conformity*, in such a case, and under such circumstances, must be *preferable* to *nonconformity*. These reasons, when taken together, would *justify* my conduct to *myself*, in such a case; and I verily think, they would do the same to my *Maker*.

I will only add, that as I have nothing in view by this address, but your and the sabbatarians *benefit*, by endeavouring to remove a *hardship* which each of you are labouring under; so, I hope, it will be kindly accepted, from

Your sincere Friend,

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And humble Servant.

THE
CASE
OF

PECUNIARY MULCTS.

WITH

*Regard to the Dissenters, particularly considered.
In a second Letter to the Reverend Dr. Stebbing.*

Reverend Sir,

YOUR not taking notice of my former letter, has not discouraged me from addressing you again in the same way. Mr. Foster, I think, in his two letters to you, charges you with being a friend, and an advocate for persecution. This charge, if I mistake not, he endeavoured to support by producing a proposition subservient thereto, that you in your former writings have advanced; which proposition it does not appear that you have yet publicly retracted. The proposition, if I apprehend the case aright, is this, namely, that those who dissent from the established religion of a country, ought to be mulcted, or pay a tax for their liberty.

This,

This, I think, is both a *false*, and an *evil* position.

That it is a false position is evident from hence, *viz.* that the *grounds* and *reasons* upon which men enter into civil society, and the *ends* and *purposes* to be answered by it, do not require, or make it necessary, that civil governors should be invested with any *compulsive* power in matters of religion. And if so, then civil governors can have no right to *mulect* their people on account of their *dissent*, as aforesaid. This subject is what I have already considered, in a Discourse, intitled, *Some short reflections on the grounds and extent of authority and liberty, with respect to civil government. Wherein the authority of civil governors in matters of religion, is particularly considered.* Occasioned by *Dr. Rogers's Vindication of the civil establishment of religion, published in the year 1728.* To this Tract, Sir, I refer you, for a more full view of the point in hand, and shall here only transcribe from it *two* short paragraphs, as a specimen thereof.

“ The *grounds* and *reasons* of association to
 “ men is not their *relation* to, and *dependency*
 “ upon God; but only their relation to, and
 “ dependency *upon each other*. And the *ulti-*
 “ *mate* end and purpose of association, is not
 “ to secure to each individual the *favour* of
 “ God, and the happiness of *another world*,
 “ but only to procure to each individual those
 “ comforts in life, which each, in a single ca-
 “ pacity, are not qualified to procure to them-

“ selves; and to guard and protect each individual from those evils, which each, in a single capacity, are not qualified to secure themselves from.

“ Men do not associate, or constitute a publick interest, because each, in a single capacity, are not qualified to obtain *God's favour*, and the happiness of *another world*; or that society, and consequently the representatives of it, should give, or secure, those advantages to them: I say, these cannot possibly be the ground and reason, the end and purpose of association, because, with respect to them, association does not alter the case at all. The favour of *God*, and the happiness of *another world*, are what society can neither give, nor secure, nor take away from any individual; and consequently these are things which society, as such, are not interested in, nor concerned with.” Again,

The forementioned position is not only *false*, but *evil*, as it tends greatly to the hurt and damage of mankind, by leading civil governors to lay an *unreasonable*, and thereby an *oppressive* and *wicked* taxation upon their people. The *ground and reason*, the *end and purpose* of taxation, is the guarding and securing the persons, and properties of the society; and consequently the rule and measure of it ought to be, that each individual should be obliged to bear *such a share* of the common burthen, as bears a proportion to his *ability*, and to the *share* of property which he has to be secured by

by it; this being the most fair and equitable state of the case. Indeed if any part of the society, by their *bad* behaviour, draws any *unnecessary* expence upon the government, which is sometimes the case of treasons, and rebellions, and the like, then, in reason and equity, the *offenders*, if they are able, ought to bear the burthen of that unnecessary expence. But for as much as *dissenting* from the established religion does not in it self render a man's *ability* to bear the burthen of government, nor his *share* of property to be secured by it, *greater*, or *less*, nor does it introduce any *unnecessary* expence, therefore it cannot be a *reasonable* ground of taxation; and consequently to mulct men upon *this account* must be *oppressive* and *evil*.

Besides, the means in all cases must be directed and governed by the end which is intended to be answered by them. If a bell is to be rung, and the strength of two men will not do it; then such a number of hands must be added, as will be sufficient for that purpose. So in like manner, if *uniformity*, in matters of religion, be the *end* to be answered by taxation in the present case, which, I think, is the most plausible pretence; then if *six-pence* in the *pound* is not sufficient to obtain that end, the tax must be *increased* to make it so. And if *twenty shillings* in the *pound* will not do, that is, if divesting men of *all* their property is not sufficient to awe them into *conformity* to the established religion; then faggots, and gibbets,

and such other severities must be used, as will be *sufficient* to answer that purpose. Whether you will admit these to come under the denomination of *persecution*, I cannot say; but this I say, that it is worthy your most serious consideration, whether you are not become, in some respect, an *accessary* after the fact, to all those cruelties and barbarities that have been at any time exercised by civil governors on account of religion, by your abetting a position which seems to *defend* and *justify* those practices.

Moreover, I think, it will be proper, (in order to do *justice* to the subject under consideration,) to enquire what has *followed* such uniformity in matters of religion as is desired, where it has been obtained, which, I think, has been the case only in *popish* countries, and perhaps in some *Mahometan* countries also. And here, according to the accounts that I have met with of this matter, it will appear, that such uniformity has been attended with the most *gross ignorance* and *superstition*, both among clergy and laity, which has led to, and introduced the most *abject slavery*, as well in *civil*, as in *religious* matters.

Having considered the proposition referred to, and shewed it to be both false and evil; I now proceed to consider what you have offered, in your late Tract, with regard to it. You say, "At the close of my first letter I gave him (viz. Mr. Foster) a *caution* (so well I knew what I was to *expect* from him) not to charge me with *persecution*, in consequence of my
" having

“ having asserted to the church a right to judge
 “ of heresy. It might have been for his credit
 “ to have taken my advice. But *persecution* is
 “ a favourite to pick with these gentlemen,
 “ and it *was* to be thrown in my teeth at *any*
 “ rate. And to find a handle for it (since *none*
 “ was to be found in my letter) he goes back
 “ to a treatise of mine, written several years
 “ ago, upon the subject of the *rights of the ci-*
 “ *vil magistrate in matters of religion*. In this
 “ book I was led to consider, not only what
 “ *allowances* were proper to be made to consci-
 “ ence (whose *rights* I had asserted in the
 “ strongest manner) but also what *restraints*
 “ might be laid upon those who might sepa-
 “ rate themselves from the established religion,
 “ upon mere worldly views, *pretending* con-
 “ science but having *none*. And to this pur-
 “ pose, I thought, that such *pecuniary mulcts*,
 “ as no *consciencious* man would be *unwilling*
 “ to pay, and every *prudent* man having no
 “ *real* scruples would chuse *not* to pay, might
 “ have their use.

“ This part Mr. *Foster* lays hold of, and if
 “ hard words, and opprobrious language are to
 “ pass for arguments, he has confuted it. He
 “ calls it a *Mahometan* maxim, and is so fond of
 “ making me a mere *Turk*, that he never
 “ knows when to have done.”

With regard to the *first* of these, I observe,
 that if you have asserted the *rights of conscience*
 in the *strongest* manner, then, I think, you
 must have asserted this, or something equal to
 it;

it; viz. that every man has an undoubted right to examine and judge for himself in matters of religion; from which admission, it follows, that no man, or body of men, have a right to control him in it, or to correct and punish him for it. For to suppose that every man has an undoubted right to examine and judge for himself in matters of religion; and at the same time, that some other man, or body of men have a right to control him in it, or to correct and punish him for it, would be to suppose a contradiction.

I am sensible, that in consequence of this right of conscience, men may break in upon the *rights* and *properties* of their neighbours. And when *that* is the case, then civil governors have a right to *correct* and *restrain* them. But then, in this case, the right of conscience is not *controlled*, nor is a man punished for the free *exercise* of it; but because he has been injurious and hurtful to *society*, which government was designed to *protect* and *defend*. If a man, by *following* his conscience, does no way injure nor hurt *society*, then civil governors have *no* right to meddle in the affair; because the *right* of civil governors relates not to mens *consciences*, but only to their *actions*. Whether mens consciences are *rightly* informed, or *not*; or whether they act *agreeably* with, or *contrary* to their consciences; are things which civil governors are not *qualified* to judge of, neither is society any way *interested* in them. Suppose a robber, or a pickpocket, when ar-
raigned

raigned at the bar, should plead that he acted according to his *conscience*, in the practice of those villainies, the court may very *justly* reject his plea. And the reason is evident, *viz.* because the court was constituted and appointed to *enquire* into and *judge* of his *actions*, and not of his conscience, and if upon a fair trial his actions appeared to be *injurious*, and *hurtful* to society, then it would be the business and duty of the *court* to *correct* and *punish* him for them.

I am likewise sensible, that civil governors have an *undoubted right* to examine and judge for themselves in matters of religion, and that no man, nor body of men, have a right to control them in it, or to correct and punish them for it. But then if in consequence of that right they should break in upon the *common rights* of mankind, their *actions*, notwithstanding their consciences, would be as *wrong* and *evil*, as the actions of private persons would be, who, by following their consciences, broke in upon the rights and properties of their neighbours. And supposing them to be *honest* and *sincere* in either case, that is, that they had done their *best* to have their consciences rightly informed; then, tho' such honesty and sincerity (supposing it could be discovered) may *excuse* their *persons* with those whom they may have to do with; yet it can make no alteration with regard to their *actions*; because honesty and sincerity cannot possibly alter the nature of things, by making those actions to be *good*, which otherways would be *evil*, whether he that performs them be considered

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sidered as acting in a *publick*, or a *private* capacity. In short, if (as you say) you have asserted the rights of conscience in the *strongest* manner, then so far as this you have behaved *well*, you have acted a *worthy* and a *manly* part; and well had it been if you had gone no farther. But if you have likewise advanced any position that is *inconsistent* with, and *destructive* of those rights, which, I think, is plainly the case of your doctrine of *pecuniary mulcts*, then you have behaved otherwise. You have *destroyed* with one hand, what you have been *building* with another.

But farther you say, that in the *book* Mr. *Foster* referred to, you not only in the *first* place had considered what allowances were to be made to conscience, whose rights you had asserted in the *strongest* manner; but also, *secondly*, what *restraints* might be laid upon those who separate from the established religion out of *mere worldly* views, *pretending* conscience but having *none*. Here, Sir, I beg leave to ask you one or two questions. Have civil governors any *certain rule* to judge by, whether men who separate from the established religion, do it out of *principle*, or out of *policy*? Whether civil governors are endowed with the extraordinary gift of *discerning* of spirits, that is, of knowing the secrets of mens hearts? If they have not, then your allowances to conscience vanish into *nothing*, and are a mere *pretence* only. For as no discrimination can be made in the present case: so if punishment be inflicted

ed on account of mens separating from the established religion, that punishment must be *general*, it must be inflicted as well on those who separate out of conscience, as on those who do it upon mere *worldly* views. And this, in the language of the patriarch *Abraham*, would be to involve both the *righteous* and the *wicked* in one common destruction, which surely must be a most *unrighteous* procedure. Thus you see, your scheme, like the host of the *Egyptians* when the sea was coming in upon them, moves *heavily*; and happy will it be for mankind if it should share in a like fate.

But supposing in any instance men should act, not only *without* the obligation of conscience, but even *against* it, if in that instance they are not injurious to society, then, What have civil governors to *do* with it? Or how came they to be *interested* in the case? Suppose a man should be convinced in his conscience, that eating *black pudding* is a *crime*, and notwithstanding eats black pudding *every day*: by this action he injures *no man*, either in his person, his character, or his fortune. The question then is, What civil governors have to do with this man? Have they a right to interest themselves in the affair of his *conscience*? No surely. For as the business of a man's conscience is what society is no way interested in, it is plain that civil governors, who are the societies *representatives*, cannot possibly have a right to meddle in that affair. In like manner, suppose a man should be convinced in his conscience, that *separating* from the estab-

blished religion is a *crime*, and notwithstanding attends divine service in a meeting-house every day, (which is carrying the point farther than your argument requires,) by this he *injures* no man, either in his person, his character, or his fortune; and therefore he cannot possibly become the *proper* object of the society's resentment, any more than the eating of *black pudding*. So that to *punish* a man for dissenting from the established religion, even tho' he dissents *against* his conscience, would be to punish him without any *just* ground.

Thus, Sir, I have also considered the *two* points, you were led to consider, in the *book* before mentioned. I now come to consider the *means* you have *found out*, and *recommended*, in order to answer the purposes aforesaid, *viz.* that such *pecuniary mulcts* or *taxes* might be laid on dissenters, as no *conscientious* man would be *unwilling* to pay; and every prudent man, having no *real* scruples, would chuse *not* to pay; and these, you say, might have their use.

Here I beg leave to ask you a plain, and a fair question. Do you think that any one *conscientious* dissenter in the kingdom is *willing*, or would *chuse* to pay any *the least* tax for his liberty in any other sense, than a man would chuse *banishment* rather than *hanging*? When *two* evils are presented, and one or other must be submitted to; then every man of common prudence, whether he be conscientious, or not, will chuse the *least*. And therefore were the conscientious dissenters to be taxed, as is proposed,

posed, they would, no doubt, chuse to pay that tax, rather than draw upon themselves a much *greater* burthen upon their *non-payment*. And that the conscientious dissenters are *willing*, and would *chuse* to be taxed for the sake of their liberty on *no other* account than that I have been considering, would plainly appear to be the case, were it to be tried. Suppose all the conscientious dissenters in the kingdom were to be consulted on this question, *viz.* whether they are willing, and would chuse to pay a tax for their liberty? I dare say, they would *all* to a *man* give their vote *against* such a taxation. The proposing therefore that *such* taxes might be laid on dissenters as [no *conscientious* man would be *unwilling* to pay,] tho' it may have the *appearance* of a *limitation* to an inattentive reader; yet in truth it leaves civil governors at *full liberty* to lay the most *heavy* and *grievous* taxations on the people, on account of their *dissent*, as aforesaid. For what tax is there *so great*, which a conscientious man, if he has common prudence, would not chuse to pay, rather than be obliged to suffer a much greater evil? However, you say, that these taxations might have their use. But of what *good* use they can be to society I cannot possibly conceive. It is true, that *too great* a share of the common burthen may be laid on *one* part of the society, in order to ease the *rest*. But, I think, this cannot, with any propriety of language, be called *good*; because it is *robbing* of one man to *enrich* another, which surely must be an *unrighteous*

eous thing: It is likewise true, that these taxations may be a means to *lessen* the number of dissenters. But then the question will return, what *good* can society receive thereby? And the answer is evident, *viz.* none at all, except the *keeping up* or *increasing* of superstition and church power (using the word church in the same sense in which you have used it, in your late writings) which this may be subservient to, may be called *good*, tho' I dare presume you are well satisfied, that superstition and church power *never* brought *good* to mankind.

Thus, Sir, I have considered the position referred to, and likewise what you have offered in your late tract with regard to it. A position which Mr. *Foster* saith is to be found in *Mahomet's Alkoran*; and this he has reminded you of again and again, for which you seem to be greatly displeas'd. Tho' for my part, I think, there is nothing in it. And as, I think, its being in the *Alkoran* should have been *below* Mr. *Foster's* notice; so I likewise think, his *notifying* it to you, had it been an *hundred* times over, should have been *below* your resentment: To be a *follower* of *Mahomet* in that which is *good* cannot be *justly* reproachful; whereas to be a *follower* of *any* master in that which is *evil*, is certainly *so*; and therefore its being, or not being of *Mahomet* is of no consequence. Had I been charg'd with maintaining a position that had been advanced by *Mahomet*, I would have *excluded* *Mahomet* out of the case, and would only have considered, whether the position *itself* was *false* and *evil*, or

true and good; and if, upon the *best enquiry*, I could make it plainly appear to me to be the *former*, then (supposing the circumstances of things had required it) I would *readily and publickly* have retracted it: But if upon *such enquiry*, it plainly appeared to me to be the *latter*, then (in like circumstances) I would as readily and *publickly* have *defended* it, even tho' it had come from the *father of lies*.

What I aim at by this *address*, is not to engage you in a controversy with myself, (I may perhaps be much below your notice,) but only, if possible, prevail upon you to *reconsider* this matter. And if upon *farther enquiry* the above-mentioned position shall plainly appear to you to be *true and good*, that then you would *publickly defend* it: But if upon such enquiry it shall plainly appear to be the *contrary*, that then you will as *publickly retract* it, and leave the *followers of Mabomet* to take the *shame* of it: I say, to take the *shame* of it, not as the *followers of Mabomet*, but as maintaining a position which is both *false and evil*. This, I think, is what you ought to do, in *justice* to your *self*, to the *truth*, and to the *common interest* of mankind; because the subject, under consideration, is not a *trifling* affair, it is not a matter of *mere speculation*, but a *practical* thing, and what mankind are apparently *interested* in. That what is here offered may be *kindly* accepted, and *carefully* attended to, is the hearty desire of,

Reverend SIR,

Yours to serve,

THO. CHUBB.

F I N I S.

Just Publish'd, Printed for T. COX, at the Lamb,
under the Royal-Exchange.

FOUR Tracts, viz. 1. An Enquiry concerning the Books of the *New Testament*, Whether they were written by *Divine Inspiration*, &c. 2. Remarks on *Britannicus's* Letters, publish'd in the *London Journals* of the 4th and 11th of *April*, 1724; and re-publish'd in the *Journals* of the 5th and 12th of *April*, 1729; containing an Argument drawn from the single Fact of *Christ's* Resurrection, to prove the Divinity of his Mission. Wherein is shewn, that *Britannicus's* Argument does not answer the Purpose for which it was intended. And in which is likewise shewn, what was the great and main End that the Resurrection of *Christ* was intended to be subservient to; viz. not to prove the Divinity of his Mission, but to gather together his Disciples, to commission, and qualify, and send them forth to preach his Gospel to all Nations. 3. The Case of *Abraham* with respect to his being commanded by *God* to offer his Son *Isaac* in Sacrifice, farther considered. In Answer to Mr. *Stone's* Remarks. In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. *Stone*. 4. The Equity and Reasonableness of a future Judgment and Retribution exemplified; or, a Discourse on the Parable of the unmerciful Servant; as it is related in *Matth. xviii.* from Verse 23, to the End of the Chapter.

2. Some Observations offered to publick Consideration. Occasioned by the Opposition made to Dr. *Randle's* Election to the See of *Gloucester*. In which the Credit of the History of the *Old Testament* is particularly considered. To which are added, three Tracts, viz. 1. An Answer to Mr. *Stone's* second Remarks on the Case of *Abraham*, with Regard to his being commanded by *God* to offer up his Son *Isaac* in Sacrifice. In a second Letter to the Rev. Mr. *Stone*, M. A. and Fellow of the learned Society of *Wadham-College* in *Oxford*. 2. A Discourse on Sincerity. Wherein is shewn, that Sincerity affords just Ground for Peace and Satisfaction in a Man's own Mind, and renders his Conduct justly approvable to every other intelligent Being. Occasioned by what Dr. *Waterland* has lately written on the Subject. In a Letter to a Gentleman. 3. A Supplement to the Tract, intitled, *The Equity and Reasonableness of a future Judgment and Retribution exemplified*. In which the Doctrine of the eternal and endless Duration of Punishment to the Wicked, is more particularly and fully considered.

3. A Discourse concerning Reason, with Regard to *Religion* and *Divine Revelation*. Wherein is shewn, that *Reason* either is, or else that it ought to be, a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion. Occasioned by the Lord Bishop of *London's* second *Pastoral Letter*. To which are added, Some Reflections upon the comparative Excellency and Usefulness of moral and positive Duties. Occasioned by the Controversy that has arisen (with Respect to this Subject) upon the Publication of Dr. *Clark's* Exposition of the Church Catechism.

All by *THO. CHUBB*.

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G R O U N D a n d F O U N D A T I O N
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R E L I G I O N.

Wherein is shewn, that Religion is founded in Nature. That is, that there is a right and wrong, a true and false Religion in Nature: And that Nature or Reason affords plain, obvious, certain principles, by which a man may distinguish these, and form a proper judgment in the case; and which an honest upright man may safely and securely stay his mind upon, amidst the various and contrary opinions that prevail in the world, with regard to this subject.

To which are added,

- I. A P O S T S C R I P T, occasioned by the publication of Dr STEBBING's Visitation-Charge, that had been delivered to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of *Wilts.*
- II. A short Dissertation on *Matt. xix. 21. If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.* Occasioned by Dr STEBBING's unjust and groundless reflexion on the author, with regard to this text, in the aforesaid Charge.
- III. An Answer to a private letter, from a stranger to the author, on the subject of God's Foreknowledge.

By T H O M A S C H U B B.

L O N D O N:

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AN ENQUIRY INTO THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE PRESENT DEPRESSION OF THE TRADE

RELATIVE TO THE MANUFACTURES OF GREAT BRITAIN

By James Ogilby, Esq. of the Middle Temple, Barrister at Law. In two Volumes. The second Edition, with Additions. London, Printed by J. Baskin, in the Strand, 1705.

THE
AUTHOR
TO HIS
READERS.

SIR S, as a farther testimony of my regard to your present and future well-doing, I have published the following Enquiry ; the importance of which, I presume, will sufficiently justify my offering it to your consideration. For, what questions can be of greater, or even of equal importance to men, who believe a Deity, and who live under an expectation of a future judgment and retribution than these ;
namely,

namely, what are the true and only grounds upon which intelligent beings may reasonably hope to obtain God's favour? And, what are the true and only grounds upon which vicious men, when brought to a sense of their guilt, may reasonably hope to obtain the divine mercy? None surely. And, as these are points that are controverted, at least amongst Christians, which shews the *diversity* of mens sentiments with regard to them: So I have, in the annexed papers, shewed that there are some *plain, obvious, certain principles* in nature or *reason* relating thereto, which every honest upright man may *safely* and *securely* stay his mind upon, amidst the *confusion* and *perplexity* in which ignorant and artful men have involved the subject. And this, I trust, will be both *useful* and *acceptable* to you, as it may help to *assist* and *guide* your understandings,

standings, your affections and actions aright, and also give you quiet and peace of mind upon your so doing. But then, by this I expect to alarm the passions, and stir up the resentment of two sorts of people against me, namely, the *bigotted* and the *interested* in religion. By the bigotted, I mean those who consider themselves in the *possession of truth* antecedent to their enquiries about it; and this leads them zealously to contend for the *religious scheme* they have *imbibed*, whether it be Judaism, Mahometanism, Christianity, Popery, Protestantism, or the like; upon a presumption that they are defending truth, and opposing error thereby. By the interested in religion, I mean those who make the *profession* of religion chiefly subser- vient to their *worldly interest*; this being a sufficient ground to them to oppose every religious principle which stands in the way, or is any way

way likely to thwart their present interest, and to support and maintain any religious scheme which tends to support and maintain them. From these quarters I expect to have it roundly asserted, that the following Enquiry is designed and calculated to *promote* and *encourage Deism*, to the *prejudice* of *Revealed Religion* in general, and of *Christianity* in particular. If by Deism be meant the belief of a Deity, and the *governing* our minds and lives suitably to such a belief, (which is strictly and properly Deism) then, I readily acknowledge that *such a charge* will be *just*, viz. that the following Enquiry is designed and calculated to promote and encourage Deism. But then, how this can be done in *prejudice* to Revealed Religion in general, and to Christianity in particular, I am at a loss to discover. Christianity is (as it must needs be if it be of God) founded
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on the *eternal reason* and *truth* of *things*; and therefore, it is impossible that reasoning *justly* from *eternal truths*, (which is the case of the following Enquiry) can be prejudicial to Christianity. And that Christianity is founded on the eternal reason and truth of things, I have already shewed to be the case, by shewing what is the *True Gospel of Jesus Christ*, in a book lately published bearing that title; which book hath drawn forth many opposers, who have employed their abilities in *perplexing* and *distressing* a subject which either they do not, or will not, or cannot, understand. The *true ground* upon which intelligent beings may reasonably hope to obtain their Creator's favour, and upon which vicious beings may reasonably hope and expect to obtain the divine mercy, are as *plain* and *obvious* as any thing in nature or reason can be. But then, in the present case, men *love*, or at least

chuse darkness rather than light ; they chuse to grope in the dark rather than attend to *that light* which is given to, and kindly intended to be a *guide* to every man that cometh into the world.

The representation I have given of the Gospel of Christ, in the forementioned book, is taken from the *words and declarations of Christ himself*, and is founded upon the *whole scope and purport of his ministry*. And, as in that view of the case the Gospel of Christ appears to be grounded on *eternal reason and truth*, and stands clear of all that *absurdity and nonsense* which some of it's preachers and pretended advocates have annexed to, and blended with it : so like pure gold it will bear being *tried* by the most *curious and artful refiner*. And, though the *perverting* Christ's Gospel has been represented to be the *ground* of that *great opposition* which has been made to the forementioned
book ;

book ; yet it may well be suspected that there is *something else* at the bottom. The appendixes of *pomp*, and *wealth*, and *power*, which are annexed to the *Christian ministry*, these usually awaken the *concern* of the *Clergy*, and were these to be *separated* from that ministry, I fear the *poor Gospel* would be left to *shift for itself* for any aid it would receive from these it's defenders. I have, in the book referred to, shewed how it comes to pass that where the Gospel has been received and professed, it has not generally had it's proper and intended effect upon the minds and lives of men. And, amongst *other causes*, I have shewed the *Christian ministry* to have been *one*. And, tho' I offered nothing on that head of discourse, but what plainly appeared to have been *grounded* on *experience* and *fact* ; yet I have hereby stirred up the wrath and indignation of *many* of the *Clergy* against me,

two of which, who are my opponents, have taken upon them to be their professed vindicators. This I apprehend to have been the *principal* ground of the forementioned opposition, which as it is no more than I expected; so thereby is made good an old proverb, *touch a galled horse on the part that is galled, and it will wince.* And, here I beg leave to ask those reverend fathers, (my opponents) otherwise like his Holiness *our servants* in *Christ Jesus*; Who have been the *great corrupters* of Christianity in all ages? Who gave birth to, nourished up, and brought to perfection, that *great corruption* of Christianity called *Popery*? Have they not been those employed in the *Christian ministry*? Yes certainly. This my reverend opponents must know to be the truth of the case, if they know any thing of the matter; and if they do not, then, surely, their *ignorance* bears some proportion to their *confidence*,

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the latter of which, it must be confessed, they are blessed with a *plentiful share* of. When I represented the Christian ministry as having been *injurious* to the Gospel of Christ, I did not represent it to have been *universally*, but only *too generally* the case. There have been, I doubt not, many honest worthy good men employed in the Christian ministry, who have laboured abundantly to render the Gospel of Christ efficacious and successful upon the minds and lives of men; and this has been the case in all ages, in all countries, and perhaps amongst all sects and parties in the Christian world; but then, taking all these into the account, what proportion there has been betwixt the *Fleetwood's* and the *Sacheverell's*, betwixt those who have been *nursing fathers* and those who have been the *troublers* of our Israel, betwixt those who have *fed* and those who have *fleeced* the flock of Christ, I will leave

leave

leave to the determination of more capable judges.

One of these my opponents has been pleased to observe, (in the introductory part of his book) that what I, at several times, have offered to the world, one part is built upon another, and thus I go on to build; so that the answering *one* or *two* of my tracts answers the whole. Upon which I observe, that many of the subjects I have treated of are as *distinct* and *independent* as any subjects of moral consideration can be; and therefore, there was no place for this author's idle remark. And what *point* he proposed to *gain by it* I cannot conceive, except it was to let his readers see how very *inattentive* he could be to the subject he took upon him to examine, and that therefore, they ought not to be surprised if they found this to be the case through his whole book. However, I observe to this author, and to the

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the rest of my opponents, that I have laid down *two* or *three* principles which I have made the *ground* and *foundation* of argument ; which principles if they are *destroyed*, then, *all* that I have built upon them must *fall* with them. But if they *cannot* be destroyed, as, I think, they cannot, then, what I have built upon them *must stand* in spite of all opposition ; and that *Babel* of *confusion* which my opponents are building, must, in point of argument, fall to the ground. The principles referred to are these *three*. *First*, that there is a natural and an essential difference in things, and that one thing or action is distinct from, and really preferable to another in nature ; *Secondly*, that there is a rule of action resulting from that difference, which every moral agent ought in reason to govern his actions by ; *Thirdly*, that God makes this rule the measure of his actions, in all instances and cases
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in which it can be a rule to him. These are the *principles* I reason from, the destroying of which, destroys all that I have built upon them; whereas, if these are immovable, then, every thing justly grounded upon them must be immovable also. Here then, is a *short* and *plain* way of answering me, though it is such a way as my opponents will not be prevailed upon to come into. It is but to shew that the forementioned principles are *false*, and the work is done, I am confuted. But then, every thing *short* of this, falls short of an answer to me. This is what I have observed long before now, and perhaps my repeating it here, may give an occasion to my acute and quick sighted opponent to renew his remark, *viz.* that I still go on to build one book upon another. It is no answer to me to advance doctrines barely grounded on the *figurative language* of the New Testament,

Testament, whether the New Testament was written by divine inspiration or not; because *figures of speech* are not a proper foundation to build doctrines of *importance* upon, especially when those doctrines are plainly *repugnant* to the most plain and evident principles of reason, which is the present case.

But to return to my readers. - Sirs, I beseech you to be upon your *guard*, and examine carefully and attentively whatever is offered to your consideration; because, *now*, opposition is made from all quarters to those truths that are of the utmost concern to your present and future well being. When the question was put, *Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead?* And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. There came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, *I will persuade him.* And the Lord said unto him, *Wherewith?* And he said, *I*

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will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. 1 Kings xxii. 20, 21, 22. How far this is applicable to *our times*, I shall not enquire, but only observe to you, that *Christians* are not more secure from false prophets or teachers than were the *Jews*; otherwise St *John* would not have given the following caution to them. 1 *John* iv. 1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, every prophet or teacher, but try them all whether they be of God or not; because many false prophets or teachers are gone out into the world.* I will therefore recommend to, and leave with you the wholesome and excellent advice given by St *John*, 1 *John* iii. 7. *Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.* Which is the same as if the Apostle had said, beware that you be not deceived in an affair of such importance; for he that *doth righteousness*, and *he only*, is righteous in

in *God's account*, and *so far*, and *to that degree* that he is so; and not he who foolishly and vainly hopes to stand in the righteousness of another; this will not take with the righteous judge of all the earth. The *righteous Lord*, or that Lord who governs his whole conduct by the strictest rules of right and wrong, *he loveth righteousness*, or he loveth those agents who act from the same principles, and govern their minds and lives by the same righteous rules that himself does. These are the *proper objects* of love, and their being so is the *ground* or *reason* of God's love to them, and not something that is lovely in the person of another. Were God to love *one agent*, for what is personally valuable *in another*, or were he to *afflict one agent*, for what is personally displeasing *in another*, he would *forfit* his character as a righteous being; he would cease to be that *righteous Lord who loveth righteousness, and who*

*who favourably beholdeth the upright
 in heart.* It is the exercise of wis-
 dom, righteoufness, and goodness, in
 the creation and government of the
 world, which constitute the *beauti-
 ful character* of our heavenly Father;
 and it is the exercise of these, and
 these only, which constitute us his
beloved children, and which render
 us *approvable* in his sight; and
 every thing *beside* these are *false* or
counterfeit coin, as not having the
 stamp of *reason* and *truth* upon
 them. This is what I would leave
 upon your minds, as it is a matter
 of the utmost concern to you.

AN
ENQUIRY
INTO THE
GROUND and FOUNDATION
OF
RELIGION.

WHEN we behold the bold attempts, the dauntless courage, the indefatigable industry, the firm and unshaken resolution, the great attainments, the vast discoveries, the extensive knowledge, the strict fidelity, the impartial justice, the agreeable modesty, temperance, and prudence, and, as it were, the boundless generosity and benevolence, and the like, of some of our species, it gives one such a *beautiful picture* of *human nature*, as very naturally leads one to think that man was *designed for*, and *prepared* to understand the most *sublime* and *useful truths*, to undertake and execute the *best* and *most noble designs*, and to be governed by the *most perfect rule of action*. But alas! when we see this affair in another light, that is, when we behold the great indolence and

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ſloth, the conſummate impudence and confidence, the groſs ignorance and ſtupidity, the great fickleneſs and inſtancy, the amazing timorouſneſs and fearfulneſs, the moſt abominable rudeneſs, intemperance and debauchery, the moſt vile diſſimulation and falſhood, the terrible cruelty and barbarity, the great niggardlineſs and avarice, and other like exceſſes, and extravagancies of others of our ſpecies, it gives one ſuch a *diſagreeable view* of *human nature*, as almoſt tempts one to think that man was *deſigned*, and *conſtituted* to answer the *loweſt*, and *worſt* of *purpoſes*. And beſides theſe, there are a multitude of intermediate characters, if I may ſo ſpeak, which, with theſe, make up the whole of mankind. From whence then is this *great variety*, this *contrariety* of *characters*, which makes it look as if out of the ſame fountain proceeded waters both bitter and ſweet. This, ſurely, muſt be worth our enquiry. I ſhall not take upon me to give a full and complete account of this matter, but only, by way of eſſay, hint at *ſome* of the *grounds* and *cauſes* of this great variety, this contrariety of characters which take place in, and amongſt mankind.

The *firſt* and *primary cauſe* of all this, is *man's agency*. For, as man, is, in, and by his natural conſtitution a free being, who has it in his power, and it is left to his option whether he will rightly uſe, neglect, or abuſe the various abilities he is endowed with, and the various external things that are provided for

for his use; and, as men have in fact more or less rightly used, neglected, or abused their own abilities, and those external things that have come within their power; and thereby have rightly used, or abused their natural liberty: so *from hence has followed*, by a natural and unavoidable consequence, that *great variety*, and *contrariety* of *characters* as aforesaid.

But then, tho' man's agency has been the *first* and *chief cause*, of the various and different characters which have taken place amongst mankind; yet there have been a great number of *secondary causes*, if I may so speak, which have contributed greatly thereto. Thus, the *great variety* and *contrariety* of *tempers* and *constitutions* which have taken place in and amongst men, by which one man is *more strongly* inclined to *industry* than to *indolence*, another is *more strongly* inclined to *indolence* than to *industry*; one man is *more strongly* inclined to *benevolence* than to a *vicious selfishness*, another is *more strongly* inclined to a *vicious selfishness* than to *benevolence*, and the like: These have contributed greatly towards the forming mens characters as aforesaid.

This, I think, has been, most apparently, the case in fact. For, tho' it may well be supposed that the *original pair* were *rightly constituted*; that is, that their constitutions were so poised or ballanced as that one part had not the ascendant over another, excepting that one part which was designed to direct and govern the whole; I say, tho' it may well

be supposed that this was the case of our *first parents*, when they came out of their *Maker's* hand; yet it could not well be expected that it would be the case, nor has it been so in fact with their posterity. The tempers and constitutions even of our *first parents* were liable to be *altered* and *changed*, by those *various* and *different circumstances* that were liable to attend them. Thus, their living in different climates, or their using too much, or too little exercise, or their eating or drinking too much, or too little, or their feeding upon improper food, of which, perhaps, for want of experience they might not have been very good judges, and the like, might have *impaired the health*, and *altered the tempers and constitutions* even of our *first parents* themselves. And, if this was, or might have been the case of the *original pair*, then, what changes, what variety and contrariety of tempers and constitutions might justly have been expected would take place in their *numberless posterity*; even such as experience and fact has shewn them to be. For, as the circumstances of mankind in general would of course be *greatly different* from that of our *first parents*; so that *difference* of circumstances would introduce that *great variety* and *contrariety* of tempers and constitutions as we see at this day. And these have contributed much towards the introducing the different and contrary characters that have and do take place in and amongst mankind. But then, these are only *second causes*, if they may be

be so called ; because, notwithstanding mens tempers and constitutions every man has it in his power, and it is left to his option, with regard to his conduct, whether he will govern his natural inclinations, or be governed by them.

I have already observed, that I do not intend to enter fully into this question, nor indeed do I think my self capable of it ; but only, by way of essay, to hint at *some* of the grounds or reasons of that great variety and contrariety of characters that take place amongst men ; and therefore, I shall take notice but of one thing more which has contributed greatly towards the forming mens characters as aforesaid, and that is *Religion*. For, as nothing has been more *different* and *contrary* than mens *religion* ; so nothing has had more *different* and *contrary influence* upon mens *affections* and *actions*.

The word Religion is sometimes used in a restrained sense, and signifies only those acts of *piety* and *devotion* by which men pay either their publick or their private acknowledgments to God ; and in this sense of the word Religion men are said to be more or less *religious*, as they more or less *abound* in the use of these acts of *devotion*, or as they are more or less *zealous* with regard to them. The word Religion is also sometimes used in a more extensive sense, and is made to signify *all those things* by which men, *as men*, propose to obtain the *divine favour* ; and by which men,

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as sinners, propose to obtain God's mercy and the happiness of another world. And, whether the word Religion be taken in one sense or the other, as it is *greatly different* and *contrary* with respect to the opinions of the multitude of mankind; so it has had a very *different*, and *sometimes* a *contrary influence* upon their affections and actions. Alas! religion has been of such weight in the present case, as that it has not only *over-ruled* and *controuled* the *understandings*, but also the *strongest appetites* and *passions*, and the *most tender affections* of men. It has extorted *industry* from the most *indolent*, and *cruelty* from the most *tender* and *compassionate*. It has *baffled* the *understandings* of the *most discerning*, and made *weak men mad*. It has laid waste cities, overturned kingdoms, and turned whole countries into fields of blood. It would, perhaps, be not only an entertaining, but also a useful performance were I to give my reader a clear view of the *great variety* and *contrariety* of *sentiments* and *practices* with regard to religion which now take place in the several parts of the world, and which have taken place in all the several ages of it; and likewise shew my reader what *great variety* and *contrariety* of *effects* religion has had upon the affections and actions of men, but this, it may well be supposed, is greatly above my ability to perform. All that I can do is only to remind my reader of what comes, in some measure, within his own notice and observation, and by which he
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may form some probable opinion of the case. Christians *all are*, or at least they *all profess themselves* to be *discipled* to one and the same *master*, and yet, notwithstanding, there now is, and has been, (almost ever since Christianity has had a being) *great variety* and *contrariety* of religious principles and practices amongst them; and these have had *different* and *opposite* influence upon their affections and actions. This has been so notoriously the case in fact, that it would fill a volume to enumerate the *various* and *contrary* religious sentiments that have been imbibed, and zealously contended for by Christians; the *great variety* and *contrariety* of religious practices that have prevailed amongst them; and the *various* and *contrary events* that have been occasioned by these. This, as I said before, must in some measure have come within my reader's own notice and observation, and therefore, needs no exemplification. If therefore, the *religion of Christians*, (who value themselves upon that much *greater* and *clearer light*, and much *safer guidance* vouchsafed to them, by *their religion*, than any other part of mankind partake of,) has been, and still is *so various* and *contradictory*, and if the *present happiness* and *misery* of *mankind* has been, and still is greatly affected by the *religion of Christians*, as the experience of this age, as well as many ages that are past, have abundantly shewn it to be; then, what may we expect, or rather what may we not expect from the *religions* of *all* those other parts

parts of mankind who *neither have, nor have had* the advantage of that much *greater light* and *safer guidance* to boast of? From what I have observed, I think, it plainly appears, that *religion* has had a *great hand*, (if I may so speak) in *forming* the various and different characters of men.

If then, the *religion of mankind in general* has been, and still is so *various* and *contradictory*, as in fact it has appeared, and still appears to be; and if the *religion of Christians*, (which comes more within our own notice and observation, and with respect to which Christians think they have sufficient proof that it came from God,) is so *confused* and *contradictory* as experience and fact has shewn, and still shews it to be; and if the *present happiness* and *misery* of mankind has been, and still is greatly affected by the *various* and *opposite religions* that have, and do prevail in the world, which most certainly is the truth of the case; then, from hence we are naturally, and almost unavoidably led to another enquiry, *viz.* whether *religion* has any *solid foundation in nature*; that is, whether there be in reality a *right* and *wrong*, a *true* and *false religion in nature*; and consequently, whether there be any *certain obvious principles in nature or reason* by which a man may *distinguish* these, and form a *proper judgment* in the present case, and which an honest upright man may *safely* and *securely* stay his mind upon.

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And, that this question may be thoroughly discussed, I think, it will be proper in the *first* place to suppose that Religion has *no* foundation in nature; and then enquire how the case will stand upon that supposition. By Religion's having *no* foundation in nature, I mean that in reality there is no *natural difference* in *actions* or *things*; that is, that one thing or action is not preferable to another in nature; that no action *does of itself* render the agent the proper object of the divine approbation or dislike, of the divine favour or displeasure; and consequently, that no action or thing is of itself, and in it's own nature, *religious* or *irreligious*; that man *is not*, in the nature of the thing, an *accountable creature*; and that there is *no foundation in nature* for a future judgment and retribution.

If Religion has no foundation in nature, which is the present supposition, then, it must be either a *creature of man's production*; that is, it must be founded only on the *opinions and fancies*, or on the *cunning and craftiness* of *men*; or else it must be the *creature* of some *invisible agent*, or *agents, not divine*; that is, it must have been introduced into the world by the interposition of some *invisible agent*, or *agents*, who is not, nor are they *that beings* whom we characterise by the term *God*; or else lastly, it must be founded only on the *sovereign pleasure and arbitrary will* of *God*; these being, I think, all the ways by which Religion could have been brought into being,

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supposing it to have no foundation in nature.
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First, if we consider Religion as a creature of *man's production*, and that it has no other foundation than on the *opinions* and *fancies*, or on the *cunning* and *craftiness* of men, then, that *great variety* and *contrariety* of religious sentiments and practices which have taken place in the world is not to be wondered at; because then, it might well have been expected that mens religions would be as *greatly various* and *opposite* as the different measures of their understandings, their different passions and fancies, and as their various and opposite interests should *incline* or *direct*. And tho', in this view of the case, there would be in reality no such thing as true and false Religion, because all Religions would be true and false alike; yet those Religions would have the appearance of being true or false to every man, as his opinion or fancy led him to esteem them to be either. And tho' mens religion might have been *subservient* to their present happiness or misery; yet it could not *affect* them with regard to futurity; because it must then be the same to a man with regard to God's favour and displeasure, and with regard to a man's happiness or misery in another world, whether he be of *this*, or *that religion*, or whether he be of *any*, or *no religion*. But this supposition, I think, is not admitted by the Religionists of any sect or party whatever, each party presuming that they have arguments and reasons
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proper and *sufficient* to ground their respective religious principles and practices upon; and consequently, they do not admit that their Religion is founded only on *opinion* as aforesaid. Again,

If we suppose *Religion* to be the production of some *invisible agent*, or *agents*, *not divine*, the case will not be greatly different from what it was upon the former supposition. I introduce this supposition, because it is interwoven with the schemes of most Religionists, who admit that invisible agents not divine, *have*, and *do operate* upon this globe, and *do interest themselves* in the affairs of Religion; which invisible agents are usually characterised by those terms Demons, Angels, Devils, and the like. And tho' it is not admitted that these invisible agents, or any one of them is the *founder*, or *founders* of true Religion; yet most Religionists readily admit that the *Devil*, some way or other, has had *a hand* in the *introduction* of all false Religions. And, as upon the present supposition, there is no such thing as right and wrong in nature; so it can be neither right nor wrong for invisible agents to interpose and interest themselves in human affairs; and therefore, one would think, it must be mere *wantonness* in them which must be the *ground* of such interposition. And, this accounts for that *great variety* and *contrariety* of religious principles and practices which have taken place in the world; as these may well be supposed to bear a proportion to the *number* of such, invisible

invisible agents as have been concerned, or to that *wanton fancy* they may have indulged herein. And tho', upon the present supposition as upon the former, there will be no such thing as true and false Religion; yet every man's Religion will appear true to himself, and all other Religions will appear to him to be false, according as those *arguments*, by which his judgment is directed, appear to him to be *conclusive*, or *otherwise*. And tho', upon the present supposition, a man's Religion, let it be what it will, cannot affect him with regard to God's favour and the happiness of another world; yet it may very much affect himself and others with regard to their happiness or misery in this, as it may engage him more or less to *pursue*, or *neglect* the one or the other. And,

Upon the present supposition, *a question or two* will naturally arise, *viz.* *how*, or in *what way*, invisible agents not divine can become the founders of Religion to mankind? And what *kind of evidence* they can produce to engage mens attention to, and belief of, it? As to the *first* of these questions the answer is *easy*, if we admit a supposition which is admitted into the schemes of most Religionists, *viz.* that invisible agents not divine, *can*, and *do impress various and contrary images* upon the minds of men. And, if this be admitted, then, we may easily perceive, not only that such agents have it in their power to become the *founders* of Religion to mankind; but also in *what way* they

they are capable of doing it. It is but to *impress* upon the mind of a man a *set* of religious principles, and *point out* to him a *set* of religious practices, by such impressions, and then a religion is *coined* for *that man*, and for *all* that shall be *discipled* to him. And,

As to the other question, *viz.* what kind of evidence invisible agents not divine can produce to engage mens attention to, and belief of, those religious impressions that are made upon their minds; the answer to this question will not be hard nor difficult, if we admit a supposition which is likewise usually admitted into the schemes of most Religionists, namely, that such invisible agents do not only impress various and contrary images upon the minds of men, but also that they *do otherwise operate*, or use their power, upon this globe. But before I proceed to answer this question, *two* things must be premised, *viz.* *first*, if the actions of free beings are *foreknowable in nature*, (which point is admitted by most Religionists) then, those actions *may be* foreknowable, not only to the *Deity*, but also to *some other* invisible agents not divine. For, as knowledge is communicable; so foreknowledge may be communicable also. That is, as creatures are so formed that they can attain knowledge by the exercise of *those powers* which result from their natural constitutions; so foreknowledge may be attainable in the *same way*; I say, this may be the case for any thing we know or can shew to the contrary.

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However, this is apparent that the *knowledge* and *sagacity* which results from the *constitutions* of various animals is *greatly different*, as the knowledge and sagacity of a *man* is greatly superior to that of an *ass*. And, this *may be the case* of invisible agents not divine. And therefore, tho' men may not be able certainly to discover and foreknow the actions of each other, and other events that are dependent on such actions; yet it will by no means follow from thence, that such discovery and foreknowledge cannot result from the natural constitutions of any invisible agents not divine. Again, *Secondly*, if invisible agents not divine *can*, and *do operate*, or exercise their power on this globe, (which proposition is admitted by many Religionists,) then, there is no operation on this globe, tho' ever so much above the natural ability or inherent power of man, but *may be performed* by the power of some invisible agent not divine. I say, this may be the case for any thing we know or can shew to the contrary. For, as power is communicable; so it is *equally as easy* for God to communicate one kind, or degree of power as another; at least it is so for any thing we know, and to suppose the contrary is plainly a *limitation* of God's power. Besides, there are *various kinds* and *degrees* of power, which *result* from the natural constitutions of the inhabitants of this globe, and this may likewise be the case of invisible agents not divine. And, this accounts for *Moses's contest with*, and
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victory over, the Magicians of *Egypt*. The *power* of the invisible being, or beings who assisted *Moses*, was *much greater* than the *power* of those invisible beings who assisted the Magicians; and thereby, *Moses*, in point of *miracle working*, became greatly their superior. These points being premised, I return to the question proposed, *viz.* what kind of evidence invisible agents not divine can produce to engage mens attention to, and belief of those religious impressions that are made upon their minds? And the answer to this question, (admitting the above suppositions) is short, plain, and obvious, namely, they have had, or may have had, Oracles, Prophecies, Prodigies, Miracles, &c. to answer these purposes. This is the case supposing Religion to be the *creature* of some invisible agent, or agents, not divine.

Thus I have shewn how the case will stand, whether we consider Religion as founded only on the opinions and fancies, or on the cunning and craftiness of men; or whether it has been introduced into the world by the interposition of some invisible agent, or agents, not divine. And, I fear, the case will not be much mended, if we consider it as founded only on the *absolute sovereignty* and *arbitrary will* of *God*, which is the point that comes next under consideration. Absolute sovereignty and mere will has *no rule* to act by, and has nothing but mere *capricious humour* for it's guide; and if we consider the Deity as under no other direction

direction but this, then, the affair of Religion must be a most *wild* and *extravagant* thing. Then, what is constituted *religion to-day*, may be turned into *irreligion to-morrow*; what is made to be *virtue* in one *place*, may be made to be *vice* in *another*. Then, *charity* may be made rewardable in *one people*, and *cruelty* rewardable in *another*. Then, *dissimulation* and *fraud* may be made punishable at *one time*, and *integrity* and *justice* punishable at *another*. And tho', upon this supposition *true Religion*, if the term may be admitted, *is of God*; yet every man would be under the utmost *uncertainty* what is true Religion; because he has nothing to guide him in the enquiry, nor no rule by which he can judge what Religion is of God, and what is not.

As to the *principles* and *practices* of any Religion, these can no way assist us in forming a judgment, whether any *particular Religion* be of God, or not. For, as upon the present supposition, there is no such thing as right and wrong in nature; so any one thing whatever must be as *agreeable* to capricious humour, and as *likely* to be chosen by sovereign and arbitrary will as any other thing. Upon the present supposition, truth and falsehood, mercy and cruelty, honesty and dishonesty, are upon a *level*, one being as *eligible*, and as *fit* to be *chosen* or *recommended* as another. And, as the internal characters of any Religion cannot possibly afford an *argument* in *favour* of it's divine original; so neither can they possibly afford

afford any *objection against it*; and consequently, every man must be under the utmost *uncertainty*, whether the Religion he adheres to be of God, or not. And therefore, to raise an argument either for, or against the divine original of any Religion from the perfections of the Deity, would be greatly absurd; because, upon the present supposition, there is no such thing as perfection or imperfection in nature. And,

As to any *external evidence* which may be supposed to attend any Religion, such as Prophecies, Miracles, &c. these can afford no light in the present case. I have already observed that as knowledge is communicable; so foreknowledge may be communicable also; and that as to power, it is equally as easy for God to communicate one kind or degree of power, as another; I say, this is, or may be the case for any thing we know or can shew to the contrary; and consequently, there is no *prophecy* nor *miracle* which takes place among men but *may be* produced by the operation of some invisible agent not divine. Now, if this *may be* the case, of which no one can *prove the contrary*; then, no external evidence whatever can possibly prove any Religion to be of God; because such evidence *may be* produced, not by the operation of God, but of some other invisible agent not divine. And, were we to *presume* that such evidences are of God, it would not help the case; because, upon the present supposition, God

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might, *consistent* with his own *character* as an absolute and arbitrary governour of the world, deceive us himself, as well as leave us in the hands of other deceivers. So that admitting Religion to be founded only on the arbitrary will of God, it would be the most *uncertain* and *precarious* thing in the world. And supposing we could come to a *certainty* with respect to it; yet it could afford *no solid grounds* of peace, comfort, or safety, to mankind; because *arbitrary will* may set aside all *promises* and *engagements*, and *annex* the *severest pains* and *penalties* even to the strictest duty and obedience. And

Tho', upon the present supposition, there is no such thing as right and wrong, as true and false Religion in nature; yet as a *sense* of right and wrong is so *deeply rooted* in the minds of most men that it becomes a kind of *first principle* to them; so it will *influence* their affections and actions, it will *greatly perplex* and *distress* their minds, and will lay a *foundation* for endless disputes and controversies in matters of religion.

Thus, I have taken a view of the case supposing Religion to have no foundation in nature, but to be founded only on the opinions and fancies, or on the cunning and craftiness of men; or else to be the creature of some invisible agent, or agents, not divine; or else to be founded only on the absolute sovereignty and arbitrary will of God; these being, I think, all the possible ways in, and by which religion

religion could have been introduced into the world, supposing it to have no foundation in nature. I come now to the question before mentioned, *viz.* whether *Religion* has any *solid foundation* in nature; that is, whether there be in reality a *right* and *wrong*, a *true* and *false Religion* in nature; and consequently, whether there be any *certain obvious principles* in nature or reason by which a man may *distinguish* these, and form a *proper judgment* in the present case, and which an honest upright man may *safely* and *securely* stay his mind upon.

I have already observed that the word *Religion* is sometimes used in a restrained sense, and is made to signify *all* those acts of *piety* and *devotion* by which men pay either their publick or their private acknowledgments to God. And, that the word *Religion* is also sometimes used in a more extensive sense, and is made to signify, either all those things by which men, *as men*, propose to obtain the divine favour; or else all those things by which men, *as sinners*, propose to obtain God's mercy and the happiness of another world. And according to this the enquiry is *threefold*, *viz.* *First*, whether *piety* has any *foundation* in nature, and what it is that nature *points out* to men with respect to it. *Secondly*, whether the *grounds* of mens acceptance with God is also *founded* in nature. *Thirdly* and lastly, when men by their misbehaviour have rendered themselves greatly

displeasing to the Deity; then, whether there is any thing in nature which can render them the *proper objects* of God's mercy and kindness, and consequently, will be the *ground* of the divine mercy to them.

And, that I may be both *clear* and *full* upon this question, I will *first* shew that there is a *natural* and an *essential difference* in things, and that one thing or action is really *better* or *preferable* to another in nature; *secondly*, that there is a *rule of action* resulting from that difference, which every moral agent *ought in reason* to govern his behaviour by; and *thirdly*, that God makes *this rule* the *measure* of his actions in all his dealings with his creatures. From which it will follow that *some actions* are in their *own nature* justly approvable, and *others* justly condemnable; that *some actions* render the performing agent the *suitable* and *proper object* of approbation and affection, and that *other actions* render the agent the *proper object* of dislike and resentment; that *man*, in the nature of the thing, is an *accountable* creature; and that there is in nature a *just foundation* for a future judgment and retribution. And, then, I will apply this to the point in question. And, here I shall have little else to do than to transcribe what I have already written upon the subject, that being full to my purpose.

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* First, I am to shew that there is a *natural* and an *essential* difference in things; by which I mean, *first*, that there is not an *universal sameness* in nature, but that *things* and *actions* are really *distinct* and *different* from each other. That is to say, pleasure and pain, two and four, right and wrong, kind and unkind, are not the *same thing*; but those *different terms* are used to express, and do convey to the mind *ideas* which are really *distinct* and *different* in nature. Pleasure is not the *same thing* as pain, two is not the *same* as four, right is not the *same* as wrong, kind is not the *same* as unkind, and the like. Again, when I say there is a natural and an essential difference in things, I mean *secondly*, that there is not an *universal indifference* in nature, but that *things* and *actions* are really one *better* or *preferable* to another. That is to say, pleasure is in nature, (when considered abstractedly from all other considerations,) *better* than pain; right is *better* than wrong; kind is *better* than unkind; and the like. And our discerning faculties do as naturally and as evidently perceive the *difference* betwixt these, with respect to their *preferableness* one to another, as those faculties do discern their *differing* one from another. That is, we do as naturally and as evidently perceive that pleasure *is better* than pain, as that pleasure *is not* pain; we do as naturally and evidently perceive that
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* See my Discourse intitled, *The Sufficiency of Reason in Matters of Religion farther considered.*

doing right is *better* or *preferable* to doing wrong, as we perceive that right is not the *same thing* as wrong; that to do right is *commendable* and worthy of a rational being, and therefore, ought in reason to determine his choice in it's favour; and to do wrong is *disreputable* and unworthy of a rational being, and therefore, his choice ought always in reason to be determined against it; and the like. And,

Tho' our reasoning faculty is absolutely necessary for the discovering the natural and essential difference in things, or to enable us to perceive it; yet this faculty *does not make* or *constitute* that *difference*. Things and actions are really distinct from, and one preferable to another, when considered *abstractedly from*, and *independent* of any power in us; and our discerning faculty does only enable us to *perceive*, but does not *constitute* that difference. So that the difference in things does not *result from*, nor *depend* upon, any particular constitution of the mind, but is founded in *nature*, and therefore will appear the *same* to all minds, in which a capacity of discernment resides, tho' *differently* constituted. Two and four are really *distinct* and *different* in nature, and this difference must and will appear *the same* to every mind in which a capacity of discernment resides, tho' *differently* constituted. Thus again, pleasure is *in nature* better and preferable to pain, and this difference must and will appear *the same* to every mind, (however

(however constituted) which is capable of perceiving what pleasure and pain is. The case is the same with respect to right and wrong, kind and unkind, and the like; these are not only different from, but also one preferable to another in nature; and our faculties do not constitute that difference, but only enable us to perceive it. And, as there is not an *universal sameness* in nature, but a real difference with respect to things and actions themselves; and, as there is not an *universal indifference* in nature, but a real difference with respect to the *valuableness* or *preferableness* of one thing or action to another, when they are brought into a comparison: so that difference, in all *simple* (tho' it be otherwise in complex) cases is the object of *simple perception only*, and as such those prove themselves; that is, they *appear evident* to our *preceptive faculty*, and do not admit of any other kind of proof. If it should be asked, how can it be proved that two and two are equal to four? that the whole is equal to all it's parts? that acting right is *different* from, and *preferable* to acting wrong? and the like; the answer would be, that these are self-evident propositions, that is, they appear evident to our discerning faculties, and as such they prove themselves, and do not admit of any other kind of proof. Again,

Secondly, as there is a natural and an essential difference in things; so that difference exhibits, if I may so speak, a *reason* or *rule of action* to every moral agent. That is, as
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doing right is in nature better, and therefore, preferable to doing wrong; so this difference will always be a *reason*, (resulting from the nature of things) to every moral agent, why he *should chuse* to do right, and will be a *reason* against, or why he *should not* chuse to do wrong. Again, as pleasure is in nature preferable to pain, the one being a natural good, the other a natural evil; so that difference affords a *reason* to every moral agent, to *chuse* to taste pleasure himself, and to *chuse* to communicate pleasure to others; and it likewise affords a *reason* why he should *chuse* to avoid pain himself, and *chuse* to avoid communicating pain to others, when these are considered abstractedly from all other considerations. And, as there is a reason founded in nature for acting right, and a reason against acting wrong, a reason for communicating pleasure, and a reason against communicating pain; so to act *agreeably to reason*, in doing the former is what constitutes *moral good*, and to act *against the reason* of the thing in doing the latter, is what constitutes *moral evil*; moral good and evil in every instance being nothing else but the acting *agreeably with*, or *contrary* to that *reason* or *rule of action* which is founded in, and results from the natural and essential difference in things; and all *moral obligations* are nothing else but the *reason resulting* from that difference why we should chuse to act *this way*, or *that way*, rather than *their contraries*. And, as those reasons for acting one way rather than another

another are founded in nature, that is, they result from the natural and essential difference in things; so they become a rule of action, which is equally obliging, to *all* intelligent beings capable of discerning that difference. And consequently, (in this sense of the word *oblige*,) God, as he is a *moral agent*, is in reason obliged to govern his actions by this rule. And,

As there is a reason or rule of action which is equally obliging to every moral agent; so from hence it will follow that the *reasonableness* of an action ought to determine the will of *every rational being*, to the performance of that action, even tho' there be no other motive to it, and tho' there be a *thousand* temptations to excite to the contrary. For, whilst, (when all things are taken into the case,) it is *reasonable* that an action should be performed, it is impossible that any, even the strongest temptations, (how many so ever they be,) should make it reasonable to *omit* that action; because if that were the case, then, under these circumstances, it would not be a reasonable, or at least an indifferent, but an *unreasonable* action, and as such it does not come into the present question, except we can suppose an action to be both reasonable and unreasonable or indifferent at the same time, and under the same circumstances, which is a manifest contradiction. So that to suppose some *other* motives should take place, besides the reasonableness of an action, which may be more

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than a ballance to the many, and strong temptations, with which a reasonable creature may be surrounded, in order to engage his will for the choice of that action, and without which motives, the bare reasonableness of an action would not be more than a ballance to those temptations, is exceedingly wrong; because the reasonableness of an action is *in itself*, when considered abstractedly from all other motives, more than a ballance to all temptations, for otherwise it would not be a reasonable action. — And it is a man's not following his *reason* in opposition to all temptations which renders him *justly* condemnable to *himself*, and to *every other* reasonable being, and consequently, to his *Maker* as such. And, here I beg leave to observe to my reader, that the present question is, what *ought in reason* to determine the will of a being endowed with a reasoning faculty to the performance of a reasonable action, and not what is *in fact* sufficient for that purpose. And here, I say, that the *reasonableness* of an action ought in reason to determine the will of every such being for the choice of that action, but then it depends upon the *pleasure* of each individual whether it shall, in fact, be sufficient for this purpose, or not. And, this is the case of all other motives which may be superadded, it depends upon the pleasure of each individual whether, *in fact*, those motives *shall be* to him the ground or reason of action, or not. And therefore, we see, not only the unreasonable-

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ness of an action, but all other motives that may be added to it, *viz.* the hopes and fears of this world, and the hopes and fears of the world to come, are not sufficient, in fact, to *restrain* some men from unreasonable actions.

And, as there is a reason or rule of action resulting from the natural and essential differences in things; so this rule is, in common language, called the *law of nature*. It is also called the *law of * God*, as it is *that rule* by which God governs his behaviour towards his creatures. And it is God's law as he *adopts* it and makes it his, by giving it as a rule of action to his subjects, (he being the great governor of the moral world,) all God's laws being founded upon it, and conformed to it. But it is *not* God's law as founded solely on his *will and commandment*, because it *is*, and *ought* to be a rule of action to *all intelligent beings*, whether God willed or commanded it, or not. And, this law of nature is in order of nature *above and before* all other laws, it being the ground and foundation of them; all law and government whether *human or divine* being originally founded, not in a superiority of power, but in the reason of things as aforesaid. And, as government itself is founded in the reason of things; so all *authority*, and all *laws* flowing from it ought to be directed and governed by this original and primary law of nature. It being a manifest

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absurdity

* See my Tract intitled, *A Discourse concerning Reason with regard to Religion and Divine Revelation.*

absurdity to suppose that any law-giver can in *reason* have a *right* to command what is not fit nor reasonable to be commanded, and which has not a laudable reason for it's performance, that of it's being commanded not being such. And this is manifestly the case, with respect to all laws, and all law-givers, whether *human* or *divine*. It being equally as *unreasonable* and *unfit* that God should make an unreasonable law, as that any other law-giver should act thus; seeing the reason of things is, and ought to be as much a rule of action to him, as to any other intelligent being. God indeed is our creator, and as he called us into being without our consent; so hereby he became our common parent, and the natural guardian of our happiness, and hereby he has a *right* to govern us, not by making what law he pleases, but only to rule us for our *good*, it being very *unequal* and *unreasonable* that he should exercise *any other* authority over us; seeing his calling us into being, or his being possessed with such power as we are not able to resist, does not *alter* the nature of things, by making that *fit* and *reasonable* which otherwise would not be so. And,

As this rule of action is founded in the reason of things; so our *obligation* to obedience is founded on the same principle. That is, we are in *reason* obliged to yeild obedience to this law supposing no promulged law had ever been given to mankind. Thus, the grateful
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acknowledgment of a favour received, and a grateful return for it, to proper persons, and under proper circumstances, (when, and where such returns can be made,) are duties which every intelligent being is in *reason* obliged to perform, when considered abstractedly from, and antecedent to, any promulged law of any kind. For whatever in *reason* becomes a law to intelligent beings, those beings, will for the *same reason* be obliged to yeild obedience to that law. And where there is no reason for a command, there can be no reason for our complying with it, except it be that *prudential* one of avoiding the evil, which otherwise our disobedience may bring upon us. And this is the case of all laws, whether human or divine. That is, our obligation to obedience in any case, does not arise from the thing's being commanded, but from it's being *fit* and *reasonable*, upon some account or other, when all things are taken into the case, (and when considered abstractedly from the will of the law-giver,) that we should yeild obedience to that law. For, as the reason of things is the ground and foundation of all *authority* and *government*; so it must likewise, in the nature of the thing, be the ground and foundation of all *obligations* to obedience. And,

As there is such a *rule of action* founded in the nature of things as aforesaid; so the *moral* perfections of all intelligent beings arise from, and consist in, their being *perfectly* subjected
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to this law. Thus, the *moral* perfection of the *Deity* consists in his being *absolutely* and *perfectly* subjected to this law of reason; that is, in his making the reason of things the *rule* and *measure* of his affections and actions, in all his dealings with his creatures. And, herein consists the *moral* perfection of the *human nature*, (when such perfection is attained,) *viz.* in being *perfectly subjected* both in *affections* and *actions*, to this law of reason; and every approach to it is an approach to the perfection of our nature. And, if our species were *universally* and *perfectly* subjected to this law, then there would be no use nor place for any *promulged* law of any kind; because the *use* and *end* of all promulged law and government, whether human or divine, is, (or at least ought to be,) to enforce and lead men on to *obedience* to this original and primary law of nature again.

* Thirdly, as there is a natural and an essential difference in things, and as there is a rule of action resulting from that difference which is equally obliging to every moral agent; so Almighty God makes that rule, *viz.* the reason of things, the measure of his actions; and this he does in all instances and cases in which it is capable of being a rule to him. — And, that this is a *true principle*, and a *proper foundation* for argument I prove thus. Almighty God is present to, and in, and with, all

* See my Discourse intituled, *The Sufficiency of Reason in Matters of Religion farther considered.*

all things, and thereby has the most perfect knowledge of them. And, as he most clearly discerns the natural and essential difference in things, and the reason or rule of action resulting from it in every case, and, as this is and ought to be as much a rule of action to God as to any other moral agent, and, as he is far above and thereby perfectly free from all temptations which might mislead him and draw him into a wrong choice, so this affords a *moral certainty* that he will always chuse to act right, or agreeably to that rule of action, which is founded in the reason of things as aforesaid. For, tho' we may have different, and sometimes opposite interests in view, and are surrounded with many temptations of various kinds to invite us to a wrong choice, and which too often is the ground and reason of our foolishly and wickedly acting contrary to that rule of action, which is founded in the reason of things; yet this is by no means the case with respect to God; and therefore, it cannot be a ground or reason to him to chuse to act wrong in any case whatsoever. God has not different and opposite interests in view, he has no wrong affections within to mislead, no temptations from without to intice and allure him, no pleasing prospect to invite, nor any superior power to threaten and awe him; in fine, nature does not afford a *motive* to excite him to a *wrong choice*, and therefore, we are sure that he never will act so; but on the contrary he *always will* make the
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reason of things the rule and measure of his actions.

But farther, * legislature or authority is either *natural* or *derived*, that is, it is a power or trust which either results from that *natural relation* which one intelligent being stands in to another, or others; or else it is a power *committed in trust* to some person, or persons, to make laws for the good and benefit of those who are subjected to that jurisdiction. The *former* of these is the case of *parents*, from whose *relation* to their *children* naturally arises a right, or results a trust, to make such laws for, and give such rules of action to, them, as are for their and others good, just as the circumstances and the reason of things shall require. And this is the case with respect to *God* and his *intelligent creatures*, he is their *common parent*, to whom they owe their existence in a much higher sense, than children do to their parents, and from whose *relation* to his *creatures* naturally arises a right, or results a trust, to make such laws, or lay down such rules of action, as are for the good of those to whom they are given, or for the good of the whole, just as the circumstances and the reason of things shall require. The *latter* of these is the case of those to whom legislative power is committed in trust, and these are the *Civil Magistrates*, who are intrusted with
power

* See my Answer to Mr Stone's Remarks, upon the case of *Abraham*, with regard to his being commanded by God to offer up his son *Isaac* in sacrifice.

power to make laws for the society's good, and to answer the purposes of civil association, just as the circumstances and the reason of things shall require. And,

Here it is to be observed, that natural legislature or authority is not the natural offspring of *power*, but of *paternity*. God does not become a *governor* to the intelligent and moral world by his being possessed with *Almighty power*, but by his being a *common parent* to his creatures. For, as he called them into being without their consent; so reason requires that he should take care of their *well being*, which it is the business of *government* to secure, and it is this which constitutes him our guardian or governor. God's being possessed with great and uncontrollable power enables him to play the *tyrant* over us, (were he disposed to use his power to so vile a purpose) but it does not invest him with a *right* to be our guardian or governor, that being the result of his *relation* to us. And, this is the case of *parents* with respect to their children, their *authority* over them is not the natural offspring of *power*, but it naturally arises from that *natural relation* they stand in to them. And, indeed, in a secondary and less proper sense, this is the case in *civil society*, where legislative power is lodged *in trust*. For, as in such societies every one is by nature upon an *equality*, (there being not any one who has a natural right of dominion over his fellow-creatures,) and, as law and government are necessary to the well-

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being

being of society, seeing the end of civil association cannot be obtained nor secured without it; so this makes it necessary and reasonable that legislative and governing power should be lodged *in trust*, in the hands of some person, or persons, to be exercised for the society's welfare; and the persons with whom this trust is lodged are by this constituted, not the natural, but the *step-parents* of the people, and guardians of their happiness; and by this they are invested with a *right*, not natural, but derived, a right *derived* from the *people* to make such laws as are for the society's good, and to answer the purposes of civil association. And,

As legislature itself is founded in *reason*; so the reason of things is the *rule* and *measure* of it. That is, those upon whom legislative power naturally devolves, or to whom it is committed in trust by others, are not at liberty to make what laws they please, but they are directed, limited, and bounded in the exercise of that power, by the grounds and reasons, and by the ends and purposes upon which legislature itself is founded, *viz.* the publick or general good of those who are subjected to their jurisdiction: so that law, strictly speaking, or that law which is in reason obliging, is nothing more than that rule of action exemplified, which is founded in the reason of things; and *duty* is not the *effect* or *result*, but it is the *foundation* of law. That is, an action does not become our duty because it is commanded;

manded; but it is commanded because it was our duty antecedent to the command. And consequently, a thing or action does not become fit, or unfit, by it's being commanded, or forbidden; but it is commanded, or forbidden because it was fit, or unfit, when considered abstractedly from, and antecedent to the promulgation of that law; and which antecedent fitness, or unfitness, was the *ground* and *reason* of such law. This, I say, is, or at least, ought always to be the case. It is true, the word *law*, in it's common acceptation, signifies the *will* of a *superior*: but then, this supposes that the will of the superior is not *lawless* will, (if I may so speak,) or a will which is exerted without rule, or reason, but a will which is directed by reason, a will which commands nothing to be done, but what was fit should be done, antecedent to the command, and which prohibits nothing but what was fit should be avoided, antecedent to the prohibition: I say, this is supposed to be the *will* of the *superior* or *law-giver*, for otherwise *legislature* would be an *unnatural* and a *monstrous* thing. And,

When legislative power is *rightly employed*, in making *laws* to answer the *true ends* of government; then, it is in *itself* right; and then, it constitutes a *legal* or *just* authority. But when it is employed to answer *other* and *contrary* purposes, then, it is in *itself* wrong, and then, it degenerates into *tyranny*. When legislative power is employed in making *bad*

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laws, or laws which will serve a bad purpose; this is manifestly *wrong*, and therefore, it cannot be deemed just authority, but properly comes under the denomination of tyranny. Or when it is employed *idlely* and *triflingly*, by commanding or forbidding actions which are perfectly *indifferent*, and which serve only to exemplify the commanding power of the law-giver, and to extort submission from the subject; this is plainly a *prostitution* of legislative power; this is what the ends of law and government will not excuse or justify; and therefore, this cannot justly be deemed legal authority, but properly comes under the denomination of *tyranny*, tho' in a much lower, and in a much less hurtful degree than in the former case. The case is the same whether legislative power be considered as lodged in a *human* or in the *divine* hand; it being equally as *unfit* that God should act *wrong* in his legislative capacity, as it is that any of his creatures should do so. There is indeed this difference, if God should *misapply* his legislative power, he is *above controul* or *correction*; whereas if men *abuse* their trust, they are liable to be *controuled* in, and be *punished* for that abuse.

I am sensible, it is commonly urged in this case, that God, as he is the great governor of the universe, has a *right*, or it is *fit* that he should, in *some instances*, command for commanding sake, that thereby he might make *tryal* of our obedience. But alas! our obedience

is *sufficiently tryed* by the many and strong *temptations* with which we are surrounded on every side, without this expedient; and therefore, this expedient is not necessary to answer that end. Besides, this expedient cannot answer any *good* purpose to us, but may answer *many bad* ones. It cannot raise in us a just and worthy sense of God, but may raise in us a mean and unworthy sense of him; *viz.* as one who acts the part of an arbitrary and a tyrannical governor. It cannot excite in us the affection of love to God, but may excite in us a slavish fear and dread of him. It cannot increase our virtue, but may greatly increase our guilt, if our disobedience is to be considered as such. And supposing we yield obedience to such commands, that obedience, to say the most, would be only yielding to the humour and unreasonable will of a law-giver, whom it would be wrong to *contend with*, or *disoblige*. And obedience, surely, in such cases, cannot render a person equally valuable with him who obeys a *moral law* from a much *nobler* principle. And, to admit the supposition that the Deity would go so far out of his way, (if I may so speak,) and would act so contrary to his general character as a wise and good governor, by commanding as aforesaid, is, (I think,) little less than blasphemy, as it is blasting the *moral* character of the great governor of the universe. But then, it is to be remembered, that when I say God *will not* act arbitrarily, my meaning is that he *will not* act
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thus when the reason of things *can* be a rule of action to him, and as to all other instances and cases he must act arbitrarily if he acts at all; and therefore, he may and will act thus when the reason of the thing requires that he should. As thus, supposing a *common* or *general good* to have been the *end* of creation to the Deity when he called the *solar system* into being; then, there was a *reason* resulting from the nature of things why God should create the solar system rather than let it have remained in a state of non-existence. And, supposing it to have been perfectly *indifferent* whether the solar system were placed in *that particular* part of space in which it now exists, or in *some other* part of space; then, as there was a *reason* for the Deity to *act* in calling the solar system into being, so there was likewise a *reason* that he should *act arbitrarily*, in appointing the particular part of space it should exist in; because without the *latter*, he could not have performed the *former*. And, this reason will hold good in all parallel cases, whether the Deity be considered as acting the part of a *Creator*, or a *Governor*, or of a kind *Physician* to his creatures; supposing such cases can take place when God acts in either of these capacities.

As to *divine* or *positive institutions*, (as they are commonly called;) if God gives any of these, he is to be considered as acting the part, not of a *governor* or *legislator*, but of a *Physician* to his creatures. And these institutions

institutions are to be considered, not as *laws* or *rules of action*, but as kind *prescriptions* to mankind; because this is *more properly* and *truly* the state of the case. Man, is not only *weak*, and *infirm* with regard to his *body*, but also with regard to his *mind*; and *divine institutions* are intended to answer the same purpose to the *mind*, as *food* and *physick* does to the *body*. The mind of man is liable to be *over-acted*, (if I may so speak,) and thereby rendered weak and infirm various ways. The business, the cares, the troubles, the pleasures of life, and the like, are apt to engross the *thoughts* and *captivate* the *minds* of men, and render them *weak* and *infirm*; by which means man becomes *less able* to act a worthy and a manly part, and to stand out with firmness and resolution against the many and strong temptations with which he is surrounded. And this makes it necessary that the mind of man, should be *sometimes taken off* from these, and *turned* to subjects of a more serious nature; by which the mind is *recruited*, and *renews* it's strength. And this is the purpose that divine institutions are intended to serve, *viz.* to take off mens minds, for a time, from the business, the cares, the troubles, and pleasures of life; to awaken in them a just and worthy sense of God, to draw forth their minds in suitable affections towards him; to excite in them a proper sense of the great end and business of life, to lead them to examine how far that end has been answered by them, and

and wherein they have been defective, to point out to them how they ought to behave in time to come, and the like. These are the *purposes* that *divine institutions* are intended to serve; and thus they become both *food* and *physick* to the *mind* of man. But then, in *divine institutions* there can be nothing *dark* or *mysterious*, because by such a conduct God would *disappoint* the very end he proposes to obtain by them; *viz.* the strengthening and recruiting the mind of man. *Mysteries* in a prescription for the *mind* would answer the same end as *powder of post*, when called by a name that is not understood, would do in a prescription for the *body*, supposing powder of post to have no physical quality in it; that is, it would serve only to *amuse* and *mislead* the patient, which surely can never be the case with respect to God, in his prescriptions (as a spiritual Physician) to mankind. *Darkness* and *mysteries* are proper expedients to carry on and support *base* and *unworthy* designs; but God has *no such* designs to execute; and therefore, we may be assured that he has nothing to do with darkness and mysteries in any of his prescriptions to mankind. It is true that *nature* is full of *mysteries*, and yet nature is of *God*; and the reason of this is evident, *viz.* because our understandings are *too weak* to discover all the secrets and powers in nature. The mysteries in nature must of course bear a *proportion* to that measure of understanding which every creature possesses for the contemplation
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of it. If the understanding is *weak*, nature is *more mysterious*: if it is *strong*, nature is *less mysterious*. But then, what has this to do with *divine prescriptions*, which in the very nature of the thing ought to be *plain* and *clear*? Is it to be supposed that God will be *darkness*, where the reason of the thing requires he should be *all light*? Will God deal with his creatures in *darkness* and *mystery*, when the nature of the thing requires that he should deal with them in *plainness* and *truth*? No surely. God has no end to answer to himself by any prescription he may give to mankind; and, as such prescriptions are intended for *our good only*; so the nature of the thing requires that they should be delivered in the *plainest* and *clearest* manner. And therefore, if any prescriptions are at any time delivered to mankind that are dark and mysterious *in whole*, or *in part*, this, I think, proves to a demonstration that such prescriptions *are not* divine. If it should be said that prescriptions for the *body* are generally dark and mysterious to the patient, and yet have their *proper influence* notwithstanding; and therefore, why may not prescriptions for the *mind* be dark and mysterious to the patient and have their *proper influence also*? Answer, the prescriptions for the *body* are *physical*, and as such have a *physical influence* upon the body; whereas prescriptions for the *mind* are *moral*, and as such have a *moral influence* upon the mind. And therefore, tho' physical prescriptions for the body

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that are mysterious to the patient may have their proper influence upon the body, because they operate *independent* of the *understanding* and *will* of the patient; yet with moral prescriptions the case is otherwise, because if such prescriptions operate at all, it must be in the *use* and *exercise* of the *understanding* and *will*; and whereas whatever is dark and mysterious in such prescriptions *cannot affect* or operate upon the understanding and will, from hence it will follow that such prescriptions *cannot* influence the mind at all; and therefore, are *vain* and *useless*. I have here pursued the above similitude, because I think it justly exposes and ridicules all darkness and mystery in religion, which, I think, can answer no good purpose, and which serve to perplex and mislead weak minds.

To conclude this point I observe, that the *earthly* governors may *wantonly use*, or *wickedly abuse* their power; yet this is by no means the case of the *great governor* of the intelligent and moral world. God will not *needlessly* command for commanding sake, and thereby unkindly *increase* the burthen of his creatures duty, and likewise *increase* their guilt upon the breach of such *superfluous* laws. I say, we may be well assured that God will never act thus, because such a conduct is directly contrary to *true goodness*, and therefore, can never be the truth of the case. Alas! some persons are apt to measure the ways of God, by what they see take place amongst weak, vain, and wicked

wicked men. The princes and potentates of the earth are apt to exercise an arbitrary and a despotick power over their subjects, to manage their people with craft and mystery, and to pride themselves in the huzzas and acclamations of the multitude; and this is the very *picture* which some Religionists draw of their Maker.

And, as there is a natural and an essential difference in things, and a rule of action resulting from that difference, which every moral agent ought in reason to govern his behaviour by, and, as God will most certainly govern his actions by this rule; so from hence it will follow that some actions are *in themselves* justly approvable, and others justly condemnable, when considered *abstractedly* from any *promulged law*; that some actions render the agent the *proper object* of approbation and affection, and other actions render the agent the *proper object* of dislike and resentment to every other intelligent being, and therefore, to our Maker as such; consequently, *some actions are in themselves religious, others irreligious*, when considered in the abstract nature and reason of things; that man is *by nature* an accountable creature; and that there is *in nature* a just foundation for a future judgment and retribution. These, I think, follow by a natural and necessary consequence from the principles before laid down. If *happiness* is *in nature* better than *misery*, then the *communication* of happiness is *in nature* better or preferable to

the *communication* of misery, the former is justly approvable, and the latter is justly condemnablen to every other intelligent being, and consequently, to our Maker as such. To render that to another which is the *proper object* of every one's approbation and liking, is, *in the nature of the thing*, commendable and praise worthy; to render that to another which is the *proper object* of every one's aversion and shunning, is, *in the nature of the thing*, disreputable and justly condemnablen; and this is the case when considered abstractedly from, and independent of, any promulged law. Again, if the communicating of happiness is *in nature* justly approvable, and if the communicating of misery is *in the nature of the thing* justly condemnablen, and if there is a *reason* resulting from the *nature of things* for the communication of the former, and a *reason against* the communicating of the latter; then the communication of the *former* renders the agent the *proper object* of approbation and affection, and the communication of the *latter* renders the agent the *proper object* of dislike and resentment to every other intelligent being, and therefore, to the Deity as such; consequently, some actions are *in themselves religious*, others are *irreligious*; that is, some actions render the agent pleasing, others displeasing to God, when considered in the abstract nature and reason of things. * As the
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* See my Discourse intituled, *The Sufficiency of Reason in Matters of Religion farther considered.*

reasonableness of an action ought to determine the will of every *rational* being for the choice of that action, supposing no other motive be superadded, and supposing many temptations invite to the contrary; so upon this the *equity* and *certainty* of a future judgment is founded, and not upon any divine revelation concerning it. For, as there is a natural and an essential difference in things, and a rule of action resulting from that difference, which every moral agent is in reason obliged to govern his actions by, and as there is planted in man a capacity or power which enables him to discern that difference, and as it is left to his choice to act either agreeably with or repugnant to reason, and thereby to be either a benefactor or a plague to the intelligent world: so from hence arises the *equity* and *reasonableness* of God's calling such creatures to an account, (when they have finished their course in this world,) and rewarding the virtuous, and punishing the vicious parts of our species, according as they have rendered themselves the suitable and proper objects of either.

* Happiness is the end of being to intelligent beings; whoever therefore freely and generously contributes to the happiness of others, by this he becomes a *benefactor* to the intelligent world, and by this the intelligent world becomes in reason obliged gratefully and generously

* See my Discourse intitled, *The Equity and Reasonableness of a Future Judgment and Retribution exemplified; or a Discourse on the Parable of the unmerciful Servant.*

generously to *return the kindness*, by contributing to the increase of their benefactor's felicity, when power and opportunity serve, which contribution is properly called *reward*. And, as happiness is the end of being to intelligent beings; so whoever viciously opposes and endeavours to frustrate and disappoint the general end of being, by barring the happiness, and contributing to the misery of others, such an one is an *enemy* to the intelligent world; and by this the intelligent world becomes in reason obliged, (except his repentance and reformation has rendered him the proper object of mercy,) to *return the evil* upon his head, by contributing to his misery, in proportion to the viciousness of his actions, which contribution is properly called *punishment*. So that rewards and punishments when *justly distributed* are founded, not in passion or affection, but the reason of things. And therefore, when punishment is justly inflicted upon a proper object, this is not punishing for punishment sake, nor is it the effect of mere resentment; but it is punishing upon just grounds, and when the reason of things requires it; neither is it contrary to, but perfectly consistent with, true goodness, yea it results from it. For, a being who has the greatest concern and regard for a general good, has, in consequence thereof, the greatest dislike of, and a just indignation against, those who oppose it. This is the state of the case independent of any promulged

mulged law; and when considered in the abstract nature and reason of things.

As the three points I have been explaining and proving, are (I think) the *ground* and *foundation* of argument, in *all questions* of moral consideration; so I have quoted at large what I have before written upon the subject, that hereby my reader may at once have a full view of the case, without having recourse to those writings; and that he may see those objections *obviated*, which may lay against it. These things being premised, I am now to apply them to the point in question, and accordingly I am to enquire *first*, whether *Religion*, when the term is used to express *piety*, has any foundation in *nature*, and what it is that nature *points out* to men with respect to it. And here I observe, that tho' those words piety, devotion, worship, &c. which I here use as synonymous terms, are usually applied to the *outward actions* of men, such as bowing the body, vocal prayer, and the like, yet these outward actions are not the thing itself, but only *visible marks* and *tokens* of it. And in this case the sign is, by a figure of speech, put for the thing signified, and is therefore called by the same name. True piety consists in a *just and worthy sense of God*, impressed upon the mind of man, which impression excites in him the affection of love, or joy, or hope, or desire, or the like, and which sense of the Deity affecting the mind of man as aforesaid is, or may be, expressed or made visible, if I may

may so speak, by such outward actions or words as are made the signs and tokens of it; and in the use of these that *sense*, and those *affections* may be *hightened* and *increased*.

I say *true piety*, devotion, &c. consists in *such a just and worthy sense* of God as is suitable to his *natural* and his *moral* perfections. For, were we to conceive of God as a *hard* and *severe master*, as one who lays burthens upon his servants that are *great* and *grievous to be born*, who requires *brick* where he gives *no straw*, reaps where he has not sown, gathers where he has not strowed, and watches for the halting of his servants that he might take occasion from it greatly to punish them: or were we to conceive of the Deity as an *arbitrary* and *tyrannical governor*, who acts *unreasonably* in his legislative capacity, by commanding for commanding sake, and thereby *extorting* such obedience from his subjects as no ways answers the end of government to them: or were we to conceive of God as an *unkind* and *cruel parent* of mankind, who *takes pleasure* in their unhappiness and misery: and were we to be affected *suitably*: this would be so far from being *true piety*, that it would be just the reverse, *viz.* it would be the height of *impiety* and *profaneness*.

Again, I say, that *true piety* is in the *mind*, tho' it may be made visible as aforesaid. And, agreeably to this, the *founder* of our (*viz.* the *Christian*) Sect, hath justly observed, that God, in distinction from, and in opposition to, body
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or matter, is a *spirit* or *mind*; and therefore, whoever will worship God *truly* and *acceptably*, and according to his *nature*, must worship him *in spirit* or *mind*, that being the only *true* or *real* worship; because *bodily* worship when *separated* from such a sense of the Deity as is usually intended to be set forth by it, is no other than a meer *fiction* or *lye*. And, as all acts of *outward* worship are nothing more than *visible marks* and *tokens* of that inward piety which takes place in the mind, and when they are separated from that sense of the Deity are mere emptiness or nothing; so those outward marks are, in some cases, *merely arbitrary*; that is, they are not natural marks of that respect which is intended to be set forth by them, but are *made* tokens of respect by the *fashion* and *custom* of the world, and as such are liable to be *altered* and *changed*. Thus, amongst our selves, custom has made *bowing the body* to be a mark of respect for *one sex*, and *bowing the knee* to be a mark of respect for *the other*. And, as each sex perform *different* actions when they pay their respect to their *neighbours*; so they use those *different actions* as *marks* of their respect to *God*. And indeed, *custom* must, in some measure, be our *guide* in this affair; because it would be very preposterous for a man to put off his *hat* as a *mark* of respect to his *neighbour*, and to put off his *shoe* as a *token* of his respect to *God*; seeing the latter action would not have the appearance of being a mark of respect, when, and where custom had

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constituted the former. But then, tho' the visible marks of respect are, in some cases, at least, merely arbitrary; yet, I think, no action can, with any *propriety*, be constituted a mark of respect that is in itself apparently a mark of the contrary. That is, no action can be made a mark of *goodness* that is in itself a *bad action*; nor can an act of *cruelty* be made a token of *pity* and *kindness*, because the action itself bespeaks the contrary; or, at least, such a conduct would be greatly preposterous. And therefore, were a man to *cut* and *wound* his body till the blood gushed out, as the *Priests* of *Baal* did, and do other such like actions, and were he to use these actions as *tokens* of that *sense of God* which he has upon his mind; those actions, I think, could not convey to the beholders a *just* and *worthy sense of God*, because the actions themselves plainly bespeak the contrary; namely, they bespeak the being, who is applied to in this way, to be *pleased* with *blood* and *slaughter*; which, surely, would not be a just and worthy, but a false and unworthy, representation of the Deity, were he to be applied to in such a manner. And,

As true piety consists in our having a just and worthy sense of God impressed upon our minds, and in our being suitably affected therewith; so it is founded in *nature*, God is not only compleatly perfect in himself, but he is also the *fountain* of *being*, and of *all good* to us; and, as such, the nature of the thing requires, or it is *just* and *reasonable*, that we

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should frequently and upon all proper occasions awaken in our selves a just and worthy sense of God, and be suitably affected therewith. This, I say, is a *suitable* and *proper behaviour* for such dependent beings as we are, towards their great and kind Creator, from whom we have received our being, and by whose providence we are continually upheld and preserved. It is likewise *fit* and *reasonable* with regard to the *purpose* it is subservient to, as it naturally tends to excite and engage our *imitation* of the Deity, and thereby to render our selves *approvable* in his sight. Moreover, *perfection* is, in the nature of the thing, preferable to *imperfection*, and, as such, it is the *proper object* of our choice, and this makes it *reasonable* or *our duty* to make use of those means that are proper to lead us thereto, of which means, I think, it must be allowed that *true piety* is the principal. When we entertain our minds with a just sense of the wisdom and goodness of God, and how that wisdom and goodness has been exemplified in promoting our own and the common tranquillity; and when we are suitably affected therewith; this is, not only acting *properly* towards the *Deity*, but it also tends to excite our *imitation* of him, and therefore, it must be our *duty* or it is *reasonable* that we should be frequent in such exercises. - Again, when we reflect seriously upon the *rectitude* of the divine nature, *viz.* that God's affections and actions are always *most pure*, as they are perfectly conformable to that rule of action that is founded in the *reason of things*;

things; and when we likewise view our selves as it were in a glass, and see how greatly we have *departed* from this rule, and when we are *suitably affected* therewith; this naturally tends to *humble us* in our own sight, to engage us to be *watchful* of our *behaviour* for the time to come, and to endeavour to render our selves the *proper objects* of God's mercy. And as this is our case; so our present circumstances *require* or make it *reasonable* that we should be frequent in such exercises.

If it should be said, that *prayer*, in this view of the case, is a *needless* performance, because *meditation* and *reflexion* may answer the end without it. Answer, admitting that *one* branch of piety, by a constant and proper application, may be *sufficient* to answer the forementioned purpose; yet, I think, that will not be a sufficient ground for *discouraging* or *laying aside* the use of the rest, when, perhaps, the use of *all* may scarce be sufficient to *call in*, and *retain*, our attention, and *engage* our affections and imitation as aforesaid.

If it should be asked, that if true piety consists in having a just and worthy sense of God impressed upon the *mind*, and the being *suitably affected* therewith, and if St Paul's remark be *just*, viz. that *bodily* exercise profiteth little, and if our *Saviour's* doctrine be *true*, viz. that God is a *spirit*, and they that worship him (truly and acceptably) must worship him in *spirit* and in *truth*, for the Father seeketh such to worship him, then, to *what purpose* can
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bodily or *external* worship serve? Answer, *bodily* worship is intended to be subservient to that worship which is *spiritual* or in the mind. For, tho' *eating* a bit of *bread*, and *drinking* a sip of *wine*, cannot possibly increase the divine knowledge of us, by informing God of something concerning us, which before he was ignorant of; nor can it increase God's kindness and good-will towards us, by disposing him to do that for us, which before he was not inclined to do; yet those actions may *lead us into*, and *stir up in others*, a just and suitable sense of what they were intended to be the outward tokens and memorials of, and thereby give occasion to our selves and others to be *suitably affected* therewith, and to *act accordingly*; and when this is the case, then those outward actions become subservient to *true piety*, and answer the end they are capable of serving, and which they are intended to serve. And this, I think, is the design of all *external worship*, and all *positive institutions*, viz. to be subservient to *inward piety*, and thereby to produce in us suitable affections and actions. For, to suppose in this case, that *mere obedience* to a positive law or rather institution, considered simply as such, will render us *pleasing to God*, is, I think, a most gross *misrepresentation* of the Deity; because it supposes God will *prostitute* his legislative power to answer so *needless* a purpose as to obtain *mere obedience* from his creatures thereby; such a conduct may indeed be suitable to the wantonness, pride, and vanity of
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some *human legislators* ; but it cannot comport with the justice, wisdom, and goodness of the *great governor* of the universe ; and therefore, cannot be the truth of the case.

But farther, if outward or bodily worship is only a sign or token of that piety which takes place in the mind, and if those tokens are not, in many cases, natural marks of respect, but are arbitrarily constituted to be such by the fashion and custom of the world ; then, why may not *God* interpose and appoint those outward signs of inward piety if he pleases ? Answer, *God* may do so if he please, for any thing I know, or for any reason I can give to the contrary, if the circumstances of things render such an interposition *proper* and *useful* to man. But if the circumstances of things do not require such an interposition ; then, as it would be *useless*, so it is not likely to be the case, because it is not to be expected that *God* will thus interpose to answer no good purpose to mankind. By the circumstances of things I mean, when the fashion of the world has constituted such actions to be marks of inward piety as are in themselves natural marks of the contrary ; that is, when those actions naturally tend to raise in the mind of the actor and the spectators, not a just and worthy sense of *God*, but a false and unworthy sense of him, and in that respect are rather marks of impiety than piety : I say, when this is the case ; then, as there is a *reason* resulting from the *circumstances* of things for such an interposition, *viz.*
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the *reforming* the forementioned abuse; so God may, if he please, kindly interpose and appoint what actions shall be the tokens of inward piety, to answer that purpose. But then, where those circumstances are wanting, it is not likely that he will do so.

From what I have observed, I think it appears, that *Religion* (when the term is used to express *devotion, worship, &c.*) is *founded in nature or reason*; and from thence likewise appears what it is that *nature* points out to men with respect to it. Here is likewise a *plain-rule* by which a man may *judge* of himself whether he be truly religious, or not; or, in other words, whether he be truly pious, or not. If a man, upon all proper occasions, awakens in himself a just and worthy *sense* of God, and if he is *suitably* affected therewith, and if he, when the circumstances of things require it, *expresses* that inward sense by such *outward acts* as are not improper in themselves, and which the fashion and custom of the world or which God has constituted to be the signs and tokens of it; then, he may very justly conclude of himself that he is a *truly religious* or *pious man*. But, if a man lives as it were *without God* in the world, that is, if God is *not at all* in his thoughts, or if he from necessity is *forced* to think of God, (which will sometimes be the case, as when the circumstances of things will make the sense of a Deity present to a man's mind) or if he should *voluntarily* think of God, but is *not* suitably affected therewith; then,

then, he *cannot*, with any propriety, consider himself as a religious or pious man, even tho' he should frequently use those actions that are made to be the outward signs and tokens of it; because he is *wanting* in that wherein *true piety* consists. This is the state of the case independent of any revelation or promulged law; and when considered in the abstract nature and reason of things.

I now proceed to enquire *secondly*, whether Religion (when the term is used to express that which is the *ground* of our *acceptance* with God) is likewise founded in *nature*. And here the way seems *plain* and *obvious*. For, if there be a natural and an essential difference in things, and if one thing or action be really better or preferable to another in nature, and if there is a rule of action resulting from that difference which every moral agent ought in reason to govern his actions by, and if Almighty God makes this rule the measure of his actions in his dealings with his creatures, in all instances and cases in which it can be a rule to him, which are mostly *self-evident* truths; then from hence it will unavoidably follow, that whoever makes *this rule* the *measure* of his affections and actions, must, *by this*, render himself *approvable* and *acceptable* to God, as he *hereby* renders himself the *suitable* and *proper* object of God's approbation and affection. And whoever viciously and wickedly *greatly departs* from this rule, and *persists* in it, such an one must be *unacceptable* and *disapprovable*

to his Maker, as he *hereby* renders himself the *suitable* and *proper* object of the divine dislike and resentment. This, I say, is most apparently the true state of the case. For, as God is the *most perfect* intelligence, if I may so speak; so he must, if he acts *consistent with himself*, approve of *every intelligent* being who acts *conformable* to that principle of intelligence that is planted in him; and God must likewise *disapprove* of *every intelligent* being who acts *greatly contrary* to that intelligent principle. And therefore, when a man acts such a part in life as in reason he ought, he will of course be accepted and approved of God, it being morally impossible that it should be otherwise. When a man makes the *law of nature* the rule and measure of his affections and actions, he then acts that very part in life which his Creator designed he should act, and hereby he *answers* the end and purpose of his creation; and therefore, we may with as much justness and propriety doubt of the existence of a God, as doubt whether such a being will be acceptable to him. And, on the other side, if a man's conduct is the *reverse* of this, then, we are assured, from the reason of the thing, that *such a man* will be *reprobated* or *disapproved* by his Maker. This is the state of the case, independent of any promulged law, and when considered in the abstract nature and reason of things.

I am sensible, God may, if he please, give revelation to mankind. That is, it is no way repugnant to our natural notions of a Deity to

suppose, that God may kindly interpose and give a revelation, when the circumstances of things render such an interposition *expedient* and *useful* to men. And this was plainly the case of the *Christian Revelation*. Men were *greatly sunk* in their understandings, and *greatly debauched* in their affections and actions; and this rendered the *Christian Revelation* *greatly expedient*, and *greatly useful* to mankind. But then, the expedient of this arose, not from any *defect* in the natural constitution of things, so as that man could not have done without it, supposing him to have used those abilities and advantages that nature has furnished him with; I say, that the *expedience* of a revelation does not arise from any such *imperfection* in the natural constitution of things, but only from a *general corruption* as aforesaid. Besides, a *plain rule* of action laid down, is what the bulk of the people can have *easy* access to, and be *guided* by, without *reasoning* upon every fact they happen to be concerned with, and this renders a promulged law of *farther use* to mankind. Tho' indeed, all revelation and promulged laws have their *disadvantages* attending them also; *viz.* they are liable to be *corrupted*, *altered*, and *changed*, as they fall into the hands of *weak* or *artful* men, by which *great mischief* may accrue to our species. And this must, in the nature of the thing, be the case of *all revelation* in general, and has been the case of the *Christian Revelation* in particular, as experience and fact do abundantly testify. Nothing surely has been
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more *tortured*, and made to speak *different* and *opposite* things than the Christian Revelation, which has been very *fatal* in it's consequences to mankind. There has been nothing more opposite and contrary than the various *principles* and *schemes* of Christians, the adherers to which have each of them considered his principles and his scheme to be *Christianity*; and all these, tho' never so opposite, have been *grounded*, or at least pretended to be grounded on the Christian Revelation; by which means men have been led, not only into *false ways* of preserving the happiness of another world, but also groundlessly to *hate* and *persecute*, and use one another *ill* in this. So that, tho' there are *great advantages* which may attend a revelation and a promulged law; yet these have their *disadvantages* also.

But farther, Divine Revelation, so far as it comes under the denomination of a *law*, can be *no more*, nor *no other* than a publication, or republication, or an exemplification, of the original and primary law of nature. The law of nature or reason is a *perfect law*. It is a perfect law as it takes place in, and is a *proper rule* in all instances and cases, and under all possible circumstances where a law or rule of action is wanting, and as to all other cases that are in themselves *perfectly indifferent*, legislature is not concerned with them. It would be an *imperfection*, even in a *human* legislator, to command for *commanding sake*, much more in the *great governor* of the universe, who has

no vitiated affection to gratify thereby, and therefore can be under no *temptation* to act below his character. It is also a perfect law as it is a *proper rule* of action to all intelligent beings; and consequently to the *Deity* as such. It is by this law that God governs his actions, as well when he acts in his *legislative*, as in his *creating* capacity; that is, he makes the *reason of things*, and not *capricious humour* and *arbitrary pleasure*, the *measure* of his actions in both. God can, with regard to his natural liberty, and as he is above controul, act *unreasonably* both in his creating and in his legislative capacity; that is, God can create beings on purpose to make them miserable, and he can give such laws to his subjects as no way answer the ends of government to them, and which serve only to increase the burthen of his subjects duty, and enlarge their guilt upon the breach of such laws; but then we are morally certain that he *never will act thus*, because such a conduct is *wrong* in itself, and because there is nothing in nature to *excite* him to it. To say that God may act thus in order to *try* our *obedience*, is most weakly urged; because, (as I have already observed) our obedience is sufficiently tryed without God's giving us any such laws, and therefore such tryal would be both *needless* and *useless*; and because such tryal can answer no good purpose, and may answer a very bad one, *viz.* the greatly increasing of our guilt; and consequently there is a reason, resulting from the nature of things, against

against God's giving any such unnecessary and useless, or rather hurtful, laws to mankind. From what I have observed, I think, it plainly appears that divine revelation, so far as it comes under the denomination of a *law*, can be *no other*, nor *no more*, than a publication, or republication, or an exemplification, of the original and primary law of nature.

I am sensible likewise that God may, if he please, act the part of a *Physician* to his creatures, by appointing or directing them to the use of *such means* as are proper for their *spiritual health*; that is, for their improvement and establishment in piety and virtue. But then, these institutions, (as I have before observed) do not properly come under the denomination of *laws*, but rather of kind *prescriptions*, to mankind; these being instituted and intended to be, not so much considered as acts of *homage* to God, as means of *good* to us. God requires the use of these, not so much considered as acts of *obedience* to himself, as that we should become *wiser* and *better* in the use of them; or at least to preserve us in that good state in which we are. As thus, we are required or directed to eat bread and drink wine as memorials of actions that are past, in order to excite in us proper reflexions, and thereby to produce in us suitable affections and actions. Now, it is not our paying obedience to a command, by eating bread and drinking wine, and barely thinking of those things the memory of which was intended to be perpetuated

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by those actions ; but it is our performing those actions so, as to answer the end proposed by the institutor to be obtained by them, which renders the institution of use to us, and which renders us acceptable to God in the use of it. And here it is to be observed, that the institutor might if he pleased have appointed the eating flesh and drinking water, instead of appointing the eating bread and drinking wine to answer the purpose aforesaid ; and if he had done so, that purpose would have been as well answered by the former, as by the latter. But then, in this case, the institutor does not act as a *legislator*, by commanding what is in itself indifferent, but only kindly directs us to the use of a *means*, which when rightly used and applied by us, becomes subservient to the end proposed to be obtained by it, and which would have been the case of any other means ; and therefore, to urge this as an instance of God's commanding what is in itself indifferent, is, I think, exceeding weak. Where a good end is to be obtained *various ways*, and all those ways are *equally subservient* to that end ; then it must be a matter of *indifference* which of those ways is made use of to obtain it ; and were God to interpose and command, or appoint, or direct, (for whatever word is used in the present case it mattereth not, because words do not make things to be otherwise than they are in themselves,) I say, were God to appoint or direct us to pursue that end in one or other of these ways, this would be an instance

instance of his *kindness* and *good-will* towards us, as hereby he would shew himself to be concerned for our well-doing. But then, to urge this as an instance of God's acting the part of an absolute and arbitrary governor, is, I think, greatly below a man of understanding; because, in truth, there is nothing in it; seeing, it is only contending for such absolute sovereignty in the Deity, as, I presume, no man of understanding ever denied that he might exercise, when the circumstances of things rendered it proper that he should, which is the present case.

I am also sensible, that in *difficult* and *complex* cases our discerning faculty is sometimes *incapable* of distinguishing betwixt truth and error, right and wrong, and consequently is liable to *err* with respect to both. But then, this is the case as well *with* as *without* divine revelation, there not having been any divine revelation yet given to the world, which has *discharged* us of those difficulties. And, as to revelation itself, our discerning faculty is *absolutely necessary* to direct us in the *use* and *application* of it, for otherwise we are in great danger of being *missed* by it. Thus for example, in the Christian revelation, (which is allowed to be the most perfect of any revelation that has hitherto come forth under a heavenly character,) we are required to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, to take no thought for the morrow, not to resist evil and the like; which precepts were

were we not to exercise our *discerning faculty* in order to discover *when*, and *how far*, and under *what circumstances* they are to be *rules of action* to us, we should be in great danger of being *misled* by them, both to our *own*, and the *publick* hurt. So that divine revelation is only intended to *assist* and *help* our discerning faculty, and not to *supersede* it and *set it aside*. Our discerning faculty, or in other words our reason, was intended to be our *guide*, as well in *religious* matters, as in *all other* affairs; and were we to *lay it aside*, or suffer it to be *over-ruled*, we should lay ourselves open to *all delusion*. By suffering our reason to be *over-ruled*, I mean, when we *receive* that for *truth*, which appears to our discerning faculty to be *error*; that for *right*, which appears to us to be *wrong*; such a submission puts us off our *guard*, and lays us open to *all fraud* and *imposition*. As to *darkness* and *mysteries* in religion, these, as I have already observed, may answer the purposes of cunning crafty men, but they by no means comport with the wisdom and goodness of God, who has no purpose to answer to himself, by any revelation he makes to his creatures, and therefore, can only intend his creatures *good* by such revelation; which end *darkness* and *mysteries* would not *promote*, but *disappoint*. And to argue from *mysteries* in *nature*, to *mysteries* in *religion*, would be most *unsafe*; because it tends to *disarm* us of what God and nature has provided for our security, by rendering our discerning faculty *useless* in
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all enquiries about religion. For, if mysteries in religion are to be admitted, because there are mysteries in nature, then the *grossest wickedness* may be put upon us as *religious*, and we could have no *just* objection against it, seeing, in this view of the case, it is to be considered as a *mystery*, or a *religious injunction*, that we cannot see the fitness nor reasonableness of. And, tho' it appears plainly to us to be *evil*, yet that will not be a proper ground for us to *reject* it; because mysteries in religion are what our discerning faculty cannot *comprehend*, nor form any judgment about; and therefore it is not to be *made use of* with respect to them. And there is scarce any thing how vile and wicked soever it may appear to be, but something or other in nature may be found out, and be represented as *analogous* to it. That there *are*, and *will be*, mysteries in nature is most certain, because in a multitude of cases nature is *above the reach* of our discerning faculty, and in those instances it *must* and *will be* mysterious to us: but will it therefore follow that there may be mysteries in *Religion*? by no means. Religion is of *moral* consideration, and is what *each individual* of our species is particularly interested in, and therefore, in the nature of the thing, it ought to be *plain* and *obvious*; because so far as it is otherwise, as it does not come within the reach of our discerning faculty, so far it can be of no *use* nor *concern* to us. And God would act very *preposterously*, were he to be *at all dark*,

where the reason of the thing requires he should be *all light*. Besides, divine revelation, surely, must be intended to *inform* and *instruct* us, and not to *amaze*, *perplex*, and *confound* us, which are the produce of *darkness* and *mysteries* in religion.

And, though in *difficult* and *complex* cases our discerning faculty is sometimes *incapable* of distinguishing betwixt truth and error, right and wrong, and consequently is liable to err with respect to both, which, as I have already observed, is the case as well *with* as *without* divine revelation, and which, indeed, must appear to be the case of *man*, when we consider *how* he is to attain knowledge, and how many things there are in his way that are liable to *mislead* him ; yet, notwithstanding this, his case is by no means *desperate*. Man (as I have shewn above) is an *accountable* creature, and, as such, reason requires that he should have *fair play* for his life, that is, reason requires that he should be dealt with in a way of *justice* and *equity*. And therefore, let a man be in what circumstances he will, whether *with* or *without* divine revelation, if he does *his best* to have his understanding rightly informed as to truth and good, that is, if he *does all* that in reason and equity can be expected from him in his circumstances to obtain such information, and if he acts *honestly* and *uprightly* according to it, he must and will be accepted and approved of God, even though he should err with respect to both. I say, such

such a man *must* and *will* be approved and accepted of God; and the reason is most obvious, because, by *such a conduct*, he renders himself the *suitable* and *proper* object of God's approbation and affection. This *must* and *will* be the case, whether men be of high or low rank in the world, or whether their advantages in it be more or less. And this *must* and *will* be the case, in all ages, and under all dispensations, and in all worlds, if I may so speak; because God is equally disposed at *all times*, even from everlasting to everlasting, to *accept* and *approve* of every creature, who renders himself the *suitable* and *proper* object of his approbation and affection; and to *disapprove* or *reprobate* every creature, who by his *misbehaviour* renders himself the *suitable* and *proper* object of his dislike and resentment. And though divine revelation may *assist* and *help* our discerning faculty in the discovery of truth and good, and in distinguishing them from their contraries; yet it cannot possibly *alter* the *grounds* of our acceptance with God, because that is *eternally* and *unchangeably* the same.

But farther, as there are many things that are liable to mislead the understandings of men, and as there are many and strong temptations with which men are surrounded, and by which they are in *great danger* of being *sometimes* betrayed into folly; so this renders it *unreasonable* to expect that man, in his present circumstances, should be either *infallible* or *impeccable*;

that is, it is unreasonable to expect that he should be without error, or without fault, because it is *great odds* but he will in some instances fall into *both*. And, as this is the present state of mankind; so from hence it will follow, that when a man does his *best* to have his understanding rightly informed, and when, in the *general course* of his actions, he acts *agreeably* thereto, and in those instances in which, through the strength of temptation, he has transgressed the rule of his duty, he is *sensible* of, and *humbled* for his faults, and makes his miscarriages a reason to himself to be *more watchful* and *careful* of his behaviour in time to come, such a man must and will be *accepted* and *approved* of God, because he has, *by such a behaviour*, rendered himself the suitable and proper *object* of the divine approbation and affection.

This, I say, *ought* in reason to be the case; and therefore, *most certainly* it is so. For, as man is so constituted and circumstanced as that it is *ten thousand* to *one* but he will *act wrong* in some instances; and were God to be so extream as to mark every thing that man does amiss, and would not accept of a man's sincere repentance and reformation as a *proper ground* of *mercy* to him, for those offences which through the strength of temptation he has been hurried into; then, man would lie under a very *great disadvantage*, and existence would be so far from being a *favour* and a *benefit*, that, on the contrary, it would be a
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very *great hardship* and an *injury* to him ; and then, it could not have been *goodness* and *kindness*, but it must have been *malice* and *ill will* which was the *spring* of action to God in the *creation* of man. And, if this were the case, then, man would not be dealt with in a way of *justice* and *equity*. For, if man's feet are, by his Creator, set in such *slippery* places, as that it is *ten thousand* to *one* but he will fall ; then, if he should fall, and should rise again by repentance and reformation, and yet should not find mercy at the hands of his Maker, which in reason and equity he ought, in this case, his existence would be a very great hardship, and an injury to him, and he would not be equally dealt with. And, on the other side, he, who in the general course of his actions, acts the contrary part, must and will be disapproved of God ; because, by such a conduct, he renders himself the suitable and proper object of the divine reprobation. It is not a particular action, but a man's general behaviour which constitutes his character, and denominates him to be a good or bad, a virtuous or vicious, a religious or irreligious, man.

From what I have observed, I think, it plainly appears, that Religion (when the term is used to express the grounds of our *acceptance* with God) is founded in *nature*, and that *nature* or *reason* affords a plain obvious rule, by which *true religion* may be distinguished from that which is *false*. For, if there is a natural
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and an essential difference in things; and if there is a rule of action resulting from that difference, which every moral agent ought in reason to govern his behaviour by; and if God makes this rule the measure of his actions, in all instances and cases in which it can be a rule to him, which is most apparently the true state of the case; then, from hence it will naturally, necessarily, and unavoidably follow that *personal valuableness*, or the governing our *minds and lives* by that rule of action which is founded in the reason of things, or, in other words, the acting *that part* in life which in reason we ought, this is *true religion*; this will render us *truly pleasing* and *acceptable* to God. And, on the other side, whatever is represented as the grounds of our acceptance with God, *besides* personal valuableness in us, *besides* the being in our selves the suitable and proper objects of the divine approbation and affection, such things *will not* render us truly pleasing and acceptable to the Deity, and consequently, *all such things* are *false religion*, let them come from what quarter soever, even though *Paul*, or an *Angel* from Heaven, were to be the *promulger* of such doctrines. God is not only infinite in all *natural* perfections, as he is all presence, all knowledge, and all power; but he is also infinite in all moral perfections, as his conduct, in the exercise of his knowledge and power, is, in all instances and cases, perfectly conformed to that eternal and invariable *rule of action* which results

from, and is founded in the natural and essential differences in things. And, as the reason of the thing requires, that nothing should be *approved* by an *intelligent being*, but what is *in itself* the proper object of such *approbation*, and it's being such an object should be the *ground* or *reason* of that approbation; and, on the other side, that nothing should be *disapproved* by an *intelligent being*, but what is *in itself* the proper object of such *reprobation*, and it's being such an object should be the *ground* or *reason* of that reprobation; I say, as the reason of the thing requires this; so from hence we may be *morally certain*, that nothing but *personal valuableness* in a moral agent, can be the *ground* of that agent's acceptance with God; and that nothing but *personal vile-ness* in such an agent, can be the *ground* of the divine reprobation of him. So that true religion, in the present case, consists *in this*, and *in this only*, viz. the acting such a part in life as in reason we ought; or, in other words, the governing our affections and actions by the law of reason; or, at least, the coming as near to this as may reasonably be expected from us in our present circumstances. This, I say, is *true religion*, and *this only*; because it is this, and this only, which renders us the *proper objects* of the divine approbation and affection; and therefore, it must be this, and this only, which *can* and *will* be the ground of our acceptance with God. And for as much as there is
nothing

nothing in nature but personal valuableness in us, which can render us the proper objects of God's approbation and affection; therefore, whatever *beside* this is represented as the *grounds* of our acceptance with the Deity, that must of necessity be *false religion*, and cannot possibly be otherwise. As to any instituted means of religion, these are to be considered as *means only*, and not as the *end* which is intended to be promoted by them. And they become *means*, not by being *instituted*, nor yet barely by being *used*, but only when they are *so used*, as to become *subservient* to that end, *viz.* the making us *wise* and *good*, which constitutes *true religion*, in the present case.

I am sensible, that these are *truths* which will not be acceptable to many *Religionists*, even to many *zealous* and *orthodox Christians*, who are very unwilling to be convinced that *virtue* and *happiness* are so necessarily connected together, that the *latter* cannot be obtained without the *former*; that a man cannot obtain the *happiness* of *another world*, without becoming a *good man* in *this*. Alas! how many *Christians* are there who would much rather be carried safe to heaven, by the *strength* and *virtue* of their *Master's merits*; than be obliged to *follow him*; in that *narrow way*, and through that *streight gate* of *virtue* and *good works*, which is the *only path* that leads thither. It is not the offering to God *thousands* of *rams*, nor *ten thousands* of *rivers*

of oil, nor the *first-born* of a man's offspring, nor the *first-born* of every creature, which can possibly render a man *approvable* to God; because as these do not render a man *personally valuable in himself*, they do not render him the *proper object* of the divine approbation and affection. But it is the *doing justice*, the *loving mercy*, and the *walking humbly with God*, which will render a man *acceptable* to the Deity; because these render him *personally valuable in himself*, and the *proper object* of the divine acceptance. And this is the case both *with* and *without* divine revelation, and whether men be in high or low stations, and wherever their lot is cast, in any part of the world. The sum of the matter is this, true religion, (when the term is used to express the grounds of our acceptance with God) consists in the right use and exercise of our *intellectual* and *active faculties*, by our doing all that in *reason* may be expected from us, in our respective circumstances, to have our *understandings* rightly informed; and in an *honest* and *upright behaviour*, in the *general* course of our actions, agreeably thereto. This, I say, and *this only*, constitutes *true religion*; because it is this, and this only, which renders us *personally valuable* in our selves, and the *proper objects* of divine regard. And whatever *besides* this is represented to be, or which may be relied upon as the *ground* of acceptance with God, all such things

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are

are *false grounds*, and consequently; are *false religion*. This is the state of the case independent of any divine revelation or promulgated law, and when considered in the abstract nature and reason of things. And this leads me to enquire,

Thirdly and lastly, whether *religion*, when the term is used to express the *grounds* upon which *sinners* obtain the *divine mercy*, is also founded in *nature*. And here, I think, it will be proper to state the notion of *mercy*, and shew what idea we annex to that term, in the present case. By *mercy*, I think, we intend the *remitting* to an offender, in whole, or in part, the *punishment* which, by his *offence*, he had justly rendered himself obnoxious to. So that *mercy* stands opposed *first*, to *cruelty*, whereof *justice* is the mean. He who lays upon the offender a *greater* punishment * than his crime deserves, is *cruel*. He who punishes *equal* to the offence, is *just*. And he who *remits* that punishment, in whole, or in part, is *merciful*. Again, *mercy* stands opposed *secondly*, to *unmerciful*; that is, to the punishing such offenders as have rendered themselves the proper objects of *mercy*. He who *punishes* such an offender as has rendered himself the *proper object* of *mercy*, is *unmerciful*; and he who *remits* that punishment, is *merciful*. Again *mercy*, or a *merciful* disposition, is generally, and, I think,

* See my *Collection of Tracts*, page 142.

think, justly esteemed to be a *perfection*, or a *good* quality in the agent in which it takes place; and unmercifulness, or an unmerciful disposition, is generally esteemed to be an *imperfection*, or an *evil* quality in the subject in which it resides. But then, this supposes that there is *something in nature* which renders an offender the *proper object* of mercy, for otherwise mercifulness could not be a perfection, nor unmercifulness an imperfection in nature. Besides, to suppose a perfection to take place in nature, and at the same time to suppose that there is nothing in nature which corresponds with, and is the ground of * that perfection, is the same gross absurdity as to suppose an effect without a cause. And if there is something in nature which renders an offender the proper object of mercy, (which must needs be the case) then, to shew *mercy* to *such an offender* must be *right* and *fit*, for that very reason, namely, because he, *viz.* the offender, is become the *suitable* and *proper object* of such mercy. And to be *unmerciful* to *such an offender* as has rendered himself the proper object of mercy, by punishing him according to the demerit of his crime, must be *wrong* and *blame-worthy*, for the very same reason, *viz.* because by his becoming the proper object of mercy he *ceased* to be the proper object of punishment, and therefore, to punish such an offender must be *wrong*. An offender,

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* By *perfection* here is meant *moral perfection*.

by his *offence*, becomes the *proper object* of punishment, and must *continue* so to be, till he has *suffered* the punishment his crime deserves, or till something takes place in him which renders him the *proper object* of mercy; and when *either* of these take place, then he *ceases* to be the proper object of punishment. I say, when either of these take place, because when the offender has rendered himself the *proper object* of mercy, and *as far* as he has done so, then he thereby *ceases* to be the proper object of punishment, *as much* as he would, by his suffering in whole, or in part, the punishment his crime deserved. I here put the case, when the offender has rendered himself the proper object of mercy, and *as far* as he has done so; because, possibly, * an offender may become the proper object of mercy *in part*, that is, such circumstances may attend him as may render it reasonable that his punishment should be *abated*, but not wholly taken away. This must be the case, except we admit that an offender can be the proper object of mercy to the *full*, and of punishment to the *full*, at the *same time*, which is an apparent contradiction; because *mercy* consists in the *remission* of punishment. So that it is not the shewing mercy to *any*, or to *all offenders*, without any rule or reason; but only
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* I here admit the supposition that an offender may become the proper object of mercy only in part, but do not take upon me to maintain either side of the question.

to *such* as have rendered themselves the *proper objects* of mercy, which is *right, fit, commendable, and praise-worthy*. If to shew mercy to *all offenders*, without regarding that which renders the offender the proper object of mercy were *right and fit*, then the consequence will be, that there will be no *punishment* in *futurity*; because we may well be assured that God will not punish where the reason of the thing requires that he should shew mercy. And, on the other side, if to punish *all offenders equal* to their *crimes*, without regarding that which renders the offender the proper object of mercy were *right and fit*, then the consequence will be, that there will be no *mercy* shewn in *futurity*; because God will not shew mercy where the reason of the thing requires that he should punish, which is the present case. But the truth lies betwixt those extreams. For, as God will punish *such offenders* as continue to be, notwithstanding his patience and long-suffering towards them, the *proper objects* of punishment; so he will certainly shew *mercy* to *all such offenders* as have rendered themselves the *suitable and proper objects* of it.

Thus, I think, I have fully stated the notion of mercy, and shewed what idea we annex to that term, in the present case. The next thing to be considered, is what there is in nature which can, and does, render an offender the *proper object* of *mercy*.

Mercy,

Mercy, in the present case, takes place of *justice*, and supercedes or sets aside *punishment*. Justice, in the present case, is the ballance of common equity, by which is weighed out or dispensed *rewards* and *punishments*, in an *equal proportion* to the *good* or *evil*, the *virtuousness* or *viciousness* of mens actions. And, that I may keep the argument clear of all incumbrances, and thereby guard against capitious opposers, I will state the notion of *rewards* and *punishments*, and of *good* and *evil actions* as the foundation of them. Those words *reward* and *punish* are relative, the former is a relative to some past good action or merit, the latter is a relative to some past evil action or guilt. For though in a loose and popular way of speaking *all favours* may be called *rewards*, and *all afflictions* may be called *punishments*, (as a man by suffering great *pain* in a fit of the gout may be said to suffer great *punishment* thereby) yet, strictly speaking, no favours nor afflictions come under the denomination of *rewards* and *punishments*, but such only as have had some *good* or *evil* actions, done by the *receiver*, to be the ground and foundation of them. If the settled price of labour be *one shilling* per day, and a man labours a day for me, and if I pay the labourer *one shilling*, that pay is properly called *reward*; because there was something done by the receiver *relative* to reward, which was the ground of that *pay*, and which therefore gives

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it that denomination. But if a man's *pressing necessity*, and not any precedent service done me, should excite me to put a *shilling* into his hand, in order to *supply* that necessity, this action would properly come under the denomination of a *gift*, and not of a reward; because there was nothing in the receiver, relative to reward, to be the ground of that action, which could bring it under that denomination. And, as there must be a precedent good action or some service done, to be a foundation for reward; so that action or service must be done by the *receiver*, and not by another, to constitute what he receives a reward. If *one man* should perform a day's labour for me, and I should deliver a shilling to *another*, he that received it would not be rewarded thereby; because there was nothing in him, *relative* to reward, to be the ground of it, which could give the action that denomination. Again, If a man, by a fall from his horse, should break a limb, or otherwise suffer great pain thereby, this would be a very *great affliction* to that man; and yet it would not come under the denomination of *punishment*, because there was no *precedent evil action* in him, (which is the *relative* to punishment) that was the ground of the affliction, which could give it that denomination. But if a man should *steal* an horse, and should be sentenced to death or banishment for it; the *execution* of that sentence would properly come under the denomination of *punishment*, because
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there was a precedent evil action or guilt in him, which is the *relative* to punishment, that was the ground of that sentence, and therefore would bring it under that denomination. And, as there must be some precedent evil action or guilt, to be the ground of punishment; so that evil action must be done, and that guilt must be attracted by the *sufferer only*, and not by another, to constitute any affliction *punishment*. If one man should steal an horse, and another man, known to be innocent with regard to that fact, should be *hanged*; in that case, tho' the person hanged would suffer one of the greatest of *natural evils*, yet that suffering would not be a *punishment* to him, because he had no *precedent guilt*, which is the *relative* to punishment, to be the ground of that suffering, and therefore, it could not come under the denomination of *punishment* to him. And, as to the *guilt* that was contracted by the *other*, it could not possibly alter the case with respect to *him*; because *he* could not possibly become *guilty* thereby. And, supposing the innocent person should, not only *consent* to be hanged, but should *voluntarily offer himself* to suffer, in order to save the guilty; this would not alter the case at all, because such *consent* and *voluntary offer* could not possibly make him *guilty* of the other's crime, and where there is no guilt there can be no punishment; it being the same gross absurdity to suppose punishment without crime, as it is to suppose a son without a father. And, to
suppose

suppose that punishment may be transferred from one person to another, when guilt, which is the ground of it, cannot, is the same gross absurdity. How idle then must it be for men to pretend that the *innocent Jesus bore the punishment* that was due for the *sins of mankind*? I say how vain must such a pretence be? For, as it was impossible that Christ should be *guilty* of our *crimes*; so it was equally as impossible that he should *suffer* the *punishment* due for them. Again, the *good* or *evil*, or the *merit* or *demerit* of actions, which is the ground and foundation of rewards and punishments, does not arise from the good or evil *effects* and *consequences* of those actions, but from the good or evil *motive* or *principle* they spring from, suppose the action of another, by *mere accident* and without any design of the agent, should become very *beneficial* to me, in this case, tho' the action in it's effect and consequence would be a *natural good* to me; yet it would not be a *moral good* in the actor, because it's being a good to me was not the produce of his inclination and will, and therefore, it could not be a proper foundation for *reward*. Whereas, if that good to me was *intended* by the agent, and I was the *proper object* of his regard, then it would be a *moral good* in the actor, and he would be worthy of a *reward* upon the account of it. Again, if a man, by *mere accident* and without any design, should take away the *life* of another; in this case, tho' the action in it's effect and consequence would be the

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greatest of *natural evils* to the man who lost his life by it, yet it would not be a *moral evil* in the agent, because it was not the produce of any *evil* or *vicious* inclination in him, and consequently, he could not contract *guilt* to himself by it, nor be worthy of *punishment* on the account of it. Whereas, if he *intended* that evil to a man, without any *just ground* to inflict it, he would be guilty of *moral evil*, and be worthy of punishment. And, tho' an *evil disposition* does not, I think, constitute *guilt*, until it becomes the ground and foundation of *action*, or, at least, until it is *intended* to be so; yet, I think, it is the *evil disposition only* which communicates *guilt* to the action, if I may so speak, or in other words, it is the evil disposition that renders the action *vicious* and *blame-worthy* which is produced by it. So that the merit and demerit of actions, by which they become the ground and foundation of rewards and punishments, result not from their effects and consequences, but from their causes.

But to return, justice, (as I observed above) is the ballance of common equity, by which is weighed out or dispensed rewards and punishments, in equal proportion to the merit or demerit of mens actions. Justice, in the administration of rewards, is the *mean* betwixt bounty and fraud. He who rewards the labourer *equal* to the value of his labour, is *just*. He who rewards the labourer *below* it's value, defrauds him, and thereby is *criminally* unjust. He who rewards the labourer *above*

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the value of his labour, is *bountiful* to him, and thereby is *virtuously* unjust, provided there be a *laudable reason* for that bounty. So that he who rewards *above* the merit of an action, is as *truly* unjust, as he who rewards *below* it; but then, *injustice* in one instance is *vicious* and *blame-worthy*, whereas *injustice* in the other instance may be *virtuous* and *commendable*. Again, justice, in the administration of punishment, is the *mean* betwixt mercy and cruelty. He (as I observed above) who punishes the offender *equal* to his crime, is *just*. He who lays upon the offender a *greater* punishment than his crime deserves, is *cruel*; that is, he is *criminally* unjust. He who *remits* that punishment, in whole, or in part, is *merciful*; that is, he is *virtuously* unjust, provided there be a *laudable reason* for the exercise of that mercy. So that he who punishes *below* the demerit of a vicious action, is as *truly* unjust, as he who punishes *above* it; but then, *injustice* in the latter case is a *vice*, and ought to be *avoided*, whereas *injustice* in the former instance is a *virtue* and *truly* commendable, provided there be some *laudable reason* for the exercise of that mercy. So that justice is *right* and *fit* only when it comes in competition with *criminal* injustice; but when it comes in competition with *virtuous* injustice, and is preferred before it, by punishing the criminal equal to the demerit of his crimes, when he has rendered himself the proper object of mercy, then, and under these circumstances, *justice* degenerates

rates into *unmercifulness*, and is in itself truly *blame-worthy*. I say, justice itself is *blame-worthy* in *such cases* where there is a *laudable reason* for the exercising of *mercy* to the criminal, and what that *laudable reason* is comes now to be considered.

I have already observed, that punishment is relative to guilt, the latter of these being the ground and foundation of the former. I have likewise observed that actions derive their guilt, not from their effects and consequences, but from their causes; that is, from those evil or vicious dispositions of mind which are the ground and cause of them. I here farther observe, that when *once* guilt is contracted, it can never be *taken away*; that is, when *once* an evil action has been committed, that action cannot be *undone*, nor can it ever be otherwise but an evil action, and consequently, the person who committed it must continue to *have been* guilty of that evil action to all eternity, or, at least, so long as he shall continue to exist. And this is the case upon *all schemes*, whether the criminal suffers the punishment his crime deserves, or whether we admit the absurd supposition of another's suffering in his stead, or whether his punishment be remitted, in whole, or in part. But then, tho' an evil action cannot be *undone*, but must continue to *have been* committed to all eternity; yet that *evil disposition of mind* out of which it sprang may be *put away*, and when that is the case, then, he that before was the *proper object* of punishment,

punishment, by this *ceases* to be such, and becomes thereby the *proper object* of mercy. For as in things *natural*, take away the cause, and the effect *will* cease; so in things *moral*, take away the cause; and the effect *ought* to cease. A man in a state of *poverty* is the *proper object* of relief, and therefore *ought* to be relieved: But then, take away the cause, and the effect *ought* to cease; that is change his circumstances by putting him into a state of *plenty*, and then he *ceases* to be the proper object of relief, and therefore *ought not* to be relieved. In like manner, a man who from a *wicked disposition of mind* has been guilty of a wicked action, becomes thereby the *proper object* of punishment; but then, take away the cause, and the effect *ought* to cease, that is, change his circumstances by removing that *wicked disposition* which took place in him, and which was the *ground* of his misbehaviour, and then he *ceases* to be the proper object of punishment, and *becomes thereby* the proper object of mercy. For when the *grounds* of resentment and punishment *cease*, which is the case here, then, in reason and equity, resentment and punishment *ought* to *cease* also. And it would be the same absurd conduct, to *punish* a man after he is become a *penitent*, for his having *before* been guilty of an evil action; as it would be to *relieve* a man in a *state of plenty*, for his having *before* been in a *state of poverty*. This *change of circumstances* in an offender, *changes* his *character* and *relations*. For, whilst he was under the
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power of vicious affections, and was disposed to gratify them to the publick hurt, he was then an *evil* or *vicious creature*, and an enemy to the intelligent and moral world, and, as such, was the *proper object* of resentment and punishment. But when he became *changed* as aforesaid, he then *ceased* to be that *vicious* or *evil creature*, and is become *virtuous* and *good*, he is no longer an enemy, but a friend and a benefactor to the intelligent world as far as it is in his power so to be, and, as such, he is no longer the proper object of *resentment* and *punishment*, but is become, by the *forementioned change*, the proper object of *compassion* and *mercy*. So that if the Deity will follow nature, and be guided by it, (which he most certainly will) then, he must deal with such a creature according to what *he is*, and not according to what he *has been*; he must deal with him, not as an *offender*, considered *simply as such*, which would render him the proper object of *punishment*, this not being his *whole character*; but he must and will treat him as a *penitent offender*, that being his *whole character*, and the *present state* of his case, and, as such, he is the proper object of God's *mercy*. To say in this case, that the penitent offender *still continues* to have been guilty of the crimes he has committed, and therefore, he *ought* to be *punished*, this is weakly urged; because, (as I have already observed) that is the case upon *all schemes*, and therefore, it ought not to be urged here; and is the same kind of reasoning

reasoning as to say, that the man who has been in a state of poverty, tho' his circumstances are changed, and he is now in a state of plenty; yet he *still continues* to be the man who has been in a state of poverty, and therefore *still* ought to be relieved; the weakness of which, I think, appears at first sight.

From what I have observed, I think, my reader cannot avoid seeing what it is which renders men, who have, by their greatly departing from that rule of action they ought to be governed by, rendered themselves justly displeasing to their Maker; I say, I think, my reader cannot avoid seeing what it is which will render *such offenders* the *proper objects* of God's *mercy*; and consequently, will be the *ground* of the divine *mercy* to them. Namely, it is passing through *such a change*, which, (to speak in the figurative language of the New Testament) is called a *being born again*, becoming a *new creature*; being *created a new*, in, or according to Christ Jesus; and the like. Whatever offender passes through *this change*, he thereby *ceases* to be the proper object of *punishment*, and becomes the proper object of *mercy*; and therefore, we may be assured, he will most certainly obtain it at God's hand. I am not here enquiring what is, or may be, the *ground* or *reason* of remitting punishment *amongst men*, which, perhaps, sometimes is relation, friendship, precedent obligations, and the like. These cannot take place with respect to God, and therefore, *whether*, and *how*

how far they may be *justifiable* grounds of remitting punishment amongst men, does not come into the present question. I have already observed that the law of nature is a *perfect law*, as it is a rule of action in all *instances* and *cases*, and under *all* possible circumstance in which a law or rule of action is wanting. And, for as much as *nature* has pointed out a *plain* and an *obvious rule* in the present case, by shewing *who*, and *who only*, are the proper objects of mercy to the Deity: So we may be *as certain*, as we are that God is, that he will govern his conduct, in this particular, by this rule. And, that what I have before laid down is the truth of the case, is, I think, as plain and obvious as any thing in nature or reason can possibly be. Here then is a plain obvious rule by which every great offender may judge whether he is become truly religious, or not; and whether he shall most certainly obtain God's mercy, or not. If he has passed through *that change* which we usually call *repentance*, and is become in truth and sincerity a *virtuous good man*; then, he will, most certainly, obtain *mercy* and *acceptance* at the hand of his Maker. But if he still retains his *vicious wicked disposition* of mind, and would follow that disposition, in the practice of every villainy, were he not restrained from it, either in hope of a reward, or for fear of punishment, or from some other selfish consideration, as, in such a case, he is in truth a *vicious wicked man*, whatever his outward behaviour may be:

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So he is likewise an *irreligious* man, and the *proper object* of God's displeasure. And, as *true religion*, in the present case, consists in the forementioned *change* or *renovation of mind*, and in a *change of life* consequent upon it (for make the tree good and the fruit will be good also): So every thing *beside* this change which is represented to be the *ground* of God's *mercy*, must be *false religion*. I say, every thing beside the forementioned change which is represented to be the ground of God's mercy, must be false religion; because it is the forementioned *change*, and *that only*, which renders sinners the *proper objects* of *mercy*, and therefore, it is that change, and that only, which can possibly be the *ground* or *reason* of God's mercy to them. This is the state of the case independent of any revelation or promulged law; and when considered in the abstract nature and reason of things.

And now I expect it will be said that I am greatly *undervaluing* the undertaking and sufferings of Christ, and that upon my principles mankind had *no need* of a Saviour and a Redeemer; this, and such like, probably, the ignorant and the artful will be buzzing in the ears of the people, and will be objecting to my readers. Upon which I observe, that as I would by no means *lessen* or *detract* from the *real value* of Christ's undertaking and sufferings, by representing them to be the produce of *selfishness* in him, *viz.* that he sought himself, and pursued his own interest in what

he did, as St Paul seems to have represented the case to be, when he said, that *for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and, (in consequence thereof) is sat down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high*; I say, as I would by no means thus detract from the value and merit of Christ's undertaking and sufferings: So, on the other side, I durst not *complement* these with what does not belong to them, and to which they can no way stand related. And, this leads me to put the question, what connection, what relation, what affinity, what analogy, is there betwixt the *sins* and *offences* of mankind, and the *sufferings* and *death* of Jesus Christ? And the answer is obvious, *viz.* there is none at all. Man is, by nature, an *accountable creature*, who is answerable to God for his behaviour. And as all merit and guilt is *personal*, and cannot possibly be *transferred* from one agent to another: So, according to all the rules of justice, equity, and reason, the righteousness of the righteous *ought, and will* be upon *him*, and upon *him only*; and the wickedness of the wicked *ought, and will* be upon *him*, and upon *him only*. That the father *ought not, nor will he* bear the iniquity of the son, nor the son the iniquity of the father. That the soul that sinneth *shall, and will die*, except he *repent and return to his duty*, by doing that which is lawful and right, and that then he will most assuredly save his soul alive. That, if a man does *well*, then he will

will be *approved* and *accepted* of God; but if a man does *evil*, then the *punishment* due to his sin lieth at the door, and will most certainly lay hold of him, except his *repentance* and *reformation* (which renders him the proper object of mercy) prevent it. These are the ways of *righteousness* and *equity*, and these are the *righteous* and *equitable* ways of God. For, tho' the *house of Israel* walked by *other rules*; yet *these*, and *these only*, are the *rules* that the God of *Israel* walks by, and that constantly, uniformly, and everlastingly. Yet ye, (the house of *Israel*) say, *the way of the Lord is not equal*. Hear now O *house of Israel*, *is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?* saith the Lord of hosts, *Ezek. xviii. 25*. Now, if these are the ways of *truth* and *reason*, of *justice* and *equity*, as most certainly they are, then the question will return as above, *viz.* what *connection*, what *relation* is there betwixt the *offences* of men and the *sufferings* of *Christ*? And the answer will be as before, *viz.* it plainly appears that these have no connection with, no relation to each other at all. Mankind were greatly *corrupted* and *degenerated*, as to their understandings, their affections, and actions; and under *these circumstances*, God, out of his abundant goodness, sent his Son our Lord *Jesus Christ* to be their *Saviour*. That *Jesus Christ* was sent to apprise mankind of their danger, and to point out to them the only certain way by which they might escape, and secure to themselves the divine favour.

And, in the prosecution of this design, our Lord fell into *wicked hands*, by which he was *crucified* and *slain*. And, out of this *scene of action*, viz. the crucifixion and death of Christ, some of his followers have extracted the most *profound mysteries*, than which nothing in *paganism* was more *absurd* or *ridiculous*.

I am sensible, it is commonly urged, that satisfaction must have been made to the justice of God for the sins of mankind, otherwise God could not have exercised his mercy in the forgiveness of our sins; and that such satisfaction was made by the death and sufferings of Christ. Good God! how absurd? how inconsistent is this? justice, considered abstractedly, is not an agent or person, but only a property or quality, if it may be so called; and therefore, when men talk of making satisfaction to the *justice* of God, they must mean, (if they talk sense) making satisfaction to a *just God*, or rather God must *act justly* by demanding and receiving, or by making himself full satisfaction in the case. But then, this is a case in which *satisfaction* cannot possibly take place; because where there is *no injury* done, there can be *no satisfaction* made: But God is not injured, in the least degree, by our sins, and therefore, he cannot possibly receive any satisfaction. God is indeed *offended* at, but not *injured* by our miscarriages, or rather he is *displeas'd* with us on account of the *evil dispositions* that take place in us, which are the *ground* and *cause* of those miscarriages, and
 this

this is a *just ground* of *resentment* to him, which resentment may be removed, either by our suffering *equal* to the demerit of our crimes, or by our rendering our selves the *objects* of his mercy; but then, this is a case in which *satisfaction* is quite out of the question. Again, if we admit the absurdity of satisfaction, it will involve us in another absurdity. For, supposing *full satisfaction* be made to God for the *sins* of mankind; then, this would be so far from making way for the exercise of God's *mercy*, that, on the contrary, it would *supersede* it and set it quite aside. Mercy and justice, in the present case, are *in-compatible*. If justice takes place, mercy cannot. Justice consists in paying the *full* debt, or in punishing *equal* to the demerit of the crime; and when that is done there can be no place for *mercy*, because mercy consists in *re-mitting* that very punishment. Again, if mercy takes place, then justice cannot. Mercy consists in the *remitting* of punishment, (as was said before) and when that is done there can be no place for the *execution* of *justice*, because justice consists in the *inflicting* that very punishment which is supposed to be *remitted*. I have already observed, that the execution of justice is only *commendable* when it stands opposed to, and takes place of *criminal* injustice; and that when it comes in competition with, and takes place of *mercy*, then it becomes *blameable*, provided the person on whom it is exercised be the *proper object* of mercy.

So

So that were the Deity to execute justice upon *such* an offender as has rendered himself the *proper object* of mercy, this would not be a *perfection*, but an *imperfection* in him. It would be endless were I to go about to *unravel* and *expose* all that *absurdity* and *nonsense* that this subject is incumbred with; and therefore, I shall not attempt it.

I will only farther observe, that as our Lord Jesus Christ is called our *Redeemer*: So this title is grounded on the language of the *New Testament*, in which Christ is said to have *redeemed* his people to God by his *blood*, and that they have *redemption* through his *blood*, and the like. Here the question will be, whether the redemption applied to Christ be *literal*, or only *figurative*. By a *literal* redemption, I apprehend, the *purchasing* the *freedom* of a *captive*, by paying down a *price* or valuable consideration, to the captive's master, for his *liberty*; which valuable consideration is called the *price* of that *redemption*. So that in a *literal* redemption there must be a *literal* slave, and a *literal* master, and a *literal* price paid down to that master, for the purchasing a *literal* freedom, to that literal slave; but none of these take place in the *redemption* applied to *Christ*, and therefore, that redemption cannot be *literal*, but only *figurative*, and consequently, all the *expressions* and *passages* in the *New Testament* relating thereto, must of necessity be understood not in a *literal* but in a *figurative* sense. If it should be asked,
how

how is all that figurative language to be understood? Answer, it is a question that I am not particularly concerned in. And as the entering into it would of course introduce an endless wrangling controversy; so that is a sufficient reason to me not to meddle with it. It is sufficient to my purpose that all the *expressions* and *passages* referred to are plainly and evidently *figures of speech*, and as such they are not proper foundations to build doctrines of importance upon, (as I have already observed) especially if those doctrines are plainly *repugnant* to the eternal reason and truth of things, which is the present case. But then, if the redemption wrought out by Christ be not literal, but only figurative, the question will be, *how*, or in *what way*, is it that Christ has been a *Saviour* and a *Redeemer* to mankind? Answer, this point is largely and fully considered in my book entitled *The true Gospel of Jesus Christ asserted*, (already published) to which I refer my reader for satisfaction.

Thus I have gone through what I proposed, and have, I think, plainly shewed that *religion is founded in nature*; that is, there is a *right* and *wrong*, a *true* and *false religion in nature*; and that nature or reason affords some plain and obvious principles by which a man may *distinguish* these, and form a *proper judgment* in the present case; and which an honest upright man may *safely* and *securely* stay his mind upon. I have, at the beginning of this work observed, that the various
and

and different characters of men are in part occasioned by *religion*, as religion has a great influence upon their *affections* and *actions*; and consequently, not only their *future*, but also their *present* happiness and misery is greatly affected thereby. For, as the practice of *true religion* lays a *sure foundation* for a blessed eternity; so it is the *best* and *safest way* to happiness now. And, as *false religion* will *disappoint* mans hopes with respect to another world; so, in a multitude of cases, it *contributes greatly* to their unhappiness in this. It is therefore a matter of great concern that men should have *just* and *true* notions of religion; because their present and future well being greatly depends upon it. I have contributed my mite towards this work, and, I trust, it has not altogether been in vain. And, though religion has been, and still is *greatly controverted* in the world; yet, I think, men may come to a *certainty* with respect to it. Religion is not an arbitrary institution, founded on sovereign pleasure; but it is grounded on the eternal reason and truth of things, as I have largely shewn in the precedent enquiry; and therefore, it admits of equal certainty with every thing of like kind. True religion has no dependance upon *language*; that is, upon the use and sense and derivation of words. For, as religion is what every individual of our species is greatly interested in, whether he be high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned; so it must, in *reason*

and

and *equity*, be level to the capacities of all; and therefore, cannot depend upon niceties and trifles. Learning indeed has it's use to men of leisure and abilities; but then, it generally does more mischief than good with relation to religion, because it serves to darken and perplex that which is in itself plain and clear, and which ought so to be preserved to the people. If a religion is at any time promulged, under a *divine character*; and if what is delivered concerning it, be put into *writing*; then, the *language* it *first* appeared in gives *great men* a fair occasion and opportunity to shew their *learning* and *abilities*, and to make their *advantages* upon it. This is plainly the case of what is usually called the Christian Revelation, and the Christian Religion, or, to speak more properly, that promulgation of the original and primary law of nature, which was made to mankind by the ministry of Jesus Christ. The *language* which this revelation *first* appeared in, like all other languages, has given *great* and *learned men* an opportunity of shewing their *dexterity*, by turning what was *first* promulged to mankind into *any* and *every* *shape*. These men make *Christianity* to be *Poper*y, and to be *Protestantism*; to be *this* *thing* and *that* *thing*; to be *any* *thing* and to be *every* *thing*. And indeed this must be the case of all *traditionary* religion, whether in it's original promulgation it were *true*, or *false*. A religion grounded on *revelation*, if it is to be *propagated*, of course introduces

Transcribers, Translators, Commentators, Expounders, and the like. And these, through the weakness of some, and the wickedness of others, introduce that *great variety* and *contrariety*, that *confusion* and *perplexity*, as we see at this day. And this, (as I said before) must, and will be the case of all *traditionary* religion, whether in it's *first* promulgation it were of God, or not; and whether those who *first* committed it to writing were divinely inspired, or not. How *necessary* and *desirable* a thing must it therefore be, that there should be some *plain, obvious, certain principles* in nature or reason to be a *solid foundation* for religion, which honest upright men may *safely* and *securely* stay their minds upon, amidst that diversity and perplexity which all traditionary religion is liable to, and is constantly attended with; and this, to our satisfaction and comfort, is the truth of the case. *True religion*, when considered *abstractedly* from what may be made the outward signs and tokens of it, from what may be used as means and helps to it, and from what may be annexed to and blended with it, is not liable to such *tossings* and *changes*. For, as it is *grounded* on the eternal reason and truth of things; so it must of necessity be *the same*, both yesterday, to day, and for ever. And, indeed, it would be a very hard case, were *true religion* (which is of *universal* concern to mankind) to depend upon the *sense* and *derivation* of words, the understanding of which,

which, men of letters are apt to boast of, and value themselves upon; seeing *words*, with regard to their *sense* and *derivation*, like shuttlecocks, are liable to be *battled to and from*, according to the art and skill of the opponents. And, though this is what many learned men would fain have the case appear to be, because then, *they only* would be capable judges concerning it; yet the truth is, true religion is not of so *light* and *airy* a nature, but is more *solid*, as being grounded on *eternal reason* and *truth*, (as I have already observed) and therefore admits of *no alteration*, and is to be discerned and judged of by every man, whether he has learning, or not.

To conclude: I observe, that I have not reasoned from general and received opinions, nor from the sentiments of great and learned men, in any age, or ages, nor from any other kind of authority, nor indeed from any *uncertain* and *precarious hypothesis* whatever; but only from such principles as are founded on *the eternal reason and truth of things*. So that skill in criticism, in history, in arts and sciences, is not wanted here; but a capacity and attention sufficient to discern and distinguish betwixt just and solid arguments and reasonings and their contraries, such ability and application being necessary to render a person a proper judge of what I have laid down; and therefore, I appeal to all those of superior abilities, of greater attention, and quicker discernment, as the best judges in the present case.

case. But then, as to the *Horlers* or *Tumpe-
ters* of the age, who sound an alarm of danger,
and *call to arms* the whole *Ecclesiastical Sol-
diery* to wage war with me, who are much
better qualified to *sing a love song*, and to *dance
a horn-pipe*, than to reason upon questions of
so important and serious a nature; and also to
all our systematical Divines, Preachers, Wri-
ters, and Disputers, their judgments, surely,
must be of less weight in the case under con-
sideration. Nevertheless, though I have ap-
pealed as above; yet, I am sensible, that great
men, who have obtained popular applause,
are usually very careful not to turn the tables
and bring upon themselves popular odium;
and therefore, when *popular errors*, that is,
errors which have been generally received as
important truths, when such errors are brought
upon the *carpet*, and are under *examination*,
great men seldom come *openly, plainly, and
fully* into the defence of truth; especially if
there be something in view worth *rowing* *
for, and if there be a prospect of obtaining
it; I say, under these circumstances, great
men seldom come openly, plainly, and fully
into the defence of truth. Indeed, there are
some instances of great men, who, when not
engaged in controversy, have acted *bravely
and boldly* in asserting truths not greatly po-
pular.

* *Rowing* here alludes to the print, in which *three*
Bishops were represented as *rowing hard* for *Lambeth*,
otherwise the Archbishoprick of *Canterbury*, though, (by
the way) they all three lost it.

pular. Thus for example, Dr *Sherlocke*, by the King's ordinance now Lord Bishop of *Salisbury*, in a Sermon preached before the Society for propagating the gospel in Foreign Parts, (pages 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.) hath expressed himself in the following manner.

‘ I shall now proceed to lay before you such consequences as seem to me to be the natural result of this method made use of by our blessed Lord and his Apostles, in publishing the gospel to mankind.’

‘ And the first is this: that the religion of the gospel is the true original religion of reason and nature.’

‘ This appears, by considering the nature of that repentance, which our Lord, and those who came after him in the ministry of the gospel, preached to the world: repentance supposes a transgression, and transgression supposes a law; for as the Apostle argues, *where there is no law there is no transgression*: and since repentance consists in a change of mind, in rectifying what was before amiss, and in fulfilling that obedience which was before wanting; it is evident, that to repent of the violation of any law, is to return to the obedience of it: and he that exhorts and calls you to repentance, calls you back to the obedience of that law, against which you had offended. The question then is, against what law those offences were committed, the repentance for which was so necessary, that without it there was

‘ no

' no admittance into the fellowship of the
 ' gospel of Christ? The laws of the gospel,
 ' considered as such, are evidently excluded
 ' upon the present view; for repentance being
 ' the first thing every where taught, and an-
 ' tecedently to the publication of any of the
 ' rules and precepts of the gospel, the law not
 ' yet published could not be the rule of that
 ' repentance, which related to sins already
 ' committed. At the time of the publication
 ' of the gospel, there were many forms and
 ' institutions of religion subsisting in the world;
 ' but as these were very different from one
 ' another, insomuch that if some were true,
 ' others were certainly false; so they could
 ' not be the ground of that repentance, which
 ' being generally taught to all the world, to
 ' the *Gentile* as well as the *Jew*, must respect
 ' some general law, which related alike to all,
 ' and the obligations to which were in some
 ' degrees universally felt and acknowledged:
 ' and this can be no other than that which
 ' the Apostle to the *Romans* has described in
 ' the second chapter, ver. 14, 15, *when the*
 ' *Gentiles, which have not the law, do by na-*
 ' *ture the things contained in the law, these*
 ' *having not the law, are a law unto them-*
 ' *selves: which shew the work of the law written*
 ' *in their hearts, their conscience also bearing*
 ' *witness, and their thoughts the mean while*
 ' *accusing or else excusing one another.* How-
 ' ever the light of reason and nature was
 ' darkened and obscured by the ignorance
 ' and

and superstition of the world, yet some remains of it were in all places to be found; and the general principles of religion were so rivetted in human nature, that she could not but start at any thing that directly contradicted them: Thus, for instance, in the great branch of natural religion, which relates to the worship and service of God, tho' mankind had universally erred and defiled themselves with many pollutions and abominations, yet Atheism was as detestable a crime in the Heathen world, as it is in the Christian: and some, we know, were thought worthy of death, for being the maintainers of so unnatural an opinion. A sense of the moral duties between man and man were better preserved; and there are not many vices condemned in the gospel, which were not infamous before in all civilized parts of the world. This general law, as the Apostle tells us, was the groundwork of conscience, the testimony of the conscience plainly shewing the work of the law to be written in the heart; and this is a farther evidence, that this law of nature was the foundation of that repentance, which was to usher in the gospel; for as the preacher of repentance necessarily refers himself to the consciences of men, to point out to them the guilt of their actions; so must his doctrine necessarily relate to that law, which is the principle or origin of conscience: Since then the doctrine of re-

pentance,

' penitance, with which the gospel set out in
 ' the world, had reference to the law of rea-
 ' son and nature, against which men had
 ' every where offended; and since repentance
 ' infers the necessity of a future reformation;
 ' and a return to that duty and obedience,
 ' from which by transgression we are fallen;
 ' the consequence is manifestly this, that the
 ' gospel was a republication of the law of
 ' nature, and it's precepts declarative of that
 ' original religion, which was as old as the
 ' creation.'

' That this must certainly be the case, will
 ' appear, by considering the nature of the
 ' thing itself. The notions of good and evil
 ' are eternally and unalterably the same, which
 ' notions are the rules and measures of all
 ' moral actions, and are consequently necessary
 ' and constituent parts of religion: and there-
 ' fore if the religion of nature, in her primi-
 ' tive state, was pure and uncorrupt, (which
 ' will not, I presume, be denied) though
 ' there was sufficient reason for a republication
 ' of it, because of the great ignorance and
 ' superstition which had grown upon the
 ' world, yet there could be no reason for any
 ' alteration of it; for though the world was
 ' the worse for abasing the religion of na-
 ' ture, and might want to be reformed by
 ' a divine instructor; yet the religion of na-
 ' ture was not the worse for being abused;
 ' but still retained it's first purity and sim-
 ' plicity. The duties of religion, considered

‘ as a rule of action, flow from the relation
 ‘ we bear to God, and to one another; and
 ‘ religion must ever be the same, as long as
 ‘ these relations continue unaltered: If our
 ‘ first parent was the creature of God, so are
 ‘ we; and whatsoever service and duty he
 ‘ owed, in virtue of this dependance, the
 ‘ same is due from us; nor can this relation
 ‘ be ever made the ground of different duties
 ‘ in his case, and in ours; if therefore nature
 ‘ rightly instructed him at first how to serve
 ‘ his Maker, our obligations being the same
 ‘ with his, our rule must be the same also.
 ‘ The case is the same with respect to the
 ‘ duties owing from man to man: and it
 ‘ would be as reasonable to suppose, that the
 ‘ three angles of a triangle should be equal to
 ‘ two right ones in one age, and unequal in
 ‘ another, as to suppose that the duties of re-
 ‘ ligion should differ in one age, from what
 ‘ they were in another, the habitudes and re-
 ‘ lations from which they flow continuing al-
 ‘ ways the same.’ Again, pages 21, 22.

‘ It is true, the Gospel has taught us things,
 ‘ which by nature we could not know; but
 ‘ they are all designed to confirm and streng-
 ‘ then our hope in God; it is true also, that
 ‘ there are some institutions in the Gospel,
 ‘ which in their own nature are no consti-
 ‘ tuent parts of religion, but they are such
 ‘ only as are necessary to enable us to do our
 ‘ duty, by conveying to us new supplies of
 ‘ spiritual strength. These are the additions

' which the Gospel has made to natural re-
 ' ligious, forgive it this injury. Our blessed
 ' Saviour saw that the hopes of nature were
 ' lost, therefore he brought to light again life
 ' and immortality : he saw that we were cor-
 ' rupted, not able to resist evil, and therefore
 ' he supplied the defect by the assistance of
 ' his holy spirit ; pardon his care, and do not
 ' think the worse of him, or his religion,
 ' for the great provision he has made in it
 ' for your security.'

Thus far this *great man*. However, I must
 here remind my readers, that I have not quoted
 from the Bishop of *Salisbury's* Sermon by
 way of *authority* ; nor indeed do I claim him
 as having been an *advocate* for my principles,
 any farther than his Lordship has *plainly* and
publickly declared himself. Nevertheless, I
 think, I should not do *justice* to truth, nor my-
 self, did I not farther observe, that the *just*
reasonings of this *great man*, in favour of the
great and *main points* contended for, both in
 the *precedent enquiry*, and in my book entitled
The true Gospel of Jesus Christ asserted, are
 more, *much more*, than a *ballance*, in point of
argument, (which only is to be regarded) to
all that my numerous opponents have offered
 against them. This, I say, is the case with
 respect to the *great* and *main points* I have
 advanced in this and the forementioned book ;
 and as to points of lesser moment, such as
 how it came to pass that when the Gospel
 was first preached, it was not universally re-
 ceived ;

ceived; and how it comes to pass that where it has been received, it has not generally had it's proper effect upon the minds and lives of men; what I have offered upon these points, I have *experience* and *fact* for my vouchers. My Lord Bishop of *Salisbury* has expressly declared, that the Gospel was a *republication of the law of nature*; and if so, then, the Christian Religion cannot be an *arbitrary institution*, grounded on *sovereign pleasure*, but must be (as I have said) founded on the *eternal reason* and *truth* of things. And what additions Christ has made to natural religion, his Lordship acknowledges, are not in their own nature *constituent parts* of religion, but they are such only as are necessary to *enable us* to do our duty; which, I think, is the same as to say that they are no parts of religion at all, but only *means* and *helps* to it, or, in other words, they are means and helps to make us *truly religious*, and the *proper objects* of God's favour. This indeed is what I have more *largely* and *fully* shewn and proved; but then, what have I, in effect, said more, or less than this?



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A

POSTSCRIPT.

Occasioned by the Publication of
Dr STEBBING'S Visitation Charge,
that had been delivered to the Clergy
of the Archdeaconry of *Wilts.*

LOST CHRIST.

Ordered by the Publisher of
the British Librarian's Charge
to be printed and bound in the
of the Archbishop of Westminster.

POSTSCRIPT.

AFTER I had finished the foregoing Enquiry, the Reverend Dr *Stebbing* published the *Visitation Charge*; that he had before delivered to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of *Wilts*, in answer, (as common fame will have it) to my book entitled *The true Gospel of Jesus Christ asserted*; the amount of which answer is this, *viz.* that what I have represented to be the true Gospel of Jesus Christ is Heathenism, *mere Heathenism*. To which I reply, let it be so. I am not contending for words, or names, but things; and therefore, if what I have advanced be the *truth*, which I think it is, then, that is sufficient for my purpose, and Dr *Stebbing* is at liberty to call it, or stigmatize it, by what *name* he please. However, if my principles or scheme of Christianity be *mere Heathenism*, as Dr *Stebbing* hath maintained; then, as the doctrine of a *future judgment* and *retribution* is a part of that scheme; so consequently, that doctrine, according to Dr *Stebbing*, is a part of Heathenism, or it is an *Heathenish Doctrine*; and then, according to the Doctor, the Heathens were not destitute of that *encouragement*

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to virtue, and *disengage* from vice, which arises from the consideration of *future* rewards and punishments, as some of our Divines have too hastily maintained that they were.

By the term *Heathenism*, I think, Dr *Stebbing* must mean *natural Religion*; and by *mere Heathenism*, I think, he must mean *pure uncorrupted* natural Religion without any mixture or addition; this, I say, I think, must be his meaning, if he has any fixed ideas to his words. And forasmuch as the Christian Religion is, (as it must needs be, if it be of God) the pure uncorrupted religion of nature, or as Dr *Sherlocke* the present Bishop of *Salisbury* has very justly and truly expressed it, ‘*The Religion of the Gospel is the true original Religion of reason and nature;*’ so, in this view of the case, mere Heathenism is the uncorrupted religion of *Christ*, or it is that religion which *Christ* published to the world without any mixture or addition. But then, this is putting the case into such a light as no doubt Dr *Stebbing* never intended it should appear in. True religion is not a precarious thing, founded only on sovereign and arbitrary will; but is grounded on eternal reason and truth; and as such it must be the same both yesterday, to day, and for ever. And therefore, if the Christian Religion be of God, (which surely Dr *Stebbing* will not deny) then, of necessity, it must be neither more, nor less, nor otherwise, than the true original Religion of reason and nature. And,
As

As true Religion is founded in nature ; so nature exhibits a proper rule of action to all intelligent beings, in all cases, and under all possible circumstances where a law or rule of action is wanting ; and this denominates it a perfect law. For, were nature deficient in this respect in any case, or circumstance whatever, then, the law or rule of action resulting from it would not be perfect, and consequently, the law of nature would not be a perfect law, which supposition is greatly absurd. So that nature exhibits a proper rule of action to intelligent beings as well *after* they are become offenders, as *antecedent* to the offence committed ; that is, nature as much, and as plainly points out to men what they ought to do after they have offended, in order to render themselves the proper objects of mercy, as it points out to them what they ought to do, so as not to stand in need of that mercy. I say, nature as plainly points out a proper rule of action in this, as in any other case. I am sensible, this is running counter to our modern Theology, which supposes that nature is *defective* in this particular, and that there is no proper rule of action resulting from it with regard to criminals ; and consequently, that God is at liberty to act *arbitrarily* in this respect, by appointing what conditions he please for his creatures to obtain his mercy, and for them to be reconciled to him ; but this is grossly absurd as I have already observed.

And,

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From

From hence a question very naturally arises, *viz.* what *difference* is there between Dr *Stebbing's Christian Religion* and mine? if I may be allowed to use those terms, without being charged with great impropriety. And the answer is, that the difference is *very great*. My representation of Christianity is *all natural*, it is pure nature without any *mixture* or *addition*. Whereas, Dr *Stebbing's Christian Religion* is a *compound*, it is partly *natural*, and partly *artificial*; it is cooked up in a *polite* manner, and after the *French* fashion, with *high* sauces, *forced* meats, and *made* dishes, such as nature and reason are perfect strangers to, and by which it is suited to the *vitiating* appetites of mankind. But then, it ought to be remembered, that no doctrine is to be admitted, or at least ought to be admitted, as an *important truth*, until upon a fair trial it is *proved* to be such; and therefore, the doctrines of atonement, of propitiation, of pecuniary mulcts, of transubstantiation, and the like, these must *all be tried* before they be admitted; and if upon a fair trial these, or either of them, shall plainly appear to have the stamp of *reason* and *truth* upon them, then, where that appears to be the case, every such doctrine ought, for that reason, to be *received*; but if upon such trial these doctrines, or either of them, shall be found *wanting*, then, where such *defect* appears, every such doctrine ought, for that reason, to be *rejected*.

There are many *words* and even *assertions* in the New Testament that are either mere *figures of speech*, or else are only *allusions* to what took place amongst men, and in particular to what took place among the Jews under the dispensation of *Moses*. And though the doctrines that are or may be grounded upon these, may afford matter for an *artful harangue*; yet a little attention will discover that they will not bear being reasoned upon, without being found wanting. Thus for example, it is asserted that *Christ sits at the right-hand of God*, which assertion seems at least to imply that God is a *material* being, who, in some particular place in the universe, sits on a glorious throne, and that Christ, as his son, sits in a chair of state at his right-hand; in which sense, probably, those words are understood by many young and tender minds, who have been taught frequently to repeat them from the time they first came to the use of speech. Now, tho' what is thus *implied* in the forementioned assertion, may with as much *justness* be grounded upon it, as other doctrines are grounded upon other words or assertions in the New Testament; yet it is not to be *admitted*, because the contrary can be *proved*, viz. that God is an *immaterial* being, who is present in the same manner, kind, and degree, in every part of infinite space; and consequently, has no right-hand for Christ to be placed at. So that these words, viz. *Christ sits at God's right-hand*, tho' they are made an

article of *Christian Faith*; yet, I think, can be no other than an *allusion* to the custom and usage of an *earthly prince*, who, when seated on his throne, has his *son*, or the *heir apparent* to his crown, sitting at his right-hand; and as to what we are to understand by it, and learn from it, these are questions that at present I am not concerned with. In like manner, Christ is said to be *the propitiation for the sins of the whole world*, which words, as they stand in our translation, 1 *John* ii. 2. are scarce sense; and if we understand them to mean, that Christ by his *mediation*, or any other way, disposes or inclines God to be *propitious* to a sinful world, then, in this sense they cannot possibly be true, because God is *in himself*, and from his *own nature*, disposed and inclined to be propitious to all such sinners as shall render themselves the proper objects of his mercy *antecedent to*, and *independent of*, Christ's undertaking, and therefore, cannot possibly be made so by it. And this truth is as evident and plain as that God is not material. It is the *evil* disposition of mind that takes place in us, and is the ground and cause of all our transgressions, which is the ground of God's dislike of us, and of his resentment against us; and therefore, there cannot possibly be any thing in nature which can render God *actually propitious*, that is, which can actually remove God's dislike and resentment, but the *actual removal* of that which is the *ground and cause* of these, *viz.* the

evil

evil disposition of mind that takes place in us; and then, as the cause is taken away, the effect ought, and consequently, most certainly will cease. This is so plain and obvious that men of common abilities with a little attention must perceive it; and therefore, it would be offering the *greatest affront* to Dr Stebbing, to suppose that a man of his superior abilities and greater attention does not. It will not be sufficient to urge, that the doctrines of atonement, of propitiation, and the like, as they are usually understood by Christians, are grounded upon the *words* of St Paul and St John, whose ministry was backed with *miracles*, and therefore, those doctrines ought to be received as *important truths*; I say, it is not sufficient to urge this, because the doctrine of transubstantiation is grounded upon the words of the *Master* of these Apostles, even *Christ himself*, and therefore, upon this foot of argument, the doctrine of *transubstantiation* ought much more to be received as an important truth, which yet notwithstanding is justly rejected by Protestants. All doctrines therefore as well that of transubstantiation which are grounded upon the *words and language of the New Testament* ought to be tried, before they be admitted as important truths. And seeing, the doctrines of atonement, propitiation, and the like, as they are commonly understood by Christians, will not bear the trial without being found wanting; the consequence is clear, *viz.* that all such doctrines ought to be

be rejected by Christians. And, as to the circumstance of miracles, no external evidence whatsoever can possibly so alter the nature of things as to make a false proposition true. Besides, miracles are evidences, or natural marks, not of the *veracity*, but only of the *power* of the agent that performs them; and therefore, all doctrines and rules of action that are delivered under the pretext of miracles ought to be tried, before they be admitted. And, agreeably to this principle, *Moses* gave it in charge to the people of *Israel*, *Deut. xiii. 1.* and so on. *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, saying let us go after other gods, (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; &c.*

I have already observed, that the *sum total* of *Dr Stebbing's* charge, is, that what I have represented to be the *True Gospel of Jesus Christ* is *Heathenism*, mere *Heathenism*; or, in other words, it is *Deism* and *Infidelity*; these, I think, being used by him as synonymous terms, and which, by his own construction, in a parallel * case, is the same as to say, that I
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* See the Reverend *Dr Stebbing's* Controversy with the Reverend *Mr Foster*; in which, when *Mr Foster* had charged the Doctor with having maintained a *Mahometan* maxim, *viz.* the laying pecuniary mulcts on Dissenters,
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am an Infidel, a Deist, a Heathen, yea a mere Heathen. These are hard names or terms of reproach as they are commonly used and understood, and which, I think, in the present case, can answer no other purpose than to render me odious and contemptible; and this is a short and easy way of dealing with an adversary. However, the point with me, is, (as I have already observed) whether what I have advanced be the *truth*, with respect to which Dr *Stebbing* hath not yet shewn the contrary; and not what name it is to be called by, or that I am to be called on account of it, and therefore, the Doctor may go on with his invectives, which are well suited to answer low, mean, and base purposes. Besides, those characters of Infidel, Deist, Heathen, &c. may with as much *justness* and *propriety* be fixed upon *other persons* as upon me, whom yet, surely, Dr *Stebbing* would not chuse to treat in this way; and therefore, if the Doctor's Visitation Charge is to be considered as an *answer* to my book, then, there is a *reply*, which has been prepared long since, *viz.* a Sermon preached by the Right Reverend Dr *Sherlocke* now Lord Bishop of *Salisbury*, at *Bow-Church, London*, on the 17th of *February*

the Doctor, in the bitterness of his soul, poured out his complaint to the publick, that Mr *Foster* would make him a *mere Turk*; and yet he makes no scruple to use the author in the same way. Though perhaps, to do as one would be done by, is a principle too low and mean, too *Heathenish* for Dr *Stebbing* to make it a rule of action to himself.

February 1715, before the Society for propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts; which *Sermon*, I conceive, to be a *full and complete reply* to the aforesaid *Charge*; and therefore, to it I refer my readers for their farther satisfaction, or, at least, to what I have quoted from it in the foregoing Enquiry; and to which *Sermon* or *Reply* Dr *Stebbing* may make a rejoinder if he please.

To conclude this Postscript, I observe, that as the book Dr *Stebbing* refers to has made a great noise in the world; so several books and pamphlets (whereof the Doctor's Visitation Charge is one) have been published *called* answers to it, the shewing the *weakness* and *impertinence* of which, would not be of much use or benefit to my readers; and therefore, I have rather chosen to represent to them what are the *solid grounds* upon which *true religion* is founded, as in the precedent Enquiry, the attending to which Enquiry will be much more subservient to their improvement in useful knowledge and virtue, than to a wrangling controversy. And if Dr *Stebbing*, or any other person has wherewith to oppose; they may shew off as soon as they please. There is nothing so plain and evident but what artful men may find out ways to darken and perplex; and, tho' this may take with the weak and inattentive, yet men of understanding can see through such disguises, and therefore, to their judgments I readily submit what I have written.

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I will only add, that as Dr *Stebbing's* charge is a much clearer proof of *strong passion*, than *sound reason*; so, I fear, it was the produce of his *resentment*; namely, for my having publickly called upon him to *reconsider* his *false* and *evil doctrine* of pecuniary mulcts, and either publickly to defend it, or give it up; one or other of which, surely, he ought to have done, though I have not heard he has yet done either. I call the * foremention'd doctrine false and evil, because, I think, I have *proved it to be both*, in my letter to the Reverend Dr *Stebbing*, on that subject; which letter I ordered to be sent to him, and, I doubt not, but it was sent accordingly.

* See the author's second letter to the Reverend Dr *Stebbing*.



A S H O R T
DISSERTATION
O N

Matt. xix. 21. *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come and follow me.*

Occasioned by Dr STEBBING's unjust and groundless reflexion on the author, with regard to this text, in his Visitation Charge, delivered to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of *Wilts.*

A SHORT

DISSERTATION

ON

The Nature and Extent of the Right of Property in the Land

As it relates to the Right of the Crown and the People

By JOHN HENRY DE LA PIERRE, Esq.

London, Printed by J. B. Smith, in the Strand, 1703.

Price 1s. 6d.

A S H O R T
 DISSERTATION
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Matt. xix. 21. *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*

IN order to judge *rightly* of the sense and meaning of our Lord in these words, I think, *three* things must be enquired into, as previous to it. *viz.* *First*, wherein human perfection consists; if thou wilt be perfect. *Secondly*, who are the poor; give to the poor. *Thirdly*, whether, and how far chusing extream poverty, by divesting our selves of all property in worldly goods, in order to make those that are poor not so, or less so, be necessary to human perfection; if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, &c.

First, I am to enquire wherein human perfection consists. The perfection of any intelligent being, I think, consists in his being perfectly

perfectly subject in mind and action to the law of his nature ; that is, to that law or rule of affection and action which is suitable to and results from his make and constitution, his circumstances and relations, and which that creature ought in reason to be subject to, and be governed by. And, as that intelligent being called *man* is a compound, consisting partly of understanding, of appetite, of affection, &c: so the *perfection* of man consists in a perfect submission of the whole composition to the law of his nature, or to that law which in reason he ought to be governed by. When the various appetites and passions that take place in man are constantly and uniformly directed to, and placed upon, their proper objects ; when each and every of these are kept in due bounds, one not indulged to the suppressing of another ; when the springs of action in man, *viz.* selfishness and benevolence, hope and fear, and the like, are duly ballanced, so as that one has not the ascendant over the others ; and, when all these, together with the principle of activity or self-motion, are wholly subject to that principle of intelligence which is likewise a part of the human constitution, and which was intended to guide and direct the whole ; then, such a creature may be said to be *perfect*, according to the measure and degree of his nature, as he is perfectly subject to the law of it, or to such a law as in reason such a compound creature ought to be subject to, and be governed by.

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This I call *human perfection*, not in distinction from, but considered to be the same with *Christian perfection*. The design of Christianity was to engage us to act the part, and to fill up the just and proper characters of *men*; and not to enable us to fill up the characters of *Angels*, or any other species of beings who are differently constituted, circumstanced, and related, and as such have a different law, and a different kind of perfection to attain, or come up to. Or, in other words, the design of Christianity was to make us *good men*; and not to make us *more* or *better* than men; and therefore, *Christian perfection* must be the same as *human perfection*. Again,

Secondly, I am to enquire who are the poor. As the various good things which God hath provided for the use and comfortable subsistence of men, are variously possessed by them; so he whose share of property in these is not sufficient to procure the comforts, and supply the necessities of life, such a man is said to be *poor*; as he, on the other side, whose share of property in these is much more than sufficient to answer the forementioned purposes, is said to be *rich*. And men are more or less rich, or poor, as their share of property in worldly good things is more, or less *abundant*, or more, or less *scanty* as aforesaid. And, as this world's good things were kindly intended, by the Creator of all, to supply the wants, and to yield a comfortable subsistence to our whole species; and, as a comfortable passage through
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life is greatly desirable in itself, and as such it is the proper object of every man's choice, for himself, and for others; so this renders it reasonable and fit that those who greatly abound, should supply the necessities of those who want. Again,

Thirdly, I am to enquire whether, and how far chusing *extream poverty*, by divesting our selves of all property in worldly goods, in order to make others that are poor not so, or less so, be *necessary to human perfection*. I have already observed, that human perfection consists in a man's perfectly conforming himself, that is, his whole composition, to the law of his nature; which law requires that those who abound, should supply the necessities of those who want. And, if such circumstances should take place as render it reasonable for a man to part with all that he hath for the poor's sake, (which is very rarely if ever the case) then, and under these circumstances, the selling all and giving it to the poor becomes a man's *duty*, or it is necessary to human perfection. But then, when, and where these circumstances do not take place, the chusing *extream poverty*, by divesting our selves of all property in worldly goods, in order to make others that are poor not so, or less so, is so far from being necessary to human perfection, that, on the contrary, it is in itself *an imperfection*, and is justly *blameable* and *condemnable*. *Extream poverty* is not in itself desirable, it is not the object of our choice when considered simply,
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and therefore, is never to be chosen for it's own sake; nor is it to be chosen in order to make others that are poor not so, or less so. For though, we are to love our neighbours *as our selves*, and consequently, are to pursue their happiness as well as our own; yet we are not to love them *better than our selves*, because we are, and ought to be as near and dear to our selves as our neighbours are, and because we have as good a title to the comforts of life as our neighbours can have; and therefore, it cannot possibly be our duty to love our neighbours better than our selves. So that though, the law of our nature requires that those who abound, should supply the necessities of those who want; yet it does not require that the former should change circumstances with the latter. Extream poverty and want are in themselves the proper objects of our *aversion* and *shunning*, and what we are to use all proper endeavours by labour, industry, and other means, to keep our selves from; and therefore, are never to be chosen by us, but when the *necessity* of the case requires it, supposing such necessitous cases may happen. So that were we to chuse extream poverty, by divesting our selves of all property in worldly goods, when the circumstances of the case does not require it, nor make it necessary, this would be so far from being *human perfection*, that, on the contrary, it would be *an imperfection*, as it would be a defect of duty towards our selves, and acting against the law of our nature, and, as such,

it would be justly blameable and condemn-able.

To this I may add, the declaration of our Lord, as it is referred to by St Paul, *Acts xx. 35. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.* Now if it is more blessed to give than to receive, as our Lord hath expressly declared it is; then, it is more blessed, or better to have it in our power to give, than to be in such circumstances as render it fit for us to receive; that is, it is more blessed, or better to be *rich*, than to be *poor*, and consequently, we ought not to change the former for the latter, and we shall be justly blameable if we do. So that according to this declaration of our Lord, the chusing extream poverty, by divesting our selves of all property in worldly goods, in order to make those that are poor not so, or less so, is so far from being human or Christian perfection, that, on the contrary, it is itself an *imperfection* and justly *blameable*. This is the opinion of our Lord Jesus Christ touching this matter. But then, how far the doctrines advanced by Papists, or by our present Methodists, are affected by it, I shall not enquire.

Having thus prepared the way, by shewing wherein human perfection consists, who are the poor, and how far divesting our selves of all property in worldly good things for the poors sake is necessary to human or Christian perfection;

perfection ; I think, it will not be hard nor difficult to discover the sense and meaning of our Lord's words, in the text under consideration : *viz. if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, &c.* St *Matthew* informs us, that one came unto Christ, and said unto him, *Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?* This question seems to be grounded on a vulgar error that took place among the Jews, namely, that there was a *particular* commandment, a strict obedience to which would excuse the neglect of the rest of the commandments, and would render a man acceptable to God. Our Lord, to correct this error, and to answer the man's question plainly and fully at the same time, told him that obedience to the *whole law* was that *good thing* ; and not a strict obedience to one branch of his duty, with a neglect of the rest, expressed in these words, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* This answer though plain and full, did not discharge the man's mind from the forementioned error, and therefore, it was not satisfactory to him ; he still thinking that there was one peculiar command that he must pay a strict obedience to, and this led him to put a *second* question, *viz. which of those commandments must he keep?* To which our Lord made a *second* reply, in which he did not express himself in general terms as before, but descended to particulars ; only these particulars related mostly to the negative parts of our duty,

duty, *viz.* what we are not to do, and not to what we are, as in these words, *Thou shalt do no murder; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal; &c.* The young man being conscious to himself that he had paid a strict regard to these negative parts of his duty, readily (and no doubt very honestly) replied, all these things have I kept from my youth up; but being in doubt whether this contained the whole of his duty, he therefore, put a *third* question, *viz.* What lack I yet? Our Lord being fully satisfied wherein his great defect lay, namely, in point of benevolence, answered him in these words, *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*

In this answer it is the same as if our Lord had said, if thou wilt be perfect, which consists in the discharge of thy whole duty, then, thou must not rest satisfied in paying obedience to the negative parts of it only, that is, in not doing evil; but thou must pay a strict and proper regard to the more noble parts of it, which consist in doing good. Thou must put on such a benevolent disposition of mind as will dispose thee to be concerned for, and to pursue thy neighbour's good and happiness as well as thy own; thou must render thy self as useful in the world as thou canst; by using thy abundance to supply the necessities of those who want, and by doing all that good to others which thy superior circumstances enable thee

to do. In a word, thou must love thy neighbours as thy self, which will engage thee to part with all for their sakes, if ever the circumstance of things should require it, or make it necessary. And if thou wilt do this when the circumstances of things shall require it, and which it is as much thy duty to do, as those other acts of obedience are that thou hast hitherto paid a strict regard to, then thou shalt have treasure in heaven, or, in other words eternal life. Or, if thou wouldst become my *disciple* in that *particular* and *special manner* as these men are whom thou now seest with me, by devoting thy person and property wholly to the service of mankind, in the exercise of that ministry I shall appoint thee to, and by thy yielding up life itself, for their sakes, when called to it, which is the highest act of benevolence thou canst perform, if it springs from a benevolent mind, and the highest degree of perfection thou canst attain to; then, thou must quit all worldly affairs, thou must expect, and therefore prepare thy self, to suffer reproach, and all manner of evil in the doing that work to which thou wilt be appointed; and thou must become my immediate and constant attendant. This, I think, is a just and true paraphrase of our Lord's words, or at most it is all that can fairly be collected or concluded from it.

As selling all and giving it to the poor, is one of the *highest acts* by which a true benevolent mind can shew itself; and as our Lord chose

chose to express the positive parts of that duty we owe to our neighbours in a few words; so he thought it proper to express the whole by one of the highest acts of duty of the kind. For, whoever from a true charitable or benevolent disposition of mind will part with all he possesses for the good of his fellow-creatures, when the case requires that he should, such a man will most certainly do all the lesser acts of duty of the same kind. And therefore, as our Lord chose to express all the positive duties we owe to our neighbours by *one act only*; so it was very suitable and proper that he should do it by one of the highest of the kind, as in the instance above. In like manner, when *St Paul* considers those actions that have the appearance of being benevolent, as distinct from that benevolent disposition of mind they ought to spring from, but do not, he makes use of the same instance, *1 Cor. xiii. 3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.* This, to appearance, is one of the highest acts of benevolence; and yet when it is the offspring of any other principle than a true benevolent mind, *St Paul* assures us, it stands for nought in God's account. And, as this is true in the instance of giving all to the poor; so it is equally the same of all lesser acts of like kind.

Our Lord expressed the same thing, with the like brevity, tho' in different words, upon another occasion, as in *Matt. xvi. 24. Then said*

said Jesus unto his disciples, *if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* By denying himself, I think, our Lord must mean, the rooting out of a man's heart that principle of *covetousness* or *vicious self-love*, which is the great corruption of human nature, and the governing principle in wicked men; and the possessing himself with the contrary disposition, *viz.* a truly *generous* or *benevolent* mind; it being this that renders us like our beneficent Creator, and therefore, truly acceptable to him. The young man referred to, his heart was so set upon his riches, that it was to him the greatest of evils to part with them, even when the case required that he should. And, this gave occasion for our Saviour to inform him, that if he would be perfect, he must not rest satisfied in having performed the negative parts of his duty only; but must perform the positive parts also. And, this likewise gave occasion for our Lord's remark, *viz. how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!* Great riches are apt to engross the hearts and affections of those who possess them, and this shuts up their bowels of tenderness and compassion to the rest of their fellow-creatures. And tho' a man's benevolent actions ought to be proportioned to his wealth and riches, and to the streightned circumstances of his neighbours; yet great possessions and great benevolence seldom meet in the same person; and this justifies

fies our Saviour's remark as aforesaid. Men, like the young man referred to, are too apt to rest satisfied with not having done evil, whereas, our Lord assures us, that as great a regard must be had for doing good, as for not doing evil, and that a defect in the *former*, as well as in the latter, will render us justly blameable and condemnable. *Matt. xxv. 41.* and so on. *Then shall he say also unto them on his left-hand, depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. — Verily, I say unto you, in as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.* A benevolent disposition is the most noble and God-like part of our nature, and, is therefore called the perfection of it. *Luke vi. 36.* *Be ye therefore merciful, (or kind and benevolent) as your Father is merciful;* which according to *St Matthew, chap. v. ver. 48.* is the same as to say, *be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* And, *St Paul saith, Romans xiii. 10.* that *love is the fulfilling of the law.* So that to be perfect, according to the sense and meaning of our Lord, is to put on such a benevolent disposition, as will dispose and engage us to pursue the good and happiness of
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our neighbours as well as our own, and so far as we have power and opportunity for doing it; and if the circumstances of things require it, to part with our all, in this world, for their sakes. *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*

The use that I would make of this discourse, is, to observe to my readers, that in my book intitled *The True Gospel of Jesus Christ asserted*, I summed up that good news which Christ was in a particular and special manner sent of God to acquaint the world with, under *three* heads or propositions, the *first* of which was this, *viz.* That *Christ requires, and recommends a conformity of mind and life to that rule of action that is founded in the reason of things; and makes or declares that compliance to be the sole ground of divine acceptance, and the only way to life eternal.* And, to prove or make good this proposition, I quoted the young man's question, that he put to our Lord, *viz.* *Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?* And likewise our Lord's plain and full answer to this important question, *viz.* *If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments;* and also the man's *second* question, with our Lord's *answer* to it. But then, though I did not relate the young man's *third* question, *viz.* *What lack I yet;* nor our Lord's *answer*, *viz.* *If thou wilt be perfect, &c.* because the *third* answer, like the *second*, was, as I

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apprehend,

apprehend, only an explanation of what our Lord had said in the *first* ; yet I did not stifle, suppress, or conceal it, supposing it to be against me, as the Reverend Dr *Stebbing* has very *unkindly* and *unjustly* represented, or at least insinuated I have done. However, as I have, in the foregoing Dissertation, shewed what I apprehended to be the sense and meaning of our Lord in his *answer* to the young man's *third* question ; so, I hope, I have hereby taken away the *ground* of Dr *Stebbing's* *complaint*, or rather *accusation* against me ; and have also farther *made good* the above proposition, *viz.* that Christ requires, and recommends a conformity of mind and life to that rule of action that is founded in the reason of things ; and makes or declares that compliance to be the sole ground of divine acceptance, and the only way to life eternal. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

From what I have offered, my readers may see, that though it may be a man's duty, under *some* circumstances, to sell what he hath and give it to the poor ; yet it is not *every* man's duty, under *all* circumstances ; nor has Christ made this the *ground* of our acceptance with God ; which yet he must have done, for this text to be *pertinently* urged against me. And, as to discipleship, I farther observe, that though to be a *disciple* of Christ, by being appointed, and sent forth to preach the Gospel to the world, in like manner as the *twelve* were, requires a man's quitting his worldly affairs,

affairs, his devoting himself wholly to the work of the Gospel, and his going up and down the world preaching it *freely to all* without distinction; yet to be Christ's *disciple* in like manner as Dr *Stebbing* professes himself to be, does not require this; or if it does, then, surely, the Doctor's conduct, as a *disciple* of Christ, is very preposterous; who has not only added to those worldly advantages which arise to him from his *two Livings* in *Norfolk*, and his being *Preacher* at *Grays-Inn*, what arises to him from the *Archdeaconry* of *Wilts*; but he is also adding what arises from the *Chancellorship* of the *Diocese* of *Sarum*; and which worldly advantages, no doubt, he stands disposed to *double*, or *treble*, if he has, or shall have, interest enough to answer that purpose. Good God! Is this selling all, and giving it to the poor? Is this taking up the Cross, and going out into the world, without purse, and without scrip, not having two coats, preaching the Gospel *freely* to all? Or, is it not rather, as the Prophet expresses it, (*Isaiab* v. 8.) *adding* house to house, and field to field? Or, like pulling down barns and building greater? Or, is it not like the horse-leech, which cries give, give, and is never satisfied? And, if selling all and giving it to the poor, be, at *all times* and under *all circumstances*, necessary to constitute a disciple of Christ; then, tho' Christians are *thick sown*, in this part of the world, yet they are very *thin sprung up*, seeing among that numberless multitude who have by their

sponsors renounced the world at the font, where they were received into the flock of Christ, few, very few, have ever had *this mark* of discipleship upon them: and then, the *extravagancies* of our present Methodists may well be admitted as *parts* of Christianity, which yet Dr *Stebbing* and others of our dignified Clergy have thought fit to oppose. Though, by the way, it is not altogether unusual for some of our Reverend Doctors of Divinity to be both for and against a thing, just as the point in view renders it expedient for them to be either. Thus, upon an occasion, and to serve a turn, such as the *waging war* with Mr *Whitefield*, or with any other person or party who go farther lengths in Enthusiasm or Superstition than the *present standard* of Orthodoxy will admit, upon such occasion these gentlemen are ready to call into their aid *reason* and *common sense*, and to plead for the use of these even in matters of religion; whereas upon other occasions, and when other, and perhaps contrary, purposes are to be served, then, the use of reason and common sense in matters of religion is not to be admitted, but these are to be exploded as carnal and unhallowed things.

That *new circumstances* and *new relations* introduce *new obligations* and *new duties*, is true; but then, this makes nothing against me, because those new duties and obligations naturally flow from those new circumstances and relations, and as such are founded in the *reason* of things;

things; and therefore, what Dr *Stebbing* has urged on the subject is *void of argument*. However, as the knowing what is the *true* sense and meaning of our Lord, in the text under consideration, is a matter of *importance* to Christians; and as Dr *Stebbing* has been pleased to introduce the subject, and has *drawn*, or rather *forced me* into an examination of it: so I hope he will carefully and attentively consider what I have offered upon it. And, I think, it behoves him either publickly to acknowledge that I have done *justice* to the text, or else shew plainly to the world that I have not. Though, perhaps, the Doctor may think such *fair practising as this* is more suitable to his *mere Heathen*, who has nothing but an *honest upright heart*, and a *virtuous life* to ground his expectation of God's favour and future happiness upon; than to an *orthodox Divine* who has the doctrines of *atonement, propitiation*, and the like, to be the authors of his hope.

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged, that Dr *Stebbing* is a *great man* *, and very much
my

* See a marginal note added to Dr *Stebbing's* Charge, where the Doctor says, that the author has not proved a point in a tract which the Doctor acknowledges he has not read; and the reason upon which this judgment of the Doctor's is grounded, is, that men greater than the author have not proved it. The author does not enter into the question whether Dr *Stebbing's* reasoning in the present case is conclusive, or not; but only observes, that as he (the author) does not put his abilities in competition with the abilities of any man; so he hopes to meet with other kind of usage from all other men of understanding, and that he shall not be condemned without being heard.

my superior; who, if I may be allowed to use the similitude, has been *trained in arms*, has been a *man of war* from his youth up until now; and therefore, his *bespeaking victory* is not to be wondered at. Yea, with regard to *John* viii. 24. he seems to claim the *triumphs of conquest*. For, if ye believe not that I am he, ye *shall* die in your sins. Though I do not understand Greek, yet, I think, I may venture to say, that the word which our Translators have rendered [shall] would with much greater propriety have been rendered [will] and then the text stands thus. For, if ye believe not that I am he, ye *will* die in your sins. Our Lord, in this passage, did not take upon him to denounce the judgment of *damnation* upon the *wicked Jews*, for their not believing him to be the *Messiah*; but only shewed them what would be the *consequence* of such infidelity. For, if they would not be prevailed upon to believe that he was the *Christ*, then there was no reason to expect that they would *attend* to his *message*, which called them to repentance and amendment of life. And therefore, seeing without *this faith* they would not *repent* and *amend*, which is the *only ground* of God's mercy to sinners, the consequence is clear, *they would die in their sins*; not the *sin of infidelity*, but the *sins* they had been *antecedently* guilty of; or they would suffer the punishment due for them. Let not he who *girds* on his armour *boast*, as he who *puts it off*.

I am

I am sensible, there is lately introduced a distinction among Christians, *viz.* those who are *for*, and those who are *against* the *mediatorial* scheme, as it is called. This gives me an occasion to observe, that I readily acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ to be a *mediator* strictly and properly so called. That is, as a *middle* or an *indifferent person*, and not being either of the parties concerned, he has stood in the breach, and made up the difference, or has endeavoured to make it up, betwixt an *offended God*, and his *offending creatures men*; by stipulating or propounding the terms and conditions of agreement and reconciliation betwixt them; by proposing to men those motives or arguments of persuasion which are proper to engage them to accept of God's mercy and favour upon the terms propounded; and by representing to them what will be the sad consequences of their refusal; this being *all* as a mediator, or middle person, he *could do*, or that it *behoved him to do* in the present case. For, had he went *farther*, and put himself in the place, and acted the part of either of the parties concerned; then he would have acted *out of character* as a mediator, and would have personated a *principal*, or one of the parties interested in the case. As thus, supposing he had personated the *offenders*, and had suffered in their place and stead, (admitting such a thing could be) in such a case, he would have acted quite out of character as an indifferent, or middle person, or mediator, and would have

have behaved as a principal, or party concerned in that quarrel or dispute he was to be a mediator in, and which, by his mediation, he was to put an end to. I shall not proceed farther, in exposing a *pretended* mediatorial scheme of Christianity, which some of our dignified Clergy contend for, the grand characteristicks of which are absurdity and confusion.

I am likewise sensible, that our Lord Jesus Christ faithfully executed the office, discharged the trust, and finished the work which he was appointed to, by his Father; for which faithful obedience he has his reward; *God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, viz. that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* But then, the question is, what is this to Dr *Stebbing* or me? Is he, or am I, more or less valuable on account of any thing of this? Or is either of us more, or less the proper object of God's mercy and favour with respect to it? Surely, Dr *Stebbing* cannot but know that we are not. And if so, then what colour of reason can be assigned why any thing of this should be placed either to his, or my account? And this leads me to put those questions, *viz.* can a man of understanding, who carefully considers, and duly attends to the subject, think, that God will act so very preposterously, so contrary to nature, as to love and approve of one agent, for what is lovely and approvable in the person

of

of another? Or that he will hate and detest one agent, for what was hateful and detestable in the person of another? This, surely, is hard to conceive.

And as Dr *Stebbing*, and the rest of the Clergy have taken upon them to be *guides* to the people, in the affair of *salvation*; so, surely, it becomes them to take *great heed* to their *ministry*, lest they should prove the *betrayers* of mens souls, which, I think, all those are who teach such doctrines as lead men to *hope* for the obtaining of God's mercy and favour in *any other way*, or upon *any other grounds*, than the rendering themselves the *suitable and proper objects of both*; because this is pointing out to men such grounds of reliance, as will most certainly disappoint their trust. It is not enough to say in the present case, that those who teach men to rely on the merits and intercession of Christ for mercy and salvation at the hands of God, do also teach that men must also repent and live well, or else they will have no share in that mercy and salvation; I say, it is not sufficient to urge this, because, notwithstanding this, experience shews that men are too apt to rely upon the former, without the latter. Like as in the Church of *Rome*, though *repentance* is made the express condition of *absolution*; yet men rest satisfied in having the latter, without the former. These are therefore dangerous doctrines, and may prove fatal to mens souls. I will therefore take the liberty to remind the *teachers*

among Christians, of what denomination soever they be, that if the Gospel of Christ be according to *truth*, and the *word of God*, (which Gospel they consider themselves to be preachers of) then, we are assured by it, not only that God will *judge the world*, and that he will do it by *Jesus Christ*, but also that he will judge it *in righteousness*, and that he will render to every man, not according to the rectitude, or erroneousness of his judgment in matters of speculation, nor according to the merits or intercession that is made to him by another; but only according as every man's *own works* shall be, whether they be *good*, or whether they be *evil*. Now, if this be the truth of the case, which it must be if the Gospel be true; then nothing can be more evident than this, namely, that *personal valuableness* is the *only ground* of our acceptance with God. I say, nothing can be more apparent. However, I am sensible, that *education*, and *old rooted prejudices* have a very great byass on the understandings and judgments of men, and that these are a *strong bar* against a careful, and free examination of any subject that is contrary to them. But then these are not the *only things* that bar up the way to truth; for, according to an old proverb, there are none so blind as those who will not see. Mens vitiated affections, and particularly a vicious self-love, lead them to *wish* and *hope* that they shall find mercy and favour at the hands of their Maker, through something that is external to themselves,

selves, through something that they have not, because they have nothing valuable in themselves to recommend them; and this disposes them to embrace the most *palpable* errors, and to close their eyes that they *cannot*, or *will not*, see the most *obvious* truths. I shall conclude this discourse with a very melancholy reflexion, namely, that as the Christian Religion is too much become a *mere faction*, the votaries to which have a *party* and an *interest* to support; so this becomes a *powerful*, and, it is to be feared, that sometimes it proves a *prevailing temptation*, to some of them, to turn the truth of God into a lie.



The year 1773 was a year of
 great distress to the
 colonies. The British
 government had imposed
 the Stamp Act, which
 required that all
 printed matter be
 stamped with a tax.
 This act was met with
 great opposition, and
 led to the formation
 of the Stamp Act
 Congress in 1765.
 The British government
 refused to repeal the
 act, and the colonies
 eventually declared
 their independence in
 1776.

1773

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Handwritten text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The characters are faint and difficult to decipher but appear to be arranged in several lines.

Additional handwritten text at the bottom of the page, also appearing to be bleed-through. It includes some faint lines and possibly a signature or date.

An ANSWER to a PRIVATE LETTER, &c.

S I R,

I Received your Letter, but whether it will be in my power to contribute any thing towards a removal of that perplexity you complain of, I cannot say. In the case you refer to, you seem to me, to *presume* a point, without offering a *sufficient reason* to ground that presumption upon. The point presumed, is, that God does certainly foreknow every thing that will be; and the reason you ground it upon, is, that the want of such foreknowledge implies an imperfection, which, you think, cannot be the case with respect to God, and therefore, you presume as above. To which, I think, it will be sufficient to answer, that if the actions of free beings are not in the nature of the thing foreknowable; then, it cannot possibly be an imperfection in God for him not to foreknow what is not foreknowable in nature; because such foreknowledge is impossible. So that this point must *first* be proved, *viz.* that the actions of free beings are in the nature of the thing foreknowable, before the want of such prescience can justly be deemed an imperfection.

God is *actually present* to every thing that is, in every part of space; and, hereby, he has a
perfect

perfect *knowledge* or *perception* of every thing that is. God *has been* also actually present to every thing that *has been*, in every part of space, and through every point of duration that is past; and, from hence, I think, we may justly conclude that God has likewise the most perfect *remembrance* of every thing that has been, through every point of duration that is past, because every thing that has existed *has been* actually present to him, and perceived by him. But then, God *is not* actually present to any thing that *will be*, in any point of duration to come; and therefore, we have not the like ground for concluding that he perfectly *foreknows* every thing that will be, as we have for concluding that he perfectly *remembers* every thing that has been. So that, tho' the divine *Omnipresence* is a proper and a sufficient foundation to ground these propositions upon, *viz.* that God certainly *knows* every thing that is, because he is actually present with it; and, that he perfectly *remembers* every thing that has been, because he has been actually present with it, and it has been actually perceived by him; yet, it does not appear, that the divine *Omnipresence* lays a foundation for us to conclude, with equal certainty that God perfectly *foreknows* every thing that will be, because *he is not* actually present to any thing that will be, in any point of duration to come.

If it should be said, that, tho' God is not actually present to any thing that will be; yet God can certainly *prejudge*, or *determine* what he himself will do, what free agents he will
call

call into being, and what will be the constitutions, dispositions, and tempers of such agents; and, that this is a proper and a sufficient foundation in nature for God perfectly to foreknow, or infallibly prejudge, (which comes to the same) what every agent will chuse to do, in every point of duration to come. Answer, *first*, this is *begging the question*, because the particular constitution, disposition, and temper of a person, may *result* from the temperance or intemperance of his parent, or from other like causes; which causes were the produce of the parent's free election or choice. So that here the point is presumed, or taken for granted, which is in dispute, and ought to be proved. Again, I answer *secondly*, admitting what is here presumed, but not proved, *viz.* that God does *foreknow* what will be the particular constitution, disposition, and temper of every free being that will exist, it will not follow from hence that he can *infallibly prejudge* what every free being will chuse to do, in every point of duration to come. I say, that this consequence does not necessarily follow. For, tho' the particular constitution, disposition, and temper of each individual, may afford, or introduce *particular motives* or excitements to action; yet seeing the will is not *necessarily determined* by those motives, but may and does chuse to act in *opposition*, sometimes to one motive, and sometimes to another, and thus, in turn, in opposition to them all, which occasions that mixture of *good* and *bad*, of *wise* and *foolish* actions, of which most, if not all, mens characters

acters are compounded; therefore, a foreknowledge or prejudgment of the particular constitution, &c. does not appear to be a *sufficient foundation* in nature, for such *prescience* as is here supposed. So that, I think, it is not very clear and plain that we have where-with in nature or reason to ground, with certainty, this proposition upon, *viz.* that God does perfectly foreknow, or infallibly prejudge what every free being will chuse to do, in every point of duration to come.

But admitting that God does foreknow, or prejudge as aforesaid, if our actions have *no dependance* upon the divine prescience, as, most certainly, they have not; then, our *liberty* cannot possibly be affected by it, (which yet you seem to think it is) prescience and liberty being *as consistent* as any two things in nature can be. You add, for what God foreknows *will be*, cannot *but be*. Answer, if by [cannot but be] you mean no more than [will be] then, it is true, tho' it answers no purpose; because it amounts to no more than this, *viz.* what will be, will be. But if by [cannot but be] you mean [it must be from an absolute necessity in the nature of things] then, in this sense, it is not true. Let it be admitted, that God perfectly foreknows, or infallibly prejudges that there will be a *future judgment*; in this case, a future judgment will be so far from being the *result* of any absolute necessity in the nature of things, that, on the contrary, it will result wholly from God's *free election* or *choice*. So that, tho' God certainly foreknows there
will

will be a judgment to come; yet there may not be a judgment to come, with regard to any absolute necessity in the nature of things for such a judgment, because a judgment to come, will not result from such necessity, but from the free determination of the Deity, as I have already observed.

But farther, admitting that God does foreknow, or infallibly prejudge every thing that will be, and, consequently, foreknows that some free beings will abuse their liberty, to their own hurt; yet, I think, this should not have been a reason to him, as a just, wise, and good being, to have with-held his hand from giving being to them, which yet, you seem to think, it ought to have done. Suppose *five* persons in a boat upon the water to be in such danger, as that without *your interposition* they must all perish; and supposing it to be in your power to save them, but that you could not save some, without saving them all; and supposing you foreknew, or could infallibly prejudge, that *two* of the *five* would abuse your kindness to their greater hurt, so that, upon the whole, it would be better for them to perish in the waters, than to have life lengthened out to them: in this case, the questions would be, what you ought *in reason* to do, under such circumstances, or what a just, wise, and good being must do, to *act suitably* to such a character; whether he must *save them all*, or let them *all perish*. If you save them all, this would be acting a *kind* and a *good* part by them, as it would save their lives, and put it into

their power to improve the kindness to their greater future good. And, whereas *two* of the *five* would, upon the whole, be sufferers; yet that would not be the effect, of your kindness, but the produce of their own free election or choice. This would be the state of the case, supposing you saved them all. If you suffered them all to perish, then indeed, it would, in the event, prove a *negative* good to *two* of them, as by it they would be prevented from bringing upon themselves a future greater evil, which otherwise would be their case. But then, this would be acting a most *unkind* and *cruel* part by the other *three*, who would not only lose their lives, but would also be barred the enjoyment of such future greater good, as otherwise they would have procured to themselves. This is the state of the case, supposing you suffered them all to perish. In the *former* of these cases, there is no *injustice* done, nor *unkindness* shewed to any; whereas in the *latter* case, your conduct, to say the least, would be *greatly unkind* to *three* of the *five*, who, I think, ought not in reason to be *barred* your goodness, because *two* of the company would abuse it to their greater hurt.

This, I think, may very justly be applied to the conduct of the Deity, in the *creation*, and *government* of the intelligent and moral world. God has called into being a multitude of agents, who are the subjects of moral government, on purpose that they might attain to *happiness*; but has left it to *their option* whether that end should be obtained by them, or not. And, tho' he
fore-

foreknew, or prejudged that *some* of those agents, (the number of which I hope will be *greatly short* of *two* in *five*) would abuse his kindness to their much greater hurt; yet, surely, that ought not in reason to have *barred* his goodness to the whole, by with-holding his hand from giving being to them; seeing that would have been a very *great hardship* and an *injury* to all those who will answer the *true ends* of being to themselves. And as to the others, who will, in the event, and upon the whole, be sufferers by existing, the blame will rest wholly upon themselves, because their misery will be wholly of their own procuring. As to the *duration* of that punishment which will be inflicted on wicked men in another world, and which you seem to startle at; all, I think, that can with any *certainty* be determined concerning it is only this, *viz.* that whatever *conclusions* men may draw from the *lofty* and *figurative* language of the New Testament in this respect; yet we are sure that the judge of all the earth will *do right*, and therefore, there cannot possibly be any reasonable ground of complaint.

If the foregoing reflexions prove successful, by removing the perplexity you complain of, my end is answered, who am, Sir, your's to serve,

Sarum, August 7,
1739.

THOMAS CHUBB.

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TRUE G O S P E L
O F
J E S U S C H R I S T
A S S E R T E D.

Wherein is shewn, what is and what is not that Gospel; what was the great and good end it was intended to serve; how it is excellently suited to answer that purpose; and how, or by what means, that end has in a great measure been frustrated.

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By *THOMAS CHUBB.*

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The SECOND EDITION.

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M D C C X L I.

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T H E
A U T H O R
T O H I S
R E A D E R S.

SIRS, I have in the following tract shewn you what was the great end, and the professed design, of our Lord Jesus Christ's coming into the world; and of what he did, and suffered in it, from it, and for it, viz. to save mens souls. I have likewise shewn you what method Christ took, and the means he made use of, in order to obtain that end. And, in the doing of this, I have also shewn you, what is strictly and properly the true gospel of Jesus Christ, or what is that good news which he was sent of God to acquaint the world with. And

as there has been of late great complaining of the growth of infidelity, and of the bold attacks made by Unbelievers upon Christianity, and of the idleness, weakness, and unfairness, of what has been urged on that head; and as many other persons have been engaged in its defence (though possibly what has been urged in favour of Christianity, may have been, in many instances, as idle and weak as what has been urged against it): so from your perusal of the annexed treatise, you will be better qualified to discern whether the main points in dispute, and the chief and principal things contended for, and against, be real Christianity, and the true gospel of Christ; or whether they be not rather, and in the main, the doctrines and commandments, and the interest and power, of men, which some zealously oppose, and others as zealously defend. Alas! there is sometimes great zeal pretended to be shewn for Christianity, when there is just ground to presume

presume that the true gospel of Jesus Christ is least at heart. Mens worldly possessions, their power, and pre-eminence, are what they value, and think worth contending for; and that such contention may appear with the better grace, Christianity is brought in to countenance it. But let this be as it will.

What is contained, in the following tract the whole body of mankind are manifestly interested in; and this has induced me to offer it to publick consideration. I do likewise particularly recommend it to the serious consideration of all those who esteem themselves, or are esteemed by others, to be ministers of Jesus Christ, and preachers of his gospel. And the reason of this is, because the subject of it, as it enters into those important questions, viz. what is, and what is not, the true gospel of Jesus Christ, is what they, as preachers of Christ and his gospel, are particularly interested in, and if it should appear

pear to be erroneous, are particularly concerned to refute. I do also beg leave more especially to recommend it to the consideration of all those who have obtained the reputation of being the great Defenders of Christianity; because, I think, they are more especially concerned to examine it, in order to see whether it has been real and true Christianity they have been engaged in the defence of, or not. And,

As I have pursued this work with the utmost fairness and freedom, and with a strict regard to truth wherever it might lead me, or whomsoever I might oppose by it, and under a well-grounded persuasion, and with a serious regard to a future judgment and retribution: so I intreat my Examiners to do the like, and then I doubt not but what is here offered will appear in a different light, and have a different effect upon their minds than otherwise it would have. I do likewise intreat my readers

ers to consider, that to look upon a future judgment and retribution only as a proper topick for argument; as something that has upon the foot of reason more to be said for it, than can be said against it; as something we are obliged to revelation for the certainty of (though I think that is a mistake); as a subject which affords matter for a man handsomely to harangue half an hour in a pulpit upon, and the like, is one thing; and for a man to pay such a serious regard to it, as that it becomes a ground or reason of action to him, which rightly directs and governs his mind and life, this is quite another thing. And yet, where the latter of these is wanting, there faith is the same as infidelity with respect to any good purpose that is served by it. Alas! a future judgment and retribution seem to be things rather to be talked and boasted of, than to be a ground or reason of action, or to be seriously regarded by Christians. Though, I hope, this will
not

not be the case of my Examiner; for if it should, I fear, I shall come but poorly off.

I have in the following sheets shewn what are the true grounds of our acceptance with God; and likewise what are the true grounds upon which sinners may reasonably expect to obtain the divine mercy; and these surely must be allowed to be points in which all mankind are nearly concerned. I have likewise in the following tract rendered the gospel of Christ defendable upon rational principles, by separating from it those things which have been blended with it, and which thereby have laid a foundation for most of those difficulties and objections which have been urged against it. And yet, notwithstanding, (such is the humour of the age,) I may possibly be deemed and represented as an Unbeliever, and an enemy to that gospel; than which surely nothing can be more unjust, or ungenerous. However, I will so far interest

terest myself in the cause of unbelievers, (if any such there are among us,) as to say, they ought to have justice done them; and if they have any thing to offer against Christianity as the ground of their infidelity, they ought to be heard and answered in the spirit of the gospel of Christ, which is a spirit of meekness, forbearance, and love. I am sensible the common cry is, that it is not mens perceiving any difficulties which attend the divinity of the Christian Revelation, but it is their love to their vices which is the ground and cause of their infidelity; though this is a presumption which, I think, does not appear to be well-grounded. For if a man be disposed to follow his vicious inclinations, without any disturbance from others, or reluctance in his own mind; then certainly he is most secure of this, by his strictly adhering, with regard to his opinions, to the established religion of his Country, let that be what it will, and not to deviate from it in any point. For

then as he may be as vicious as he pleases without rendering himself remarkable, or drawing on him the watchful eyes of others: so it is but to strain the sense of the Revelation publickly adhered to, and he may find out several ways to render the practice of vice easy to himself. This has been too much, and too often the case among Christians; many of them by applying to themselves the virtue and merit of a strong faith, or by a warm zeal for a party, (which they are apt to consider as contending for truth and true religion,) or by a constant attendance on some external observances, or by the application of the good works; or sufferings, of some other person or persons to themselves, or the like, have rendered their minds easy under the practice of the vilest actions. And as such principles introduce into mens minds a groundless peace and satisfaction, even whilst they indulge themselves in a vicious course of life: so those principles are usually ground-

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ed upon the mistaken sense, or the misapplication of some part or parts of the Christian Revelation. Whereas if a man differs from the established religion of his country, and becomes an Unbeliever; then every watchful eye is turned upon him, and every fault in his conduct is as it were registered in a book, and remembered against him upon all occasions. And as reason or the religion of nature disapproves and condemns every vice: so if the Unbeliever reflects seriously upon his actions after the commission of them, he must stand condemned in his own mind, and has no sanctuary to fly to, to render that weight and burthen easy to himself. and if a man does not reflect seriously upon his actions, then as he has no reluctancy of mind: so the case is the same whether he be a Believer, or an Unbeliever. And as I have thus far interested myself in the cause of Unbelievers: so I beg leave to observe one thing to them, viz. that the starting a few difficulties is not a rational, and therefore is not a sufficient ground for
setting

setting aside the Christian, or any Revelation, if what is offered in its favour carries with it the greater and higher degree of probability. When any question admits of a dispute, common justice requires that every thing should be brought into the case which makes either for, or against that question; and wherever upon a fair comparison, the greater and higher degree of probability lies, that ought in reason to determine our judgments, either for or against that question.

THE
TRUE GOSPEL
OF
JESUS CHRIST
ASSERTED.

SECTION I.

THE *great end* and the *professed design* of our Lord Jesus Christ as to his coming into the world, and with respect to what he has revealed to it, performed in it, and suffered from it, and for it, is manifestly and apparently this, *viz.* to *save mens souls*; that is, it is to prepare men for, and to insure to them the *favour of God*, and their *happiness* in another world, and to prevent them from bringing *great and lasting misery* upon themselves. And that this is the truth of the case is most evident from Christ's own repeated declarations concerning this matter. *Matth. xviii. 11. For the son of man is come to save that which was lost. Luke ix. 56. For the son of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them. Chap. xix. 10. For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. John iii. 16, 17. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son;*
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that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world thro' him might be saved. Chap. v. 24. Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation: but hath passed from death unto life. Chap. vi. 40. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. Chap. x. 10. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. Chap. xii. 47. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I am not come to judge the world, but to save it. From these and such like declarations which Christ has made, it is most evident and apparent, not only that men by their vices and wickedness had rendered themselves unworthy of God's favour, and had exposed themselves to his just displeasure; but also that the great end and the professed design which Christ came into the world to prosecute, was to procure their salvation; which in other words is the same as to say, that his great end and design was to prepare men for, and to insure to them, the favour of God, and their happiness in another world; and to prevent them from being greatly and lastingly miserable. And,

As this was the main or chief end which Christ came into the world to prosecute; so in consequence thereof, and thereby in a secondary and less proper sense, he may be said to come into the world to promote and secure the present well-being of mankind; namely, to lead men to present pleasure,

sure, and to secure them from *present misery*, as the pleasures and pains of this world, are generally *connected* with the pains and pleasures of another; that is, what fits and prepares a man for future felicity, generally *tends* to make him easy and happy here; and what exposes a man to the miseries of another world, generally *tends* to make him unhappy and miserable in this. And in this view of the case, Christianity may as truly be said to be subservient to mens *present* as to their *future* well-being; not by investing any Christian with any *temporal power* or *jurisdiction* over his brethren or fellow Christians, out of which his present good or temporal advantage might arise; but only by engaging each and every individual to put on *such* a temper of mind, and *such* a behaviour, as renders each person a *blessing* to *himself*, and to *society*, and from which temper and behaviour the *present temporal good* of each individual generally flows. Christianity was not intended, and therefore it has made no provision, for the investing any *Christian*, nor any *set*, or *order*, or *body of men* amongst Christians, with any the *least degree of temporal power* or *wealth*, any otherwise than as it engages each individual in the practice of that *virtue* which may render him worthy to be intrusted with the *former* in civil society, and as it leads him to that *diligence*, *industry*, and *frugality*, which is productive of the *latter*. And,

As the grand design of Christ and the Christian revelation is to promote the future good and being of mankind, and not the present interest of any person, but only as the latter is connected with, and naturally flows, from the former: so whenever the *name* or the *revelation* of Christ is

made use of to support and carry on the *temporal interest* of any Christian, or any set, or order, or body of men among Christians, by investing them with any the least degree of *temporal power* out of which their *present interest* might arise, this is manifestly an *abuse* of the name and of the revelation of Christ, by making these subservient to other and contrary purposes than what they were intended. I would not be understood to mean that Christians as Christians have not a right to make use of the name and the revelation of Christ, by way of *argument* or *motive* in order to persuade and engage each other to the practice of *justice*, *gratitude*, and *benevolence*, out of which the temporal good of many Christians must arise, there being in these cases no temporal power or jurisdiction at all; but what I intend is, that no Christian considered as a Christian, and by virtue of his being such, has any *coercive power* or *jurisdiction* over the *persons* or *properties* of any other Christians, so as to have a right *forcibly* to oblige them to any thing, or to *mult* or *punish* them for their non-compliance, Christ not having *delegated* any such power; and when, or wherever it has been claimed and exercised, it has been *subversive* of the great end and purpose of his coming, and of his preaching and ministry; that is, it has been *injurious* to the *present* and *future happiness* of mankind.

To *believe in*, and to submit to be *governed* by the *laws* of Christ, is what, and what alone, constitutes a *Christian*; and it is this which *contracts* the relation betwixt Christ and his people. Whoever therefore believes in, and submits to be governed by the laws of Christ, by
this

this he becomes a Christian or a member of the body of Christ; and he is *more* or *less* a Christian, or rather he is a *better* or a *worser* Christian, as he *more* or *less* submits himself to be governed by *Christ's laws*; and when he throws up *all subjection* to the laws of Christ, and *refuses* to be governed by them, he then ceases to be a Christian, or a member of the body of Christ, let his professions and pretensions be what they will. Christ stands to his people in the relation of a *governour*, as he was appointed and sent of God to declare to men what that *rule of action* is, which they are to govern their *tempers* and *behaviours* by, and which will render them *pleasing* to their Maker; and as he is appointed their *judge* to call them to an account for their actions, and to *reward* or *punish* them in another world according as they have behaved themselves in this; and it is *mens subjecting* themselves to *Christ*, that is, to that *law of reason* or *rule of righteousness* which Christ specially requires their compliance with, that contracts the *relation* betwixt him and them, and which denominates him to be their *head*, that is, their governour; and they to be his *body*, that is, his subjects or people. So that Christians as Christians have no *other head*, that is, they have no other authoritative power or governour over them, but their *one common head* or governour, *viz. Christ Jesus our Lord*; and they have no other *law*, considered as Christians, but the laws of *Christ* to direct their behaviour by. And,

As a Christian considered as such, is subjected only to the *laws of Christ*: so he is only *answerable* to *Christ*, and not to any Christian, nor

to any set, or order, or body of men among Christians for the *breach* of them. Christ is constituted to be, not only the *sole law-giver*, but also the *sole judge* of the behaviour of his people; and therefore his people are only answerable *to him* for the breach of his laws. And though the laws of Christ require the performance of *relative* and other duties; yet Christ hath not *invested* any Christian, nor any body of men among Christians, with a *right* to call any of his people to an account for the breach of his laws, so as to have a right to *correct* and *punish* them for their non-compliance. I would not be understood to mean that Christians as Christians have not a right to *reprove* and *admonish* one another, with respect to their breach of the law of Christ, and to make use of all proper methods by way of *argument* and *perswasion*, in order to bring the transgressors of Christ's laws to repentance and reformation of their evil ways, there being in such cases no temporal power or jurisdiction at all; but what I intend is, that as Christ is constituted the sole judge of the actions of his people, so it is his *peculiar prerogative* to punish them for the breach of his laws. The *sanctions* annexed to, and which are designed to enforce *obedience* to the laws of Christ, are not the pleasures and pains of *this world*, but the happiness and misery of *another*; and Christ will in his *own person*, at the proper time, *viz.* at the *day of judgment*, call his people to an account for their behaviour, and will reward or punish them according as they shall have acted agreeably with or contrary to those laws. I say, that the sanctions annexed to the laws of Christ are not the pleasures and pains of
 this

this world; any otherwise than as our obedience or disobedience to Christ's laws is of itself; and by its own natural tendency *subservient* to our present happiness or misery. And therefore, if any *Christian*, or any *body* of men among Christians, should take upon him, or them, to inflict any *temporal* punishment upon any of their fellow Christians, for their breach of any of the laws of Christ, considered as the laws of Christ; this is plainly to *invert* the order of things, by annexing *other* and *contrary* sanctions to the laws of Christ than he has annexed to them; by *judging* and *punishing* before the time; and by the members assuming an *authority*, and exercising a *power* which peculiarly belongs to *Christ* their head. And,

As believing in, and submitting to be governed by the laws of Christ is what alone constitutes a Christian: so in this every person is, and must be, a *voluntier*, it not being in the power of any man, nor any set, or order, or body of men, to *believe in*, and *obey* the laws of Christ, in, and by, or for the *person of another*. Neither can any man, or body of men, *force faith* or *subjection*, in, and from the person of another; seeing faith is, and must be the produce of *conviction*, and obedience to the laws of Christ must be *voluntary*, for otherwise it is not, neither can it be *Christian obedience*. To perform an action which the law of Christ requires, because the *law* of the *state*, or any human judicial power requires the performance of the same action, and because the law of the state, or such judicial power *threatens*, and will punish our disobedience; this is not obedience, to the laws of Christ, but only to the *law*

law of the *state*, or to such *human* judicial power as required, and was the ground of that obedience. And as every Christian is and must be a voluntier, for otherwise he is not strictly and properly a Christian: so he is such *independent* of the will and determination of any Christian, or any order of men among Christians; it not being in their power to make him *so*, or to make him *otherwise*. I would not be understood to mean, that it is not in the power of any one man, by *argument*, by *perswasion*, by *example*, and the like, to *encourage* and *invite* men to a *compliance* with the laws of Christ, or to *lead* or *draw* them *off* from their *subjection* to him; but what I mean is, that as every Christian is and must be such voluntarily and of his own choice, in opposition to the will or choice of any other person or persons who may be supposed to chuse for him; so he is such independently, that is, it does not depend upon the will and pleasure of any other person or persons whether he shall be a *Christian*, or *not*, it not being in the power of any person or persons to *christianize* or *unchristianize* a man as they please, but it depends upon every man's *own pleasure*, (in opposition to *all others* who may be supposed to chuse for him, or force him, or determine against him,) whether he will obey the laws of Christ, or not; and consequently whether he will be a Christian, or not. And,

As the relation betwixt Christ and his people is contracted by their believing in, and submitting to be governed by his laws: so the same thing contracts the relation of *brotherhood* betwixt one Christian and another. Men do not in this case,

case become related to *Christ* by their relation to, and union with *each other*; but on the contrary they become related to *each other* only and wholly by their union with, and their relation to *Christ*. So that brotherhood in the present case does not arise from, nor depend upon, the will and pleasure of any or *all* the members of that body; but wholly and solely upon *each one's* relation to the *head, Christ*; he being the *center* of unity to the whole. And though any particular society among Christians may *excommunicate*, that is, *exclude* any individual from being a member of that particular society, and thereby *disown* their brotherly relation to him as a Christian: yet this does not *destroy* that relation, nor make him *less* a Christian than he was before; because his relation to *Christ*, and to *them* as a Christian brother in consequence thereof does not arise from, nor depend upon, their *opinion* of him, nor their *behaviour* towards him, but only by his *believing in*, and submitting to be *governed* by *Christ's laws*, which such acts of excommunication does not affect at all. And,

As Christians stand to each other in the relation of *brethren only*, and not in the relation of *masters* and *servants* to each other, considered as Christians: so there is no such thing as *greater* or *less* among Christians, considered as such, any otherwise than as the Christian revelation has a *greater* or *less* influence upon their minds and lives, and thereby the *end* and *purpose* of that revelation is *more* or *less* answered upon them. For tho' one Christian may by his being called to perform some *good offices* towards his fellow Christians (such as to *teach* and *admonish* them

and the like), or by his being intrusted with *superior abilities* to serve his fellow Christians, than some other Christians may be called to, or be entrusted with; I say, tho' this may enable one Christian to be *more useful* and *serviceable* to his fellow Christians than other Christians are capable of being; yet this does not give those who are called to any office in a Christian society, or who are intrusted with superior abilities to serve it, any *power, authority, jurisdiction, or pre-eminence*, over their fellow Christians; but on the contrary they stand to them in *these circumstances* only as *brethren* in Christ Jesus; that is, they are upon a foot of *perfect equality* in these respects. And therefore though Christ and his revelation may be truly said to be subservient to the *present* happiness of mankind; yet it is not by his investing any *Christian, nor any set, or order, or body of men* among Christians, with a *right of dominion* over the *persons or properties* of their brethren out of which their *present* interest might arise (he not having made any *such investiture*); but it is by his engaging his disciples and followers to be *wise and good men*, upon which their *own present* happiness, and their beneficialness to *society* does apparently depend.

This, I say, is the state of Christ's Church and people at *present*, even before his *second coming*. He stands to his people in the relation of a *Governour*, as he has represented to them, and pressed their *obedience* to that rule of action which they ought in reason to govern their behaviour by; and as he will call them to an *account* for their actions, and will reward or punish them in another world, according to their behaviour here; and

and they become his people by their chusing to be governed by those laws. So that Christ's kingdom, at present, does not consist in the exercise of any temporal power or jurisdiction over the persons and properties of his people; but it is a dominion over the consciences of men, founded only on argument and persuasion; mens consciences are first brought into subjection to Christ, by argument and persuasion, and then their persons and properties, their affections and actions are, not forced, but voluntarily subjected to him, as being directed and governed by his laws, and thereby are engaged in his service, and this is strictly and properly Christian obedience. The Jews and Romans thought by Christ's taking to himself the title of King that he assumed such temporal power and jurisdiction over the persons and properties of men, as the princes and potentates of the earth exercised over their subjects, and in this view of the case they considered him as an enemy to Cesar: but he assured them that, at present, this was not the case, and that such his temporal kingdom was not of this age; for if it were then would his servants have fought for him, that he might not have been delivered to the Jews. What sort of power Christ will assume at his second coming, when that kingdom shall come which he hath taught his people to pray for; when he shall take to himself his great power and reign; when the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of God, and of his Christ, is beside the purpose of my present enquiry. What I observe is that as Christ, as yet, has not assumed nor exercised such a temporal dominion over his people, but only a dominion over their consciences, result-

ing from, and founded only on *argument* and *perswasion*: so neither has he *communicated* any such *temporal* power or dominion to *others*; and consequently not any *Christian*, nor any *set*, or *order*, or *body of men* among Christians, considered as Christians, and by virtue of their being such, have any *right of dominion* over the *persons* or *properties* of their brethren.

S E C T. II.

AS the great end and the professed design of Christ's appearing in the world, and of his delivering a divine revelation to it, was to save mens souls (as I have before shewn): so surely this is an *end* most *excellent* and *valuable* in itself, and most *worthy* of him who undertook the prosecution of it. Happiness is the proper object of desire to every intelligent dependent being, and misery is the proper object of their aversion and shunning; and therefore every such being is naturally led to chuse and pursue the one, and avoid the other; though thro' their folly they often disappoint themselves. So that whoever contributes to the introduction, preservation, or increase of happiness; or to the prevention, lessening, or removal of misery; such an one is a *benefactor* to the *intelligent world*. And as happiness or misery may be *more* or *less general*, *intense*, or *durable*: so the benefaction in contributing to the introduction, preservation, or increase of the one, or to the prevention, lessening, or removal of the other, is *greater* or *less* in proportion.

tion. And when *all* these circumstances take place in the same case in a *very high*, or in the *highest degree*; this prodigiously *magnifies* that benefaction. And this is plainly the case with respect to our Lord Jesus Christ in his undertaking for mankind, in which he proposes and endeavours not only to introduce and procure the *greatest* and the most *durable* happiness, and to prevent the *severest* and most *lasting* misery; but also to answer these gracious purposes to a *whole race* of moral agents, or at least to as many of them whose unhappy circumstances require it; consequently he is *under God* the *greatest benefactor* to our species, provided the means made use of by him are suitable and proper to obtain those ends.

This leads me to inquire *how*, or in *what way*, our Lord Jesus Christ proposes to *save mens souls*; that is, what *method* he hath taken to prepare men for, and to insure to them the *favour* of God, and their *happiness* in another world; and to prevent them from bringing great and lasting *misery* upon themselves. And if we examine the history of his life and ministry, from which alone we can obtain satisfaction in the present case, we shall find that he applies himself to men as *free beings*, who have the direction of their own actions, and as such he lays before them and recommends to their most serious consideration certain *doctrinal propositions* founded upon the supposition of a *Deity*; which because of their great importance to mankind, and their being very little attended to, are called the *good news*, or the *gospel*. And as these propositions were in a *particular* and *special manner* recommended by
Christ

Christ to publick consideration, and as he was *particularly* and *especially* appointed to perform that work, they are therefore called the gospel of *Jesus Christ*. And these propositions were recommended with this view that a serious and well-grounded persuasion of those important truths might be such a *spring* and *principle* of *action* in men, as might reform their vices and *rightly* direct and govern their *minds* and *lives*; and thereby render them worthy of, prepare them for, and insure to them the favour of God and their happiness in another world; and prevent them from falling into great and lasting misery, which otherwise they were in great danger of bringing upon themselves. And a *well-grounded* persuasion of those truths *thus* becoming a principle of action in men (as aforesaid) is called *believing* the gospel; and *believing* in Jesus Christ; and whoever *thus* believes, it is declared, that he shall be *saved*.

The important truths which Christ has thus recommended to publick consideration, may be summed up in the following particulars. *First*, he requires and recommends the *conforming* our *minds* and *lives* to that eternal and unalterable *rule* of action, which is founded in the reason of things, (which rule is summarily contained in the written word of God,) and this he lays down, as the *only ground* of divine acceptance; and as *that* which will entitle men to the favour of God, and the happiness of another world; and consequently *this* will prevent them from being greatly and lastingly miserable. *Secondly*, if men have lived in a *violation* of this righteous law, by which they have rendered themselves
highly

highly displeasing to God, and worthy of his *resentment*; then Christ requires and recommends *repentance* and *reformation* of their *evil* ways, as the *only*, and the *sure ground* of the *divine mercy* and *forgiveness*. And *thirdly*, in order to make those truths have the greater *impreſſion* on the minds and lives of men, he declares and assures them, that *God* has appointed a *day*, in which he will *judge* the *world* in *righteousness*, and that, he will then either *acquit* or *condemn*; *reward* or *punish* them, according as they *have*, or *have not* conformed their minds and lives to that rule of *righteousness* before mentioned, and according as they *have*, or *have not* repented and amended their *evil* ways. This is the *true gospel* of Jesus Christ, and this is the *way* and *method* which Christ has taken in order to *save mens souls*:

S E C T. III.

FIRST, Christ requires and recommends a *conformity* of *mind* and *life* to that *rule* of *action*, which is founded in the *reason* of things, and makes or declares *that compliance* to be the *sole ground* of *divine acceptance*, and the *only way* to *life eternal*. And that this is the case, is most manifest, from the history of his life and ministry, this being the point, to which the generality of his *parables* and *discourses* do most apparently tend. For, though he did not deliver such a complete body of laws, or system of morality, as might particularly direct men how to act under the various and different circumstances of life in every

every instance, (there not having been any such complete system given, in, or by any divine revelation, that has yet been delivered to the world, or at least this does not appear to have been the case), much less did he deliver any new body of laws, or rule of action to mankind: I say, tho' this was not the case; yet Christ did *recommend* to men, and *press* their *obedience* to that *law of reason*, which they were antecedently obliged to govern their behaviour by, as the *history* of his *life* does abundantly testify. He, when opportunity offered, and as the occasion required, treated of *several branches* of man's duty, and shewed in those instances, what in *reason* ought to be *done*, and what *avoided*: He also laid down some general principles of action, *viz.* the *doing as one would be done by*, the *loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength*, and the *loving our neighbour as ourselves*; from which general principles, as they are founded in *reason*, so the *particulars* of our *duty*, under the various and different circumstances of life are to be *collected*. He likewise referred men to that *law of reason*, or summary account of man's duty, contained in, and which is commonly called the *ten commandments*, as the *rule* of their *actions*; and made or declared their *obedience* to it, to be the *ground* of God's favour. And this law of reason is fitly called the *law of Christ*, as he specially and strictly requires our *compliance* with it, and declares *that* compliance to be the *sole ground* of divine acceptance, in distinction from, and in opposition to that *law of ceremonies*, or *positive institutions*, which *Moses* had delivered to the *Jews*, and which therefore was called the *law of Moses*.

Moses. He also represented to men the *good* and *bad consequences*, which would most certainly attend their *compliance* or *non-compliance* with this law, with regard to the *favour* or *displeasure* of God, and their *safety* or *miscarriage* in another world.

Thus in his most excellent sermon on the mount, after he had recommended the practice of *virtue*, and had reprov'd and condemn'd the practice of *vice*, in many instances; that is, after he had shewn what *temper* and *behaviour* his disciples and followers ought to *put on*, and what to *avoid*; he then represented to them the *mighty consequences*, which depended upon *such* their tempers and actions. *Matthew* vii. 21, 22, 23. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* (which will he had been speaking about in the precedent sermon) *Many will say unto me in that day, (viz. the day of judgment) Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* Here we see are great pretensions, *professing* of Christ, *prophesying* in his name, and *working miracles* by his power and authority; and yet, all this availed nothing with respect to the *favour* of God, and their *safety* in another world; because they were *wanting* in *that*, upon which their acceptance with God solely depended; namely, conforming their *tempers*, and *actions* to the *law* of *righteousness*. And therefore said Christ, notwithstanding these your

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professions

professions and pretensions, admitting them to be just, I never knew you: that is, I never approved of you, and will certainly condemn you for your unrighteous behaviour.

Our Lord proceeds, ver. 24, 25. *Therefore, whoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.* Here we see what that *rock* is, which is a Christian's security in the day of his trial; namely, the attending to and following the advice and counsel, which Christ had given in the precedent sermon, and doing what he had been recommending to our practice. Christ had been recommending to his audience, the practice of moral * virtue, or the conforming mens tempers and actions to that law, or rule of action, which is founded in the reason of things; and therefore, as such, it is what God requires our obedience to, and makes that obedience the ground of our acceptance in his sight. I say, it is *bearing these sayings of Christ, and doing them*, which is, (in Christ's account) building upon a *rock*, and which is a christian's *only security* in the day of his trial. It is not professing Christ, nor calling him Lord, nor giving him the highest appellations, it is not prophesying in his name, nor working miracles by his power and authority, it is not an orthodox faith, nor subscribing

* *Note.* Tho' I think no action can be virtuous, but what is founded in reason; yet least any should think that the word *Virtue* is of a more extensive signification, therefore to prevent any exception, which otherwise might have been taken, I call the virtue here referred to, *Moral Virtue.*

creeds, nor assenting to (if such a thing could be) mysteries and unintelligible propositions, it is not a constant attendance on, nor a warm zeal for ceremonies and external observances, nor the like, which are the rock a Christian may safely and securely build upon: but it is to have his mind possessed with those *virtuous qualities*, and his life adorned with those *worthy and virtuous actions*, that Christ in the preceding sermon had been recommending, which alone can afford a just ground of hope and comfort to him; because it is these alone, which can render him a *worthy* and a *proper object* of divine regard.

Our Lord goes on, verses 26, 27. *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof.* Here we see what folly and madness it is for a man to make any thing besides hearing these sayings of Christ, and doing them, (or the practice of moral virtue) the ground of his confidence; because any thing, and every thing short of this, would be like building a house upon the *sand*, which when the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon it, it would *fall*, and *great* should be the fall thereof. From hence likewise, we may plainly perceive, what Christ means by *believing in him*, in the following declarations. *Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. He that believeth on me, hath everlasting life. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not,*

shall be damned; and the like. Where by believing it is evident, that Christ did not, neither could he, mean a bare assent to the truth of this proposition, *viz.* that *Jesus is the Christ*; but he means by it, the *attending* to that message, which he was sent to deliver to the world, and the *governing* our *minds* and *lives* according to it. To believe in Christ is the same, as to believe the gospel; or the good news which Christ proclaim'd to the world, and both imply such a serious and well-grounded persuasion of those truths, as becomes a principle of action in the believer, and rightly directs his mind and life. Whosoever in this sense believes in Christ, or believes the gospel; that is, is thereby wrought upon to become a *virtuous* and *good man*; such a one will be *saved*, or *have everlasting life*. And whosoever in this sense does not believe, that is, does not become a virtuous and good man, but goes on in a *vicious* and *wicked course of life*, such a one will *die in his sins*, or be *damned*. It is the doing or not doing what Christ requires, which is the ground of our safety or miscarriage; and this is the test, by which we shall be tried, according to Christ's own account of this matter.

But our Lord makes the case still plainer, if such a thing can be, in his answer to the man's question, *Matthew* xix. 16. *What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* This was a plain and a fair question, a question of the last importance, and which called for a plain, a full, and a serious answer; and which Christ was obliged (if he would answer his character as a safe guide to life eternal) to answer accordingly. And the answer which Christ returned to this important

important question was, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*, verse 17. And I think it may fairly and justly be presumed, that this answer was as *plain* and *full* as the case required; and consequently, that the only ground of divine acceptance, or that which renders men pleasing and acceptable to God, and which secures to them the happiness of another world, is *keeping the commandments*. But then the question will return, what Christ meant by the commandments. And the answer is evident, *viz.* he meant that law, or rule of action, which is founded in the reason of things, and which is summarily contained in the *ten commandments*. And that this is the truth of the case, appears from what follows. For, as there had been an opinion among the Jews, that there was one command, which they were more especially obliged to observe, and that a strict observance of that one command, would in some measure excuse their neglect of the rest: so when our Lord told the man he must keep the commandments, the man asked which? In answer to this second question, our Lord (by explaining what he meant by the commandments) did not send the man back to any law of ceremonies, or positive institutions, which had before been given to the Jews; neither did he point out to the man any such law, or body of laws, which he intended to lay upon Christians, and to declare it to be the condition of God's favour; but, on the contrary, he referred the man, to that summary account of man's duty, called the ten commandments. *Jesus said, thou shalt do no murther, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt*

shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, honour thy father and thy mother, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, verses 18, 19. Or as St Mark hath it chap. x. 19. Thou knowest the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honour thy father and thy mother. And thus St Luke hath it chap. xviii. 20. Thou knowest the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honour thy father and thy mother. From all which it is most evident, that by the commandments, Christ means the moral law, or that rule of action which is founded in the reason of things; and which therefore, every rational being ought to direct his behaviour by; and whoever makes this law the measure of his actions, shall have everlasting life. Again,

Our Lord returned the like answer to the question which the Lawyer put to him, *Luke x. 25, 26, 27, 28. And behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He (viz. Christ) said unto him, what is written in the law? How readest thou? And he (the man) answering, said, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thy self. And he (viz. Christ) said unto him, thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live. Here again, we see Christ declared that the way to eternal life, or the true grounds of divine acceptance, is to keep the commandments, by loving God and our neighbour, which is nothing else but the conforming*

conforming our minds and lives to that rule of action, which is founded in the reason of things. And

Here I beg my reader to observe, that this is *Christ's* own account of the matter; and therefore it may *most safely* be relied upon. And as the questions which were put to him, were of the *highest importance* to mankind, *viz.* what men should do, that they might obtain eternal life; and as he was sent into the world on purpose, that he might be a *safe guide* to men in this very affair: so, if he had not given a *full and true answer* to those questions; if he had not *plainly* declared *all* that was necessary for men to *know* and *do*, in order to obtain eternal life; then he *would not* have been true to his trust; he would not have answered his character; but this is not to be supposed. And therefore we may depend upon it, that the keeping the commandments, or the governing our minds and lives by that rule of action, which is founded in the reason of things, will most certainly render us pleasing and acceptable to God, and secure to us the happiness of another world.

I would also desire my reader to observe; that our Lord Christ did not propose, or point out to men, any *new way* to God's favour and eternal life; but, on the contrary, he recommended that good old way, which always was, and always will be, the true way to life eternal; *viz.* the keeping the commandments, or the loving God and our neighbour, which is the same thing, and is the sum and substance of the moral law. This plain path-way to heaven lay neglected, and for the most part unfrequented; men, both

Jews

Jews and Gentiles, having forsaken the fountain of living water, that is, the true way to life eternal; and hewn to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water; that is, they had found out new and false ways of recommending themselves to God's favour. And this rendred our Saviour's undertaking and ministry so much the more needful. And therefore it was truly said of him, that he was to be, (not the maker, but) *the restorer of right paths to dwell (or walk) in.*

S E C T. IV.

AS Christ requires and recommends a conformity of mind and life to that unalterable rule of action, which is founded in the reason of things, as the only ground of divine acceptance, and as the only way to life eternal; so if men have lived in a violation of this righteous law, by which they have rendred themselves displeasing to God, and worthy of his just resentment: then, *secondly*, Christ requires and recommends *repentance* and *reformation* of their evil ways, as the *only ground* of the divine mercy and forgiveness. The doctrine of *repentance* and *remission of sins*, were what Christ was chiefly concerned to publish to the world; because as mankind were generally corrupt and vicious, and were far from conforming their minds and lives to that rule of righteousness, which ought to have been the measure of their actions; so they not only took false measures for the recommending

mending themselves to the divine favour; but also upon a sense of their guilt, they went into false ways of obtaining the divine mercy; and this was too much the case both of Jews and Gentiles. By false ways and measures, I mean such ways and measures, as were not suitable and proper, and therefore were insufficient to answer these purposes. Mankind being under such circumstances, it became our Lord Jesus Christ, as he was sent to be the Saviour of the world, to *undeceive* them in these particulars, by fairly and plainly representing to them the true, and the only grounds of divine acceptance; and (as mankind were generally vicious and wicked) to represent to them the only and the sure way to obtain the divine mercy and forgiveness; and to awaken in men a just and an affecting sense of the great importance of these things, as their safety or miscarriage in another world does manifestly depend upon them. This was plainly the business of one, who took upon him, or who was sent of God to be *the Saviour of the world*. And this was what our Lord Jesus Christ carefully and faithfully performed in the exercise of his ministry.

Christ not only called upon sinners to repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance, but he also plainly and expressly declared this was the very end and purpose of his coming, *viz.* to call sinners to repentance, and to assure them, that except they did repent, they would all perish: Which plainly supposes and implies, that if they did repent, and amend their ways, they would obtain the divine mercy. And as he preached the doctrines of repentance and remis-

sion of sins to the *Jews* in his own person ; so he rose from the dead on purpose that he might commission, and spirit, and send out the Apostles to preach the same doctrines to the *rest of mankind*. This is what he expressly declared to his disciples. Saith he, *thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations*. Luke xxiv. 46, 47. Which is as much as if he had said, thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ, as he was sent of God, to be the *Saviour* of the world, to take all proper care, that the doctrines of repentance and remission of sins, should be preached among all nations ; and as he did not preach those doctrines to all in his own person, but only to the single nation of the *Jews*, in the doing of which he drew on him the hatred and unreasonable resentment of that people, which was shewn in their prosecuting him even unto death, and which therefore it behoved him to suffer, and not to draw back in the discharge of so weighty a trust : so likewise it behoved him to rise again from the dead, and to commission, and send out his apostles to preach the same doctrine to the rest of the world. I say, it behoved Christ to do all this, as he had undertaken to promote and set forward the *salvation* of mankind, which trust he faithfully discharged accordingly. And,

Here I beg leave to remind my readers, that to preach the *gospel*, and to preach the doctrines of *repentance* and *remission of sins*, is in Christ's account the *same thing* : for what he calls preaching the *gospel* at one time, he calls preaching the

the doctrines of repentance and remission of sins at another. Thus Mark xvi. 15. *And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;* compared with Luke xxiv. 46, 47. *And he said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance, and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.* Here we see what Christ means by the gospel, or what that gospel is, which he commissioned, and sent out his Apostles to preach to the world: viz. it is the doctrines of repentance, and remission of sins.

I would likewise remind my readers, that Christ hath pointed out to sinners no other way to the divine mercy and forgiveness, than that *good old way*, viz. by repentance and reformation of their evil ways, which *always was*, and *always will be*, the true and only way for sinners to obtain the divine mercy. This is the way which God by his prophets heretofore pointed out to the sinful nation of Israel. Thus *Isaiah i. 16, 17. Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* Which is the same as if he had said, though your sins are many and great; yet upon your repentance and reformation they shall be forgiven. Thus again, *Ezekiel xviii. 30. Therefore, I will judge you, O house of Israel,*

every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God; repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Which is the same as to say, that upon their repentance and reformation, they should obtain mercy. As to that doctrine, viz. that Christ hath by his sufferings and death made satisfaction to God for the sins of the world, and thereby merited the sinners discharge from condemnation, this doctrine Christ did not preach; and therefore it cannot be any part of his gospel, but it is directly opposite to it, and tends to subvert it. The true doctrines of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, touching this matter, are the doctrines of *repentance*, and *remission of sins*; that is, repentance and reformation is the only way to the divine mercy. Let not therefore the sinner trust to, nor rely upon, the vain words of men, who like *Rabsakeb* the captain of the host of the king of *Assyria*, may and will deceive them; but let them trust to, and rely upon, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent of God, to be their guide and instructor in this particular, and who, they may be assured upon good grounds, will not deceive them in so important an affair.

S E C T. V.

AS Christ represented to, and pressed upon, men a conformity of mind and life, to that eternal law, or rule of action, which is founded in the reason of things; as the only ground

ground of the divine acceptance; and as he recommended to, and pressed upon sinners repentance and reformation of their evil ways, as the only ground of the divine mercy and forgiveness; so that those important truths might make the deeper impression, and have a more lasting influence upon the minds and lives of men; he, *thirdly and lastly*, assured them, that God has appointed a time, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and that he will then call all men to an account for their actions, and will acquit or condemn, reward or punish them in another state, according to their behaviour in this. Thus *Matthew xxv. 31.* to the end of the chapter. *When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer, and say unto them, verily I say*

*say unto you, in as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or a thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, verily I say unto you, in as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. Here we see Christ has not only declared, that God will most certainly judge the world, by him; but also he has shewn by what rule he shall proceed in passing that judgment; viz. he shall approve or condemn, reward or punish, every man as he has, or has not conformed his affections and actions to that righteous law, which is founded in the reason of things; the end of which law is *charity, or benevolent affection and actions.**

The moral law, or that law which is founded in the reason of things, is a law of *love*, or a law, which is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.* St Paul has justly observed, that as *love worketh no ill to his neighbour; so love (or a conduct directed by love) is the fulfilling of the law.* Ro-

mans xiii. 10. And as the moral law is a law of love: so Christ hath declared that it is by *this law*, every man shall be tried; every man shall be approved or condemned, rewarded or punished, according as he has, or has not conformed his affections and actions to this law of love. *Then* (viz. at the day of judgment) *shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world. For I was* (in mine and your needy brethren) *an hungred, and ye gave me meat: &c.* And then shall he say also to them on his left hand, *Go ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat, &c.* Christ as a righteous judge will approve or condemn, reward or punish, every man according as there has been an antecedent fitness, or unfitness, worthiness, or unworthiness in the person judged. And this judgment is to be considered, not as an *arbitrary institution*, or a particular appointment of God, in these *latter ages*: but as a *part* of the *original scheme of providence*, when this world was *first* called into being. This is evident, from what Christ saith of that kingdom, which the righteous shall inherit, viz. that it was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. So that God will judge the world, not because he has declared in and by the gospel of Jesus Christ that he will do it; but he has declared in and by the gospel that he will do it, because it is fit and reasonable that he should, and because he originally purposed so to do.

S E C T. VI.

HAVING shewn in the three preceding sections, what is the true gospel of Jesus Christ; or what is that doctrine of life and salvation, which Christ himself preached, which likewise it behoved him to preach; or which the circumstances of things required that he should preach, as he was sent to be the Saviour of the world; and which therefore is strictly and properly called the gospel, or the good news: I now therefore beg leave to shew, in *one* or *two* instances, what is not that gospel. And,

First, the gospel of Jesus Christ is not *an historical account of matters of fact*. As thus. Christ suffered, died, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, &c. These are *historical facts*, the *credibility* of which arises from the strength of those evidences which are, or can be offered in their favour: But then, those facts are not the *gospel of Jesus Christ*, neither in whole, nor in part. *Luke vii. 22. Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard, how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached, &c.* Here we see that the gospel was preached to the poor by Christ himself, *antecedent* to the transactions I now refer to; and therefore those facts, or any doctrines founded upon them, (such as that of *Christ's satisfaction*, or that of his *intercession*, or the like) cannot be any part of that gospel.

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Thus again. Christ turned water into wine, gave sight to the blind, feet to the lame, life to the dead, &c. These are facts, which though they were proper to awaken the attention of his hearers, and to give weight to his preaching and ministry; yet the *history of them* is no part of his gospel. The history of these facts, when well attested, may be offered, as an evidence of the *Divinity* of Christ's *mission*; but then this history, as far as it is an history of such facts only, can be no part of that mission; and consequently can be no part of Christ's gospel. This is evident, from the text I before quoted, *Luke vii. 22.* Where the working of miracles, and preaching the gospel to the poor, are by Christ considered and represented as two different things. The gospel of Jesus Christ, was that doctrine which he preached (the sum of which I have already considered), and not any history of facts, which relate either to his person or ministry. Besides, those facts are such, as the *salvation of mankind* are not primarily and immediately, but only secondarily and mediately concerned with; and therefore they are no part of Christ's gospel.

Thus again. St *Peter* saith, that Christ *went and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noab.* 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. This is a short but dark branch of history, or a relation of a matter of fact, which relation has puzzled the heads of many enquirers to find out it's true meaning; though it is a matter of no concern to us, what is meant by it, or how St *Peter* came by his information, or whether the

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relation given be true, or false; seeing it is no part of the gospel of Christ, and it is what the saving mens souls is not concerned with.

Thus again. St *James* (as in chap. v. 17, 18.) relates it as a matter of fact, *viz.* that *Elias* *prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.* And according to St *James's* representation of the story, the case seems to be, not only that this great drought was brought upon the land, in consequence of the *prophet's* prayer; but also that the prophet's prayer was the produce of his *passion* and *resentment*. *Elias* was a man *subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly, &c.* Now, whether St *James* received that part of the history, *viz.* that the three years and a half's drought upon the land, and then the giving of rain, was the *effect* of the *prophet's* prayer; I say, whether St *James* received this by *tradition* from the *Jews*, (for it does not appear to be supported by the history of those times) or how he came by his information, or whether it be true in fact, or not, it maketh nothing to us; seeing it is no part of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is what the saving of our souls is not in the least concerned with. Again,

Secondly, the gospel of Jesus Christ is not any *particular private opinion* of any, or of all the writers of the history of his life and ministry; nor any *private opinion* of any, or of all those whom he sent out to publish his gospel to the world; nor is any of their *reasonings, or conclusions* founded on, or drawn from such opinions,
any

any part of that gospel. Thus St *John* begins his history, *John* i. 1, 2, 3. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* These propositions, for any thing that appears to the contrary, are only the *private opinion* of St *John*, who wrote the history of Christ's life and ministry, and they are no part of Christ's gospel; *viz.* that gospel which he preached to the poor, and which he gave in charge to his Apostles to publish to the world. And therefore, whether Christ was the *Logos*, or Word, whether he was with God, and was God, or whether he made all things in the sense, in which St *John* useth those terms, or not, is of no consequence to us; because these points are no part of Christ's gospel, and they are what the salvation of mankind is not in the least concerned with. Whether Christ pre-existed, or not; or whether he was the agent employed by God in making this visible world, or not; are points, which do not affect the saving of mens souls at all; it being sufficient for us to know, that he was the sent of God, and that *the word of the Lord in his mouth was truth.* This I say, is sufficient for us to know with regard to our salvation; and therefore whether the fore-mentioned propositions are truths, or not; is of no consequence to us in that respect. Besides, we do not know what was the ground and foundation of St *John's* opinion, with respect to those points, and therefore, we cannot possibly form a judgment, whether his opinion was well-grounded; or not; and conse-

quently whether it ought to be relied upon, or not. To say in this case, that St *John* was *divinely inspired* in writing his history, is (for any thing that appears) groundlessly to presume a point which is void of truth; and which therefore is not to be admitted.

Thus again. St *Paul* seems to be of opinion that the gospel being preached to the Gentiles, was owing to the generality of the Jews *rejecting* it, as appears from his argument and reasonings *Romans xi*, from *verse* the 10th, to the end of the chapter. And it seems to be his opinion likewise, that it was a part of the original scheme of providence, and a thing intended by God, that the body of the Jewish nation should thus reject the gospel, and thereby give him an occasion of offering it to the Gentiles; or at least, that he foreknowing the Jews would act thus, takes an occasion from that circumstance, (being as it were affronted with, and resenting their ingratitude), to offer the gospel to the Gentiles, which otherwise he would not have done. St *Paul* also seems to be of opinion, that God, by this method of his providence, intended not only to shew kindness to the Gentiles; but also to mortify the Jews, and provoke them to jealousy, which was likely to be the case, when they saw the Gentiles, who were a people whom they very much despised, taken into divine favour, and made their rivals. This seems to be the purport of the Apostle's argument. The points here referred to, I think, are no other than the *private opinion* of St *Paul*. Now, whether that opinion was founded on some *texts* of the *Old Testament*; or on the words of Christ to the woman of Canaan,

naan, (*Matth. xv. 24. I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of Israel;*) or on the *practice* of Christ, who in his own person preached the gospel to the Jews only; or whether the Apostle's opinion was well-grounded, or not; or whether we rightly understand the Apostle's meaning herein, or not, it maketh no matter to us; seeing it, and all his reasonings founded upon it, are no part of Christ's gospel.

To this I may add, that the *private opinions* of those, who wrote Christ's history, and of those who were appointed and sent out to preach his gospel to the world, were in many instances very *abstruse*, and much above the capacities of the common people. Whereas, the gospel which Christ preached to the poor, and which he gave in charge to his Apostles to publish to the world, was *plain* and *intelligible*, and level to the *lowest understanding*, as indeed it *ought*, and *must needs* be. For if Christ had preached to the *poor*, that is, to the lower part of mankind, an historical account of facts, or a set of mysterious and almost unintelligible propositions, which had been liable to a *thousand difficulties* and *perplexities*; this would have been, not to instruct, but to confound them, and would have been the same to them, as preaching in an unknown tongue; but to our satisfaction and comfort this is by no means the case. I might proceed farther, but this is sufficient for my present purpose, which is, to remind my reader, that every thing is not Christ's gospel which weak, or ignorant, or artful men, have taken upon them to call by that name.

S E C T. VII.

AS the grand design of our Lord Jesus Christ was to save mens souls, and as he profecuted that design by his proposing and recommending to mens most serious consideration certain doctrinal propositions, which because of their great importance to mankind, are called the good news, or the gospel: so he took several other steps, and did several other things, in order to render that gospel effectual, to answer the gracious purpose for which it was intended. And,

First, Christ according to the account given in the history, *wrought a long train of miracles*; that is, he did upon several occasions, and in a variety of ways, exercise such power, as was greatly superior to any power that is ordinarily found amongst men, the effects of which in common language are called *miracles*. And as this power was employed in acts of *kindness* and *benevolence*, viz. in giving sight to the blind, health to the sick, life to the dead, &c. so it was chiefly intended to set forward the salvation of mankind, by *alarming* the people, and calling in their most serious attention to what Christ had to offer to them; and by stamping a *divine character* upon his preaching and ministry; by which means his doctrine was likely to have the greater influence, and make a more lasting impression upon the minds and lives of men. For though Christ's doctrine was exactly conformable to our
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natural notions of things, and therefore, when considered alone, it was worthy of all acceptance; yet when to this was added a *divine character*, and it came recommended as the word and will of God, this naturally brought it home to the minds of men, with much greater weight and power, than otherwise it would have come; at least, this was likely to be the case with the less considering part of our species, and who are much the greater part of mankind.

I do not hereby charge myself with the *proof* of the facts before-mentioned, neither do I enter into those questions, *viz.* whether those facts were a strict and proper *proof* of the *divinity* of Christ's mission, or whether, when all things are taken into the case, they carry with them the *higher degree* of *probability* that they were wrought by the *power of God*, rather than by the agency of any other being, these are points beside my present purpose; but what I observe is, admitting they were really wrought as the history sets forth, then they naturally tended, not only to draw the multitude about our Lord, but also to call in their attention to what he had to offer to them, and carefully to consider the truth and reasonableness of it. And as Christ represented himself as a *messenger* sent from *God*; so those facts were likely to be of weight upon the minds of the people in that respect. To see a man exercise such power, as was greatly superior to any power that is ordinarily found amongst men; which power was employed in instantly giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, feet to the lame, strength to the weak, health to the sick, life to the dead, and the like; and that

in the support of a doctrine, which is exactly conformable to our natural notion of things, which is founded in truth and reason, and which is greatly subservient to the present and future well-being of mankind; this surely must lead men to *reflection* and *consideration*; and those facts must have *weight* upon the minds of the spectators, and carry with them at least the *face of a probability* that they were wrought by the *power of God*, rather than by the agency of any other being; and as such were evidences of Christ's divine mission. And thus the miracles which Christ wrought were subservient to the furtherance of his gospel.

S E C T. VIII.

SECONDLY, that the gospel might come the better recommended to the world, Christ was in his own person an example of *strict conformity* to it, by conforming his affections and actions to that unalterable rule of action, which is founded in the reason of things. Christ *preached* his own *life*, if I may so speak, and *lived* his own *doctrine*, and thereby, he was at once a standing monument of the practicableness of virtue, and of the present peace and happiness that flows from it. In him we may see, what it is to live a godly, a righteous, a sober, and a benevolent life; and that what he requires from us as the ground of God's favour, is neither *unreasonable*, nor *impracticable*. In him we have an example of a quiet and peaceable spirit, of a
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becoming modesty and sobriety, just and honest, upright and sincere, and above all of a most gracious and benevolent temper and behaviour. One who did no wrong, no injury to any man, in whose mouth was no guile, who went about doing good, not only by his preaching and ministry, but also in curing all manner of diseases among the people. His *life* was a beautiful picture of *human nature*, when in its native purity and simplicity, and shewed at once what *excellent creatures* men would be, when under the influence and power of that *gospel* which he preached unto them.

And as his holy life and doctrine drew on him the unreasonable resentment of the *Clergy* among the *Jews*, who stirred up the rest of the people against him: so this gave an occasion for his *sealing* his testimony with his *blood*, and of giving an instance of the greatest *benevolence* towards mankind. And as his *life* was an excellent pattern and example of every good word and work, and therefore very fit and proper for his disciples and followers to copy after: so his *death* was not less exemplary. For he not only laid down his life to promote the *greatest* and the most *general good* to mankind; but he did it in such a manner, (by exercising such *patience* and *resignation* under the severest trials and most painful afflictions and persecutions), as rendered him highly worthy of our imitation. He was very sensible that the great thing which he had undertaken to prosecute was the *saving of mens souls*; and as it disposed him to *do* and *suffer* whatever was necessary or expedient to forward this great and gracious design: so it induced him

to overlook the *cruelty* and *unreasonable resentment* of his persecutors, by *pitying* and *praying* for them, whilst he was suffering the most intense pain from them, and even dying by their hands. And thus his life and death were made subservient to his ministry, and served to recommend his gospel to the world.

S E C T. IX.

THIRDLY, that the gospel might be recommended with the better grace to the world, and to posterity, and that it might have a more lasting influence upon the minds and lives of men, Christ laid a foundation for *friendly societies*, or families of love, who being united in the *profession*, and living under the *power* and *influence* of his gospel, might be acted by a friendly and brotherly affection, and from thence be led to be help-mates to, and watch over, each other for their good; to bear one another's burthens, sympathize with and comfort one another under the various afflictions and persecutions they might meet with in and from the world; and by a good example provoke one another to love and good works. Christ likewise laid a foundation for such societies, not only to answer the valuable *purposes* before-mentioned; but also that those societies might be *lights to the world*, and be living patterns to others of the practicableness of virtue, and of such a temper and behaviour as renders each individual a blessing to himself, and to society, and most acceptable to God, and thereby

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recommend the *gospel* to their acceptance. Christian societies are intended to be like *a city set on a hill* which cannot be hid ; that is, they are intended to be a collection of persons, who for their plainness and simplicity, their justice, honesty and integrity, their modesty, temperance and sobriety, their peaceable and quiet, their loving, friendly and benevolent, behaviour towards all men without distinction, as are thereby *remarkably valuable*, and such as the world cannot but *observe* and *approve*. For tho' an individual may escape general observation, yet surely a society of such persons cannot pass unobserved. Christian societies are intended to be a *specimen* of the *blessed effects* of the *gospel* of Christ, when it is received as it ought to be ; that is, when it becomes a principle of action in men, which rightly directs and governs their minds and lives. Christianity is not a *name*, but a *thing* ; and therefore it is not the *professing*, but *living* according to the *gospel* which truly represents *it* to the world. Christians are known to be such, not by their name, or by their profession, but by their lives. *John* xiii. 35. *By this shall all men know that ye are my* (viz. Christ's) *disciples, if ye have love one to another.* The banner of a Christian, is not the *picture* of a cross hung upon a pole, or made upon a man's forehead ; but it is a *virtuous* and *unblameable conversation*, or a mind and life conformed to the *gospel* of Christ. These are the *purposes* which Christian *associations* are intended to serve, and thus Christ intended that such associations should be *subservient* to the furtherance of the *gospel*, and should recommend it to a general acceptance.

Christ did not lay the foundation of friendly societies to answer the *purposes* either of *pomp*, or *wealth*, or *power*. He never intended that among his disciples and followers, *some* should be *singled out* from their *brethren* to be possessed of great revenues, live in stately palaces, wallow in luxury and ease, or sordidly heap up riches to raise a family, lord it over those by whose labours they are maintained, clothed in pompous and antick dresses, placed on thrones, or garnished stalls and seats of honour, assuming and exercising dominion over their brethren; and that *others* should labour to maintain them, be subject to them, bow down before them, and call them Rabbi, Rabbi. Christ was so far from giving any countenance to any thing of this kind, that, on the contrary, he has strictly forbid it. Matt. xx. 25, 26, 27, 28. *But Jesus called them (viz. his disciples) unto him, and said, ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the son of man came not to be ministred unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.* Chap. xxiii. 8, 9, 10. *But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called master, for one is your master even Christ.* Here we see Christ hath taken all possible care that no authority or dominion, superiority, or pre-eminence, dignifying or distinguishing should take place

place among his disciples and followers considered as such. He has not only forbid it, but has repeated the prohibition over, and over, and over. *It shall not be so among you. Be not ye called Rabbi. Call no man your father upon the earth. Neither be ye called master.* This is the charge which Christ hath given; and therefore Reverend, Right Reverend, and Most Reverend Fathers in God, and all others badges of distinction, and marks of honour, pre-eminence, superiority, or dominion, which take place in *Christian societies*, considered as such, and which serve to introduce a *groundless respect* and *veneration* for the persons of men, and a *groundless submission* to their pretended authority, are not only *not Christian*, but the most gross *Antichristianism*, as they are set up in opposition to, and in defiance of, Christ's authority, and his special charge and command to the contrary. I would not be understood to mean that Christians, as Christians, are not to render to their fellow Christians *honour*, even *double honour*, to whom it is due, (that is, to such of their fellow Christians, who by their *virtue* and *good works* have rendered themselves worthy of it) by shewing such outward decent marks of respect, as are agreeable to the usages and customs of the age and place in which they live; but what I intend is, that no dignifying titles, nor other badges of distinction, which serve *only* to introduce a *groundless veneration* for the persons of men as aforesaid, are to take place in *Christian societies*, Christ having given a strict charge to the contrary.

Among Christians *considered as such*, there is in reality no such thing as superior or inferior,
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greater or less ; and therefore no distinction ought to be made. For whether the king upon the throne, or he that grindeth at the mill, whether high or low, rich or poor, young or old, whether of Jewish, or Gentile extraction, whether Scythian, Barbarian, bond, or free, they are all one in Christ Jesus ; Christians as Christians being upon a foot of perfect equality, one not having any authority, superiority, or pre-eminence over another. *Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master even Christ, and all ye are brethren.* If in a Christian society any man will be greater than others it must be, not by his having greater *possessions*, or greater marks of *honour* conferred upon him, or by exercising *dominion* over his brethren, these being *antichristian* as I have already observed ; but it must be in his *greater services*, and in his being *more useful* in a Christian society than others, in imitation of his master, who *came not to be ministred unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.* In these respects a man may be as *great* among Christians as he please, or as his circumstances and abilities will enable him ; but then this kind of greatness does not give him any authority, superiority, or pre-eminence, over his brethren.

In *civil* societies, distinctions and pre-eminence and authority may be necessary to answer the purposes of *civil* associations ; but in *Christian* societies the case is otherwise, these not being necessary to, but are subversive of, the true ends and purposes of such *associations*. Civil associations are founded on *mutual indigence* and *dependence* ; and consequently on *necessity*, and are intended to produce by law and government mutual assistance
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and protection: Christian associations are founded on *love* and *benevolence*, and a just sense of *moral obligations*, and consequently are *voluntary*, and are intended to produce by a friendly and brotherly affection, and a just sense of duty, that mutual assistance and protection, which in civil associations are produced by law and government. *Self* assistance, *self* defence, *self* preservation are in part the ground and foundation of *civil* societies; that is, men enter into civil societies and constitute a common interest partly from necessity, and out of regard to themselves, their present indigent and dependent condition calls for that assistance and protection from others, which they in their turn afford to them. *Love*, and a *friendly* or brotherly affection, with a regard to what is *right*, is the sole ground of *Christian* associations, in which men are to *do good*, and *lend*, hoping for nothing again; that is, men are to perform every kind office to their neighbour from a principle of good-will, and a sense of duty, and not out of regard to themselves, nor in expectation of a return of the like kindness, whatever their future condition may be. And as the *band* of civil society is *law* and *government*, founded on *mutual indigence* and *dependence*; so the *band* of Christian society is *mutual consent* and *agreement*, founded on a *friendly* and brotherly affection, and a regard to *moral obligations*. So that whatever tends to weaken a friendly and brotherly affection among Christians, that is subversive of the true ends and purposes of Christian association; but all distinctions, pre-eminence, and authority in a Christian society,

ty, has such a tendency, and therefore Christ hath strictly forbid them.

S E C T. X.

AN D as Christ laid a foundation for friendly societies to answer the purposes before-mentioned; so he has for the most part left the *direction* of those societies, and their affairs to the *societies themselves*, or to *each member* thereof; he not having given in many cases any particular directions concerning them. Thus, every one who is discipled to Christ is left to judge and chuse for himself, what *particular* society of Christians he will join himself to; Christ not having given any directions concerning it, neither has he invested any Christian, nor any set, or order, or body of men among Christians, with power and authority to determine any one Christian's practice herein. And though a man's *situation* in the world, and other circumstances which may attend him, may plainly point out to him, *what particular* society of Christians he ought to join himself to; and tho' he may be justly *blameable* if he acts otherwise: yet in this he is only answerable to *God*, and not to any of his *fellow* Christians; because not any of them are invested with authority to determine his judgment or practice with regard to this matter, or to force him to a compliance with what they shall judge right.

Thus again, every Christian society are left to judge and chuse for themselves who shall be
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their *Bishop*; that is, who shall be their Monitor, their common Adviser and Instructor, and their Representative and Speaker in their publick and solemn addresses to God; Christ not having given any directions concerning these things, neither has he invested any Christian, nor any body of men among Christians, with power and authority to judge and determine for any Christian society touching these matters.

Thus again, every Christian is left to judge and chuse for himself, what *share* he will bear of the expence that is necessary to support the particular society to which he belongs, and to answer the purposes of Christian association. For tho' he has a rule to judge by, *viz.* his *own circumstances* and *abilities*, and the *circumstance* of the *society* of which he is a member; and though he is answerable to *God* for his behaviour herein; yet he is perfectly free and at liberty with respect to all others; Christ not having invested any Christian, nor any set or order of men among Christians, with power and authority to determine his practice herein, or to force him to a compliance with what they shall judge right. And therefore, tho' he is answerable to God for his actions in these respects; yet he is not answerable to any of his fellow Christians. Every Christian is such *voluntarily* and of his *own* choice, independent of the will and determination of any other person, or persons, who may be supposed to chuse for him, to force him, or to determine against him, as I have already observed; and therefore the obligations which a Christian as such lies under, are all *internal*, and not external; that is, his obligations arise from *within*

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himself, from a sense of *duty*, and his being answerable to *God*, and not from any power or authority lodged in any other person, or persons, to determine what shall be his duty, or to force him to a performance of it, Christ not having delegated any such power.

S E C T. XI.

BUT tho' Christ has in part left every Christian society to direct their own affairs, he not having given any particular directions concerning them in many cases, nor delegated any the least degree of power to any person or persons to command or direct them, or to judge or determine for them in those cases; yet he has in some other cases given *instructions* and *directions*, which every individual member of a Christian society ought carefully to consider and attend to. Thus,

Christ has shewn what are the *moral* qualifications of discipleship to him, or what every man must *be*, and *do*, who would enter himself a member of a Christian society. Matt. xvi. 24. *Then Jesus saith unto his disciples, if any man will come after me let him (or he must) deny himself*; that is, if any man will be my Disciple, or enter himself a member of a Christian society, he must *divest* himself of that *vicious* self-love, which is too commonly the spring of action in men, and is the ground of most of the evils that take place in the world, and he must act from other principles, *viz.* from *benevolence* and a regard

gard to what is *right*, these being the principles which Christ acted from, and the spirit he was actuated by. And as St Paul has *justly* observed, *Rom. viii. 9. If any man has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his*; that is, if a man is not actuated by the same spirit and principles which Christ was, then he is no Christian. Again, *and take up his cross*; that is, he must be ready and prepared to suffer any *evil* or *indignity* rather than *violate* his conscience, or act *unworthy* of his character as a Christian. Again, *and follow me*; that is, he must make *Christ's doctrine* and *example* the rule and measure of his affections and actions. And thus Christ shewed what were the *moral* qualifications of discipleship to him. Again,

Christ, in conformity to the usages and customs of the world, and the *fondness* there is in the generality of men to *external* observances, and that his gospel might as it were make a *sensible* impression on the minds and lives of those, who took upon them to adhere to it, appointed an *external action* to be performed when any person becomes his Disciple, or enters himself a member of a Christian society, or at least when any person is *profelyted* from another to the Christian religion. *Matt. xxviii. 9. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them, &c.* Which action, *viz.* of *washing in*, or *plunging a person under, water*, was intended to represent, not only that person's *separation* from a vicious and wicked world, and his *devoting* himself to live a good and virtuous life, not only the *purity* and *spirituality* of the Christian religion, which consists in an *internal principle*, that rightly directs and go-

verns the affections and actions of men, in opposition to the *abominable superstitions* and *idolatry* which took place among the *Gentiles*, and the *carnal ordinances* and *ceremonial purity* of the *Jews*; but also it was intended to shew both the *conviction*, and the *steady resolution* of the person baptized. For by this action he declared (as far as an action is capable of expressing the sense of a man's mind) that he believed our Lord Jesus Christ was appointed and constituted of *God*, to be *his guide* and *director* in matters of *religion*; that therefore he chose him for his *master*; and that he was determined to be governed by his laws. And this was intended to be a check upon him all his life after, and to give occasion to others to retort it upon him, if he should at any time act unworthy of his Christian profession. Again,

As the life and death of Christ was intended to be an example and pattern for Christians to copy after in all ages, and as that Gospel which he preached was intended to be both a ground and reason, and a rule of action to them; so Christ, that he might always preserve a quick and an affecting sense of himself, and his *behaviour* upon the minds of his followers, and thereby lead them to an *imitation* of him; and also that he might constantly recal their *attention* to those important *truths*; which he had delivered to the world, and thereby rightly direct their affections and actions; and likewise that a sense of his *sufferings* and *death* (which was the highest act of benevolence, in that he laid down his life to promote the eternal good of mankind, and even of his greatest enemies,) might be kept fresh upon
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their minds, appointed *another external action* or *actions* to be performed, that in the constant use thereof his example both in life and death, and the great end he had in view, and those momentous truths he delivered to the world, might be constantly brought to their remembrance, to awaken their attention, and to excite their imitation as aforesaid. Thus Luke xxii. 19, 20. *And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you,* (to which St Paul adds as Christ's own words, 1 Cor. xi. 25.) *this do ye, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.* In remembrance of me as your *Lord and Master*; who hath shewn you what is that *Rule of action* which you ought to govern your behaviour by, and what are the grounds of the divine favour and mercy to mankind: and therefore take care so to remember me, as to make those important truths I have laid before you the spring and principle, and the rule and measure of your affections and actions. Do this in remembrance of me as your *great exemplar*; who have walked before you in the paths of virtue, and shewn you by my example how you ought to behave in a variety of instances, and under various circumstances: therefore so remember me, as that your minds and lives may be conformed to that pattern I have set before you. Do this in remembrance of me as your *greatest friend and benefactor*; who have spent my time and laboured abundantly to serve you, have exposed myself to shame

shame and suffering for your sakes, and even laid down, or am ready to lay down, my life to promote your greatest good: therefore so remember me as to preserve an affecting and grateful sense of my kindness and good-will towards you, and suffering for you, upon your minds; and so remember me, as in a particular and special manner to *imitate* that example of benevolence I have set before you, by performing every kind office to your neighbour, and by doing, and suffering, and even laying down your lives for each other, and for the publick good, when, and as far as the circumstances of things shall in reason require it. These are the gracious purposes which this institution was intended to serve, and thus when it is rightly used according to the true intent of the institutor, it becomes subservient to the gospel of Christ. And tho' this ordinance is most plain and simple in itself (the intention of it being plainly expressed in the institution); yet a variety of mysteries have been extracted from it, and all sorts of game and legerdemain tricks have been played upon it. Again,

As Christ proposed his own example for his followers to imitate; so in a particular and special manner he recommended his *great condescension* in performing the meanest office to his disciples, as most worthy to be copied after by his people. John xiii. 4, 5. *He (viz. Jesus) riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself. And after that, he poured out water into a bason, and began to wash his disciples feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded, ver. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken*
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his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, know ye what I have done to you, ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet; ye ought also to wash one anothers feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you: Verily, verily I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent, greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. Here we see, not only that Christ exercised great condescension himself, but he also recommended it to his followers, *viz.* that they, in how high and exalted a station soever, should condescend to perform the meanest office to the meanest of their fellow Christians if the case required it. Again,

Christ hath given the members of a Christian society particular directions how to act, when they behave *unworthily* toward each other; and that, with respect to the person *offending*, and the person *offended*. To the person offending, his advice is, *Matt. v. 23, 24. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* The language and advice here is suited to the *Jewish Church*, because the *Jewish polity* was yet remaining; but when applied to a Christian society, it is the same as if our Lord had said, when thou comest to a Christian society to pay thy publick acknowledgments to God, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, withdraw thyself, and do not think to find

find acceptance with thy Maker, whilst thou art violating his laws, by trespassing against thy brother. And therefore first go and be reconciled to thy brother, by making a suitable reparation for the injury done, repent of thy wicked action; and then come and pay thy respect to God with acceptance. To the person offended Christ's advice is, *Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17.* *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone, if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican; that is, esteem him no longer as a Christian.* Again,

Christ hath given Christian societies some cautions and directions with respect to their devotions. *Matt. vi. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.* *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do; for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking; be not ye therefore, like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye. Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.* Whether we consider this as a *form* of prayer, or only as a *guide* and a *direction* to Christian societies with respect to the *object* and *subject* of their prayers, and the *dispositions* and *qualifications* of the persons praying, and the *grounds* of their acceptance with God, it comes to the same; because the same useful instructions are held forth in either case. Here Christian societies are taught
to

to direct their desires, not to any *mediator* or *intercessor* with God, but to *God himself*, their father in heaven, who as his power enables him, so his fatherly kindness disposes him to do more abundantly for his dutiful children, than they can ask or think. Here Christians are given to understand, that the *foundation* of God's *moral* government and kingdom amongst men, and the *foundation* of *Christian* obedience, is laid in the heart; by mens being possessed with a just and worthy sense of the moral character of their maker. Here Christians are taught to bound and confine their desires to the *comforts* and *conveniences* of life, (which is all that is worth seeking) and not to let them rove after the superfluities and abundance of this world. And here Christians are taught to expect that God will deal with them, not according to, or for the sake, and on the account of, the *merits* and *intercession* of his *Son*; but according as they behave themselves one to another. *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*, ver. 12. *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses*. Verses 14, 15.

S E C T. XII.

Fourthly and lastly, that the gospel might be preached to *all nations*, and that the *Gentiles* as well as the Jews, might be brought under its influence, and consequently might share

in its benefits, Christ chose *twelve men*, (of which one proved a *traitor* to him, and to fill up whose place *Matthias* was chosen) to be with him in his *preaching* and *ministry* among the *Jews*, to be *witnesses* of what he both *taught* and *did*, and whom he intended to appoint and qualify to *preach* the same gospel to the rest of *mankind*. And accordingly, Christ, after he was put to death by the Jews and Romans, rose again from the dead, on purpose that he might strictly charge and command, and that he might excite and enable, these his Apostles to preach his gospel as aforesaid; and thereby pursue the great end and purpose of his coming. Luke xxiv. 26, 27, 28, 29. *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold I send the promise of my father unto you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye shall be endued with power from on high.* (This promise of the father, or the enduing them with power from on high, as it consisted in working miracles like as Christ had done before, and to answer the same end; so it was made good to them at the feast of *Pentecost* following.) Mark xvi. 15. *And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* Matth. xxviii. 18, 19. *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them, &c.* To the persons before-mentioned were afterwards added *two* more, viz. *Paul* and *Barnabas*, that in the exercise

ercise of their ministry up and down the world, these *fourteen Apostles* might offer to all without distinction the gospel of Christ, and acquaint them with the true contents of it, and by their *example* and *perswasion* might invite and encourage others voluntarily to undertake and prosecute so gracious and good a work.

Christ having thus preached the gospel to the Jews in his own person, having wrought a multitude of miracles to awaken their attention, and to stamp a divine character upon his preaching and ministry, having lived in a strict conformity to that gospel, and died a martyr for it, having laid a foundation for friendly societies, or families of love, to answer the purposes aforesaid, and having chosen and qualified, and having strictly charged and commanded his Apostles to go out into the world and preach the gospel to all without distinction; in a word, Christ having done every thing that was proper, to render his gospel successful, and to make it have its proper effects and influence upon the minds and lives of men; he then left it to make its way through, and to take its fate in the world. And indeed, when we consider that the gospel of Christ is founded in reason, and is strictly conformable to our natural notions of things, and that it is nothing more than an address to men, in order to engage them upon rational principles, to be wise for themselves in an affair of the greatest importance to them; in this view of the case, it might have been expected that the gospel would have been universally received, and that all who received it, would carefully frame and fashion their minds and lives according to it. But alas! the event

has shewn the case to be otherwise ; the grounds of which miscarriage will be hereafter consider'd. And

Here, I beg leave to observe to my reader, that when the *Apostles* of our Lord died, the Apostolick office *died with them*, they having no successors. *John xx. 21. As my father hath sent me, even so send I you.* Here we see the utmost extent of the Apostolick commission, namely, that it extended to the *persons* of the Apostles, and no farther. Our Lord did not say, as my father hath sent me, so send I you, and so do you send others, and they others, and so on to the end of the world ; but he only said, as my father hath sent me, even so send I you. And though many, after the example, and by the persuasion and encouragement, of the Apostles, might engage in the good work of *preaching the gospel* to the *unconverted world* ; yet in this they were volunteers, they not having any special call, nor any particular appointment from Christ to that work ; and therefore they were not Apostles, nor were they so esteemed. And as the *Apostolick office ceased*, by, and at the death of the Apostles ; so whatever *power* or *authority* the Apostles might be supposed to be invested with considered as Apostles, that *power* ceased by, and *with* the ceasing of the *Apostolick office* as aforesaid. Most vain and assuming must it therefore be, for any man, or any set, or order, or body of men among Christians, to pretend *successorship* to the *Apostles*, to lay claim to any *Apostolical power* or *jurisdiction* upon that account, seeing the Apostles had no *successors*, as I observed above.

The

The Apostles indeed, (as the occasion and circumstances of things required, and the better to answer the purposes of Christian association) did, *by, and with the advice and approbation of the rest of their fellow Christians*, appoint particular persons, to perform *two* distinct offices in the several Christian societies which were gathered in their times; *viz.* that of *Deacons* and *Bishops*. The former of these were appointed to take care of the *poor*, by collecting the society's *bounty*, and *distributing* it faithfully as the necessities of the widows and others in distress call for it. *Acts vi. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.* *And in those days, when the number of the disciples were multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, &c.* And as the Apostles when they had gathered Christian societies, were obliged to leave them, in order to preach the gospel to others: so this gave occasion for their appointing particular persons to perform in Christian societies, the latter office I mentioned above, *viz.* that of *Bishops*. Though probably this was done *by, and with the advice and approbation of the rest of their fellow Christians*; seeing that was the case of the former institution of *Deacons*,

Deacons, the reasonableness and usefulness of the thing, and the circumstances of Christian societies being the ground and foundation of both. The business of a Bishop was to watch over a *particular society of Christians* (which were committed to his care), for their good; by seeing that every individual walked according to the gospel of Christ, to reprove and admonish them, if they in any instance behaved otherwise, to excite and stir them up to the practice of virtue; in a word, the Bishop was to be a constant monitor to the people of their duty, to keep fresh upon their minds a just sense of the doctrines of the gospel, and to minister for them in their religious assemblies, by being their speaker and representative in their publick and solemn addresses to God. And,

The performing the office either of *Deacon* or *Bishop*, did not require any *great degree* of learning, or *long* and *tedious* study, or the being brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*; but only a good understanding, with a just sense of the gospel of Christ, and of the great and good end it was intended to serve, an honesty and integrity of mind, with a faithfulness of behaviour suitable to the trust reposed in them. The gospel of Christ is a *plain, simple, uniform thing*; directed only to *one* great and good end, *viz.* the *saving of mens souls*. And tho' *great learning, tedious study, &c.* may be necessary to render men capable of *perverting* it, and making it subservient to other and contrary purposes than what it was intended for: yet these are not *necessary* to render men capable of undertaking it themselves, nor yet to qualify them to preach it to others.

Christ

Christ did not chuse men of *letters only* to be his *Apostles*; that is, to publish his gospel to the world, which was what the Apostolick office consisted in; neither did the Apostles and Brethren chuse men of *letters only* to be *Bishops*; that is, to watch over the several Christian societies which were gathered in their times; great learning, tedious study, &c. not being necessary to the execution of those offices. And when these came to be esteemed necessary, then Christ and his gospel were soon preached out of the world; that is, the gospel of Christ was soon *perverted* and *abused*, and made subservient to any and every other purpose, excepting the grand purpose for which it was intended, *viz.* the saving mens souls, though this was always pretended. And,

Tho' the Apostles and Brethren instituted the offices of Deacons and Bishops in Christian societies; because what these officers were to do was *necessary* to be done; and because it was proper that it should be some persons *business* to do it, that it might not at any time be *left undone*; yet it was not so their business as that it might not, or ought not, at any time be done by any other person. To *collect* and *distribute* the society's bounty was the business of the *Deacon*; but then it was not so his business as that it ought not, or that it would be criminal, if it was done by any other person, except some other circumstance attended the case, which made it so. To *excite* and *stir up* the *Christian brotherhood* to the practice of their duty, to reprove and admonish those who behaved ill, and to be the *speaker* for the society in their publick addresses to God, and the like,

like, was the business of a *Bishop*; but then it was not so his business, as that it might not, or ought not under any circumstances to be done by any other person. And,

As the Apostles and Brethren instituted the offices of Deacons and Bishops in Christian societies to answer the purposes aforesaid; so these offices may very fitly be said to be of *apostolical appointment*: but then this will not justify our presuming and calling them *Christ's institutions*, or *divine institutions*, because we have nothing to justify such a character, or to ground such a *presumption* upon. The Apostles, in obedience to the command given them by their master, went up and down the world preaching the gospel, in the doing of which, many Christian societies were gathered; and as the Apostles were obliged to leave those societies, in order to go on with that work they had a special call to, *viz.* of preaching the gospel; so they took care to leave them under *such circumstances*, and with *such regulations*, as that the true ends and purposes of Christian association might be answered upon them; and these were the *grounds* of the two institutions before-mentioned. And therefore as I said before, tho' this will justify our calling them *apostolical institutions*; yet this does not afford or countenance the least pretence for calling or esteeming them *divine institutions*, or the institutions of *Christ*.

I would likewise observe to my reader, how very unlikely it is, that St *Peter* should be constituted *Bishop* of the particular society or congregation of Christians at *Rome*; because he could not execute such an office without *quitting* his
Apostleship,

Apostleship, and thereby betraying the trust which Christ had reposed in him of preaching the gospel as aforesaid. To do the work of an Apostle, was to go from place to place *preaching the gospel to all* without distinction, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, whether Scythians, Barbarians, Bond or Free. To do the work of a Bishop, was to *watch over a particular society* of Christians for their good, by teaching and instructing, by re-proving and admonishing, and by performing every other good office towards them, as was necessary to the well-being of the several members of that society; so that whoever did the latter could not do the former, because these offices were incompatible. And therefore St Peter could not execute the office of *Bishop at Rome*, without *abandoning his Apostleship*, which surely is not to be supposed. But admitting, for argument's sake, that St Peter did quit his Apostolick office, and took upon him the office of a Bishop, and that he was Bishop of the particular society of Christians who inhabited in the city of *Rome*: yet nothing will follow from hence in favour of any *apostolical power, or jurisdiction*, which might be supposed to *descend from him to his successors* the Bishops of Rome, or to any other *Bishop, or Bishops* whatever; because the Bishop of Rome did not succeed St Peter in his *Apostolical*, but in his *Episcopal Character* only. Or if it should be admitted that St Peter still retained his Apostolick Character when he was Bishop of *Rome*, though he did not in fact execute the office of an Apostle; yet this does not help the case at all. For as St Peter in the present case is supposed to sustain a *twofold character*, viz. that of an *Apostle*,

and that of a *Bishop*: so it is monstrously absurd to suppose that the powers he might be possessed of, when considered in the capacity of an *Apostle*, should descend to his successors, when they succeeded him only in the capacity of a *Bishop*. Most vain and assuming must it therefore be (as I said before) for the *Bishop of Rome*, or any other *Bishop* or *Clergyman* whatever, to lay claim to the *power of the keys*, let that power be what it will, or any other *Apostolical power* or *jurisdiction* whatever; seeing no such power has, nor could be descended to them. The *Apostolical Commission* extended no farther than the persons of the *fourteen Apostles* I mentioned above; and therefore when the *Apostles died* the *Apostolick office*, and consequently all *Apostolick power* and *jurisdiction died with them*, as I have already observed.

I would likewise farther observe how *weak* and *vain* the pretence is, that the *Bishops* and *Clergy* of the *Church of Rome* have been continued by a *regular uninterrupted succession, from the Apostles down to this time*; whereas, if *Father Paul's* account of this matter (a man of great learning and integrity) may be relied upon, then the succession of *Bishops* and *Clergy* has been *greatly irregular*, and has been *twice at least interrupted and broke in upon*. Thus in the *Apostles time*, and down to the end of the *second century*, those appointed to any office in *Christian societies* were *elected*, or set apart, to their respective offices by the *body of Christians*; that is, by that society they were appointed to serve. See *Father Paul of beneficiary matters, pages 5, 6*. “ Reserving
“ therefore to themselves, (*viz. the Apostles,*)
“ the

“ the more important charge of preaching and
 “ teaching the gospel; they committed the care
 “ of their temporals to other ministers.”——

“ These new ministers instituted by the Apo-
 “ stles, for the management of their temporal af-
 “ fairs, were six in number, chosen by the
 “ whole body of the faithful, and called Dea-
 “ cons.”——

“ And this order of admitting
 “ none to any Ecclesiastical Function, but by e-
 “ lection of all the faithful in a general Assem-
 “ bly, was inviolably observed, and so continued
 “ for above 200 years.”——Here we see that

not only the *right*, but also the *practice of elect-*
ing was in the *people*, or body of the faithful, for
 the *first two hundred years* and longer. And tho’

the using or applying the outward mark or sign
 of such election or separation of a person to any
 office in a Christian society, by *laying on of hands*,

and *praying* for God’s blessing upon the person
 and labours of him that was separated, was per-
 formed by the *Bishop* or Overseer of that, or of

some other Christian society; yet that does not
 affect the case at all; because this is to be con-
 sidered; not so much the act of the Bishop, as the

act of the *Society* or Congregation whose mini-
 ster and representative he was, in the performance
 of that action; and because what was done by

the Bishop, was not the act of *separation itself*,
 in whole, or in part, but a mere *appendix* to it
 and an outward *sign* or *token* of it. Thus we find

that Christ chose his *twelve* Apostles, *Mark* vi. 7.
 and thus he separated and sent forth his *seventy*
 Disciples to preach the gospel through *Judea*,

Luke x. 1. and the chusing of these out of, or
 from amongst others to answer the purpose afore-
 said,

said, was a *sufficient ordination*, without any *external token* or *ceremony*, which does not appear to be added in either case. Thus again, the Apostles and Brethren, (the number of which were about an *hundred and twenty*;) appointed *two*, viz. *Joseph* and *Matthias*, and left it to be determined by lot which of those should succeed *Judas* in the *Apostolick office*; and when that was done *Matthias* was numbred with the *Apostles*, and it does not appear that laying on of hands, or any other ceremony was used in the case. This I think plainly shews, that laying on of hands by the Bishop, on persons set apart to minister in Christian societies, was not a *necessary part* of such separation; but a mere *appendix* to it. And though when the *Deacons* were chosen by the *multitude*; that is, by the body of the faithful then present, *A&Cts* vi. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. the Apostles *prayed*, and in conformity to *antient usage*, (for it does not appear, that they had any divine directions so to do,) they laid their *hands* on the persons so separated: yet that *ceremony* does not appear to be a *necessary part* of such separation, but only an *outward sign* or *token* of it. And though laying on of hands has been called *ordination*; yet this was only a *figure of speech* in which the *sign* is put for the *thing signified*.

After the *second century* the affair of electing persons to minister in Christian societies admitted of some small alteration, viz. sometimes the clergy took upon them to *nominate* persons for Ecclesiastical Functions; but then such nomination was no more than barely to *recommend*, it being of no effect but as the persons nominated were approved and accepted by the *body of the people*.

people. Thus again Father *Paul* of beneficiary matters, *Pages* 20, 21. “ The Priests, Deacons, “ and other Clergy, were also presented by the “ people, and ordained by the Bishop; or else “ nominated by the Bishop, and with the con- “ sent of the people ordained by him. No per- “ son that was unknown was admitted, nor did “ the Bishop ordain any, but such as were ap- “ proved, or indeed proposed by the people, “ whose concurrence was thought so necessary, “ that the Pope, *St Leo*, proves at large the in- “ validity of a Bishop’s ordination without it. “ And *Constance* being chosen Bishop of *Milan* “ by the Clergy, *St Gregory* thought he could “ not be consecrated without the consent of the “ inhabitants, who being at that time retired to “ *Genoa*, to avoid the ravages of the barbarous “ nations, a message was first sent them, at his “ instance, to know their pleasure. A thing “ which may justly be recommended to the ob- “ servation of this age, where we are taught that “ elections, wherein the people should pretend “ to have any share, would be unlawful and in- “ valid: so changed, and so inverted are customs, “ as to make good and evil change their names, “ calling that lawful which was formerly repu- “ ted detestable and impious, and that unjust “ which had then the reputation of Sanctity.”
And,

Thus things continued till about the year 500: after which time, the power of electing men to minister in Christian societies was by degrees taken from the *People*, and transferred to those invested with *civil power*. See Father *Paul* of beneficiary matters, *Pages* 24, 25, 26, 27. “ But “ after

“ after the year 500, the Bishops being become
 “ the absolute dispensers of the fourth part of
 “ the Goods of the Church, they began to em-
 “ ploy more of their care on their temporal af-
 “ fairs, and to make Parties in the cities: so that
 “ elections were no longer carried on with a
 “ view to the service of God, but managed by
 “ faction, and intrigues, which often proceeded
 “ to open violence. This gave the first alarm to
 “ Princes, who had hitherto little concerned
 “ themselves in the choice of the ministry.”——
 “ Moved therefore, partly by religious confide-
 “ rations, and partly by reasons of state, they
 “ now began not to suffer the Clergy and People
 “ to determine elections by themselves, and ac-
 “ cording to their own passions. For seeing
 “ men now no longer avoiding and flying from
 “ Bishopricks, but even made interest for them,
 “ with all the courtship and skilful sollicitations
 “ they could use; so great a change opened a
 “ way to factions, and consequently to seditions,
 “ and sometimes bloodshed at the instigation of
 “ the contending parties.”——“ These distem-
 “ pers produced an Edict, that no person elected
 “ should be consecrated without the approbation
 “ of the Prince or Magistrate, reserving to them-
 “ selves the right of confirming the great Bi-
 “ shopricks, such as those in *Italy* of *Rome*, *Ra-*
 “ *venna*, and *Milan*, and leaving the care of o-
 “ thers to their Ministers.”——“ In this man-
 “ ner, that is with the imperial sanction, the
 “ Popes and Bishops continued to be chosen in
 “ *Italy* until the year 750: but in *France*, and
 “ other Countries beyond the mountains, the
 “ royal authority, and even that of the Mayors
 “ of

“ of the Palace, appeared more absolute; for
 “ the People, as soon as those Princes concerned
 “ themselves in elections, desisted entirely, and
 “ withdrew themselves from them.”—“ Thro’
 “ all the history of *Gregory of Tours*, from the
 “ time of *Clovis* the first Christian King of
 “ *France*, until the year 590, we find no in-
 “ stance of any one Bishop being made in any
 “ other manner than by the nomination or con-
 “ sent of the King.”——“ It was easy for those
 “ Bishops when once they were made without
 “ the authority of the People, to exclude the
 “ People also from the choice of Priests, Dea-
 “ cons, and other ecclesiastical ministers, and to
 “ transfer that right to the Prince alone.” Here
 we see, that the *succession* of *Bishops* and *Clergy*
 was become *greatly irregular*, and was most
 shamefully *interrupted* and broke in upon. For
 instead of their being chosen and set apart to
 their respective offices by the *people*, whom they
 were appointed to watch over, and minister to,
 which in *reason*, and according to *antient* usage,
 they ought to be; they were set apart by those
 invested with *civil power*; and this *broke* the *suc-*
cession, and rendered it *greatly irregular*. And
 supposing the external sign or ceremony of *lay-*
ing on of hands, and *praying* for the person set a-
 part, was performed by the Bishops, as in times
 past, and according to antient usage; yet the *suc-*
cession of *Bishops* and *Clergy* was notwithstanding
greatly irregular, and that *succession* was as ef-
 fectually, and as truly *interrupted*, as if a change
 had been made in the *ceremony* also, or in the
administration thereof. The *Crown* of *Poland* is
 well known to be *elective*. Now suppose a per-
 son

son were to accede to that crown any other way than by that of election, this would be *greatly irregular* according to the *constitution* of that *kingdom*, and the *succession* in that case would be *greatly interrupted* and broke in upon, even though the visible sign of *anointing*, or any other *customary ceremony* be continued, and administered by the *same person*, or *persons*, and in the *same manner* as heretofore. This I think is so plain as not to admit of a dispute; and the cases are parallel.

After this the affair of elections suffered another change, and by degrees the *Clergy* possessed themselves of that power, and wholly excluded both *Prince* and *People*. Thus again *Father Paul* of beneficiary matters, *Page 56*. “ But
 “ the Posterity of *Charlemaign* having been driven out of *Italy* in the year 884, *Pope Hadrian III* ordained, that the *Popes* should, for the future, be consecrated without applying to the *Emperor* at all. *Page 88*. The *Emperor* being yet young, and *Germany* all in commotions, this juncture invited the *Pope*, to exclude him entirely from the election of the *Bishops* and *Abbots*, and to that end sent him a *monitory*; whereby the *Emperor* was forbid to concern himself any more in those dispositions. *Pages 106, 107*. Finally, in that space of time between the years 1122 wherein *Henry V* renounced the investitures, and 1145, it became a rule almost every where established, that upon the death of the *Bishop*, his successor should be chosen by the *Chapter*, and confirmed by the *Metropolitan*: that the *Abbots* should be chosen by the *Monks*, and then
 “ confirmed

“ confirmed by the Bishop, if the Monastery
 “ were not exempted, and if it were, then the
 “ Pope was to be applied to for his confirmation.
 “ That the other benefices which were *de Jure*
 “ *Patronatus*, should be conferred by the Bi-
 “ shops upon the presentation of the Patron:
 “ but that all the rest should be at the entire
 “ disposal of the Bishops. There remained in-
 “ deed the chief election of all, the Popedom,
 “ which seemed not to fall under any regulation;
 “ for after the Emperor had been excluded
 “ from the election, instead of its returning to
 “ the people, which was a consequence ought
 “ to have been expected, *Innocent II*, upon a
 “ quarrel betwixt him and the *Roman* people, in
 “ which he was driven out of *Rome*, in return,
 “ took away the right of election from the peo-
 “ ple.” Here we see, that the affair of *electing*,
 or separating men from their brethren in a Chri-
 stian society, to *minister* in and to that society,
 was again *interrupted* and broke in upon. For
 instead of their being chosen and separated by
 the *people*, according to *reason*, and *most antient*
usage; or instead of their being separated by
 those invested with *civil power*, according to the
usage of the *times immediately preceding*; the
Clergy by degrees possessed themselves of that
 power, and have kept it ever since; and this again
 rendered their *succession greatly irregular*. How
idle and *vain* therefore must the pretence be, of
 a *regular uninterrupted succession* of Bishops and
 Clergy in the Church of *Rome*, from the *Apo-*
stles down to *this time*; whereas according to Fa-
 ther *Paul’s* account, it has in fact been just the
 contrary. And, if the *pretence* of such a *succef-*

sson be *idle* and *vain* in the Bishops and Clergy of the Church of *Rome*; then that pretence must be equally so in *all others*, who have derived their succession from them.

S E C T. XIII.

HA V I N G before shewn what was the *great end* of our Lord Jesus Christ's coming into the world, and likewise what he has *done* in order to obtain it: I now proceed to shew, that the means Christ made use of were *suitable* and *proper* to obtain the end proposed, *viz.* the saving of mens souls. And in order to do this I shall shew *first*, that the means Christ made use of were suitable and proper to *reform the world*, and rightly to *direct* and *govern* the *affections* and *actions* of men: and *secondly*, that the reforming, and rightly directing and governing the minds and lives of men was the only *possible way* in which Christ could be a *Saviour* to them. And,

First, I am to shew, that the means Christ made use of were suitable and proper to *reform the world*, and rightly to *direct* and *govern* the *minds* and *lives* of men. And here I observe, that as Christ addressed himself to men as *free* beings; so what he had to offer to them was founded upon the consideration of a *Deity*. By a *Deity* I mean a governing mind, who called this world into being, who takes cognizance of the actions of men, and who will call them to an account for the same, and deal with every
 one

one according to his works. And though the bulk of mankind were *grossly corrupted* with respect to their *understandings*, their *affections*, and *actions*, when Christ undertook to reform and save them; yet the sense of a *Deity*, or of such a governing mind as I have now mentioned, was still preserved and kept alive among them, as is abundantly evident from the many superstitions and idolatries that every where prevailed. And indeed, it must be a very hard thing quite to *raze* out of mens minds the sense of a *Deity*; because the present dependent condition of every one, the beauty and order that is to be seen in the creation, the tendency and subserviency of its several parts to a general good, and the like, do naturally, and almost unavoidably, make the sense of a *Deity* present to mens minds.

But though the sense of a governing mind was not, neither could be easily, lost in the world; yet most mens conceptions of God were so *gross* and *unworthy*, and a just sense of his *moral character*, and his *moral government* were so far lost, as to answer but little purpose to them, with regard to their reformation, or to the rightly directing and governing their affections and actions. Men, from a *false* and *unworthy* sense of *God*, went into *false* ways of *pleasing* him; and upon a sense of their guilt, they took *wrong measures* to recommend themselves to the *divine mercy*. So that tho' the sense of a *Deity* was not lost among men; yet such a sense of his moral perfections, and his moral government was so far lost, as to answer but little purpose to them; that is, their sense of a *Deity* did not naturally lead them to a *reformation* of their evil ways, nor afford such a

ground or *reason* of action to them, as would rightly direct and govern their minds and lives. And,

As this was the unhappy condition of the *bulk* of mankind, and as our Lord Jesus Christ took upon him to be their *reformer*, and in consequence thereof to be their *saviour*: so it behoved him to set men *right* in these matters, by impressing upon their minds such a just and worthy sense of God, and of the true grounds of his approbation and dislike, and the measures which he will most undoubtedly take with our species, as when seriously attended to naturally tends to *reform* the *vices*, and rightly to *direct* and *govern* the *minds* and *lives* of men. And as this was what the circumstances of mankind required; so this was what our Lord did for them in order to their reformation, &c. namely, he published his gospel to the *Jews* in his *own person*, and gave it in charge to his Apostles to publish the same gospel to the *rest of mankind*, which gospel (as I have already observed) is briefly summed up in the following particulars. *First*, he requires and recommends a conformity of mind and life to that eternal and unalterable rule of action which is founded in the reason of things, and makes or declares that compliance to be the only and the sole ground of divine acceptance, and the only and the sure way to life eternal. *Secondly*, if men have lived in a violation of this righteous law, by which they have rendered themselves displeasing to God, and worthy of his just resentment; then Christ requires and recommends repentance and reformation of their evil ways as the only, and the sure grounds of the divine mercy

mercy and forgiveness. And *Thirdly*, Christ assures us that God has appointed a time in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and that he will then approve or condemn, reward or punish, every man according to his works; that is, according as he has, or has not conformed his affections and actions to that rule of action beforementioned, and according as he has or has not repented and amended his evil ways.

This is the true gospel of Jesus Christ. This is that gospel which bringeth peace and salvation to every one who believes it, and makes it a principle of action to himself. This is that gospel, by the *publication* and *reception* of which Christ proposed to *reform the world*, and rightly to *direct* and *govern* the *minds* and *lives* of men. And indeed, nothing could be better suited to answer such a purpose than the gospel here referred to; for were men to act under a *well-grounded persuasion*, and with a *serious regard* to those truths, then it would not fail of producing the forementioned effects. This was the case at the beginning of Christianity, the gospel then wrought *wonders* in the world; that is, a well-grounded persuasion, and a serious regard to the truths beforementioned, wrought a *wonderful change* upon the minds and lives of men. The most fierce and cruel of our species became mild, gentle and compassionate; the most leud and debauched became chaste and temperate; the most selfish and avaritious became benevolent and liberal. In a word, the gospel, that is, the propositions beforementioned, (which are the sum and substance of the gospel of Christ) when believed and seriously regarded, wrought such a change in the affections

fections and actions of men, as by a figure of speech was called a *new birth*, and a *new creation*, and the persons upon whom this change was wrought were said to be *born again*, and to be *created again in Christ Jesus*, and the like. And,

As the gospel wrought such a change, and produced such effects upon the minds and lives of men *heretofore*; so it would produce the same effects *now*, were men to believe and regard it as they did then, by making it a principle of action to themselves. Alas! to believe the gospel now, is only to assent to those particular propositions, *viz.* that *Christ's person* and his *mission* are *divine*, in opposition to *Pagans, Mahometans, Jews, and Deists*, who possibly may some of them dispute those points: and not such a well-grounded persuasion, and such a serious regard to the truths beforementioned, (which are the contents of the gospel) as become a principle of action in the believer, in *opposition* to that *vice and corruption*, which prevails in the world, and which the gospel of Christ was intended to reform. Had men now a well-grounded persuasion, and did they pay a serious regard to the following truths, which contain the true gospel of Jesus Christ, *viz.* that nothing but a conformity of mind and life to that rule of action which is founded in the reason of things, can possibly render them pleasing and acceptable to God; that nothing but repentance and reformation of their evil ways can possibly recommend vicious wicked men to the divine mercy; and that God will most certainly call us all to an account for our present behaviour, and will deal with every man according to his works; I say, had men a well-grounded persuasion,

perswasion, and did they pay a serious regard to those truths, this would work wonders *now*, as well as *heretofore*. But alas! the case is quite otherwise now, as believing the gospel, and believing in Jesus Christ is now become quite another thing. And,

Here I humbly beg my reader to consider, were the *generality* of men to act under a well-grounded perswasion, and with a serious regard to the truths beforementioned, what *effects* it would produce upon their affections and actions, and what manner of persons they would be. Surely the case would then, be vastly different from what it is now; because a serious regard to those truths naturally leads men to consider what they are about, and to act with *caution* in whatsoever they set their hand unto, as their *highest interest* is manifestly concerned therein. A serious regard to those truths would constantly call in mens *attention*, and this would prevent their running *hastily* into any thing that is evil; because then they would have time to consider whether a present enjoyment (which upon the whole is wrong, and therefore ought to be avoided), is worth purchasing at the loss of God's favour, and the happiness of another world. A well-grounded perswasion, and a serious regard to the forementioned truths, would naturally lead men to *look forward*, and consider what *part* in life they ought to *act*; and this again would lead them to *watch* against those temptations by which they might be betrayed. In a word, the world would then of course put on another face, and mankind would be so changed for the better, as to be quite otherwise than what at present they appear to be.

And

And this would be the case of all ranks and conditions of men, from the king upon the throne to the meanest of his subjects. Every man, who acted under such a persuasion, and with a regard to the forementioned truths, would be careful honourably to *fill up every relation* he stood in to others, make good *every obligation*, and *faithfully discharge every trust* reposed in him. Then, those who are intrusted with the power of making *laws*, for the good and well-being of a community, would in their legislative capacity take heed, not to *exceed*, nor yet to *betray* the trust reposed in them. Then, the courts of princes would not be turned into *puppet-shews*, and the wealth of nations wasted in supporting those shews; but they would be the *seat of judgment*, in which iniquity would not be found, where every *complaint* would be heard, and every *grievance* among the people impartially redressed. And this would be the case with respect to all estates and conditions of men, the belief of the gospel of Christ would be such a spring and principle of action in them, as would dispose every one to act *suitably* to his character whatever it were. And,

If we consider men under the power of *vicious affections*, and *long contracted habits of sin*, surely, nothing is more likely to work their *reformation* than the true gospel of Jesus Christ. For were such men fully convinced of, and could they be prevailed upon to pay a serious regard to the truths beforementioned, truths in which they are so deeply interested, and which so nearly concern them, this would *melt down* the most *hardened* and *obdurate* of them all. For, if nothing but a
conformity

conformity of mind and life to that rule of action which is founded in the reason of things, will render men pleasing to God; and if nothing but repentance and reformation of their evil ways will recommend vicious wicked men to the divine mercy; and if God will most assuredly judge the world in righteousness, and render to every man according to his works (which is the sum and substance of the gospel of Christ); then, where those truths are believed upon mature consideration, and a serious regard is paid to them, this naturally tends to *bear down* the most *inveterate habits of vice*, and is more than a *counterpoise* to the *strongest temptations*, and consequently leads to *reformation* the most *hardened sinner*. Thus a well-grounded persuasion and a serious regard to the truths beforementioned naturally tends to reform the world, and rightly to direct and govern the minds and lives of men; and these would be the blessed effects of the gospel of Christ were it generally believed and regarded as it ought to be.

S E C T. XIV.

HA V I N G in the preceding section fully shewn, that the true gospel of Jesus Christ is excellently suited to reform the world, and rightly to direct and govern the minds and lives of men: I now proceed to shew, *secondly*, that the reforming the world, and rightly directing and governing the affections and actions of men, was the only *possible way* in which Christ

could be a *Saviour* to them. And in order to do this, I beg leave to observe, that it is *agreeableness* or *disagreeableness* in any agent, which alone renders that agent (considered as an agent or free being) the object of divine *approbation* or *dislike*. God does not approve or disapprove from capricious humour or arbitrary pleasure; but from the real and intrinsic valuableness or unworthiness of the object of such his approbation or dislike. Were God to approve or disapprove of any object upon any *other account*, from any *other motive*, or upon any *other ground*, than the real intrinsic valuableness or disagreeableness of that object, this would be a manifest *moral imperfection* in the Deity; because then, God would not only be capable of being, but he would be actually *mised*, by his being led to approve or disapprove of what is not the true and proper object of his approbation or dislike; and by his being led to affect and act upon *wrong* and *false principles*, to admit which, would be to defame the moral character of the best of beings, and therefore it is not to be supposed. To approve or disapprove of what is not in itself the true and proper object of such approbation or dislike, is in the nature of the thing manifestly wrong; and therefore such a conduct must be *unworthy* of the Deity. This, I think, is as plain and evident as any mathematical proposition can be demonstrated to be; and therefore I shall not proceed farther to explain a point which appears self-evident to the lowest understanding.

Mankind in the general were grossly corrupted, both with respect to their understandings,

ings, their affections, and actions, when our Lord undertook to reform them (as I have already observed), and this rendered each one *personally displeasing* to his maker, as each one was become the proper object of divine dislike. Every one who had behaved grossly unworthy of, and unsuitable to his character, and who had thereby disappointed the very end of his creation; did by this means render himself personally displeasing to his maker, and the proper object of his resentment. For as man is a *free* being, who has the direction of his own actions, and as he is endowed with a discerning and reasoning faculty, which when carefully used and attended to, would in the general rightly direct his understanding, his affections, and actions: (excepting in difficult and perplexed cases, in which he would be liable to err, and consequently to act wrong, and which wrong behaviour his kind creator would not unreasonably take an advantage from) so this puts it into every man's *power*, and leaves it to his *choice* to behave well, or ill; to render himself personally pleasing, or displeasing to God; and consequently to be the proper object of divine favour, or resentment. And,

As the generality, or at least a great part of our species had made a *wrong* choice, had by their ill behaviour rendered themselves personally displeasing to their maker, and by that means were become the proper objects of his resentment: so there was no other possible way in which Christ could be a Saviour to them; but by his working a *personal change* in them, or rather by his recommending such momentous *truths* to their

consideration, as when seriously attended to, would dispose and engage them to *reform themselves*, and work in them such a change, as would make them cease to be the proper objects of divine dislike and resentment, and become personally pleasing to God, by being thereby the proper objects of his favour. I say, this was the only possible way, in which Christ could be a Saviour to mankind; because this was the only possible way in which he could render men personally pleasing to their maker, and the proper objects of divine regard. It was mens vicious and wicked behaviour *only*, which rendered them personally displeasing to God, and which made them the proper objects of his resentment; and therefore there was nothing in nature, but mens *reformation*, and their *right behaviour*, which could possibly render them personally pleasing to him, and make them the proper objects of his favour. God is eternally and unchangeably the same, he always likes or dislikes as the being which is liked or disliked is in itself the proper object of one or the other. So that, if there be at any time a *change*, with respect to the divine *approbation* or *dislike*, the ground of that change, is not, nor cannot be, in God, who is unchangeable; and therefore must be in the *subject* upon whom it is exercised; that is, if God at any time *ceases* to disapprove the being which he did disapprove, and *likes* the same being which before he disliked; then, that being must be so changed, as to cease to be the proper object of his dislike, and become the proper object of his approbation and affection. So that if we have by our misbehaviour rendered ourselves personally

personally

personally displeasing to God, and are become the proper objects of his dislike and resentment, we must unavoidably continue to be personally displeasing to him, and to be the proper objects of his dislike and resentment, until such a change is wrought in us; which is done by our *repentance* and *reformation*, as that we cease to be the proper objects of his dislike and resentment, and become the proper objects of his approbation and affection. I say, this must needs be the case; because were God to like or dislike upon any other grounds, it would be manifestly wrong, and therefore the supposition is not to be admitted. Were God to take up a resentment against any of his creatures upon any other grounds than their having *behaved ill*, which is the only proper ground for resentment, this would be wrong; or were he to shew mercy to, and forgive such transgressors as had rendered themselves the proper objects of his resentment, upon any other grounds, than their *repentance* and *reformation*, which in such a case, would be the only proper ground for mercy and forgiveness, this would be wrong also; and therefore it is not to be supposed.

If then, our Lord Jesus Christ would be a *Saviour* to mankind; he must *reform* them, and must rightly direct their *minds* and *lives*; because there was no other possible way, in which he could render them personally pleasing to God, and consequently no other possible way in which he could be a *Saviour* to them. If he had lived to the age of *Metuselah*, and had behaved all that time in the best and most perfect manner possible, and if he had died a death a thousand times
more

more *painful* and *shameful* than what he did, this might have rendered him in his *own person* so much the more pleasing and acceptable to his father, as he hereby might become so much more the proper object of divine regard; but this could not possibly render any *other person*, more or less pleasing to God, because no other person could hereby become more or less the proper object of his favour. What is personally pleasing in one agent, cannot possibly render another agent pleasing to God; because that other does not thereby become the proper object of it; more especially if the latter be *in himself* personally displeasing to God, and is the proper object of his resentment, which is the case of *vicious wicked men*, antecedent to their repentance and reformation. And if wicked men repent and amend their ways, then they by this change cease to be personally displeasing to God, and become in themselves personally pleasing to him, and the proper objects of his favour; and consequently they do not need any thing that is personally pleasing in another to make them so.

Besides, it is very absurd, and a shameful affront to the majesty of heaven; to suppose that God *removes* his displeasure, and takes into his *favour* one agent, for what was personally pleasing in another; because this *supposes* him to act upon *wrong and false principles*. The *right behaviour* and the *sufferings of Christ*, have no more connexion with, nor relation to any *other person*, so as to be a ground or reason for God to shew favour or kindness to that other person; than *colour has to sound*. The right behaviour and the sufferings of Christ rendered him

personally

personally valuable, and as such he became hereby personally pleasing to his father; but then they could not do so by any *other person*, because they were no ways, nor in any sense *his*, nor bore any *relation* to him; and because every other person continued *the same* as to his personal valuableness or disagreeableness, and consequently was the *same object* of divine approbation or dislike, *after* the right behaviour and the sufferings of Christ as *before*; so that the good works or sufferings of Christ could not possibly make any *alteration* in the case. And,

As the reforming the world, and rightly directing and governing the minds and lives of men, was the only possible way in which Christ could be a Saviour to them: so this was the only way in which he *proposed* to be their Saviour, and this was the only *method* he pursued in order to obtain that end. He tells *sinners* plainly, that except they *repent* they will all *perish*; and that the true and only way to life eternal is to *keep the commandments*; and that if they *do this* they *shall live*; and the like. This is the *true gospel* of Jesus Christ. As to the saving mankind by the *imputed righteousness*, or the *meritorious sufferings*, or the *prevailing intercession* of Christ, these are doctrines which Christ never taught, and are what Christ never pretended to save men by; but were methods of salvation set up by *men*, who have called themselves *his followers*. And these methods of saving mankind, as they are of *human invention*, and are no part of the gospel of Christ: so they naturally and manifestly tend to *subvert* it, as I shall shew hereafter.

S E C T. XV.

HERE it may be natural for my reader to ask, that if the gospel of Christ is founded in reason, and is exactly conformable to our natural notions of things, and if it be a proper expedient to reform the world, and rightly to direct and govern the minds and lives of men, and if this is the only possible way for men to secure to themselves the divine favour, and the happiness of another world, and the most likely way to obtain peace and happiness here; then how came it to pass, that when the gospel was *first preached*, it was not *universally received*? and how comes it to pass that where it is *received*, it does not *generally* have its *proper effect* and influence upon the *minds and lives* of men? But, on the contrary, *Christians* in general appear to be like *other people*, having the *same vices and corruptions* prevailing among them. The same pride and arrogance; the same tyranny and cruelty; the same fraud and oppression; the same covetousness, dissimulation, intemperance, and the like, are to be found among *Christians*, as are among *other men*. So that the main difference betwixt *Christians* and *Mahometans*, *Jews* and *Pagans*, seems to be in *name* and *profession* only, and in the *different rituals* of their several religions. And tho', where Christianity has taken place it may possibly have introduced more *learning and knowledge*, and better *order and decency* among men; yet even this, it is to be feared,

feared, has been subservient to render the *villanous* among Christians *more completely* so, and to make men more *dextrously* and *decently* vicious. These are questions, which as they are nearly related to the point in hand; so I presume my reader will not be tired, if his attention should be retained, whilst they are particularly considered. And

Here I am to enquire, how it came to pass, that when the gospel was *first published* to the world, it was not *universally received*. And surely, if my reader would but consider how many *difficulties* it had to encounter with, and how many kinds of *opposition* were likely to be made to it, he would not be surprized to find that it made no greater progress than it did. For as the gospel of Christ is an address to men as *free* beings, which have the direction of their own actions, and as such it must be left to every man's *choice* whether he would *bear*, or whether he would *forbear*; whether he would *attend* to it, or whether he would set his *face* against it: so consequently it could not be *forced* upon the world, but must make its way by mere dint of *reason*, and strength of *argument*. Indeed the *miraculous* power which attended the gospel at its first publication, was designed to *alarm* the world, and to call in mens serious *attention* to what was kindly offered to them, and to stamp a *divine* character upon it; and upon many it had its intended effect. But then, with multitudes of others the case was otherwise; men found out ways to take off the *force* of this alarm, by ascribing that power to *other causes*, and the like. So that the generality of men

were so far from being brought over to the gospel of Christ, that, on the contrary, they made *great opposition* to it, the grounds of which opposition I come more particularly to consider: And

First, as the world lay in *wickedness*, and men had contracted *long habits* of vice: so this disposed many to oppose every thing which might give a check to their enjoyments, or that might introduce any uneasiness into their minds. And as the gospel could not work upon men, until they could be prevailed upon seriously to reflect upon, and carefully attend to it: so sad experience shews how *hard* and *difficult* a thing it is, to bring men who have given a loose to their appetite and passions, to reflect seriously upon their conduct or carefully to attend to any thing, which may be offered against it. Alas! to attempt to bring such men to *serious reflection* and consideration, is like attempting to bring a bear to the *stake*, or putting a *knife* to a man's *throat*, and therefore too many are apt to *start back*. And as the gospel when carefully attended to, must greatly disturb the minds of wicked men, by representing to them as in a glass, the *vileness* of their behaviour, the *wretchedness* of their condition, and the *dreadful consequences* which will unavoidably follow upon it, except their repentance and reformation prevent it: so it is no wonder that many of them *stopt* their ears against it, and refused to hearken to *that voice* which spake not *good* concerning them but *evil*. And tho' the gospel of Christ is excellently suited to reform vicious men; yet it does not do it by way *charm*, but by *moral swasion*, men must reflect seriously

seriously upon the contents of it, and carefully attend to it, for otherwise it can have no effect or influence upon their minds and lives, which wicked men are not easily, nor generally prevailed upon to do. So that when we consider, how hard and difficult a thing it is to bring vicious men to serious reflection, and how few there are who will be brought to it, it will not appear strange that Christianity made no greater progress in the world than it did. Again, this will farther appear if we consider,

Secondly, that the gospel of Christ lays the ax to the *root* of the tree, and (if I may so speak) it gives no quarter; that is, it does not admit of any thing to be the *ground* of God's favour but the practice of moral virtue, or a conformity of mind and life to that rule of action which is founded in the reason of things; and it admits of nothing to be the ground of divine mercy and forgiveness, but repentance and reformation of mens evil ways. Whereas most other religions have some *kind* and *favourable salvo's* annexed to them, something to help men out at a dead lift, something to offer to God instead of a right behaviour, and repentance, and reformation of their evil ways, and by which they are led to hope, that they shall find acceptance with him; tho' they have nothing personally valuable in themselves to recommend them. Most other religions have provided for their adherents either *costly sacrifices*, or *painful penances*, or *tedious pilgrimages*, or *bowings and prostrations*, or *frequent watchings*, *washings*, *fastings* and *prayers*, or a strict regard to *rites and ceremonies*, or the *good works*, the *sufferings*, or the *intercessions* of others,

others, or something which mens wealth or power can procure for them, to be the grounds of their acceptance with God, and of their obtaining the divine mercy. So that let men live as *viciously* as they please, and tho' they go on and persist in their *wicked* courses; yet still there is *something* to fly to, something to render the practice of vice *easy* to themselves, and to give them *hope* even to the last. Whereas the gospel of Christ does not admit of any thing of this kind, it has provided no such *salvo's* for *sinners*, neither does it afford any such grounds of *hopes* and *comfort* to *wicked men*. But, on the contrary, it requires and obliges men to become *personally* valuable in themselves, to become *worthy* of, and to be the proper objects of divine regard; and it declares mens *personal* valuableness to be the *only* and the *sole ground* of their acceptance with God. And if men have behaved unworthily, then it requires and declares mens *repentance* and *reformation* of their evil ways to be the *only* and the *sole ground* of the divine mercy and forgiveness. This being the case, that men were already in the possession of religions which were so *favourable* to their *vices*, and which offered them grounds of *peace* and *comfort* whilst they indulged their vicious inclinations; it is no wonder that they *were not* in the general given to change, or that they should *violently* oppose Christianity which would *bereave* them of those *comforts*; and consequently it is not to be wondered at that the gospel of Christ made no greater progress than it did. Again,

Thirdly, the prejudices which many men took up against Christianity arising from *education*,
precon-

preconceived opinions, and the like, were so strong, as to bear down every thing which might be offered in its favour: so that the very *novelty* of the thing, was sufficient to introduce a great opposition to it. Religion with many becomes *hereditary*, and like mens estates descends from *father* to *son*; and many men are so exceeding tenacious of opinions which they have received by and from their forefathers, (tho' taken up upon very slight grounds,) that they are not easily prevailed upon to part with them. Constant experience shews the *force* and *power* which education and preconceived opinions has on the minds of men, in so much that most people follow the *same customs*, go into the *same opinions*, and strictly adhere to the *same religion*, which their parents and ancestors were of before them, without examining the grounds upon which they proceeded. Or if they do examine, it is so *slightly* and *partially* as to be of no effect to them; each one presuming they are in the *possession* of *truth*, antecedent to their inquiries about it. Thus generally the *children* of Jews are *Jews*, the *children* of Mahometans are *Mahometans*, and the *children* of Christians are *Christians*, each one abiding by *that religion* he has been educated in. The case is the same with respect to the several denominations among Christians, the *children* of Papists are generally *Papists*, even tho' they live in *Protestant* countries, where the *superstitions* and *absurdities* of popery have been very much *exposed*; the *children* of Protestants are *Protestants*; and amongst these the *children* generally embrace the *same tenets*, and join with the *same sect* their *parents* did before them. And this

was

was too too much the case when the gospel was kindly offered to the world; mens prejudices arising from education and preconceived opinions ran so high, as to be with many a *bar* to their conviction and conversion. This was the case among the *Jews*; they could not bear with any thing which seemed to lessen the value of *that religion* which they had received from their ancestors; and this disposed them violently to *oppose* the gospel. And this was the case also among the *Gentiles*; each set of people paid such a *sacred regard* to the religion they had been *educated* in, as not only prevented them from attending to, but also led them strenuously to oppose whatever might be offered against it; and consequently this introduced among the *Gentiles* great *opposition* to the gospel of Christ. So that when this is taken into the case, it is not to be wondered at that the gospel made no greater progress than it did. Again,

Fourthly, those who have been intrusted with, or who have taken upon them the care and government of *civil societies*, have many of them by a *stretch* of power *provided* and *imposed* a religion upon their people, and thereby have given them a rule of action in religious matters to walk by, and appointed what shall be the grounds of their acceptance with God. This I call a stretch of *power*, because the *nature* and *ends* of government do not *authorize* nor *justify* them in so doing. For whatever *right* civil governors may have to *propose* and *recommend*, yet surely they have *no right* to *force* a religion upon their people; because as authority and government are *founded* upon, so they are *limited* and

bounded

bounded by the grounds and reasons, and by the ends and purposes of civil association. And as men do not enter into civil societies, in order to gain or secure to themselves the favour of God, and the happiness of another world; but only to *gain and secure peace and happiness here*: so from hence it will follow, that to *command and govern* the judgments and actions of men in matters of religion, is not the province of the civil magistrate; because men do not enter into civil society to answer these purposes, and because the favour of God, and the happiness of another world (which is the business of *religion* to secure) society and government can neither give, nor secure, nor take away. But this is what I have elsewhere (*) more largely considered, to which I refer my Reader. And,

As the civil magistrates have sometimes provided, and imposed a religion upon their people: so they have endeavoured to secure the peoples submission, by *threatning and inflicting* the severest pains and penalties. And by this means the most gross absurdities and superstitions have been pinned down upon the people from generation to generation, without any hope or prospect of a reformation; because to attempt any alteration in such religious establishments, is like digging up foundations, and turning the world up-side down: so that the civil establishment of religion, exclusive of a general toleration, is not only

(*) See my discourse on the grounds, and extent of authority and liberty, with respect to civil government. Wherein the authority of civil magistrates in matters of religion, is particularly considered. Occasioned by Dr Rogers's vindication of the civil establishment of religion. Price 6 d. And in my Collection of Tracts, page 453.

only wrong and unjustifiable in itself, but also it is the *greatest bar* to all reformation in religion. And this was the case at the *first* publication of the gospel, the power of the civil magistrate, which should have been employed in the protecting and defending the Apostles in the quiet and peaceable exercise of their ministry, was turned against them. Thus Herod the king stretched forth *his hand to vex certain of the church, and he killed James the brother of John with the sword, and because it pleased the Jews, he proceeded farther to take Peter also.* Acts xii. 1, 2, 3. And as the established religions which took place in the world at the first preaching of the gospel, did many of them abound with abominable *superstitions* and *idolatrics*, which of course the gospel of Christ must *condemn*; as it is shewed that none of those *false ways* of recommending men to God, would be sufficient to answer that purpose: so this engaged the civil magistrates of those times against Christianity, and drew on the professors of it the most heavy and bloody persecutions, which surely, was no *small check* to the progress of the gospel. For tho' the sufferings of innocent persons might *awaken* the *attention* of some, and thereby be a means of bringing them over to Christianity (which gave occasion for that proverb, *viz.* the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church): yet surely, it gave a terrible fright to many others, and kept them at the greatest distance from it. And if we add this to the former considerations, it will not appear strange, that the gospel made no greater progress than it did. Again,

Fifthly,

Fifthly, Religion has always been a *foundation* for men to build a *profitable trade* upon; that is, men of selfish views have made it subservient to the purposes of worldly power, wealth, and grandeur to themselves; and these I call the *interested in religion*. This, I think, has been the case in all ages and countries, and it is notoriously so at this day. Religion is too often principally made subservient to the wealth, and power, and grandeur of those who take upon them to have the direction and management thereof. And though the *professed* design of the interested in religion is to secure to others the favour of God, and their happiness in another world; yet the *real* design, and what they *steadily* pursue, is their own power, and wealth, and every other advantage which they can possibly gain, or secure to themselves in this. And as the profitable trade which religion affords, is chiefly supported by the *weakness, ignorance, and bigotry* of the people: so the managers in matters of religion, do, many of them, take all possible care to keep them so. And accordingly a *padlock* has been too often put upon the understandings of men, and it has been deemed *damnable* for them to enquire any farther into matters of religion, than the interested in that science shall please to direct or give leave. *Ecclesiastical courts*, and courts of *Inquisition* have been likewise set up, in order to strike an *awe* upon the minds of the people, and to *check and restrain* all enquiries into matters of religion; and to *correct* and *punish* all those who shall presume to *deviate* from that standard of truth, which the directors and managers in matters of religion have given them. And if at

any time the peoples attention have been awakened, and they have been called upon to look a little farther into matters of religion, than the standard given them would admit; then presently the interested in religion found an alarm of *danger*, then the *church* is in danger, or *religion* is in danger, or *heresy* prevails, or *infidelity* prevails; or something like it is given out, to *intoxicate* the minds, *inflame* the passions, and *stir up* the resentment of the *weak* and *bigotted* multitude; and by this means, sometimes, such a *fire* has been kindled in a nation, as has not been easily quenched. And,

As some of those who have been intrusted with the care and government of civil societies, have attempted at such power over their people, as exceeded the bounds of reason; and as those who have taken upon them to direct and manage in matters of religion, have often been *too apt* and *ready* to lend them their helping hand to procure it: so (as one good turn deserves another,) those intrusted with civil power, have made use of that power to *confirm* and *establish* to the managers of religious matters that wealth, and power, and grandeur, which they have unreasonably assumed to themselves. And thus likewise (when the directors in matters of religion have thought it necessary for the support of their power and interest, and have been pleased to call for it,) the civil magistrates have sometimes used that power, which ought to have been employed in *protecting* and *defending* the people in the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of their own, in providing *faggots*, and *gibbets*, and other *severities*, to correct and punish all those
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who shall dare to deviate or dissent from that standard of truth, which the managers of religion, by the help of the civil magistrate, have imposed upon them. So that of all the *kinds* of opposition which have been at any time made to the *reforming* the world, that which has come from the *interested* in religion, has always been the *greatest* and *strongest*. And,

This was the case at the *first* publication of the gospel, the *chief priests* and others among the Jews, who were either *interested* in the thing, or *influenced* by those that were, these *inflamed* the passions, and *stirred* up the resentment, not only of the *ignorant* and *bigotted multitude*, but also of the *civil magistrates* against our Saviour; which ended in that bloody and barbarous scene of his crucifixion and death. And neither the *soundness* of Christ's doctrine, nor the *innocency* of his behaviour, nor the abundant *goodness* and *benevolence* of his actions, nor yet the authority and power of his *miracles*, were sufficient to secure him from that *rage* and *madness*, which the interested in religion had stirred up against him. And as the interested in religion made great opposition to the ministry of Christ: so they did the same to that of his Apostles. Thus we read *Acts* iv. 1, 2, 3. *And as they* (viz. Peter and John) *spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Saducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold. Verses 6, 7. And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high-priest,*

were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, by what power, or by what name, have ye done this. Chap. v. 17, 18. Then the high-priest rose up, and all that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the Apostles, and put them in the common prison. And as the interested in religion among the Jews, made great opposition to the gospel of Christ: so the case was the same among the Gentiles, religion being made subservient to worldly purposes, as well among the latter, as the former. Thus we read *Acts* xix. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28. And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain to the craftsmen, whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover you see and hear, that not only at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul, hath perswaded and turned away much people, saying, they be no gods which are made with hands. So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought: but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship. And when they had heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, great is Diana of the Ephesians. So that when we consider what great opposition was made to Christianity, by those who were interested in the several religions which then took place in the world, it is no way surprizing that the gospel made no greater progress than it did.

Sixthly and lastly, The gospel itself very soon became *corrupted* and *depraved*, there being many *absurd* doctrines and *superstitious* practices annexed to, and blended with it, and these were dignified with that specious title the *Gospel of Christ*. And in particular Christianity became corrupted in that grand principle of all true religion whether natural or revealed, *viz.* the *Unity of God*; and this, not only became a *bar* to mens receiving it, but it gave occasion for that *great defection from it* which has so far and so long prevailed in the world, commonly called *Mahometanism*. The professors of Christianity likewise degenerated from that *plainness* and *simplicity*, that *honesty* and *integrity*, and from that spirit of *love* and *benevolence* by which they were to be *known*, and by which Christianity was to be *recommended* to the world; and became *assuming* and *domineering*, *contentious* and *quarrelsome*, *selfish* and *avaritious*, and every evil work prevailed amongst them. In short, the religion of Christ, or rather the religion which was called after his name, became like the rest of the religions which took place in the world; that is, it consisted rather in *externals*, and in *shew* and *appearance*, than in an *internal principle* which rightly directs and governs the *affections* and *actions* of men: and the *professors* of it were in the general *like other people*. So that Christianity had little left to recommend it to the sensible and more discerning part of mankind; and this tended to check and hinder the progress of it.

Thus I have put together the several things which stood in the way of the gospel, to prevent its succeeding in the world; and if we consider
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the case in this view, I think it will not appear strange, that it made no greater progress than it did.

S E C T. XVI.

I HAVE in the preceding section shewed how it came to pass, that the gospel of Christ when it was first preached did not universally prevail: I now proceed to enquire how it comes to pass, that with respect to those who *do receive* it and make a *profession* of it, yet notwithstanding, it has not generally had its *proper effect* and influence upon their *minds* and *lives*. And in order to do this I beg leave to repeat what I have already observed, *viz.* that the gospel of Christ is an address to men as free beings, by recommending to their most serious consideration certain doctrinal propositions taken from the consideration of a Deity, the sum of which is contained in the following particulars. *First*, that nothing but a conformity of mind and life to that eternal and unalterable rule of action, which is founded in the reason of things, will render men pleasing and acceptable to God. *Secondly*, that nothing but repentance and reformation of mens evil ways, will recommend sinners to the divine mercy. *Thirdly*, that God has appointed a time in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and that he will approve or condemn, reward or punish, every man according as he has, or has not conformed his affections and actions to that righteous rule before-mentioned, and according as he has, or has not repented and amended

amended his evil ways. And as these propositions when believed, and seriously regarded, are excellently suited to reform the world, and rightly to direct and govern the minds and lives of men, by being a proper ground or reason of action to them: so whatever doctrines or practices have taken place among Christians, which either immediately or mediately tend to *weaken*, or *take off* the *persuasive influence* of those propositions, such doctrines and practices do manifestly tend to *pervert* the gospel of Christ, and more or less to render it *unsuccessful* upon the minds and lives of men. What those doctrines and practices are, I come now more particularly to consider, tho' I shall not take notice of all, but only of such as principally and eminently do so. And

First, The doctrines of the *imputed righteousness*, the *meritorious sufferings*, and the *prevailing intercession of Christ*, being either separately or conjunctly the *grounds* of mens acceptance with God, and of sinners obtaining divine mercy, these doctrines do naturally tend to *weaken* and *take off* the *persuasive influence* of the gospel, and to render it of *none effect*; as by them is pointed out to men *another way* to God's favour and mercy, and *another way* to life eternal than the *gospel* has pointed out unto them; and, consequently, the aforesaid doctrines render the doctrine of the gospel an useleſs and an insignificant thing. I put these *three* doctrines together, because they *pervert* the gospel of Christ the same way. I say *pervert* the gospel. For if persons can be prevailed upon to believe that men are rendered acceptable to God, and that sinners are recommended to the divine mercy, not on the account of their
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being in themselves the suitable and proper objects of either; but only on the account of the right behaviour, the sufferings, and the intercession of Christ, whether it be by either, or all of these (though one would think that if *one* of these did the work, neither of the other *two* would be necessary): then the consequence is clear, that to persons so perswaded there cannot appear any *necessity* for them to become personally valuable in themselves, by a right behaviour and by repentance and reformation of their evil ways, because if men are rendered acceptable to God, and are recommended to his mercy by the *former*, then the *latter* cannot be necessary to that end, and then the recommending of, or insisting upon, the latter to persons thus perswaded, can have *little* or no *effect* upon their minds or lives, because the *force* of the *argument* is taken away, and thus the perswasive influence of the gospel is weakened if not destroyed thereby. And,

This is very consistently acknowledged by the *Antinomians*, who professedly maintain not only that the righteousness, the sufferings, and the intercession of Christ are the sole grounds of the divine favour and mercy to men; and that their own right behaviour, and their *repentance* and reformation are not *necessary*, nor any way subservient to that end: but also that if men hope or expect to obtain the divine favour and mercy on the account of their own *good works* or *repentance*, this is the *high road to destruction*, as such hope and expectation *lessens*, or *takes off* the *merit* of Christ's righteousness, his sufferings, and intercession; and likewise the *freeness* of the divine mercy and grace to mankind. And that the aforesaid

doctrines

doctrines have not only such a *tendency*, but also *have*, and *do in fact* weaken, or take off the persuasive influence of the forementioned propositions which contain the true gospel of Jesus Christ, I dare appeal to the experience of the *present* and *past* ages, as evincing the truth of it; there having been, and still being, multitudes of persons professing Christianity, who *indulge* themselves in a vicious course of life, and yet *hope*, and *trust*, and *rely upon Christ*, (as they call it,) for salvation to the last. And tho' they have nothing personally valuable in themselves to recommend them, and tho' they are the suitable and proper objects of the divine dislike and resentment; yet as they have been taught that the *true grounds* of the divine favour and mercy to men, are the righteousness, and sufferings, and the intercession of Christ; so they *presume* with great confidence that *through these* they shall be *saved*, than which surely nothing can be more absurd. Thus the forementioned doctrines do naturally tend to pervert the gospel of Christ, and to render it an useless thing; as they tend to weaken, and take off that persuasive influence which otherwise it might have upon the minds and lives of men. And thus my readers will see how it comes to pass, that where the gospel has been received and professed, it has not generally had its intended effect. And

This surely is worthy the most serious consideration of all those who are by profession *preachers* of *Christ* and his gospel; because the work which they are engaged in, is not a trifling affair; but is of the *last importance* to mankind. Christian Ministers are to represent to the people the *true grounds* of the divine favour and forgiveness, and

the *true* and *only way* to life eternal; it therefore most certainly behoves them to take great heed to their ministry *rightly* to fulfil it. For whoever points out to men *another way* to God's favour and eternal life, than Christ hath pointed out; such an one preaches *another gospel*, he is a *deceiver* in points of the greatest importance (whether he intends it or not), he is an *Antichrist*, and a *betrayed* of mens souls. And as the doctrines I have now been considering, *viz.* the imputed righteousness, the meritorious sufferings, and the prevailing intercession of Christ are represented to be, what they really are not, *viz.* the true grounds of the divine favour to men, and of the divine mercy to sinners: so to represent them *as such*, and to *teach men so*, is in truth to *preach another gospel* than Christ hath preached, and to point out to men *another way* to God's favour and life eternal than *Christ* hath pointed out unto them. I have already shewn what are the true and only grounds of our acceptance with God, and what are the true and only grounds of the divine mercy and forgiveness to sinners, *viz.* our being prevailed upon by the gospel, to become the suitable and proper objects of it, by a right behaviour, and by repentance and reformation of our evil ways: this is what the gospel of Christ *declares*, and this is what the reason of things *require*, and were God to act upon any other principles, that is, were he to be pleased with men, or shew mercy to sinners upon any other grounds, this would be running *cross* to nature, and acting from *unworthy* motives, and consequently, would be a manifest *moral imperfection* in him.

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I am sensible, that the forementioned doctrines are said to be contained in the *writings* of the *Apostles*, and more especially that doctrine of the meritorious sufferings of Christ being the ground of God's shewing mercy to sinners; but this is not to be admitted. The Apostles had a great regard to their countrymen the *Jews*, which disposed them to study and make use of all the ways they could to bring them over to Christianity. And as the *Jews* paid a great regard to *Moses's law*: so the Apostles endeavoured to *assimilate* the gospel to it, that thereby it might be rendered more *acceptable* to those *Jews*. And as the Apostles (in conformity to the usage of those eastern countries), sometimes delivered themselves in *high* and *lofty figures* of speech: so they sometimes borrowed those figures from the *figurative actions* which were appointed under the dispensation of *Moses*. Figurative actions I call them, because in truth they were no other. Thus we read, *Leviticus xvi. 21, 22.* *And Aaron* (and consequently the high priests which succeeded in after times), *shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited, and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.* These I say were *figurative actions*, because if we understand them *literally*, they are very absurd, seeing the *sins* of the people were not capable of being *collected together*, and then *carried off* in this manner. For it is not to be supposed, that *Aaron*

went over the camp, or that the *high priests* (after him) went over the nation of *Israel*, and by a kind of *suction* drew all the sins of the people into their own *breasts*, and then *breathed* them out again upon the *head* of the goat, or that they gathered together the *sins* of the people, and bound them in *bundles*, and laid them on the head of the goat, to be carried away into the wilderness, there to be lost; like as tradesmen bind their *wares* in bundles, and lay them on horses, to be carried to market. These I say are *absurd* suppositions, and therefore, the *actions* here referred to, must be considered as *figurative* actions. And as the expressions in the writings of the Apostles which relate to the present question, were many of them taken from such figurative actions as took place among the Jews: so those expressions are plainly *figures* of speech, and ought thus to be understood, for were some of them to be taken in a *literal* sense, they would not be reconcileable to *truth* nor *common sense*, as might easily be made appear, but that is beside my present purpose.

Besides, as the expressions referred to are mostly contained in the *writings* of *St Paul*: so were I to *risk* the whole upon his *authority*, supposing him to be the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, I should even then *gain* my point. Thus, *Heb. x. 4. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.* Now the proper question is, wherein lies the *impossibility* of the *blood* of *bulls* and *goats* taking away *sin*? or how comes it to be impossible that the blood of those creatures should do it? And the answer is manifest, *viz.* that it is an impossibility in nature for the blood, that is, the shedding the blood, of *bulls*, and *goats*

to render a sinner *less* a sinner, or *less* the object of God's displeasure than he was before; and consequently, it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin. The case is exactly the same with respect to the blood, that is, the shedding the blood, of Christ, or any other blood whatever, it being as much an impossibility in nature for the blood of Christ to render a sinner *less* a sinner, or *less* the object of God's displeasure, as it is that the blood of bulls and goats should do it; and consequently it is as much impossible that the blood of Christ, as it is that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin. But this is too plain to be insisted on any farther. But then

Possibly it may here be asked what St Paul means by paying so great complement to the sacrifice of *Christ's death* as he doth, and by giving it so great a preference to the sacrifices which were appointed by the law? if it *did not* literally take away sin, or if St Paul did not understand that to be the case. To which it may be answered, that whatever the (*) Apostle intended thereby, it is evident he could not intend to represent the blood of Christ as taking away sin in a *literal* sense, that being an *impossibility in nature* by his own acknowledgment, as in the case of the blood of bulls and goats; and therefore he must mean that the blood of Christ takes away sin, not in a literal, but in a *moral* or *figurative* sense, as it affords a *proper argument* to work upon sinners to repent and amend their ways, and thereby to ren-

(*) See my Discourse entitled the Equity and Reasonableness of the Divine Conduct in pardoning sinners upon their repentance exemplified. Or a Discourse on the parable of the Prodigal Son.

der themselves the proper objects of God's mercy. Besides, the Apostle not only ascribes to the blood of Christ the *taking away sin*; but also the *reforming the sinner*, or the purging the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Thus *Heb. ix. 14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, which through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God.* Here we see the Apostle considers the blood of Christ as reforming the minds and lives of men, by purging their *consciences* from dead works to serve the living God; whereas this is *impossible* when taken in a *literal sense*, and therefore *St Paul* must be understood in a moral or figurative sense, as the shedding the blood of Christ affords a proper *argument* to work upon men to repent and amend their ways, and so to *purge their consciences from dead works to serve the living God.* This is what a man of the Apostle's *attention* and *discernment* could not but know; and therefore, when he ascribes purging the conscience from dead works to the blood of Christ, it must be a *figure* of speech, and in common justice it ought so to be understood, if we will allow *St Paul* to be a man of *common sense*. And as the blood of Christ, by a *figure* of speech, may be said to *purge* the *consciences* of men from dead works: so in the *same sense*, and by the *same figure* of speech, it may be said to *take away sin*, as it affords a proper *subject* for sinners to reflect seriously upon, and thereby to lead them to repentance and reformation, by which they become the proper objects of God's mercy. And, as it is in this sense, and in this sense only, that the blood of Christ can be said to

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take away sin, or to purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God: so the Apostle could not intend to represent the blood of Christ as taking away sin in a literal, but only in a moral or figurative sense, as I observed above.

I am likewise sensible it is pretended, that God could not pardon sin, 'till *satisfaction* was made to his *justice* for transgressions; and that Christ by his *death* made *such satisfaction*; and consequently, that his meritorious sufferings, were the *ground* or *reason* of God's shewing mercy to sinners. Upon which I observe, that the sufferings of the *innocent*, could not possibly be a *satisfaction* to *justice* for the faults of the *guilty*; because, as far as justice comes into the case it requires, that in the *subject* in which the *fault* is, in *that same subject* the *punishment* should be also; and the contrary to this is manifestly *unjust*. So that, if God had *punished* the *innocent* for the *faults* of the *guilty*, and had let the *guilty* go *free*, this would have been so far from setting the matter right in point of justice and equity, that it would have been quite the reverse, as it is doing or acting unjustly by both parties; *viz.* by punishing where punishment was not due, and by forbearing to punish where it was due, which surely cannot be doing or satisfying justice, but the contrary, as I have elsewhere (*) more fully shewn. However, this was not the case, because Christ did not fall a *sacrifice* to the *resentment* and *justice* of God, but only to the unprovoked wrath and malice of the *wicked Jews* and *Romans*. And therefore, though

(*) See my Discourse concerning Reason with regard to Religion and Divine Revelation.

what is here urged, (supposing it were well grounded, *viz.* that God could not pardon sin, till satisfaction had been made to his justice for transgressors,) may afford a strong argument for a *popish* purgatory (but not for the *profitable trade* founded upon it); yet it will by no means serve the present purpose.

I am also sensible, it is pretended, that God could not, consistent with the *ends of government*, pardon sinners, without *shewing* his *dislike of sin*, and that God's dislike of sin, was shewed by the *sufferings and death* of Christ; and consequently, his sufferings were the *ground or reason* of God's shewing mercy to sinners. Upon which I observe, that if God had singled out some one or more of the *vilest* of our species, and had laid some *heavy afflictions* upon them, and had done it in such a way as that it appeared plainly to all to be *his hand*, and that it was laid upon them as a *punishment* for their *sins*; then, there would have been some pretence for this argument, because then, it would have appeared that they were punished *by God* on the account of their *sins*, and consequently, they would have been standing monuments of *God's dislike of sin*. But when the most innocent and virtuous of all our species was singled out to bear the most heavy afflictions, and when those afflictions were laid upon him, not by the hand of God, but by the wicked *Jews and Romans*, and that too, not for his having done evil, but *good*, which is the present case; this surely could not possibly shew God's dislike of sin. And I think I may say, that if there be such a thing as persisting *obstinately* in error, it must be so in the present case; because

because I think there is not any thing which has the face of an argument that can be offered in its favour. Again

Secondly, Another way in which the gospel has been perverted and rendered unsuccessful, has been the doctrine of mens being rendered acceptable to God by a *right belief*, or a sound and orthodox faith; this doctrine naturally tends to *weaken* or *take off* the perswasive influence of those propositions which contain the true gospel of Jesus Christ. For, if persons are prevailed upon to believe that men are rendered acceptable to God, and that sinners are recommended to the divine mercy, not on the account of their being in themselves the suitable and proper objects of either, but only on the account of their *judgment* being brought to a *particular standard*, and their *assenting* to a set of *speculative propositions*; then the consequence is, that persons so perswaded cannot think themselves under a *necessity* of becoming *personally valuable* in themselves, by a right behaviour, and by repentance and reformation of their evil ways, because if the *former* render men pleasing to God, the latter is not necessary to that end. And this has been too much, and too often the case among Christians; men have relied upon the *soundness* of their *faith*, as the ground of their acceptance with God, however vicious and wicked their affections and actions have been. So that in this view of Christianity, the great and main point for men to be concerned about, is not what they *do*, but what they *believe*, and accordingly the most *vicious actions* are easily *overlooked*, by persons of this principle; whilst an *error*, or even the *suspicion* of an error in points of *faith*,

exposes a man to the *rage* and *madness* of such people. And, tho' a serious and well-grounded persuasion of the truths of the gospel, naturally tends to reform the vices, and rightly to direct and govern the affections and actions of men, and therefore faith or such a persuasion is spoken very highly of in the writings of the New Testament: yet when faith consists only in the persuasion or assent of the mind to certain propositions, (let those propositions be what they will,) and does not produce the forementioned *effect* upon the minds and lives of men, then, and in that case, faith is so far from being a *benefit* to them, that on the contrary it too often proves a *snare*, as it leads men into a groundless persuasion of their being interested in God's favour, whilst they are the unsuitable and improper objects of it. Thus the forementioned doctrine naturally tends to pervert the gospel of Christ, by weakening and taking from it that persuasive influence, which otherwise it might have upon mens minds and lives. And thus my reader will farther see how it comes to pass, that where the gospel has been received, it has not generally had its proper effect. And,

Here I beg my reader to observe, what a wide difference there is betwixt the *sayings* and *declarations* of Christ, and the *sayings* and *declarations* of some of those men who call themselves after his name, touching this matter. Our Lord saith, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*, (and keeping the commandments, according to his own explanation, is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as our selves;) *this do and thou shalt live.* These are the words and declarations
of

of *Christ*, whereas some of those who call themselves his followers, say, and declare otherways: They say, *Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholick faith, which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholick faith is this, that we worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity; neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance,* and so on, as in that *creed*, commonly called the *creed of St Atbanasius*. Here I observe, that the way to heaven which *Christ* pointed out to men, is to *love God and their neighbour, this do* (saith he) *and thou shalt live*: whereas, the way to life which some *Christians* have pointed out, is thro' a *dark maze* of speculative and mysterious propositions; and the holding or assenting to those, is made the *ground* of *God's* favour. But this I think is the *highest pitch* of *Antichristianism*, as it is *opposing Christ* in the most *material* point of all, and tends to *disappoint* and *frustrate* the very end and purpose of his coming, which was to be a safe guide to life eternal; by pointing out to men, the true way that leads thither. For, if men are taught to believe, that the great and main thing they are to be concerned about, with respect to the saving of their souls, is not the rightly directing and governing their *affections* and *actions*, but the *captivating* their *understandings* to a set of mysterious propositions, which is the present case, this naturally tends to make them *negligent* and *regardless* of what *Christ* has declared to be the conditions of *God's* favour, and the true way to life eternal, and thereby the great end and purpose of his coming is likely to be frustrated.

Besides, the propositions here referred to are some of them *unintelligible*, or at least are *exceeding difficult* to be understood, others are *contradictory*, and many of them are what the *salvation* of men is not the least concerned with. Thus the creed begins. *And the catholick faith is this, that we worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity; neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.* This proposition I think is *unintelligible*, or at least *exceeding difficult* to be understood; because it is hard to conceive what ideas are intended to be conveyed by those words. And, that some of those propositions are *contradictory* to each other, is most evident. For, if there be one person of the *Father*, another of the *Son*, and another of the *Holy ghost*, and if the father the son and the holy ghost be *each and every of them eternal*, as this creed maintaineth; then, there are in the most strict and proper sense *three eternal*; that is, there are *three eternal persons*, or *three persons* who are each and every one of them *eternal*: and yet, in direct contradiction, the same creed affirmeth, that *there are not three eternal, but one eternal.* And many of the propositions here referred to, are such, with which the *salvation* of men is not concerned. For, what has a trinity in unity, or unity in trinity; or three eternal, and but one eternal; or three incomprehensibles, and but one incomprehensible; or three uncreated, and but one uncreated; and the like, to do with the *saving* of mankind. Nothing surely, no more than the *fables* of *Esop*, nay perhaps not so much, because those fables may afford such *moral* instructions, as when attended to, may make the
 reader

reader *wiser* and *better*; whereas, the propositions now under consideration, serve only to *perplex* and *confound* mens minds, and to furnish out materials for *scepticks* and *unbelievers* therewith to *oppose* the Christian religion.

This therefore, is a most melancholy consideration, that Christ should be thus opposed in a point which affects, and which is likely to frustrate the very end and purpose of his coming, *viz.* the *saving* of souls; and that this opposition should meet with such countenance among Christians. For the aforesaid declarations which point out to men another way to life eternal than what Christ hath pointed out, are not only appointed to be read in our religious assemblies; but also that they might be recommended with *greater solemnity*, and might make the *deeper impression* on the minds of the people, they are to be read on certain days which have marks of honour stamped upon them, such as *Christmas-day*, *Easter-day*, *Ascension-day*, and the like. This I say, is a *melancholy* consideration, that such declarations should be read in our religious assemblies, which do manifestly tend to *mislead* the people in an Affair of the last importance to them. And this I think, is worthy the consideration of those *clergymen* who are concerned in the reading the aforesaid declarations. For if they do it merely in compliance with the *law* of the *state*, or to avoid being *barrassed* in our *spiritual courts*, even then I think, the least they can do as *Christian ministers*, in justice to their *master* and to the *souls* of men, is at the time to remind the people that these are *not* the words nor declarations of *Christ*, but only the words of *men* called after his name,
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and to caution the people not to be *mised* thereby. When King *Charles* the first's order came forth, which *encouraged* and *authorised* the people to exercise *sports* and *pastime* upon the *Lord's-day*, and the clergy were obliged to read that order in their respective parish churches; on pain of exclusion from their benefices, the curate of *St Thomas's parish in Salisbury* (as I have been informed) read the *King's order* as aforesaid, and likewise at the same time reminded the people, that this was only the *law or order of man*, and next he read the *fourth commandment*, and told them *that* was the *law or order of God*; and then, left it to their choice which they would regard, *God*, or the *King*. In like manner, when any of our clergy read that creed to their people, in which the following declarations are contained, *viz. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholick faith, which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. Again, He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the trinity. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation, that he believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Again, This is the catholick faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved.* I say, that as in these declarations there is pointed out to men *another way* to life eternal than what *Christ* hath pointed out unto them: so in common *justice*, the reader ought also to repeat the words and declarations of *Christ* touching this matter, and to remind the people that *these*, and *only these*, are the words of *Christ*, and that the *other* are the words of *men* who call themselves his followers; and then, leave it to the people's

ple's choice, which of these they will take for their *guide*, in so important an affair. Again,

Thirdly, There have been other doctrines advanced and entertained among Christians, which tend to subvert the gospel of Christ another way, *viz.* such as that God has from his sovereign pleasure, and by an irreversible decree *fixed* the *final* condition of every man, considered abstractedly from, and independent of, a man's good or bad behaviour, which might be the ground or reason of such determination. This doctrine, and doctrines near of kin to it, have prevailed among Christians, by which the persuasive influence of the gospel has been *weakened* and *destroyed*. For, as the doctrine of the gospel is founded upon this supposition, *viz.* that mens *future safety* or *miscarriage* is left to every one's *choice*, as it depends upon their present behaviour, and that it is in every man's *power* to behave *well* or *ill*: so if men can bring themselves to think that this is *not the case*, and that their *future state* is fixed by an *unalterable decree*, grounded merely on *sovereign pleasure*, then all care and regard for themselves must of course be set aside; because it is vain and useless; and consequently, the doctrines of the gospel can have no persuasive influence upon their minds and lives. And from hence my reader will also further see how it comes to pass, that where the gospel has been received and professed, it has not generally had its proper effect. Again,

Fourthly, there have been other doctrines advanced among Christians, which tend to subvert the gospel in a way different from the former, *viz.* such, as that our species are brought under a kind

of *fatality*, which puts it out of their power to *do good*, and *necessarily*, or at least *unavoidably*, (which I think comes to the same) determines them to *do evil*. And, that this unhappy State of mankind, which subjects them to the displeasure of God, and to the miseries of another world, is owing to the miscarriage of our *first parents*; or to the operation of some *foreign agent* acting upon us; tho' it is sometimes ascribed to one of these causes, sometimes to the other, and sometimes to both. This, and such like doctrines have, and do still prevail among Christians, by which the persuasive influence of the gospel has been lost upon them. For, if men can be prevailed upon to think that their actions are not in their *own power*, and that whatever they do is *unavoidable*; then, as they cannot justly blame themselves for any thing they do, how vile soever their behaviour may be: so they have no ground or reason to hearken or attend to any advice or counsel which may be offered to them. And, as the doctrine of the gospel does not operate upon men by way of charm, but only by moral swasion, and, as the aforesaid doctrine renders all persuasion *useless*; so of course it renders the gospel of Christ a *useless* thing, as it takes away that persuasive influence, which otherwise it might have upon the minds and lives of men. And from hence my reader may likewise farther see how it comes to pass, that where the gospel has been received, it has not generally had its proper effect. Again,

Fifthly, There have likewise other opinions prevailed among Christians, which tho' they do not quite destroy, yet they very much tend to weaken the persuasive influence of the gospel, by
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engaging mens *greatest attention to*, and regard for, other things, which are put in competition with it, and preferred before it. Thus, the setting too great a value upon, and paying too great a regard to, *rites and ceremonies and positive institutions*, by giving them the preference to *moral duties*, is highly injurious to the gospel of Christ. For, if men are once perswaded that a constant attendance on, and a warm zeal for, ceremonies and positive institutions, (which is consistent with the practice of vice) is more valuable in itself, and more acceptable to God, than a conformity of mind and life to that rule of action which is founded in the reason of things, then of course their obligation to and regard for the latter, becomes so much the *weaker*; and consequently, the perswasive influence of the gospel, is in proportion taken off hereby.

Alas! the injury which has been, and is still done to the gospel, or rather to the souls of men, by this means, is inexpressible. This is most visible in *Popish* countries, where mens attendance on, zeal for, and trust in, these is carried to its utmost height; where this principle has introduced a multitude of *superstitions*, expressed by washings, fastings, bowings, prostrations, crossings, and the like; and where there are large bodies or religious orders of men who live all their days lazily and idly upon the labours of others, without bearing the least share of the common burthen, or contributing the least mite to the common good, having nothing personally valuable in themselves to recommend them, but many of them much the contrary, and yet think themselves secure of God's favour, on the merit of a

hair shirt, a hemp girdle, or whatever is the *distinguishing character* of their order, and spending some of their time in meditation and devotion. And tho' the unworthy false principle I have now under consideration hath most grossly appeared in *Popish* countries; yet it has not failed to act its part among *Protestants*; there being abundance among them who have little else to recommend them but their attendance on, and zeal for, ceremonies and positive institutions, and their making an *outcry* for orthodoxy and the church. But what is a matter of concern at present is that this *Popish* doctrine, as it may well be called, because it serves to answer *Popish* purposes, should now be contended for among us; and that some of our *preachers* of Christ and his gospel, should become *publick advocates* in its defence; this is a melancholy consideration. And, from what I have observed, my reader will also farther see how it comes to pass, that the gospel where it has been embraced and professed, has not generally had its proper effect. Again,

Sixthly, Another Thing which has been highly injurious to the gospel of Christ, was that great *liberality* which took place in the early times of Christianity, by which men gave their goods both movable and immovable to the *church*, that is, to Christian societies. And tho', this at first was kindly intended to answer the purposes of Christian association; yet afterwards it was *misapplied*, to the *prejudice* of the gospel. For, wherever *property* takes place, *power* will attend it in proportion; and the introducing of property and power into Christian societies, laid a foundation for *parties* and *factions* among Christians, by
which

which mens attention and regard was taken off from the doctrines of the gospel, and applied to other things, which were not subservient to the saving, but rather to the destroying of mens souls. When property and power took place in Christian societies, then, there was something which crafty selfish and designing men thought worth contending for; and accordingly as the event shewed, bones of contention were introduced, and discord, wrath and tumults, hating and persecuting one another, and every evil word and work followed upon it; so that the doctrine of the gospel had little or no influence upon their minds or lives.

Besides, as the main design of a *Christian ministry*, was to awaken and keep fresh in the minds of the people, such an affecting sense of the *doctrines of the gospel*, as might dispose and engage them to frame and fashion their minds and lives according to it: so the introducing property and power into Christian societies, in a great measure *frustrated* that good design, by introducing with it a ministry among Christians, which in that respect, has been, (taking all ages and countries into the case) in a great measure *useless*. When those who first took upon them the care of Christian societies, and in consequence thereof were constantly refreshing the minds of the people with a just sense of the doctrines of the gospel, and in that respect, were said to be preachers of it, when those who thus *preached the gospel, lived of the gospel*; (that is, on the *bounty* of those to whom they preached) then, those who entered in the ministry, (that is, those who undertook to minister to and for a Christian society in matters of religion)

gion) did it for no other end, but to be subservient to the gospel, and the saving mens souls, and to this was their care and labours in the ministry directed, as indeed then, they could not have any great worldly advantage in view. But, when wealth and power were considered as the *property* of the *Clergy*, which by degrees came to be the case, then, men went into the ministry, not to pursue the great end which Christ came into the world to prosecute, *viz.* to secure to men their future happiness, but to answer the purposes of wealth, and power, and grandeur, to themselves, and to the obtaining of these, was their care and diligence and their industry chiefly directed. So that the true gospel of Jesus Christ for the most part became *neglected* and *disregarded*, any farther, than, as it served to grace and countenance mens worldly designs. I would not by this be understood to mean, that all who entered into the Christian ministry, did it with those vicious views beforementioned; but what I intend is, that as this was a natural consequence of Christian societies being possessed with wealth and power; so it became too generally, the case. And, when Clergymen came to be *over rewarded* for the service and duty they were appointed to perform, they then, generally, became *above* that service they were rewarded for. And indeed, this has been too much the case in *civil*, as well as in *religious* affairs; the *great rewards* which have been given to civil governors, have been too apt to set some of those governors, above the work and duty they were rewarded for. But, let that be as it will, what I observe is, that the over-rewarding a Christian ministry, renders it in
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a great measure useless; as it generally sets those ministers above the work and duty they are rewarded for. And,

The *enlarging* the revenues of the church, not only introduced a *useless*, but also a *superfluous Clergy*, or a set of Clergymen, who with respect to their *offices* in Christian societies, have answered very little or no good purpose to the gospel of Christ, or the souls of men, whatever plausible pretences may have been made in their favour. These superfluous Clergymen, have been dignified and distinguished by *pompous titles* and *vestments*, which have served to introduce a groundless *veneration* and *respect* to their persons, whilst their principal business has been, to possess great revenues, to live in pomp and grandeur, assuming and exercising dominion over their brethren, whom they have endeavoured to keep under the power of ignorance and superstition, as it has been the ground and foundation of their wealth and sovereignty; whose power has been employed to the very great hurt and damage of Christian people, and has been highly injurious to the gospel of Christ. And tho' this has been most notoriously the case in *Popish* countries; yet notwithstanding the *Reformation*, some of those superfluous dignified Clergymen maintain their ground amongst *Protestants*, at least with respect to their *pomp* and *possessions*. And,

As the power and wealth of the Clergy *increased*; so their *thirst* after more increased with it; and this introduced *plurality* of *benefices*, or one man taking upon him the care and charge of more than one Christian society, because the profits which arose from one, was not sufficient to gratify

tify his avaritious desires. Tho' it must be remembered, that when the Clergy took care to enlarge their revenues, by introducing plurality of benefices, they took care at the same not to *increase* their own labours, but to *decrease* them, by the introduction of a *supernumerary Clergy*. These supernumerary Clergymen, were such as had no Christian societies committed to their care, but only served as *journeymen* to do the work for a small stipend, whilst the appointed guardian of the societies souls, lived lazily and idly upon the profits of it. And, this again introduced that most unfair practice of *non-residence*, which very much prevails at this day. A practice the most unreasonable, as a man not only takes the care and charge of the souls of a Christian society upon him, in order to do his best towards securing to them their future happiness; but also receives a handsome gratuity on *that account*, and as a reward for that very care and service; and yet notwithstanding, he puts it off to *another*, to whom he pays a much less reward than what he receives himself, and takes no farther thought nor care about them, but whether they *sink* or *swim*, be *saved* or *damned* he mattereth not. As if the *safety* or *miscarriage* of mens souls in another world, was such a *trifling* affair, as not to deserve his most serious regard; or as if what was to be done for the people, was of such little consequence, that it might be shifted off from one to another, and if it be but done, then how, or when, or by whom it is done, it mattereth not. Tho' by the way, it is to be remembered, that neither the *hireling* nor his *principal*, are often more, or longer, or
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does more for the people, than their *stated duty*, and the *law* obliges them; and very often not so much. Yea, such is the behaviour of some Clergymen towards their people, that they do not come near them from Sunday to Sunday, and then it is only hastily to read over the church service, with a short lesson of instruction, and when that is done, the horse stands ready at the hatch, and carries him off; and the people are left in the wilderness of this world, like *sheep* without a *shepherd*. And tho', this is not always, yet it is too often the case, even among us, in a *Protestant country*, and in a *reformed church*, a church, which (if some of our Clergy do not tell God Almighty *idle tales* in their *prayers*,) is the *best*, the *most reformed*, the *purest*, the *most primitive* and *apostolical* of any church in the world; and surely, it may well be doubted, whether the case is better in the *Roman* and *Greek* churches, who have no *just* pretence to these high characters. So that the Christian ministry has not turned to any great account, with respect to its being subservient towards the answering the true ends and purposes of the gospel of Christ, which is what it ought, and what it was intended to be subservient to. What I intend by all this, is to shew my reader how it comes to pass, that where the gospel has been received and professed, it has not generally had its intended effect; and that it is in part owing to that *useless* ministry which has too generally prevailed in the Christian world.

To this I may add, that the possessing the Clergy with wealth and power, which was first introduced by mens great liberality in giving their goods both moveable and immoveable to

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the church, this introduced not only a useless, a superfluous, and a supernumerary, but also an *injurious* ministry, or a ministry which were *directly* and *immediately* highly injurious to the gospel of Christ, and to the souls of men. I shall not here take notice of the numberless evils and mischiefs, and the miseries which have been brought upon multitudes of our species by their means, by their wicked, perfidious, and barbarous practices, and by their procurement; for were all these to be entered upon record, (allowing me to use the same figure of speech, which St John has used before me,) I suppose the world it self, would not contain the books which might be written; but this is beside my present purpose. What I observe is, that the introducing of *wealth* and *power* into Christian societies, introduced with it a ministry which were directly and immediately *highly injurious* to the gospel of Christ, and to the souls of men. For as the Clergy were set upon increasing their wealth and power at all hazards: so they, in order to answer those purposes, have introduced *such doctrines*, and such a multitude of *superstitious practices*, and assumed to themselves *such power*, as took away the persuasive influence of the gospel, and rendered it of none effect. Thus, the Clergy claimed a *dispensing power*, or a power to *dispense* with mens *duty*; and an *indulging power*, or a power to *indulge* men in their *vices*; and a *pardoning power*, or a power to *pardon* and *forgive* mens sins. So that by this means, the Clergy not only robbed the people of their *temporals* to enrich themselves, but also they sadly *mised* them with regard to things *spiritual*, to the manifest

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injury of the gospel, and to the apparent *bazard* of their souls. And as the Clergy carried the *keys of heaven* at their girdles: so this gave them an *opportunity* and a *pretence* when they let any *person* in, or rather *pretended* so to do, for receiving a *handsome present* for the favour, which the people were ready to make them. For, if a man will give *skin upon skin*, or *skin after skin*, and *all that he hath to save his life*; then, what will he not give to *save his soul*, when he apprehends it in danger. And, as the *safety* of mens souls, was supposed to be thus in the *hands* of the Clergy: so of course the great care and concern of the people was, not so much to render themselves acceptable to God, by a right behaviour, and by repentance and reformation of their evil ways, but to secure to themselves an interest in their *priests*, which might be done with an *indulgence* of their *vicious inclinations*; and thus, the persuasive influence of the gospel was lost upon them.

To which I may farther add, that the *wicked lives* of many of the Clergy, have been highly injurious to the gospel of Christ, and to the souls of men. For, as *example* generally influences more *strongly* than precept, and as *bad* examples are apt to work more strongly and persuasively than good ones: so the bad examples of Clergymen are *more* mischievous and hurtful than any others. Clergymen are supposed to be well acquainted with their duty, and to have an awakened sense of it; and therefore, the people are too apt to think they may *follow* their example with *safety*. So that, when Clergymen go into any *wicked* practices, the people *follow them*, and think they may *a little exceed* them, without any apprehension

sion of *danger* to themselves. And thus, the persuasive influence of the gospel, is weakened and destroyed.

So that, if it be considered, what a *bone of contention* was introduced among Christians, by the introduction of *wealth* and *power* into Christian societies, and what *strife* and *debate*, *quarrels* and *tumults* have followed upon it; and likewise, that it introduced among Christians many *useless*, and *superfluous*, and *supernumerary*, and, above all, many *injurious* Clergymen, or men who in a variety of ways have *subverted the true gospel of Jesus Christ*, by weakening and taking off its persuasive influence, and rendering it of none effect. I say, when all this is considered, then it will not appear strange, and my reader will see how it comes to pass, that with respect to those who have received and professed the gospel, it has not generally had its proper effect and influence upon their minds and lives. Again,

Seventhly, The making of *infant* Christians, has been very injurious to the gospel of Christ. For, as by this means Christianity is become in a manner *hereditary*, descending from *parents* to their *children*: so for a man to be *once* a Christian, is to be *always* a Christian, without his taking any farther thought or care about it. Persons in the present case, are made Christians, whilst they are under an incapacity of knowing what Christianity is; and consequently are such, *independent* of their *choice*. And as their own judgment or practice was not the *ground* or *reason* of their being Christians: so too too many have been apt to conclude, that their *after conduct* makes no alteration in the case. And accordingly, multitudes of
persons

persons have claimed the character of *Christians*, and as such presume that they are *interested* in the *promises* of the gospel, when they have had no other pretence to these, but their being *made Christians* by baptism in their childhood. And as the practice of making infant Christians has generally prevailed over the Christian world, there having been but few Christians, comparatively for many ages, who have *protested* against it: so the injury which has been done to the gospel by this means has been so much the greater. And,

As the practice of making infant Christians has taken place; so the institutions of Christ have been *prostituted* to grace and countenance it. And thus infants have been washed with, or plunged under, water, to represent their *discipleship* to Christ; that is, their belief in, and submission to, his gospel; when they were not capable of knowing any thing of either. And thus likewise they have been made to *partake* of that institution, by which the memory of Christ's life and death was intended to be preserved and kept fresh in the minds of his people; when they were incapable of knowing that there ever was such a person as Christ in the world. This I call a *prostitution* of the institutions of Christ, because in truth it is no less. The institutions of Christ were intended to be subservient to the gospel, by awakening suitable reflections in those that use them, and thereby producing in them suitable and proper affections and actions; and therefore to apply these to subjects *incapable* of such reflections, is to apply them in such a way as that the end of those institutions cannot possibly be answered upon them; and this surely is a prostitution of the institutions of Christ.

And, as the perswasive influence of the gospel has been very much *weakened* thereby; so from hence my reader will likewise see how it comes to pass, that where the gospel has been received and professed, it has not generally had its proper effect.

Again,

Eighthly, That which has been *most of all injurious* to the gospel of Christ, was the *blending* together *Christian* and *civil* societies and making them the same thing. By this unnatural coalition, all the other ways by which the gospel has been perverted, have been as it were *ratified* and *confirmed*. By this, the most absurd doctrines, and the most gross superstitions, have been *established* and *perpetuated* through many generations, without any hope or prospect of a reformation. By this, the profession of Christianity has been made principally subservient, not to the *saving* of mens souls in another world, but to answer the purposes of *worldly* policy in this. By this, the most *bloody* and *cruel persecutions* have been introduced among and practised by Christians, which has brought great *scandal* upon Christianity, and is a reproach even to the *Christian name*. By this, Christian societies have been constituted of persons of all *characters*, as well the most openly vicious, profane, and profligate, as the more sober and virtuous; and hereby, Christian societies have been so far from recommending Christianity to a general acceptance, that, on the contrary, the *gross prevarications*, and other abominable practices of Christians have rendered it *odious* and *contemptible* to the rest of mankind. And by this, a ministry has been *established* and *imposed* upon Christian societies, and whether those ministers have preached

the *true gospel of Jesus Christ*, or whether they have preached such doctrines as tend to *subvert it*, whether they have profecuted the *good and well being* of the respective societies committed to their care, or whether they have been *plagues and pests* to them, whether in their private characters they have been an *ornament* or a *scandal* to the Christian religion; I say, let the case have been how it would in these and many other respects, the people have been obliged to *attend them*, and sit down under their ministry, it not being in their power to redress themselves, except it were by a *separation* from the established religion, and that has been *too often* attended with the *most dreadful consequences to them*; consequences so dreadful, as has rendered *Christianity*, or rather what has been called by that *name*, the most *terrible thing* that ever took place in the world. And as the *blending* together *civil* and *Christian* societies, by making them the same thing, (and which ought ever to have been kept distinct and separate,) has been highly injurious to the *gospel of Christ*, and as it has given *Christianity* such a *deadly wound*, as is not likely to be healed: so this will shew my reader how it comes to pass, that where the *gospel* has been received and professed, it has not generally had its proper effect and influence upon the minds and lives of men. Again,

Lastly, I observe, that as man is a *free being*, so it must be in his *power*, and be left to his *choice* whether he will behave well, or ill, notwithstanding the great tendency of the *gospel* to dispose and engage him to do what is right. And supposing when a man attends to what is offered in the *gospel*; he cannot avoid being *convinced* of the

the *truth* and *reasonableness* of it: yet still he has it in his *power*, and it is left to his *choice*, whether the gospel shall have its proper effect upon his mind and life, or not. And as experience shews, what *influence* appetite and passion, bad example, vicious self love, and the like, has upon the actions of many men, by which they are led to do that which upon mature consideration their judgments would condemn: So this, together with what I have observed above, will be sufficient to shew my reader how it comes to pass, that the gospel of Christ, tho' excellently suited to reform the world, and rightly to direct and govern the affections and actions of men; yet it has not generally had that effect upon those who have received and professed it.

S E C T. XVII.

THUS I have gone through what I proposed, and have shewn what was the *great end*, and the *professed design* of our Lord Jesus Christ's coming into the world, and of what he did, and suffered, in it, from it, and for it. I have likewise shewn, what were the *means* Christ made use of in order to obtain the end proposed; and that those means are *excellently suited* to answer that purpose. I have also shewn what *were*, and *are*, some of the *principal ways* by which that end has been disappointed. And as in the doing of this, I have had occasion to take notice of a variety of points: so I could but touch upon many of them, because otherways I must have
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run out this tract to a much greater length, which I chose to avoid.

To conclude the whole; I beg leave to recommend to my reader the serious consideration of a *future judgment* and *retribution*, and if he is persuaded there will be such a judgment, as I hope he is; that then, he would not barely entertain it as a *speculation* which in point of argument he is capable of defending, but that he would pay such a *serious regard* to it, as to make it a *principle of action* to himself; that is, that he would so regard it, as to *live suitable* to such a persuasion, and as one that must give an account of himself to God. And that my reader may have a *well-grounded* persuasion of the forementioned truth, I will lay before him the principles upon which the *certainty* of a future judgment is founded. *viz.* *First*, That there is a Deity, or governing mind, who as he made all things exclusive of himself; so he inspects or takes cognizance of the actions of his creatures. *Secondly*, That there is a natural and an essential difference in things, and that one thing or action is preferable to another in nature. *Thirdly*, The essential difference in things and the preferableness of one thing or action to another in nature, is the *ground* of the divine conduct, and the *reason* why God chuses to act one way rather than another. *Fourthly*, As God is present to, and in, and with, all things, and as he has no wrong or vitiated affections from within, nor any inticing temptations from without, to mislead him, either in point of judgment or practice; so from hence it becomes certain, that he *cannot err* in point of judgment, and that he *will not* in point of practice; that is, he cannot possibly

possibly form a wrong judgment of things in any case, and he will always chuse to act right, or agreeably to that reason of action which results from the essential difference, and the preferableness of one thing to another in nature. These I say, are the *principles* upon which the *certainty* (*) of a future judgment is founded.

I shall not here take upon me to prove the several principles before laid down, but only shew my reader how the *certainty* of a future judgment does *naturally result* from them. Man is a creature who is qualified to *discern* the essential difference, and the preferableness of one thing or action to another in nature, tho' in complex cases he is liable to mistake. He is likewise a *free* being, who has power put into his hand, tho' some more, some less, which renders him capable of contributing to the *good* or *hurt*, to the happiness or misery of many of his fellow creatures, of being a *blessing* or a *curse*, a *benefactor* or a *plague*, to the intelligent world. And as man is *such* a being, who has it thus in his power, and it is left to his choice, whether he will contribute to the general end of being, which is a general happiness, or whether he will perversely, and out of an excessive and unreasonable regard to himself contribute to the contrary, of which every man will be more or less one or the other: so when he has *thus* acted his part in life, and is *gone off* the stage of action, then, it is highly *fit* and *reasonable*, it is perfectly *just* and *equal*, that the maker, director, and

(*) By certainty is not meant mathematical, but moral certainty, which is all the certainty that the nature of the thing will admit in the present case.

and governor of the universe, should call him to an account for his behaviour, and should shew his *favour* or his *displeasure* to him, according as the *merit* or *demerit* of his actions shall render him worthy of either. And as God will always act *agreeably* to that reason of action, which results from the essential difference, and the preferableness of one thing or action to another in nature, and as there is an *evident reason* for a future judgment, resulting from that difference: so from hence it will unavoidably follow, that God will most certainly judge the world. And thus my reader may see, that the certainty of a future judgment and retribution is deduced, plainly, and evidently, from the forementioned principles. These I think are the *grounds*, and the *only* grounds, upon which the certainty of a future judgment is founded. I know that some men roundly assert (and seem to do it by way of *insult* upon the *Deists*), that men can have no certainty of a future judgment, any other way than from *revelation*: but I beg those gentlemen carefully to examine the principles before laid down, and then shew the world wherein the *defect* of my reasoning lies. And,

As it is pretended men can have no certainty of a future judgment but from *revelation*; I therefore, crave leave to ask, *what* certainty revelation affords in the present case? And the answer I presume will be, that God has *declared* therein that he will judge the world. And this leads me to enquire, *what* certainty men have, that God will act *agreeably* to such a declaration? And here the common, and indeed the only answer is, that God is a God of *truth* who *cannot*, that is to say,

who *will not lye nor deceive*. But then, the question will return, *what certainty have we that God will not lye nor deceive?* And here I think, the answer will be, either, that lying and deceiving is *wrong and unfit* in the *general*, or else that it is so in the *present case*, and that *this* affords a proper ground of certainty, either, that God will not lye nor deceive in *any case*, or else that he will not do it at least in the *case before us*; and from *hence* it will follow, that God will most certainly judge the world, seeing he has *declared* that he will do it. Now, whether we consider lying and deceiving as wrong and unfit in the general, or whether it be so only in the present case, it comes to the same with respect to this argument: because in both cases it is supposed, that there is an essential *difference* in things, and that one thing or action is *preferable* to another in nature, and likewise that such difference is the *ground or reason* why God chuses to act one way rather than another; why he chuses to reveal the *truth* rather than a *lye*; either in the general, or in any particular case; why he chuses to *keep* his promise rather than *break* it. And as this is the *only ground* of certainty with respect to the *divine Veracity*, namely, we are sure that God will not lye nor deceive, because lying and deceiving is *wrong and unfit*, either in the *general*, or in any *particular* case referred to: so this affords a *like ground* of certainty, that God will *judge* the world, whether he has declared that he will do it, or not, because it is *right and fit* that he should.

But farther, the *certainty* which *revelation* affords in the present case, does not barely result from the *divine declaration*, but from the *ground*

or reason of that declaration, *viz.* the *rightness* and *fitness* of the thing declared. For, were we to admit what is not to be admitted, *viz.* that there is no reason resulting from the nature of things for a future judgment; then, I say, we could not be certain that there ever would be such a thing, even tho' God had declared that he would judge the World; because if he may be supposed to act *without*, or *against*, reason in one instance (which would be the *present case*), then he may do it in a *thousand* instances; if he, without, or against, reason declared that he would judge the world, then he might without, or against, reason *refuse to abide* by such a declaration; and consequently, the divine declaration upon the present supposition, would not afford such a ground of credit, as ought *absolutely* to be relied upon; and therefore, certainty could not possibly result from it. So that, if the certainty of a future judgment, could not be discovered by *reason*; then much less could it be done by a *divine revelation*. And from what I have observed, I think, it plainly appears, that revelation is so far from carrying the evidence for a future judgment *higher* than reason, that it rather *borrow*s or *derives* its own strength from it. Indeed, when a *second* evidence is added to a *first*, in witnessing to the same truth, this may be said to carry the evidence for that truth *higher* or *farther*, than when either of those evidences stood single and alone, and in this sense, revelation may be said to carry the evidence for a future judgment *higher* or *farther* than reason, as the divine testimony, is *added* to the evidence arising from reason, and both join issue in witnessing to the same truth.

The reason why I insist on this is, because if what some men complain of be true, *viz.* that *Deism* and *infidelity* prevail; then, there is an apparent *necessity* for it. The evidence arising from divine revelation, will be of *little* or *no weight* with persons who *doubt* or *disbelieve* it; and therefore, those persons must be dealt with some other way. They must be shewn by arguments drawn from reason and experience, that it is their *wisdom*, their *duty*, and their *interest*, both with respect to this world, and that to come, to live *good* and *virtuous* lives. They must be made sensible, that they are *accountable* creatures, who are *answerable* for their present behaviour to God, whether there be any such thing as a divine revelation, or not. This I say must be done, if we would do the persons here referred to any service, this being what the supposed *present* circumstances of things require; and this is what one would think, every *good* man, who has a tender regard for the present and future well-being of mankind, would *chuse* to do. But instead of this, they are frequently told, that they can have no certainty of a future judgment and retribution but from *revelation*, which is the same as to say, that they can have *no certainty at all*. And as to the persons here referred to, who are supposed to disbelieve the divinity of the Christian revelation, it is the same as to tell them, that they may give as *great a loose* to their appetites and passions as they please, because it cannot be made evident to *them*, that they are accountable for their actions. This is a sad state of the case, and yet it is what some of our *Christian writers*, and *Christianity defenders*, insist on. And not only this, but other principles

are advanced, which are subversive of religion and virtue, viz. that *self-interest* is the ground and foundation of all obligation; that there is *no real difference* in things, when considered abstractedly from, and independent of, any divine determination concerning them; and the like. So that there is no principle in nature to reason from, nor any foundation for argument, with respect to religion, and divine revelation. And thus *virtue* and *religion*, are in danger of being plucked up by the roots.

PROVIDENCE

PROVIDENCE is the distinguishing
into general and particular
By a general providence I understand
that God, at the creation, put the
natural world under the direction of certain laws
and that ever since he has caused it to be gov-
erned (subject to those laws) by which means he
has made a constant provision for the support and

of the creation; and which kind of provision gives
the denomination of Providence. Secondly,
God, at the creation, called into being several
kinds of animals, and placed
in their situation, and gave a degree
of intelligence to some of them, and
intended to fill the world with his creatures
which are necessary to the support of justice
in each particular animal world.

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PROVIDENCE is the distinguishing
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By a general providence I understand
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A SHORT
 DISSERTATION
 ON
 PROVIDENCE.

PROVIDENCE is usually distinguished into general and particular.

By a general providence I understand *first*, that God, at the creation, put the natural world under the direction of certain Laws (*); and that ever since he has caused it to be passively subject to those laws, by which means he has made a constant provision for the animal part of the creation; and which kind provision gives it the denomination of Providence. *Secondly*, God, at the creation, called into being various species of *animals* to inhabit this globe, and placed in them *appetites*, and *passions*, and *such* a degree of *intelligence* as was suitable to their state, and sufficient to answer the purposes of life to them; which appetites, passions, and degree of intelligence peculiar to each particular animal confi-

(*) The word Law, as here applied to the natural world, is not used in a proper but only in a figurative sense.

dered simply as an animal, was intended to be, both the *spring* and *principle*, and the *rule* and *measure* of action to it; and as such may be said to have been the *law* of its being. God has also, ever since the creation, *continued* the various species of animals by a constant and proper production; and has *continued to them* the same appetites, passions, and degree of intelligence as was originally given to each species (with some variation as to individuals arising from their different causes in nature); by which means the *original design* of the *creation*, as to the animal part of it, has been constantly and uniformly carried on. *Thirdly*, God, at the creation, made *man*, and made him to be the *chief* or *principal inhabitant* of *this globe*, by placing in him not only appetites, passions, and a degree of intelligence which he had in common with the rest of the animal world; but also by placing in him the affection of *benevolence*, to dispose him to pursue the good of his fellow-creatures; and likewise by endowing him with such a *superior* principle of intelligence as constituted him a *moral agent*; that is, man was originally endowed with *such a degree* of intelligence as, when properly applied, rendered him capable of discerning the *natural and essential difference in things* and the *rule of action* that results from that difference, which rule, he, as a moral agent, ought in reason to have governed his behaviour by; and as such it was to him the *law* of his being; God having put it into his power, and left it to his choice, whether he would act *agreeably with*, or *contrary to this law*; and this constituted him an accountable creature. Or it may be expressed thus, man was originally endowed,

not only with appetites and passions which were intended to be, (when moved by objects from without,) motives to action to him; and a principle of activity to be the immediate cause of action in him; but he was also endowed with *such a degree* of intelligence as, when properly applied, rendered him capable of discerning the essential difference betwixt *right* and *wrong*, *good* and *evil*, in a *moral sense* (except in difficult and complex cases, in which he was liable to err, and to act wrong in consequence of such error, and which his wise and kind Creator was disposed to make all equitable allowances for); to which principle of intelligence his appetites, passions, and active principle were intended to be *subjected*, it being qualified and constituted to be the judge whether, and how far his appetites and passions ought to be the *ground* and *reason* of action to him. Man being thus excellently constituted he was well qualified, and thereby it became his duty to *co-operate* with his *maker*, by pursuing and carrying on the general and primary end of the creation, *viz.* a *common*, and a *most extensive good*; but still, as a free-being, it was left to his choice whether he would virtuously pursue that end, or viciously oppose it; and by his choice and subsequent behaviour in this respect he rendered himself the *proper object* of reward or punishment in futurity. And as man was thus originally constituted, and thus endowed; so God by his general providence has *continued* the species, and has *continued to them*, through all generations, the same capacities and endowments as were given to our *first* parents, (some few individuals excepted, which exceptions, it may be fairly presumed,

fumed, have had their causes in nature, and were the produce of the same general providence); by which means the *general* and *primary end* of the creation has been constantly, and perpetually pursued by the creator, ever since he called this world into being; and it has likewise been *virtuously pursued* by some of our species, and *viciously opposed* by others, as it hath been all along left to their choice to do one, or the other; whereby they have, by the *law* of their being, been rendered *accountable* creatures, and the *proper objects* of reward or punishment in futurity, as they have rendered themselves deserving of either. This, I think, is most apparently the true state of the case, notwithstanding what weak, or designing, or enthusiastick persons may have said to the contrary. And supposing the account of the fall of man, (as it is called,) as related in the book of Genesis be taken in a literal sense, it will not alter the case; because our *first* parents acted a *very weak* part in the state that is usually called their state of *perfection*; tho', I think, it may as well be called their state of weakness and imperfection, as their behaviour plainly shewed. It is true, our *first* parents were *innocent* when called into being, as indeed it could not have been otherwise, it being impossible for them to have been blameable *antecedent* to their existence, or that their *beginning to be*, (in which they were wholly passive,) should make them so. But then, this has been the case of *all* their posterity. And tho' man when called into being was innocent; yet he was not only *capable* of and *liable* to contract guilt to himself, but it was also *great odds* that he would do so in *some* instances. Man is a compound

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creature, made up of various appetites and passions, which appetites and passions when moved by objects from without, become so many excitements to action in him; and those excitements are capable of being *greatly heightened*, by those circumstances that may attend the case. And tho' he is endowed with a principle of discernment, by which he is in the general qualified to judge when, and how far those excitements ought to be the ground and reason of action to him; yet, *sometimes*, his appetites and passions are *so suddenly affected* as that he is hurried on to action before his *attention* is called in, and thus he is, *sometimes*, *betrayed* into folly. And as this is the case of all our species; so it is great odds but *every one* will act wrong in some instance or other. And as this was the state and condition of man, from the *very beginning* of his being, as in fact it has plainly appeared to be; so his state and condition must have been *perfectly known*, and *justly considered* by his maker; and therefore we may be well assured, that God *from the beginning* was not disposed to be extreme in marking every thing that he should find to be amiss in his creature man in order to punishment; but, on the contrary, he would make all equitable Allowances for every disadvantage man should lie under from his constitution, and his circumstances in the world. For to suppose that God is the *author* of man's being, that he gave man that *very constitution* which rendered him not only *liable* but also *likely* to do amiss in *some* instances; and likewise to suppose, that God from the beginning required and expected that man should maintain his innocence in *every instance*, or otherwise incur his highest

est displeasure, this last is a most *unreasonable*, and a *groundless* supposition; because it supposes God to have required from man, upon very severe terms, what could not, (all things considered,) have *reasonably* been expected from him, seeing it was *great odds* that the case would be otherwise in *some* instances, as I have already observed. If a man, in the *general course* of his actions, behaves *properly*, and in those instances in which, (by temptations that surround him on every side,) he is drawn away from his duty, he is *sensible of*, and *sorry* for his misbehaviour, and makes his miscarriages a *reason* to himself to watch against those temptations for time to come, such a man must be approved in the sight of God; because he does, (when all things are taken into the case,) as well as can *reasonably* be expected from him in his circumstances. And this must have been a *part* of the scheme of God's general providence *from the beginning*, supposing him to be a righteous and equitable governor of the intelligent and moral world: I say, this must have been the case, notwithstanding all that our system writers in divinity may have said to the contrary; because were the case to have been otherwise, God must have acted unworthy of himself, and unsuitable to his moral perfections, which cannot have been the case, and therefore is not to be admitted. It is likewise true, our *first* parents, when called into being, were in a state of *maturity*, and had the full exercise of their intellectual faculties, and in this respect they may be said to have been in a state of *perfection*, which cannot be said of their posterity, who are *first* in a state of *childhood*: but in all other respects they seem to have been very

much upon a *level*, abating the difference that has arisen from the different circumstances that have attended them. We at this day appear to be endowed with the *same* faculties and powers that our *first* parents were endowed with; and they were liable to be misled, and were actually so by the *same* temptations that we have been, tho' those temptations may have been different, and may have had a different influence, on account of the different circumstances that may have attended either. And as the human constitution, in the general, has *continued the same* through all generations as at the beginning; so its faculties have not only been *capable* of being *extended* or *contracted*; or, in other words, *sharpened* or *blunted* to several degrees, but also this has been the case *in fact*; that is, the human powers have been extended in some instances, and contracted in others; which extension and contraction may have been *more* or *less* general, and may have been of *longer* or *shorter* duration, according to their different *causes*, or *occasion*; that is, according to the different *applications* of men, or the different *circumstances* that may have attended, either *individuals*, or the various *collections* of mankind.

This has been the work and business of God's general providence, in which he has acted the part, and fully shewed himself to be the most skilful projector, and the best executor of the most noble of all designs, *viz.* a *common* and *most extensive* good; by introducing *such* a constitution of things as has *answered* the *intention* in all its parts, thro' all generations. This was such a constitution of things as abundantly shewed the great Creator to be, what he must

must needs be, *viz.* the *best* of all beings. It is true, that the *vitiating* affections of men have given occasion for a *multitude* of evils, both natural and moral, to have taken place in the world; but then it must have been supposed from the beginning that this *would*, or at least *might*, be the case. For as man, according to his original constitution, was made a free being, it must have been left to his *option* whether he would *honestly use*, or *wickedly abuse*, the powers he was intrusted with, the consequences of which were the *evils* referred to. It is also true, that in the course of God's general providence abundance of *natural* evils have taken place, beside what have been introduced through the weakness and *vitiating* affections of men, as by shipwrecks, inundations, and the like; but then it must likewise have been supposed from the beginning that those evils *would*, or at least *might*, take place, as they would or might necessarily follow from the natural world's being constantly and uniformly subjected to those *laws*, by which the ends of God's general providence were intended to be perpetually carried on. And to suppose it had been better that *this world* had never been, than for it to have been under such circumstances; is the same as to suppose it had been better that the art of *navigation* had never been discovered, than that being discover'd a few individuals should have become sufferers by it.

By a particular providence, I think, is meant a particular and special *interposition* of the *Deity*, in the production, or prevention, of such effects upon this globe as are *above*, or *beside*, the ordinary

nary course of nature, or of those *laws*, by which the world is governed, in the course of God's general providence; and therefore could not have been produced, nor prevented by nature's strict adherence to those laws. Those productions and preventions are the same (I think) as those that are called miraculous; and therefore may, with equal propriety, be called by the same name; whether they are the produce of the immediate agency of God, or of any other invisible agent appointed by him for that purpose. Again, A particular providence comes under a two-fold consideration, as it is considered to be *more or less extensive*. First, By a particular providence, some persons intend, that God upon some *extraordinary* occasions, and to answer *great* and *good* ends, does immediately interpose, and by his power *produce*, or *cause* to be produced, such effects as would not be produced, in the course of his general providence; or by *preventing* such effects as otherwise would be produced by the settled laws of nature were they left to take their course. As thus, suppose a comet in its return from the sun were to cross the atmosphere of our earth, and God, by an immediate interposition of his power, should *turn it* out of its *natural course* to prevent the terrible destruction that otherwise would be the effect of it; this would be an instance of the *particular* and *special* providence of God; and so in all like cases in which, upon extraordinary occasions, and to answer some great and good ends, the Deity in a particular and special manner interposes, by producing or preventing such effects as are necessary to answer those purposes, and which would not have been *produced*

duced nor prevented in the course of his general providence. Again,

Secondly, By a particular providence, some persons intend, that God does not only upon some extraordinary occasions, in a particular and special manner, interpose as aforesaid; but also that he very frequently, and almost perpetually, does so in the affairs of the world. Infomuch that a man cannot escape any danger, especially if it be considerable, nor partake of any considerable good, without the immediate and special interposition of the Deity. Neither can a boy carelessly clut the hair of his head, which clutting will occasion the pulling some off in the combing, nor wantonly kill a sparrow, without the immediate and special interposition of God to lead him to those actions. So that in this view of a particular providence, God is made a *party* not only in almost all the *good*, but also in almost all the *evil actions* that take place in the world. And,

As a particular providence comes under the *two* forementioned considerations; so, I think, it is not the former, but only the latter of these that is controverted among Christians; or at least it is the latter of these only that admits of a dispute with regard to me. That God, upon some extraordinary occasions, to answer some great and good ends, should immediately interpose to bring about such events as are necessary to answer those purposes, which events would not have been brought about in the course of his general providence, is a supposition that does not appear unreasonable to me; and therefore I have no objection against it. But that God should be *frequently* and almost *perpetually* immediately interposing as aforesaid,

aforesaid, is a supposition that is greatly unlikely in itself, it is void of proof, and is grounded only on mere presumption, and therefore may justly be disputed. I have already observed that God in the course of his providence makes an ample provision for the inhabitants of this globe, and that by his continuing to govern the several parts of the world by those settled laws that he *first* gave them, he continues to pursue the general and primary end of creation, *viz.* a *common* and a *most extensive good*. I have also observed, that the original constitution of things has answered the Creator's intention in all its parts through all generations, excepting in such instances and cases of which it must have been supposed from the beginning that it would, or might be otherwise; and consequently this constitution of things has not stood in need of such perpetual *patching* and *mending* as the scheme of a particular providence that I have now under consideration supposes. The whole frame of nature, as under the direction of God's general providence, shews abundantly the great benevolence, the wisdom and power of its author; whereas the scheme of a particular providence here referred to, supposes him to have been *greatly defective* in one, or other, or all of these. This scheme of providence supposes the original constitution of things to have been so *badly* put together, as that it has required the *constant* and *special* attendance of the Deity to new regulate and amend it ever since. This scheme of providence supposes God to have been doing by *nature* what some men have been doing by *religion*, namely, he has been continually turning it *topsy-turvy*. God has been perpetually working

miracles

miracles to keep the system of nature in *tolerable* order. He has been continually watching here and there, and has been constantly and immediately interposing to bring both *evil* and *good* upon his creatures. This is the representation that *some* men make of the divine conduct; and these are the *complements*, if I may so speak, they are constantly paying their maker. But then this is all grounded on mere *presumption*, and is void of *proof*, as I have already observed. For,

As to those facts that are considered as *eminent* and *apparent* instances of God's immediate and special interposition as aforesaid, they shew no such thing. Thus if a man was to pass by an house that by a natural decay was ready to drop, and that house was to fall immediately after he had passed by it, his escaping that danger would be considered as an *eminent* and *plain* instance of the particular and special providence of God; whereas, all things considered, nothing less than a *miracle* in controuling the laws of nature, (either by hastening the fall of the house before its time, or by some other way,) could have brought that evil upon him which he is supposed miraculously to have escaped. Again, tho' the *wind* at sometimes, and in some parts of the world does frequently and suddenly shift and change its quarter; yet if any great good or evil is immediately introduced thereby, this is considered both as an *eminent* and an *obvious* instance of the particular and special providence of God. Thus in *November* 1688, by the *shifting* and *changing* of the wind the *Dutch* fleet (that brought over to *England* the then Prince of *Orange*, our great deliverer from popery and slavery,) was happily pre-

served from the danger it was in, by reason of the *English* fleet that was then in the pursuit of it; and this event has been considered as an *eminent* and *evident* instance of the particular and special providence of God, without any just or solid ground to build such a presumption upon. For if it be supposed that the people of *England* at the Revolution were better, and more worthy of the divine care and protection than the people of other countries; and therefore God immediately interposed in their favour, whilst the people of other nations have been neglected by him when in like dangers; or if it be supposed that Protestantism is more precious in God's sight in *England*, than in the neighbouring nations, (where many, many *thousand*, mens lives have been sacrificed for its sake, which is what *England* has not had to boast of,) and therefore God immediately interposed for its preservation in *England*, whilst it has been, in that respect, neglected by him in other countries; I say, if these suppositions are admitted, the question then will be, what *just* and *solid grounds* we have to build those presumptions upon? And the answer, I think, is most apparent, *viz.* that we have none at all; especially if it be considered that the event referred to might have been brought about, and, for any thing we know to the contrary, was brought about in the course of God's general providence. The case is the same with respect to all those events that have been brought about by *sudden* and *unforeseen* accidents or circumstances that have preceded them; these have been considered as *eminent*, and *obvious* instances of the particular and special providence of God, whilst

whilst there have been no just nor solid grounds to build such presumptions upon. And,

As the facts that are usually referred to in the present case, do not in the least prove what they are brought to vouch for; so much less is the point proved by any thing which our Lord Jesus Christ has said touching this matter. I shall not take notice of every text which may be urged in favour of such a particular providence as is now under consideration, but only of two discourses of our Lord upon which the abettors of this doctrine seem chiefly to rely. *Matthew vi. 25, to the end of the chapter. Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for the body, what ye shall put on: is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment: Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and*

all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow : for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself : sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. As this discourse was written many years after it was spoken by our Lord ; so, probably, through a defect of memory in the *Historian*, what our Lord said immediately before it, which introduced it, and was made the ground or reason of it was *forgotten* ; and therefore was not related by him. This discourse, as it now stands in the history, begins thus. *Therefore take no thought for your life, &c.* which words suppose something to have been said before, to which they were related, and from which they follow as a consequence or conclusion ; whereas the words that immediately precede them, they have no connection with, nor dependence upon. Verse 24. *No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ? or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore take no thought for your life, &c.* Here I observe, that though a man cannot serve God and Mammon ; yet it does not follow that therefore he ought to take no thought for his life ; the latter of these propositions does not follow as a natural consequence, or as a just conclusion from the former ; and therefore, as I said before, the *Historian* must have dropped that part of our Lord's discourse, which immediately preceded the discourse I now refer to, and which was made the ground or reason of it. However, the design of this discourse of our Lord, (*imperfectly* related by the *Historian*,) appears plainly to be this, *viz.* to warn

warn his disciples and followers against an *anxious* and *needleless* care and solicitude for the things of this life, when no good purpose can be answered by it. This is an instance of the weakness and folly which too too often takes place among men, by which they increase and multiply troubles to themselves. It is true, that many natural evils take place, as they are the result of the present constitution of things, man being so constituted as that he cannot partake of pleasure without being liable to pain. But then, a wise man will take care not to multiply those evils, nor trouble and perplex his mind about what may never happen; he will be no farther solicitous about the things of this life, than as that solicitude is necessary towards the attaining the conveniencies and comforts of it; and this is that *wisdom* which our Lord here advised his disciples and followers to make themselves masters of.

Verse 25. *Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for the body, what ye shall put on: is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment.* In this verse are *two* things to be considered. *First*, the advice and counsel given by our Lord: *Secondly*, the argument he used to render that advice efficacious upon the minds of the people.

The advice is expressed in these words, *take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for the body, what ye shall put on.* The argument used to back this advice is expressed in the following words, *is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment.* First, as to the advice, it is to be observed, that those words *take no thought for your*
life

life are not to be understood in their *utmost latitude*, but are to be limited and confined to all *anxious* and *unnecessary* thoughtfulness for the things of this life. Man is a creature who depends, not only upon the bountiful hand of providence for his subsistence, but also he depends upon his own application and industry, for the partaking of those benefits that God, in the course of his providence, has prepared for him. So that it is so far from being *blameable* in a man to take all proper and necessary thought and care for the things of this life, that, on the contrary, it is his *duty* so to do. But then, this thought and care is not to be extended beyond its *proper bounds*; it must lead a man to plow and sow, that is, to make use of all proper means for the procuring the comforts, and guarding against the evils, of life; and when that is done there he must stop; he must not needlessly perplex and distress his mind about *futurity*, about what *may*, or *may not*, happen, about evils that are wholly out of his power either to prevent, or remedy; he must do his own duty, and leave the event to providence, it is God that must give the increase. The thoughtfulness therefore that is here prohibited, is not such as is necessary towards the procuring the conveniencies and comforts of life; but it is such an unnecessary and anxious thought and care for the things of this world as answers no good end, but is in itself a *sore evil*. Having considered the advice, I come *secondly*, to take notice of the argument used by our Lord, to render that advice efficacious upon the minds of his people. *Is not the life more than meat, and the*
body

body than raiment. Which is the same as if he had said, hath God in the course of his providence given life and being to us, hath he given us bodies naturally exposed to want and necessity, and will he not in the course of his providence provide whatever is necessary for the support of both? yes surely. All unnecessary thoughtfulness for the things of this life is therefore *blameable*, and ought to be avoided, as it reflects great dishonour upon the common parent of mankind.

Verse 26. *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they.* In this verse our Lord pursues the argument mentioned in the preceding verse, by appealing to experience and common observation for the proof of it. Behold the *fowls of the air*, which are free from all thought and concern for futurity, and therefore make no provision for it; they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns; and yet God, in the course of his providence, makes provision for them; and will he not much more do so for you, who not only are to use your own industry, but also are intended to act a better part, and to answer a more noble design in the creation than they? And the answer to this question is here supposed and implied, *viz.* that he most certainly will.

Verse 27. *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature.* Our Lord here uses another argument to back and enforce the advice that he had before given, by observing that the thoughtfulness he condemned was fruitless and vain, that it answered no good purpose, that it
makes

makes no alteration in the case to which it is applied, but leaves things just as it finds them; and therefore such thoughtfulness ought to be discarded; *which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature.*

Verses 28, 29, 30. *And why take ye thought for raiment? consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?* Our Lord in these verses re-assumes the argument he had before used, taken from the divine providence, to dissuade his followers from that unnecessary thoughtfulness he condemned; and as he had before applied it to the case of *food*; so he here applies it to that of *raiment*. And why take ye thought for raiment? consider those inanimate creatures the *lilies* of the field, that contribute nothing towards the *continuation*, or the *ornament* of their being; they grow, tho' they neither toil, nor spin; and yet shew forth more real *beauty* than *Solomon* in all his glory could do. Wherefore if God, in the course of his providence, so clothes the *lilies* of the field, that are to answer an *inferior purpose*, and that are to continue as it were but for a *day*, shall he not much more do the same by his creature *man*, whom he hath designed to answer a much *nobler end* in the *creation*, and to have a much *longer* continuance in it than they? And the answer to this question is also here supposed and implied, *viz.* that he most assuredly will.

Verſes 31, 32, 33. *Therefore take no thought ſaying, what ſhall we eat? or what ſhall we drink? or wherewithal ſhall we be clothed? (for after all theſe things do the Gentiles ſeek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all theſe things. But ſeek ye firſt the kingdom of God, and his righteousneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.* In theſe verſes our Lord repeats the advice he had before given his diſciples, againſt all unneceſſary and anxious thoughtfulness and care for the things of this life; and to render that advice efficacious he farther obſerves, that the things of this world are not the *principal*, much leſs the *only*, objects of man's care, that God is to be conſidered not only as the *common parent*, but alſo as the *governour* of the intelligent and moral world, who will call man to an account for his preſent behaviour, and deal with him according to his deeds whether they be good or evil; that therefore man's *chief* concern and regard ſhould be, not what he ſhall eat, and what he ſhall drink, and wherewithal he ſhall be clothed (like thoſe inattentive Gentiles who conſider this world as their all); but to *approve himſelf* to God in well doing, by putting on ſuch a temper of mind, and ſuch a behaviour, as will render him the ſuitable and proper object of divine favour; and when he has done this, and likewiſe has uſed his own induſtry towards the ſupport and continuation of his being, then as God knows the *wants* and *neceſſities* he is liable to, ſo he has, and will in the courſe of his providence make a *plentiful proviſion* for their ſupply; and this has generally been the caſe in fact.

Verse 34. *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* In this verse our Lord again repeats, and therewith concludes, the advice he had before given, against all unnecessary thoughtfulness and concern for the things of this life; and in order to render this advice successful he farther observes, that all our care and concern for the morrow will not *lessen* to-morrow's burthen, that the morrow will unavoidably bring its *own* cares and troubles, notwithstanding all our thoughtfulness about it to day; and that therefore it must be great *folly* and *madness* in us to load the *present* day with the cares and troubles that belong to the morrow, seeing every day brings with it a burthen of cares sufficient for itself; *sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

In this discourse the *principal* argument used by our Lord, to dissuade his disciples and followers from all anxious and unnecessary thoughtfulness about the affairs of this life, is, that God, in the course of his providence, *has*, and *will take care* of all these things. And the question arising from hence is, *what that providence is* which our Lord here refers to, whether it be the *general* providence of God, or whether it be an *immediate* and *special* interposition of the Deity. And the answer is most apparent, *viz.* that God feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the grass of the field, not by an *immediate* and *special* interposition of his power, but by his *general* providence; by which *general* providence he also takes care of *man*; and consequently that the providence here referred to by our Lord, was not any particular
and

and special interposition of the Deity, but only the general providence of God. Again,

The other discourse of our Lord, which the abettors of the forementioned doctrine of a particular providence appeal to, as *full proof* of their point, is contained in the 10th chapter of St *Matthew's* Gospel, and more particularly verses 29, 30, 31. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.* In this chapter we have an account that after our Lord had called unto him his *twelve* disciples, and had given them power over unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and diseases among the people, he sent them forth to preach in the cities of *Israel*. And (say the abettors of the aforesaid doctrine) for the disciples comfort and encouragement in this work, our Lord in these verses assured them, that God would take them under his *immediate care* and *protection*, that his *particular* providence should watch over them and direct their affairs, even in the most minute circumstances: so that nothing should befall them, whether *good* or *evil*, without the particular and special providence of God. That as a *sparrow* could not fall to the ground without the *immediate* direction of God's providence, and as the *hairs* of mens heads are all *numbered*: so much less would any thing, whether *good* or *evil*, befall these his Disciples in the discharge of their duty, without the *particular* and *special* interposition of the Deity. This is the *sense* that some men put upon these words of our Lord, and this is in part

the *foundation* upon which their doctrine of a particular providence is built Whereas our Lord, in this discourse, is so far from leading his Disciples into a *reliance* upon the *particular* and *special* interposition of the Deity in their favour in the exercise of their ministry, (excepting in one case only, *viz.* what they should answer when they should be called before governors and kings for his sake,) that, on the contrary, he seems to put a *bar* to it, by observing to them, that every thing would be *left to take its course*. That as they would have to do with *unreasonable men*; so they must expect *unreasonable usage* from them; the consequences of which would be, that they would be brought before *governors* and *kings* for his sake, that they would be persecuted from *city to city*, and that they would be exposed to *suffering* and *death*, without giving them the *least hint* that providence would be engaged either in *preventing* or *removing* those evils. That they were not to expect *better usage* from the world than he had, and should meet with from it. That they ought to *go on* and *persevere* in the work and business he had called them to, and *couragiously* bear the burthen that should be laid upon them on account of it, and not *draw back* in the discharge of so weighty a trust. And that they must not *vainly expect* that God would be working miracles in their favour; but, on the contrary, they must use their *own care* and *endeavour* to guard against those evils, that the faithful discharge of their duty might expose them to.

This verse 16. *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* As Christ's Disci-
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ples were to put on the *innocency* of the *dove*, that so they might not be injurious nor hurtful to others: so they were to exercise the *wisdom* of the *serpent*, in order to guard against the evils they might suffer from them. Verses 17, 18. *But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge in the synagogues. And ye shall be brought before governours and kings for my sake.* Verses 21, 22, 23. *And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name sake.* — *But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.* Verses 24, 25. *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord: it is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord: if they have called the master of the house Belzebul, how much more shall they call them of his household?* Here we see that as our Lord informed his Disciples what *fore evils* were likely to befall them, in the exercise of their ministry: so he charged them to use their *own endeavours* to guard against those evils, but does not give any intimation that the particular and special providence of God would be concerned either in their prevention or removal. And,

Tho' our Lord endeavoured to *comfort* and *encourage* his disciples in the work and business he was going to employ them in; yet that consolation and encouragement was to arise, not from any promise of the particular and special providence of God to attend them in *this world*, but from that *great recompence of reward* that would most certainly follow them in the next. Verses

26, 27. *Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house tops.* Which is the same as if he had said; Tho' you will have many enemies, and tho' their mischievous designs will sometimes be carried on with the utmost secrecy against you; yet fear them not, because there is nothing so secret, but what is perfectly well known to God, who as he will in due time render to such your enemies the *due reward* of their evil deeds, so he will abundantly recompense your faithful service. Go on therefore in the discharge of your duty, and deliver publickly and plainly to the world, what I have, and shall deliver unto you. Verse 28. *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy (or make miserable) both soul and body in hell; and consequently is also able to make both soul and body happy in heaven.* Verses 29, 30, 31. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.* As much as if our Lord had said, *sparrows* are of little value, seeing *two* of them are sold for a *farthing*, and the *hairs* of a man's head are *less* valuable; and yet these, little as they are, come within the *divine* notice and inspection; there is not any thing that can *besal* them, but what is clearly perceived, and fully known to God. Fear ye not therefore, for as ye are of much greater value and concern

concern in the creation than sparrows: so you may be well assured there is not any thing that you can *do*, or *suffer*, in the discharge of your duty, but will be *registered* in God's book, and will be *kindly remembered* to your advantage. Your *good works* and *sufferings* will not only be known and observed by your maker; but also will be *amply rewarded* by him. Verse 32, and so on to the end of the chapter. *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man 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 shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*

Here we see, that the *encouragement* and *consolation* that Christ's Disciples were to draw to themselves from his discourse was to arise, not from any *promise* of the particular and special providence of God to attend them in *this world*; but only from that *great recompence of reward* which would most assuredly follow them in the next. Their comfort and encouragement was to arise, from their being assured that their *labours* and *sufferings* should not be in vain in the Lord; this was to *encourage them* in the faithful discharge of their duty, and this was to *comfort them*, and *bear them up* under all the afflictions and sufferings that the exercise of their ministry might expose them to. And,

As the doctrine of a particular providence that is here referred to, is not *taught* by our Lord in either of the discourses before-mentioned: so much less is it taught in any other part of the history of his life and ministry. Christ has not in any of his discourses laid a foundation for any such doctrine to be built upon; and therefore, I say, as above, that this doctrine is grounded on mere presumption, and is void of proof. But then, by a particular providence, I do not intend that God upon some extraordinary occasions, and to answer some great and good ends, immediately interposes, and by his power produces, or causes to be produced, such effects as would not be produced in the course of his general providence; or by preventing such effects as otherwise would be produced by the settled laws of nature, were they left to take their course; this is such a particular providence as I have no objection against and therefore have not opposed. But by a particular

cular providence, I mean, that God does not only upon some extraordinary occasions, and to answer some great and good ends, immediately interpose as aforesaid; but also that he very frequently and almost perpetually does so in the affairs of the world; this is the doctrine of a particular providence that I oppose, and of which I say, that it is grounded only on mere presumption, and is void of proof.

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THE

TRUE GOSPEL

OF

JESUS CHRIST

VINDICATED.

IN my book, intituled, *The true Gospel of Jesus Christ asserted*, I have stated the notion, and shewed what I intend by the gospel of Jesus Christ, viz. it is *those glad tidings, or that good news, which Christ was, in a particular and special manner, sent of God, to acquaint the world with.* This, I think, is, in the most strict and proper sense, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and all that is that gospel; and therefore I call it the *true* gospel of Jesus Christ, in distinction from, and in opposition to, whatever may be annexed to, and blended with it. However, if any other person is disposed to use the term * *gospel* in a much more

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* That the word *gospel* is sometimes used in a secondary and less proper sense, is most apparent. All those books, which contain the history of Christ's life and ministry, (of which the learned say, and St. *Luke* supposes, there were many,)

were,

extensive sense, and will express by it, not only those *four histories*, in which Christ's gospel is contained, and therefore are, in common language, called by the same name; but also all that is contained in the books of the New Testament, and consequently, in this sense of the word gospel, St. *Paul's* account of his having left his *cloak at Troas* is a part of Christ's gospel; let it be so, it makes nothing for, nor against me.

As to the books of the New Testament, whether they were written by *divine inspiration*, that is a point which I have carefully considered long ago, and have given my opinion of it, together with the reasons upon which that opinion is grounded; as also Christ's promise to his Apostles, of sending the Holy Spirit, which should lead them into all truth; in *a letter to a Clergyman*, which letter has been offered to publick consideration. And, as I have not had ground or reason to change my opinion, with regard to the fore-mentioned points; so, to the fore-mentioned letter I refer
my

were, from the beginning of Christianity, called *gospels*, in distinction from all other writings of that time; one of which St. *Paul* is supposed to refer to, and, upon some account or other, calls his *gospel*. The good news, which the Angels brought to the shepherds, of the birth of Christ, may, indeed, properly be called *the gospel*, viz. the *gospel* of those *Angels*; but then, I think, it cannot, with any propriety of speech, be called the *gospel* of Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ was not the messenger of the glad tidings of his own birth to mankind.

my reader, as to what contains my full sense of those matters *. Again,

As I have, in the fore-mentioned book, shewn what I understand by the gospel of Jesus Christ, *viz.* it is that good news, which Christ was, in a particular and special manner, sent of God, to acquaint the world with; so I have summed it up in the *three* following particulars, *viz.* *First*, Christ requires and recommends the conforming our minds and lives to that eternal and unalterable rule of action, which is founded in the reason of things; and this he lays down as the only ground of divine acceptance, and, as that which will entitle men to the favour of God, and the happiness of another world; and, consequently, this will prevent them from being greatly and lastingly miserable. *Secondly*, If men have lived in a violation of this righteous law, by which they have rendered themselves highly displeasing to God, and worthy of his resentment; then, Christ requires and recommends repentance, and reformation of their evil ways, as the only, and the sure ground of the divine mercy and forgiveness. And, *Thirdly*, In order to make those truths have the greater impression on the minds and lives of men, he declares and assures them, that God has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness; and, that he will then either acquit or condemn, reward

* See my Enquiry concerning the books of the New Testament, whether they were written by divine inspiration, &c.

reward or punish them, according as they have, or have not conformed their minds and lives to that rule of righteousness before-mentioned; and, according as they have, or have not repented and amended their evil ways.

Here I observe, that with respect to what has been urged against me on this subject, I think, I am not charged with any *error of excess*, in making the gospel of Christ *too extensive*; but only, that I have erred in *defect*, by *contracting* and *lessening* the gospel, and bringing it into a much narrower compass than I ought to have done; that *faith in, and love to Christ*, that the *two Sacraments*, viz. *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*, &c. are parts of Christ's gospel, which I have not brought into the account. Before I proceed to consider this great error of defect charged upon me, I beg leave to observe, that, with respect to the *first* point mentioned above, viz. that Christ requires and recommends a conformity of mind and life to that eternal and unalterable rule of action, which is founded in the reason of things, it is *the thing*, viz. the *law or rule of action itself*, that I am concerned with; and not the *name* by which that law is, or may be called; nor yet the *consideration* under which it is offered to mankind, viz. whether as the law and will of *God*, or, whether as a law founded in the *reason of things*. Again, when I referred my reader to Christ's sermon on the mount, to his discourse with the man, mentioned, *Matth. xix. 16, &c.* all that I intended, or could reasonably

be supposed to intend, was only to illustrate the point then in hand, *viz.* to shew my reader, that it was the *law before-mentioned*, which Christ requires our compliance with, as the *ground* of our acceptance with God, in distinction from, and in opposition to, *any other law*, or *any other way* of our being rendered acceptable to the Deity; and not to shew, that either the *sermon on the mount*, or the *ten commandments* contain the *whole* of that *law*. This I had before declared, they did not; by observing, that “Christ had not delivered any such compleat body of laws, or system of morality, as might particularly direct men how to act under the various and different circumstances of life, in every instance; there not having been any such compleat system of morality given in, or by, any divine revelation, that has yet been delivered to the world; or, at least, this does not appear to have been the case.” I say, this being most apparently the state of the case, all that a late * writer has urged against me, on these heads, must be void of argument.

But, to return to that great error of defect, which I stand charged with. As to *faith in Christ*, I observe, that to *believe* Christ to be a *divine messenger*, is *previous* to the *belief* of the *divinity* of that message, which he delivered

* See the Reverend Mr. *Hallet's* book, intituled, *The Consistent Christian*, &c.

livered to the world; and both these are *previous* to the *effects*, which such a *belief* has, or ought to have, upon the minds and lives of men, *viz.* the *reforming* their *vices*, and the *rightly directing* and *governing* their *affections* and *actions*. And tho' both the former of these may be said to be *necessary*, as they are *means* to the latter; yet, it is the *latter only*, strictly speaking, which is the *ground* of mens acceptance with God. It is not our *believing* the *divinity* of Christ, nor yet *believing* the *divinity* of his message, which will render us the proper objects of the divine mercy and complacency, and therefore such belief is not the ground of either; but it is the *effect*, which such belief has upon the minds and lives of men, which makes them the proper objects of both, and which, therefore, is the only ground of both. When the fore-mentioned *faith* becomes such a *principle of action* in the believer, as engages him to cease to do evil, and learn to do well, to put away from him the evil of his doings, and to bring forth the fruits of newness of life, then the believer becomes acceptable to God; but then, it is the *effects* of faith, and not faith itself, strictly speaking, which render men the *proper objects* of, and, therefore, are the *true*, and *only grounds* of the divine mercy and complacency to them. To this I may add the *authority* of our *common master*, or him to whom we are disciples, *Luke vi. 46. And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* *Matt. vii. 21. Not every*
one

one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Here we see, that *faith* in Christ as a *divine messenger*, and *faith* in his *message*, is supposed to take place in the Persons referred to; and yet, it is expressly declared by our Lord, that *that faith* will avail nothing with respect to God's favour, except it produces its *proper effects* upon the minds and lives of men; and this, one would think, should be sufficient to determine the point in hand. However, if any person should farther insist, that *faith* in Christ as a *divine messenger*, and *faith* in the *divinity* of his message, ought to be considered as *a part* of that *message*, which he was sent of God to acquaint the world with; and, consequently, that it is *a part* of *Christ's gospel*; I shall not contend the point with him; if he will have it to be so, let him have it.

But farther, as *faith* is frequently insisted on as a *proper ground* of our acceptance with God; and, as I cannot better express myself upon this point, than I have already done upon like occasions; so I will transcribe some parts of what I have already said, and offer them again to my reader's serious consideration.

“ One of the *faults* or *errors* of *defect*, which
 “ I am charged with, and which is urged by
 “ way of consequence, from the foregoing error
 “ or fault of excess, is, that I ascribe *too little*
 “ *to faith*. By *faith*, I suppose, my admonisher
 “ must mean an assent to this general propo-
 B “ sition,

“ sition, *viz.* that *the christian revelation is*
 “ *of a divine original*; or else some particular
 “ proposition, or propositions, contained under
 “ that general, such as, that *Jesus is Christ,*
 “ and the like. Upon which I observe, that
 “ *assent*, as it is simply an act of judgment
 “ of the mind arising from proper evidence,
 “ is the same, and renders a person equally
 “ valuable in *all cases*; because the *ground of*
 “ assent is not the goodness or badness, or the
 “ greater or less importance of the subject, to
 “ which the proposition assented to, relates,
 “ but only the *strength* of the evidence, upon
 “ which the truth of the proposition depends,
 “ or is supposed to depend. But tho’ assent,
 “ in all cases, is the same, that is, it is equally
 “ valuable, when grounded on proper evi-
 “ dence; yet, the truths or propositions as-
 “ sented to, may be very different, and of
 “ much greater concern to mankind in one
 “ case, than in another. *That the whole is equal*
 “ *to all its parts*, is a proposition of very little
 “ concern to mankind; but, that *good men*
 “ *will be happy, and bad men miserable, in ano-*
 “ *ther world*, are propositions, the *truth* of
 “ which nearly concerns us all; because it lies
 “ upon us to take all proper measures, to
 “ guard against the one, and to secure the
 “ other; that is, to become *good men*; seeing
 “ it is *goodness* which entitles us to the one,
 “ and secures us from the other. Now, so
 “ far as any *revelation*, or any *propositions*
 “ contained in it are *subservient* to *goodness*,
 “ and

“ and do really dispose us to it, so far *faith*
 “ in these propositions is *serviceable* to us, and
 “ may, tho’ in an improper sense, be said to
 “ render us acceptable to God, not upon the
 “ account of any intrinsic worth or value in
 “ *faith* itself, considered as *faith* or an act of
 “ assent, but as it has been subservient to good-
 “ ness, which *goodness alone*, strictly speaking,
 “ is, what renders us acceptable to our Maker;
 “ because a good man will be equally valua-
 “ ble in himself, and acceptable to God, whe-
 “ ther *faith* be introductive to his goodness, or
 “ not; just as *health* will be equally valuable,
 “ whether it be procured or preserved by this,
 “ or that means. And therefore, as it is right
 “ to render to *faith* its due; so, surely, it must
 “ be wrong to render to it more than its due.
 “ If the *belief* of a *judgment to come* has an
 “ influence upon my temper and actions, and
 “ changes them for the better, *faith* is, *instru-*
 “ *mentally*, a benefit to me; but, if *faith* have
 “ no such influence, which influence depends
 “ upon my own will, then it is of no ad-
 “ vantage to me at all. And in this case,
 “ if I am influenced and wrought upon by
 “ it, it is not *faith*, strictly speaking, but
 “ the *object* of *faith*, or the proposition or
 “ truth assented to, which is the ground and
 “ reason of my change; and it is the *change*
 “ *itself*, and not the way and means by which
 “ it is brought about, that renders me accep-
 “ table to God. Thus, I have shewn, what
 “ I ascribe to *faith*; and, I think, I have not

“ ascribed *too little*; because, if I had ascribed
 “ more, it would have been *too much*, as be-
 “ ing more than it has a title to, or than the
 “ scriptures ascribe to it. For, tho’ faith is
 “ spoken of there with great applause, yet,
 “ this was not on the account of any intrinsic
 “ worth or value in the thing itself, but of
 “ that virtue and goodness, which it was highly
 “ subservient to. The Bible, when it speaks of,
 “ and considers faith abstractedly from that in-
 “ fluence, which it sometimes has upon mens
 “ actions, pronounces it perfect emptiness, or
 “ nothing. Thus St. Paul saith of himself,
 “ 1 Cor. xiii. 2. *Tho’ I have all faith, so that I*
 “ *could remove mountains, and have no charity,*
 “ *I am nothing.* And here, I think, it may
 “ justly be presumed that the *faith* of St. Paul
 “ was *truly orthodox*, and *sufficiently strong*, as
 “ being founded upon clear and convincing
 “ evidence; and yet, St. Paul declares, that
 “ his strong, orthodox faith, when considered
 “ abstractedly, was nothing; that is, it would
 “ not be of any service to him, with respect
 “ to the obtaining God’s favour*.” Again,
 “ If it should be said, that faith has the
 “ promise of salvation annexed to it in the
 “ gospel, and that infidelity is declared damna-
 “ ble: To this I answer, that faith, or the
 “ want of it, is not to be understood in a phi-
 “ losophical, but in a moral sense; that is,
 “ men will not be *saved*, or *damned*, for their
 “ giving,

* See my *Collection of Tracts*, pages 416, 417, 418.

“ giving, or *with-holding*, their assent to this
 “ proposition, *viz.* that the gospel of Christ
 “ is a divine revelation; but they will be *saved*,
 “ or *damned*, as the end and purpose of that
 “ gospel *is*, or *is not*, answered upon them. It
 “ is the same, as if our Lord had said, tho’
 “ men by their sin and wickedness have ex-
 “ posed themselves to the just displeasure of
 “ Almighty God; yet he now, by my minis-
 “ try, makes this kind and gracious offer to
 “ them, *viz.* that if they will repent, and bring
 “ forth fruits meet for repentance, then he will
 “ pardon their sins, and receive them to fa-
 “ vour; but, on the other side, if they will,
 “ notwithstanding this kind offer, still go on
 “ in their wickedness, then God will execute
 “ his highest displeasure upon them. He that
 “ *believeth*, that is, he who accepts of this gra-
 “ cious offer, and answers the end and pur-
 “ pose of it, by turning from the evil of his
 “ ways, and by bringing forth the fruits of
 “ newness of life, he shall be saved; but he
 “ that *believeth not*, that is, he who unwor-
 “ thily rejects this kind offer, by an obstinate
 “ continuance in his folly, he shall be damned.
 “ This, I say, is the sense of the aforesaid de-
 “ claration; as is abundantly evident, not only
 “ from the nature of the subject, but also from
 “ the tenor of the New Testament. If I
 “ was in a house with a company of men,
 “ and was absolutely certain that the house
 “ would fall to the ground in an hour’s time,
 “ and consequently, that every soul present
 “ would

“ would inevitably perish, except they fled
 “ out of it before that fall; and if I gave
 “ them timely warning of their danger; in
 “ this case, it would not be their faith, or
 “ their infidelity, with regard to this warn-
 “ ing, but their going out, or their con-
 “ tinuing in this house, which would be the
 “ cause of their safety, or destruction. So, in
 “ like manner, man, by his sin and wicked-
 “ ness, has exposed himself to God’s displea-
 “ sure, and Christ is sent to apprize him of
 “ his danger, and to shew him the only, and
 “ the certain way of escaping from it, *viz.*
 “ by repentance, and reformation of his evil
 “ ways; now, if he so far hearkens to this
 “ message, as to repent and amend, he will
 “ be saved, whether he is satisfied of the di-
 “ vinity of this message, or not; but, if he
 “ goes on in his wickedness, he will be dam-
 “ ned, tho’ he believes its divinity ever so
 “ strongly. So that in this case, it is not
 “ mens *infidelity*, strictly speaking, but their
 “ *obstinate continuance in their sins*, which is
 “ the *ground and cause* of their *damnation*.
 “ Besides, if the fore-mentioned terms were
 “ to be understood in a philosophical sense,
 “ then the proposition, to which they relate,
 “ would be plainly repugnant to the nature
 “ of things; because it is morally impossible;
 “ for God to be pleased or displeas’d with any
 “ agent, for barely giving or with-holding
 “ his assent to this, or any other proposition;
 “ this assent being the effect of judgment, and

“ not of choice; man being so far passive, in
 “ the present case, as that if he attends to the
 “ subject, he cannot think and judge of it
 “ otherwise than he does *.”

As to *love to Christ*, I observe, that *love to a benefactor*, especially to him who, under God, is the *greatest benefactor to mankind*, is a duty that results from, and is founded in, the nature of things; and, consequently, comes within the *first* article, of what I call the sum and substance of the gospel of Christ.

As to the *death and resurrection of Christ*, I observe, that Christ *foretold both*, as he did that *Judas* would betray him, and that the *Scribes and Pharisees* would conspire against him, that they would deliver him up to the *Gentiles*, to be mocked and scourged by them; but then, Christ's *foretelling these* does not constitute them, nor either of them, to be *parts* of that good news, which he was, in a particular and special manner, sent of God to acquaint the world with. It is true, *St. Paul* saith, *Rom. iv. 25.* that Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification; which, no doubt, is *true*, in the *Apostle's sense*, as the death and resurrection of Christ were, some way or other, *subservient* to answer the fore-mentioned purpose; but that God could not *pardon sinners*, without the *death and resurrection* of Christ, or that these were *necessary* to answer that purpose, is more easily taken
 for

* See my *Collection of Tracts*, page 290.

for granted than proved. And here my examiner puts upon me a quotation from Dr. Clarke, whose name (on account of his learning, and his other great and valuable abilities) I doubt not, will be held in *great veneration*, as long as the remembrance of him shall remain upon the earth. But then, Dr. Clarke was a *man*, and, as such, was *liable to err*, as well as other men; and therefore, I hope, it will not be expected that I should *submit my judgment*, not only without, but *against reason*, (as in the present case) to Dr. Clarke's authority; and if any such thing be expected, I must beg leave to be *excused*. Whether God *could*, or *could not*, pardon sinners, without giving to the world some *visible mark* or *token* of his *dislike of sin*, is a question that, at present, I am not disposed to enter into; but this I say, that God's suffering the *Jews* and *Romans* to be *guilty* of the *greatest wickedness*, in the crucifixion and death of his Son, or his laying the most *heavy affliction* upon an *innocent* person, under the consideration of *punishment*, and then making that a *reason* to himself, to let the *guilty go free*, which is supposed to be the case; I say, that *neither of these* were *visible marks* and *tokens* of God's dislike of sin. I would here further observe, that our Lord saith, *Luke xvii. 3. Take heed to yourselves; if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.* These, I think, are not mere *arbitrary* precepts, grounded only on the *will* or *commandment* of Christ, but are

are founded in the reason of things ; that is, we are to *rebuke* an *offender*, not only because we are commanded, but also because, by his *offence*, he has rendered himself the *proper object* of such *rebuke* ; and we are to *forgive* the *penitent*, not only because we are commanded, but also because, by his *repentance*, he becomes the *proper object* of *mercy*, when he is incapable of repairing the injury done. And as repentance is a proper ground or reason for *us* to forgive an offender ; so it is equally the same to *God*, to whom no reparation can be made in any case. What ends were intended to be served by sacrifices, I shall not here enquire into ; but this I say, that as sacrifices, (let the thing sacrificed be of what *kind* or *value* soever,) cannot possibly make any *alteration*, with regard to *sin*, so as to make it *more* or *less* blameable ; nor yet with regard to the *sinner*, so as to make him *more* or *less* the proper object of the divine mercy and complacency ; therefore they cannot possibly be, to *God*, the *ground* or *reason* of either. I say, that sacrifices cannot possibly be, to *God*, the ground or reason of either of these, except *God* is pleased, *arbitrarily*, to make them to be such to himself ; and even then, they would be no reason at all, because then *sovereign pleasure* would be the *reason*, as well as the *rule*, of action to the Deity. *God* would have mercy on whom he would have mercy, and he would be pleased with whom he would be pleased, without any reason or rule for so doing. If, indeed, *sovereign pleasure*

pleasure is the *reason* and the *rule* of the divine conduct, then, I readily grant, that I may *err* in this, and in every other point with which religion is concerned; because then, *religion* may be *this thing*, or it may be *that thing*, or it may be *any thing*, for what I know, or can prove, to the contrary; as I* have long since shewed, in my *Previous Question*, with regard to it. And this, I think, is what it must at last come to, † if the orthodox, as they esteem themselves, are determined, in point of *argument*, to carry their cause. But here I am sensible I ought to take heed, lest I should give occasion to my opponent, (out of his great modesty,) to *blush* for me.

As to the *two sacraments*, viz. *baptism* and the *Lord's supper*, these, as I have shewn, (in my book, intitled, *The true Gospel of Jesus Christ asserted*) were instituted for the *furtherance* of the *gospel*; that is, that they might be subservient to render the *gospel* of Christ effectual, in answering the purposes for which it was intended; but then, I think, strictly speaking, they are not *parts* of that *gospel*. However, if my opponent will have them called by that name, let it be so.

I shall follow my examiner no farther, but only observe (to him, and to another (nameless))

* See my *Collection of Tracts*.

† If religion be founded only on sovereign pleasure, or the arbitrary will of God, then, I think the most absolute scepticism must follow upon it; that is, we cannot come to any certainty, in any point, with regard to it.

less) writer, who has appeared * against me) with regard to the *sixth* section of my book, which section has furnished out materials for complaint, that, as to those facts, which, at most, were only *evidences* of the *divinity* of Christ's mission, and also those facts that were *consequent* to the *execution* of that mission, it is very preposterous to consider *these*, or the *history* of them, as parts of that good news, which Christ was, in a particular and special manner, sent of God to acquaint the world with; and therefore, I think, I have justly excluded them from being *parts* of *Christ's gospel*. Nevertheless, my opponents are at *liberty* to call them by *what name* they please. And,

As to what I call the *private opinions* of the writers of the history of Christ's life and ministry, and likewise of those whom Christ appointed to publish his gospel to the world, these do not appear to be any other, nor any more, than the particular or private sentiments of those writers; and therefore, I call them their *private opinions*, because I know not what else to call them, that would be more proper. The Apostles, in the course of their ministry, thought proper to send several letters or epistles to some of the persons and churches, with whom they had concern. And their advices and counsels, their arguments and reasonings, were such as the occasions of their writings,

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* The Authors referred to, are the Rev. Mr. Hallet, and the Author of the Tract, intitled, *An Answer to Mr. Chubb's Short Dissertation on Providence.*

and the circumstances of things, required. And in this they acted an honest part, as men *who had obtained mercy of the Lord, to be faithful.* 1 Cor. vii. 25. that is, as men whom the Lord had thought worthy of such a trust. And accordingly, St. Paul, in his *first* letter to Timothy, acted the part, not only of a *spiritual father*, by giving him ghostly counsel; but also, of a *bodily physician* to him, advising him to drink no longer water, but to use a little wine, for his stomach's sake, and for his often infirmity, 1 Tim. v. 23. Here, it is plain, St. Paul thought it was proper for Timothy, on account of his health, to change that regimen of diet he had before been under, and that he should live more freely than before he had done; and consonant to this appearance of things to the Apostle, he advised Timothy as aforesaid. And this I call the *private opinion* of St. Paul, because I know not what to call it, that would be more proper. The case is the same, in many other parts of the writings or letters of the Apostles, which are no parts of Christ's mission, nor is the salvation of mankind at all interested in them; and therefore, I think, I very justly exclude them from being parts of Christ's gospel. And,

As there were many persons (*Matthew, Mark, Luke* and *John*, amongst others) who took upon them *voluntarily* * to write and publish the history of Christ's life and ministry, they

* See the introduction to St. *Luke's* history, or gospel.

they not having any special call to that work; so they, like other historians, *blended* their own sentiments with that history, and gave their judgments on several facts, which, as historians, they were not concerned to do. Thus St. *Matthew* remarks, upon Christ's healing all that were sick, that this was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by *Esaias* the Prophet, saying, *Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses*, Matt. viii. 17. Here we see, that St. *Matthew* brings down that famous prophecy in the liii^d of *Isaiab*, and represents it as a prediction of Christ's *healing bodily diseases*; whereas great multitudes of christians have understood this prophecy in a very different, and much higher sense. But then, this I call the *private opinion* of St. *Matthew*, because, I know not what to call it, that would be more proper. For as it does not appear, that St. *Matthew* was *divinely constituted* a judge of the sense of scripture prophecy, and therefore, we can have no ground to presume that he was **divinely qualified* for such a work; so he might, for any thing we know, or can shew, to the contrary, be *liable to err*, with respect to it. However, whether St. *Matthew* did err, or not, with respect to the point in hand, is of no consequence to us, seeing *that point* is no part of that good news, which Christ was, in a particular and special manner, sent

* See my *Enquiry concerning the Books of the New Testament, whether they were written by divine Inspiration, &c.*

sent of God to acquaint the world with; nor is our future safety any way concerned in it; and therefore, I think, it may justly be excluded from being any *part* of *Christ's gospel*. The case is the same with regard to what *St. John* begins his history with, and in many other instances, which make *no parts* of *Christ's mission*, and with which our *future safety* has no concern; these, I think, may, with *great propriety*, be said to be the *private opinion* of each writer, but are not, *properly speaking*, *parts of Christ's gospel*.

But farther, I observe, with regard to my opponents, that whether I have, in the *sixth section* of the fore-mentioned book, *truly represented* *St. Paul's*, or *St. James's sense*, &c. or not, it makes *no alteration*, with respect to my argument; because all that I intended to shew, was, that the things there referred to, were *no parts* of *Christ's gospel*, still using the term *gospel* in its most strict and proper sense, as aforesaid; and that those points were, what the *salvation* of mankind is not in the least concerned with. This, I say, was what I attempted to shew, and this was *all* that my argument required. However, I readily acknowledge to my admonisher, that I do not understand *Greek*, and I submit to his rebuke. Only I beg leave to remind him, that all I said upon the point, was only this, *viz.* "according to *St. James's* representation of the
" story,

“ story *, the case seems to be, not only that
 “ this great drought was brought upon the
 “ land in consequence of the Prophet’s prayer;
 “ but also that the Prophet’s prayer was the
 “ produce of his passion and resentment.” But
 then, whether the *story*, as represented by St.
James, has *this* appearance, or not, was sub-
 mitted to the judgment of my readers. Ne-
 vertheless, I have enquired* of those who under-
 stand *Greek*, concerning this matter, who have
 informed me, that Commentators and Lexico-
 graphers differ in their rendering the *Greek*
 word ὁμοιοπαθῆς, into *Latin* and *English*,
 which word our Translators have rendered,
subject to like passions.

Grotius renders it thus, *liable to death, and
 the evils of life.* So that, according to him,
St. James may be read thus, *Elias* was a man
 liable to death, and to the gout, stone, colick,
 &c. and he prayed earnestly, &c. But then,
 the question will be, what have *death* and the
colick to do with *Elias’s prayer*?

Erasmus and *Budæus* render it thus, *Elias
 was mortal, or endowed with the same condition
 of mortality.* But then, the question will re-
 turn as before, what has *mortality* to do with
Elias’s prayer?

Dr. Hammond, renders it thus, *Elias was
 subject to the same afflictions and frailties.* But
 then, by *frailties*, *Dr. Hammond* may mean,
 either

* The word *story*, is here used, not in a disreputable
 sense, but only to express a short branch of history.

either the frailties of the *body*, or the frailties of the *mind*, or the frailties of nature in general; this not being determined.

Vorstius, and *Leigh*, render it thus, *subject to the like*, or *the same passions or affections*. And, *Leigh*, in the margin of his *Critica sacra*, by a reference to *Aristotle's Ethicks*, renders it *perturbations*.

Stevens renders it thus, *one to whom there are like affections, or the same, or like perturbations; one obnoxious to the same affections or perturbations; and for it, likewise, quotes Aristotle's Ethicks*.

Scapula also renders it *perturbations*; and for it, quotes *Aristotle's Ethicks*, book 8th, as before by *Leigh* and *Stevens*.

Seeing, then, that learned men have such different readings upon the fore-mentioned *Greek* word, the questions are, What must we do under this perplexity? Who must we apply to for satisfaction? Is there no coming at *St. James's* meaning? If it should be answered, we must apply to learned men, alas! it is learned men who have brought us into this distress; so that little is to be expected from that quarter; and were I to lend my aid to get clear of this difficulty, I may, perhaps, draw on myself a *second* rebuke. However, (with humble submission to the learned) I will venture to *suppose*, that the *Greek* word ὁμοιοπαθῆς, which our Translators have rendered, *subject to like passions*, is most fully expressed in our language by those words, *subject to like*
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infirmities and frailties of nature. I say, that the fore-mentioned *Greek* word is thus most fully expressed; because those words contain all that the above-named Authors have expressed by *that word*, in their *different* readings upon it; and this is the *ground* of my present supposition. And admitting this to be the case, (of which I do not pretend to be a judge) then, as the infirmities and frailties of nature come under a *twofold* consideration, *viz.* those of the *body*, and those of the *mind*; so this accounts for the *different* readings of *learned men*, with respect to the fore-mentioned *Greek* word, some having applied it to the infirmities and frailties of the *body*; and some, to the infirmities and frailties of the *mind*; the *latter* of which seems to have been the case of *our Translators*. And as the infirmities and frailties of the mind chiefly consist in the *turbulency* and *irregularity* of the *human passions*; so, this may have been the reason, why those men, who have applied the fore-mentioned *Greek* word to the infirmities and frailties of the *mind*, chose to express those infirmities by the words *passions* and *affections*. And this our Translators have done, not only in the place which is now under consideration; but also, in *Acts* xiv. 15. *We also are men of like passions with you.* Indeed, there does not appear any reason, why our Translators should have applied the *Greek* word *thus*, in this place, rather than to the infirmities and frailties of the *body*, because one of these was as much

to the Apostle's purpose as the other, *viz.* to convince the men of *Lystra*, that *Paul* and *Barnabas* were not the proper objects of such adoration, as was going to be paid to them. But, then, it appears plain, that they have *thus* applied it; and, upon the above supposition, the application was just, or, at least, not improper. Now, the question arising from hence is, whether *St. James*, in the use of the fore-mentioned *Greek* word, applied to *Elias* the infirmities and frailties of the *body*, or the infirmities and frailties of the *mind*; and this, I think, can only be determined by the *subject* *St. James* was treating of; and, which subject, I think, confines it to the *latter*. *St. James*, surely, must intend something, by making the following remark, *viz.* that *Elias* was a man subject to like infirmities and frailties of nature, as we are; and the infirmities and frailties *St. James* particularly referred to, must have been exemplified in the case he was going to speak about, in order to render that remark *pertinent*, or to his purpose. But, the infirmities and frailties of the *body*, that is, the being subject to *mortality*, or to the *gout*, or *stone*, or the like, could not excite *Elias* to pray for a sore judgment upon *Israel*: Whereas, the infirmities and frailties of the *mind*, that is, the being subject to a *warm, angry zeal* upon account of *religion* (which was very much the case of the *Jews*) might; and therefore, I think, *that* must have been the case. And then, I think, the Apostle's words, and his reason-

reasoning grounded upon them, may, and that not unnaturally, be paraphrased in the following manner. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. An example of this we have in the *prayer of Elias*, who was not only one of our species, and took part of the same common nature with other men; but also one in whom *the infirmities and frailties* of human nature were *apt to*, and *did sometimes*, shew themselves. And he, in the height of his *pious, tho' warm, angry zeal and resentment* against an *idolatrous people*, prayed earnestly for a sore judgment upon them, *viz. that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months*. And, when he had thus brought the fore-mentioned people into *great distress*, and was thereby moved with *pity* towards them, *he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit*. If then, *Elias*, when in the *warm, angry spirit and temper* of a *Jew*, prayed earnestly, and was *heard* in that he prayed; how much more may every good and *faithful disciple of Christ* reasonably expect to have his earnest prayers *heard and answered*, when he is supposed to pray, not in the *warm, angry zeal* of *Elias*, or a *Jew*; but in the *spirit and temper* of his *kind and compassionate Master*? This seems to be the Apostle's argument. And,

For the farther clearing and settling this point, I think, it will be proper to enquire what *kind of passion* *Elias* was influenced by,

upon *other like occasions* ; and what *kind of behaviour* was consequent upon it. For, if it appears that *Elias* was influenced by such a warm, angry zeal, as aforesaid, at *other times*, and was led by it to draw down misery and destruction upon his fellow creatures, upon *other like occasions* ; then it becomes so much the *more likely* to have been the case here. An instance of this kind we have in 2 *Kings* i. 10, 12. when he called for *fire from heaven*, upon the *two captains* and their *fifties*. These men, for any thing that appears, neither *did*, nor *wished*, the *Prophet* harm ; and their *only fault*, if it may be called a fault, was executing the command of their master, in delivering to the *Prophet*, the message sent unto him from the king. Verse 9. *Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down.* Verse 11. *O man of God, the king hath said, Come down quickly.* Now, if the *behaviour* of the *two captains*, and their *fifties*, could not be the ground of that *severity*, which they fell under upon this occasion, as, I think, it could not ; then the question will be, What was ? And the answer, I think, is plain, that it was the *religious, angry zeal* of the *Prophet*, provoked and stirred up by the *impious behaviour* of *Abaziah* their master ; who, when he had fallen down thro' a lattise, in his upper chamber, that was in *Samarina*, and was sick, sent messengers to enquire, not of the *God of Israel*, but of *Baalzebub, the god of Ekron*, whether he should recover of that disease. And, that the passion
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the Prophet was influenced by, upon this occasion, was, at least, an *infirmity* and *frailty of nature*, seems evident from our Lord's *disapproving* and *condemning* a like kind of passion in his disciples, who, after the example of *Elias*, desired that fire might come down from heaven and consume those *Samaritans*, who refused to receive their Master. This kind of religious zeal our Lord *rebuked*, by telling those of his disciples in whom it took place, that *they knew not what manner of spirit they were of*; which is the same as to say, that though such a kind of piety or religious zeal had been *indulged* in *Elias*, or a *Jew*, yet it was not to be *encouraged* in a *Christian*, because it was contrary to, and would subvert, the very end and purpose of his *Master's coming*, which was, *not to destroy mens lives, but to save them*, Luke ix. 53, 54, 55, 56. Another instance of *Elias's religious zeal* we have an account of in 1 Kings xviii. 40. where the Prophet said unto the people of *Israel*, who were assembled together, *Take the Prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape; and they took them, and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.* From these instances, I think it is plain, that the piety or religious zeal of *Elias*, (like that of *St. Paul*, before his conversion,) was of the *warm, angry kind*, which drew after it *death and destruction.* Now, if the warm, angry, *Jewish* zeal of *Elias*, opened the windows of heaven, and brought down destruction upon the two captains and their fifties, which seems,

seems, at least, to have been the case; then, why may not the same warm, *Jewish*, angry zeal, have also, in St. *James's* estimation, shut those windows in the case of the three years and an half's drought upon the land?

If it should be said, that *Elias's* prayer was not the *effect* of a pious, warm, angry zeal against the people of *Israel*, on account of their idolatry, but it was the produce of a *divine impulse*:

Answer, If that was the case, then the *example* St. *James* produced to illustrate the point he had then in view, was *foreign* to his purpose; because then, the great drought brought upon the land of *Israel*, was not the produce of the *Prophet's* prayer, but of a *divine determination*, antecedent to that prayer.

This infirmity and frailty of nature, which St. *James* saith, or at least supposeth *Elias* was *subject to*, and *influenced by*, viz. a pious, but warm, angry zeal, as aforesaid, was suitable to that *infirm* or *imperfect* dispensation of *Jew-daism*, *Elias* lived under, and which that dispensation seemed to *incourage*,—or at least to *indulge*; and therefore such a temper of mind was much more *excusable* in *Elias*, if it called for an excuse, than in us *Christians*. This fiery kind of piety seems to have influenced *Jebu*, king of *Israel*, when he said to *Jehonadab*, the son of *Rechab*, *Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord*; which zeal was shewn by his *slaying* all that were left of the house of *Abab*, and by his craftily gathering together
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all the *Prophets* and *People* and *Priests* of *Baal*, and causing them to be *slain* with the edge of the sword, 2 *Kings* x. 16---25. This *Jewish* zeal has likewise abundantly shewed itself in the church of *Rome*; and has too much prevailed in *all ages* of the *Christian church*, and in *all parts* of the *Christian world*, though it is a spirit *greatly different* from that of our *Master*, who declared for himself, that *he came not to destroy mens lives, but to save them*; whose affections and actions were governed by *this principle*; and whose *temper* and *behaviour*, it is our duty, as his *disciples*, to *imitate* and *copy after*.

But farther, though I think, St. *James's* epistle shews him to have been a very *worthy, good man*, so far as a man is to be judged of by his writings, and one who had a much *juster* and *truer sense* of that gospel which he was appointed to publish to the world, than his *late advocates* seem to have; yet notwithstanding, he may have been *too credulous*, with regard to *Elias's* prayer, which way soever he came by his information. For if the afflicting the people of *Israel*, in the manner referred to, had been *suitable* and *proper*, then, they would, no doubt, have been thus afflicted, whether the Prophet had prayed, or not; and if it had been *improper*, then, I think, I may venture to say, that the *importunity* of *ten Prophets*, or *righteous men*, would not have been sufficient to procure it; so that the *Prophet's prayer* had little to do in the affair. Besides, the history rather represents *Elias* as one
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appointed by God, to make known his will concerning the great drought that was to be brought upon the land, and the rain that was to follow upon it, than one, who by his *earnest prayer*, had obtained these; and therefore the question will still remain, whether *St. James's authority alone* affords a proper foundation for *credit*, with regard to the story of *Elias's* prayer, as aforesaid. To say, that *St. James* was *divinely inspired* when he wrote his epistle, and therefore the story must have been *well grounded*; this is *begging* the question, as it is *presuming* a point that is void of proof. But all this is *by the by*, and is what my argument does not require; though perhaps, it may minister a farther occasion to my opponent, to shew both his *learning* and *judgment*, with regard to it. This, I think, is a *full and compleat answer* to what has been urged against me, by *two* late writers on the subject.

But farther, I beg leave to observe, that in the book my opponents refer to, I shewed what was the *great end*, and the *professed design* of our Lord Jesus Christ's coming into the world, and of what he revealed to it, performed in it, and suffered from it, and for it, *viz.* to *save mens souls*. I likewise shewed, what were the *means* Christ made use of in order to obtain *that end*, or *how*, and in *what way*, he proposed to be a *Saviour* to *mankind*, *viz.* he applied himself to men as *free beings*, who have the direction of their own actions, and, as such, he laid before them certain *doctrinal propositions*,
taken

taken from the consideration of a *Deity*, which propositions are summed up in the *three* particulars mentioned above. And these propositions were recommended with *this view*, that a serious and well-grounded persuasion of those important truths, might be such a *spring* and *principle of action* in men, as might reform their vices, and rightly direct and govern their minds and lives, and thereby render them worthy of, prepare them for, and ensure to them, the favour of God, and their happiness in another world, and prevent them from falling into great and lasting misery, which otherwise they were in great danger of bringing upon themselves. I also shewed, that the means Christ made use of, were *excellently suited* to answer the purpose for which they were intended, *viz.* the saving of mankind; and that this was the *only possible way*, in which Christ could be a Saviour to them. I likewise shewed *how*, or *by what means*, the aforesaid end and purpose has, in a great measure, been *frustrated*. This is the subject matter, or import, of the book under consideration. And as these are points, in which the *present* and *future well-being of mankind* are greatly concerned; so, if I have erred herein, I think, it will be *kind* and *good* for any man to shew that to be the case. Truth is what *I value* and *pursue*, and error is what *I am not interested in*; and therefore I ought to esteem him a *friend*, who leads me to the former, and from the latter. And, whereas my opponents *have not* entered into the *merits*

of *this cause*, but only have attacked me in a *part*, in which, I suppose, they thought me to be *weak* and *unguarded*; for this I do not think my self greatly obliged to them; neither, I think, is the world. However, I suppose it was thought proper, that *something* should be said, that so my book might not pass without having something offered *against* it, which might be called an *answer* to it.

Besides, if I am guilty of that great *error* of *defect* I am charged with, then, I think, my opponents ought, in justice to the subject, and to mankind, to have *supplied* that *defect*, by giving a full, and a compleat account of the matter. They ought to have shewed what the gospel of Christ is, in its *full extent*, that so every one might know what they have to *rely upon*; and not to have left the case, according to their account of it, in the same *undetermined state*, in which they found it. To say that Christ did not *promulge* the *whole* of his gospel *himself*, but *part* of it, and that he left *part* of it to be *revealed* by the *Comforter*, whom he promised to send for that end, I think, is to say nothing to the purpose; because the case is under the *same perplexity* as before, except it can be shewn, *what it* was that the *Comforter* did *farther reveal* concerning this matter. And to say that *all* that is contained in the *books* of the *New Testament*, is *Christ's Gospel*, is too romantick; because then, *St. Paul's* account of his evil treatment; by *Alexander* the Copper-Smith, and his prayer, that God would reward

Alexander

Alexander according to his works, must be a *part* of that good news, which Christ was, in a particular and special manner, sent of God to acquaint the world with; but this, I think, is *too gross* to be admitted. I have summed up the gospel of Christ, or, what is strictly and properly called by that name, under *three heads* or *propositions*; and have shewed, that the offering these to publick consideration, was a *suitable* and *proper expedient*, to answer the end proposed, *viz.* the reforming, and saving of mankind; and that, when those propositions are *believed*, and *seriously regarded*, as they ought to be, they are *sufficient* to answer that purpose. And, for as much as what I have written on the subject, has not given general satisfaction, I therefore desire, and intreat, some or other of those, who *dislike* my performance, to *undertake the same work*, and to give a plainer, fuller, and truer account of the matter, than I have done; and, that they would do it so *compleatly*, as not to *leave room* for any farther complaint. Only, I beg leave to caution them, to take heed, that they do not point out to men, *any other way to God's favour*, and *life eternal*, than what *Christ, in his gospel*, has pointed out unto them; because, this may *mislead* men in an affair of the *last importance* to them.

To conclude, I observe, that, as my late book has given occasion to *some* persons to revile me; so some of *them* have paid little or no regard to truth, justice, or charity, there-

in; and yet, I doubt not, but they consider themselves as acting the part of *good Christians* in so doing; such is the misguided zeal of this *Christian age*, if it may be so called, in which we live. I say, if it may be so called, because, if it be not the *name* and *profession*, but the *temper* and *behaviour* of men, which is to denominate what they are; then, as the temper and behaviour of the bulk of those who profess Christianity, *at present* seems to be more of the *Jewish* than of the Christian kind, so the *present age* may rather and more properly be stiled *Jewish* than Christian. The *Jews* had so far cast off humanity, and the *obligations* of *nature*, as to refuse to deal with, or to have any thing to do with those who were of a *different religion* from themselves; and were disposed to *persecute* and use such people *ill*, when they had power and opportunity so to do. Thus they refused to *deal with* and to perform any *kind office* to the *Samaritans*, who worshipped God, at a *different place*, and, perhaps, in a *different manner*, from themselves. And, it was this their *religious*, tho' *misguided*, *zeal*, which was the *ground* of that *ill usage*, that our Saviour and his disciples met with from them. And this is the spirit of *this age*. Mens affections and regard are very much confined to their *religious party*, and their zeal and indignation too often are shewn against those who *differ* from them. And *this spirit*, not only *with-holds* men from performing those kind offices, of mutual assistance

sistance and protection, that the circumstances of things require and call for at their hands; but, it also *leads them* into great partialities in their conduct, and *groundlessly* to *think* and *speak* evil of each other. *This spirit* leads men to see plainly the *mote* that is in the *eye* of him, who is of a *different religious party* from themselves, whilst the *beam*, or *grossest wickedness* that takes place in one of their *own party*, is *unperceived*, or at least is *tenderly excus'd* by them. *This spirit* leads men to *wound* the reputation of their neighbours, to *break in* upon their peace and quiet, and by the aid of *civil power*, (when it can be obtained) to *injure them* in their fortunes, and their persons, and sometimes to *bereave them* either of liberty, or life; and that, for no other reason, but *differing* from them in their religious sentiments, or being of a *different religious party* from themselves. This I call *casting off humanity*, and the *obligations* of nature; because in truth, it is no less. Every individual of our species, is a part of the *one great society*, or commonwealth of mankind. And, as each one is, by nature, liable to the same *wants* and *dangers* with other men, and may be furnished out with abilities of one kind or other, for the *assistance* and *relief* of others; so this lays each individual under a natural obligation; or, in other words, it becomes reasonable, that each one should afford that *aid* and *protection* to others, that the circumstances of things require; and which he, in like circumstances,

might

might reasonably expect to receive from them; and nothing, but the *unsocial behaviour* of any individual, which renders him a common enemy to the common good, can *cancel* and make *void* that obligation. I say, there is nothing, but the *unsocial behaviour* of any individual, which can in reason, *bar* his *right* to the society's care and protection; because, it is by his *unsocial behaviour* only, that he *forfeits* that right. Whilst each individual, in civil society, acts properly in his *social capacity*, he answers the *ends* of civil association; and, consequently, has a *just title* to all the advantages and benefits that flow from it. And, for as much as uniformity, whether in sentiments or practices in matters of religion, is not the ground and foundation of mens obligation to assist and protect each other, (it being founded in nature, or, resulting from the natural frame and constitution of things) therefore dissent, or non-conformity, whether of sentiments or practices, in matters of religion, cannot possibly destroy it. So that, whether a man be a *Protestant*, or *Papist*, whether he be a *Mahometan*, *Jew*, or *Pagan*, whilst he behaves *properly*, in his *social capacity*, and, whilst he continues to be a *man*, my natural obligation to assist and protect him, must remain; and, were I to withhold my hand from doing so, when the circumstances of things require it, I should be *greatly criminal*; and, I should be more so, were I to lend my hand to *injure him*, either in his person, his character, or his fortune. This, I say, is
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the case, let a man's *religion* be what it will; and, the reason is most apparent, as I have already observed, *viz.* because, our obligation to love and do good to each other is founded in *nature*, and is not founded upon uniformity in matters of religion; and therefore, dissent or non-conformity, whether in sentiments or practices, cannot possibly *weaken*, much less *destroy*, that obligation.

If it should be said, allowing this to be the case, with respect to men of *all religions*, yet, nothing can be concluded from hence, in favour of men of *no religion*, that is, in favour of *atheists*, who, by being such, not only *forfeit* all right and title to the care and protection of society, but also ought to be *corrected* and *punished* by it; seeing they are under *no religious* restraint, but, are at full liberty, in that respect, to be as *hurtful* to society as they please; and, seeing, upon *their principles*, they have no *interest* in *another world* to pledge, or stake, by way of security to *society*, for their good behaviour in it.

Answer, as *civil society* is founded, only, on *civil consideration*; so, *religion* is *naturally*, and *necessarily*, excluded out of the case. And here, I think, I cannot better express myself, than I have done upon a like occasion; and, therefore, I shall transcribe what I have already said upon this point. “The *ground* and *reason* of
 “ *association*, to men, (by which I mean, *civil*
 “ *association*) is not their relation to, and de-
 “ *pendency* upon, God; but, only, their rela-
 “ *tion*

“ tion to, and dependency upon, each other.
 “ And the ultimate end and purpose, of affo-
 “ ciation, is, not to secure to each individual
 “ the *favour of God*, and the happiness of
 “ *another world*, but only, to procure to each
 “ individual, those comforts in life, which
 “ each, in a single capacity, are not qualified
 “ to procure to themselves; and, to guard and
 “ protect each individual from those evils,
 “ which each, in a single capacity, are not
 “ qualified to secure themselves from. Men
 “ do not associate, or constitute a publick in-
 “ terest, because each, in a single capacity,
 “ are not qualified to obtain *God's favour*, and
 “ the happiness of *another world*; or, that
 “ *society*, and, consequently, the *representa-*
 “ *tives* of it, should give, or secure, those ad-
 “ vantages to them: I say, these cannot, pos-
 “ sibly, be the ground and reason, the end and
 “ purpose, of association; because, with re-
 “ spect to them, association does not alter the
 “ case at all. The favour of *God*, and the
 “ happiness of *another world*, are what *soci-*
 “ *ety* can neither give, nor secure, nor take
 “ away from any individual; and, conse-
 “ quently, these are things, which society, as
 “ such, are not interested in, nor concerned
 “ with.” See some short Reflections on the
 grounds and extent of authority and liberty,
 with respect to civil government, pages 24, 25.
 or, my Collection of Tracts, pages 460, 461.

This being, I think, the *true* state of the
 case, from hence it will follow, that whilst
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the atheist *behaves properly*, in his *civil capacity*; that is, whilst he bears his share of the common burthen, and is no way injurious to the common good, he has an *apparent right*, and a *just title* to all the advantages and benefits, that flow from civil association; and, cannot *justly deserve* any correction or punishment from society. I have already observed, that civil association is founded, not on *religious*, but on *civil* considerations only; and, therefore, a man's being of *any* religion, or *no* religion, his *belief*, or *disbelief* of a *Deity*, or any other proposition, is not concerned with it, nor can it make any alteration in the case. And, the reason is most obvious, *viz.* because, the grounds upon which men enter into civil society, are not their being of *this*, or *that* religion; or, their being of *any*, or *no* religion; but, it is, their *mutual indigency* and *dependency*. And, because, the ends intended to be answered by civil association, are not to obtain *God's favour*, and the *happiness* of *another world*; but, only to procure to each individual those *comforts in life*, which each, in a single capacity, are not able to procure to themselves; and to guard against *those evils*, which each in a single capacity are not capable of securing themselves from; and, therefore, a man's being of *this*, or *that* religion; or, his being of *any*, or *no* religion; or, his *belief*, or *disbelief* of a *Deity*, or any other proposition, with which religion is concerned, cannot possibly *destroy* his relation to *society*, nor *forfeit* his interest in it. So that,

when a man *fully answers* the ends of civil association, which the atheist does, whilst he behaves *properly* in his *social capacity*, he must have a *just title* to the society's care and protection, and cannot possibly be the *proper object* of its resentment.

I have, also, farther observed, that the favour of God, and the happiness of another world, are things, which society can neither *give*, nor *secure*, nor *take away*; and, consequently, are things which civil society, as such, is not interested in, nor concerned with. And, as all the advantages and benefits, that flow from civil association, are merely *temporal*, and regard *this world only*: So, if a man stakes *all* his interest in *this world*, for their sake, which the atheist does; then, he stakes *all* that he *ought*, and gives *all* the *security* to society, for his good behaviour in it, that *reason* and *equity* require at his hand. I say, all that reason and equity require; because, in the present case, the security is *equal*, or an *equivalent*, to what it becomes a security for. The *benefits*, a man is capable of receiving from society, and the injuries he is capable of doing to it, are all *temporal*, and regard *this world only*; and, therefore, if a man stakes *all* his interest in *this world*, for their sake; then, what he *stakes*, is an *equivalent* for what he *receives* from society, and a *proper security* against the *injuries*, he is capable of doing to it; and, consequently, it is *all* that *reason* and *equity* require from him. Especially, if it be considered, that, when the
atheist

atheist stakes his *interest in this world*, he stakes his *all*; and, therefore, cannot be under any temptation, from the views of *another world*, to behave *improperly*, or be *injurious* to society, in *this*; which is too much, and too often, the case of some *theists* and *polytheists*.

As to a man's interest in *another world*, it is a *supernumerary* consideration; and, tho' it may have its use, yet it is what civil association does not require, nor call for, from him. And, as to the atheist's being under no *religious restraint*, and therefore, in that respect, he must be at *full liberty* to be as *hurtful* to society as he please, this is true; but, then, it is not to the purpose. For, tho' an atheist is at full liberty, with regard to any view he has to *another world*, to be as hurtful to society as he please; yet, he is not alike at liberty, with regard to his interest *in this*; nor, yet, with regard to his *reason*, nor his *social affections*, which are as *great restraints* from *social vices* upon * an atheist, as upon a theist, or polytheist; and, which afford as *strong excitements* to all *social virtues*, to the former, as to either of the latter. And, as his interest in *this world* is his *all*, or, at least it is, in his estimation: So, this must be a *proper reason* to an atheist to *behave properly* in society, as his *present happiness*, which is *his all*, depends upon it, and is bound up with the good and happiness of society. And, as to theists, and polytheists,

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* *Note*, By social vices, I mean those vices, that are injurious and hurtful to society.

they are likewise, notwithstanding their religious principles, at *full liberty* to be as *hurtful* to society as they please, as every day's experience, and all our courts of justice, sadly verify. But, then, this *liberty*, whether in atheists, theists, or polytheists, is not, *in itself*, until it is abused, *hurtful* to society; and therefore, *that liberty*, until it is *abused*, cannot *forfeit* either of their right to the society's protection; much less can it render either of them the *proper object* of the society's resentment. And, therefore, whatever *guilt* an *atheist* may contract, by his *being such*, with regard to his duty to God, supposing him guilty in that respect; yet, whilst he *behaves properly* in, and towards society, he is as much *related* to it, and has as *just a title* to its protection, as any *theist*, or *polytheist*. And, with respect to his sins *against God*, he is (or ought at least) to be left to the *judgment of God*, who has power sufficient, and who is determined to *revenge his own wrong*; according to *St. Paul's* account of this matter, *Rom. xii. 19. For it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.* Indeed, *St. Paul* is here speaking of those offences men may be guilty of with respect to each other, and not of those they might be guilty of with regard to God, as in the verse above-referred to. *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves; but rather give place unto wrath: For it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.* Thus again, *1 Thes. iv. 6. That no man go beyond and defraud his brother*

in any matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of all such. But then, the argument is stronger, with regard to those offences that are committed against God, than with regard to those offences men may commit one against another. For, if a Christian is not to revenge the wrong or dishonour done to *himself*, because vengeance is the Lord's, and he will repay it, which is St. Paul's argument; then, much less may he revenge the dishonour done to *God*, because vengeance is God's, and he will repay it. I am sensible, it may be answered, that the revenge St. Paul referred to, was *private* or *personal*, as it stands opposed to *public* or *civil* revenge; and not *human* revenge, as it stands opposed to *divine* revenge. To which it may be replied, that if this was the case, then St. Paul's argument would more properly have stood thus, Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for vengeance is the civil magistrate's, and he will repay it. But, let this be as it will, what I would observe, is, that they are *civil injuries* only, which are a *proper* and *just* ground for *civil* revenge. For, as civil society is founded only on *civil* considerations: So, they are those actions only which are *injurious* to the *common good*, that can lay a *just foundation* for *civil* resentment. And therefore, it must be the *hurtfulness* of an action to *civil society*, which properly renders that action cognizable by the *civil magistrate*, which subjects the agent to a *civil tribunal*, and which renders him the *proper* ob-

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ject of civil revenge. And, as to the *sinfulness* of actions, or their being justly displeasing to God, that renders those actions cognizable by God, brings them within the *divine inquisition*, subjects the agent to *another*, and *higher tribunal*, and renders him the *proper object*, not of *human*, but *divine revenge*; and, therefore, God has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world, and will render to every man according to the *virtuousness*, or the *sinfulness*, of his actions.

Besides, the *atheist* (which, perhaps, is not one * in a million) is not led by his *principles*, to be *injurious* to society, in any respect; whereas those *theists*, and *polytheists*, who are under the direction and influence of *false religion*, (and who, perhaps, taking in the bulk of mankind, are the greatest part of our species) are led, by their *religious principles*, and their *religious zeal*, to be many ways greatly *injurious* and *hurtful* to mankind; agreeably to what our Saviour said of those *Jews*, who were under the influence and direction of *false religion* in his time, *viz.* that they would *kill* his disciples, and think they did *God service* in so doing. This is a thing so notorious, in fact, as not to need any farther exemplification.

* *Note*, By *atheists*, are meant *speculative atheists*, or those who are so in principle, if there are any such, and not those who believe a Deity, and yet live as if there were none. These latter do not, properly speaking, come under the denomination of *atheists*, but, on the contrary, of *atheists*, or *polytheists*.

cation. And here I beg leave to remind my reader, that, tho' I am pleading the *just cause* of *atheists*, as I would, likewise, plead the *just cause* of *Roman Catholicks*, or *any sect* of *theists*, or *polytheists*, did the case require it; yet I am not pleading the *cause* of *atheism*; and, therefore, there can be no just ground to insult me on that account, though, perhaps, it is what I may meet with notwithstanding. But, to return,

This persecuting spirit, I have been treating of, is rather the spirit of *Judaism*, and is not the spirit of *Christianity*; and therefore, in whomsoever this spirit takes place, which is too prevalent in this age, such a person may be more properly stiled a *Jew*, than a *Christian*; agreeably to what St. Paul saith, *Rom. viii. 9. If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his; that is, he is not Christ's disciple.* And likewise, agreeably to this, our Lord puts the question, *Luke vi. 46. And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* which is the same, as to say, that if we *profess* to be Christ's disciples, but do not govern our *tempers* and *actions* by his *laws*, then such profession goes for *nothing*. Our being called *Christians*, and our *professing* our selves to be such, does not *make us so*; that depends upon our conforming our *minds* and *lives* to Christ's *will*, from which, *persecution* is at the *greatest distance*. Our Lord, in *John xvi. 1, 2, 3.* speaketh to his disciples in the following manner: *These things have I spoken unto you,*

you, that you should not be offended. They shall put you out off the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor Me. Here our Lord observes, what would be the effects of that fiery piety, or angry religious zeal, which then took place among the Jews, viz. they who were influenced by it, would not only exclude Christ's obedient servants from their religious assemblies, but would also take away their lives, and think they did God service in so doing. He likewise observed, what was the ground of this Jewish spirit of persecution, viz. their being destitute of that spirit of true goodness and benevolence, which take place in, and constitute, the moral character of both the Father and the Son. So that the spirit of persecution is not only contrary to the spirit of Christ and his religion, but it is also contrary to the spirit of God, who is his Father: These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor Me. But then, religious persecution appears with a much better grace in a Jew, than in a Christian; as it is more suitable to the Jewish, than to the Christian dispensation. For a Jew to persecute men, on account of religion, is not greatly to be wondered at, because persecution seems, at least, to be countenanced by his religion; and, because the settlement of his ancestors in Canaan; and the behaviour of many men of renown,
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among the *Jews*, seems to *encourage* it. But for a Christian to persecute, is to *fly* in the *face* of his *Sovereign*, and is the same, as to tell him, that he will not have him to *reign* over him: And, tho' he *likes* to be *called* after his, *viz.* *Christ's name*, as it is the fashion of the country in which he lives, and, to be called otherwise, would be disreputable; and though he likes to *profess* his *religion*, because of the pomp, and wealth, and power, which may be tacked to that profession, or on some other *worldly* consideration; yet, he very much *dislikes* the *thing*, and chuses rather to be governed by his *own lusts*, than by *Christ's laws*. This is the language of a *persecutor's* conduct, if I may so speak. For a Christian, therefore, to persecute, is very preposterous. However, it is a matter of no small consolation to me, that, as I do not lie at these mens mercy now, so I shall be perfectly secure from their ill-will *hereafter*, as I am to be judged by one, who is thoroughly acquainted with every one's case, who will weigh all things in an equal balance, and who will render to every one, according as his works shall be, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.

A
VINDICATION
OF THE
AUTHOR'S short Dissertation
ON
PROVIDENCE.

IN my Dissertation on Providence, I have shewed what I intended by a *general*, and what by a *particular* providence. In my definition of a general providence, I observed, that God, at the *creation*, put the natural world under the direction of certain laws; and that, *ever since*, he has caused it to be passively subject to those laws. By this my reader may see, that the *divine energy*, or those *immediate acts* of God's power, by which the system of nature is kept together, and continually upheld and preserved, is by me considered, as a part of God's *general providence*. However, if Mr. *Woolaston*, or any other person, has, or shall differently distinguish a general, and a particular providence, from what I have done, and shall make that a part of
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God's *particular* providence, which I have made a part of his *general* providence; let it be so, it makes nothing for, nor against me. Again,

In my Dissertation on Providence, I have not laid the foundation of my scheme of providence on the New Testament, as a nameless * writer represents me to have done; but only attempted to shew two things, *viz.* *First*, that those facts, that are considered as *eminent* and *apparent* instances of such a particular providence, as I oppose, do not shew, or prove, any such thing; with respect to which, my opponent has not attempted to shew, but only *presumes*, that they do, and then makes a fine flourish upon the *revolution*, *viz.* that it was a case, in which a *great* and good end was served by it, &c. As if no great and good end could be brought about, without the *particular* and *special interposition* of the Deity to effect it. Whereas this very event might have been, and was, brought about, in the course of God's *general providence*, for any thing this writer has, or can shew, or prove, to the contrary. Alas! there are many events take place, some of which are *great benefits*, others, *great evils*, to mankind, with respect to which, it is not apparent, that there was a particular and special interposition of the Deity to effect them. And here, I think, it may not be amiss for me, to take notice of another event; namely,

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* See a book, intituled, an Answer to Mr. Chubb's short Dissertation on Providence, &c.

the *burning* the town of *Blandford*, which was brought about in the *same way* with that of the revolution; in which, to appearance, at least, it was not a *great and good*, but a *very bad end*, that was served by it, *viz.* the bringing into *great distress*, the inhabitants of that town. For, when the fire broke out in that place, the great desolation that followed, was owing, as I have been informed, to the wind's *sudden and frequent* shifting and changing its quarter. Now, admitting this to be the case, I think, it will be very hard to suppose, that the inhabitants of the town of *Blandford* were *more vile and wicked*, and, as such, were *more the objects* of the divine resentment, than the inhabitants of the city of *London*, or any other place, and therefore were singled out to be *monuments* of *God's displeasure*: I say, it will be hard to suppose this; and, consequently, it will be hard to suppose, that the *particular and special interposition* of the Deity was concerned in bringing that great desolation upon them. What I would observe, is, that though by the *wind's sudden and frequent* shifting and changing its quarter, a *great deliverance* accrued to the *people of England*, in one instance, and *great distress* upon the *inhabitants* of the town of *Blandford*, in another; yet, nothing can be concluded from either of these cases, in favour of such a particular providence, as I oppose; because, we have no *just ground* to presume, that, in either of the forementioned instances, the event was brought about by a particular
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and special interposition of the Deity. But farther, I undertook to shew, *Secondly*, that such a particular providence, as I oppose, is not proved by any thing that our Lord Jesus Christ has said touching this matter. These are what I attempted to shew, and these appear, to me, to be the truth of the case, notwithstanding what has been offered against me on this subject; tho' these are points, that must be submitted to the judgment of our readers.

But, perhaps, were I to proceed no farther, my opponent might then think, he had just ground of complaint against me, *viz.* that I chose to avoid speaking to what he has urged, because I could not make a proper reply to it. And therefore, to bar all such complaints, I farther observe, that our Lord, in *Matt. vi. 28.* puts the question to his disciples, *And why take ye thought for raiment?* to which he adds, in that, and the following verses, *Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet, I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so cloath the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more cloath you, O ye of little faith?* Here, by those words, [much more] my opponent thinks, that our Saviour taught the doctrine of such a particular providence, as I oppose. For, if God, in the course of his general providence, cloaths the grass of the field, then by his *much more* cloathing Christ's faithful

ful servants, must be meant, his doing it by his particular providence; otherwise the terms [much more] answer no purpose to Christ's argument. This, I think, must be the argument of my opponent, because, otherwise, it makes nothing against me. Upon which, I observe, that in this, I think, my opponent was *too hasty and inattentive*, by his putting such a sense upon Christ's words, as is contradicted by universal experience and fact. For it does not appear, that any one of Christ's disciples, either in, or since his time, has been cloathed by a *particular providence*; that is, by a particular and special interposition of the Deity, but only by the general providence of God; or, at least, no such instance has come to my knowledge. And, if any such has come within the knowledge of my opponent, he is at full liberty to produce it. We have had no *miraculous cloathing*, that I have ever heard of; and as to any other way of cloathing mankind, it will answer no purpose to my opponent, because every other way comes properly under the denomination of God's *general* providence. And in this, I think, my opponent has not done *justice* to Christ, our common Master, nor *service* to his cause, but the contrary; because, the putting such a sense upon Christ's words, as is contradicted by universal experience and fact, (which is the present case;) as it is not the truth of the case; so it gives too much countenance to *unbelievers*, and is paving the way to *infidelity*.

But farther, I observe, that our Lord, in the chapter referred to, forbad his disciples to take any thought for the things of this life. Thus, *Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for the body, what ye shall put on.* Again, *Take no thought for the morrow;* and such like. Now, the question arising from hence, is, What our Lord intended by these prohibitions? Whether he intended to bar his disciples from taking *any kind* of thought for the things of this world? or, Whether he only intended to bar them from all *anxious* and *unnecessary* thought and concern for the things of this life? And, whether it be one, or the other of these, I think, we ought, in justice to our Master, to suppose, that the reasons he urges to back his prohibitions, were suitable and proper to ground those prohibitions upon. This, I say, ought to be supposed, because, otherwise, we consider our Lord as acting a childish part, by his assigning such a reason, as will not support what he makes it to be the ground or reason of.

If the former was the case, that is, if our Lord intended to bar his disciples from taking any kind or degree of thought, and care, for the things of this life, then, I readily grant, that by God's *much more* cloathing Christ's disciples than the grass of the field, must be meant, his doing it by a particular and special interposition of his power; because, God's doing it in the general course of his providence, would not be a *proper ground* for the aforesaid prohibition,

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when taken in the sense under consideration. For if Christians were to take no kind nor degree of thought, nor care, for food and raiment, then the consequence would be, that they would be destitute of both, except God supplied them with both, by a particular and special interposition of his power. But as *such* a prohibition would render man a *useless* part of the creation, and as Christians are not *supplied* with *food* and *raiment* in any such *particular* and *extraordinary way*, therefore, I think, we may fairly and justly conclude, that our Lord's prohibition is not to be understood in this sense. And if our Lord intended, in the forementioned prohibition, only to bar his disciples from all *anxious* and *unnecessary* thought and concern for the things of this world, then God's shewing a greater concern for the welfare of man, in the course of his general providence, than for the grass of the field, as he has provided the latter for the sake of, and as a means to, the former, this is a proper ground for such a prohibition, or it is a proper reason to a Christian, not to be *anxious*, as aforesaid; and therefore, I think, this was all that our Lord intended in those words, *Shall he not [much more] cloath you, O ye of little faith?* As to God's cloathing Christians by a particular and special interposition of his power, this does not appear to have taken place in fact; and such an interposition would not only be a bar to all anxiety, but it would also be a reason against taking any kind or degree of thought, or care, for the things
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of this world, which surely our Lord never intended; and therefore it cannot be the truth of the case. Again,

What prayer is, and what are the ends intended to be answered by it, I have already shewn, in a discourse on that subject *, to which I refer my reader; in which he will plainly see, that *all prayer* is not a *farce* and a *mockery* upon *my principles*, as my opponent imagines it to be. Tho', by the way, I think, all arguments drawn from *consequences* are justly excluded out of the case. For, if what I have advanced, is *erroneous*, let that be shewn, and the work is done, I am confuted; but, if what I have offered be the *truth*, then no consequences, whether imaginary or real, can possibly make it otherwise. But farther, I observe, that our Lord, in the prayer, commonly called the *Lord's-Prayer*, hath *taught*, or *required us*, to put up this petition, *viz.* that *God would give us day by day our daily bread*. And the questions are, What is it that we are taught, or required, to *ask* of God in this petition? And what is it we are to *expect* by way of answer to it? Whether we are to desire, and expect, that God would, by a *particular* and *special* interposition of his power, give us every day the food we are to feed upon, and supply every other want we may be exposed to? Or, whether we are to desire, and expect, or rather hope, that he will do it, in the course of

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* See my Collection of Tracts.

his *general* providence? Now, supposing the *latter* to be the case, and supposing, for argument sake, (tho' it is what I do not admit) that *all such kind* of prayers are a *farce*, and a *mockery*; yet, why should the *reproach* of it be cast upon *me*? seeing it is what *all Christians* are equally affected with. However, I think, the *end designed*, and which only *can be answered*, by *prayer in general*, is not to make any *alteration* or *change* in God, but only to influence and affect the *person praying*. And this, I think, will plainly appear to be the *truth* of the case, when I have examined the *Lord's prayer*, in its several articles, and have shewed, that it is in *this view only*, that it can be a *rational* and *proper* address to God. And, I the rather chuse the *Lord's prayer*, to exemplify the point in hand by, than any other prayer; because, our Lord himself has given us this prayer, and has intended it to be, either a form of prayer to be used by us, or else to be a guide and direction to Christians, and to Christian societies, with respect to the object, and the subject, of their prayers, &c.

The *first* article in this form or guide to prayer, is expressed in those words, *viz. Our father, which art in heaven*. In this article, we take upon us, to inform God of *two* things; *First*, that he is our Father: *Secondly*, that he is in heaven. With respect to the *first* of these, I think, it is not to be supposed, that our Lord intended, that we, in the use of these words, should *add* to the *divine knowledge* and the *divine good-*

goodness, by our *informing* God, that he stands to us in the relation of a *Father*, which relation, antecedent to our address, he was *ignorant* of; and, thereby, *engage him* to act a *fatherly* part by us, which, before our application to him, he was not disposed to do. This, I think, could not be our Lord's design in directing us to address Almighty God, as aforesaid; because, he knew full well, that the divine knowledge cannot possibly be increased by us, and that God is *in himself* disposed to do more abundantly for his dutiful children, than they can ask or think; consequently, such an address, that is, to address God with *this view*, would be *irrational* and *improper*. Now, if our telling God that he is *our Father*, cannot possibly *increase* the divine knowledge, nor the divine goodness, and consequently, cannot possibly *influence* or *change* the Deity, the questions will be, What signifies this address? Or, who is it that ought, or can be influenced and wrought upon by it? And, the answer to these questions is most apparent, *viz.* that it is the *petitioner only* who can, and who ought to be affected and influenced by the fore-mentioned address; as he, hereby, reminds himself of the *relation* he stands in to his *Maker*, and consequently he ought to be stirred up, from a sense of that relation, to *increase* in such a *temper* and *disposition* of mind, and such a *behaviour*, as is suitable to, and becoming an affectionate and dutiful *child of God*; and this is

the purpose, the fore-mentioned address is intended to serve, and is capable of serving. And, In this *first* article of the Lord's prayer, we not only tell God, that he is our Father; but also, that he is in *heaven*. By his being in heaven, I think, is intended, that he is not like *earthly* parents, who, in many respects, are upon a foot of *equality* with their children, but on the contrary, that he is, in *all respects*, greatly above them, greatly superior to them. And, with regard to this, I think, it is not to be supposed, that our Lord intended, that we, in the use of those words, should *stir up* and *prevail upon* God to make a *right use* of that power and superiority, we hereby acknowledge him to have over us, which, antecedent to this address, he was not disposed to do; this, I say, could not be our Lord's design, because he well knew that God is always disposed, from his *great goodness*, to make the *most proper use* of his power and superiority, and, therefore, must have been so disposed, *antecedent* to our address; consequently, such an address would be *irrational* and *improper*. Now, if our telling God, that he is greatly above us, greatly superior to us, cannot possibly *affect* or *influence* him, so as to stir him up to make any other use of his power and superiority, than he would have done, antecedent to this address; then, the questions will be, Who is? Or, who can be influenced and wrought upon by it? And the answer is plain and evident, that it is the *petitioner*, and *he only*; as it awakens in him

him a *just sense* of the power and superiority of God, and as it disposes, or ought to dispose him to be *affected*, and to *act* accordingly. Again,

The next article of the Lord's prayer is expressed in those words, *Hallowed be thy name*. By this, I think, is intended, that men should have *such a sense* of the Deity impressed upon their minds, as is *worthy of him*; that is, as is suitable to his natural and his moral perfections. With respect to this, I think, it must not be supposed, that our Lord intended, that we, in the use of those words, should *engage* the Deity to take *such measures* with his creatures, as might introduce into their minds a proper sense of himself, which measures, *antecedent* to this address, he was not disposed to take with them. This, I think, could not be our Lord's design, in directing us to pray as aforesaid; because, he was well satisfied, that Almighty God does not stand in need of the *importunity* of his creatures, to *engage* him to do, what was proper for him to do, antecedent to their application; consequently, such an address to God, that is, addressing him with this view, would be *irrational* and *improper*. Now, if our telling God, that we wish his name may be hallowed, cannot possibly affect him, so as to dispose him to do, what otherwise he would not have done; then, the questions will be, as before, *viz.* Who is? Or, who can? Or, who ought to be influenced and wrought upon, by this address? And the answer is plain, *viz.* that
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it is the *petitioner* and *he only*; as he hereby is, or ought to be *led by it* to possess his own mind, and also to endeavour to possess the minds of others, with a *just* and *worthy sense* both of the natural and the moral perfections of their Maker. Again,

The next article of the aforesaid prayer is expressed in those words, *viz. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.* This I consider as one and the same article in the Lord's prayer, because, *God's kingdom*, or *moral government*, amongst men, consists in his subjects *conforming* their minds and lives to his will. And here again, I think, it is not to be supposed, that our Lord intended, that we, in the use of those words, should *excite* and *stir up* the Deity to *do that*, towards the introduction or increase of his kingdom and moral government amongst men, which, *antecedent* to, and *independent* of this address, he would not have done, or have been disposed to do. This, I think, could not be our Lord's design, in his directing us to address Almighty God as aforesaid; because, he could not but be sensible, that God is *in himself* *always disposed* to do, whatever is proper towards the introduction, or increase of his kingdom, *antecedent* to, and *independent* of our application to him; consequently, such application, that is, an application to God with this view, would be *irrational* and *improper*. Now, if our acquainting God, that we desire the introduction or increase of his kingdom, or moral government, amongst men, cannot

cannot possibly *affect* him, so as to dispose him to do, what otherwise he would not have done, and which, I think, is most apparently the truth of the case; then, the questions will be, as above, *viz.* Who is? Or, who can? Or, who ought to be influenced and wrought upon by this address? And the answer, again, will be as above, *viz.* that it is the *petitioner*, and *he only*; as he is, or ought to be *led by it*, to use his endeavour, that God's will may be done on earth, both by *himself* and *others*, with that *sincerity* and *universality*, as it is done in heaven. Again,

The next article in the Lord's prayer, is expressed in those words, *Give us, this day, our daily bread.* With respect to this petition, I think, it is not to be supposed, that our Lord intended, that we, in the use of those words, should attempt to *engage* the Deity to employ the *ravens* in bringing us bread and flesh, *morn-*
ing and *evening*, as in the case of *Elijah*, or, that he should any other way, by a *particular* and *special* interposition of his power, supply *every want* we are exposed to. This, I think, could not be our Lord's design, in directing us to pray as aforesaid; because, he well knew, that Almighty God makes a *constant* and *ample provision* for his creatures, in the course of his *general providence*; consequently, such an address would be *irrational* and *improper*. Now, if our praying to God for our *daily bread*, does not *affect* or *influence* him, so as to engage him to make any other provision for us, than in the course of his *ge-*

neral providence, (with respect to which, it is plain, that, *in the general*, it does not;) then, the questions will be, as before, Who is? Or, who can? Or, who ought to be influenced and wrought upon by this address? And, the answer will be, as before, *viz.* that it is the *petitioner*, and *he only*; as he is, or ought to be *hereby* prevailed upon, to use his *own* endeavour, for the obtaining of those good things, which God, in the course of his *general* providence, has prepared for him. Again,

The next article in the prayer referred to, is expressed in those words, *viz.* *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.* With regard to this petition, I think, it is not to be supposed, that our Lord intended, that we, in the use of those words, should engage the Deity to exercise *such* mercy towards us, which, *antecedent* to this address, he would not have done, nor was disposed to do; nor, is it to be supposed, that our Lord intended, that we should *point out* to the Deity, what should be the *condition*, upon which he should shew *mercy* to us. This, I think, could not be our Lord's design, in directing us to pray as aforesaid; because, he knew full well, that the *condition*, upon which God would shew *mercy* to sinners, was a point settled, *antecedent* to our address, and could not be *altered* by it; and, that God would shew mercy to *those sinners*, and *those only*, who, by their repentance and reformation, (which includes the duty of shewing mercy to their fellow creatures) have
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rendered themselves the suitable and proper objects of it; consequently, such an address would be *irrational* and *improper*. Now, if our asking forgiveness of God, cannot possibly *affect* him, so as to dispose him to exercise *such* mercy towards us, than otherwise he would have done, then, the questions will return, *viz.* Who is? Or, who can? Or, who ought to be influenced and wrought upon by this address? And, the answer will return as above, *viz.* that it is the *petitioner*, and *he only*; as he is, or ought to be *excited by it*, to render himself the *proper object* of that mercy and forgiveness, which he desires to obtain at the hands of his Maker. Again,

The next article in the Lord's prayer is expressed in those words, *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* The word *evil* in this place, I think, is used to express *moral evil*; and, is the same, as if it had been said, Lead us not into temptation, but, rather, deliver us from the evil we may be tempted to. With regard to this petition, I think, it ought not to be supposed, that our Lord intended, that we, in the use of those words, should endeavour to *restrain* the Deity from designedly leading us, by his *particular* and *special* interposition, into any thing that might *tempt* or *draw us* into sin; or, that he would *particularly interpose* and *destroy our agency*, in order to prevent our being guilty of those sins we may be tempted to. This, I think, could not be our Lord's intention, in directing us to

addresses Almighty God as aforefaid; because, as on the one fide, he could not but know, that God cannot poffibly be *tempted to evil himfelf*, neither *tempteth he any man*: So, on the other fide, he could not but know, that when any perfon is tempted to evil, it muft be left to that perfon's *choice*, whether he will maintain his innocency, or not; confequently, fuch an address, that is, to address God with this view, would be *irrational* and *improper*. Now, if our petitioning God that he would not lead us into temptation, and that he would deliver us from evil, cannot poffibly *affect him*, fo as to *reftrain him* from leading us into fin; nor, can it be an *excitement* to him to *destroy our agency*, in order to prevent our being guilty of it; then, the questions will be, Who is? Or, who can? Or, who ought to be influenced and wrought upon by this address? And the answer is evident, *viz.* that it is the *petitioner*, and *he only*; as he is, or ought to be *led by it* to keep as much as poffible out of the way of temptation; and, when he is tempted to evil, then, to ufe his beft endeavour to maintain his innocence. Again,

The next and laft article of the Lord's prayer, is expreffed in thofe words, *viz.* *For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.* In this article, we take upon us to inform God, that he has a right of dominion over the intelligent and moral world, *thine is the kingdom*; that he has power fufficient to fupport his authority, by rewarding the

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the obedient, and punishing the transgressors of his law, *thine is the power*; and that, as all things ought now, so they will finally terminate in his glory, *thine is the glory for ever and ever*. With regard to this last article of the Lord's prayer, I think, it is not to be supposed, that our Lord intended that we, in the use of those words, should *increase* the *divine knowledge*, by acquainting God; that he has a right of dominion over the intelligent and moral world, that he is invested with power sufficient to support his authority, and that, as in the natural world, all things do, so, in the moral world, all things ought, and will, finally terminate in his glory. Nor is it to be supposed, that our Lord intended, that we, in the use of those words, should *increase* the *divine goodness*, by our prevailing upon God to make use of *such means*, for the introduction, or increase of his kingdom and moral government amongst men; which, *antecedent* to our address, he would not have done, nor was disposed to do. This, I think, could not have been our Lord's design, in directing us to address Almighty God, as aforesaid; because, he could not but know, that the *divine knowledge* could not possibly be *enlarged* by any information we could give the Deity; and that God was in himself disposed to do, whatever was proper for him to do, *antecedent* to our address, and that he *would do it*, whether we addressed him, or not; consequently, such an address must be *irrational* and *improper*. Now, if our

telling God, that his is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever, cannot possibly *inform*, nor *influence him*, by acquainting him with what he did not know, nor by leading him to do what, otherwise, he would not have done, *antecedent* to our address; then, the questions will return, as before, Who is? Or, Who can? Or, Who ought to be influenced and wrought upon by it? And the answer again is most apparent, *viz.* that it is the *petitioner*, and *he only*, as he is, or ought to be, *led by this address*, to become more and more a *dutiful* and *faithful* subject of God's kingdom, by living under a just sense of God's power, by conforming his mind and life to God's will, and, by endeavouring, that his own, and other mens actions, may, as far as he can contribute towards it, terminate in the glory of his Maker.

Thus I have examined the *Lord's prayer* in its several articles, and have shewed, that it is in *this view*, *viz.* when it is intended to *affect* and *influence*, not the Deity, but the *petitioner only*, that it can be a *rational* and *proper* address to God. And this, I think, is the case of *prayer in general*; it is intended to *affect* and *influence*, not the Deity, but the *petitioner only*. Whether there may be *particular instances*, and *extraordinary occasions*, in which the case may be otherways, I have not here taken upon me to determine; and, therefore, such instances and occasions I am not concerned with. And as to the following, or the like

like general exhortations, *Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;* these, I think, were intended to engage our *utmost care and diligence* in the discharge of our duty, and to *assure us*, that, when that is our case, we shall not fail of God's favour, our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; and not to assure us, that God will not fail to grant unto us whatsoever we shall desire and seek after.

Besides, if we refer to *experience and fact*, I think, it rather shews, that God is not generally influenced and wrought upon by prayer, than that he is. Thus, for example: Within these *two hundred years* last past, there have been, probably, *thousands*, yea, perhaps *millions*, of petitions put up to God for the *destruction and downfall of Antichrist*. And, with regard to the petitioners, I think, it may fairly be presumed, that great numbers of them have been *righteous men*, who have been *fervent*, both in their private and publick prayers to God with respect to it. Whether by *Antichrist* be meant the *Pope and Hierarchy* of the church of *Rome*, or any other *great opposition* made to the kingdom and government of Christ, such opposition to Christ's kingdom is a matter of *great concern*, as the present and future well-being of mankind is apparently *interested therein*, and, as such, the *fall* of it is *greatly desirable*, and a *proper subject* of prayer to Christians; and notwithstanding *this*, and notwithstanding *all the importunity* that has been

been used; with regard to it, Antichrist *still remains*; that is, there is *still* a great opposition made to the kingdom and government of Christ. Now, if the *repeated fervent prayers* of a *multitude* of Christians, (many of whom, it is to be hoped, have been *righteous and faithful*;) for the obtaining that which is confessedly of *great concern* to the Christian world, have not been sufficient to *influence* the Deity, so as to prevail upon him *to do*, what otherwise he would not do, as is evident they have not, in the instance before us; then, the question will be, *viz.* How can it be expected, that the *importunity* of an *individual*, for the obtaining of that which is of *much less concern*, should so *affect* and *influence* God, as to prevail upon him *to do*, what otherwise he would not have done, *antecedent* to such address? And the answer, I think, is very apparent; *viz.* that *such expectation* must be *groundless*. I do not offer this to draw men off from prayer, nor to encourage carelessness and indifferency in the use of it; but, on the contrary, to draw men off from a *groundless* reliance upon it, as that which is *greatly efficacious*, and has a *prevailing influence* upon God; whereas prayer, in general, is intended to *affect* and *influence* the *petitioner only*. I also intend by it, to engage men *so to pray*, as that the *true ends* of prayer may be answered upon them, by *leading them*, in the use of it, to have a *just and worthy sense* of the Deity impressed upon their minds, and *diligently to labour themselves* after what

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they petition for, of their Maker. As to God, he is disposed, and therefore will do what is proper for him to do, whether we address him for it, or not; or, at least, this will generally be the case.

To this I may add, that the *great use* of all *religious worship* must needs be, not to affect and influence *God*, but the *worshipper*. God is what he is, *antecedent* to, and *independent* of, all our addresses, all our professions, all our acknowledgments of him, all our applications to him, and all our bowings down before him; and, what he is, he always will be, notwithstanding all these. We may, indeed, by our addresses to God, affect and influence *ourselves*, by disposing ourselves, thereby, more and more to a conformity of mind and life, to the divine pattern, and the divine will; but we cannot possibly, by our addresses to God, so affect and influence him, as to dispose him to do, what was proper for him to do, antecedent to our address; because, he is always disposed so to do, from a higher and better motive, than being called upon to do it. And, to suppose, that God will, at any time, act *improperly*, by way of return to his creatures, for their having complimented him with their petitions, is too gross and absurd to be admitted. God cannot be *bettered*, nor *profited*, by any thing that he may require from us, nor from any act of worship, nor any other thing that may be performed by us to him; and, therefore, the *true* and *only ground* of all such requirements,

requirements, must needs be, that they may be *beneficial to us*. And, were God to dispense his favours, *merely* because they are *petitioned for*; then, tho' mere petitioning would not be a *proper ground or reason* to God to bestow his favours; yet, notwithstanding, he would dispense them promiscuously, to all that asked, whether the petitioners were *worthy* of what they prayed for, or not. And, though we are exhorted to *pray always, to pray without ceasing, to continue instant in prayer*, and the like; yet, surely, the meaning of all this cannot possibly be, that God is capable of being *teazed* into a *compliance* with our desires, and, therefore, we are to be *continually* calling upon him; but the meaning is, that, in the frequent use of such *pious* meditations and reflections, we are capable, hereby, not only of *preserving our selves* in that good state in which we are, but, also, of *being carried on* to a nearer and stricter conformity of mind and life, to the divine mind, and the divine will; and, therefore, we should be *frequent* in such exercises. And if this be not our case; then, as all our piety and devotion answers no purpose, with regard to God, so neither does it turn to any account with respect to ourselves, except we make some advantage thereby upon the weakness of our neighbours, as the *Scribes and Pharisees* did heretofore. Alas! to what purpose will it be for us to tell Almighty God that he is *good*, if we are not led by it to *imitate* his goodness? If, indeed, our piety serves

serves only to prevent our falling back, or growing worse; then, it may be said to be instrumentally a *negative good* to us; but, surely, it was intended to serve a higher purpose, *viz.* to make us *Godlike*, by leading us to *imitate* the Deity in all his *moral* perfections; and this we should endeavour to make all our piety and devotion subservient to.

This, I think, is a full answer to what has been urged against me, on this subject.

By what I have observed above, my readers may also see, that I am not under a *necessity* of declaring my self a *Deist*, as some persons have weakly and vainly imagined me to be. Besides, if the not being able to *get clear* of some *texts of scripture*, when taken in their *literal*, and in their *plain* and *most obvious sense*, be sufficient to *convict* a person of *Deism*, then, I am afraid, we shall have *Deists out of number*; or, at least, we shall have a *multitude* of such in each other's estimation. And as others are allowed the liberty of quoting texts for this purpose; so, I hope, I may, without offence, take the same liberty of quoting texts in my turn. *John xv. 7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Chap. xvi. 23. In that day ye shall ask me nothing; verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, in my name, he will give it you.* In these texts, when taken in their *literal*, and in their *plain* and *most obvious sense*, there is an *absolute* and *unlimited promise* made

to every true and faithful disciple of Christ, that *whatsoever* he shall ask of God, in Christ's name, *he shall receive it*; if he is *sick*, and asketh for *health*, he shall receive it; if he is a *cripple*, and asketh for the *restoration of his limbs*, he shall receive it; if he is in *prison*, and asketh for *liberty*, he shall receive it; if he is *poor*, and asketh for *riches*, he shall receive them; and so on. Now, supposing a person cannot *get clear* of those *texts*, that is, cannot *reconcile them* to his *principles*, when taken in their literal, and in their plain and most obvious sense; yet, surely, it will be very hard, and, I think, greatly unjust, to suppose, that he is hereby *clearly convicted* of *Deism*; because, in the sense before-mentioned, those texts are scarcely reconcilable to any principles, seeing what is promised in them, does not appear to take place in fact. If it should be said, that there is a *sense* of those texts, (tho' we may not be able to discover what that sense is,) in which the *promise* of Christ is *made good*; and, that to *believe* this to be the case, is sufficient to *clear* a person from the charge of *Deism*: I answer, allow me the like liberty, and, I doubt not, but I shall be able to keep clear of the charge of *Deism* also; though, by the way, this groundless charge I am not much solicitous about.

I will only add, that as in these papers, I address myself to persons who call themselves *Christians*, that is, to persons who profess themselves to be the *disciples* and *followers* of *Christ*;

so, I intreat them to do *justice* to that profession, by living *suitable* to it, and by paying a proper regard to the *will* and *commandments* of him, whom they profess to have chosen for their Master: Which Master hath given it them in charge, that they *love* one another; that they *do good* and *lend*, hoping for nothing again; that, as he was neighbour to the man that had fallen among thieves, who *shewed mercy*, by relieving the distressed, tho' of a different religious party from himself, so they, (*viz.* Christ's disciples) should go and *do likewise*; that their communication should be, *yea, yea*, and *nay, nay*, because whatsoever is more than these, is the produce of some vitiated affection; that they *judge not*, lest they be in like manner judged; because, with what judgment they judge, they are to be judged, and with what measure they mete, it will be measured to them again; that they *forgive*, as they hope to be forgiven; that they be not quick in *spying* the *less faults* of their neighbour, but be much more careful in *reforming* the *much greater* of their own; that they should not affect *ostentation* or the *praise* of men; that they should not be *anxiously careful* after the things of this life, but desire and pursue what is *most valuable*; that they should mortify in themselves, the affection of *self-love*, when, and so far as it is *vitiated*; and that they should do to others, as they would reasonably desire and expect that others would do to them, in like circumstances. These, and many other excel-

lent precepts Christ hath given us, which, if we would *adorn* our profession, and would answer our character as *Christians*, we must make them rules of action to ourselves, and govern our minds and lives by them. It has been but too common among Christians, for the most zealous to cry, the Church, the Church; like those heretofore, who cried, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord. But alas! It is not our calling Christ Lord, Lord; nor, our bowing our bodies or knees at the mention of his name, which will constitute us his *true disciples*; but it is our following his example, and governing our minds and lives by his laws. If the *Rechabites* drank no wine, nor built houses, nor sowed seed, nor planted vineyards, but dwelt in tents all their days, in obedience to the commandment of *Jonadab*, the son of *Rechab*, their father, *Jeremiah xxxv. 6---10.* then how much more should *Christians* pay a strict regard to the will and commandments of *Christ*, whom they publicly acknowledge, and profess to believe that he was *anointed of God* to be their *Prince* and *Saviour*? But, if those who take upon them to be called after *Christ's name*, pay little or no regard to the commandments of their acknowledged *Master*, but live in a constant violation of the most weighty of his laws; then, notwithstanding all their loud professions, their outward reverence, and their bitter zeal shewed for his name; I say, notwithstanding all these, they may justly expect to have a more dread-

ful sentence pronounced upon them, by Christ himself, at the last day, than the Prophet *Jeremiah* pronounced upon the disobedient *Israelites*. Ver. 16, 17. *Because the sons of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, have performed the commandments of their father, which he commanded them, but this people have not hearkened unto me; therefore, Thus saith the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard, and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.* Matt. vii. 22, 23. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

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