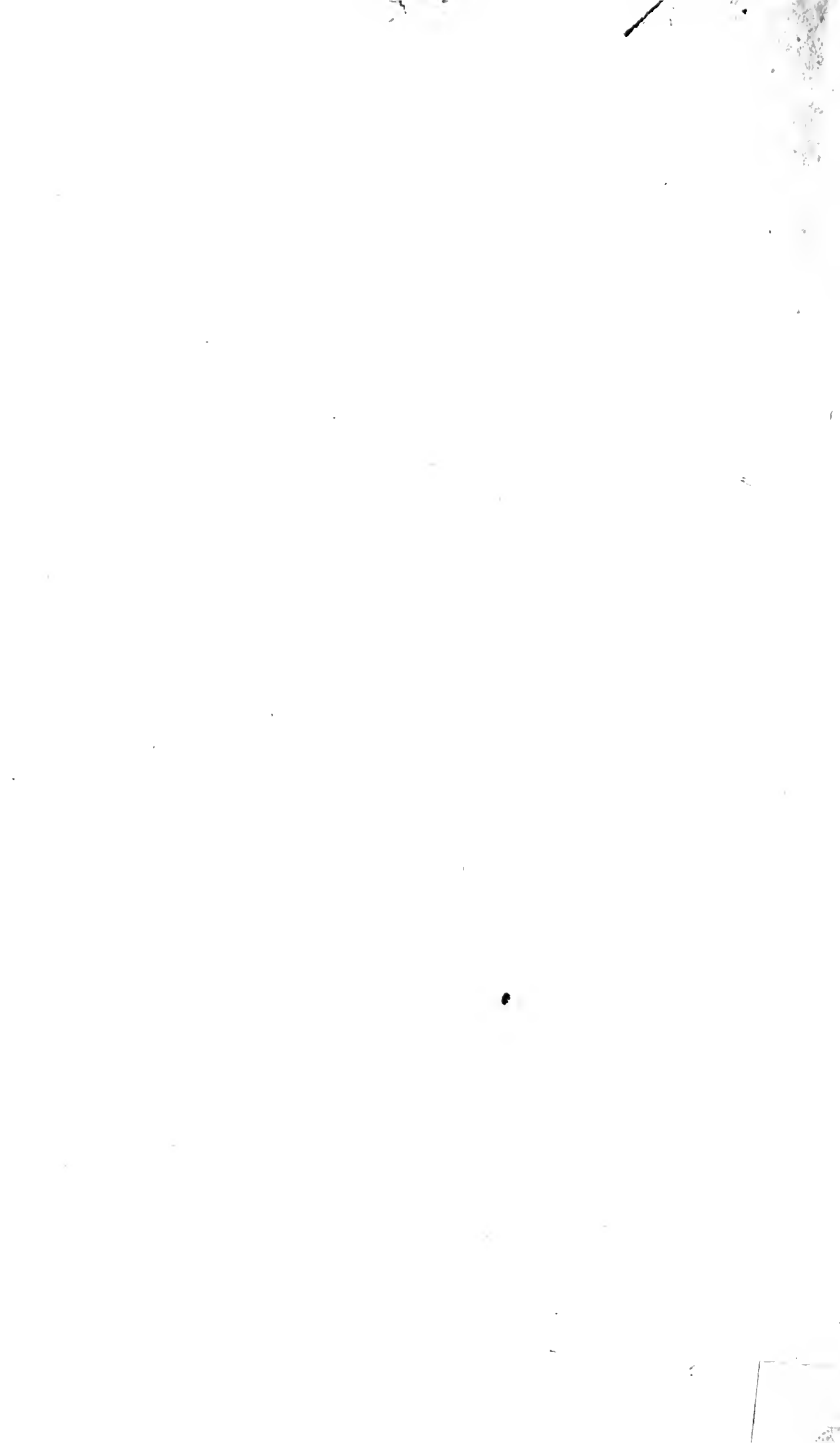
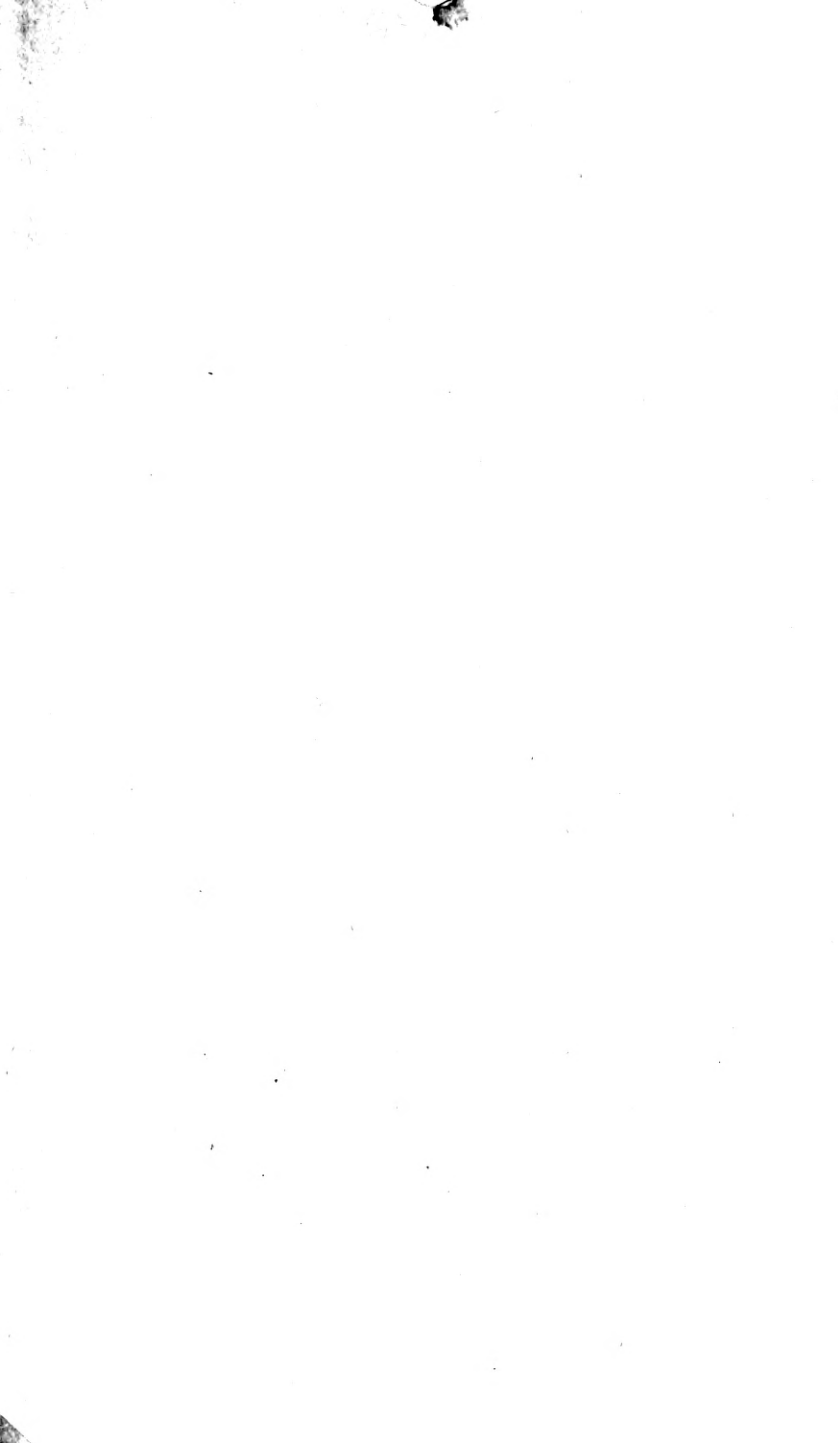


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# DISCOURSES,

Controversial *and* Practical,

ON

# VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

Proper for the CONSIDERATION of the

P R E S E N T T I M E S.

*Philosophical*  

---

*and*  
IN TWO VOLUMES.

*By the* AUTHOR of DEISM REVEALED.



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L O N D O N :

Printed for A. MILLAR, in the Strand; and J. and J. RIVINGTON,  
in St. Paul's Church-yard.

M. DCC. LIV.

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CONTROVERSIAL  
DISCOURSES;  
CHIEFLY ON THE  
EVIDENCES,  
AND THE  
FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES,  
OF  
*CHRISTIANITY.*

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V O L. I.

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*He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned. MARK xvi. 16.*

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T H E  
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A D D R E S S E D T O

The Right Reverend, and Reverend,

T H E

C L E R G Y

O F T H E

C H U R C H of *ENGLAND*.

*Right Reverend, and Reverend Gentlemen,*

**S**UCH, ever since the Reformation, hath been the candour of the Church, wherein you at present worthily preside; and such her wisdom in some instances, and piety in others; that her doors have never been unreasonably shut against any man, nor her Christian charity and indulgence denied to those whom their prejudices have forbidden to enter. It is no wonder therefore, if, actuated by dispositions so ingenuous, and a spirit so truly Christian, she hath always perused, approved, and applauded, all well-executed performances, howsoever foreign to herself their authors may have been, in birth, education, communion, and even principles.

Emboldened by these reflections, the writer of the following Discourses, who, being of your own communion, labours to defend those principles you deem fundamental; in this light, thinks himself secure of your acceptance and patronage; provided the many defects, too easily discoverable in his performances by judges so very discerning, do not forbid your approbation; provided also it shall appear, notwithstanding all the tracts and discourses hitherto published on the same subjects, that the Times call for new endeavours of this kind.

As to the defects of these performances, thus addressed to you, it is feared, they will be found too numerous, and too considerable, to countenance the boldness of the author in this application. He is, nevertheless, on a review of what he hath written, encouraged to apply; because the objections to which his work may be liable, are, he hopes, sufficiently balanced, not only by the goodness of his intention, but also by the perspicuity and conciseness, wherewith he hath endeavoured to draw together, as in so many focal points, the lights necessary for the illustration and proof of each controverted Fundamental, which are either too much dissipated, or too much obscured, by the terms of art, and prolixer reasonings, of abler, but more voluminous controvertists. He hath likewise introduced, throughout these Discourses, a variety of new arguments, which, he hopes, may merit your attention, whatsoever they may do as to your approbation. And further, as it was his chief aim finally to decide, if possible, the debates under each important topic, to the satisfaction of every truly candid enquirer; he hath, first, endeavoured to prove the Scriptures to be the real word of God; secondly,

secondly, to shew how, as such, they ought to be read and understood; and lastly, to clear up the several disputed points, by pure unsophisticated passages of Scripture, not darkened or perverted by the arbitrary and artful expositions of men; but taken in their first obvious and naked sense, presuming that God knew how to write intelligibly to a plain well-meaning understanding.

But still it may be said, and it is owned, with no small shew of reason, that controversy, of all things, hath proved most prejudicial to religion; that nothing new can be urged on the essentials of Christianity; that the world is really overstocked with sermons and religious tracts of all kinds, more especially on every disputed topic; and that, so far as such performances are capable of doing good, those in being may suffice, inasmuch as all that genius and judgment could contribute to give them variety, perfection, and force, is exhausted in those already published.

It is true, that controversies, in some respects, have greatly hurt religion; but it is as true, that, in others, they have done it infinite service.

If the corruptors of our faith, and the opposers of truth, have somewhat darkened the one, and staggered the other, in such minds as had a previous tendency to error or infidelity, the loss, in regard to these men, is the less to be regretted; because their faith (scarcely deserving the name) must have been of little use to themselves, had they retained it, since it was capable of being shaken by arguments levelled directly against the clearest dictates of divine revelation. An understanding, prepared to yield on an attack of this kind, would have yielded to its own unassisted perversity. But,

on the other hand, hath not the faith of the ingenuous been greatly strengthened by the noble apologies for Christianity, and its essential doctrines, wherewith the truth hath, in all ages of the church, been supported? Is it not an unspeakable satisfaction to see, that the Creed of a Christian, after a thorough scrutiny, can stand the test, not only of impartial reason, but of every other attack, howsoever artfully or cruelly carried on against its adherents? If the teachers of error have, by divine permission, done some hurt; surely the *sowers* of sacred truth have, by divine appointment, done infinitely more good, in defending that *which was sown* from being *caught away out of our hearts by those fowls of the air*, which *the prince of the air* hath always employed in that mystery of iniquity.

It is a gross mistake to suppose, that nothing new may be said on the fundamental articles of our faith. They are really inexhaustible, and the Scriptures, wherein they are revealed, is a bottomless abyss of wisdom. The following Discourses may, perhaps, satisfy the learned reader, in a variety of instances, that both assertions are true, without leading him from the plain path of common sense. But, be this as it will, it is humbly presumed, no wise or faithful Christian will censure him, who endeavours to give a new and satisfactory answer to every new attack; and, as often as the old objections are revived, searches the armoury of the church for those weapons, wherewith the like assailants have been foiled in former times. To rub the rust of antiquity, and of the schools, from these; to give them a new edge; and to wield and point them with skill against the present adversaries of our faith; is a  
work

work of no small service and merit. To be attacked, and not defended, is the same as to be defeated. The adversary does, and will, attack: it follows therefore, that we must either defend, or submit, and give a triumph to men who will not fail to vaunt it, to the great emolument of a scheme and cause we still think pernicious.

No one thing gives the declared enemies of Christianity so great an advantage against it, as our scandalous divisions on the essential articles of faith. Now, though these divisions are by no means owing to the obscurity of revelation, but to the manifest obliquity, both of understanding and heart, in those pretended Christians, who, through pride, prejudice, and other vices, are not to be concluded by Scripture; yet, as long as these continue, the enemies of our religion will always charge them to the account of revelation; to that of reason, which they conceitedly adore, as all-sufficient, they never will. They will be as far from charging our disputes in points too important to be obscurely revealed, on any irregularity of the human heart, wherein, blinded by a manifest sympathy with the intestine perverters of Christianity, they will see no corruption, no undue influence over the judgment of a Deistical Christian.

To believe, as the Deists do, that our fundamental differences are owing to the obscurity of revelation, is to give up the cause of Christianity; for we cannot believe this, and yet believe, that the Scriptures are the word of God, without a blasphemous denial of both his wisdom and goodness. That the contentions therefore of Christians, in regard to the very essentials of the religion they profess, may be no longer turned into an infamous

reflection on that religion, it is necessary our sentiments on the fundamentals should be a little more conformable; in short, that we should have but one creed, and that this creed should be as antient as the Church of Christ; because the conformity of any one age with itself is not more requisite to this purpose, than the conformity of all ages with one another. He, whose labours are aimed at this end, serves the cause of Christianity as effectually, as he who endeavours to defend it against a general attack; first, because intestine dissensions are worse than foreign wars; and secondly, because it is in vain to apologize for Christianity, till we shew what Christianity is, and have made it evident, that we have a common Christianity. If the new *Jerusalem* continues as much embroiled within itself, as the old, it is easy to foresee the success of its besiegers. The candid part of mankind now plainly perceive, the Deists can no longer, either maintain their own principles, nor any otherwise materially wound Christianity, than through the dissensions of its adherents. The Scriptures, they say, and we own it, command us to *stand fast in the faith*, and tell us, *the faith is one*; but this, they further urge, cannot be the command of God, since the same Scriptures, from which we extract our various systems of faith, are found, in fact, and by experience, to be either too dark, or too undeterminate, to give mankind any one system. Hence they insist, that *the unity of faith*, spoken of in Scripture, is unattainable; and consequently, the command, that all should *stand fast* in one faith, impracticable and unreasonable. To prove that the Scripture is sufficiently decisive on the great articles of the religion it reveals, and therefore that the command is reason-

reason-



reasonable, and worthy of God, is the chief purport of the following Discourses. How far the author hath succeeded in his attempt, you, Gentlemen, will be best able to judge. If by his poor endeavours it shall appear, to the satisfaction of a reader content to follow him through a work so short and summary, that the Scriptures are sufficiently clear and determinate on the great points of faith, though controverted among the professors of Christianity; the world will then know where to look for the source of its own disputes; and will be forced to find it in the violence of its own passions, which it will not subdue; in the blindness of its own prejudices, which it will not suspect; and in the imbecillity of its own reason, which, though men may idolize to the full extent of their vanity, hath suffered them to differ as widely in all other branches of knowledge, wherewith interest or inclination hath had any opportunity of interfering. As to the command enforcing unanimity in the faith, the disobedience, in that respect, of persons professing Christianity, ought no more to derogate from the reasonableness of the injunction, than their disobedience to the decalogue is allowed to do from the goodness and utility of its precepts. Indeed experience hath made it but too manifest, that the different degrees of latitude, taken by the professors of our religion, either in thinking or acting, proceed from the different degrees of indulgence, wherewith they treat their constitutional tempers, their own natural inclinations and aversions; and that they call that freedom of thinking, whatsoever it is, which licenses their liberty of acting as they please. If variety of interpretations, more or less remote from the simple interpretation of the

words, are put on the doctrinal part of revelation; variety of interpretations, more or less deviating from the strictness of the expressions, are also put on its moral precepts. But whereas there is no receiving the doctrines of Christianity in their genuine purity, without, at the same time, receiving its injunctions in their utmost severity; a latitude of interpretation must therefore be found out, which may bend the former to our own reason, and the latter to our own inclination; and then, but not till then, we are our own teachers and lawgivers, our own masters and governors.

Whether the world, according to the fastidious maxim of some men, is really overstocked with sermons, &c. or not, the Clergy, nevertheless, go on, making new ones every day, and preaching them, on a supposition, it seems, that they are not absolutely unnecessary. If the neglect of them only is considered, all that are already in being may be burnt, without a very sensible loss, at least to the objectors, who would disrelish even a Novel, were it intitled a Sermon. But if the expediency of such compositions, as means of instruction and reformation, is to be estimated by the ignorance, the errors, and vices, of mankind, it may be modestly enough presumed, we are not, to this day, sufficiently furnished. Are the Clergy, because one part only in four of the seed falls on good ground, and the other three on bad, to sow no more? or, in case the methods, whereby conviction and persuasion were effected in one age, do not succeed in another, of a quite different turn and genius, are our teachers to shut up their mouths, and lay aside their pens, rather than attempt the great work they

are entrusted with, in a method more suitable to the present times? *Epictetus* tells us, every thing hath two handles; one, whereby it may be easily seized and managed; and another, of which the contrary is true. The same may be said of every man; nay, of every age of men. Two centuries ago, there was no convincing any man, although on points that now seem too obvious to need a demonstration, but by mode and figure; whereas, at present, an argument in that form would be taken for a spell by some, and for a nonsensical piece of affectation by others. We, who are old, can remember the time, when it was customary with the Clergy successfully to *persuade men by the terrors of the Lord*; but the ears of this age are too delicate, or our consciences too raw, to endure with patience an application so caustic; and therefore we say to our teachers, as the *Israelites* did to *Isaiab* and the other prophets, *Prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things; prophecy deceits*. But what saith God to that prophet, in reference to this very people? *Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins*. How exactly parallel is our case to that of the *Israelites*! We call for smooth things, and deceits, as they did: But where is the trumpet loud enough to rouse us, unless that which shall raise the dead? For some time past, not only the controversy about morality, but the disputes also between Christian and Deist, and between the Orthodox and *Arians*, have been shamefully abandoned to the futilities of a feebler philosophy, than even the false wisdom exploded by Christianity of old. The dictates of God himself have been preposterously submitted to the weak

reason-

reasonings, and even to the vicious prejudices, of men, pretending to believe the Scriptures, although they suffer the contents of the sacred volumes to interfere, at best, but as seconds to their own opinions. In the mean time, every one, having dressed out religion in a garb of his own fancying, hath given his opposites an occasion to tear it in pieces, while they pretended to tear away the disguise only. Out of this confusion have arisen, first, doubts and diffidence; from thence infidelity, and a contempt of all things sacred; and from thence again, such an universal scene of pollution and wickedness, as shocks the eyes of one, who is but moderately criminal, to survey: for what is to be seen in it, but kingdoms given up to faction and ambition; estates, to gaining and sharpening; oaths, to bribery and corruption; and the consciences and persons of both sexes, to prostitutions too flagitious to be named? *Shall not God visit for these things?* or, till he does, shall not his ministers cry aloud against them, as well in the principle as the practice, if, speaking in a lower voice, they have not been heard? Shall they not *set their faces like a flint*, and whet their words to daggers, when an age like this is to be reprov'd? Will splitting of hairs, or going half the way, with heretics, a method too long tried, resetttle us all in the truth? Or will feebly moralizing on the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice, in pursuit of the present affected practice, reform a generation so hardened in wickedness?

No, Gentlemen; such expedients, you are sensible, can never answer the ends propos'd. Success is not to be hop'd for on all occasions, from the pursuit of any one method. If there is any good

to be done by preaching, although the principles are not to be changed, yet surely the manner must be diversified, according as the genius and disposition of mankind vary. The errors and vices of one age differ so widely, either in substance or circumstance, from those of another, that to reason always on the same points, and from the same topics; or to attempt persuasion, on all occasions, in the same strain; is to talk wide of those we address to; is to speak to them in a language they either do not understand, or feel. Is there a possibility, I mean with any prospect of success, of accommodating the same species of admonition to those who tremble, and to those who presume? Or, is a debate, especially on a religious subject, to be managed in the same manner with a modest and candid enquirer after truth, and with a still impudent, though detected, sophister? We should, I humbly conceive, neither presumptuously dictate to the former, nor meanly waste our arguments on the latter. The first merits all our affection, be his present opinions never so detestable in our eyes. But it is our duty to drag out the last from the coverture of his impious arts, and to scourge him with scorpions in the sight of his deluded admirers, that, if they did not choose him for a guide, because they previously knew him to be a deceiver, they may learn to abhor and fly from him, as they would do from a person infected with the plague.

As to men of but moderate talents for controversy, who, although unhappily entangled in the new opinions, do nevertheless still retain an honest regard for the truth, ought they not to hear and read, as well on the one side as the other? Since their modesty makes them the disciples of others, it ought,  
one

one should think, to convince them, they may possibly have made a wrong choice of teachers. Such men as, for want of sufficient literature, are unable to go through with a work so very difficult, even to the learned, and therefore must, in some measure, depend on others, ought undoubtedly to listen with the one ear, as well as with the other, and to *try all things*, that they may, in the end, *hold fast that which is good*.

They may easily judge, whom they ought to follow, by the fruits of their instructions. Is not virtue banished, where-ever piety hath been extinguished? And what remains of piety are to be found, where the new opinions have taken place? It is evident to every common observer, that respect for the holy Scriptures, for the Sacraments, for the Sabbath, and for the Sanctions of Religion, hath retired from the minds of mankind, in proportion as the novel doctrines have advanced; and that dissolution of manners hath followed the dissipated faith, and licentious principles, of our new apostles. Their disciples need be referred no farther, than to their own breasts, for an experimental proof of this. Why then will men, still retaining some tincture of a good meaning, give up their minds to leaders so long accustomed to treat their own understandings with pernicious novelties, that it is manifestly become unsafe to be within the noxious air of their conversation, which infects, as fast as it is breathed? *Avicenna* makes mention of a girl, who, having been fed, from her infancy, on certain species of nutritive poison, came at length to have a constitution incapable of bearing any other kind of food, extremely distempered in itself, and contagious to all who approached her. He does not tell us, however,

ever, that she, like the intellectual plagues above-mentioned, was fond of a croud, or shewed any industry to infect others. In this particular, our new teachers rather resemble the *Talus* of *Eustathius*, a man made wholly of brass, who had a trick of going into the fire, and staying there till he was as hot as that could make him, and then rushing out to embrace those whom he would destroy.

Beside the dangerous tendency of their principles, these venders of new opinions shew themselves to be very unfit instructors for a well-meaning man, by the disingenuous artifices, and double-dealing, wherewith they make all their profelytes. They declare, in the most solemn manner, for any system of principles, though never so contrary to their real sentiments, if place and profit happen to be annexed to it; and then, without the least scruple, employ all the credit that place can give them, to inculcate a contrary system, but under such disguises as give them, in the eyes of the undiscerning, some shew of believing and acting in conformity to their declarations. Base enough to do this, they have also the assurance publicly to defend it, when done, and to repeat it, in the face of mankind. Shall a man of honest intentions give himself up to these mercenary, these self-detected deceivers, and refuse to hear or read any thing, but that which they think fit to recommend? It is impossible. The partizans of a known impostor are always impostors themselves.

For men, thus deceiving, or wishing to be deceived, the following Discourses were neither written, nor published; but for those only who honestly look for the truth, and prefer a painful

ruffle, at the entrance, to the most pleasing doze in error. The author, conscious that the principles he maintains are true and necessary; that the Almighty Being not only authorizes, but prescribes, the defence of them; and that the dignity of a cause so highly noble and important merits the service of much greater talents, than hath been bestowed on him; writes therefore freely and boldly, at the full stretch of those he hath.

However, he submits his performances, first, to you, Gentlemen, and then to every other sensible and honest peruser; earnestly wishing, the abilities had been equal to the Spirit that gave them birth; and humbly hoping, that, while the dullest treatises on the side of heresy and irreligion are devoured, with a kind of greediness, these, which speak for God and Truth, may possibly meet with acceptance; especially in case they shall happen to seem not less rational, less spirited or entertaining.

He will bless God for your approbation, Gentlemen, if he shall be so happy as to obtain it; and will esteem it the greatest comfort of his life. But as to the censures of the dishonest, of whom alone he writes with severity, he will consider them as applause; believing what he says hath pierced to the quick, when the hardened dissembler is forced to complain.

To conclude this already too tedious address, I most earnestly beseech God to bless and preserve that Church, whereof he hath shewn himself so long remarkably the protector, and in nothing more, than in giving you to be its pastors. May he make  
it,



it, by your ministry, fruitful in Faith and good Works, for the sake of Him who purchased it with his blood. I am,

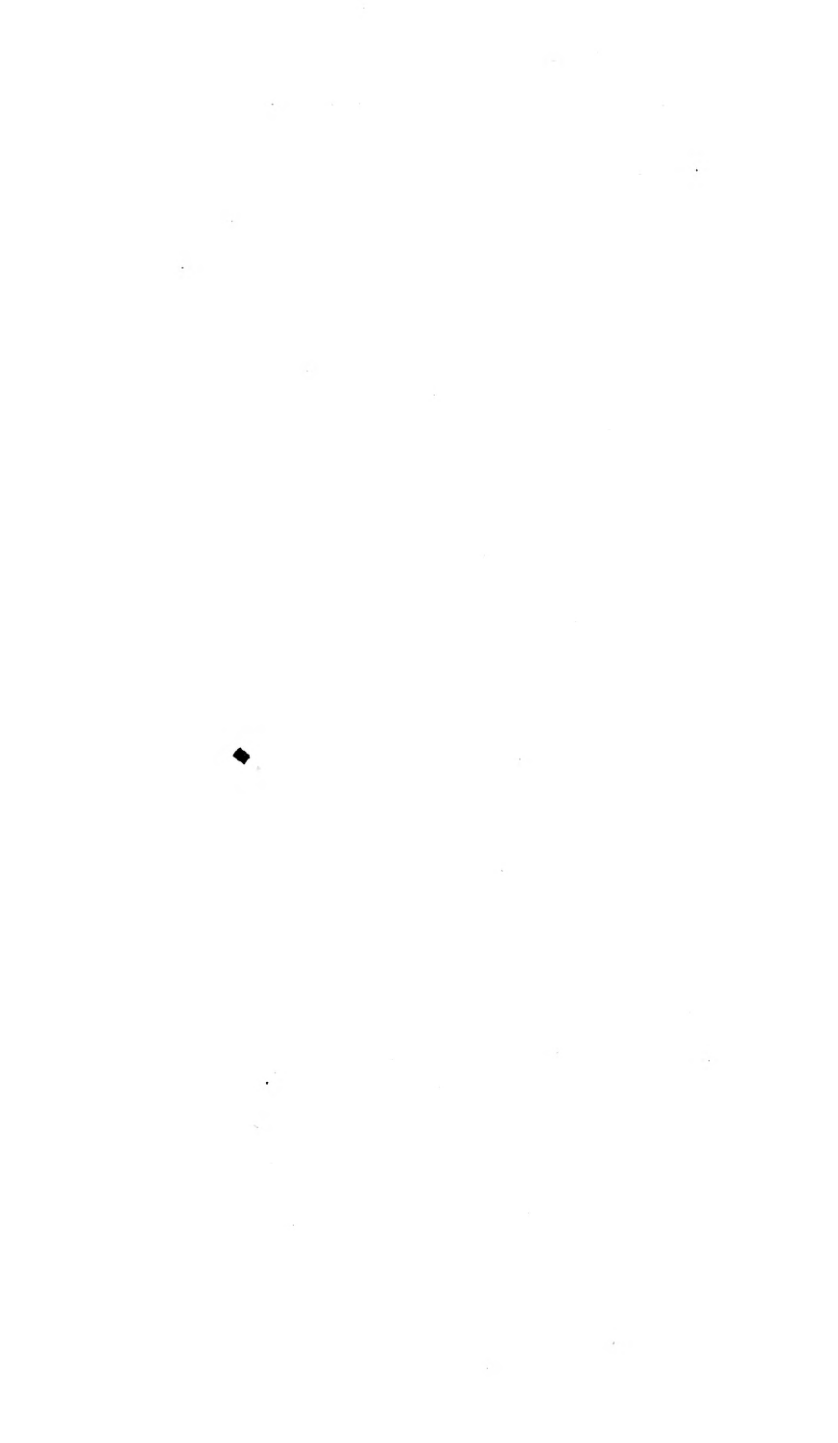
*Right Reverend, and Reverend Gentlemen,*

*Your most sincere Well-wisher,*

*And most faithful, and dutiful,*

*Humble Servant,*

PHILIP SKELTON.



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D I S C O U R S E S in VOL. I.

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St. Mark xiv. 43, 44, 45. *And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords, from the Chief-priests, and the Scribes, and the Elders.—And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss that*

*that same is he : take him, and lead him away safely.—  
And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him,  
and saith, Master, Master ; and kissed him.*

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## DISCOURSE I.

How the True Religion may be distinguished from such as are False.

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I THESS. V. 21.

*Prove all things : hold fast that which is good.*

**T**HIS precept of the Apostle contains sound and useful advice, in regard to all branches of knowledge, and all kinds of choice. He does but throw a die for his own happiness, who neglects the former part of it ; and he who acts against the latter, hath no right to complain of the thief and the robber : but the force and beauty of the precept lies in the connexion between its parts. He can never be rationally tenacious of his choice, who hath not made it on due examination ; because he can never be sure it is judiciously made, if chance, or others, have made it for him : and firmly to adhere to that which he neither is nor can be sure is right, is obstinacy and folly.

As, however, the Apostle intended this most excellent piece of advice for a religious purpose only ; and as our Saviour, with the same view, says, *Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?* we are to interpret both as an appeal to the sense and understandings of mankind, in relation to the evidence whereby one Religion

may be distinguished, as true and genuine, from others that are false and spurious. Be the evidence of Christianity what it will, its Author had the confidence to submit it to the reason, nay, to the very senses, of all men. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works. Go and shew John the things ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, &c.* It is plain from hence, that Christ appealed to our senses and reason, in order to the full conviction of such as should believe on him; and desired this conviction in his disciples, to the end that, having found the Religion he preached to be true and good, they might *hold it fast*, as the Apostle advises.

There is no one now, I believe, who will dispute the justness of this rule, whether he submits to the authority of those who delivered it, or not. Every one must allow the rule to be good in itself. Yet what all are ready to grant in speculation, very few are willing to reduce to practice, I mean in matters of religion. In other things indeed, as if they were of more value, we use all the sense and reason we have. If we are sick, we are not so attached to the name of a drug, or a physician, as not to postpone either to a better, for the sake of health. If we are to purchase an estate, we examine, without any manner of prejudice, the goodness and extent of the lands, and what they may be set for; nor will we close the bargain, till we have the opinion of the best lawyer concerning the title. We make it no objection to his judgment, that his name is spelled after this or that manner. If we buy any piece of goods, its properties are thoroughly examined. If we sell one, the money is not received, till it is carefully viewed and inspected. We shew surprising sharpness, and go to an hair's breadth, in our disputes about property; and if they run to a law-suit, the very father of lyes and deceits must be employed against us, or no advantage can be taken of us. But examine us in religious matters, and behold, we are almost idiots. Here we know little or nothing; can give no reason for what we maintain, or, for  
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the most part, a very weak one ; are destitute of common sense and understanding. Here names, not things, are received, are loved, are contended for. Here names, not things, are rejected, hated, and even persecuted in those who adhere to them, not because we are sensible of any material difference between their persuasion and our own, but because they spell theirs with other letters, than we employ in the name of ours. Truth and error are here alike to us in themselves, and differ only as they get the start of each other through our education or passions. If education predominates, the most knowing son takes up contentedly with, often adheres tenaciously to, a Religion handed down to him by the most stupid father ; and never goes further than the herald's office for his creed. If his passions or affections have the ascendant, his Religion, instead of being a tie, according both to the nature of the thing, and the etymology of the word, must be converted into a licence, that it may countenance what it should correct, and bring his conscience to second his will, as that does his appetites and desires. He must adhere to the Religion of his father, though it was evidently the cause of blindness, cruelty, and wickedness, in him ; or he must have a Religion of his own, because he is determined to take greater liberties, than his father's principles could warrant. In these ways of choosing, or rather stumbling on, a Religion, judgment and reason are not suffered to interfere, but are reserved for matters of greater consequence, such as the choice of an horse, a cook, or a strumpet.

And yet, if it is of any moment to a man, whether he shall be good and happy, or wicked and miserable, it must equally concern him, not only to be religious, but to make a wise choice of a Religion ; for it is not a whit more sure, that there is a God who made us, than it is, that he made us *to serve him in spirit and in truth*, and in so doing to be completely happy. He who believes, there is no God, whatever he does with the natural world, must look on the intellectual as a moral chaos, wherein if there is a right and a wrong in actions, there is no reason for doing the right, and avoiding the wrong ; no law, no duty,

because no account of what is done. But he who believes there is a God, must believe, that whatsoever is good is true, inasmuch as a Creator of infinite goodness and truth can no more be supposed to have set them in opposition to each other in the nature of things, than to feel them opposite in himself. Now, that Religion is good, we know by experience, because man can be neither good nor happy without it. We know also, that no man can subsist long out of society; nor society, without Religion; so that a Religion which hath any truth in it at all, must be better than no Religion. As therefore Religion is not only a good, but a necessary good, we must conclude, it is a great and necessary truth. Indeed man is under as great a necessity of having Religion, as he is of having food; and of having a true Religion, as of having wholesome food.

Some men give themselves a marvellous liberty of speaking on this subject. They are so good indeed as to own Religion may be useful, but deny its necessity; and as to the choice of a Religion, they say, it is of no great consequence, because God may be served, and man saved, in any Religion. As truth and goodness can never be separated, so this detestable way of talking hath as small a proportion of the one, as of the other, in it. Could God have been indifferent whether there should be any connexion between himself and his intelligent creatures? Or could he have judged a connexion less than necessary, at least to us, who, if separated from him, must be miserable? And how otherwise can we be connected with him, than by piety, devotion, and duty? Of his infinite goodness he gave us being; but being, without this union, must have been a curse, instead of a blessing. Religion therefore is necessary. And though the true Religion is not absolutely necessary to our subsistence in this world, experience teaching us, that society may subsist with an erroneous Religion; yet if there is an heaven, and if the purification of our nature, and the love of God, are necessary to fit us for that heaven, then the true Religion, which alone can produce these excellent effects in us, must be necessary to our great, our lasting happiness. Besides, if our Religion should consist in superstitious and wicked opinions,

opinions, and in the worship of false gods, can we suppose that God should look with as favourable an eye on us, as he would do, in case our principles were conformable to truth, and all our homage paid to himself alone? Could happiness be obtained without virtue, or virtue acquired under the influence of worship paid to a wrong object, and essentially erroneous in its practical principles; and could all this be as easily and safely done under these circumstances, as with the assistance of true Religion; then indeed I should think the choice of a Religion a matter of little moment to us. But suppositions like these are too chimerical to deserve a further notice.

Man is so made, that he cannot help being anxious to obtain what is good: but he often mistakes the kinds, the degrees, nay, the very reality of good, pursuing one kind of good by means proper to the attainment of another; pursuing the less in preference to the greater; and, what is worse, pursuing real evil under the appearance of good. To remedy these mischiefs, from whence all sin and misery proceed, the best way is to make a thorough inquiry after the chief good, which is God; and after the right means of arriving at that good, which is true Religion. That man is truly wise, who, in order to this most useful and most important of all inquiries, banishes his prejudices, silences his passions, and, following his reason steadily, prays to God, that his reason may not mistake, nor miss of, its aim; and who, when he thinks he hath attained his end, which, in the use of such a method, he can hardly fail of, neither so far wrongs his own judgment, or God's assistance, as to withhold his heart, and his affections, from the fruits of an inquiry so anxiously pursued.

However, that an honest inquirer of this sort may have a sure path to go in, we will lay down a few rules, which, if followed, must direct him to the great truth he seeks for; and, in so doing, shall not so much endeavour to shew him, what is the true Religion, as how to find it out himself.

Let the first rule be, that as by our senses we apprehend things sensible, and by our reason come to the know-

lege of things demonstrable ; and have no other way, either of receiving information, or trying the truth of that information ; so we must never receive a Religion that contradicts sense and reason.

It is no objection to this rule, that our senses may be deceived, or that we may reason wrong, provided we fairly and freely make the utmost use of both ; for nothing more can be required of us, in order to the attainment of knowledge in any kind or degree, than a full exercise of the powers and faculties bestowed on us. But we may presume these cannot fail us in the attainment of knowledge so absolutely necessary to us, as that of Religion ; because, if it is so necessary, the lights, whereby the true Religion may be distinguished from such as are false, must be sufficiently clear and strong to be apprehended by the faculties given us for that very purpose. If, however, there is, in respect to any man, a failure either of the lights afforded, or the faculties bestowed, we know proportionable allowances will be made ; for his happiness cannot possibly depend on the use of means not put within his power.

But to prevent a wrong use of this rule, it must be observed, that a point may be true and rational, which reason cannot account for ; and that we may have full evidence of its truth, at the same time that we cannot shew demonstrably how it is consistent, either in itself, or with other known truths. For instance ; we may have sufficient reason to think, God is both infinitely just, and infinitely merciful, altho' we can by no means demonstrate, how he can shew himself infinite in both, with regard to transgressors. Again, it may be matter of certainty to us, that God is infinitely good and communicative ; and yet, that one half of eternity passed before any creature was brought into being ; I say one half, because every moment of duration divides eternity into two equal parts. These two propositions are evidently true, and therefore reconcilable in themselves ; although it exceeds the strength of our minds, and probably of all created minds, to shew their consistency. This caution, when duly considered, will be found necessary to prevent our running into  
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downright atheism ; for there is no religion, indeed no kind of knowlege, which can so approve itself to reason, as to be perfectly accounted for by us, in all its parts, results, and consequences. Every thing knowable is self-evident, demonstrable, or probable, for a few steps ; beyond which if it is pursued, it becomes unaccountable, and reduces all our boasted knowlege to doubt and paradox. Hence it may be expected, that Religion, whether stiled natural, or revealed, may have its mysteries, as well as physics, or any other branch of knowlege ; nay, rather, because its object is infinitely more incomprehensible, and its operations more remote from human apprehension.

These things premised, it is the business of an ingenuous inquirer to try the truth of each Religion by the rule laid down ; and if he finds it sets forth any thing palpably absurd or inconsistent, that is, any thing, to which his senses, or his reason, can safely give the lye, he is to reject it as unworthy of his assent. Now this will not be so difficult a matter, as may at first be apprehended ; because there neither are, nor never were, any Religions in the world but five ; namely Deism, Judaism, Mahometism, Christianity, and Polytheism ; and because the leading principles of these, from whence they have their denominations, are easily known, and as easily tried, by a truly candid and thinking mind. They cannot all be right and true ; nay, none but one of them can deserve those epithets ; for each is utterly inconsistent with, and contradictory to, all the rest. And that some one of them is the true Religion, we must conclude ; or else conclude, that God hath afforded mankind no true Religion. But if one of them is the truth, and the rest imposition, the truth must be glaringly evident to a candid inquirer ; or otherwise God hath offered us the truth, and with-held the evidence, or means of distinguishing that truth from error, which is a flat contradiction. But as it must be owned God hath not made this most valuable of all acquisitions so easy, even to a candid inquirer, as not to ask some pains ; so we must insist he hath no more reason to complain of this, than of the difficulty he finds in all other useful attainments, which almost in every thing, but

Religion, bears proportion to the benefits accruing from them; whereas in that, the attainment, altho' requiring some pains, is easy, and the benefit immense. Let him take as much pains to find out the true Religion, as he does to acquire a fortune, which I think is not quite so valuable, and then it will be time enough to hear his account of the matter, both as to the difficulty and success. But as I am confident the investigation of true Religion is by no means so difficult as the acquisition of a fortune, in the ordinary way of business, I will come upon easier terms with him, and only desire him to be at the same trouble on this account, that he undergoes in one *East-India* voyage, and I will venture to promise success to a man so candid and rational. If indeed a man were blessed with never so large a portion of abilities and candour, but not with proportionable thirst or diligence for the inquiry; he may, after all, have as fair a chance to live and die in religious ignorance, as the most stupid bigot. This most inestimable gift of God will not drop into his mouth at every yawn. However, I must take the liberty to tell him, he hath neither abilities nor candour, beyond those of a fool, if he does not think *wisdom as well worth seeking for, as silver; as well worth searching for, as hid treasures; if he does not think the merchandize of it better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold; if he does not think it more precious than rubies, and incomparably better than all other things he can desire.* I will further venture to tell him, he hath not discernment enough to distinguish between the most evident truth, and the most palpable falsehood, if he cannot previously distinguish between this truth, The right Religion is infinitely preferable to all other acquisitions; and this falsehood, Wealth, or worldly honour, is better worth the labour and pains of a pursuit, than the true Religion.

But as it would be a gross folly to make a long journey for what we want, before we have considered whether we may have it at home; so every man ought, in prudence, first to apply his rule to the Religion of his own country, that, if he finds they tally, he may rest contented where his education placed him; and not giddily moop after that  
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truth, which he hath left at his back. If he finds they do not, it is then more his business, than any thing else in the world can be, to look carefully about him, and try other Religions by the same rule. He is never to be satisfied with himself, till he finds one that fits it exactly ; for one there certainly is that will fit it, if it is really and truly reason, not passion, prejudice, conceit, or whim, tricked out in the garb of reason. But in case his rule is drawn from any of these, thus speciously disguised, he will not be far to seek for a Religion that may please him ; for of those I have mentioned, some one or other cannot fail to be agreeable ; or, supposing none of them should, he may easily invent a new one for himself that shall, in all points, hit his humour to a tittle, and sit as easy as his heart can wish.

But, if he is a truly rational inquirer, he will embrace no Religion, that makes his own nature, which he would instruct and reform, the rule of his principles and actions ; no Religion that assigns a certain period to its own continuance, and yet pretends to subsist seventeen hundred years after that period is out ; no Religion that plans itself on ambition or avarice, and makes rapine and slaughter meritorious in the sight of God ; no Religion that sets up more gods than one, and makes a largess of its favours to the adoration of adulterers and murderers, perhaps to devils. No, he cannot rationally close with any Religion that does not,

According to my second rule, evidently prove itself to come from God, from the Almighty, the infinitely wise and good God.

As God is the sole object, so he must be the only author, of the true Religion ; for it can be nothing else than the manifestation of himself, and his will. It can terminate in nothing else, and therefore can be derived from nothing else, but him. Here the first rule must be brought forward, and added to this, that his sense and reason may enable the inquirer to distinguish between the genuine signs of divine original, and the counterfeit.

That Religion which cannot stand the first trial, is not to be admitted to a new one, under this second rule. But if  
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it appears to have nothing absurd, or unreasonable, in it, there is then such a presumption in its favour, as merits a further examination, and that is all ; for although it may be rational, it may nevertheless be but of human invention ; and tho' free from absurdity, as far as it goes, may however be defective in some necessary article ; which defect may not be perceived, till the whole is thoroughly examined ; but, as soon as it is perceived, ought to condemn it, because that Religion, which claims God for its author, must effectually subvert its own claim, if it is not, in all respects, particularly in point of authority, instruction, and efficacy, perfectly well qualified to answer his end in giving it.

Now a Religion, that comes from God, must, I apprehend, have these signs of its original ; Antiquity, miracles, edification, and power. There may be others ; but these will serve sufficiently to distinguish it from all Religions of human invention.

First, as to antiquity ; it is certain no Religion can claim God for its author, if it is not near as old as the creation ; because a Religion, coming much later into the world, cannot be rationally regarded as necessary ; for if it were, why was it not earlier communicated ? How can we suppose, the infinitely gracious Being should so long have withheld from mankind the necessary means of reformation and happiness ? This argument I deduce, not from any obligation lying on God to communicate Religion to us at all, but from our wants, and his free goodness. But as we always stood in need of Religion, although unequally in the different ages of the world, so the true Religion must have been given from the beginning, although perhaps imparted by degrees, as men wanted, or could receive and record it. If God thought fit to give us a Religion at all, why not to the first men as well as us ? Or rather, why not to their posterity through them ? As there is all the reason in the world to believe the race of mankind sprung from a common parent, so it is equally reasonable to believe, that the knowledge of God, and our duty to him and one another, were imparted to that parent, in order to be by him transmitted to his posterity ; first,  
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because he wanted it as much as others ; and secondly, because he had it in his power to propagate it as fast, and as far, as his own offspring. No other man could at least so conveniently, or so uniformly, hand it to all mankind, as their common parent. The remains of Religion found in all ages and nations of the world, though never so dark and barbarous, and the notoriety of the fact, that every man was, and still is, taught somewhat of Religion by his parents, or others, prove that this knowlege came to us through the first man, because otherwise some nations, inhabiting islands, or parts of the continent, sequestred for many ages from commerce and communication with the rest of mankind, might have been wholly uninctured with it. But no nation hath ever yet been discovered, among whom it is not believed, that there is some superior being, who ought some way or other to be worshiped ; nay, among whom the practice of sacrifices, a thing that could not possibly have been of human invention, is not, under one form or other, observed. This proves the antiquity of Religion, so far as it is right and rational ; so far as it is otherwise, we may be sure it is the produce of human invention.

There can be but one true Religion ; and therefore we may take it for granted, the God of Truth never gave any other, whatsoever additions or alterations he might have made in it, according as times and occasions required. All Religions of later date than the first age of the world, so far as they are conformable to truth and reason, owe their beginning to the original Religion ; and whereinssoever they depart from either, they are to be considered as off-sets, and heresies, from that. A new Religion is of all things the greatest absurdity that ever entered into the head of man, whether we regard him as the broacher, or the disciple, of it ; for, in the first place, it denies the truth of all that went before ; and, in the next, it gives us to understand, that God never thought fit to teach us the truth till now. But in case any religious innovation makes its appearance in the world at a period considerably posterior to that we assign the true Religion, and, grafting itself on the old Religion, pretends divine authority for the alterations, repeals, additions,

additions, it proposes to be introduced, then we must examine its credentials by the second sign of true Religion; to wit, miracles.

Something there must be to distinguish between that which comes from God, and that which takes its rise from the craft of man; and to prove, that he, who presumes to alter any thing in the work of God, is commissioned by God so to do; because every thing that is done by him, must remain as it was, until he shall see fit to change it. Now we may be sure God never interposes in the business of Religion, without expecting a compliance on our part; which expectation must nevertheless be wholly unreasonable, if he does not give evident proofs of his interposition; because we are never to innovate in that which came from him, before we have his authority for so doing. But how can such proof be given without miracles? If the finger of God is to be demonstrated, it must be by somewhat above the power of man to perform; nay, above all power, but his own. As to prophecies long ago given, and now fulfilled, they are indeed convincing proofs of God's interposition; but then they are no less properly to be esteemed miracles, than healing the sick, or raising the dead, with a touch or word. Whatsoever the wisdom or power of creatures superior to ourselves may be, they are, of themselves, unable to invert the course of nature; neither can they foresee events at a great distance of time, that depend on the free elections of men, whose great-grandfathers are not yet in being. None but the almighty and all-knowing God, who made, and governs, the world, can predict the one, or perform the other; at least, none can thus predict or perform, without his permission, or rather command, who will not suffer us to be deceived, if we pray to him for direction, and are not enamoured of deception. When such proofs as these appear to vouch for a doctrine reasonable and good in itself, as it must have shewn itself to be on trial by the first rule, we may safely conclude God is concerned in the transaction, and lends his authority to the doctrines thus evidenced by wisdom and power surpassing those of the creature. No effect can so indisputably demonstrate its cause, as miracles do

do a divine power; because all other effects may possibly proceed from other than the usual or apprehended causes; whereas miracles, real miracles, can be ascribed to no other cause, or author, than God. Now, by miracles, I mean such performances, as are done directly against the known course of nature; for instance, restoring the dead to life, and that without any application or means.

But as this is the grand evidence of a real commission from God, impostors will not fail to perform wonders, if they can, in proof of their pretended missions. And indeed there are secrets in nature, so utterly unknown, and so surprising to the ignorant, that it requires some attention and sagacity to distinguish their effects from real miracles. However, the observation of a few rules will put them to a trial they cannot stand, and plainly shew they are not from God. First, if somewhat very amazing is performed, and we can neither account for it, nor ever saw any thing like it done before; and he who does it, pretends to do it by the power of God; we are carefully to examine the purpose he applies it to; whether it is to give credit to a good or evil doctrine; and whether the worker hath, or very probably may have, the good of others only, or his own interest and honour, in view. It will be proper to suspend our assent for some time, till we can better judge of the consequences he intends to draw from the exhibition of such performances in our sight. In the next place we are to consider, whether his life and conversation is secret or open; for if it is secret, there is some reason to suspect his morals, and consequently to look on him as one whom God would not employ. If his life is openly vicious, or, after some time, found out to be so; and if what he does appears to be performed with an ill design; we need not scruple to condemn his miracles; because we know God might easily find a more creditable instrument to work with, and may be sure would never choose to recommend vice, or even virtue, to the rest of mankind, in so extraordinary a way, by one who shews he does not believe in the expediency of his own precepts, nor consequently in the divinity of his own miracles. But in case nothing of this kind is discovered, it will then be proper, in the third

place, to give a more close attention to his performances themselves, to examine sharply whether they may not be done by concert and connivance ; whether he uses any apparatus, or takes up any time in doing them, or exhibits only in certain places, and at appointed hours ; whether they are of one or two particular kinds ; whether he is as ready to do them before men of sense, as among ignorant and superstitious people ; and on sudden and accidental calls, as with previous warning ; whether they are in themselves acts of real utility and beneficence, or only useless tricks ; and lastly, whether they are really and truly so contrary to that part of nature, which we know by continual experience, that no power, but his who controuls nature, could possibly have effected them. If his miracles are wrought in great abundance, and with great variety, and so freely and openly, as to give every one that pleases an opportunity of putting their genuineness to the test, and no signs of imposture are discovered ; if he is not only harmless and innocent in all parts of his behaviour, but full of meekness, beneficence, and candour, omitting no opportunity of doing good, even to such as use him worst ; we must conclude, that God is with him, and that we cannot slight or oppose him, without slighting or opposing God, who would never have seconded the preachings of any man with such transcendent power, if he had not thereby intended to give him credit with all mankind for whatsoever he shall inculcate in his name. But if, besides all this, it should so happen, that, seven or eight hundred years before, the miracles he works, together with the chief transactions of his life, should have been foretold in a prophecy still extant ; and if the time and place of his appearance should have been also predicted in a prophecy near as old, and still also extant ; nay, if it should appear by other prophecies then in being, that he had been promised, from time to time, during the space of near four thousand years ; and, what is yet more, if he utters several very extraordinary prophecies himself, some of which most unexpectedly take effect soon after, contrary to the endeavours of his powerful enemies to vilify him, by falsifying them ; these predictions, joined with his

his miracles, must put our incredulity greatly to a stand, if not wholly overcome it. We should not indeed make a proper use of either of the rules laid down, should we retain any doubt concerning the divinity of his mission, or the truth of the Religion he preaches. After standing so severe a trial, he hath a full right to our faith, and may challenge the utmost attention and veneration for what he says; especially, provided the matter of his doctrines shall appear to be, not only conformable to the essence of the original Religion, but in itself useful, wise, and weighty; for we cannot suppose God should send one to teach us things of little significance, or such as we knew before, or such as neither required nor admitted any further enforcements.

And this brings us to the consideration of the third sign or mark of divine original in a Religion; namely, the edification of those to whom it is proposed. In order the more clearly to discern this sign, we ought candidly to consider, whether we stand in any need of instructions, or not; whether we are as wise and good as we could wish to be; and whether, in some particulars, relating to futurity, and reformation of manners, or to the terms of acceptance in the sight of God, our ignorance and uncertainty are not such as may make further information necessary. It is requisite, on this occasion, that we should neither be too diffident of our own judgment in discerning the truth, or falsity, of a Religion proposed; nor too confident of our sagacity in finding out the true Religion, without assistance. However, there is greater danger of too much confidence; because the presumption against us is very high and strong, both from the natural short-sightedness of the human mind in things of this kind, and from the great abundance of the miracles, which he who takes upon him to teach us, performs. It is hard to suppose his instructions unnecessary, who awakes our intention, and demands our conviction, by works so far exceeding the power of nature.

Two things then are here carefully to be examined; first, our own understandings, that we may judge, whether, of ourselves, we know, or may know, enough of religious

religious matters, to make further information needless ; and secondly, in case we are sensible we do not, we are next to examine the instructions proposed, that we may see whether they come home to our wants, and are qualified to dispel that darkness we modestly lament in ourselves.

As to our own understandings, we must consider whether we brought any stock of religious knowlege into the world ; what we could have afterwards acquired independent of all instruction ; and how much the rest of mankind could have taught us, if God had never, by revelation, taught them any thing. In order to make a right judgment in this matter, we are fairly to reflect on the doubts and uncertainties that puzzle our own reason, and the religious disputes about the object of worship, the nature of worship itself, and the duration of our own being ; which have perplexed the world where-ever either no revelation, or a very defective tradition of revelation, hath been received. *Socrates* and *Plato* were of opinion, this darkness of the human understanding, as to matters of so great moment, called for a revelation. Others think, on the contrary, either that it is no great loss to be ignorant in things of this kind, or else, that human reason, with no other assistance than what the works of creation afford it, may easily attain to a sufficient knowlege of Religion. Which of these two opinions hath the best right to plead experience for its voucher, we must determine for ourselves, before we either receive, or reject, an instructor pretending to come from God. If we find ourselves sufficiently knowing, it will be an egregious folly to lend an ear to any man on the subject of Religion ; whether he takes upon him to speak from God, or his own discoveries. But if we judge ourselves deficient in religious knowlege, it will be our business to hear what he, who says he comes from God, hath to say, since he gives such proof of his mission, as we cannot convict of imposture. If what he tells us is no more than what we knew before, or is wide of our purpose, he may be a fit instructor for others, but can be of no service to us ; and therefore we are to have nothing further to do with him.

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But in case he tells us the very things we doubted of, clears up our ignorance as to the very points we were utterly at a loss in ; for instance, teaches us how to think justly of God, and our duty to him ; of ourselves, and our duty to one another ; of our chief good and happiness, and how to secure it ; of our chief evil and misery, and how to escape it ; if in this he appears to deal fairly by us, proving such things, as admit of it, by reason ; and such as do not, by the authority of his miracles ; and if for all his labours he seeks no other reward, no other gratification, than the dissipation of our doubts and errors, and the reformation of our manners ; we must be lost to common sense and goodness, in case we refuse, or even hesitate our assent. Yet, after all, should he, in addressing himself to us, evidently appear to catch at our applause, or inveigle our assent, by rhetorical flourishes, and parading speeches, it ought greatly to stagger our opinion of his mission. We cannot easily suppose God would condescend to be served by arts like these ; or that a message, from him, supported with real miracles, could need these aids, which imposture and fallacy have so long employed, that they are now qualified only to bring suspicion on the cause that retains them. On the other hand, there is some danger of taking the simplicity, wherewith the teacher may happen to deliver himself, for insignificance. To a false taste, that which is not high-seasoned, is apt to appear insipid. That we may not therefore be deceived either by him or ourselves, we are carefully to weigh the depth, the solidity, and the pertinence of its matter ; and by no means either to admire him for the garniture, or despise him for the artless plainness of his elocution.

However, there is still another sign of divine original, which it concerns us not a little to have an eye to ; and that is, the power and efficacy of his doctrines over the hearts of such as shall receive them. If God sends us a Religion, it must not only be right and true, but of force sufficient to attain its end ; namely, the happiness of mankind. The infinitely gracious Being cannot be supposed to give us a Religion for any other end. Neither can the infinitely wise Being be supposed to give us a Religion for

that end, which contains not means equivalent thereunto. Now since our happiness cannot be provided for, but by the reformation of our manners, these means must be of sufficient strength to work this reformation; otherwise the Religion that proposes them, must be unworthy both of the goodness and wisdom of the author it pretends to derive from.

To know how great the strength of these means should be, we must well consider the difficulty of the work they are applied to, and the delicacy of that work in beings morally free. As to its difficulty; he knows little of himself, of the corrupt nature, and inveterate habits, he hath to correct and subdue in a mind so irresolute, so inconstant, who is not thoroughly convinced, the means of his reformation must be very efficacious to be successful. A sensible man, who hath studied himself, sees plainly, that, unless he is very powerfully assisted, he cannot be thoroughly reclaimed. His many ineffectual anxieties on this subject, his baffled resolutions, attended with little else than continual falls, and shameful disappointments, serve sufficiently to teach him this lesson of humility. He cannot help considering the lower half of his nature, as a vicious and refractory beast, that is not broken to the bridle without infinite skill and strength; nor the upper, as a raw and feeble rider, by no means equal to a task so arduous. Convinced of this, he must be satisfied, that none but he, who made him, is able to mend him; and that, in the true Religion only, the means of this amendment are to be hoped for.

And as to the delicacy of this work, in regard to his freedom, he cannot but be sensible, that means of prodigious efficacy may be used with him, before they amount to compulsion, or do more than counterbalance his byas to evil. He knows God will assist his virtue, not force his services; and therefore, in having recourse to Religion, he looks for such assistance, at least, as may keep his corruptions at bay, and suspend him in a state of liberty.

Now this he hath reason to hope for, in a Religion that calls God its author, and hath already given such proofs



of its divinity. But if he reflects attentively on the matter, he will find there are but two conceivable ways whereby this may be effected ; first, by the influence of the Divine Being, working on his thoughts ; and secondly, by future rewards and punishments proposed to his desires and fears. God, he knows, is present every-where ; and can assist him, and all men, as he pleases. He knows also, that he alone can so proportion the assistance to the want, as to enable his creature to get the better of his irregular dispositions, without infringing on his freedom. And as to rewards and punishments, he is sensible, if they are future, they cannot be made so great, as too strongly to engage his desires and fears in the work of reformation, or to bear too hard on the liberty of his will. This he gathers experimentally from their effects on those who already believe in their eternity, without being forced by their faith to a life of perfect purity ; and likewise from observing, that, in all men, expectations, though of the greatest moment, if very remote, are not so apt to make deep impressions on the mind, as matters of vastly less consequence, that are present with us, or very soon to be at hand. Whether the mind learns this of the eye, which takes a little hill that is near it, to be much greater than the largest mountain at a distance, he cannot tell ; but as he finds the thing is true in fact, so he hath no reason to apprehend the loss of his liberty in the greatness, be it what it will, of the happiness promised to virtue, or of the misery threatened to vice. Sensible therefore of his own wants, and not in the least afraid of too strong a reason for being good, he requires, in the true Religion, very powerful succours from God, and the proposal of virtue and endless happiness, or of vice and endless misery, to his free election ; not only as a necessary means of his reformation, but also as a necessary proof of its divine original. He requires, in short, that the Religion he gives his faith to should discourage vice to the uttermost, and promote, with more than human power, the advancement of virtue in every soul that receives it.

Every rational mind must regard these marks of divinity as sufficient to distinguish the true Religion from

all others, and universally to draw the assent of mankind, if inattention, or prejudice, infused by education, passion, pleasure, pride, &c. does not stand between that Religion and reason.

However, a rational man, who knows the obliquity of the human heart, the wild irregularity of the human understanding, and the endless variety of extravagant opinions, too apt to be ingendered in the one, and nursed in the other, even under the influence of the best Religion, cannot help wishing God had been pleased to establish some one certain, intelligible, and infallible, rule of faith and practice, in order, for ever, to ascertain a system of truths so infinitely beneficial to mankind. Such a man could hardly help concluding, from the wisdom of God, the necessity of a revelation, and the disingenuous disposition of mankind to extort a voucher from the true Religion, to authorize their own conceits and designs, that if a revelation, intended for all men, was ever given, it must have been so recorded as to prevent, as far as possible, all alterations, additions, mutilations, whatsoever. There is nothing the mind of man, when left wholly to itself, is more unable to fix than the principles of Religion. If it hath no information on the subject, it can hardly ever form any scheme of Religion at all: And if it hath the advantage of some religious hints, it either suffers other matters, that appear for the present more interesting, to shuffle them intirely out of its attention, or makes them the seeds of speculations so wild and wicked as were never heard of in other parts of knowlege. This most abominable humour is apt to continue with it, even after it hath been introduced to the true and perfect Religion. All the awe it feels, or ought to feel, for the infinite majesty of him who dictated that Religion, is not sufficient to hinder such a mind from substituting its own monstrous inventions in the place of God's oracles, and even pleading his authority directly in the face of his own express declarations. It is true, no expedient, though ever so wisely contrived, or applied, can wholly prevent the unaccountable doubts of the wrong-headed, the petulant errors of the conceited, or the incorrigible vices of the perversly wicked. No de-

gree of light can enable the blind to see. No goodness of the road can bring a man to his journey's end, who neither can walk, nor will be carried.

But, to remedy this evil, as far as the nature of the thing will permit, a genuine record of the true Religion must be kept up, that its articles may not be in danger of total corruption in such a sink of opinions, every one more cordially favoured, and more zealously abetted, by its wrong-headed inventor, or ill-hearted abettor, than the most fundamental principle God ever revealed to mankind. If the truth of a Religion is to be proved by prophecy, the prophecies relating to it must be recorded, and time given for their completion, that the picture of that Religion, when the substance represented comes to be fully unveiled, may be known to have been previously drawn by the hand of God, and its future author and finisher clearly distinguished by the prophetic characters and promises made of him many ages before. And when he hath put the last hand to the divine revelation, his history and doctrines must be also faithfully recorded by competent and unquestionable witnesses, and both records kept with the utmost care and exactness. Such a record of every thing necessary to be believed or done, is the best expedient to ascertain a Religion, the communication whereof is finished, and the whole finally fitted for universal use in all times and places. By this all doubts, worth the clearing up, may be resolved; all disputes, wherein truth only is sought for, determined, or condemned as frivolous; all principles, necessary to be believed, expressly asserted; all duties precisely defined; and all the motives or obligations, whereby those duties are urged on either the conscience, or the will, always standing out in that full force and energy, which the authority of Almighty God impressed on them from the beginning. Such a record a rational man hath reason to look for of a Religion coming from God, and setting itself forth, as brought to full perfection.

But whereas disputes may arise concerning the sense of this record in some particulars, it may be expected by such as cannot be content with reasonable satisfaction,

that there should always be an infallible interpreter to explain that record, as often as doubts concerning its meaning may arise. But the infallibility of such an interpreter can be founded on nothing else, than a continual inspiration; nor that inspiration evidenced any otherwife, than by a perpetual miracle. Now a perpetual miracle, considered as the evidence of any thing, is nonsense; because, were it at first never so apparently contrary to the known course of nature, it must in time be taken for the natural effect of some unknown cause, as all physical phenomena, if far enough traced, always are; and consequently must fall into a level, as to a capacity of proving any thing, with the most ordinary appearances of nature, which, though all of them miracles, as to the primary cause of their production, can never be applied to the proof of an inspiration, because ordinary and common. But, even tho' the miracle were varied never so often, in order to the proof of the inspiration, it could not answer the end, nor settle all the religious disputes of mankind; as is experimentally evident from the stubbornness of those, who, on a certain occasion, would not be concluded by the decisions of men, whom they knew to have a power of working all manner of miracles. They saw the miracles every day, and yet many of them were as far from conversion as ever; while numbers that were converted, set up opinions of their own, directly opposite to the express determinations of such as wrought the miracles, and could by no means be brought to submit. Besides, are all questions, howsoever unnecessary or impertinent, to be decided? Does it become the wisdom or majesty of God, to encourage an endless curiosity as to matters no way useful, perhaps prejudicial, to mankind? If it does not, what is the use of a perpetual infallible interpreter or dictator? Why, only to decide things already decided by the original revelation fully recorded; as if God could not speak as intelligibly by his first, as by his subsequent interpreter. Why may not this last speak as obscurely as the first, and so require a third interpreter to explain his meaning? Hence it appears, that right reason is a sufficient

ficient interpreter of God's words, and asks no other to unfold their meaning.

On the whole, it is certainly a duty every reasonable man owes to God and himself, to find out, if he possibly can, a Religion that answers to the character, and stands the trial, insisted on. All his other pursuits and inquiries are about trifles of no moment, in comparison with this. They relate to a state of things, wherewith happiness is incompatible; this to one, wherein it is, or may be, certain. They relate to a day, a month, or a year; this to duration without end. They relate to a body, corrupt and despicable in its gratifications, and perishable without remedy; this to a soul, fitted for pure enjoyments, and high pretensions, and in itself immortal.

What now must be said of him, who is deeply skilled in politics, who hath an extensive knowlege of trade, who can advise with a judgment not to be questioned, and speak with an elegance not to be resisted, in law-suits, and other secular affairs; and yet hath either no Religion, or at least no reason for his Religion? It is true, *he is wiser in his generation than the children of light* are in theirs. He knows better perhaps how to serve *the god of this world*, than the very Saints know how to serve the God of heaven. Yet after all, he is but a sensible, a knowing fool. This very man would not scruple to call another a fool, who should shew vast industry, and equal ingenuity, in finding out, and bringing to perfection, some new bauble for children; but, in the name of common sense, with what face? with what assurance? Is it because he hath chosen a bauble of somewhat greater significance to compliment with his understanding and time? What minute distinctions, what almost imperceptible preferences, are sufficient for vanity to boast of! All his pomp, his parade, his wealth, are but the rattles of a little older child, in the eye of true wisdom. If death cannot demonstrate this, futurity, at least, will do it, to the infinite mortification of that pride, which values itself on worldly wisdom. Then he only will be found to have been wise, and to have been blessed with true greatness of soul, who made it his chief study to find out the

right Religion, and who, having found it, made it his chief endeavour *to hold it fast* ; that is, to retain it in an understanding thoroughly convinced, and in an heart deeply affected ; to impress it strongly on all his thoughts ; to make it the rule of all his actions, and his guide to God.

If man was made like a swine, only to eat, drink, and die ; or like a peacock, to flutter, to make a vain shew for a while, and then perish for ever ; he is in the right on't to indulge himself in his draught and feathers, and look no farther : but then what need of coaches and palaces ? what need of thrones and sceptres ? why is he always looking upward, and aiming at something greater than he hath yet attained to ? Why are the solid satisfactions of the beast laid aside for the airy, but anxious pursuits, for the imaginary, but dangerous schemes, of the man ? Why does he not prudently live down to his own principle, and seek for ease and safety in his sensuality ?

No, he was made for greater things. Not greater surely, if not better. But what can be either greater or better, if to-morrow he dies ? dies, soul as well as body ? O death ! how satirically dost thou grin at the folly of avarice and ambition ! Wert thou an atheist, thou wouldst do the same ; because the scheme of life they prescribe, is not much more consistent with infidelity than Religion. It is true, indeed, man was made for much greater things than this world can promise, or a short life accomplish. He was made for God, for heaven, and eternity ; and the greatness of his soul is suited to the dignity of the objects. But he no sooner loses sight of these, and meanly turns his unbounded appetite of grandeur to low and little objects, than he presents us with the ridiculous view of a sage quarrelling for cockle-shells, or an emperor catching flies ; proud, if his worthy endeavours succeed ; and miserably chagrined, if they fail. There is but one thing in nature commensurate to the wishes of an immortal soul ; and the true Religion alone shews us how to arrive at that. Nothing else can restore us to the dignity of our nature, can denominate us truly wise, can make us truly great and happy. Why do we esteem ourselves superior

to the brute creation, if it is not because we are endued with reason? But what comes of this distinction, if reason serves no better purpose than teaching us to be a little more ingeniously brutal? If in this consists the excellence of our nature, why is it debased to mere animal uses? Why does it not teach us to aspire, through rational piety and love, to the source of all being, all beauty, all excellence, all good? What is man without reason? He is a world inhabited by nothing but serpents, wolves, and lions. And what is reason without Religion? It is a lamp not yet lighted; or an eye in the dark; or a country naturally fertile and beautiful, but so blasted, that all above the soil is withered; and all the roots and seeds of useful plants beneath are as totally destroyed, as if some malignant spirit had been preparing it for the habitation of himself, and his hideous associates. The whole creation would be nothing, or worse than nothing, without God. But the rational soul must be the most lost and miserable of all creatures, if cut off from God; for God is the light, the life, the very soul, of the soul. Now nothing, but Religion, can unite the soul to God. And what is Religion, but the knowledge, the fear, the love of God, curing the corruptions, and exalting the virtues of the soul to a resemblance of infinite excellence?

But God is not seen as he really is; and consequently cannot be regarded, imitated, or served, as he ought to be, through the medium of a wrong Religion, which misrepresents him to the mind, as a wavy uneven glass does all objects to the eye. If he is represented to us as nothing but mercy, he cannot be feared; if as nothing but justice, he cannot be loved; if he is not both loved and feared, he cannot be worthily served, unless his proper service is supposed to consist in presumption, or despair. If he is set forth as vicious, revengeful, cruel, he cannot be imitated, but to the further depravation of the soul. If he is exhibited as neither knowing, nor caring for, what his creatures do, as neither a rewarder of virtue, nor a punisher of vice, then Religion differs not in effect from atheism; all law must be imposition; all govern-  
ment,

ment, tyranny ; and the whole world an hell of wickedness and confusion.

Hence it appears, that a false Religion is better than no Religion, only in proportion as it approaches nearer to the true. And what follows? but that it is the first duty, and the highest interest, of a man, to search, with all possible candour, with all possible diligence, for the true Religion ; and when he hath discovered it, which, I think, such an inquirer cannot fail to do, is it not then as much his duty and interest to give it the absolute government of himself? If he can make himself easy before he hath accomplished this work, let his stupidity in other things be never so great, I must assure him, his ease of mind on this head is infinitely the highest proof of his folly. What name then shall we give it in him, who, as to all other knowable matters, surpriseth us with the evident signs of sensibility, judgment, and prudence? Here language fails me, and therefore I shall make an end with

Most humbly beseeching the Father of Lights, and Fountain of Wisdom, to guide us by his Holy Spirit into all truth, that, *having proved all things, we may hold fast that which is good*, to the eternal salvation of our souls, and the glory of his Name ; to whom be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.



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## DISCOURSE II.

The Bible is the Word of God.

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2 TIM. iii. 14, 15, 16, 17.

*Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them:*

*And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, thro' faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

*That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

**T**HE word *Scripture*, of which so high a character is given in this passage, signifies, by its derivation, only a writing; but here is put for certain writings, whereof God is supposed to be the author or inspirer. When the apostle tells *Timothy*, *he had known these Scriptures, or writings, from a child*, he speaks of the books contained in the Old Testament only, which, as they prophesied of the Messiah, and pointed out him, and his religion, to the reader, were *able*, therefore, to  
*make*

make that reader wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus the Messiah; but, when he says *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God*, he extends the signification of the word to the writings of the New Testament also, which he took to be the dictates of divine inspiration, as well as those of the Old.

The books he comprehends under the Name of *Scriptures*, thus eminently understood, speak in the same high strain concerning the inspiration of God, and of its necessity, in order to true and saving wisdom. They acknowledge there is a rational faculty in man, whereby he may attain to knowlege in sensible and temporal things; and whereby also he may judge of higher matters, when God is pleased to instruct him therein; but, as to these latter, they represent God as the only sufficient teacher, and every-where send us to him for instruction. *There is a spirit in man*, says *Elibu*, and *the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding*, Job xxxii. 8. God himself intimates the same by the questions he puts to *Job*, chap. xxxviii. ver. 36. *Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? David* prays incessantly to God for wisdom: *Give me understanding, and I shall live*, Psalm cxix. ver. 144. *Let my cry come near before thee, O Lord; give me understanding, according to thy word*, ver. 169. *Solomon* exhorts his readers, on all occasions, to seek for wisdom of God, to whose gift alone he ascribes it, both in himself and others: *The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowlege and understanding*, Prov. ii. ver. 6. *Christ* thanks his Father, Luke x. 21. *for revealing those articles of wisdom unto babes, which he had hid from the wise and prudent*; and promises, ch. xxi. ver. 15. *to give his disciples a mouth, and wisdom, which all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay, or resist. If any of you lack wisdom*, says *St. James*, ch. i. ver. 5. *let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given you. St. Peter* ascribes all prophecy to inspiration: *The prophecy*, says he, *came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, 2 Pet. i. ver. 21. A great deal  
more

more might be added, to shew, that the penmen of the Bible endeavour to represent God as the fountain of wisdom, or true religion; and themselves as only the scribes, who record in writing what God is pleased to dictate.

But whereas every religion lays claim to a divine original, as well as that contained in the books just now mentioned; and whereas *Mahometism* produces a written record of itself, which it ascribes to God, and his angels, as inspiring or dictating whatsoever *Mahomet* committed to writing; it is the business of a rational inquirer to examine them all by the rules and signs recommended in the former discourse, that he may make a competent judgment of their merits, before he finally fixes his choice. To avoid impertinence and prolixity on this occasion, we will suppose this inquiry over in regard to all religions but that of the Bible; and terminated in a rejection of some, for wanting a fixed system of principles properly recorded; and, of others, not for wanting a record indeed, but for having one stuffed with such absurdities and contradictions as reason cannot possibly receive for divine inspiration. Having, by this supposition, left ourselves but one religion to inquire into, we may perhaps, in the compass of this discourse, arrive at satisfaction as to that. If any one who hears me is surpris'd at my saying there is but one religion contained in the Bible, whereas *Judaism*, or Christianity, hath, or, at least, in different ages of the world, must have had, an equal right to found itself on some part or other of that book; he ought to know, that Christianity, rightly understood, disowns the distinction; and represents itself as the religion given to the first man, and never altered, from the beginning, to the publication of the last-written book in the New Testament, as to its great fundamentals, belief in one God, and the Messiah; but only in mere modes of worship, and obedience, wherewith God thought proper to diversify, to enlarge, to explain, or to enforce it, at different periods of time. If both Testaments are the work of God, they do, they can, contain but one religion, because there neither is, nor possibly can be, but one true religion; nor is it to be supposed, God could  
ever

ever give any other. Now he who believes God to be the author of the Old Testament, must believe him also the author of the New ; because, if he is not, the prophecies of the Old, relating to the Messiah, which make a great part of it, must be false.

The *Jews*, who, from Christ's time to this, have mistaken Christianity for a religion essentially different from their own, have, in reality, apostatized from the religion of the Old Testament ; and have given the lye to all their prophets, in saying Jesus was not the Messiah ; while, at the same time, they confirmed, as far as in them lay, the truth of their predictions, by what they did to him, and have since done, in respect to his religion. It is true, they and the Christians have now two distinct religions ; because the former, resting in the exterior and temporary part of the Scriptural religion, which, by its own confession, was only preparatory to a more spiritual and lasting dispensation, rejected that faith they themselves waited for, as the grand accomplishment of all revelation. While they served God in the *type or shadow*, and hoped for *better things yet to come*, at a certain period predicted, they acted consistently with the scheme of religion laid down in their own Scriptures. But when that period arrived, and those better things were offered, they, mistaking the nature of the promises, refused the things promised ; and so, contrary to their own prophecies, adhered still to the type, when they ought to have embraced that which was typified. If God was the author of the Old Testament, they were in the right religion till the time prefixed for the arrival of the Messiah ; but departed from it, and took up with another, when they rejected him, and passed the period at which he was to be expected. Since that, their religion consists in a preposterous expectation of an event either actually passed, or never to come : Whereas they who embraced Christianity, received the substance of that religion which was prefigured under the Law ; and, be it right or wrong, are not typically, but really and truly, in the old religion, from which the unbelieving *Jews* apostatized. This is the very state of the case delivered by

St. Paul, in the third of his epistle to the *Galatians*; where, having shewn, that *the promise of the Messiah was given to Abraham*, ver. 8. and that *the law was afterwards added because of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made*, ver. 19. he then opens the use of the Law, and says, *it was the school-master of the Jews, to bring them unto Christ, that they might be justified by faith*, ver. 24. He accordingly, *Rom. x. 4.* calls *Christ, or the Messiah, the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth*. Whatever we think of St. Paul's inspiration, as real, or only pretended, we cannot help considering this way of interpreting the promises of the Old Testament, and the Law, and terminating their accomplishment in the Messiah, as just and right; and therefore must regard the religion of St. Paul as that very religion which was prophetically preached in the Old Testament.

Laying it, therefore, down as a point already proved, that there is but one religion set forth in both the Testaments, though under different dispensations or covenants, let us, in order to try whether this is the true religion, examine the writings, wherein it is contained, by the rules prescribed in the former discourse, that we may judge, if we can, of the divine original and authority pretended to by these writings, which will decide the question about the truth or falsity of the religion they set before us.

In the first place, we have here a written record of the religion under question; which gives us a fair opportunity of examining its merits; an advantage not to be expected in any religion depending merely either on the vague opinions and reasonings of man, or on oral tradition, so liable to be changed and corrupted. And as to the genuineness of this record, it is infinitely less to be suspected, than that of any other history or account of former times; because the people in whose hands it was, always regarded it with the utmost veneration, as the book of God himself; proved their principles, and decided their disputes, by it; and therefore were extremely watchful over the original text, lest any one should mutilate or corrupt it, in order, by that means, to suppress its evidence

dence against him, or pervert it for him. It is farther to be observed, that all the other books in the world have not produced so many copies, translations, comments, nor so great a variety of consequent writings, all drawing their matter, their arguments, and illustrations, from thence. In every age since the use of letters and learning flourished in the world, this book hath been the fountain not of a few obscure tracts, but of whole libraries; and hath found employment for more inquirers, readers, writers, disputants, than all other histories, than all other arts and sciences, put together. As all this made the loss of the book itself a thing impossible, so it made the corruption of it a thing next to impossible. He who doubts the genuineness of this book, and yet believes in that of *Herodotus*, *Thucydides*, or *Livy*, ought, for the same reason, to look on them as less genuine than *Valerius Maximus*, *Aulus Perſius*, or *Censorinus*; for, by his rule, the more a book is read, considered, and quoted, the more likely it is to be corrupted; or, in other words, the greater its authority was in all former ages, the less it ought to be esteemed in this.

There can indeed be no rational dispute about the antiquity and genuineness of the Old Testament, while we have the *Jews* to vouch for it, whose origin, whose laws, whose pretensions and expectations, it contains. If these men could be supposed to have corrupted any part of it, the prophecies relating to the Messiah were the most likely to have suffered under their hands; which, nevertheless, still stare them in the face from almost every page of their own Scriptures. There is nothing to be found in the history of mankind so extraordinary as what relates to this people.

They are by far the oldest race of men on the globe, subsisting distinctly from all other nations on one œconomy of laws and customs, altho' scattered through all countries, and no-where possessed of one, where they might unite, and govern themselves according to those laws. They have many ages ago buried all the antient empires with which they had any thing to do, although themselves of little strength at the best, and for the most  
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part oppressed and persecuted, as men, between whom, and the rest of the world, there is no common tie of humanity. They are venerated for their antiquity, and from an opinion, that they were once the favourite people of God; and yet despised as the very scum and off-scourings of the human species. They are, in short, the miracle of history; but in nothing so wonderful as in their scrupulous and zealous attachment to a book that mentions and condemns their whole œconomy, as out of date, and superseded by another; and records the curses of Almighty God denounced against them in an hundred places of that book, and executed on them in all places of the world, and thro' every age since their apostasy. Now this can be traced to no other cause but divine Providence; nor can any other imaginable reason be assigned why Providence should thus deal by them, unless it is, that they may the more effectually vouch for the genuineness of those writings, wherein his prescience, and their blindness, are recorded.

As to the antiquity and purity of the New Testament, it cannot be called in question, till every other book, no-way related to Christianity, and older than our own times, is, with reason, condemned as spurious, in regard to its pretended original, and as too corrupt to be depended on in any of its parts; nor, indeed, even then, because the arguments affecting their credit cannot strike at a book, the truth of which hath been attested by the blood of so many martyrs, and its authority alleged by so many myriads of men, in every age since it was published, for tenets which they held on all sides as dear as their lives, against others which they detested and avoided more than death.

If any one objects here, that as much may be said for the antiquity and purity of the *Alcoran*, we deny it. What martyrs sacrificed their lives for the truth of the religion it exhibits, either in the life-time of its author, or soon after; unless we call those martyrs, who fell in battles fought for the plunder of nations, to which this religion pretended to give its professors a right? What controversies, what councils, drew their arguments from,

or decided their differences by, this book, in the first ages after its publication? The *Mahometans* had not, for a long time after the decease of their pretended prophet, any religious disputes, if we do not call those such which were set on foot about the right of succession; and with these the *Alcoran* had nothing to do. During this time *Abubeker*, who formed the incoherent papers of *Mahomet* into a book, and others who had the keeping of that book, might have done with it what they pleased. But, from the time this book began to be often copied, it could not possibly have admitted of much alteration, altho' it might have been corrupted with vastly more ease than the New Testament, so much oftener transcribed from the beginning, and translated into such a variety of languages. It is indeed next to downright madness, to imagine this record of Christianity could have had any other date than that of the church which kept it; or that a book so copied, so quoted, so translated, so expounded, so universally and continually appealed to, could have been materially adulterated.

But, supposing both the Testaments to be as antient and as uncorrupted as we please, yet still we are to inquire whether they are the work of God, or not. There are two ways, by which the author of a book may be known, first, by his stile and matter; and, secondly, by his owning it himself.

As to the stile of the Scriptures, it is, in one respect, as various as the ages in which it was dictated, or the peculiar genius of each prophet or apostle who committed it to writing, can well be supposed to have made it, had no common inspirer or dictator directed their pens. Their different choice of words, and use of phrases, are apparent not only in the originals, but even in the translations. Yet, in another respect, there are several peculiarities that seem to distinguish it from the writings of men, though under the great disadvantage of a translation, made by mere men; which does not hinder it from demonstrating infinitely more beauty in one part; more force and pathos in another; more true sublimity, and yet simplicity, in all; than the most exquisite productions  
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of human genius in their original dress. It is delivered in a species of writing quite distinct from that of the classics, and more natural. Those justly admired performances shew the highest improvement to which the mind of man can, by its own efforts, ascend. They are perfectly exact and delicate. They are so highly polished and finished, that hardly a single thought or word can be replaced by another, without a sensible loss. But then, with all this, they are really stiff, laboured, low, and languid, in comparison of the Scriptures. The art with which they are penned discovers itself, in spite of all their care to conceal it, not only in the texture of the work at large, and the nice adjustment of its matter, but in the choice of every phrase, and the very cadence of every period. It is quite otherwise in the Bible. We have there no appearance of art; no manner of care about minuteness, about polished words, and prim phrases, and little prettinesses. It does not appear, from any one passage of the whole, that the writer had the least intention to strike the minds of his readers with any thing else than the force of his thoughts, conveyed in a rough and masculine dress. Hence arises this admirable effect, that no part of our attention is impertinently amused with the words, but all given to the sentiment, which goes naked to the heart with an energy not to be resisted. When men speak, they require art and address to give strength and persuasion to what they say. But it is not so with God. He can speak to the mind by spirit and thought alone; and never uses words, but for a memorial of what he says. When he condescends to deliver himself in this human vehicle, he will not vouchsafe to borrow any thing from it, but mere conveyance; nay, he disdains the low assistance of method, because it borders on art. He scatters flowers and fruit with such an unaffected profusion, as sets the art of the gardener in a very contemptible light, on the comparison. Hence it is, that as a garden can please us but for a very little time, whereas the face of nature is ever new and delightful; so the finical performances of writers uninspired, howsoever pleasing they may be at first, soon grow dull and languid on the

taste; while such as God vouchsafes to dictate, not only bear, but improve on, a thousand readings. New sense, new beauty, new force, spring up at every repetition, as if all the sentiments had vegetated since the last. But this is owing to the prodigious depth of what he says, which does not, like the thoughts of men, ostentatiously display all its strength and beauty on the surface, but reserves enough to invite and reward every return of our attention. What other stories affect us like that of *Joseph* and his brethren? What fables, produced by human wit, strike the mind like the parables of Christ, or like that of *Nathan* to *David*? How poor and unaffecting are all the descriptions of God's works in other performances, to those we find in the book of *Job*? How low and spiritless are all the attempts of other writers to raise our idea of the Divine Majesty, in comparison of those we find in the *Psalms*, in the prophecies of *Isaiab*, and in the *Apocalypse*? How shall we account for it, that all other writers, who made it their sole business to aim at force, at dignity and sublimity, should fall so infinitely short of the Scriptural writers, who certainly aimed at no such thing? If we are men of taste and integrity, we must acknowledge, that, in case God should ever deign to speak to men, we should expect to hear him speak in the language of the Scriptures, artless and simple, like them, in his expressions; sublime and powerful, like them, in his sentiments.

But, again; an author is known by the matter of his performance. We ascribe this performance to the author of *The whole duty of man*, on account of its piety and good sense; that to Mr. *Addison*, because its thoughts are more delicate, and its turn more genteel, than those of other writers; and a third to Sir *Isaac Newton*, for no other reason; than because it shews a reach of thought beyond the extent of all other minds. But, when we come to look into the Scriptures, we discover a scene of instruction, which, if true, is of infinitely higher dignity and use than the matter of all other writings laid together. We there see, in the historical part of it, when and how this world was created; how we were brought into

into being ; how we fell into this state of sin and misery, in which we find ourselves ; how God drowned the antient world for the sins of men, and preserved a family to re-people it ; how he chose out a people from the rest of mankind, and governed them by laws peculiar to themselves, and by a power superior to nature ; how he sent his Son into the world to redeem us from sin and misery by his precepts, and his blood. This history, which runs thro' a space of more than four thousand years, carries on it, as to the characters and actions of men, the evident signs of more truth and impartiality, than are to be met with in any other history. The failings and vices of such as are most highly favoured in it, nay, and even of those who wrote it, are so undisguisably recorded, that one can hardly help believing some higher hand than their own, had the government of their pens, when they were employed in the work. With this chain of history is interwoven a system of religion, uniform throughout as to its object and end ; but various as to its outward form, according to the different circumstances under which it was from time to time imparted. The worship of one God ; the commemoration of his mercies with gratitude, and of his judgments with fear ; the reformation of mens manners ; the immortality of their souls ; their redemption from the guilt and punishment of sin by the death of Christ ; their exemption from everlasting misery, and title to eternal glory ; form, as it were, the outlines of this religion. But, in order to give it the greater power over our affections, certain positive institutions are added to it, as the most efficacious engines to work on minds exceedingly addicted by nature to outward and sensible things. And, in order to teach us how infinite justice, and infinite mercy, in regard to us, could be reconciled ; as well as to shew us by what assistance creatures so enslaved to sin both by nature and habit might be reformed ; a personal distinction in the unity of the Divine Nature is discovered, whereby we are given to understand, that there is, in God, a Father, who created and governs us ; a Son, who, cloathed in human nature, died to redeem us ; and an Holy Spirit, who reclaims and sanctifies us. This

is the religion revealed in the Old and New Testaments, which, if compared with other religions, is, to common sense and reason, as the sun is to the eye in comparison of the stars. What other religion gives us so just an idea of God, of his unity, or of his attributes? What other religion shews him so awfully majestic in wisdom, justice, and power; or so infinitely amiable in mercy and goodness, so infinitely condescending, as to participate our nature, to suffer for our sins, and to dwell with us poor unworthy creatures? What other religion teaches us to believe, God is always present with us, knows all things, and forgets nothing? What other religion commands us to cleanse our hearts, and purify our very thoughts, and revenge the injuries of our enemies with benefits and blessings? What other religion proposes motives of sufficient weight to counterbalance the corruptions of nature, the inveteracy of sinful habits, and all those violent or ensnaring temptations wherewith the objects of sense and appetite continually assault us? Does Paganism or *Manichæism* furnish us with so noble an object of adoration? Does *Mahometism* teach us so much peace and charity towards men? Does Deism give us so many, or so inducing, reasons for love towards God, or such efficacious helps for the reformation of our manners? No; if God ever gave a religion to mankind, it must be that of the Bible. None other is suitable to the reason, or adequate to the wants, of mankind. Whatever is the force of those reasons which are drawn from the goodness of God, and the exigencies of men, to prove that the means of true religion must have been afforded to the world, it lends all its weight to the Scriptures; for, if they are not the word of God, nor the means of religious information they suggest, the right means, then are we yet to seek for divine instruction.

Beside affording us this admirable scheme of religion, the Scriptures discover a degree of wisdom infinitely superior to all that can be collected from other writings; and this they so accommodate to all circumstances and cases, that a man, who is but moderately acquainted with them, can hardly ever be at a loss, in any difficulty, for such a  
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rule to act by, as will never expose him to the necessity of repentance. The book of *Job*, the Proverbs of *Solomon*, but more especially the preachings of Jesus Christ, teach us such lessons of wisdom and virtue, as are sufficient to put all the philosophy of the world to the blush, and convict it of ignorance and puerility.

Again, there is no state of mind, either culpable or uncomfortable, wherein, if a man applies to the Scriptures, he may not find a remedy against the cause of his complaint, sufficient to bridle a licentious, or console a desponding, turn of mind. Is he afflicted? *Job* will teach him patience and submission. Hath he sinned? *David* will shew him how to repent, and bewail his fall. Are the enemies of his soul likely to prevail against him? Christ will rouse him to vigilance, and *St. Paul* will lend him armour of proof. Is he dull and languid in his addresses to God? Let him join in prayer with *David*, *Solomon*, *Hezekiah*, *Daniel*, and they will bear up his heart with them in strains of devotion so sedately ardent, so humble, and yet so elevated, that, instead of any longer looking on this act of communion with God as a dry disagreeable duty, and preferring every little miserable amusement to it, he will hardly think he lives, but when he prays.

Add to all this, that whereas the mind of man is more apt to be led by precedents than precepts, and is usually too little affected with a naked rule of action, the Scriptures are admirably fitted to his weakness in this respect; for the morality they inculcate is so blended with the history they exhibit, that the reader feels the example, while he sees the rule; and finds his heart animated, as fast as his understanding is enlightened. There is nothing more unassuming than virtue in the abstract, as it lies formally delineated in a system of Ethics. Nor, on the other hand, is there any thing more highly interesting or entertaining than the exemplification of it in the life of a truly religious and good man, with unwearied patience struggling through a thousand difficulties, with fortitude facing the most alarming dangers, with firmness resisting, and at length subduing, the most violent temptations; and, in the end,

emerging in an happy and glorious catastrophe. Here is virtue, not in words, but deeds; not tricked out in lifeless definitions, and quaint propositions, but displayed in all its lustre and beauty by facts that invite the imitation of all men, in whom the dignity of human nature is not intirely extinct. Now the Scriptures present us with a rich treasure of such examples. Its morality is as glorious in the practice, as it is perfect in the precept, of those through whom it is delivered. While, by the one, it points out the way to happiness; it animates us, by the other, with the sight of heroes, bravely fighting, greatly conquering, or joyfully gathering triumphal crowns on every step of it.

On the whole, I think no other author can be so clearly distinguished and known, in the matter of his performance, as God is, in the spirit and wisdom of this surprising book. What one man writes, another might have written, or, at least, have imitated beyond the skill of criticism to distinguish; but no man hath ever yet been the author of such a book as this; and he who knows any thing of it, and of human nature, must conclude no man ever will. It is well if the greatest genius that ever lived had penetration enough to find the bottom of its sense, or sufficient elevation of soul to rise, even on the wings it lends him, to the height it soars to. If any man says I speak from prejudice, let him enjoy his opinion, and leave me to indulge myself in mine. But one thing I am firmly persuaded of, that, were I now for the first time to read this book, I should admire it ten times more than I do; for, I will confess, my weakness in respect to novelty is as great as that of other men. I call it a weakness, for such indeed it is in all cases, but more especially in respect to this book, which hath enough in it to prevent its ever growing old or stale, to a reader of true judgment and taste, were he free from the infirmity mentioned. If, however, what I am saying is the effect of prejudice, how comes it to pass, that certain parts of this sacred book appear to infinitely greater advantage in a bald translation, than in the laboured paraphrases of *Pope* or *Young*? Why do the texts, quoted under this depreciating

ciating circumstance by *Addison*, shew, in the midst of his beautiful periods, and admirable sentiments, like jewels set in wood? That they do, is a remark made by every common reader; but not to be accounted for on any other principles than this, that a man writ the one, and God the other.

The objections laid by Deists against the mysteries, and positive institutions, set forth in this book, are really not worth the notice of an ingenuous inquirer. If God reveals himself, he must reveal a mystery; for he is a being infinitely mysterious and incomprehensible.—Nay, every thing in nature, as well as revelation, is mysterious, if an impertinent curiosity will attempt to trace it beyond the limits of its own capacity. And why may not God order that to be done for a great and good end, which was before indifferent? Can he not make those things subservient to a good purpose, which in their own nature are neither good nor evil? And, if he can, who shall hinder him?

Nor is it much more material to such an inquirer to give himself the trouble of discussing their arguments concerning the command of God to *Abraham*, for the sacrificing of his son; and to the *Israelites*, for spoiling the *Egyptians*, or dispossessing the *Canaanites*. It was *Abraham's* duty to preserve the life of his son, only because God willed it: and, for the same reason, if God was pleased to will the contrary, the Patriarch must will it too, or fail in his duty. This I do not say, as looking on these things to be indifferent in themselves; but because that which makes them matter of duty, and brings them under the regulation of a law, is the will of God, howsoever known. *Abraham* was ready to cherish and preserve his son, while he took it to be the will of God, that he should do so; and he was as willing to deprive him of life, when God commanded it; whose right of thus commanding, neither this, nor any other father, can have the least room to call in question. That act of the two which was most irksome to him, was the highest proof of his virtue and obedience; and is accordingly, with great justice, *counted to him for righteousness* in the Scriptures. As to the  
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spoiling the *Egyptians*, and outing the *Canaanites*, no rational objection can lie against it, as done by the command of God, till it is first proved, that God is not the absolute governor, and sole proprietor, of all the goods and lands in the world; and that he hath not a right to take them from such as, by oppression and wickedness, have forfeited their tenure, and to give them to others more obedient and deserving. The only difficulty in these cases lies in this, that God should command that which in itself is immoral, as for a father to kill his son, or for one neighbour to borrow of another with an intention not to restore. But this difficulty vanishes when we consider, that God, as an absolute legislator, hath a right to dispense with the laws he lays on his subjects; that, properly speaking, no action is good, but because God wills it; nor evil, but because he forbids it; and that he who obeys the law of God for any other reason, but because it is his law, pays more respect to the law itself, or to his own opinion, than to God; whereas all obedience ought to terminate in the one supreme lawgiver, and absolute governor, by no means in his law; for, whenever it does, it destroys the very essence of the law, which lies in the authority wherewith it is imposed, and not in the matter of the law itself. Both *Abraham* and the *Israelites* knew God had a right to give contrary laws at different times, and to be at all times equally obeyed. *Abraham*, therefore, on the command of God, was ready to kill his son; and the *Israelites*, on the like authority, borrowed a small part of their own, and kept it. Can any man say either did wrong, without saying, that God cannot dispense with the laws he gives us; or that, if he does, we ought to disobey, and adhere to the first law, out of respect to our own nature, against the second, founded on an express command of him who is superior to nature? Do we obey the law of God for its own sake, or for his? No doubt, for his alone; for what is the law but his will? But can he will contraries? Why not at different times, and under different circumstances? We should not turn our own nature, or the law of God, manifested by that nature, into an idol, and



set it up above God ; which we always do, when we make it eternal and indispensable.

If any man reads the Scriptures with candour and attention, he will find they speak throughout such things, and in such a manner, as are worthy of him whom they claim for their author. It will be evident to him, that, as to the points of antiquity, edification, and power, expected as marks of the true religion, the Scriptural religion is thoroughly qualified to stand the test of reason ; inasmuch as it was given to *Adam* ; inasmuch as it teaches us how to serve God, and save our souls ; inasmuch as it communicates divine assistance, and sets before us such motives of reformation as are of infinite weight. He, indeed, who only dips here and there, who runs superficially over the words, without staying to examine their meaning, or who reads the Scriptures purely to find objections, will perceive little difference between them, and the works of men ; and that perhaps to the disadvantage of the former, which no-where, that I know of, have spruced out a single sentence for such a reader.

But, whereas arguments drawn from the stile and matter of the Scriptures, to prove they are the word of God, may possibly deceive us, it is, in the next place, our business to inquire whether God hath ever owned or declared himself to be their author. And here it may be a preliminary inquiry, how this declaration should be made ; whether to some who may publish it to others, as in the case of an anonymous book ; or by affixing his name to it, as those writers do to their works, who desire to be known to the world. Altho' the Scriptures produce both these vouchers for themselves, it is evident they are insufficient to prove them the work of God. Those men may have told us a lye, who say they had the declaration from God himself : and, as to adding his name to it, that may have been done without his having any hand in the work, by impostors, who, for by-ends of their own, may have thus attempted to give a sanction to these performances, tho' merely of human invention. These methods may serve well enough as to the works of men, whereof it is not very material whether we know the authors, or  
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not. But a book which tells us, it is the work of God, and, as such, demands obedience to all its dictates, ought to give convincing proofs of its divine original, because we know God would never have published a book, but for very important ends; nor ever expected attention to that book, in order to those ends, without satisfying the world, that he was actually its author.

How then is this to be done? Must God appear to every particular man, and assure him the Bible was dictated by him? By no means, provided rational satisfaction may be given in a more compendious way. If God was pleased to accompany the publication of his book with such other performances, openly and publicly exhibited, as none but he could do, this must prove the book itself to be his work. But what are those performances, which none but God can do? Why, prophecies, whereby future events, depending on the free elections of men, are predicted; and miracles, whereby nature is put out of its course, and forced to undergo such changes as are directly contrary to the stated laws impressed on it by almighty power. To say any being, but one, is equal to such performances, is the same as to say, there are more infinite beings, or gods, than one. Or to say, God would lend those gifts to prove a book to be his, which he knew to be the invention of men, is to blaspheme against common sense, as well as him.

By miracles, therefore, often and openly wrought, and for a long time continued to be wrought, by the penmen of any book, as proofs of a divine inspiration dictating that book, its authority may be made incontestably evident to all who shall see the miracles, or receive such testimony thereof as cannot rationally be doubted, and is never doubted in other cases. Miracles, it is true, are in themselves improbable facts: but these two things are more improbable; first, that a great number of men, honest and rational in every thing else, should conspire to report a fact they knew to be false, and should die rather than discover that fact; and, secondly, that God should never have given a true religion to mankind, or given it without sufficient evidence, or evidenced it sufficiently,

ficiently, without miracles, which is impossible. Now, whatsoever the improbability of miracles, considered in themselves, may be, it is vastly less than either of these improbabilities singly; and therefore, when set against them both, is reduced to nothing; insomuch that miracles, supposed to be wrought in proof of the true religion, become probable in proportion to the surplus of the two greater improbabilities compared with the one which is less than either. All the works of God are miracles; for they are all raised out of nothing: and as every work of his in this world is a miracle, wrought for the use of man, many of them for very low, and almost imperceptible uses, why shall we think it strange or improbable, that the same infinitely wise and gracious Being should work some for the reformation and eternal happiness of man? Did he miraculously form a mushroom to be tasted, and a rose to be smelt, by us? And *why should it be thought a thing incredible with us, that God should raise the dead?* especially since, in so doing, he not only shews his goodness, by restoring his creature to life, but, when it is done for our conviction, thereby calls us into the true religion, and, thro' that, to a spiritual resurrection from sin, and to eternal life. Miracles, when there is no necessity for them, are of all things the most incredible; but, when there is a necessity, they are as credible as the most usual phænomena of nature; for God can as easily work a miracle, as do any thing else; and we may be sure will be as willing as he is able, if a sufficient reason requires it; but no imaginable reason can be stronger, than that of proving the truth of a necessary religion to those who are to receive it.

Since, therefore, a revelation can be no otherwise proved to come from God, than by miracles; if a revelation is expected, miracles also, for the same reason, must be expected. Now the miracles related in the Bible being qualified, as it is evident they really were, to stand the scrutiny for that purpose recommended in the former discourse, right reason must receive them as evidence, that the religion of the Bible was dictated by God himself. They are to be considered as the authority and seal of  
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Almighty God, affixed to his own revelations, by all, to whom sufficient proof is given, that those revelations were thus miraculously evidenced. As to us, and others who have lived, or shall live, in ages very remote from those in which the miracles were wrought, they are fully attested to us, in the written record made of them, by such as performed or saw them, and laid down their lives for the truth of that record. And as to the antiquity and purity of the record itself, I have already shewn there is infinitely less reason to suspect it, in regard to either, than any other record in the world. We believe in Christianity, because we are convinced it was proved by miracles; and we believe the miracles were actually wrought, because we are sure the history which relates them, is authentic and genuine, having been so kept as to put it beyond a possibility of material corruptions.

But there is a particular kind of miracle recorded in the Scriptures, which proves to us, and must for ever prove beyond all controversy, that they are the word of God; and that is prophecy, or the prediction of future events, depending on the free elections of men. We have already observed, that God only foresees, and can enable his creatures to foretel, such events. But, in the Scriptures, there are predictions of this sort in such abundance, and so evidently verified, partly by facts recorded in the sacred history itself, and partly by others, attested in the history of later times, as puts the matter beyond all question, that those Scriptures are the work of God.

To avoid the circle of proving the Scriptures by the prophecies, and the prophecies by the Scriptures, nothing more is requisite than to prove the Scriptures of both Testaments as old as they represent themselves to be, by arguments independent not only of the prophecies, but of the Scriptures. Now the *Jews* are competent vouchers for the antiquity of the Old, and the *Christians* for that of the New, as I have already made appear; and these are parties too opposite to be suspected of an intention to vouch for each other. Besides, were there occasion for it, the antiquity of these writings might be established as clearly as that of any other writings, on the credit of an-  
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tient authors, whose works are not comprehended in the Scriptures, and who could have had no intention to attest any such thing, either because they had no reason to think it needed their attestation, or because they would rather, if they could, have recorded the very contrary. But the point by no means stands in need of borrowed proofs. It is not to be supposed the *Jews* should forge a set of writings that give their adversaries so great advantages. Nor can credulity itself be so very blind, as to believe the Christians could have been all along quoting the writings of the New Testament against one another, in their continual controversies, had not these writings been extant before the first quotations of that sort.

If then there had been at first any doubt concerning the divinity of the prophecies in the Old Testament, which foretel the coming of the Messiah, together with the rise, progress, and period, of the *Persian, Grecian, and Roman*, empires, there could be none, after all these prophecies had been exactly fulfilled. It was impossible for *Isaiab* or *Daniel*, as mere men, to foretel events so very remote, and so absolutely depending on the freedom of persons who were not to be born for some hundreds of years after the death of those prophets. Nay, it was equally impossible for any angel, or superior creature, to communicate intimations of this kind from the strength of his own faculties. That the prophets should be enabled to foretel the coming of the Messiah, carries reason with it at first sight; but that they should have the history of the three empires mentioned revealed to them, and, through them, to the *Jews*, seems not so pertinent or accountable. It is, however, equally an argument of the divine foreknowledge wherewith they were inspired. Nor is it a less proof of God's wisdom, considering how greatly his people were in after-times to interfere with these empires; and what an immense advantage it was to the Messiah, and his dispensation, to have the most important affairs of the world, for so long a course of years, foretold by the same prophets that foretold the time of his own coming, the place of his birth, his miracles, his character, his death, his resurrection, his suc-

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cess as a teacher, and, in short, all the chief transactions of his life. As, in the eye of the world, the character he intended to assume was low and despicable, something was necessary to aggrandize the expectation of him, and give the world reason to look on him with veneration, although unaccompanied with outward pomp and power. Nothing could so effectually answer this end (I mean, nothing previous to his own miracles), as the prophetically intermixing his birth and history with those of the greatest empires the world was ever to see; and, what was more, the prognosticating to his kingdom an absolute conquest over the last and greatest of these, together with a dominion without bounds or end, as we see in the Second and Seventh of *Daniel*.

As to the prophecies relating to Christ, it is sufficient to convince us of their divinity, that Christ and his apostles quoted them to the *Jews* as extant in their antient books, and as literally and exactly fulfilled in the new dispensation of religion. And as to the new prophecies which he and his disciples uttered concerning the apostasy and blindness of the *Jews*; the destruction of *Jerusalem*; the long and dreadful persecutions wherewith Christianity was to be opposed; the amazing success and triumph wherewith it was, nevertheless, to be crowned; the rise, progress, and power, of Antichrist; with many other important events, all arising from the uncompelled schemes, and voluntary actions, of men in after-ages; we must grant they have had a full and clear completion, if we are not determined to give the lye to all history during a period of more than 1700 years, and even to our own experience and observation.

Now we ought to observe, in respect to almost all the prophecies in both Testaments, that, while they promised benefits and blessings to some, they threatened others with disgrace, destruction, and curses; that, therefore, if there were some who had reason to wish for their completion, there were others no less interested to oppose, and, if possible, prevent it; and that, in most instances, the opposers had all the advantages worldly power and policy could give them; while they, who wished well to the completion,

completion, were wholly destitute of both. This was seen remarkably in the case of Christ's resurrection. He was dead; his disciples were the simplest, the weakest, the most fearful, of mankind. They wished, indeed, to see him alive again; but the stealing away of his dead body was a thing they neither could have desired, for to what end? nor have effected, because they had a military force to oppose, and, either by day or night, must have carried it away thro' crouds of *Jews*, attentive to the tomb, and watchful over an event the most awakening that had ever been foretold or promised to mankind. But that, notwithstanding all this, the prophecies were fulfilled by his actually coming to life again, these men, so fearful before, have fully proved to the whole world, by a testimony which all the severities of a sanguinary persecution could not frighten them from giving. The same thing is as remarkably evident in the history of the three succeeding centuries. Christ foretold great and terrible persecutions, and also universal success, to his followers. Now did not the refutation of his prophecy, as to the persecutions, lie in the hands of the *Jews* and *Romans*? Had they any thing more to do, in order to prove him a false prophet, and consequently an impostor, than only not to persecute? Yet they did persecute, and that most cruelly at times, for the space of three hundred years; and, by that very means, not only verified this prophecy, but also thereby did more towards verifying the other, concerning the successful preaching of Christianity, than they could have done by any other possible expedient; for the wounds of the martyrs were infinitely more eloquent than their mouths.

The compass of a discourse like this will not suffer me to descend into a minute discussion of every thing the subject may seem to require; but *I speak as to wise men*, who may easily see, by what hath been said of miracles in general, and prophecies in particular, that God hath owned the Scriptures for his word and work; that he hath furnished reason with abundant proofs of this; and that, therefore, to believe rationally in religious matters, and to be a Christian, is one and the same thing.

I know there are men who will find the way to make light of all this ; and I know there were also men who firmly believed in the prophecies relating to the Messiah, and, at the very time prefixed by those prophecies for his appearance, saw Christ work the very miracles which it was foretold he should work, and yet considered, or would have had others consider him, as no better than the instrument of the devil. This their sin against reason, and the highest possible cause of conviction, Christ pronounced unpardonable. They, who in these times follow them in their infidel presumption, no doubt partake of their guilt ; for, altho' they do not see the miracles of Christ, as they did, who ascribed them to the devil, yet there is no one thing in the world they have more reason to believe, especially as they have had all the other proofs afforded in favour of Christianity since the first committal of the unpardonable crime, whether by miracles, by martyrdoms, or by prophecies fulfilled, from that day to this. Even the false prophets, the false teachers, the false miracles, the heresies, dissensions, schisms, among Christians, altho' seen through the telescope of infidel malice, as so many dark spots on the bright face of Christianity, do high honour, nevertheless, to its Author, who foretold them all, and, by that means, converted these instruments and efforts of his enemy into so many proofs of his own infinite wisdom and truth, for the full satisfaction of such as shall candidly inquire into the merits of his religion.

Let a rational man now consider, first, the rapid propagation of Christianity, which, in less than half a century, had spread itself thro' all parts of the *Roman* empire ; had penetrated into the *East-Indies*, *Ethiopia*, *Italy*, *Spain*, *Gaul*, and *Scythia* ; and, in the space of two hundred years, had converted such numbers in all ranks and conditions of men, that its apologists could boldly tell the emperors, they could not suppress Christianity without subverting their own power. Secondly, let him consider, that, as fast as this religion advanced, so fast superstition, idolatry, and wickedness, declined, particularly in the *Roman* empire, at that time remarkably prone, thro' infinite wealth,



wealth, and insolence of power, to universal corruption. And then let him reflect a little, by what instruments it made this prodigious progress, and wrought these glorious effects. Were its preachers all profound philosophers? No, there were few among them who knew more than barely how to read and write. Were they all eloquent orators? No; excepting *St. Paul*, there were none of them, for a long time, who understood more of elocution than the plainest tradesman who heard them. Were they all profound politicians? No; of all men they were the simplest, the most artless, the most destitute of address and skill in managing worldly affairs. What then? Did they proselyte the world, like *Mahomet*, by the sword, by power, and by the expectation of spoil and plunder? No; they were among the very lowest and weakest of the people. The sword was so far from being with them, that, for three hundred years, it was almost continually employed against them; while they opposed it with nothing but patience and resignation. The empire found itself Christian, almost as soon as it ceased to persecute Christianity. And as to the hope of wealth, it was so far from being a temptation to any man to turn Christian, that every one who received baptism, foresaw he must surrender the little wealth he had, either to an imperial, or a voluntary confiscation. How then? Did the ignorant convince and teach the learned? Did the uneloquent persuade the orator? Did the simple circumvent the artful? Did the weak subdue the strong? No; to suppose this, is to suppose a thing in itself absurd and impossible. It was God, who, by the wisdom of his word, convinced and persuaded. It was God, who, by the power of his miracles, caught and conquered. That all the world might know it was he alone, he chose men for preachers who had nothing to contribute to the work but a tongue; and, lest they should have any farther share in it, forbade them to study or prepare what they had to say: he chose them, in short, that he might, *by the foolish things of the world, confound the wise; that he might, by the weak things of the world, confound the things which are mighty; and by the base things of the world, and things that are despised, yea,*

*and by things that are not, bring to nought things that are. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings he ordained strength, sufficient to still the enemy and the avenger, and perfected his own praise.*

While the true religion was as yet contending for superiority, and the prophetic promise made to it in that behalf was unaccomplished, some apology might be made for him who suspended his assent till he saw the issue, because the opposition was powerful, the end great, and the means apparently insufficient. But now that prophecies, so unlikely to be true, have been fulfilled; now that instruments, so utterly inefficacious in themselves, have prevailed; all that which at first might have occasioned, or in any degree justified, suspense, serves only to enforce conviction and assent. This great event was not stolen upon the world. A full and timely warning was given of it by the promises and prophecies published in Scripture. The world, alarmed at these, and confiding in its own power, exerted its utmost efforts to prevent their taking place, and thereby to prove the book wherein they were contained was not the word of God. Little did it think it was doing all it could to prove the contrary, which undoubtedly it was; for by what other means could the divinity of the prophecies, and the interposition of Almighty God in favour of his word and religion, have been so amply, so universally, demonstrated, as by an opposition, which must have proved successful, had it not been baffled by a power superior to that of all mankind?

To conclude; if we have reason for believing any thing, it is this; that Christianity is the true religion, and the Bible the word of God. Fully convinced of these great truths, let us now earnestly beseech the gracious Author to give us a right understanding of its necessary doctrines, a steady adherence to all its blessed truths, and an heart and will ever ready to regulate both our faith and practice by the same, thro' Jesus Christ our Saviour, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE III.

How the Scriptures are to be read.

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JOHN V. 39.

*Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.*

**H**AVING, in the former Discourse, proved that the true religion is revealed to us in the books of the Old and New Testament, I intend, in this, to shew, how we ought to read these books, in order to answer the important ends for which they were written. If we consider either those ends, or the foreign and really sinister views, with which the sacred writings are perused by too many, we shall look on this as a subject of infinite consequence to us. May the Holy Spirit enable me to speak with that power, and you to listen with that attention, which the unspeakable dignity of the point demands!

When the words of my text were uttered by our Blessed Saviour, the books of the Old Testament were the only Scriptures in being. In those the Jews *thought they had eternal life*; and Christ neither commends nor censures their judgment. He does not commend it; because those books, considered in themselves, and without an eye to any further dispensation, did not afford the means of eternal life: nor does he censure it; because those

writings, rightly understood, did testify of him, who is *the Way, and the Truth, and the Life*, John xiv. 6. Now, if what is promised, concerning Christ, in the Old Testament, is, with equal authority, recorded in the New, as fully accomplished, we must look for the means of eternal life in the New, rather than in the Old. The search, however, recommended by Christ, must be made into both, that the whole scheme of our redemption, whether as prophetically promised, or as actually completed, may be understood and taken together.

And here it is necessary we should consider, what sort of a search this ought to be. The word in the original, whereby it is prescribed, implies a close examination, a thorough scrutiny, into the Scriptures. The nature of the thing also points out the same; for it is the word of God we are to search, and eternal life we are to search for. In respect, therefore, both to the majesty of the Author, and the dignity of the end, no one thing in the world can be of so much consequence to us, as a right application of our minds to the book of God.

Taking this for granted, let us inquire, first, With what views; secondly, On what principles; thirdly, With what dispositions; and lastly, By what rules, we ought to read the holy Scriptures.

And first, As to the views; they ought, undoubtedly, to be no other than those which God proposed to himself, in the revelation made by the sacred books.

Should an author write with one intention, and his reader peruse him with another, the absurdity of such a conduct in the reader must be too evident to need any other proofs, than what it gives of itself. Yet that which is but an absurdity in him, who reads a system of morality, in order to learn arithmetic, becomes a flagrant impiety in one who reads the word of God with any other view, than that wherewith it was written. All other authors sometimes trifle in their works, and therefore may be trifled with by their readers; but there is no trifling with the works of God.

With what view then did God become the author of a book? It was not surely to confirm the opinions, nor to countenance the vices, nor to gratify the curiosity, nor to pamper

pamper the learned pride, of men : No ; it was to teach the world something it did not, or could not, otherwise know ; to disabuse it of its religious errors ; to correct its vices ; to call home its inquiries to necessary instructions ; and to teach it the vanity of science, falsely so called. It was infinite mercy that gave birth to this book, and infinite wisdom that furnished the matter. The end therefore proposed by it, must be proportionably great and good. To prevent mistakes, hear what it says itself, concerning this end : *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God ; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. *The Scriptures, says the Spirit of God, ver. 15. are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. They teach us to know the only true God, and Christ Jesus, whom he hath sent, which is eternal life,* John xvii. 3. If therefore we would avoid the impious absurdity of reading the word of God with other views than those for which it was written, we must search it only for the knowlege of God, and our duty, that we may understand what we are to believe and do, in order to be saved. All things necessary to the service of God, and our salvation, are there so clearly revealed, that common sense cannot fail to find them, provided it wisely and honestly searches for nothing else. Other things there are, which are more difficult ; but they are less useful, the smaller kernels being inclosed in proportionably thicker shells ; which if the weak are not able to open, some one stronger may do it for them ; or, in case no one does, they ought not too deeply to regret their loss, since they have a sufficient plenty before them of food more substantial, and much easier digested.

Notwithstanding all the stir that hath been made about the fundamentals of Christianity, what they are, and how to be understood, he who reads the Scriptures with that intention only which God had in publishing them, must infallibly find what he looks for, provided he reads on right principles, and with proper dispositions ; which,

what they are, we shall presently explain. It was precisely for such men as this, that God committed his revelation to writing; wherein, nevertheless, he must have been wholly disappointed, if minds, so well accommodated to his intentions, cannot arrive at even the foundation of true religion, nor understand its very rudiments. Our endless disputes concerning the essentials of Christianity do not, in the smallest measure, proceed from the obscurity of those essentials, as they are set forth in holy Scripture, but from the obliquity of our own minds, who, prompted by our vile affections and prejudices, are ever looking for such informations or proofs as God never intended to give us, frequently indeed for the confirmation of such opinions as it was his main intention to refute. Now, it is no wonder that inquirers of this sort, if wedded to their prejudices, should either endeavour to pervert the Scripture, by sophisticated constructions, or, what is more consistent with reason (since it is more likely God should never speak to us, than that he should speak falsely, or absurdly), reject it in the lump; because it does not speak as they would have it.

What then, in the second place, are the principles on which the word of God is to be read? I will mention only four, without taking up your time in proving them; because they are such as no rational Christian can dispute.

He who reads the Scriptures, in order to the ends for which they were written, must, first, firmly believe, that they are the word of God.

Secondly, He must be fully persuaded, that he himself is neither able to find out, nor perform his duty, so as to arrive at eternal happiness, without the assistance of divine revelation.

Thirdly, He must take it for granted, that God can deliver or aver nothing but the truth.

And, lastly, He must believe, that God knows how so to speak, as to be understood by those he speaks to; and, in necessary matters, could not have chosen to be obscure in what he reveals.

It is, in a great measure, for want of a due attention to these principles, that such infinite disputes and bickerings have

have arisen, in all ages, among Christians, concerning the very primary articles of faith, and the plainest duties or motives of Christian morality. Did every Christian reader of the Scriptures consider, that he comes ignorant, weak, and under the unhappy weight of a nature corrupt, and prone to sin, when he applies to those books for instruction and assistance; that he is therefore not to bring his preconceptions with him, like one who knows already what he is to think and do; and that he comes to a teacher, who is willing to direct him; who hath made provision for all his wants, and is able to help his infirmities; did he, I say, rightly consider these things, and suitably accommodate his mind to these considerations, he could have no doubts about his success; nor could there be any room for such doubts, if the Scriptures are indeed the word of God. In that case, necessary knowledge only being sought for, the instructions and the disciple are so well fitted to each other, that he must easily find out *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, he seeks for. As sure as God is wise and good, so surely is the way plain and manifest in itself: And as the reader of his word hath nothing to blind him, so he cannot fail to find it.

But, unhappily, few men read this holy book, either as if they thought God had written it, or as if they took their own salvation to depend absolutely on it. They read it with a tincture of Deism, and self-dependence; and therefore do not wholly resign themselves to it: and, in their debates, they quote it, rather as an authority, to which others, more credulous, must yield, than as decisive, in respect to themselves. This is evident from their frequently shifting from one interpretation of the same text to another, when the first does not answer their ends, nor baffle the opponent; just as if they thought it not material what the text meant, provided it could be forced to vouch for their tenet.

This dealing is altogether preposterous, and subversive of itself; for if they believe the Scriptures, and argue from them as conclusive, why are they not allowed to speak for themselves? Why do these men intermix their own prejudices with the scriptural principles, and press on

is the motly consequences of premises so unnaturally conjoined? He must be very stupid that does not see the clumsy seam, which tacks the truths of Scripture to their prejudices, nor the force put on both, to make them unite. In other branches of knowlege we found all our reasonings on axioms peculiar to the points we would prove. But, in regard to religion, we are pestered with arguments, either founded on no axioms, or drawn from other lights, than those of revelation, by disputants who pretend the utmost deference for it. From these foreign axioms they have beat out systems of their own, with which they find it infinitely difficult to reconcile that of Scripture. This is the very thing which distresses the libertine Christians of all denominations. Instead of making their principles bend to the Scriptures, they preposterously and impiously make the Scriptures veil to their principles, on a *postulatum*, that reason (by which they mean their reason) is the dernier resort in all sciences; which is so far from being true, that the very faculty, by which we reason, is forced in every argument to appeal, for the grounds of its deductions, to the simple apprehension, wherein these notices are received, that admit of no dispute. Here are lodged those first principles of religion, that God is true; and that those senses which gave testimony to the miraculous proofs of our religion, were not deceived. These axioms erect every plain assertion of Scripture into an axiom equally indisputable among all, who believe the Scripture to be the word of God.

If the word of God is admitted as the rule of religion, no axioms, or first principles, can be drawn from any other source, for the establishment of a theological system. The independent fancies and reasonings of men are by no means to be associated with this rule. All the disputes and errors among Christians have arisen from this monstrous position, that revelation was given us only in aid of natural religion; whereas it was really intended for our only guide to God, while the sole office of sense and reason, in respect to religion, is *to apprehend, and be apprehended* by, that guide, *Phil.* iii. 12. As to the dictates of mere nature, as it is found at present, they have all along experimentally



ally proved themselves not only inadequate to this purpose, but rather, in the bulk of mankind, the corruptors of true religion, ever mistaking their authority for greater than it was, and confounding the truth, as often as they were suffered to prescribe, with infinite blunders and inconsistencies. If God hath given us two religious lights, they ought not, surely, to destroy each other; but as, on the contrary, that which was last afforded, must have been given, because the first was found deficient, the first ought to yield, whenever they appear to interfere. He who believes the Scriptures, and yet abides by the dictates of his nature, when they seem to contradict those Scriptures, pays a compliment to his own understanding, at the expence of his respect for God's wisdom and veracity: And he provides not a whit better for the preservation of that respect, who endeavours to warp the word of God to his favourite preconceptions.

The judicious see, we have had enough, and too much, of this work already; and that Christianity and Deism can never be so coupled together, as to produce any other children than monsters. We must either follow Scripture, and be Christians; or follow nature, and be Deists; or we may indeed be Atheists, and follow nothing. There is no sense nor safety in halting between opinions and principles so irreconcilable. No two of these three can ever possibly coalesce, but in an head capable of quietly lodging contradictions together. For instance, what sort of principles are his, who, placing himself between Deism and Atheism, believes in God, and denies the retributions of another life? And what sort of principles are theirs, who, taking their stand between Christianity and Deism, hold a morality and sanctions independent of God's animadversions; and disbelieve every thing they cannot account for, with the one, while they maintain the truth of revelation, with the other? May not God justly say to these men, as he did to the *Babylonians* and *Chaldeans*, *Your wisdom and your knowlege, it hath perverted you?*

It may seem amazing, that one who believes the Scriptures to be the word of God, should ever once be perverted by experience;

suffering any thing else to dictate religious principles to him; and still more amazing, that he should suffer his other dictator, if he must have another, to lay violent hands on the Scriptures, and, by arbitrary expositions, prescribe to God himself. Yet we see this done, by too numerous classes of men, every day. The bigots to superstition and libertinism, although they set out under infallible guides, wholly opposite, I mean popery and self-sufficiency, follow, nevertheless, the same impious method of so expounding Scripture, as to force from it whatsoever those guides are pleased to dictate. Are the Scriptures so very pliant, as to yield to these extremes? No; so far from that, they condemn both as peremptorily, as they could have done, had they been written but yesterday, purely for that purpose.

Of all the human species, not excepting thieves, robbers, and assassins, they are the vilest sort of men, who artfully labour to shelter those private opinions, which vanity or interest hath induced them to espouse, under the sanction of scriptural authority, though they see this cannot be done without doing violence to the word of God. The Scriptures were given to instruct, reform, and save, mankind; but these monsters of dissimulation and impiety use it only to pervert, corrupt, and ruin them. Having no concern about their own salvation, they no more care what comes of the souls, than *Cæsar* did what came of the bodies, of other men, so they may obtain a victory, make a triumph, and lord it afterwards over the reason and faith of a misguided multitude. As the opinions they contend for are generally the very reverse of those doctrines, on which the Scripture lays the greatest stress, so none are obliged to search it so narrowly as these men, who mean to quote it exactly, as the devil did in his polemical controversy with Christ, in direct opposition to its true import, and for the very same end, that they may be worshiped. What then? Were so many prophecies uttered, so many miracles wrought; were both the Law and the Gospel written; and did Christ die, merely to give these worthies (who are taught to squint from the truth by interest, as well as vanity) an opportunity  
of

of shewing the superiority of their talents, by forcing God's word to prove in one place, what it expressly denies in another? Enormous impudence! infernal sacrilege!

Now, as to the dispositions wherewith, in the third place, the holy Scriptures ought to be perused, they may, I think, be comprehended in humility and diligence.

With what degree of humility we ought to read the word of God, we may judge by that respect we feel for the works of an eminent uninspired writer. We always compare the ideas we have of his and our own understandings together; and read him with deference and resignation proportionable to the apprehended superiority of his abilities over our own. We dwindle in our own eyes, as an *Homer*, or a *Newton*, grows in our esteem, till the error of the one begins to assume the authority of a demonstration, and the blemish of the other passes on us for a beauty. But be our admiration of a mere man what it will, we, nevertheless, always read his works with some respect for our own judgement, and take the liberty, sometimes, to doubt or disapprove of what he says, because we know he may err: Whereas when we read the works of God, all this use of our judgment is, or ought to be, as totally superseded, as if our reason were annihilated; because we know he cannot err, because we know our reason is less than nothing to his wisdom. From this humility, which, when the book of God is open before us, cannot be too deep, should arise modesty in respect to our own understandings, and veneration for the wisdom of God.

The reasons for modesty in respect to our own understandings, proceed from a consciousness of our ignorance, which (let folly wonder at it as much as it will) is always greatest in him who knows most; for this reason, because the more sense and penetration he is master of, the better able he is to see into his own defects, and find out the limits of his own capacity: Whereas an unthinking man cannot see, shallow as he is, to the bottom of his own depth, for the confusion and mud that lie above it; nor view the extent of his own capacity, narrow as it is, for the mist that overspreads it. In this I am supported by  
experience;

experience, and by the wisest of men, who saith, *A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil; but the fool rageth, and is confident. The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowlege*; because he is sensible he hath not yet enough. The wisdom he hath already acquired is as the seed of more in the kindly soil of his modesty, which is ever reminding him of his defects and wants. *But there is more hope of a fool, than of him who is wise in his own conceit*; which flatteringly tells him, he is full, and can hold no more; or, although he could, there is no more to be laid in.

A man of sense, before he applies to the word of God, should consider, how little he knows of true religion, for which he is not beholden to his instructors; and how absolutely ignorant he must have been of its first principles, had they never been suggested to him by others. His deductions from these, so slowly and so precariously made, will equally serve to humble him; and, at the same time that he sees so little room for depending on his own researches, he is as fully convinced of the insufficiency, for the same reasons, of other men, considered as uninstructed themselves. He knows the unenlightened nations are, to this day, sunk in almost total ignorance of true religion. He can hope for little from the philosophy of the antients, inasmuch as he perceives their most exalted geniuses, *Socrates, Plato, Cicero*, groping their way to divine truths, with infinite anxiety, and little success; gleaning traditions, catching at oracles, forcing conclusions; and, after all, only convinced of the prevailing errors, without being able to substitute any certain system of truths. From hence he may take modesty at the rebound, and ask himself, if such men could do so little, what progress he should have made, or shall be able hereafter to make, if left to his own unassisted efforts, or the aids of other men, equally unenlightened by the divine instructor?

His modesty, founded on these reflections, cannot, you see, be confined to his own inability, but distrusts for that of the whole species at large. He perceives others are not much better qualified for the investigation of true religion

religion than himself ; but so far as he or they know any thing of the matter, he can trace that knowlege, through a continued succession of teachers, up to divine revelation ; and, if his skill in antiquity is considerable, can see where the influx of conceit and conjecture, of human invention and priestcraft, of superstition on the one side, or libertinism on the other, hath carried the mud of foreign mixtures into the stream of religious tradition. But how to extract the limpid truth from such a compound of impurities, he will still be at a loss to know, without recurring to his judgment, who alone can distinguish what flowed from the rock, from that which ran from fens and morasses. In case he hath sense enough to see how utterly incapable he and all other men are, to be their own directors, in an inquiry after knowlege so remote from the senses, he is then, so far, a fit disciple for God ; and, if he is convinced the Scriptures are his word, will open them with that veneration which becomes the disciple of such a Master.

To a man not blinded by an high opinion of his own abilities, the book of God will appear, though written in the language of men, in every respect worthy of its Author. Here, he who gave us being, teaches us to know ourselves, by a discovery both of our origin, and our nature. Here, our minds are anatomized by the hand that formed them, and the springs of error and corruption, of sin and death, laid open. Here, the only remedies of these internal disorders are exhibited in evidences sufficient to satisfy our reason, and in motives and expedients sufficient to captivate our affections. To this true theory of our nature, long sought for in vain by philosophy, is added such a knowlege of him, who gave being to all things, and such an history of his awful or gracious dealings with men, as affords us a thorough insight into true religion, while it throws light on both the natural and moral world. In this sacred book are displayed the miracles of infinite power in creating, of unfathomable wisdom in governing, and of boundless goodness in redeeming, the world ; and a majesty of stile so adequate to the grandeur, the immensity, of the subjects, that it is matter of just amazement to an  
uninspired

uninspired writer, though of the most elevated talents, how so much force and dignity could have been given to words, generally indeed to the simplest and coolest words, of those languages, in which this wonderful book is written. How the most groveling imagination soars on its descriptions! How the insensible heart melts, when touched by its heavenly strains of piety! How the stubborn heart trembles, at the thunder of its menaces! Can the languages of men be the only vehicle of that spirit we feel, when we peruse this book? Or is there not something else, unseen, unheard, that speaks to our understandings in light, and to our hearts in fire, while our senses entertain the letter of God's word? How would that philosopher have been transported with the study of these venerable volumes, who saw error and wickedness in all the theology of the pagan world; who sought in vain for sufficient lights in philosophy, and oral tradition; who inferred from thence the necessity of a divine instructor; and who, with the most penetrating understanding that ever shone in a mere man, confessed he knew nothing, and died a martyr to a negative religion! In what a despicable light do the modest and sensible declarations of this prodigious man set the scoffs of the libertine scorner, who says he needs no religious instruction, and ridicules the Scriptures, as low, tasteless, and weak performances! There is nothing displays the stupidity of a genuine block-head so egregiously, as his conceited grin at the wisdom, and his unfeeling numbness at the *pathos*, of a well written book; nor is there any thing can so justly figure him to our imagination. as a wild boar in a flower-garden, rooting up, and trampling under foot, the beauties of nature. Let us leave the contemner of God's word to amuse himself with his *Pilkington*, and his *Woolston*, that he may laugh at things sacred, and, with *Solomon's Fool*, make a *mock at sin*, at his own sins, which another, of common sense and humanity, can hardly behold without tears; and let us return to the man of sound sense and piety, who, diffident of his own understanding, and highly venerating the wisdom of God, is desirous to enter on the study of his word, that we may suggest to him a third disposition

of mind, arising from the conjunction of these two with an ingenuous love of truth, which it is necessary he should cultivate in himself, in order to a profitable search into the Scriptures.

And this is candour, or a readiness to close with truth, the moment it makes its appearance. In all our debates, we are willing enough to compliment ourselves with this generous attribute; yet, nevertheless, we are usually either so insensible to the force of reason, or so tenacious of our opinions, or else, on all sides, so eternally right, that nothing is given up, no exchange of sentiments made. There is indeed, in this matter, a self-deceit, which it is not easy to see to the bottom of. We are apt to be extremely fond of our prepossessions, through habit, if we had them from education; and through vanity, if they are the dictates of our own judgment. When we peruse the Scriptures under the influence of this attachment, we contemplate their sense through the medium of our own opinions, rather than through that of the words; we give a cursory attention to passages that seem to speak against us, and dwell with pleasure on such as appear to second our own previous way of thinking; and if we are not blessed with uncommon candour, the exposition given by a commentator must be very slight, to be rejected, when it is for us; and very strongly supported, to be received, when it is against us. But we should consider, that our opinions, before they are maturely examined, may as well be against us, as for us; that the resignation of a wrong opinion, instead of reflecting any discredit on us, is the strongest proof both of a good head and heart, and consequently does us the highest honour; and that we can in nothing be more unhappy, than in being precipitately wedded, for better for worse, and that with a violent, but blind, affection, to an harlot principle, that lies in our bosom, deceiving our judgment, and poisoning our conscience; which may be the case, for aught we can tell, till it is severely canvassed. Besides, if it is an error, as long as it holds possession, it keeps out the opposite truth, which may possibly be a matter of infinite consequence to us.

Now, the authority of the divine books is as well qualified to force this byass from the mind, as their wisdom is to set it frait, when thus disincumbered. But then, to give it its full swing within us, we ought always feelingly to remember, that we, who are ignorant and erroneous creatures, are perusing the word of God, who cannot be mistaken. This should teach us resignation. He is a presumptuous fool, who repairs to God for the confirmation of his own principles, and not for information. It was to teach us better principles than our own, that a revelation was given us.

If God is our teacher, we must give him leave to go foremost, and not impiously expect he should only follow to vouch for every fancy we please to form. As then we are to read the word of God for information, we must look for two kinds of benefit; first, to be taught such truths as we were wholly ignorant of before; and, secondly, to be disabused of such errors as had formerly stolen our assent, when the means, or attention to the means, of better knowlege, was wanting. In such an expectation, instead of wishing to see our prejudices, which are more likely to be wrong than right, supported, we should only wish for sense and resolution enough to discard them with contempt, in case they shall be condemned in the word of God. As a riveted attachment to prepossessions of any kind is the strongest proof of a foolish, a dastardly, and a slavish, mind; so, on the other hand, there is nothing that gives us so high an idea of a man, as to see him, with a noble dignity and strength of soul, shaking off the long-worn fetters of prejudice, and emerging out of inveterate errors into the free exercise of reason. A soul, thus prepared to break through all impediments of education, pleasure, interest, or self-sufficiency, and to run into the arms of truth, with a mind open to conviction, and an honest ardour of heart, is one of the most pleasing objects which the all-seeing eye can behold. The holy Scriptures were written peculiarly for such a soul as this, who is transparent to every ray of light they send forth.

But here two things are to be noted; first, That a man may be prejudiced in favour of the truth; and, after his



his principle is brought to the test, may shake off the prejudice, and yet retain the truth, on the strength of a rational conviction; and, secondly, That whereas we cannot divest ourselves of our prepossessions, till we see reason sufficient to prove them erroneous; I do not mean, by what I have said, that we should abdicate our anti-scriptural opinions, before we have read the Scriptures, and perceived them condemned therein; but that we should so hold them at bay, as to give them no vote in the interpretation of Scripture, nor a licence to stay longer with us, than the sacred oracles appear to patronize them: I mean also, that we should be as clear-sighted, and as ready to give them up for the infinitely better dictates of Scripture, as we are to distinguish a guinea from a shilling, and to exchange the latter, though long kept, for the former, which we never saw before. In this instance, and all others relating to our worldly interest, sense and reason operate freely; and why should they not rather shew their power over us in matters of religion, for which sense and reason were given us? But some men keep their religious prepossessions, like pocket-pieces, which they will neither use, nor part with, for truths of ten thousand times the value.

The other disposition of mind requisite, in order to a profitable perusal of the Scriptures, is diligence; without which, little benefit is to be expected, either by those who search them with an eye to controversy, or those who do it only with a view to reformation of manners.

To the first, I must beg leave to observe, that the word of God is too intelligible, as to fundamentals, to need more than an ordinary capacity, and a moderate degree of attention, provided the reader is blessed with an humble and candid turn of mind. In matters less necessary, it is not always so plain. Now, whereas both lie together in one book, and are often closely connected, the wrong-headed reader, instead of viewing these latter by the light reflected on them from the former, is too apt to fix his attention on the darker and less essential passages; and, through the obscurity arising from thence, hath but a dim perception of such as are in themselves more clear;

or else absurdly confounds both together; from whence it frequently happens, that he either heretically degrades an essential, or schismatically contends about an extraneous, of religion. But neither of these, nor both together, occasion half the difficulties in searching the Scriptures, that the prejudices of mankind do, who, reading under a bias, magnify the real obscurities, and raise up others where there are none; for, to support a favourite opinion, which they can no more surrender than a dis-tempered limb, they are obliged to darken the plain passage, which makes against it, and wrest a number of others, in order that they may oppose that sense of it which they do not like. Hence infinite volumes of contradictory commentaries and tracts, as well on fundamentals, as other points, which have rendered the controversial study of the Scriptures one of the most perplexed and difficult branches of learning. Now, as there is no convincing a man by Scripture, till you have refuted his exposition of Scripture, it is easy to see what a compass must be taken, to enforce conviction, and sometimes even to come at satisfaction, on any one disputed point, if we are to take the judgments of other men in our way. To disembarass ourselves or others, even by the help of Scripture, so artfully expounded by various sects, and, on the strength of those expositions, so plausibly alleged, for opposite purposes, in books, where it lies intermixed with the infinite subtleties of those who quote it, is indeed no easy task. Unhappily there is not one of us whose mind is not charged with more or less of this medley, and so tinged with it, that, in reading the word of God, we can hardly separate his meaning from that which hath been tacked to it, for some time, in our heads. It is owing to this, that a passage, plain in itself as the light, being viewed through the coloured spectacles of this or that exposition, perhaps of two or three expositions at once, looks dark, confused, or opposite in its sense to other passages, concerning which we have hitherto had no doubt. It is very remarkable, that when we read a chapter or two in the Bible, we generally find them plain and intelligible enough; but if we, immediately

diately afterwards, consider them in a commentary, we are surpris'd to find them all turned into riddles. Every verse requires a paraphrase; and it is odds it does not escape an annotation beside, where it is often made to speak what the writer never intended; because he was of no particular sect, but a Christian, who only set down what God dictated. These and the like freedoms taken with Scripture, make great diligence and application necessary in him who studies it as a controvertist.

But that the candid, the diligent, and learned searcher of the Scriptures may give himself as fair an opportunity as possible to find out its real sense, let us now, in the last place, suggest the rules, by which his inquiries ought to be regulated.

If his mind is humbly conscious of its own inability to instruct itself, deeply penetrated with awe and veneration for the book of God, and candidly disposed to surrender its prepossessions to the dictates of Divine wisdom; having left himself nothing but his pure reason to be applied to the sacred writings; it will be worth his while to hear what the true use of that faculty is in this application.

Nothing seems to be worse understood, nor more disputed, than this very important point. Some men tell us, it is impious to use our reason, when God is speaking to us, and would have us keep back our faculties from interfering with the dictates of an omniscient Instructor. Others give their reason a kind of check over the word of God, and, when they seem to clash, endeavour to bend the Scriptures to a meaning more agreeable to what they call reason, than that which appears to be its obvious sense, as if their reason were the safer guide of the two.

The first are guilty of an error against the nature God hath given them; it being impossible for any man to be convinced, but through the inlets of knowlege, and the rational faculties, which God hath endued him with by nature. And the second are guilty of as gross an error; because God is wiser than man. *Solomon*, rightly understood, seems to have ruled the point: he says, *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own under-*

*standing.* This, as indeed right reason does, sets the judgment of God above our own. But does it exclude the use of reason? No; it only bids reason yield to the infinitely superior wisdom of God, when that is known to have dictated somewhat, which reason, left to itself, would have ruled the contrary way, on a certainty that God cannot err, and that the reason of any particular man may. This, however, leaves reason its proper province in religious matters untouched; which consists precisely in finding out the true and real meaning of the divine dictates, howsoever notified, and teaching the mind to acquiesce in that with as full conviction, when it contradicts, as when it coincides with, the deductions of our own judgment. The dictates of God, and right reason, can never be contrary. Whenever God says one thing, and the reason of any man another, reason must have erred. Be the maxims of any man what they will, he can have no maxim so much to be depended on, as that God is true in all he says; nor form any conclusion so certain, as that we are firmly to believe what God tells us, though never so seemingly or really contrary to other points formerly received as truths.

But here it is to be observed, that before reason yields up its judgment to any proposition, as asserted by God, it must first have more certainty, that it was so asserted, and that it understands the true sense and meaning of that proposition, than it hath, that the other proposition, which it yields, is true; for when it hath less, it must give up the Scriptures. There is no middle way, no warping the sense of a book, which we take to be the work of God. The office of reason therefore, in respect to a revelation once admitted, is by no means that of an informant, but of an expounder. Scripture, if we are fully satisfied it is the word of God, must dictate absolutely to our understandings, and not our understandings, in any measure, to Scripture. If we are sensible of our own insufficiency, and determined to follow the Scriptures, we must read them with the utmost resignation to what they set forth, so far as we, on a fair exposition, understand it. Our preconceptions are not to intrude, nor shelter themselves,

selves, right or wrong, under the authority of revelation. Neither are we so to bring its determinations, and our interfering judgments, together, as to beget a sort of middle or spurious principles, which, like monsters, must carry the features of parents that have no resemblance to each other.

In reading other books for information, we take their meaning by the words, as they lie. Why should we not deal in the same manner by the book of God? Is he the only author who knew not how to express himself? Or may we arbitrarily put what interpretation we please on his words? In perusing other books, we are, in a greater or less degree, always knowing readers, and take the liberty, as such, to dissent from our author, as often as we think he dissents from reason and truth. But, in reading the book of God, we read on the supposition of total ignorance in ourselves, of unerring wisdom in the writer, and of great depth often in the matter. You that read the book of God to gratify an impertinent curiosity, or to pick out proofs for your own opinions, or with any tincture of a reserve, or an appeal to your own previous judgment, know, that you are a poor despicable mortal, equally ignorant and vain. You are blind, but you do not know it; wicked, but you do not feel it. On both accounts, there are men of moderate capacities, who are fit to be your teachers; and yet you set up to be the teacher of God.

If we are thoroughly convinced God is the author of the Bible, we must conclude there are no impertinent nor useless notices communicated to us therein, nor any obscurity in things necessary. What then is left for our reason to do? but to judge reverently and candidly of its sense, and to submit to that without reserve. The truth is, it much oftener happens, that our simple apprehension is requisite, than our reason, to find the meaning of God, which, for the most part, is too plain to need or admit a disquisition. When the private opinions of any man happen to differ with the express words of Scripture, if he hath common sense or modesty, it will be easy for him to see which ought to give way; for, if his opinions are right,

then the Scriptures are not the word of God; and if they are not his word, then, infinitely good and gracious as he is, he hath not yet afforded us the means of true religion. He who, by proceeding on a contrary maxim, is led first into a counterfeit Christianity of his own invention, and then into Deism, may consider this, and afterwards judge for himself, whether, on his principles, he hath not yet a further step to make.

There are other rules whereby the ingenuous controvertist, whose understanding is thus divested of prejudices, and confined to its proper office, may direct himself in the study of the holy Scriptures.

In the first place, as he ought to be a competent master of the original languages, so it is necessary, above all things, that he fix to himself the right sense of the leading terms; more especially of the names of God; of the appellations, Father, Son, Holy Ghost, the Messiah, and the like; and of the words, Inspiration, Miracles, Faith, Worship, Covenant, Atonement, Sacrifice, &c. Now, as these are common words, he cannot do better than to understand them, for the most part, in the common acceptation; because it is not to be supposed, the Holy Spirit should apply these terms, so generally used, to any other than the accustomed ideas, without giving notice of an application so unexpected. If this is done with due care and skill, and without any view to the proof of this or that particular tenet, it will infinitely facilitate and enhance the use of the next rule:

Which consists in a clear and determinate conception of the main or essential doctrines, which are always more strongly insisted on, more copiously and variously expressed, and consequently in a more precise and ample manner revealed, than other matters of less moment. If these fundamental articles are once well cleared up and known, they will serve, as first principles or axioms, to ascertain a world of other points, more briefly intimated, or couched in darker terms. There are but few passages in Scripture, especially of the doctrinal kind, that have not more or less connexion with some one or other of the fundamentals; and in proportion as they have, the light, that

that issues from the fundamental, may be trained along that connexion, till it is brought near enough to dissipate the difficulty.

The third rule is, that of explaining the figurative by the literal, and the darker by the plainer passages, when the same thing happens to be expressed both ways in different parts of the Scripture. By this expedient innumerable difficulties may be removed, and the New Testament may be used as an authentic commentary on the Old.

The fourth rule is, carefully to consider the context of a doubtful expression, that, the design of the writer being known, such a sense of the words may be found as they will bear apart, and as that design evidently requires. Of all methods, this is the most at hand, in every difficulty, and, if closely pursued, will generally save the trouble of going to a greater distance in the Scripture for clearer passages to the same purpose; which, however, is often necessary, and ought to satisfy the inquirer; because the whole Scriptures, being dictated by the same infallible Spirit, are to be considered as one connected context.

The fifth rule is, that one plain assertion, especially if it be negative, as, *Beside me there is no God*, is to determine the point it makes for, against any number of darker passages, that may seem to intimate the contrary; and against all deductions of our own drawing from plainer passages, howsoever necessary these deductions may appear. The meaning we pick out of an obscure passage may happen not to be that of the author, but our own; and therefore is never to be set in competition with a plain express assertion of God. Much less is a consequence, of our own forming, to be opposed to such expressions; because it is sufficient evidence of its fallacy, that it contradicts the direct assertion of the Holy Spirit. The usefulness, or rather necessity, of this rule, will appear best by an instance. Christ, or the Word, says, *My Father is greater than I*. From hence it seems necessarily to follow, that if the Father is God, the Son, or Word, cannot be God, in direct contradiction to the Holy Ghost, who says, *There is but one God*, and, *The Word was God*. Here, it is plain, the conclusion ought to be given up,  
though

though we could not discover its fallacy, merely because drawn by a fallible man, directly against the express assertion of the unerring God; or at least that the authority of the Scriptures ought to be denied, on the supposition of a contradiction found in them. But why should not the conclusion be given up, since it is possible Christ may have had two natures in him, so as to have been less than the Father in respect to the one, and equal to him in respect to the other? This instance sufficiently shews, how apt our own deductions are to deceive us. Yet such is the pride and self-sufficiency of some men, that they must needs have an hand in making Scripture for themselves; and, what is the most preposterous effect of their pride, they are generally more tenacious of the precarious conclusions drawn by themselves, than of the great truths of Scripture, which expressly condemn those conclusions.

If any passage happens not to be cleared up to the satisfaction of the inquirer, by these methods of searching the Scriptures themselves, he ought then, in the last place, to hear what others have to say on the subject, in their commentaries or conversation; because it is possible, that the unwilling truth, which he was not able to bolt, may be discovered by another more sagacious. But, in this case, as he ought only to wish for a satisfactory solution, not for any particular solution, and to consider those whom he consults with, howsoever famous for their judgment and learning, as no more than fallible men; it is his business to beware, that neither his own propensities, nor the authority of a great name, put too precipitate an end to his inquiry.

It now only remains, that we say a word or two to those who search the Scriptures purely with an eye to their own reformation or virtue. These, though the plainer, are undoubtedly the wiser sort of Christians. The grand end of revelation was, to teach us what we should believe and do, in order to be saved. The design therefore of God in giving, and of these readers in receiving, the Scriptures, is one and the same.

But it must be observed, that the practical searcher of God's word stands in as great need of candour and diligence,



gence, as the controversial. If the latter hath his prejudices to surmount, the former hath his vicious inclinations to subdue. As the one may be tempted to warp and bend the Scriptures to his private opinions, so the other may be too apt to soften them into an indulgence for those vices which they were given to correct. Humility therefore, and candour, and resignation, to the dictates of God, are equally necessary in both cases.

Diligence also is equally requisite; because although the fundamentals of our faith, the practical principles, and the sanctions, of the Christian covenant, are most clearly revealed; yet, whereas, through the miserable depravity of human nature, the exercise of vigilance, devotion, and mortification, are generally distasteful to us, a continual and close attention to the means of reformation becomes so necessary, that it cannot be remitted, without an immediate relapse into sin and wickedness. Now, as the means of reformation are set before us in the Scriptures, those sacred volumes are therefore incessantly to be perused and studied, that deep and lasting impressions of our duty, and the motives to our duty, may be not only taken off, but perpetually refreshed and renewed. The libertine transgressor, however, will not read them; because he contemns them. The believing, but hardened sinner, dares not read them; because they threaten him, in every page, with the judgments of God, temporal and eternal.

But the sincere and thinking Christian, who in vain exerts his natural strength against his corruptions, flies to them as his only resource; because in them he clearly sees what he is to do, and what to avoid; how closely all his thoughts, words, and actions, are inspected by infinite wisdom; how awfully and severely he is to be judged by Almighty God, in all his majesty, before angels and men; and how gloriously he is to be rewarded, or how dreadfully punished, for the life he is now leading. He there also sees the infinite benefit that may be drawn from the contemplation of his covenant with God, and a strict adherence to the ordinances of pure religion. He can no-where see virtue and vice painted in such heightening colours, nor exemplified in  
such

such striking characters. He is therefore to read and meditate on the word of God with all possible diligence, veneration, and affection; because he reads for his life and his soul.

But he is to remember, that he also is, in some measure, a controversial reader. He is engaged in a controversy, of infinite importance, with his baptismal enemies; and these are subtle disputants indeed, who, by a species of sophistry not easily parried, endeavour to prove, that good is evil, and evil good; and that it is better to be vicious than virtuous. In order to this, they draw their arguments not only from passion, affection, and the allurements of temptation, but even from an appearance of reason, nay, and sometimes from the very Scriptures themselves.

As the tempter hath not yet ceased to quote Scripture, they who search it against him, ought to do it by the rules laid down for the controversial perusal of it, that, as our Saviour did, they may baffle his misapplied quotations by others that cannot be wrested. This cunning adversary knows full well how to argue with them, from that part of their nature which they are most inclinable to follow, and to help out his too pleasing plea, by alleging such passages of Scripture as magnify the mercy of God towards the infirmities of men, and by relaxing such as most severely threaten vice with the effects of divine justice. If we may judge by the warm apologies frequently made for actions apparently wicked, we must conclude, a right rule of action is not naturally so clear a point in practice, with some, as it is in speculation, with others. And, considering with what delight at first, and triumph afterwards, men frequently do such things, as their consciences strongly protest against, it is evident they stand in need of something further, than they are yet aware of, to restrain the enormity, and correct the depravity, of their affections. Revelation affords us this. To revelation therefore we ought to have recourse; but ought to search it with candour, lest we be deceived; and with diligence, lest we should, at any time, lose sight of those  
powerful

powerful aids it affords us towards a thorough reformation of our manners.

To conclude ; if any man, on a thorough examination, hath found the Scriptures to be the word of God, what hath he further to do, than to read them with the diligence and humility of a learner ? How should we listen, were God to speak to us face to face ? Just so should we listen, when he speaks to us out of his Scriptures, attentive only to hear and understand what he says ; more fully persuaded of its truth, than of any other truths ; and as ready to obey whatsoever he enjoins, as if the happiness of heaven was to be the immediate reward. If God speaks to us, does he not so speak, especially in matters of the last consequence, as to be understood ? And, if we understand him, surely we must believe and obey him. But, if in any thing he hath been silent, in that we should be silent too, taking it for granted, that it is a thing we ought not to know : or, if in some things he speaks mysteriously, we are only concerned to believe as far as we understand ; and to conclude, either that the divine author, for wise and good reasons known to himself, thought fit to leave the matter in some obscurity ; or that the nature of the thing itself made greater plainness impossible to our clouded apprehensions, and narrow capacities. When we have enriched our understandings with a clear conception, and lively impression, of all the fundamentals, we are not to think the Bible may be laid aside : No ; these impressions are to be made still stronger, and our improvement carried higher, by a continued perusal of God's word, wherein, if we should spend our whole lives, we should, to the last, find new beauty, new excellence, new force, darting on us from unnumbered passages, that, in all our former readings, were overlooked, as not containing any thing extraordinary. This is a bottomless mine of jewels, whereof the very rubbish is gold and silver, prepared to set off the lustre of its emeralds and diamonds. If we can be affected only with things sensible, in God's word we may find such as are spiritual cloathed in a body, and so accommodated to ourselves, that while their beauty is admired, nothing

else can give pleasure ; while their terrors are apprehended, no earthly pains can be felt. Here all is great, all affecting, fit for God to utter, and man to hear with every faculty of his soul. Let us therefore *draw near, and hear what the Lord will say unto us ; for the words he speaketh unto us, they are spirit, and they are life.*

And let us draw near by prayer ; for, without God's assistance, we can neither bring with us that humility and candour, nor that diligence, so necessary to a profitable study of the Scriptures ; neither are we to depend altogether on the strength of our own talents, as sufficient to interpret the word of God, inasmuch as they are naturally dead to true religion, and shut up against the knowledge of divine things. The Spirit of God, that inspired the sacred penmen, is the best interpreter of his own dictates. Let us therefore beseech him *to open our understandings, that we may understand the Scriptures.* Let us earnestly beseech him, who hath caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, to grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, by patience, and comfort of his holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which he hath given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE IV.

The Unity of God proved.

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ISAIAH xliv. 8.

*Is there a God besides me? Yea, there is no God;  
I know not any.*

**I** Once little imagined it could ever be necessary to prove in a congregation, calling themselves Christians, that there is but one God; a point so fundamental to the whole of our Religion, that not a single article of our faith can be true, if this be false. If without the belief of God we must be Atheists, it is as plain, that without the belief of his Unity we must be Pagans. There was nevertheless of old, and is at this day, a numerous sect, that stiles itself Christian, and yet believes in, and worships, more gods than one. But I hope, before this Discourse is brought to an end, it will evidently appear, that reason must be disclaimed, and Scripture renounced; or a plurality of gods rejected, as both senseless and impious. It is hard to say, whether, had God never vouchsafed us the light of revelation, we should, even at this day, have, by the force of reason only, been able to make his Unity a clear point to our understandings. The antient *Egyptians*, *Greeks*, and *Romans*, did not do it; and the knowing *Chineses*, as well as the  
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barbarous *Americans* and *Africans*, are still far from doing it. The Scriptures therefore afford us the best lights, and the most satisfactory proofs, in this most important point of knowlege. However, now that God hath been pleased to discover the great truth, reason is surpris'd at herself for having been so long in the dark about it, and is able to demonstrate the point she could not find out. If this is the case, it will be worth our while to let her open the cause a little, before a superior advocate is called to its defence.

In order to determine the question, whether there is one only, or more gods, we must know what God is. And here a difficulty may seem to arise, inasmuch as this Being cannot be defined. But it is none. It is enough to say, he is the infinite Being, which, at the same time that it excludes all possibility of a definition, sufficiently distinguishes him to our understandings from all other beings, and shews what it is alone, which we are to pray to, and adore.

Now that which demonstrates his being, points out to us, with equal clearness, the Unity of that being; and shews us, that, as there is a God, so there can be precisely but one.

That we ourselves, and all other things which fall under the observation of our senses, or offer themselves, by any medium of knowlege, as objects of our more internal faculties, one only excepted, are finite and bounded beings, is a truth which a very little reflection will convince us of. They are bounded in their extent, and passive powers, if material; in their active powers, if mental. Such beings could not have been the primary causes, either of themselves, or other things: of themselves they could not, because the act of creating supposes existence in the agent, previous to that act; nor of other things, because it requires unlimited power to raise any thing out of nothing. Neither could they have been self-existent, because in that case they must have been unlimited, and independent as to existence, which is absurd; for no two things can be unlimited or infinite in any one respect, inasmuch as each could not possess the whole of any one attribute.

attribute. Although it were possible to conceive, that two or more beings might have two or more attributes unlimited, and that each of them might have a share of any one; yet to suppose that each can have all, is a flat contradiction. But he, who is self-existent, hath independent, and therefore unlimited, existence; or, to express it better, he hath perfect existence, which can neither be so multiplied, or divided, as to leave perfect existence to another. A self-existent being must exist necessarily and eternally; necessarily, because, if we take away the necessity of his existence, it becomes indifferent whether he exists or not, unless by the will of another, which is wholly contrary to the idea of self-existence; and eternally, because no being can arise out of nothing, but by the will and power of a prior cause, which totally destroys the supposition of self-existence. A necessarily self-existent being must therefore exist through all duration. He must also exist through all space; for if we could suppose him not to exist in any particular part of space, we might as well suppose him not to exist in another part of it, and so on in all; which would take away the necessity of his existence, and reduce him either to a dependent being, or non-existence. Hence it appears, that there can be but one infinite, unlimited, being; and that all other beings must have had a beginning, and may have an end. They must therefore have borrowed being from some sufficient cause. But what cause would have been sufficient to raise them out of nothing, and to bestow such beauty of form, such harmony of qualities, such excellence of nature, on them? None less than infinite; infinite in duration, otherwise nothing could have been produced for want of a first cause; infinite in power and wisdom, or nothing could have been produced so useful, so perfect, as the works of creation are in their kind, nor so good and happy as the intellectual part of it may be, for want of a sufficient cause.

From hence again it appears, that there can be but one infinite, that is, one unlimited, being; and that two such are a contradiction, inasmuch as they must limit each other. Infinite is improperly attributed to creatures, and

Only in respect to our limited capacities. Thus it is that matter is said to be infinitely divisible. And even when infinity is ascribed to space and duration, we ascribe them to nothing, and therefore speak absurdly, if space and duration be not considered as attributes of the one real Infinite. Absolute, real infinity, can therefore be the attribute of one being only, and can admit neither division nor multiplicity.

Neither can it admit defect in the smallest degree ; because defect implies limitation. Of all defects, folly and sin are the greatest instances of weakness and limitation, and therefore the farthest removed from the nature of a true Infinite. Moral necessity is the next ; because it excludes liberty, whereas liberty is essential to an unlimited and unbounded being. These two positions, whereby we assert the necessity of goodness, and of moral liberty, in the one infinite Being, may seem contradictory to our narrow apprehensions, which cannot conceive them consistent in ourselves ; but they are so far from it, when attributed to the Infinite, that we see they can be separately demonstrated to be necessary attributes of that Being.

Having thus proved, that there must be an infinite Being, and one only, which raised all beings out of nothing, and bestowed on them their respective natures ; another proof of his Unity will result from thence, if we consider, that he who makes any thing must, so far as he is the maker of it, understand and comprehend what he makes ; and that it is impossible for any finite nature to comprehend those operations, whereby the forms or essences of things were impressed on their substances, much more how those substances were called forth out of nothing. Yet, impossible as this is to the creature, it must be easy to the Creator ; that is, to an infinite mind. We must infer the wisdom of a workman from the greatness and excellence of his work. Such are the works of creation, that we cannot help ascribing infinite wisdom to their Author. Now infinity, as we have seen already, cannot be divided, or multiplied ; and therefore there can be but one infinite wisdom, or one infinitely wise Being.



This Being alone can comprehend any thing ; for he alone made every thing. That which in the world seems infinite to us, is finite and comprehensible to him. Matter is, to our apprehensions, infinitely divisible ; but he can reckon up the parts into which it may be divided. It is demonstration to us, that space is infinitely extended ; but he can assign its measure, and count its points. It is equally plain to our understandings, that duration is eternal ; but he can sum its moments, and give the total. And, what is more than all this, the infinite mind can comprehend itself ; or to speak more strictly, as comprehension seems to limit the thing comprehended, whereas God cannot be limited, the knowlege of the divine mind is commensurate with the infinity of the divine nature ; which is all I mean when I say, the infinite Being can comprehend himself. Now this is so far from being true of any other mind, that no other can comprehend itself, or any thing else, though never so low in the scale of beings, though never so obvious in comparison with other things. We conceive of that which we take to be infinite, by negatives only ; which is not conceiving it as it is, but as it is not, and confessing we cannot comprehend its real nature, nor define it. The infinite mind only can conceive an infinite, positively, and as it really is in itself ; and therefore it is to be styled the infinite of infinities, which is of capacity sufficient to comprehend, and consequently, in the boundless grasp of his ideas, to limit, whatsoever else we call infinite. Now is it not shocking to common sense and reason, to suppose there can possibly be more than one being, of whom all this may be said ; that is, more than one real Infinite, one God ?

It is from the works of creation only, that we can refute the Atheist, and prove there is a God, against such as deny the truth of all revelation. But could we rationally ascribe the creation to a creature ; that is, to a being of limited wisdom and power ; this would force us to acknowledge the argument for the being of a God not demonstrative. If the world could have been made by a less than an infinite Maker, it could not, of itself, prove there is a God, or an infinite being ; and consequently the

Deist could never hope to convince the Atheist ; for the Deist neither knows of, nor will allow there is, a creature of wisdom and power sufficient to create the world ; that is, to raise the systems of created spirit and matter out of nothing. If, without the aid of revelation, the being of God is to be proved from any thing, or all things, that have been made, we must find the work of creation infinitely too great for the agency of a creature, or a limited being. The truth is, we cannot prove the being of an infinite cause any otherwise, than by an effect acknowledged on all hands impossible without an infinite cause. He who denies the work of creation to be such an effect, totally subverts the argument of an infinite cause, and leaves himself without a natural argument for the being of God. To say, that the infinite first cause may enable a creature to create, by communicating infinite wisdom and power to that creature, is the same as to give up the natural argument for the being of a God ; for neither reason, nor the light of nature, points out any such creature to us ; nay, reason tells us such a communication is impossible. A creature must be limited in all its attributes and powers. God cannot make a new God, another, or a second, infinite. This implies a contradiction. They who say, he can communicate a limited degree of his wisdom and power, and that such degree may be sufficient for the work of creation, do not consider, that the attributes of God can no more be divided, or parcelled out, than he can himself ; that they cannot be limited so as to adapt them to a created nature ; and that the wisdom and power of the creature are only analogous to those of the Creator, by no means the same either in kind or degree. Neither do they consider, that a limited wisdom or power are utterly inadequate to the work of creation ; and that to insist they are not inadequate, is to destroy the argument for the being of a God, drawn from that work. It is as much the business of a Christian, as of a Deist, to convince the Atheist of error ; but that Christian can never convince him, who grants the world might have owed its origin to somewhat less than infinite power and wisdom ; for, to refute an Atheist, it is not enough to  
prove

prove the world was made ; we must prove it was made by God, which cannot be otherwise done, than by proving no one else could make it.

I have endeavoured to make this kind of proof for the Unity of God as clear and familiar to your apprehensions as possible ; and yet you see, there is, notwithstanding, so much subtilty in it, as is sufficient to convince us of the extreme difficulty to be surmounted by us in beating out the proof, had not the point itself, to be proved, been suggested to us by revelation.

As therefore we have reason amply sufficient for looking on the Scriptures as the dictates of God himself, who can neither deceive, nor be deceived, we shall take what the Scriptures say on this head for unquestionable proofs, since such they must be to every Christian. It would be endless to cite all the concurrent passages for this purpose ; and therefore I shall only single out a few, wherein the doctrine is most expressly set forth. *Is there, saith the Lord, speaking by Isaiah in the words of my text, a God besides me? Yea, there is no God, I know not any. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no god besides me—that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me ; I am the Lord, and there is none else, Isaiah xlv. 5, 6. Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called, I am he, I am the first, I also am the last, Isaiah xlviii. 12. Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts ; I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God, Isaiah xlv. 6.* He lays down his eternity, you see, as an introduction to the belief of his Unity. *He is the first, he is the last ;* and he therefore is the only God. *Unto thee, that is, Israel, it was shewed, saith Moses, Deuteron. iv. 35. that thou mightst know that the Lord he is God, there is none else besides him.*

Here you may perceive the Unity of God is enforced by his own declarations, conceived in the strongest negatives, to the utter exclusion of all other beings from the idea of God. Accordingly the first commandment, together with numberless other places of Scripture, in negatives also, absolutely forbids the worship of every thing

else as God ; whether by love, by fear, by prayer, by sacrifice, or any other species of adoration. *We know, saith St. Paul, that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one, 1 Cor. viii. 4.* If now there is but one God, we cannot be at liberty to worship, or pray to, any other being. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, saith Christ, and him only shalt thou serve, Matt. iv. 10.*

In these passages, the first and fundamental article of our faith is fixed, and the sole object of divine worship so restrained, as to leave no subtil or equivocal medium between the adoration of one only eternal God, and gross idolatry. Although we should suppose a creature endued with all the wisdom, goodness, power, and glory, that God himself can bestow on a finite being ; and further still, although we should suppose this creature employed in suffering the greatest misery to procure us the height of happiness ; yet, as he is nevertheless but a creature, he must be at an infinite distance from the right object of our worship ; and, as he is but the instrument of our happiness, he cannot challenge any degree of that love, wherewith he, who hath made and employs him, ought to be adored.

Who now would imagine, after all that hath been said, or can be said, on this subject, a rational believer in the word of God could once think himself obliged, or barely permitted, to *worship the creature even as the Creator*, who saith, *I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another ?* Isaiah xlii. 8. The word in the original, which is translated by *The Lord*, is *Jehovah* ; that name whereby he distinguishes himself from all other beings, and which he will no more give, or communicate, to another, than his glory. And what is this incommunicable glory, which, together with the name, cannot be imparted to any creature ? The passage itself shews it to be the honour or glory peculiarly annexed to that name ; to wit, divine worship ; because he connects the negative, as to his glory, immediately with the declaration of his name ; and likewise, because he says, in the very same verse, *neither my praise to graven images.* And why

why not to graven images, but because they are creatures; and creatures, though of the highest order, being but creatures infinitely beneath him, cannot share the praise, the glory, the worship, due only to the infinite eternal Creator?

But here the pretended Christians, who worship creatures, say, both this name and honour may be, and are, imparted to creatures. As to the honour, they tell us, it is conferred, in a certain degree, on angels, kings, &c. when they are set forth to us in Scripture, as the substitutes of God, as the representatives of his majesty, and the executors of his authority. For this they cite passages by no means applicable to the purpose, there being nowhere in Scripture a single passage, that prescribes any degree of divine worship as due to an angel, or king. Even the respect we are there allowed or commanded to pay them, is, if we attend to the sense of Scripture, to be terminated in him ultimately and only, in whose name, and by whose authority, they minister to us in spiritual, or bear rule in temporal, concerns. Instances so far fetched, and so disingenuously distorted, are not to be brought in contradiction to passages so directly negative, so pre-emptorily exclusive, as this, of all creature-worship. And as to what the same worshipers of creatures urge, that this name may be, and was, communicated to creatures, inasmuch as God said to his people, *Exod. xxiii. 20, 21. Behold, I send an Angel before thee to keep thee in the way, &c. Beware of him, &c. for my name is in him*; it can by no means serve their turn, till it is first proved, that divine worship is ordered to be paid to this Angel, on account of the name that was in him; which cannot possibly be done. The *Israelites* are only admonished to beware of him; not to worship him. How does it appear, that he takes upon him to speak in his own person, or to act as any thing more, than the mere servant and substitute of God?

The angel, indeed, who appeared to *Moses* at the burning bush, and was one of those that *spoke the law*, *Hebr. ii. 2.* delivers himself in the name, and, as it were, in the person, of *Jehovah*, who was present also. But if God employed this angel to utter his words, does

it follow, that those words were spoken by the angel any otherwife than as the instrument and mouth of God, when it is so evident, that the words neither are, nor can be, the words of any but God himself ?

But if the name Jehovah may be given to a creature, then there is no peculiar name, by which God may be distinguished from his creatures, made known to us by either the light of nature, or Scripture. How far this must contribute to throw our study of the Scriptures into confusion, and tempt us to Polytheism, let the sober hearer judge. I must say, for my own part, that, as far as my observation on the Scriptures hath led me, no error, no crime, seems to be so carefully guarded against, as that of idolatry ; and surely, if we consider either its heinous and pernicious nature, or the unaccountable controversy before us, none could so much need it ; for after all the guards and precautions, after all the threatenings and judgments, wherewith the way to it is barred, we see the worshipers of the true God, who call the Scriptures their only rule of faith, have found the way to hedge in the adoration of creatures under the shelter and sanction of those very Scriptures. This cannot but seem astonishing, beyond all measure, to one who is well acquainted with the word of God, and but little used to the obliquity of human reason, and the perversity of the human heart. The first commandment alone, one should imagine, is sufficient to confine our worship to the one infinite Being, and to fill us with the utmost abhorrence to the thoughts of adoring any inferior or subordinate object whatsoever. This commandment is far from being a simple direction for the worship of the true God : besides this, it prohibits absolutely the worship of any other ; and is levelled directly against the Polytheism of the Pagans, who, together with one supreme, adored a variety of subordinate deities. It was no matter what was worshiped with the *Mithras* of the *Persians*, the *Baal* of the *Syrians*, the *Osiris* of the *Egyptians*, or the *Jupiter* of the *Grecians*, who were false gods themselves ; but wheresoever the true God is adored, there nothing else is to share the peculiar honours of divinity with him ;

both

both because his own awful law forbids it, and because the first, the highest created nature, being infinitely removed from all approaches to a participation of his majesty, hath no more title to a fellowship in his honour, than a worm, or a mite.

Besides, to what end should we pray to a fellow-creature, who, if absent, cannot hear us? who, though present, may want pity, or, pitying, may want power to relieve us? For what can a creature do, without the licence or commission of the Creator? And of whom is this to be sought or obtained, even if the things we petition for, were to be conveyed or executed by the intervention of a creature? Surely of him alone, who is present every-where, and cannot be ignorant of our requests; who hath goodness proportionable to his knowledge, and power equal to his goodness, to encourage the addresses of all his creatures. As there are no degrees of divinity, so there can be no degrees of divine worship, no prayers offered up, no thanksgivings rendered, but to God alone. If Reason and Scripture make any thing, in reference to the object or nature of divine services, plain and indisputable, it must be this. We may therefore safely lay this down as a maxim, that there is but one God, who must be adored by all Christians, as he ought to be loved, with all their hearts, with all their minds, with all their souls, and with all their strength.

Having clearly proved, both from Reason and Scripture, that there is one only God, let us now see whether any created being can, consistently with either, be advanced to the name and dignity of God. Such a question ought, I confess, to shock the good sense and piety of every one that hears it; but, since it is actually made a question, and many have the boldness to maintain the affirmative, it is humbly hoped that clergyman, who endeavours to refute an opinion so poisonous and impious, will rather merit the thanks, than the censures, of a truly Christian audience.

Forasmuch as it does not seem to be the opinion of our adversaries, that any creature can possibly be made God, in the strict and proper sense of the word, I shall not much labour

labour to shew the absurdity of believing, that a finite can be converted into an infinite ; or a being, produced in time, be rendered eternal. If I fully prove a subordination of gods, or a deification of creatures, howsoever conceived or managed, to be that very Paganism or Polytheism, against which right Reason and Scripture do so strongly protest ; this, I hope, will be sufficient.

All created natures are, at the will of their Creator, capable of multiplication, of more or less, of increase and diminution ; and consequently, as to intelligent beings, of subordination. But the infinite nature cannot be imparted, cannot be multiplied, cannot be increased or diminished ; and therefore admits not of comparison or subordination. There is no comparison between entity and non-entity ; and finite is to infinite, as nothing is to something. The heathen poet therefore spoke very judiciously and honourably of God, when he said, “ What shall I make the  
 “ subject of my song before the accustomed praises of the  
 “ Father ; who rules the affairs of men and gods, the seas,  
 “ the earth, and the world, with a variety of seasons or oc-  
 “ casions ? from whom nothing greater than himself ever  
 “ sprung ; nor is there any thing that may be compared to  
 “ him, or placed in the second rank after him <sup>a</sup>.” Now, it is not more absurd to say, the nature of God may be imparted to creatures, than to say his power, and other attributes, may be imparted ; for in them consists the infinite distinction of his essence, so far as known to us, from all other beings. If then neither his nature, nor attributes, nor essence, can be imparted, we must conclude the same of his peculiar title and name, by which they are signified and discriminated.

Under the name of God, therefore, when properly applied, no idea of subordination can be conveyed, so as to make it the true and proper appellative of any creature. God, it is true, bestows wisdom and power on creatures ; but what wisdom and power ? Surely not his own infinite wisdom or power, which can neither be divided nor imparted ; but a finite, a created wisdom and power, peculiar to the creature. These attributes of the infinite

<sup>a</sup> Horat. *Lib. I. Ode 12.*



Being are infinite, and admit of no degrees. We do not say of one who is inspired, or works miracles, that he is infinitely wise, or almighty; but that God uses his audible words to express the divine wisdom, and his fleshly members to execute the divine power. The man is not the agent, but organ. It would be impious to say, such a one is God; but it is only a religious truth to say, he speaks by the wisdom, or acts by the power, of God. Hence it appears, that the name of God cannot, without the grossest impiety, be given to a creature, even when acting in his name, and by his peculiar power.

Much less can it be ascribed to a creature, acting only by the mere power of a creature; for that power is bounded, was created, and therefore cannot be the power of God. If it could, every creature would, in proportion to its share of power, be a god; which would produce infinite degrees of God. This would reduce us to the theology of the *Grecians*, who peopled heaven with subordinate gods; and of the *Egyptians*, who stocked the fields, and planted the gardens, with gods. Nay, what is more, this would give us foolish, wicked, weak, and even inanimate, gods; for every thing has some powers, or some degrees of power.

But our adversaries will here distinguish between power and authority, and tell us, that created beings, acting, not by their own power, but by the authority of God, may, as his delegates, be intitled to the name and worship of God; the honour paid to them ultimately terminating in him, whose authority they are cloathed with. We shall readily grant, that a bounded respect may be paid to them, and that on account of their Master's majesty. But is this the peculiar honour of God? Is not his honour infinite? theirs finite? How then can the same name and stile be given to both; since they are infinitely different in kind and degree? This confounding of ideas, so distinct, under the same term, is not allowed among men, when the difference is not only finite, but minute. It is treasonable to call the governor of a provincial kingdom, the king. When we raise his stile the highest, we only call him viceroy. But as the worship of

of created power, on a supposition that it is part and parcel of the divine power, would lead us to the adoration of onions and garlick ; so the worship of deputed authority, on a supposition that it is derived from the divine appointment, would run us into the adoration of beadles and constables ; for they act by authority from some superior magistrate, he by authority from the king, and he again by authority from God. *By me kings reign, and princes decree justice* : Prov. viii. 15.

We know power, that is, all power, particularly the civil power, as the Psalmist saith, belongeth to the Lord. We are therefore bound to respect it where-ever we find it ; but we are not for that reason to make divinities of those who bear it ; nor to honour them with sacrifices, prayers, and adoration. If they faithfully apply it according to his intention, we ought to esteem them for their work's sake. If they do otherwise, we have a right to despise them, even while we obey their power ; which shews it is but just to distinguish between the delegate and his office. However, it is but too natural for men to honour the substitute with the respect that is due only to the principal. There is all possible care taken to prevent this human weakness from stopping the devotion of the *Israelites*, and fixing it in the creatures. They are not only forbidden to fall down before any images or representations of the Divinity, but are also threatened with the severest judgments, in case they should presume to worship his representatives, angels, kings, &c. This was necessary, because their law was ordained by angels, who had frequent intercourse with them, and might by that means, through the superior dignity of their nature, and the superstitious ignorance of those they were sent to, attract too high a degree of respect, as we see in the case of *Manoah*, *Judges* xiii. 22. and of *John*, *Rev.* xix. 10. Besides, they had reason to think there were certain angels appointed to preside over particular nations, as we see in the tenth of *Daniel*. To these they might be tempted to pay a part of that worship, which was due to God alone, after the manner of their idolatrous neighbours, who worshipped one supreme, together with other inferior

inferior divinities. To prevent this intirely, the first commandment, and innumerable other prohibitions, to the same effect, are scattered throughout the Pentateuch and the Prophets, whereby all divine worship is absolutely restrained to the one only God, Jehovah. Hence it is, that he is often distinguished among the neighbouring *Gentiles*, from all the other gods, sometimes by the name of *The Lord*, or *Jehovah*, and sometimes by *The God of Israel*. To prevent for ever all distinctions between God and Jehovah, founded on a possible furnise, that the one might be a supreme, and the other only a subordinate, or a national, or a tutelary, God of the *Israelites*, God is often called the only Jehovah, or Lord ; and the Lord, or Jehovah, is still more frequently, and more strongly, called the only God. In these passages, God is called the only Jehovah. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, or Jehovah, Deut. vi. 4. Bless the Lord our God for ever and ever ; and blessed be thy glorious Name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou, art Lord, or Jehovah, alone, Neh. ix. 5, 6. Now therefore, saith Hezekiah, Isa. xxxvii. 20. O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know, that thou art the Lord, or Jehovah, even thou alone.* From hence it appears evidently, that there is but one Jehovah, and that the one God is that one only Jehovah ; so that the expressions which seem to intimate two Jehovahs, being neither directly affirmative nor negative, and admitting easily of another solution, as we shall see hereafter, are to be accommodated to those, which are directly negative, and exclusive of all other Jehovahs, but one. There can be nothing stronger than the terms, wherein the Jehovah is called God alone, or the only God. *Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightst know, that the Lord, or Jehovah, he is God : there is none else besides him, Deut. iv. 35. Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord, or Jehovah, he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath : there is none else, Deut. iv. 39. Thou art great, O Lord [Jehovah] God ; for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, 2 Sam. vii. 22. It be*

*God, save the Lord, or Jehovah?* 2 Sam. xxii. 32. Solomon prays, that God would maintain his and the people's cause, *that all the people of the earth may know, that the Lord, or Jehovah, is God, and that there is none else,* 1 Kings viii. 60. When all the people saw the fire falling from heaven on the sacrifice of *Elijah, they fell on their faces, and said, The Lord, or Jehovah, he is the God; the Lord he is the God;* that is, God himself, or the only God, 1 Kings xviii. 39. *O Lord, or Jehovah, there is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee,* 1 Chron. xvii. 20. *Thou art great, and dost wonderful things: thou art God alone; teach me thy way, O Lord [Jehovah],* Psalm lxxxvi. 10, 11. *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, or Jehovah, that I am God. Yea, before the day was, I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall lett it?* Isa. xliii. 12, 13. *I am the Lord [Jehovah], and there is none else, there is no God besides me,* Isa. xlv. 5. I might give other passages to shew, that Jehovah is God alone, whereby it is as fully proved, that there is no other God at all but one, and that the Jehovah is that very God, as the authority, from whence they may be brought, can prove any thing. But why should I multiply proofs, if these are insufficient? If the Prophets, speaking by the Spirit of God, if God himself on repeated assurances, such as these, cannot convince us, that there is no Lord, or Jehovah, but God; nor any God, but Jehovah; if they cannot, in short, satisfy us, that God and Jehovah are precisely the same Being, and that neither name can, without a blasphemous contradiction to God's own reiterated asseverations, be given to any other; it is in vain to talk of arguing from Scripture. What now must they do, who have maintained, that the one eternal God, and Jehovah, are different, infinitely different beings; and that the one is but the creature and substitute of the other? They cannot surely any longer defend their Arianism, or Polytheism, on this hypothesis; and therefore must mine for another. Accordingly they do, endeavouring to pick a wretched subterfuge for their Paganism out of the word *worship*, and those terms in the original languages, for which it is put.

put. They say, worship, respect, reverence, dependence, &c. admit of different degrees, and are prescribed in Scripture to be paid not only to the supreme God, but also to superior creatures. We grant it; but do not the words imply an infinitely different meaning, when set for the service we are commanded to pay to the one only God, and when set for that respect we are ordered to shew to fellow-creatures, who are placed over us? Besides, are there not acts of devotion, with their proper terms, such as sacrifice, and prayer, mental, as well as vocal, which sufficiently distinguish the worship to be paid to the one God? The practice immediately following on the promulgation of any law hath always been esteemed the best interpretation of that law. Now, did the *Jews*, while they irreproveably adhered to the law of God, ever conceive themselves to have more than one object of their worship or devotion? Did they ever think themselves at liberty to pray and sacrifice to two or more gods; the first, infinite and supreme, the rest created and subordinate? Were the law and the prophets more expressly against so heathenish a practice, than the constant faith and worship of God's people, while they continued truly such? or have we any other object of worship, than the ancient *Israelites* had? No; our blessed Saviour, referring to *Deuteronomy* vi. 13. and x. 20. saith, *It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* In thus quoting the law, he centres all our worship in the same object with that of the *Israelites*; and what that object is, we may hear from the same authority in the same passage, *The Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible.* This was the God of the *Israelites*; this is our God. Is there now a greater God than this? Is there a God over this God of gods? Is there a Lord over this Lord of lords? Is he but a national or subordinate God? And as to the worship we are to pay him, that we may have no more chicaning on words, it is fixed sufficiently by the context to this expression of our Saviour. The devil had offered him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, on condition he would fall down and

and worship him. Here our Saviour's answer must be wholly impertinent, if the meaning of the word *worship*, both in his reply, and in the offer of the tempter, is not exactly the same. Now, that this was the worship peculiar to the true God only, is plain from the words of our Saviour, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* The expression of falling down, in the act of adoration, further serves to determine and illustrate the sense of the word under dispute. If then the *Israelites* were, and consequently we Christians are, to worship Jehovah, or the Lord God, only, it follows, that he must be the one only true God; or that, if he is but an inferior god, we are hereby forbidden to worship the superior or most high God; or at least it follows, that the term *worship*, in these words of Christ, must signify, contrary to the manifest purport of his argument, not the worship due to the only adorable God, but such a worship as may be paid to creatures, as well as him. Is it not the one only, supreme, eternal, God, whom alone we are, in this passage, commanded to worship, whom alone we are commanded to serve? If it is, are we at liberty to worship any other being under the notion of a created or delegated god?

That there is but one only God, and that no other is admitted to a participation of his name, or to any subordination of his divinity, in any sense or measure, under him, or in fellowship with him, these words of Jehovah, were there nothing else, would be sufficient to convince me, *I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me,* Deut. xxxii. 39. How you may judge in this matter, I know not; but it is to me as manifest as the light, that the all-foreseeing God intended, by what I have cited from his word, to prevent all distinctions between the eternal God and Jehovah, that there might not be the least room left for supposing the God of *Israel* was an inferior, or subordinate, god.

All the expedients, to which our adversaries have recourse, in order to evade the strength of this, and the like reasoning, miserably fail them. They can erect no new God by adoption, by generation, by creation, no more  
than

than by delegation. God can adopt only creatures ; and creatures can never be converted into gods ; the finite can never be made infinite. And as to generation, it is either proper, or improper. By generation, properly so called, it is impossible a creature should become God. Every thing begets its like, or another thing of the same nature with itself. God therefore, by proper generation, cannot generate a creature. The act of this production admits of no other term, but that of creation. Much less can he, by the improper or metaphorical generation, ascribed to him in Scripture, where it is also called regeneration and adoption, raise up a new Infinite, or God.

These things being laid down as self-evident or demonstrable truths, can we suppose the God of truth would, in any case, or for any purpose, deceive us into the adoration of creatures, under the pretence of loving, praying to them, and trusting in them, not as creatures, but as the deputies of God ? Would he thus debase his own majesty, and alienate our dependence from himself to our fellow-creatures ? Would he thrust in the creature between himself and his servants, to stop the passage of our love and duty towards the source of being, of bounty and mercy ? Does this Sun of the intellectual world raise up clouds to obstruct the rays of his own glory, and darken the eyes of his worshipers, whose love he woos by infinite obligations, whose adoration he calls up to, and centers in, himself, by all the convenience, the beauty, and magnificence, of the creation, and by the whole tenour of true religion. He, who can thus think of him, knows him not. He, who knows him, finds his imagination swallowed up in the sense of his infinity, his love engrossed by his boundless goodness, and his whole soul, with all his affections, faculties, and powers, so attached to him, that he hath little attention, not to say adoration, left for his fellow-creatures, howsoever dignified by the bounty of their Creator. We cannot pay our adoration to any being, but him, if we receive the first commandment as a rule of our duty, or the first article of the creed as a rule of our faith ; especially if we consider, that, in respect to our worshipping

any thing else, he is called in the second commandment, in *Joshua xxiv.* and in *Nabum i.* *A jealous God ; the Lord who revengeth ; the Lord who revengeth, and is furious ; the Lord who will take vengeance on his adversaries ;* which adversaries we shall find to be the worshipers of other gods, if we cast our eyes over the chapter to verse 14. It is in pursuance of the same metaphor of *jealousy*, that the *Israelites*, whom he had espoused by covenant for a peculiar people, are said by the prophets, on account of their revolting to the service of other gods, to be *adulterers*, and to have *gone a whoring after their own inventions.*

If we are not so much as to *make mention of the names of other gods, nor to let it be heard out of our mouths,* *Exod. xxiii. 13.* ; If a *Gentile* could so truly say, *2 Kings v. 15.* on being miraculously cured of a leprosy, *Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel ;* If God himself hath said, *2 Kings xvii. 35.* *Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice unto them ;* If he says by *Isaiab xlv. 22.* *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else ;* If the same is inculcated in innumerable other passages of Scripture ; If it is inculcated with the most glorious promises to the worshipers of the only true God, and with the most dreadful denunciations against the worshipers of other gods ; how shall we call the Scriptures the word of God, and at the same time allow ourselves the most distant thought of adoring any thing but him ?

But here, say the adversaries, these very Scriptures make frequent mention of other gods, without condemning them as false gods, but rather with marks of veneration, as *Exod. xxii. 28.* *Thou shalt not revile the gods.* *Deut. x. 17.* *The Lord your God is God of gods.* *1 Sam. xxviii. 13.* *I saw gods ascending out of the earth.* *1 Cor. viii. 5.* *There be gods many, &c.* What then shall we say ? Do the Scriptures contradict themselves ? God forbid. For *Elohim*, the word in the original, which we translate by *gods*, *Exod. xxii. 28.* the *Targum* of *Onkelos*, the *Syriac* and *Arabic* versions, put *judges* ; and so indeed



it ought to be interpreted in this and the like places. When it is applied to God, it signifies the most powerful or sovereign Lord. Here it is to be remarked, as it is by *Plato* and *Damascene*, that God, being incomprehensible, is not properly to be named; for names cannot intimate his nature, as they do the natures of other things. It often happens, therefore, that, in speaking of God, we are forced to use such terms as are applied to inferior beings. Hence it is that we call him *Elohim*, the Judge, or Potentate; *El*, the powerful God; and to distinguish him from inferior *Elohim*, *El Elion*, the most high God, *Gen. xiv. 20.* *El Gibbor*, the most mighty God, *Zeph. iii. 17.* *El Elim*, the Potentate of potentates, *Dan. xi. 36.* In the same manner he is called *Adonai*, or the Lord. These are but titles or epithets, borrowed from things below, to denote the attributes of God; and therefore it is no wonder, that they are sometimes applied to inferior beings. However, it is easy to see by their adjuncts, that they bear an infinitely different sense when applied to God and his creatures. They no more make gods of them, than they can make a creature of him. But, besides these, he hath his more proper names, which, by their peculiar sense and application, simply intimate him alone, with the addition of negatives, strongly expressing his Unity. Such are *Shaddai*, the All-sufficient; *Ehjeh*, I shall be; *Jah*, the essential Lord; and *Jehovah*, the Being, or he which is, which was, and which is to come. God, it is true, is called, *Deut. x. 17.* *The God of gods*; but is it not to intimate his excellence, rather than their divinity? In the same sense it is said, *Psalms cxvii. 7.* *Worship him, all ye gods*, where the Psalmist says in the same verse, *Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves in idols*; and then commands these very gods, or *angels*, as *St. Paul* calls them, *to worship the true God*. As to the passage, *1 Sam. xxviii. 13.* we have there only the word of a witch, struck into almost a frenzy of fear on the sight of an unexpected vision, and the discovery of a king, who had made her practices death by a decree, that she saw any gods. And after all, it appears by the place, that what she took for *Samuel* afterwards, was one

of her gods. And concerning the words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 5. the meanest reader may see he speaks by way of irony and derision ; for he says in the foregoing verse, *There is none other God but one* ; and in the following verse, *To us there is but one God* ; guarding his irony with a strong negative on each hand of it. This text, so often cited by our Tritheists to prove there are more gods than one, or that there are subordinate gods, serves sufficiently to explain those passages of the Old Testament, where the same appellations are sometimes given both to God and creatures, and to restrain our faith and worship to the one only true God ; for it is expressly asserted, that *there is none other God but one* ; and that doctrine urged home upon us by a direct application of it to our minds and consciences, *To us there is but one God*. Now, if we are really Christians, and do believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, is not this single passage, wherein the Holy Spirit, speaking of these supposed inferior gods, denies their being gods, and forbids their worship as such, sufficient to end for ever all doubts and debates about the Unity of God, or the object of divine worship ? This passage tells us, there is but one God, and that the one only God is our only God. God himself awfully inculcates the same doctrine, *Isa. xlv. 21, 22, 23. Who hath declared this from antient time ? who hath told it from that time ? have not I the Lord [Jehovah] ? And there is no God [Elohim] else besides me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none besides me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.* Here we see, the one only Jehovah denies the being of any other *Elohim*, or gods, but himself ; and, as a necessary consequence, bids all men *look unto*, or *be converted* to him, that they may be saved, solemnly swearing by himself, that every knee shall bow to, and every tongue swear by, him ; that is, that all shall worship him alone, because he alone is God ; and consequently there is none other, whom we may bow to, swear by, or adore. Hath God declared, there is no other god besides him ? and shall man dare

dare to say, there are other gods? Shall God, by an oath, confine all divine worship to himself, and man impiously take occasion from his own word to worship other gods along with him, on a pretence, that he hath ordered them to be honoured with the name and worship of God, when no such order can be found? If it could, God must have given contradictory orders, and left it undetermined which we should obey, than which a more blasphemous supposition can hardly be conceived. Our Saviour's words, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, are sufficient, once for all, to determine the Unity both of God, and our worship. Hence it appears, that the sophisticated arguments, founded on such expressions as these, *There are gods many; worship him, all ye gods; I have said, Ye are gods, &c.* have no hing in them of any consequence to the dispute about the Unity of God. But further still, to put this matter about the Unity of God, both as God, and as the sole object of our worship, beyond all possibility of debate hereafter among the thinking and ingenuous part of the world, it must be observed, that the plural acceptation of the word *Elohim* is the very thing that hath given an handle to the Tritheists to insist on a plurality of gods. Let it be further observed, that whatsoever this word may do to favour the belief of a personal distinction in God, it can never be rationally brought to prove there are more gods than one, or more objects of our worship than that one, since in the first commandment, where the Unity of God, as God, and as the sole object of our worship, is fixed, both scientifically and practically fixed, by precise and negative terms, which must be taken universally, and in their full unlimited sense, the word *Elohim* is that which stands for God, or the only divine Being, or the only Being to be worshiped. The true sense of the commandment therefore is this; "Whatsoever other beings  
" the nations round you may worship, or whatsoever  
" beings the word *Elohim* may elsewhere in my word be  
" applied to, *Thou, Israelite, shalt have, shalt serve, shalt*  
" *worship, by prayer, sacrifice, love, fear, or dependence,*  
" *no other Elohim, or gods, but me, or with me, or in my*

“ *sight* ; for I am the God that appeared to *Moses* at the  
 “ bush ; I am the God that brought you out of the land  
 “ of *Egypt* ; I am the God of your father *Abraham* ; I  
 “ am the God that created all things out of nothing ; I  
 “ am the God, who, equally incapable of being de-  
 “ ceived, and of deceiving, do assure you, that *I am*  
 “ *your Elobim, or God ; and there is none else, no other*  
 “ *Elobim, besides me, Deut. iv. 35. that I [Jehovah] am*  
 “ *Elobim in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, and*  
 “ *there is no other Elobim, or God, but me, Deut. iv. 39.*  
 “ *that there is not any Elobim, or God, besides me, 2 Sam.*  
 “ *vii. 22.* Of this also I further assure you, and all men,  
 “ in all times and places, *1 Kings viii. 60. xviii. 39.*  
 “ *1 Chron. xvii. 20. Psalm lxxxvi. 10, 11. Isaiah xlv.*  
 “ *5.* and in many other passages of that word which I  
 “ dictate by the mouths of my holy prophets.” Here  
 the true, the only God so clearly tells us, there is no other  
 God but him, and that we are to worship no other God  
 but him, by the very word laid hold of to prove there  
 are more gods, that it looks like a sort of impiety in us  
 to attempt the proof of either point, after what he hath  
 said. What then must it be in the adversaries to say, there  
 are other gods, and we may, nay, ought to worship other  
 gods ?

It would indeed be a shame to take notice of cavils  
 founded on passages of Scripture so miserably wrested,  
 were it not a sin to leave them before the feet of the igno-  
 rant and unwary ; and not commanded, on some occasions,  
*to answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his*  
*own conceit.* The gods, mentioned in these mistaken  
 passages, are no other than such as the *vine* in the fable,  
*Judges ix. 13. boasts of chearing ;* or than they of whom  
 the Psalmist speaks, *Psalm lxxxii. 6, 7. I have said, Ye are*  
*gods—but ye shall die like men.* But where are the attri-  
 butes or worship of God prescribed to be paid to these  
 gods, when mentioned in the most favourable sense ? Or  
 rather, in what book of holy Scripture are not the first  
 peremptorily denied them, and the second absolutely for-  
 bidden to them ?

You see now clearly, by what hath been said, both from Reason and Scripture, that there is precisely but one God, and consequently but one object of divine worship; that we must be Pagans and Polytheists, if we admit any gods besides him; and that we are guilty of idolatry the moment we pray to, or worship, any other being whatsoever.

It is easy to conclude, from this double demonstration, what ought to be the practice of you who worship the true God only. You are not so much as to listen to the subtle follies of such as would persuade you to admit other objects of worship, although never so elevated in nature, and subordinate in office. Let those two sects, who have been the disgrace of Christianity, so opposite in all other things, agree with each other, and with the Pagans, in deifying creatures, either by calling them gods, or by impiously praying to them, and putting their trust in them, while they refuse them the name of gods; but let your good sense and piety be shewn in this, that you worship the true God alone *in spirit and in truth*. *What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou shouldst fear the Lord thy God, and serve him with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind?* God will not accept of thee, nor canst thou live the life of a true Christian, if *thine heart is divided*, as *Hosea* expresses it, between the true God and the false. The *Samaritans* were not reckoned to the people of God, because *while they feared the Lord, they served their own gods*, 2 Kings xvii. 33. Consider what God denounces against those, *who worship, and swear by, the Lord, and yet swear by Malcham*, Zeph. i. 5. *Why should you halt between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; if another, follow him*, 1 Kings xviii. 21. *If you do return unto the Lord your God with all your heart, then put away the strange gods*, 1 Sam. vii. 3. Let *Dagon* fall before the ark of God; for the same heart cannot be a temple to both. *You cannot serve two masters*. Well might the son of *Sirach* say, *Wo be to the sinner that goeth two ways*; for he must of necessity miss his end in both. The temple of the true God, and that of the false,

stand directly opposite to each other, so that there is no going to both at once.

But, if you choose the service of the one only living God, it is your business rightly to prepare yourself for that service, that it may be fit for you, as a rational creature, to offer, and for him, as a God of infinite holiness and majesty, to receive. In order to this, first endeavour to know him in his word and works, that you may make a right judgment of the service he requires. And when you do know him, then labour to be like him in justice, in mercy, in purity, and holiness; so shall you recover his image, which sin had defaced in you, and mutual affection shall flow from this happy conformity of natures. Then weigh in a just balance all those objects of sense, appetite, and passion, that have hitherto estranged your affections; and you will quickly find them nothing, if God is in the other scale. All created things have this of meanness and littleness in them, that they are never great, and this of deformity, that they are never beautiful, but by comparison with somewhat that is less significant, or less excellent. They are beholden for their grandeur to that which is little; and for their beauty, to that which is ugly. The infinite Being only is great, is lovely, in himself, and without comparison.

What is it then with-holds your heart from God? Things that are as nothing, from the immense, the infinite Being? Things that are foul and vile, from the beautiful, the glorious God? Things that are deceitful and pernicious, from him who is full of truth and goodness; from him *to whom salvation belongeth*; and who would make you for ever happy, if you could but see, that the Infinite is greater than the finite? How amazing is it, that this should be difficult to you, who can distinguish between the magnitude of a world, and of a grain of sand, wherein the difference is so minute! Have you reason only for small things? Have you judgment and discernment only for little differences; and none for that which is immense?

But if you really do know God, and are rightly apprised of the infinite difference between him and all things else,

else, let not this knowlege, which ought, above all other sorts of knowlege, to be practical, confine itself in your understanding only. Know him with your heart, give him your affections as well as your reason ; for now that God is master of your judgment, it would be very absurd in you to let any thing else have your love. Such a division of yourself between things above, and things on the earth, would carry you to opposite ends ; the one would rivet you to the earth, the other would exalt you to heaven. Since both cannot be done, is it not best to follow reason, and cleave to God ? If you choose this upper path, break loose from the world, the deceitful world, and fly to God, the author of your being, and the source of all good. Learn to fear him in his power and justice ; learn to admire him in his wisdom, his majesty, his immensity ; learn to love him for his bounty, his goodness, his mercy ; and then adore him with the united force of all these happy affections and sensations. As he is one, endeavour to worship and serve him with an undivided heart. Let your faith honour him, your works serve him, your tongue bless and praise him.

If you come thus affected and disposed before him, you will not come poor nor empty-handed. Your heart, fear not, will be a more acceptable sacrifice than thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil. But take care that faith purge it, that repentance cut it in sunder, and that piety prepare and lay it on the altar. There let it burn in the flames of hallowed love ; and God will receive it, as a sweet-smelling savour, as an offering more precious than ten thousand worlds.

Before you are satisfied of God's Unity, and other attributes, all your disputes and inquiries about him are in themselves speculative. But conviction hath no sooner put an end to these speculations, than you ought seriously to consider, for what purpose you made this most important point the subject of your examination. It was not merely an effect of curiosity ; it was not surely that you might talk better, and parade it with more appearance of knowlege, in this religious fundamental, than other men. If vanity must be indulged, hath it not a lower field of  
shells,

shells, pebbles, and butterflies, to expatiate in? God, I must insist, is too sacred, too awful, a subject for curious speculations, and a conceited ostentation of knowledge. It was, it must have been, with nobler views, that you sought for satisfaction in so weighty a matter. It was, no doubt, with an earnest desire to know who it is that gave you being, and all the comforts of that being, that you might love him, and by your services attach his love to you. This was a wise end, and well becoming the faculties God hath bestowed on you. But if you have at length attained to it, your wisdom can now no otherwise be justified, but by reducing this attainment to practice; that you may feel in your own heart the conscious pleasures arising from a life spent in the love and fear of God; and that all who know you *may see your light*; and, being edified by it, *may glorify your Father which is in heaven*.

May God, of his infinite goodness, so enlighten your mind, and so work on your heart, as to produce this happy effect, through Christ Jesus our Saviour. Amen.



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## DISCOURSE V.

Objections to the Divinity of Christ answered.

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St. JOHN V. 22, 23.

*The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:*

*That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.*

**H**AVING, in the former discourse, proved, that there is but one God, I intend, with his assistance, to prove in this, and the following, that Jesus Christ is that only one God. In this, I shall endeavour to remove the most material objections to his Divinity, wherewith its opposers arm themselves from holy Scripture, that, in the next, the proofs thereof drawn from thence, being freed from these obstructions, may come with their full force.

The Son, or Christ, as my text assures us, is to judge the whole moral world at the last day. Now, none but the all-knowing Being, *who searcheth the heart*, is able to judge the actions, the words, the very thoughts, of all intelligent creatures. None but he, *whose judgments are true and righteous altogether, whose righteousness is like the great mountains, and whose judgments are a great deep,*

*deep*, is qualified to perform this work of justice, on which depend so necessarily the virtue and goodness both of angels and men. None but the Almighty hath power sufficient to decide the fate, and fix the eternal rewards or punishments, of all God's accountable creatures. None, therefore, but the Divine Being, is fit to execute this high commission. *Doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth*; for no other is able to do it.

Let it not offend the ears of one who believes in the unity of God, that he should receive a commission; since we acknowledge, that he, to whom this trust is committed, receives the authority, whereby he acts as our judge, from the appointment of the Father, as he does also his essence from the eternal generation; the Father being the fountain of the Godhead, and therefore of the divine authority; and since we likewise acknowledge, that the judge is man as well as God. Whatsoever reference this commission may have to his previous nature, it is declaratively founded on that which he assumed in the womb of the blessed Virgin; for, at ver. 17. he expressly assigns this as the reason of that commission, asserting, that *the Father hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man*. By thus affixing the idea of his delegation to his human nature, he seems to have pointed out this passage as a key to all other expressions of the like import. He is sent, he is commissioned, he is commanded, to do, not his own will, but the will of his Father, because he is a Son; peculiarly, indeed, because he is the Son of man.

As he is commissioned to judge, so, in the same manner, was he commissioned to preach, and work miracles. He, being man, had a distinct will of his own; it was, however, *not that will, but the will of his Father*, which he was appointed to execute in all he did: Neither was it his human wisdom, by which he taught the world; nor his human power, by which he wrought his works; but the divine wisdom and power communicated to him by his Father along with his essence. Therefore he saith, *I (as a man) can of myself do nothing: As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will,*

will, but the will of my Father which hath sent me, John v. 30. The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doth, ver. 20. I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak, ch. xii. 49. The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works, ch. xiv. 10. In all this, it is evident he speaks as the Son of man; for the Father, he tells us, gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. As such, he proves his mission by miracles: As such, he gives us a law, and a covenant: And, as such, he will judge us at the last day by that law and covenant. All these privileges and powers accrue to him as the Son of man; because by his blood, as such, he bought us, and acquired a right to rule over us, and judge us; to the execution, however, of which high office, the divine wisdom and power are absolutely necessary.

But you ought to observe, for what end and purpose the Father hath thus committed all judgment to the Son. You see, it is, *that all men may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*; and you heard, in the former Discourse, the express declaration of God by *Isaiab*, that *he would not give his glory, or honour, to another*, that is, to any but himself. As sure, therefore, as the word of God is true, so surely is Christ that God, and no other; for the honour here appointed to be given is, both in degree and kind, that very honour which is due to the Father, which is due to God alone, and which God will neither give himself, nor suffer to be given by us, to any but God. And good reason there is why we should be ordered to do this, since *all the angels of God are commanded to worship Christ*, Heb. i. 6.; and since, in the presence of his Father, *the whole host of heaven, together with every other creature*, ascribe this glory to him, as to the Father, *saying, with a loud voice, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever*, Rev. v. 11, 12, 13.

Now, though this power and glory are given to Christ the Son of man, as a purchase made by his precious blood; yet, since the power and glory are divine, they could not have been given unto him, were he not truly and properly a Divine Person; because *they cannot be given to another*; and because the Scripture every-where restrains them to God alone.

Accordingly, our blessed Saviour speaks of himself as possessed of that glory, not only before he became man, but before the creation of the world. *Now, O Father, glorify me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was,* John xvii. 5. To this glory Christ, as God, was intitled from all eternity; but did not acquire a right to it as man, till he had paid the purchase by his blood.

If, in holy Scripture, there are other expressions that intimate some inferiority in the Son, it is not to be wondered at; since it is plain this must be accounted for, as it very easily and rationally may, by the human nature of the Son, whereof I have given a sample sufficient to guide us in all such cases; and by the œconomy or distribution of offices, whereby the Three Divine Persons are distinguished, in the word of God, as concurring respectively to the scheme of our redemption. There are several passages of Scripture, indeed, that seem to intimate the obedience and subjection of the Son to the Father, as prior to the assumption of the human nature. But these may also be naturally interpreted with an eye to that assumption; or, allowing they may not, they are proper to the relation between father and son; and may be so understood, without the least necessity for supposing an inequality of nature between the Divine Father and Son, any more than between an human father and his son, where we know there is none. In the Divine nature, which is one, and simple, there can be no degrees. Now the equality, or rather identity, of Christ with the Father, and his subjection to him, are both revealed to us in holy Scripture; and therefore it lies on those professors of Christianity who deny, as much as on us who maintain, the true and proper Divinity of Christ, to reconcile this seeming

seeming opposition. The former attempt it by sinking the sense of such passages as speak for his Divinity, to the standard of such as intimate a lower character of him. We, on the contrary, do not endeavour to raise the sense of those Scriptures which convey the lowest notion of him, in order to bring them up to the level of those that speak highest; but interpret them, either of that honour which every son owes to his father, though of the same nature, and consequently of equal dignity as to nature; or of the œconomy of offices, one superior to another, already mentioned; or of the Son's humanity. Whether of the two do most justice to the sense of Scripture, may possibly appear in this and some following Discourses.

If Christ, in one place, *John* xiv. 28. says, *My Father is greater than I*, he must be understood of his relation to the Father as his Son, born of a woman; because he says, in the same verse, *I go unto my Father, I go away, and come again unto you*, speaking of his bodily ascension, and of his bodily return at the end of the world. Accordingly, after his resurrection, being now about to ascend into heaven in the fulness of his human nature, he saith, *I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God*, *John* xx. 17. Now, this migration from and to his church on earth can be understood only of his human nature, wherein he was ready to ascend or depart; for, in respect to his superior nature, he was never to depart from that church, which was then united to him as his spiritual body, and to which he said, speaking of futurity in the present tense, *Lo, I am with you alway unto the end of the world*, *Mat.* xxviii. 20. When, therefore, Christ saith, *My Father is greater than I*, he speaks of himself, no doubt, as a man. As such, he calls the Father his God in the passage now cited; and when he hung on the cross, where it is as certain the human nature of Christ spoke, as that it suffered. As he applies the 22d Psalm to himself by these words, taken from thence, and repeated at the approach of death, we see the royal prophet must have furnished that exclamation for him in the character of a man; and therefore ought to be understood as speaking to him in the same character,

cter, when he saith, Psalm xlv. 7. quoted by St. Paul, Hebr. i. 9. *God, thy God, hath anointed thee.* But this did not hinder either the Psalmist, or the Apostle, from addressing him, in the verse immediately preceding, under an infinitely higher character; for they say to him, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* And here it is worth observing, that the word God, applied to Christ in the 6th verse, and to the Father immediately after in the 7th, is the very same, namely, *Elohim.* And did the Psalmist, who spoke of the Father and the Son in the same passage, and by the same name of God, intend, without in the least hinting it to us, that the Father and the Son were two distinct gods, the one infinitely less than, and inferior to, the other? From these observations it appears, I think, sufficiently plain, that, when Christ saith, *My Father is greater than I,* and prays to him by the title of *his God,* he cannot possibly be understood as speaking in reference to his prior or superior nature, but only of that which he had in common with the rest of men. If the Father is, in respect to Christ's higher nature, greater than him, how came Christ to say, *John* xiv. 9. *He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father;* and, ver. 10. *I am in the Father, and the Father in me?* How came he to say, *I and my Father are one Being?* *ch.* x. 30. Or how came the Holy Spirit, speaking by St. Paul, to say, *Phil.* ii. 6. *Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God?*

The opposers of Christ's Divinity, I know, explain both these passages in a different sense. As to the first, they say, *Christ is one with the Father, as his disciples are one with him,* *John* xvii. 22.; that is, they are joined together by love and charity. The *Jews,* to whom our Saviour spoke the words, *John* x. 31. did not so understand them; for they charged him with having thereby made himself God; and he, by his reasonings and assertions afterwards, only confirms them in the same opinion of his meaning. This is manifest from their attempting to seize his person, which put an end to the interview between him and them. But, granting that Christ is no otherwise one with the Father than his disciples are with him,

him, it will not relieve the *Arians* from the conclusion I have drawn, because Christ and his disciples were of one and the same nature, and formed one body; and all we contend for, is, that he was as truly of one nature with the Father, as they were with him. And as to the passage in the epistle to the *Philippians*, where it is said, that *Christ, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God*, the construction put on it by our adversaries is so forced, and so disingenuous, that it scarcely deserves a serious notice. They will have the original word for *form* to signify only *image*, or similitude; whereas every one skilled in the *Greek* knows it implies rather an internal, inherent form, or the essence of any thing. *Thought it not robbery* is a most close and faithful translation; yet they would translate the words, *was not in haste to take to himself, and boast*; whereof it is difficult to determine whether the folly or the impudence is greatest. *Equal to God* is also the most exact translation our language will bear, and perfectly expresses the sense. But they will have the words mean only *like God*; that is, they will have the word of God speak a meaning quite foreign to the common, known acceptance of the terms, purely that it may accommodate itself to their prepossessions. But the use of the word *morphe, form*, in this passage, may serve to decide the merits in respect to the construction of the whole; for the same word is used when Christ is said to be in the *form* of God, and when he is said to be in the *form* of a servant, and therefore must be taken precisely in the same sense on both occasions. Now, we know he was *really a servant*, and not merely in the likeness of a *servant*; and so he is expressly called, *Matth. xii. 18.* and *Isaiab. xlii. 1.* It follows, therefore, that he was as truly *God* before, as he was a *servant* after, he took on him the nature of man, that is, of a servant; for all men are, by nature, truly and properly the servants of God.

Altho' in many places the Father is said to *have sent the Son*, and, in my text, to have *committed all judgment to the Son*; which expressions, we own, imply authority on the one side, and subjection on the other; yet no inequality of nature, previous to the incarnation of Christ, can

be concluded from thence, without doing violence to the many other passages wherein the godhead of the Son, and his equality with the Father, are peremptorily inculcated. Such expressions as these intimated, from whence the *Arians* would infer the inferiority of the Son, relate not, by any means, to his nature, but his office, as is made evident by the marks of paternal authority wherewith they are stamped.

The most remarkable of these are such as stile the Son an *Angel*. Well may Christ be so called, since he is the *Angel*, or *Messenger*, of the covenant, *Mal.* iii. 4. But what are we to understand by the word *angel*? Is it the designation of a particular nature, or only of an office? No doubt, of an office only; for the original word *malach*, neither by its etymology, being derived from an *Hebrew* word which signifies *function*, nor in its use or application, being given promiscuously to Christ, superior creatures, men, and devils, imports any thing of the nature of him to whom it is applied in Scripture, excepting *Hebr.* ii. 16. where the word *nature* is joined with it; and in two or three other places, no-way relative to Christ, or the present controversy. As the several orders of creatures above us are all of them *ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation*, and to execute the other good purposes of God throughout the world, they are stiled *angels*, which is not a name, but a title; and so are the apostles, so are the bishops of the seven *Asiatic* churches, and that with equal propriety. When this title is applied to Christ, it only intimates, that he is the *messenger* of his Father, but gives us not the smallest hint concerning his nature. It is true, he is called an *angel*: and is he not also called *Adam* and *Davil*? Not, surely, because he was that first man from whom all others descend; or that other, who was the immediate son of *Jesse*; but because he was, by office, the father of the regenerate, and the royal shepherd of God's people. That he hath nothing of the same nature with those beings who are, by way of eminence, commonly called *angels*, is manifest from *Hebr.* ii. 16. *Verily he*  
took



*took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.*

Is it not here most evident, that he had, first, a distinct nature of his own, and that he afterwards took on him another, but not of *angels*; by which is meant, in this passage, all those superior creatures whom we call by that appellation? And what was that first nature which he had before he assumed the second? It could not be the nature either of angels or men, because it is here clearly distinguished from both. Neither could it have been any nature inferior to that of man; because, if it had, it could not have been said with truth, that he was *in the form of God* before his incarnation; nor that *he emptied and humbled himself* in order thereunto, *Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8.* It follows, therefore, that his first nature was no other than the divine; and that he was so far from being an *angel* by nature, and bearing only the name and stile of God, that he was really God by nature, and bore only the stile of an *angel*; for he neither had originally, nor took on him, the nature of *angels*.

Our adversaries may here perhaps object, that the word *angels*, in this passage, is to be understood of the lowest order of spirits superior to us, as if they were peculiarly so called; but that, notwithstanding, Christ may have been one of those principalities, powers, thrones, &c. who are represented to us as higher than angels; and, having first this superior nature, it was proper enough to say, he took not on him the nature of these inferior spirits called *angels*; but, being, by his first nature, much higher than them, he became a little lower, by the assumption of the second.

But these objectors would do well to consider, that the word *angel*, or *angels*, in Scripture language, infinitely oftener comprehends all the orders of created spirits superior to us (they being, by office, all equally the angels or messengers of God), than it signifies, in a restrained sense, the lowest order of such spirits: that, in this text to the *Hebrews*, it probably comprehends them all, because it is brought in contrast to the nature of man; and Christ, in the same passage, is called God, and all the angels of

God are ordered to worship him; and, above all, that altho' we do take it here in the restrained sense, it will give the *Arians* no advantage, because, to serve their purpose, they must understand it, not of an office, but a nature, as they do in those passages where he is called an *angel*; whereas it is here expressly denied, that he ever had the nature of angels. As the whole force of their argument, drawn from his being called an angel, to prove him but a creature, is founded on the supposition of his being, not by office, but by nature, an *angel*; we see it is expressly refuted by holy Scripture, and proved to be one of those fallacious arguments, which take the middle term in two different senses in the premises, and whereof one of the premises is the thing to be proved, as may be seen by reducing it to a syllogism. *All angels are creatures; Christ is an angel; therefore, &c.* The first of these propositions we deny; and observe, that *angel*, in the first, is made to imply a certain nature; whereas, in the last, the express word of God will not suffer it to signify any thing else but an office; for Christ took not on him the nature of *angels*, but the office. Besides, in the first, *angels* signify all the orders of spirits superior to man; whereas, in the latter, *angel* signifies not what the attempted answer to my argument takes it for, and St. *Paul* expressly denies, but an higher order of creatures, which that answer must understand by it, or it can be no answer at all.

When Christ is spoken of under the lowest characters, as being *made, growing in wisdom and stature, weeping, hungering, dying*, and the like; his being *born of a woman*, whereby every thing that can be said of a man, may be truly and properly said of him, the committal of *sin only excepted*, lets us clearly into the reason of such expressions. He had in him both an uncreated and a created nature; and therefore we are not to wonder, that he is spoken of both as God, and as a creature. Yet the Scriptural writers, altho' they often call him God, in respect to his eternal, never directly say he is a creature, in respect to his temporary, nature. They speak of him with honour; and therefore, while they enumerate his lower characters, they stile

title him peculiarly by that title which intimates his highest dignity. The same is done every-where in relation to men. If a man hath various titles, we always give him the highest, when we mean to shew respect. In like manner, those writers give instances of divine worship paid him, and actually prescribe it, notwithstanding his created nature; for they never say any thing from whence it may be at all inferred, that they, even in supposition or imagination, divided his person; wherein as the *fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily*, the whole is to be adored, altho' consisting of the human nature as well as the divine. Now, this by no means gives an open to creature-worship, nor contradicts the doctrine laid down in my last discourse. If God had prescribed the worship of a delegated creature, it had, no doubt, been our duty to obey. But, God having absolutely forbidden all worship to be paid to creatures, and peremptorily restrained it wholly to himself, we are not at liberty to worship a mere creature. Yet, as we are assured Christ is God, and consequently the one only God; and, further, as we are commanded to worship him; his created nature can be no bar to our duty in that respect; nor can it ever convict us of creature-worship, till it is proved, that he is not God, or that we adore him purely as a creature. The respect we pay to a man, is paid to his whole person, soul and body, but only on account of the former, and therefore cannot be construed into any degree of veneration for a mere body. Nor can our adoring Christ be called creature-worship, because we worship him only on account of his Divine Nature, which gave that dignity to those sufferings, whereby, considered as man, he was exalted to universal dominion and adoration. The veneration we pay to Christ as man, being heightened by the adoration we pay him as God, becomes one undistinguished act of divine worship, which ought no more to be divided, than the person of the object to which it is paid. Neither, if Christ is truly God, and one with the Father, ought there to be any distinction in the adoration of a Being so essentially one. Accordingly, there is none in that hymn whereby God and the Lamb are adored by every creature, *Rev. v. 11, 12,*

13. If Christ is one undivided person, and divine, the act of worship paid to him ought to be one undivided act of divine worship. And, if he is one Being with the Father, the act of worship paid to both ought to be the same. If the unity of his person, notwithstanding the assumption of the human nature, forbids all distinctions of worship in the first instance; much more ought his essential unity with the Father to forbid all such distinctions in the second, notwithstanding his eternal Sonship, which makes no inequality or distinction of nature.

But here our adversaries put us in mind, that Christ is called *the first-born of every creature*, Coloss. i. 15. and *the beginning of the creation of God*, Rev. iii. 14. But his being called the first-born of every creature by no means intimates, that he is merely a creature; for the word *first-born* is not always to be taken literally. It sometimes signifies pre-eminence, and sometimes dominion. *The first-born of the poor*, Isaiah xiv. 30. signifies only the poorest of the poor. *The first-born of death*, Job xviii. 13. signifies the most dreadful kind of death. God says, *he will make David his first-born higher than the kings of the earth*, Ps. lxxxix. 27. But this gives David no priority of birth, either as a man, or a king; for he was not born before all other kings, much less before all other men; it only intimates supereminence of dominion. Neither doth the title of *first-born* give Christ this priority, because he was not born before all other men, or creatures, in the same sense with them. If another sense, then, is to be sought for, let us hear St. Paul in the same passage, that, taking the whole together, we may the better understand his meaning. The apostle, after having told us, that *Christ is the first-born of every creature*, ver. 15. says, *All things in heaven and in earth were created by him, and for him*, ver. 16.; that *he is before all things, that all things consist by him*, ver. 17.; and that *he is head of the body, the church; the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence*, ver. 18. Thus his priority of birth is interpreted, by the apostle himself, of his rising the first from the dead to a life immortal and eternal; and with this, you see, is connected his right of supreme

supreme dominion over all creatures. We need, therefore, look no further for the sense of the word *first-born*, as applied to Christ. It is in the same sense that St. *John* calls him, *Rev. i. 5. the first-begotten of the dead*; and, *ch. iii. ver. 14. the beginning of the creation of God.* In these, and such-like places, the resurrection is spoken of as a creation, or birth; and Christ, as a man, and a creature, derives his triumphant birthright, and universal empire over all creatures, from his conquest of death. As the only-begotten Son of God by eternal generation, he went forth to create the worlds, and rested the seventh day, which he therefore hallowed and consecrated into a sabbath. As the Son both of God and man, he went forth from the womb of the Virgin to the work of redemption, or the new creation. From this work he rested also, by his resurrection from the dead on the first day of the week, which from thenceforward, to commemorate his resting after having *made all things new*, *Rev. xxi. 5. 2 Cor. v. 17.* was kept as the day of rest or sabbath. From hence he derives a new Sonship, as he was *appointed the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead*, *Rom. i. 4.*; and acquires also an inheritance of pre-eminence or dominion over all things, *Coloss. i. 18.* Hence also, as all the faithful are *the children of God, being the children of the resurrection*, *Luke xx. 26.* so Christ, who rose the first, acquired the right of primogeniture in this new kind of birth, and is therefore truly called the *first-born of every creature*, both because in this sense he was born first, and because he inherits the lordship over all. In all this his human nature only is spoken of, without the least eye to that supposed angelic nature whereto the *Arians* would needs affix the idea of his primogeniture.

This objected passage, you may perceive, instead of proving him only a creature, proves him the Creator, and consequently God.

There is no passage of Scripture whereof the *Arians* and *Socinians* make so much use, as that in the 13th of St. *Mark's* Gospel, where Christ saith, speaking of the destruction of the world, or of *Jerusalem*, *Of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which*

are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. St. Matthew has not recorded these words (*neither the Son*) when he relates the prediction of our Saviour, wherein he intermixes the signs of the two events mentioned. The words in St. Matthew seem indeed to be tantamount. They are these: *Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.* If Christ is the one only true God, as I shall soon in the clearest manner prove from Scripture, it may, I must own, seem very strange, that, as such, he should be ignorant of this, or any other event. However, the Socinians have no right to press us with this text, since they deny the prescience of God himself. But the words are certainly spoken of Christ as the Son of man, in which sense he is said to grow in wisdom; and as a prophet, who was commissioned to foretell some things, and to reserve others, with the silence, in respect to the latter, of those who are wholly ignorant of them. The words of St. Paul, Coloss. ii. 3. *Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,* appear to be the best comment on these of our Saviour; for, at the same time that they attribute omniscience to Christ, they give us to understand, that the abysses of his knowledge are not to be revealed. He so plainly gave the signs whereby the approaching ruin of *Jerusalem* was to be known, that none of the Christians were found there when the city was begirt by the *Romans*. This was sufficient for them, without the foreknowledge of the precise times and seasons, which the Father had put in his own power, Acts i. 7. because the determination thereof was part of that providence which depended on his own prerogative or office, and therefore was not to be revealed by the Son. But if, merely as a man, and a prophet, the revelation of the day and hour was not committed to him, we are not to conclude from thence, that, purely as the Son of God, he was ignorant of that or any thing else, since we in other places perceive he knew all things, John xvi. 30. and that the Father concealed nothing from him; for the Father, saith Christ, John v. 20. *loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doth.* That Christ, nevertheless, sometimes speaks as a mere man

man might do, nay, and as one ignorant of that which he knew perfectly well, is plain from his words on some other occasions. Did he not know he was to die the death of the cross? Was he not sensible the prophets had predicted it? *Matt. xxvi. 54.* and his Father unalterably decreed it? *Acts ii. 23.* Did he not foretel it himself? *John xii. 32.* Did he not even resolve it? *John x. 18.* Could he have been the Messiah, or our Redeemer, without it? Yet, the night he was betrayed, *he fell on his face in the garden, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, Matt. xxvi. 39.* Will the *Arians* infer from these words, that Christ did not foresee his own death, as absolutely certain? If they neither will, nor can, why will they urge us with his words concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, or of the world? Since it was proper for Christ thus to express himself in a prayer to his Father, concerning the possibility of averting an event whereof he must have had a certain and infallible foreknowlege; why is his foreknowlege as to the precise time wherein *Jerusalem*, or the world, was to be destroyed, to come under the least suspicion on account of an expression of like import in effect, returned in answer to an inquiry, concerning which they who made it had no right to satisfaction? Christ therefore tells them not the hour, nor the day; but he gives them the signs of both events as one, and saith, *Take heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.* Were we to conclude as the objectors do, we must infer the ignorance of the Creator from his saying, *He repented that he had made man*, and the rest of the animal creation, *Gen. vi. 7.* and that he *had set up Saul to be king*, *1 Sam. xv. 11.* as if he had not foreseen either the depravity of mankind, or the defection of this prince. If we are so captiously to interpret Scripture, what will the *Arians* do with that which is said in the 5th of *Isaiab* concerning God's vineyard or people? *I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes: I looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.* Was God absolutely disappointed? Had he no foresight of the iniquity and oppression whereof his people were guilty?

St. *Augustine* observes, on this subject, that when God said, after trying *Abraham*, *Now I know that thou fearest God*, we ought to understand him as saying, *Now I have caused thee to know, that thou fearest God, inasmuch as God knew it before*; and that, when our Saviour saith, *John xv. 15. All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you*, we ought not to understand absolutely *all things*, but only all they were then able to receive; because, in the next chapter, he tells them, *He had yet many things to say unto them, which they could not then bear*, and which, therefore, the Spirit was to teach them after his departure. I instance these passages to shew, that, as the exercise of our Saviour's attributes was in some measure limited by the ignorance, incapacity, disinclination, or unbelief, of those on whom they were exercised, so those attributes are sometimes spoken of as if they were limited in themselves. It is in this sense we are to understand the words of the evangelist, *Mark vi. 5, 6. He could do there no mighty work;—and he marvelled because of their unbelief.* The faith of the sick was made necessary to his own cure; but we are not to conclude from hence, that our Saviour could not have healed him, though he had not believed, because he sometimes healed the absent, and raised the dead, who could not believe; but rather, that he would not, or could not consistently with the designation of his mission and office. But, whether we can reconcile these words to our belief of Christ's prescience and Divinity, or not, matters little to the debate about his Divinity itself, since we can so fully prove it by innumerable passages of Scripture, too direct, express, and positive, to be balanced by one obscure passage, from whence the *Arian* is to draw the consequence himself, which may possibly be wrong; whereas the true and proper Divinity of our blessed Saviour depends not on consequences of our drawing, but on such assertions of God himself as common sense cannot mistake the meaning of. If Christ is *the true God*, he must *know all things*. If there are some things, which, as man, he does not know, or which, as the commissioner of his Father, he is not impowered to reveal, this will not prove him



to be a mere creature ; for, in that case, how could it be true, that he is *the wisdom of God*, and *God himself* ? Again ; if there are some things, which, as man, and a commissioner, he cannot do, neither will this prove him to be a mere creature, since *he is able even to subdue all things to himself*, and *upholdeth all things by the word of his power*. If there is but one true God, as I have already shewn ; and if Christ is that one true God, as I hope soon to shew ; no consequences drawn by us, tho' from Scripture, can ever prove he is not truly God. But this matter must be left to the next opportunity. Let us, in the mean time, proceed with such other objections as seem to merit an answer.

Our adversaries further insist, that Christ, *John xviii. 3.* calls *the Father*, in contradistinction to himself, *the only true God*. Christ, it is true, there addressing the Father, calls him the only true God ; but there is nothing in the passage to shew, that he does this in contradistinction to himself. He only names himself afterwards ; but puts not the least sign of a negative on his own Divinity, nor at all compares himself with the Father. Indeed he could not have done it, without contradicting what the Holy Ghost says of him in many places, particularly *John i. 1.* where he says, *The Word was God* ; and, *1 John v. 20.* where he calls Christ *the true God*. The opposers of our Saviour's Divinity object to these latter words as not spoken of Christ, but without the least colour of reason, as any one may see who reads the whole verse, which runs thus : *We know the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true ; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.* The whole connexion evidently shews the words to be spoken of Christ. Besides, he is peculiarly called *eternal life* in other places, as at ver. *12.* *He that hath the Son, hath life ; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.* Christ calls himself *the resurrection and the life*, *John xi. 25.* Our adversaries allow Christ to be truly God, in some sense or other ; for the Scriptures often expressly call him God, and he calls himself *Jehovah*, and *God*, as we shall hereafter

after see. If, therefore, this passage in the 17th of St. *John's* gospel, proves any thing for the objectors, it proves too much; for, if the Father only is the true God, then Christ is either no god at all, or a false god. But the passage here proves nothing. It only says, *the Father is the only true God*, and we say the same; but it does not say, the Father alone is the true God. Between these two there is a wide difference. The first leaves it undetermined whether Christ is God, or not; and is the very expression itself of our Saviour, both in terms and meaning; whereas the last would exclude the Divinity of the Son. The same observations, in substance, may serve to baffle the like objection founded on the words of St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. viii. 6. *To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.* Here the Son is not excluded, in the application of the words *one God* to the Father, from the Divinity; no more than the Father is excluded, by the words *one Lord*, applied to Jesus Christ, from dominion. The Father is still Lord, though all power is given to the Son; and the Son is God, though that appellation is, in this place, connected immediately with the Father, from whom the Son, by eternal generation, hath his essence. In that passage likewise, *Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6.* where it is said, *There is one Spirit—one Lord—one God and Father of all*, the Son is not excluded from the Divinity. It he were, how could St. *Paul* expressly call him God, as he does, *Rom. ix. 5. Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever*; and 1 *Tim. iii. 16. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory*? Or how could the *Arians* call him God in any sense, were his Divinity here denied in a passage which tells us, *To us there is but one God*?

Again; it is objected, that Christ distinguished himself from God, when he refused the appellation of *good*, *Mat. xix. 17.* and ascribes it to God only. But does Christ really reprove him who called him *good master*? All he says, is, *Why callest thou me good? there is none good*

*good but one, that is God.* Was it more improper, or more untrue, in this man to call him *good master*, than in him to call himself *the good shepherd*, John x. 14. ? Was he not truly good, who was without sin, and went about doing all the good the people he was sent to would suffer him to do? Why then did he ask this question? No doubt, it was to try whether the man who had called him good, would confess him, according to the prophecies, to be the Messiah, and God. He probably saw the man was convinced of this in his heart; and we may guess the same by his question, *Good master, what shall I do that I may have eternal life?* On this supposition, he could not, by any other method, have so naturally thrown it in his way to confess the Divinity of him whom he had already applied to with so much respect, and for so important a piece of information. This passage, therefore, instead of derogating in the least from the Divinity of our blessed Saviour, can bear no other rational interpretation, than such as strongly insinuates that very Divinity.

But, further, it is objected, that Christ cannot be God, since God calls him *his servant* more than once, particularly *Isaiab* xlii. 1. quoted by *St. Matthew*, xii. 18. How, say they, can the same person be God, and the servant of God?

I answer; He was the servant of God his Father, inasmuch as he was his angel or messenger, who *came not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him.* In order to this, *he who was in the form of God, made himself of no reputation, or rather emptied himself, and took on him the form of a servant, that he might become obedient to death, even the death of the cross;* that is, he became man, for as such it is that he is called a servant; but while, in this respect, he is said not to *differ from a servant*, he is stiled also *the Heir and Lord of all*, Gal. iv. 1. Under this head, the supremacy of the Father, and the subjection of the Son, are urged from various passages of Scripture, on which our adversaries ground their opinion, that the Son is but a creature, and consequently not, in the proper sense of the word, God. Of these the chief are; *There is one God and Father of all, who is above*

above all, Ephes. iv. 6. and, *The head of Christ is God*, 1 Cor. xi. 3. And is it not said of Christ, that he is *over all, God blessed for ever?* Rom. ix. 5. There is, surely; but one God, one God who is over all. Christ, therefore, and the Father, are one, one in nature, one in Deity, altho' the Son, as such, is subject to his Father, as Father; and still more so, as he is the Son of man; in which latter sense it is that God is said to be his head; for it is, no doubt, in that sense that our Saviour, in the same verse, is said to be *the head of every man, or of the church*, Ephes. v. 23. for he, being God, *hath purchased it*, as man, *with his own blood*, Acts xx. 28. Wherein the supremacy of the First Person in regard to the Second consisted, before the latter took our nature on him, we cannot determine; we only know, that the First is called the Father; and the Second, the Son; and that the Father, in virtue of his paternity, sent the Son to instruct, and die for us. But we know also, that the Son, having, by the gift of his Father, that is, by generation, or a communication of nature, life in himself, as the Father had life in himself, freely and voluntarily laid down his life, as man, for the sheep, having power to lay it down, and to take it again. Altho' he did this, as he tells us, *by the commandment of his Father*; yet, were he not God, as well as man, he could not have a right to dispose of his own life. As no man hath given life to himself, so no man hath the disposal of it in his power; for the issues of life and death belong to God only. What then could have given the man Christ Jesus a property in his own life? It must, no doubt, have been that infinitely higher life, which, altho' held by ineffable communication from the Father, *of whom are all things*, yet belonged to the Son of God, *by whom are all things, by and for whom all things were created*. On the whole, if there is but one God, and Christ is God, he can in no sense be of a nature inferior to that of his Father; for there cannot be a superior and inferior God; and therefore the supremacy of the Father cannot possibly be founded on any difference of nature or essence, but only on that relation which Christ bears to him as his Son, of one and the same nature; or

as a distinct Person, voluntarily undertaking and holding an office under the Father. The truth is, the subjection or subordination of the Son is seldom or never mentioned in Scripture but with an eye to his humiliation; that is, to the assumption of human nature, and its consequences. Thus it is only that he is called a servant. Before it, he was in no sense a servant. No, *he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, at that time when he vouchsafed to humble or empty himself,* in order that he might become a servant, or man. Now we know, that the highest angels of light, and every creature, altho' of the most exalted dignity, are all the servants of God. Christ, therefore, could not have been a creature before he became man; for it is plain he only then became a servant. As we may look on Christ as the greatest of men, though subject to *Joseph and Mary*; so we may regard him as the greatest of beings, tho' subject to his Father. His subjection no more derogates from the dignity of his nature in the one case, than it does in the other.

It is still further urged by the *Arians*, that Christ cannot properly be called God, since he himself says, *John v. 30. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.* Were this passage to be taken strictly, Christ must be less than the weakest of men; for every man can do something. Or, were the intire dignity of his person to be estimated by these words alone, tho' understood with the utmost latitude, we could not possibly think of him as more than a mere man. Yet the *Arians* themselves allow him a much higher character, not only on account of his office, but of his nature also. They say he was before all worlds, and call him God. They must, therefore, not grant, but insist, as well as we, that he spoke these words of his human nature. And indeed, no further back than the 27th verse, he had said, that *his Father gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man*; which evidently shews, that he speaks, throughout the whole passage, of himself as the Son of man only. The same re-

mark is to be made on what he delivers to his hearers, at ver. 26. *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son also to have life in himself*; a text urged likewise by the opposers of Christ's Divinity, altho' it is as clear as the light, that he there speaks of himself as a man, because, in the same sentence, he calls himself *the Son of man*. If, however, the objectors will needs interpret this text of his superior nature, they ought to consider what it is to *have life in himself, as the Father hath life in himself*. The Father, we know, hath it from all eternity, and in the highest independent sense. Christ, therefore, must have it in the same sense, tho' by communication, though by eternal communication, or he cannot have it, as the Father hath it, in himself. This cannot be said with truth, and in strictness, of any creature. But where is the sense, or rather where is the honesty, of Dr. *Clark*, and the other *Arians*, in pressing us so often with these and the like texts, at the expence of their own hypothesis? It is only to serve the present turn. The dispute between them and us is not concerning the human nature of Christ, and therefore can never be affected either way by citations that relate purely to his humanity. No; our inquiry turns solely on that other and higher nature of Christ, whether it is truly a divine, or only an angelic nature. Now, is it not altogether disingenuous to make a sophistical parade of texts that relate not in the least to this higher nature, but only to that which Christ assumed in the womb of the Virgin? Were the *Arians* held to these their citations, must they not abandon their whole system? If such passages can characterize the whole person of Christ, he can be no more than a mere man: if they intimate only his inferior nature, why are they urged in a dispute about the other, by men who own to us, and insist to the *Socinians*, that he actually hath another and an higher nature?

It is with the same shameless disingenuity that they never fail to object those places where our Saviour says, *I proceeded forth and came from God*, John viii. 42. and that *he was come from God, and went to God*, ch. xiii. 3. Strictly speaking, no one can come from, or go to, God, because he

he is equally present every-where; but, as God manifests his glory more especially in heaven, from thence our Saviour is said to come; so thither he is said to go, in the same sense, with respect to his human nature, as any other man may be said to change his place; with respect to his divine, in a sense utterly incomprehensible and unintelligible to us; but still in a sense as intelligible as that wherein he says, speaking of his Father, as well as himself, *If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him,* John xiv. 23. Here change of place, or presence on condition, which in terms implies a possibility of absence, is ascribed to the Father, as well as the Son. He whom all acknowledge to be God, is so frequently said in the Old Testament to move to or from a place, that it is needless to particularize the passages. In whatever sense this is said of God, it may in the same be said of Christ, without derogating from his omnipresence, who was in heaven at the same time that he was on earth, if we believe *John the Baptist* in these words, spoken while Christ was here below, *The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him,* John i. 18. or if we believe *Christ himself*, who saith, *No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven,* ch. iii. 13. But whereas, in the passages objected, Christ is said to come from God, and go to God, our adversaries insist he is therein distinguished from God, and consequently cannot be God. And we, on the other hand, insist, that so far the expression relates purely to the human nature, that is, the soul and body, of our Saviour, which, like those of other men, proceeded from the hands of their Maker, and were, when these words were spoken, about to return to him again. Thus it is necessary we should understand them, whether we consider the approaching departure of Christ as man, which gave occasion to them, or the many other places of Scripture wherein he is, in the strictest sense of the word, called God.

The last objection I shall here take notice of, is, that which our opponents draw from the 15th chapter of the

first epistle to the *Corinthians*, where we are told, *Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to God*, ver. 24. *after having put every thing else under his feet*, ver. 25, 26, 27. *and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all*, ver. 28. Here, say they, the name and title of God is given to the Father only; and the subjection of Christ, from the consummation of all things, to all eternity, is predicted; which, in their judgment, could not be, were Christ God, equal with the Father.

We readily acknowledge, that the name and title of God is, in this place, given to the Father only; and that the subjection of Christ, as urged in the argument of our opponents, is foretold: but we think it cannot be concluded from hence, that the Son, in respect to his superior nature, is not God, equal with the Father, since he hath a lower nature, whereof all this, we insist, is said. At ver. 24th, it is said, *Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father*. Here *the Father* is added only to denote a distinction between him and the Son, which had been needless, were not the Son God also; for, had the apostle said simply *to God*, and not, by way of distinction, subjoined *the Father*, it might have been apprehended, that none was God but he to whom the kingdom is to be delivered up. But, to decide the present question, it will be necessary to consider what this kingdom is which the Son shall deliver up, and how it came to be peculiarly his.

The kingdom of the Son is an *absolute dominion over every thing in heaven, in earth, and under the earth*, Philip. ii. 10. *This kingdom he acquired by donation from the Father, on account of his death*, ver. 8, 9. *The right of judging this kingdom accrues to him as the Son of man*, John v. 27. *It was by the sacrifice of his blood that he became the Mediator between God and the subjects of this kingdom*, Heb. ix. 14, 15. *It was through his death that he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*, Heb. ii. 14. and thereby finished his conquests, and reduced the kingdom to perfect obedience, 1 Cor. xv. 26. Hence it appears, that, in the passage objected, Christ is spoken of purely as that man whom God had highly



highly exalted, and to whom he had given a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, &c. Philip. ii. 9, 10. It is true, indeed, that, had not Christ been God as well as man, he could neither have acquired, nor exercised, this boundless empire. However, we see it is as man that he dies, that he conquers, that he reigns; and as man, therefore, that he resigns his power, when all the ends of his commission are answered, *that God*, whether as the Father, as the Son, or as the Holy Ghost, *may be all in all*, without the interposition of a created delegate, just on the same footing as before the worlds were made. Be the superior nature of Christ what it will, it hath nothing to do with our debate on the passage before us; for, as man only, Christ acquires a kingdom, resigns it, and is subject to God, from the final judgment, the last act to be done by him, in consequence of his commission, to all eternity.

But what would our *Arian* adversaries infer from this passage? Is it not, that the whole person of Christ shall be subject to the Father, from the last day, to all eternity? And shall not we also have as good a right to infer, that now, and till that period, his whole person possesses an absolute dominion over all things, and is not subject? What does the change or resignation imply but this? And surely this is a great deal too much for either the *Arian* or *Socinian* system of subordination; too much indeed for reason itself to digest, because reason will not suffer us to suppose, that a mere creature should be entrusted with an unlimited, un subordinate, uncontrollable, dominion over all things, during any space of time. But, in the midst of this, it should be considered, that *God was all in all* before Christ was a man; that, in some sense or other, he is so still; that Christ, *by whom, and for whom, all things were made*, was possessed of an unlimited empire over all things antecedently to his incarnation; and that *David*, quoted by *St. Paul*, says to him, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, Heb. i. 8. The title to dominion, conferred on him as man, and on account of his death, he is to resign; but that which he holds as God, he keeps for ever and ever; *for he shall reign for ever, and of his*

kingdom there shall be no end, Luke i. 33. Rev. xi. 15. This last text was uttered by the seventh angel, *When the time of the dead was come that they should be judged,* ver. 18. ; so that Christ's kingdom is to last for ever, from and after the day of judgment. Accordingly, power, as well as *honour and glory*, are ascribed to him, in conjunction with the Father, *for ever and ever*, in the hymn of the whole universe, Rev. v. 13.

As, in the next Discourse, I intend to prove the Divinity of our blessed Saviour, sometimes from passages, which, in this, I have shewn to have been spoken of him as a man ; to prevent your thinking I contradict myself in so doing, give me leave to observe to you here, that the same passage, which, in one part of it, speaks of him as God, in another speaks of him as man ; or, at the same time that it speaks of him as a man, necessarily leads us, by a verbal quotation, to other passages where the name or attributes of God are expressly given him. I need not trouble you with instances of this now, because they will be sufficiently apparent to the attentive, in the prosecution of my design.

They who are acquainted with the controversy concerning the Divinity of Christ, must see, that I have singled out those objections from Scripture, to that Divinity, which are of the greatest weight and moment ; indeed, which are of any weight at all ; and they see, I hope, that there is nothing in them, nothing, I mean, when set in opposition to the many express and positive passages that prove our blessed Saviour to be truly and properly God. Had the objected texts been accompanied by no such passages, altho' some of them might have stood for us, rather than our adversaries, on a fair and natural construction, yet I must own there are others, from which it must have been inferred, that he was only a creature. But what are the inferences of human reason, so apt to err in every branch of knowledge, when placed over-against the clear and positive assertions of God himself ? He tells us, *There is but one God.* He says, *To us there is but one God.* He commands us *to worship and serve him alone.* He also often assures us, that *Christ is God ; and orders the*  
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*very angels to worship him.* Christ, therefore, is the one only true God. This, surely, with men of reason and candour, who believe the Scriptures, is sufficient to decide the controversy about our Saviour's Divinity, come what will of the conclusions and deductions drawn from the darker passages of Scripture, which no-where says, that he is not God, or that he is but a mere creature.

Altho' every real Christian must be concluded by this short decisive summary of the merits, whereon both the learned and illiterate ought to found their faith in Christ's true and proper Divinity; as, nevertheless, something further may be requisite to the conviction of men already prejudiced against it, I shall, God willing, in the next Discourse, lay before you the Scriptural proofs of that doctrine, which, I trust, will appear too full and satisfactory to leave any doubts about it in the mind of him who takes the Scriptures for the word of God, and knows they can neither contradict him, nor themselves.

In the mean time let us earnestly beseech God so to direct our inquiries, that we may find the truth, and that the truth may set us free from all our doubts and divisions concerning our blessed Saviour; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE VI.

The Divinity of Christ proved.

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PHILIPPIANS iii. 8.

*I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowlege of Christ Jesus my Lord.*

**I**T is no wonder the apostle should esteem all other gains as losses, in comparison with the knowlege of Christ, since to know Christ, is to know God, and all the means of salvation ; *for in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Coloss. ii. 9. and with him God shall freely give us all things, Rom. viii. 32. This is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, John xvii. 3. Thus, therefore, saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might ; let not the rich man glory in his riches ; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, Jerem. ix. 23, 24.* It was for these reasons that St. Paul, speaking of his visit to the Corinthians, says, *I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God ; for I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified, 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2.*

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To know Christ, therefore, is infinitely better than all other knowlege; and the most excellent part of this knowlege is, to know that which is most excellent in Christ, namely, his Divine Nature, which gave dignity to those sufferings whereby we are redeemed, and majesty to that dispensation whereby we are reclaimed and governed. If he is God, we must believe in him, depend on him, and worship him, as such. *As he is the way, and the truth, and the life, so that no man cometh to the Father but by him,* John xiv. 6. to know who he is, must be the prime article of knowlege; for *he that hath seen him, hath seen the Father,* ver. 9.

But whereas about this there are infinite disputes in the world, some insisting, that Christ is the one only eternal God; others, that he is only an angel, and raised to the dignity of a god; and others again, that he is but a mere man; I endeavoured, in the preceding Discourse, to answer the chief objections brought against his true and proper Divinity; and shall now, in this, lay before you the principal proofs of that Divinity, as they are found in holy Scripture, which alone can determine the question either way, this being a point above the investigation of reason, and not to be decided but by God himself. And this I shall do by shewing,

First, That, as he is the Messiah, the Word, and the Son of God, he must be God:

Secondly, That the incommunicable attributes of God are given to him by the inspired writers:

Thirdly, That the incommunicable name, or names, of God, are given to him by those writers:

Fourthly, That he takes the same to himself, and denies the being of any other God:

And, lastly, That divine worship, that is, the incommunicable worship of God, is actually given him by divine appointment.

That Jesus is the Christ, or Messiah, according to *1 John* v. 1. is now taken for granted by all Christians; and that, agreeably to the prophetic character of the Messiah, he must, as such, be God, is evident from *Isaiah* vii. 14. *Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall*

call his name Immanuel; compared with *Mat. i. 22, 23.* Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, *Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us;* and further compared with *John i. 1. 14.* *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* *Psalms xxiv. 4. 8. and Hosea i. 7.* are generally applied to the same purpose. But the texts already cited at large make it as plain, that the Messiah is God, as it is, that Jesus is the Messiah. But the Divinity of the Messiah is further cleared of all doubt by what is said in the 21st of *Revelations*, ver. 3, 4. *Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying;* and, in the 22d and 23d verses, where the apostle speaks of the *New Jerusalem*, *I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Observe here, that these words, *the tabernacle of God is with men, and, he will dwell with them,* are in substance the very same with *John i. 14.* *The Word, or God, was made flesh, and dwelt,* or, as it is in the original, *made his tabernacle, among us.* Now compare this with what God is pleased to say in *Ezek. xxxvii. 27.* *My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people;* and with what *Isaiah* says of the church, or the *New Jerusalem*, ch. lx. 1. *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* Ver. 19, 20. *The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory; and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.* Here it is very observable, that the Spirit, speaking by *St. John*, does but quote what he had said by

*Ezekiel*

*Ezekiel* and *Isaiab*; that, in the passages both of the apostle and the prophets, the same subject, Christ's church, city, or kingdom, is treated of; that, in both, the same expressions are used; that the Lamb is Christ; that this Lamb is called the light of the *New Jerusalem*; and that this light, or glory, is called the Lord, and God.

In the second place, Christ is called the *Word*, or Wisdom, of God. If we consider the sense of this title, as applied to him in Scripture, and observe the connexions that attend it, we shall need nothing more to convince us of his Divinity. This *Word*, as St. *Ignatius* observes in his epistle to the *Magnesians*, is not the pronounced, but the substantial, *Word* of God. It is worth remarking, that this substantial or personal *Word* was not altogether unknown to the people of God before our Saviour's time; nor even to the Pagan philosophers both before and after it. We are told, 1 *Sam.* iii. 21. that *the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh, by the Word of the Lord.* *David* speaks as plainly of him in the 33d psalm, as St. *John*; *By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made.* *Solomon* also, in the 8th of his Proverbs, gives his encomium under the name of *Wisdom*; but with such personal characters, and in such terms, as would induce one to think St. *John* had the passage in view when he writ the first verse of his gospel. *The Lord possessed me, says Wisdom, in the beginning of his way, before his works of old, I was set up from everlasting. When God prepared the heavens, I was there. When he set a compass on the face of the depth, &c. then was I by him, as one brought up with him.* How near is this to the words of the apostle, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God!* Likewise, when he writ the first verse of his first epistle, where he calls Christ *the Word of life*, he seems to have copied it from the 35th of this chapter, *Whoso findeth me, findeth life.* The antient Rabbi's, and *Philo Judeus*, make frequent mention of him by his name of *Logos*, or *Word*, calling him the Son of God, and ascribing the attributes of God to him. Nay, *Philo* says the *Logos* was that God who appeared to *Adam* after his fall, to *Abraham*, and to *Moses* in the bush. The author of  
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the book of *Wisdom*, written some ages before our Saviour's time, says, it was the *Logos* that plagued the *Egyptians*, and calls him Almighty; *Thine Almighty Word leapt down from heaven, out of thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction*, *Wisdom* xviii. 15. *Zeno*, *Plato*, *Plotinus*, *Amelius*, and *Iamblichus*, speak of him by the same name, and almost with equal propriety and honour. *St. John*, you see, was far from broaching a novelty when he gave him the same appellation of *Logos*, or *Word*, and expressly called him God. So far he might have gone as a Rabbi, or Philosopher; but, when he affixes this title to our Saviour, he speaks in the character of an Apostle, and must be believed in the plain sense of his words. It is observable, that this first verse of *St. John's* gospel must be flatly contradictory, on the *Arian* hypothesis, to what God himself says, *Deut.* xxxii. 39. *I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me.* God says, *There is no god, that is, no other god, with him*; but *St. John* says, *The Word was with God, and was God.* The Word, therefore, cannot possibly be another god, as the *Arians* blasphemously maintain. But it is not in this single passage only, together with its context, that our apostle calls Christ the Word, and points out his Divinity to us; he does the same in the 19th of the *Revelations*, where, alluding to *Isaiab* lxiii. 2. and lix. 17. he saw one riding in heaven on a white horse, who was cloathed in a vesture dypt in blood, whose name was called *The Word of God*, and who had on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, *King of kings, and Lord of lords*, which is the proper stile of the great and only God, as you may see in *Deut.* x. 17. and *Psal.* cxxxvi. 3.

In the third place, the Divinity of our blessed Saviour may be clearly proved from his being called in Scripture the Son of God, by way of excellence, and the only-begotten Son of God. *St. John* tells us, in the iv. and 15th of his first epistle, that *whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* Here you perceive the peculiar character, and the very sum total, of all happiness, is annexed to this article of our faith, *that Jesus is the Son of God.* This will seem



seem altogether unaccountable to us, while we understand no more by the Son of God, than the Son of his love and favour. This, if we believe the Scriptures, may be said of angels, and all good Christians. As God is our Creator, we may be called his sons; and *Adam*, because he was the immediate work of God, is called the son of God, in our Saviour's genealogy. In this sense God is the Father of us all, whether our dispositions and actions render us pleasing to him, or not. But, if we shew ourselves grateful for his goodness, and dutiful and obedient to his will, *if we do not commit sin, then we know we are born of God*, 1 John iii. 9. that is, we know we are, not only his children by creation, but his dearly and well-beloved children, by regeneration and adoption, through Christ Jesus. The angels, those superior creatures of God, who kept their first station, are, in the book of *Job*, and elsewhere, called also the sons of God. Is it no otherwise that Christ is stiled the Son of God? Shall God dwell in us, and we in him, merely for believing, that Christ is in this sense the Son of God? Why may not the same happy privilege be annexed to our believing, on the authority of Scripture, that any particular angel, or man, is thus related to the infinite Being? You see, this cannot possibly be the meaning of St. *John*. But, if we consult the 9th verse of the same chapter, we shall clearly perceive what he intends by the Son of God; for therein he says, *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him*. Here it appears, that he, whom, in the one place, he calls only the Son of God, he calls, in the other, the only-begotten Son of God; and that as, by the former, he represents this article of our faith as the great means of union with God; so, by the latter, he sets forth Christ as the source of eternal life. From the two passages laid together, and strengthened by a variety of other places, all speaking clearly to the same effect, we may easily gather the pre-eminent dignity of our Saviour's person, and the necessary importance of our faith in him as the Son of God.

Neither

Neither Scripture nor common sense give us any idea of more than two sorts of sonship; the one by nature, and the other by election or adoption. Christ must be the Son of God in one only of these senses. Now he cannot be concluded the Son of God by adoption, from the light this matter is set in by Scripture, because he is so often stiled his *only begotten Son* (though we are there called his sons, and said to be begotten of him); which he could not be, were he no more than an angel, or a man; for, in that sense, both are frequently called the sons of God in Scripture, which, whatsoever it may seem to do in terms, cannot contradict itself in meaning. The very Deists themselves, in their distress for Scriptural contradictions, never thought of trumping up this for one; which shews, that even they regarded the Sonship of Christ, and that of angels or men, as quite different things in the language of Scripture. How would it sound in the ears of Christians, or comport with the Scriptures, to say, Christ is not the only-begotten Son of God; or Christ is merely his adopted Son; which are tantamount as to the point in hand? If therefore Christ is not the Son of God by adoption, he must be his Son by nature; and, if by nature, he is of the same nature and substance with his Father, as properly, as truly, as any man is of the same nature and substance with him who beget him. If, then, he is of the same nature with his Father, he is God. Accordingly the inspired writers often call him God; and he himself says, *I and my Father are one Being*. After all, shall they who receive the Scriptures as the true word of God, and the only rule of their faith, say, Christ is but a creature, is but the adopted Son of God? How could he, who once was nothing, and, after having a being bestowed on him, was, out of mere favour, like other creatures, adopted and taken into the family of God, by his sole merit, procure adoption for all men?

The prophets, to whom he was not fully revealed, spoke of him in quite a different strain from that of the *Arians* and *Socinians*. *David*, reporting the declarations of God concerning Christ, says, in the 2d Psalm, *I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son,*

*this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.* In the 97th, the Psalmist gives him, over and over again, the name of Jehovah; and, in the midst of a most exalted description of his power and majesty, says, *Worship him, all ye angels, or gods.* Nay, in the 45th Psalm, he calls him *the Mighty One*, and says to him, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* Agur, in the 30th of the Proverbs, speaking by questions concerning the mysterious nature and name of the Creator, says, *What is his name, and his Son's name, if thou canst tell?* You see, he asks not of sons, as of many; and therefore cannot be construed as inquiring about the names of angels. And, as Agur inquires after his name, and the Psalmist gives it, calling him *Lord or Jehovah, and God*, so Micah v. 2. discovers the eternity of his generation, thereby distinguishing him from all other sons, from all the other titular sons of God: *Thou, Bethlehem-Ephrath, tho' thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings-forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* Here the goings-forth, or generation, of the Son, from the Father, are represented as coeternal with the Father; and a just foundation is laid for that beautiful similitude, so often applied to the Son, of light, which, issuing from the luminous body, is coeval with its source. The Jews in our Saviour's time, being acquainted with the passages I have cited from the Old Testament, must certainly have taken this expression, the Son of God, as applied by Christ to himself, in an infinitely higher sense than the *Arians* do, or they could never have charged him with blasphemy, nor with *making himself equal with God*, for that application, as we read they did, *John v. 18. x. 33.* where we find they were going to stone him for taking this honour to himself. But he, instead of explaining away what he had said, argues, *a fortiori*, *If they were called gods, to whom the word of God came, say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works*

of my Father, believe me not. But, if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him, John x. 35, 36, 37, 38. This was all the apology he made for his having said, *I and my Father are one Being*, ver. 30. This was all the answer he gave to their saying, *He made himself God*, ver. 33. Yet, in this, he was so far from receding, or denying the charge, that *the Jews were but the more offended, and sought again to take him*, ver. 39.

In the fourth place, 'That our Saviour is God, may appear unquestionably from his having the incommunicable attributes of God ascribed to him by the Holy Ghost, without limitation. You have heard by the passage just now cited from *Micah*, that he is the eternal Son of God. In *Coloss.* i. 17, 18. he is said *to have been before all things*, and is called *the beginning*; and for these reasons it is there affirmed, that *by him all things consist*. St. *John*, ch. i. ver. 1. expresses himself to the same effect: *In the beginning*, that is, from eternity, *was the Word*; and frequently in his first epistle, ch. i. ver. 1. *That which was from the beginning*; as also, ch. ii. ver. 13. *Ye have known him that is from the beginning*. That, by this expression, so often repeated, he must have meant the same as *from eternity*, you will be convinced, as soon as you reflect, that, in the *Revelations*, his Master often says to him, *I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last*.

God, you know, is peculiarly stiled the Searcher of hearts, because he is omniscient. He claims this as the prerogative of himself alone, and denies it to all others, *Jerem.* xvii. 9, 10. *The heart is deceitful, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart*. Now we may see Christ in the exercise of this divine attribute, *Mat.* ix. 3, 4. *The Scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth, because he said to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee. But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? Instances of this are frequent in the Gospel; and no wonder, since St. Paul says of him, Heb. iv. 12, 13. The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of*

soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. The eleven apostles, in a body, and by a solemn act of worship, ascribe to him this peculiar act of infinite wisdom, as we see in their prayer at the election of a successor to Judas: *Thou, Lord, who knowest the secrets of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen.*

We are not to be surpris'd at his searching the heart, since omniscience is directly ascribed to him, not only by affirmations limited to this particular species or instance of wisdom, but by such as give him the attribute in its full extent. St. Peter, who first confessed the Christian faith, says to him, *John xxi. 17. Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.* His Master is so far from blaming him either for the antecedent, or the consequent which he draws from it, that he thereupon finally commits to him the care of his sheep. On Christ's telling his disciples, *John xvi. 28. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father;* they say, *Lo, now speakest thou plainly,* ver. 29.; *now are we sure that thou knowest all things:— by this we believe that thou camest forth from God,* ver. 30. Here again Christ is as far from correcting their confession of his omniscience, as of his mission. On the contrary, he answers, *Do you now believe?* as if he meant to upbraid them for not having sooner believed, as they then did.

The immutability, peculiar to God alone, is expressly given him, *Hebr. i.* by a quotation from the 102d Psalm, *Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old, as doth a garment; and, as a vesture, shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.* That this is spoken of God only in the Psalm, and directly applied to Christ, by the express appellation of God, in the Epistle, any one may

may see, who will be at the pains to compare both. Hence it is that the apostle, in the same epistle, ch. xiii. ver. 8. says of him, *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*

His immensity, or omnipresence, is clearly represented to us, *Mat. xxviii. 20. Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world;* and, in *John iii. 13. No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.* In the first of these passages he speaks, as none but Jehovah can properly speak, of himself, making all times and places present with him as one time and place. He says, you see, in the present tense, *I am with you;* concerning the future, *to the end of the world.* And how is he to be with them? Not only when gathered together in one place, as then, but when dispersed over the whole world. In the other passage he represents himself as present in heaven while he is speaking to them on earth; which could not be true, did he not fill heaven and earth.

His omnipotence is declared in the strongest terms. The Baptist, speaking of him, *John iii. 31. says, He that cometh from above, is above all.* St. Paul says, *Philip. iii. 21. He is able even to subdue all things to himself;* and, in his epistle to the *Hebrews, i. 3. He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.* But, in his epistle to the *Romans, ch. ix. ver. 5. he ascribes Omnipotence and Divinity to him at once;* speaking of the *Jews, he saith, Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.* And, which may serve instead of a thousand authorities, Christ himself says, *Rev. i. 8. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*

As all the works of God, wherewith we are any-way concerned, are distinguished from one another, and made known to us, by their essential properties or qualities; so the infinite Being is distinguished from all his creatures, and revealed to our understandings, by his peculiar attributes, which are here, in their full extent, attributed to Christ. From hence we must either infer his Divinity in

a true, strict, and proper sense ; or else we must confound the infinite nature with the finite ; whereas there is not only no medium between them, but an infinite distance, nay, a sort of contrariety, as will appear, if we consider the sense of these terms, created and uncreated, finite and infinite. This argument, drawn from the Scriptural application of the unimpairable attributes of God to Christ, will acquire a prodigious accession of strength, if we view him in the execution of those offices which necessarily require those attributes ; such as his judging the world, *John* v. 22, 23. and several other places of Scripture. And,

In the fifth place, his creating all things ; which gives the argument for his Divinity the force of all those reasonings for the being of a God, deducible from the works of creation. Now the creation of all things is, in Scripture, ascribed to him in terms so clear and express, as can leave no doubt in the mind of any reader, whether it was the intention of the Holy Ghost to represent him to us as the Creator of the world. Nay, the terms in which this great point is revealed, go yet further ; for they not only tell us he made the world, that is, all things both above and below, but that all things were made for him ; so that he is set forth to us both as the Proprietor and Maker of the whole creation. Well, therefore, may a Christian call him, especially since the Scriptures so often do it, *the Jehovah*, that is, *the Being*, or *the Lord*, *the Lord of the whole earth*, *the Lord of lords*, and *the King of kings*. To illustrate this, I shall select a few passages out of many. *All things were made by him ; and without him was not any thing made that was made*, *John* i. 3. If he made all things that were made, either he made himself, or he never was made. *The world was made by him*, *John* i. 10. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God*, *Heb.* xi. 3. *Thou, Lord*, saith *David* to Christ, *in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are the works of thy hands*, *Psal.* cii. 25. *Heb.* i. 10. *St. Paul*, in the first chapter of his epistle to the *Colossians*, is still more particular and express in speaking of Christ as the Creator : *By him were*

*all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by him, and for him.* Was he not before all things that were made, since they were all made for him? And, if he was before all things that were made, surely he himself could not have been made, for then he must have been before himself. What now can the *Arians*, or *Semi-arians*, who say Christ is a creature of the angelic order, reply to this passage, wherein it is so positively affirmed, not only that Christ created all the orders of angels, not excepting the very highest, but that he created them for himself, so that *all things which the Father hath are his*, John xvi. 15. his own property, by right of creation? Exclusive of revelation and authority, we have no other way of proving the being of one Infinite Cause, but by observations made on the works of creation; and by deducing from those observations such reasonings as serve to convince us, that things so limited in their natures could not have given being to themselves. To raise a being out of nothing, and to bestow beauty, proportion, and excellence or happiness, on that being, is to create; and to create, exceeds infinitely the power of all limited natures. If the Scriptures, therefore, set forth what is true, when they ascribe to Christ the creation of all things visible and invisible, spirits as well as matter, Christ is certainly the one Infinite Being, or God. Our adversaries do but beat the air, when they tell us Christ did not of himself create the world; but that God created it by him as an instrumental, rather than an efficient, cause. We acknowledge that Christ, both as our Creator and Redeemer, acted by the power and authority communicated eternally to him from the Father. But we insist, that this power and authority were ever naturally inherent in him as the only Son of God; and that he is, therefore, in respect to the creation, no instrument, but a true efficient. If it were not so, *David*, speaking by the Spirit, Psalm cii. and quoted by the same Spirit, *Hebrews* i. 10. would never have said to Christ, *Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are*  
*the*



*the works of thy hands.* He plainly distinguishes his own power of operation from that of the Father, as personally inherent in himself, John v. 17. *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*; and, in *Isa.* xlv. 24. he ascribes to himself alone, considered as the Lord, or God, the whole work of creation; for, that Christ is the speaker throughout this chapter, will presently appear by his calling himself the First and the Last, in the *Revelations*, as well as here: *Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb; I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.* What sign or shadow of instrumentality is to be picked out of these words? Is it not a kind of blasphemy against God, common sense, and Scripture, to ascribe the creation to a creature, or any but God himself? Yet here it is ascribed to Christ, by him who could not lye: Christ, therefore, is no creature, but God.

Accordingly, I shall now shew, in the sixth place, that the Scriptures call him, and, if we believe them, that he called himself, God. All agree, that what is said *Isa.* ix. 6. is said directly and expressly of Christ: *Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, &c.* These words, with the context, evidently explain themselves of Christ, or the Messiah, and are applied to him, *Luke* ii. 11. and *John* iii. 6. Now here he is called *El Gibbor*, that is, the most mighty God. *El*, we know, is that name of God which expresses his power, and, with the addition of *Gibbor*, God, or the powerful one, who is mighty. Both the name and the epithet intimate power; and therefore, together, are best translated by *the most mighty God*. St. *John* opens his Gospel with asserting the Divinity of Christ: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*, John i. 1. St. *Thomas*, after being convinced of his resurrection, cries out to him, *My Lord, and my God*. His beloved apostle calls him *the true God*, 1 John v. 20. St. *Paul* calls him *the great God*, Tit. ii. 13.; and, in his first epistle to *Timothy*, iii.

16. he establishes the doctrines both of his Divinity and Incarnation, in the most plain and express terms: *Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.* The same doctrines he as positively and expressly establishes, *Coloss. ii. 9.* where, speaking of Christ, he says, *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* Observe what *Hosea*, distinguishing him from his Father, *ch. i. ver. 7.* says of him: *I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God.* Observe what *St. Paul, Rom. ix. 33.* quotes from *Isaiab viii. ver. 13, 14.* and applies to Christ. The words of the Apostle are: *It is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.* The words of the Prophet are these: *Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be your sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel.* *Simeon, Luke ii. 34.* makes the same application of the prophecy: *Behold, this child is set for the falling, and rising again, of many in Israel.* *St. Peter* joins this passage of the Prophet with another, *Isa. xxviii. 16.* *Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation;* and very clearly explains this stone as *the sure foundation of them that believe; and as a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, to the infidel and disobedient,* *1 Pet. ii. 6, 7, 8.* Here you see him, who is figured by *the stone*, called the Lord of hosts; and you also see, that this Lord of hosts is no other but Christ. You know also, that the *Lord of hosts* is one of the peculiar names of God.

It is as much as the imagination of the reader can do to accompany the majestic description which *Isaiab* gives of his appearance in the temple, styling him, at the same time, the *Lord of hosts*, *ch. vi.* and which *St. John* quotes, and applies to him, in the 12th of his Gospel, by these words: *These things said Isaiab, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. In the year, saith the Prophet, that Uzziah died,*

died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim—and one cried unto another, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, and the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. The same Prophet, in his 63d chapter, speaks, throughout the whole, of Christ by the name of Jehovah, as any one may perceive by comparing what is said there, and in the 19th of the Revelations, concerning the redness of his apparel. From this chapter it is evident the Prophet speaks of him as of the very God that brought the children of Israel out of the sea, ver. 11.—that led them by the right-hand of Moses, with his glorious arm dividing the waters before them, ver. 12.—that led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, &c. ver. 13. After having said this of him, the Prophet then addresses himself to him by prayer; and says, in the name of his people, Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness, and thy glory, ver. 15.—Doubtless thou art our Father—Thou, O Lord [Jehovah], art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting. It is remarkable, that, at ver. 9. he says of him, In all their affliction he was afflicted, which cannot be true of God in any other sense than as Christ; and that, ver. 10. he points at the discontents and murmurs of the antient Israelites, whereby they rebelled, and vexed Christ's holy spirit, so that he was turned to be their enemy, and fought against them; in the very same manner with St. Paul, who saith, 1 Cor. x. 9. Neither let us tempt Christ, as many of them also tempted, and were destroyed with serpents. From whence we may gather, that both the Prophet and the Apostle understood the same Person, the first by *Lord*, and the second by *Christ*; and that this Person was the God of the Israelites; for, in that passage, Numb. xxi. 5, 6. to which the latter certainly, and the former probably, alludes, he is said to be that very God: *The people spake against God—and the Lord [Jehovah] sent fiery serpents among the people—and much people of Israel died.* If, then, Christ is the God of Israel, he is the eternal God, of whom it is

said, *Deut. xxxiii. 26, 27. There is none like unto thy God, O Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge.*

By what hath been said, and a great deal more that might be said, you may perceive the sacred writers frequently give the name of God, in its full extent, to Christ. You shall quickly be made sensible he takes the same to himself. The Scriptural writers speak only by authority from him. They utter what he dictates; *for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, 2 Tim. iii. 16.* If they, therefore, who do but speak his words, call him God, it is the same thing as his saying it himself. However, we desire not to take advantage of this. Christ hath often pronounced it with his own lips.

When the *Jews* sent Priests and Levites to *John Baptist*, to inquire who he was, *John i. 19.* he said, *I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make strait the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaias, ver. 23.* By this declaration he plainly set himself forth as the forerunner of Christ *the great Shepherd*, according to the prophecy of *Isaiab xl. 3. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make strait in the desert an highway for our God.* Observe how the words of *John* and *Isaiab*, laid together, call him, who was to come after *John*, both *Lord* and *God*. And now turn to the 10th of the same Gospel, where you will hear Christ calling himself, ver. 11. *the good Shepherd;—whose voice the sheep hear and know; who putteth them forth, and goeth before them; whom they follow, ver. 3, 4. by whom they go in and out, and find pasture, ver. 9.* Consider well the peculiar character of the good, the great Shepherd, our Saviour here takes to himself; and then compare it with the same character described by *Isa. xl. 10, 11.* in consequence of what was said, ver. 3, 4. concerning the forerunner, and you will clearly perceive Christ styles himself both *Lord* and *God*, which are there made the peculiar titles of the Shepherd. The words are these: *Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him,*  
and

and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. If *John* the Baptist is foretold in the third and fourth verses, as he himself says he is, Christ must be foretold in the tenth and eleventh; for it is evident, that the way is ordered to be prepared, in the former, for him whose pastoral character is described with incidents of tenderness so peculiar to Christ, in the latter. You see, from the whole, that our blessed Saviour, in calling himself *the Shepherd*, calls himself, modestly indeed, but by an unavoidable consequence, both *Lord* and *God*. It is by a like necessary consequence that he calls himself *God*, when he points the messengers of *John*, who came to know whether he was the Messiah, to the 35th chapter of *Isaiab*, by an express quotation of the 5th and 6th verses, concerning the miracles to be performed on the blind, deaf, and lame, at his coming, who is promised, verse the 4th, in these words: *Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence, he will come and save you*. Our Saviour, having wrought the miracles here predicted, does not call himself *God*, because it was not his way to bear witness of himself, neither does he even say he was the Messiah; he only appeals to the prophecy, wherein the wonderful things he had done in the sight of the messengers were foretold, wherein his coming is promised, and wherein he is twice called *God*. This now is the same, in effect, as calling himself *God*; it is the same as saying, Let *John* compare what you have seen me doing with the prophecy of *Isaiab*, and then judge for himself whether I am not he that should come, who is expressly called *God* in that very prophecy.

St. *John*, *Revel.* i. 7. says, *Behold, he [Christ] cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him*. This is a quotation from *Zechar.* xii. 10. where he who was *pierced*, and who, you see, can be no other than Christ, after being called the *Lord [Jehovah]*, ver. 1. says, *I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace, and*

of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son—The land shall mourn, every family apart, &c. In this passage both the divine and human nature of Christ, together with his conferring the Holy Spirit, with his death, and with the compunction of those who slew him, are fully and clearly represented in his own words. *St. Paul*, in the 12th of his epistle to the *Hebrews*, having stated a comparison between the Law and the Gospel, and likewise noting the different manner of introducing them, comes at length to compare Christ and *Moses* as lawgivers; and prefers the former, as of greater authority; quoting those remarkable words of *Haggai*, wherein he alludes to the shaking of mount *Sinai*, at the delivery of the Law, ver. 25, 26. *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for, if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven; whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.* You perceive here, that he who speaketh from heaven, whose voice shook the earth, and who promises to shake both earth and heaven, is Christ. Now look back to the words in *Haggai* himself, ch. ii. 6. and you will find Christ uttering these very words by the Prophet, and calling himself the *Lord of hosts*: *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth.* Five times in this short speech he calls himself by the awful name of the *Lord of hosts*. Further, if you compare the words of *St. Paul*, *His voice then shook the earth*, with those of *Moses*, *Exod. xix. 18.* you will perceive the apostle speaks of Christ as that very God who gave the Law on mount *Sinai*.

The same apostle, in the 2d chapter of his epistle to the *Philippians*, says, that Christ, *being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet humbled himself, and took on him the form of a servant; and in this form became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the*  
*name*

name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. As I live, saith this same Lord, *Rom. xiv. 11.* every knee shall bow to me, as it is written. Written, where? Why, *Isaiab xlv. 21. 23.* There is no God else beside me. I have sworn by myself, that unto me every knee shall bow. You see, he sweareth by himself; and St. Paul gives the reason, in reference to a like instance, *Heb. vi. 13.* namely, *because he could swear by no greater.* When St. Thomas called him his Lord, and his God, he took what was said as his right, otherwise he would have reprov'd the apostle, as the angel did St. John, *Rev. xix. 10.* for paying him the respect that was due only to God. But, instead of this, our Saviour plainly intimates an approbation of his faith, thus confessed, and tenderly blames him for not having believed on less evidence. We all acknowledge, that the Father is God; and Christ says, *I and the Father are one Being.* Does he not, in this, call himself God? It is the first article of our faith to believe in one God only, who called himself by the peculiar name of *Jehovah*, which, being interpreted, signifies *I am.* This proper, this incommunicable, name of the one only God, Christ takes to himself, *John viii. 58.* *Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.* How comes it to pass, that the Jews should take up stones to cast at him, for thus *making himself God*; and that so many of his pretended disciples should now insist he meant no such matter by it, furnishing him with an excuse, whereby, in their opinion, he might have easily refuted the imputation of this seeming blasphemy? And how came it also to pass, that Christ offered neither their excuse, nor any qualification of his own, but immediately hid himself from their fury, and went out of the temple? Our adversaries will say, the Jews did not give him time. What then! was this Prophet, greater and wiser than *Solomon*, this Searcher of hearts, who knew what was in man, so weak as deliberately to say a thing that so much needed an excuse, or qualification, to an audience, which, he ought in common prudence to have foreseen, would not give him  
time

time to make it? Let all who hear me judge whether taking liberties, like these, with Christ, and the Scriptures, tends either to the honour of Christianity, or of those who take them; and whether any book, that may be warrantably thus interpreted, is worth the reading.

Give me leave now to shew, that Christ not only took to himself the name of God, but actually averred there was no other God beside him, forbidding the worship of any other God, with the most dreadful denunciations of vengeance in case of disobedience.

Christ says, *The Father judgeth no man, but hath given all judgment to the Son.* From hence we must conclude, that what I am going to cite from the 20th and 21st of the *Revelations*, is said intirely of the Son, or Christ: *I saw a great white throne, saith the Evangelist, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened:—and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books—And he that sat on the throne said unto me, It is done: I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. He that overcometh, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.* Now it is plain, beyond all question, that he who thus appeared and spoke was the same with him, who, in the first chapter of this book, twice calls himself *Alpha and Omega*, and once *the First and the Last*, which two expressions differ not in signification. It is also as plain, that, in saying these things, he does but translate and quote what he had said of himself in *Isa.* xlv. 6. *Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts, I am the First, I am the last, and beside me there is no God; and, ver. 8. Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no god, I know not any.* It is worth observing, that, in the same passage of *Isaiab*, *the First and the Last* saith, among other things, not pertinent to our present purpose, that *he will pour water on him that is thirsty*; and that, in the parallel passage from the *Apocalypse*, he saith, *I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the river of life freely*; which may further serve to demonstrate the congruity of the two places.



places. Can there be stronger terms found, throughout the languages of men, than those in which Christ here denies the being of any other God but himself?

It hath appeared in this Discourse, if you have observed it, by a passage or two taken from the New Testament, and compared with the Old, that Jesus Christ is that one God, the God of *Israel*, who brought the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, led them through the *Red-sea* and the Wilderness, established them in the Land of Promise, spoke to them by all the Prophets; and set himself forth as the only, the universal, object of divine worship. I shall now proceed to a further proof of this great point, in order, by that means, to shew that he hath denied the being, and forbid the worship, of any other god but himself.

I have already shewn you, that our blessed Saviour took to himself that incommunicable name of God, *Jehovah*, *John* viii. 58.; that the Scribes and Pharisees, who heard him, understood by this, that he had called himself the true and only God; and that he left them, the multitude, and many of his own disciples, then present, in that opinion, without in the least offering to explain or qualify what he had said. Either, then, he was what I forbear to name, or that only true God who appeared to *Moses* at the bush, and distinguished himself, by the peculiar name of *Jehovah*, from all other beings.

That this name was better fitted than any other to express the distinction mentioned, will appear to any one who knows it signifies *I am*, that is, *Existence*, or *The Being*; intimating, that God is the only absolute, eternal, self-existent Being; whereas all other beings are dependent, relative, derivative, and, in comparison of him, not deserving the name of being. The *Jews* of old held this name in such veneration, that they durst not pronounce it; and the antient Eastern paraphrasts and translators, instead of either writing down the name itself, or rendering it by another, usually put various words for it which signified no more than *the name*; as much as to say, Here should stand the dreadful name, if we durst write or translate it. The *Chaldaic* Paraphrast almost every-where, as *Galatinus* testifies, set the word *memar*, that is, *the name*,  
in

in the place of it. All the other names of God, as *El, Elohim, Jah, Shaddai, Adonai*, they pronounced freely; from this only they abstained. And this distinction they made, because the other names were either given sometimes, by the Scriptural writers, to inferior beings, or did not so peculiarly express the one infinite self-existent Being.

Now here we must recollect what was fully proved from Scripture, in the Discourse on the Unity of God, that there is but one Jehovah; and that the one only God is that one Jehovah. It was there observed, that the proofs for this unity of Jehovah are negative and exclusive; so that the other passages, which seem to intimate two Jehovahs, but do by no means, directly or indirectly, affirm it, are to be explained by these, and not these by them. Indeed the aforesaid seeming intimation is easily accounted for by the personal distinction between the Father and the Son; inasmuch as Jehovah, signifying God, is applicable to both. By this we may understand that expression, *Gen. xix. The Lord, or Jehovah, rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord, or Jehovah, out of heaven*; and that other, *Zeck. x. 12. I will strengthen them in Jehovah, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith Jehovah*; that is, Jehovah, or God the Son, rained fire from Jehovah, or God the Father; and Jehovah, or God the Father, saith, I will strengthen them in Jehovah, or God the Son, and they shall walk about *glorying*, as the *Septuagint*, and *hoping*, as the *Syriac*, in his name; which is literally true of us, who glory in the name of Christians, and hope in the name of Christ. Thus we see there is but one Jehovah; and that Jesus Christ is that Jehovah, or Lord. So he is every-where called in the New Testament by that *Greek* word which the *Septuagint* always puts for Jehovah; so he files himself, *John xiii. 13. Ye call me Master, and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am*. So *St. Thomas* files him, in the confession of his faith, *My Lord, and my God, John xx. 28*. That, by the word *Lord*, applied in these, and so many other places, to Christ, we are not to understand that common title of masters, or princes, is every-where plain at the first sight; nay, that it signifies the *great, the only Lord, or Jehovah,*

*Jehovah*, is manifest from the second of the epistle to the *Philippians*, where we are told, that, *although he thought it not robbery to be equal with God,—he took on him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*; on account of which God the Father bestowed on him the sole government of that kingdom which he held in partnership before, highly extolling him, and giving him a name which is above every name; that at the name of *Jesus* every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that *Jesus Christ is Lord*, that is, the only *Lord*, or *Jehovah*, to the glory of God the Father. That the word *Lord* is to be understood here in this high sense, appears from the import of the whole passage, which represents Christ exalted to the monarchy of the universe with two views; first, that the whole creation might adore him; and, secondly, that every tongue might confess him to be the *Lord*.

If, while the respect for this incommunicable name was at the highest, our Saviour assumed it to himself before an audience made up of disciples, and unconverted *Jews*, we must conclude he was that very God who revealed himself, and the Law, to *Moses*, and who spoke by all the prophets. It is in vain to say he called himself at the bush, and was elsewhere called, an *angel*. We have already seen, that the word *angel* implies no particular nature, but only an office. As such, it might be well applied to Christ, who was the *Angel* or Messenger of his Father, in all he did, and who therefore in that sense, and that only, is stiled *Messenger of the covenant*, Mal. iii. 1. *whereof he was also the Mediator*, Heb. viii. 6. in which very epistle he is more than once stiled God. May not a son, who is of the same nature with his father, be nevertheless his messenger? Christ, then, having called himself by the name *Jehovah*, and being often so called by the writers of the Old Testament, and by those also of the New (for the word *Curios*, there used, is put for *Jehovah* by the *Septuagint*, which the apostles, for the most part, quoted), we must believe in him as the God of *Israel*, who gave the Law, the first moral commandment whereof is this, *Thou shalt*

shalt have none other gods before me ; that is, Thou shalt neither believe in, nor worship, any other god with me, nor in my sight ; or, Thou shalt worship me, and me only ; for the negative implies and contains in it the positive. But the commandment is worded negatively, because God knew his people were in much greater danger of falling into the worship of subordinate gods in conjunction with him, according to the custom of all the Gentile nations, who adored one supreme and many inferior gods, than of totally relinquishing his service.

Is Christ, then, who wrote these words with his own finger on the table of stone, who delivered them to his people, and, through them, to all men, with such pomp and terror from mount *Sinai*, who denounces such dreadful judgments against the transgressors of this law ; is he but a subordinate god ? Is he but a deified creature ? And, having so absolutely prohibited the worship of all other gods but himself, hath he actually forbid the worship of the one true, eternal, supreme God ? Can a man be a Christian, can a man have common sense, and believe this ? The *Arians* of old, and the *Semi-arians* of our own times, compelled by the citations concerning Christ in the New Testament from the Old, whereof I have given you but a specimen, have always acknowledged Christ to have been the God of *Israel*, who delivered the Law ; yet held him to be an inferior, a delegated God. But you see in what their shocking hypothesis terminates. This angel, this creature, this inferior god, forbids, absolutely, with dreadful threatenings, forbids, the worship of his Almighty Master, of the true God, of his God ! Horrible indeed ! But these refining adversaries of the truth tell us, he spoke not in his own name, but in the name of him who sent him ; and that the worship he demanded was not to terminate in him the representative, but in God his principal. How could he have so absolutely forbidden the belief or worship of all other gods, whether superior or inferior to himself, by words so totally excluding all shadow of representation, subordination, delegation, or even co-ordination ? If he was a son only by creation and favour, how came he so positively to forbid the worship of his  
Father ?

Father? If he was a God only by delegation, and to be worshiped merely as the representative of the real and true God, why did he, instead of transmitting the worship he demanded, stop it, and centre it wholly in himself, by expressly prohibiting all other objects of worship, and consequently his great supreme constituent? On the contrary, why did not he, so ready on all occasions to express his duty and fidelity to the Father, as the *Arians*, ever watchful to turn those expressions to his dishonour, very well know; why did he not, I say, on this great occasion, when the object of all worship, all duty, all morality, was to be fixed, give an *Arian* preface to his commandments? Why did he not say, “ O *Israelites*, I am appointed to act between God and you; and, as the representative of God, in my own proper person to receive those sacrifices, devotions, and obedience, wherewith you are to honour him?” Or why this puzzling, this amusing subtlety, tending to the worship of a creature? Why did he not rather say, “ I, your fellow-creature, and your fellow-servant, am commissioned by the great Creator and Master of us all, to forbid you, under the severest penalties, the worship of any being but him?” This, surely, was necessary, if Christ was not God himself. How different was his conduct from this! Mark his awful words: *I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me; no concomitant, no subordinate, no delegated, gods. There is but one God. I am that one God; and thou shalt worship me alone. Thus he speaks himself; and Moses, who speaks his words, delivers what he had received precisely to the same effect: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord [Jehovah].*

It is, I know, objected here, that the worship prescribed in the first commandment is not appropriated to him who immediately spoke the Law, that is, to an angel, but to him in whose name the angel spoke it. And it is insisted, that it was an angel, or angels, that spoke it, because *St. Paul* says, *Gal. iii. 19. it was ordained by angels; and argues, Heb. ii. 3. that the Gospel is intitled to higher veneration*

veneration than the Law, inasmuch as the one was spoken by angels, whereas the other was spoken by the Lord himself.

And what then? Is not the Lord, in this very epistle to the *Hebrews*, sufficiently distinguished from the angels who spoke the Law, and from all other angels, by being set forth, ch. i. 6. as an object of worship to *all the angels of God*? Now, is not all worship appropriated to the Lord by the first commandment? And is not Christ the Lord? Does he not take the name of Jehovah, or *LORD*, to himself? It cannot, surely, be inferred from this passage of Scripture, that he is only a representative; since the passage sets him forth as the principal, and even the objection owns it. If this *Arian* argument, therefore, does any thing, it only shews, that none of the angels concerned in delivering the Law was Christ, but that they were all his inferiors and substitutes; being clearly represented as such, and, as such, distinguished from him in the very place of Scripture referred to. Let no man, therefore, presume to say, because *Moses* speaks of an angel conducting the *Israelites*, and interfering at the burning bush, that this angel was Christ; for Christ, it is manifest, was the Lord, or Jehovah, himself, in whose name the Law was delivered by the ministry of angels, and who, by that Law, restrains all worship to himself. The truth is, had it not been for this argument of *St. Paul*, though intended for another purpose, it would not have been so easy as it is to prove, against the *Arians*, that Jehovah, and the angel at the bush, were distinct beings. That Christ was he who gave himself the name *Jehovah* at the bush, is plain from *John* viii. 58. That there was an angel present at the bush, who formed the voice, and delivered the words, in the name of Jehovah, is also plain from *Exodus* iii. 2.; and that this angel was not Christ, is as plain from *Heb.* ii, 2, 3. where *the Lord* is clearly distinguished from all the angels employed in the delivery of the Law. But, whatsoever part the angel is supposed to have acted at the bush, or in the delivery of the Law, it is certain Jehovah speaks the ten commandments in his own person, and confines all worship to himself.

self. Now, granting that the angel delivered these commandments to *Moses*, and even that he wrote them on the two tables of stone, against the express words of Scripture, *Exod. xxxi. 18.* ; yet all men must own they are the very words of Jehovah himself, as truly and properly as those which the prophets wrote, when they said, *Thus saith the Lord.*

After all that hath been said, it may seem almost superfluous to insist, that Christ is set forth in Scripture as the true, the proper, the only, object of adoration, he having, as was observed, appropriated all worship to himself by the first commandment. However, I will, for this purpose, just remind you of two or three passages. St. *Paul*, in the first chapter of his epistle to the *Hebrews*, applies these words of the 97th Psalm to Christ: *Let all the angels of God worship him.* If the angels worship him, surely we must; *far to them and us there is but one God.* St. *Paul* tells us, in the 2d chapter of his epistle to the *Philippians*, that *at the name of Jesus every knee must bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.* And Christ himself, as you may read, *Rom. xiv. 11.* compared with *Isaiab xlv. 22, 23.* appropriates all adoration to himself: *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.* As not only we, but the whole creation, is in duty bound to adore our blessed Saviour, we accordingly find, *Apoc. v.* that when this Lamb of our salvation, who stood in the midst of the throne, had opened the book which none else was able to read, *the four beasts, and the four-and-twenty elders that were about the throne, fell down before the Lamb,* and sung his praises in an hymn, re-echoed by all the hosts of heaven, and continued, as represented already, from the 2d of the epistle to the *Philippians*, by every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea, saying, *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

Hence you see, that incommunicable worship, that *glory which God will not give to another*, is prescribed and given to Christ: and that it is the same, in kind and degree, with that which is paid to the Father, is evident; because Christ says, *The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, John v. 22, 23.; and because, as you may perceive by the passage just cited from the *Revelations*, the worship paid *unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb*, is one individual act of worship, offered at the same instant, and expressed in the same terms. The united practice of every creature, not only on earth, and under the earth, but even in heaven itself, round the throne, and before the face, of God, is surely a sufficient comment, if they needed it, on all the assertions of our Saviour's Divinity, hitherto quoted from holy Scripture. Here is practice, to put speculation out of question. Practice generally follows faith; but here it follows the beatific vision in heaven, and leads the way to our faith on earth, that there may be no possibility of mistaking. You see there can be no *Arians*, no *Soci-nians*, no subordinate worshipers, in heaven. There the angels, the archangels, the principalities, the powers, the dominions, the thrones, are all orthodox Christians; all *honour the Son, as they honour the Father*, in one united hymn, paid, without distinction, without subordination, equally to both. There they do not worship the Son only as the representative of the Father. The Father himself is visibly present, as well as the Son, and both on one throne receive the adoration of the whole universe.

I have now gone through with such proofs of our Saviour's Divinity as the time would permit. And here let me ask you, What arguments on the other side are sufficient to make us doubt or deny this article of faith? If the Holy Ghost had said but once, Christ is God, surely nothing but an equal authority, saying the contrary, should, in reason, be allowed to shake our faith in his Divinity. But where in the holy Scriptures is this flat contradicting proposition, *Christ is not God*, to be found?



or in what other Bible are we to look for it? Are our own reasonings, so apt on all occasions to deceive us, to serve instead of it? Or are we to trust to consequences, drawn, by our own fallible understandings, from passages that say no such thing in terms, but seem, by a long chain of subtle inferences, to point to it, against the positive testimony of one such plain affirmative, that needs no comment? Surely one proof of this nature ought to outweigh ten thousand deductions. But, if one ought not, will not so many repeated passages, all concurring to affirm the same thing, preponderate? Or, if even this will not do, you ought at least to be convinced by those places that prove the point by negatives; such as where Christ himself says, *There is no God besides me; Thou shalt have none other gods before me.* He who says Christ is *the Word*, and *the Word is God*, says enough. But Christ says a great deal more, when he says these words, *I am the First and the Last, and beside me there is no God.* What argument, that requires to be helped out by our own reasonings, can be set over-against this in the balance of a sound judgment, already convinced that Christ is truth itself?

You may observe I have chosen to multiply plain proofs for our Saviour's Divinity from Scripture, rather than to spend the time in accommodating to my purpose such as were less plain, by a precarious comment of my own; as also, that I have endeavoured to clear the point chiefly by quoting passages from the New Testament, repeating, or referring to, others in the Old, whereby every such proof acquires the force of two; and, besides, hath the immense advantage of an application and comment made by an interpreter who could not err.

While I was doing this, I observed, what never occurred to me before, that the strongest proofs, and those in the greatest number, nay, those in which Christ's dignity is carried highest, are conveyed in this way. And the reason why the Apostles took that method, seems to be this: The unconverted *Jews* could not easily digest, either from their Master or them, the plain assertions of his Divinity in terms of their own. To avoid this obstruction,

the Apostles chose to assert it in the words of the Prophets, whom their readers implicitly believed, and highly revered; by this means delicately grafting this doctrine, otherwise so alarming, on the faith they had already received, and thereby at the same time strongly and clearly exhibiting the close connexion between the two dispensations. They shewed, by the miracles they wrought, that they were inspired; and, consequently, had a right to be heard when they delivered themselves in words unheard before; and therefore they do frequently assert their Master's Divinity in expressions not found among the Prophets. But, if their miraculous powers ought to have given them credit on such occasions, they ought, for the same reason, to give weight to their comments, and applications of the Prophets, inasmuch as it was evidently the same Spirit that both dictated and applied the prophecy. When, therefore, the Apostles brought the authority of the Prophets in aid of their own, they seemed to reason with a double force. Hence, perhaps, may be best explained what St. Peter says in the second epistle, after pleading a miracle; *We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed.* Not that prophecy is a surer test of truth than a miracle, for it is but a miracle; but that the concurrence of both a prophecy and a miracle give stronger testimony than a miracle alone, because it carries with it the efficacy of two miracles; and, if there was a preconception in favour of the prophecy, this too must have its effect.

It cannot be denied, but that the writers of the Old Testament, being obliged perpetually to inculcate the worship of one only God on the minds of the *Israelites*, and to deter them from that of all false gods, are every-where full, strong, and precise, on this subject, expressing the majesty of the one true God in great and glorious terms, and vilifying the false and pretended gods in such words and phrases as carry with them the utmost contempt. Here every thing appears in favour of the Unity. Now, when the same Spirit that inspired the Old Testament, makes use, in dictating the New, of such passages therein, as set forth, with the utmost elevation of expression, the  
 majesty

majesty of the one God, and applies them to Jesus Christ as that one God, surely a Christian can have no doubt of his Divinity ; for, certainly, whatever a pretended Christian may imagine he hath found out in the New Testament, there is but one God only proposed to our faith in the Old. But the writers of the New not quoting often, very seldom indeed by name, the reader, little versed in the Scriptures, for the greater part does not observe there is a quotation, when there really is ; and, consequently, neither observes the full force of the proof, nor, I might add, does he see the strong and peremptory expressions, wherein the fulness of the Godhead is ascribed to his Saviour, for want of having recourse to the passage at large, from whence the citation is taken ; but often so taken, as to leave the stronger expressions behind for a further search, on having received some impressions of the truth.

I thought fit so far to do justice to this part of the apostolic wisdom, that they who hear me may not too suddenly take up opinions prejudicial to the doctrine I have been labouring to establish, till they have paid a proper deference to that precept of Christ : *Search the Scriptures ; for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me.*

And now, blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, by patience, and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE VII.

The Divinity of the Holy Ghost proved.

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St. JOHN xvi. 13.

*—When he the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*

**H**AVING, in a former discourse, proved, that there is but one God, and in another, that Christ is God, I come now to prove, that the Holy Ghost also is God.

The words of my text represent him to us as God; for how otherwise can he *guide us into all truth*, nay, be the *very Spirit of Truth*, or *Truth* itself, 1 *John v. 6.*? How otherwise can he *shew us things to come*? These surely are not the attributes or powers of a creature. This the opposers of his divinity will grant; but they will insist, at the same time, that these attributes and powers are not his own, but borrowed from the Father and the Son, and exercised by commission from both, inasmuch as Christ saith, *He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he hearth, that shall he speak; he shall receive of mine; all things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I,*  
*that*

*that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you; ver.*

14, 15.

If the Spirit of God hath nothing of his own, why is he set forth, *1 Cor. xii. 11. as dividing his gifts to every one severally as he will?* If he knows nothing, but what he hears, or is told, why is he said, *1 Cor. ii. 10. to search all things, yea, the deep things of God?* Or why is it asked, *Isaiah xl. 13. Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him?*

There is only one way to reconcile these seeming opposites, which other parts of Scripture, brought on both sides, appear to set yet wider; but it is an easy, and the true one. As Christ, though God, acts as a Son, and a Man, in subordination to his Father, without derogating from the coequal dignity of his nature; so the Holy Ghost, though God, pursuant to the divine œconomy of offices, distributes those gifts of knowlege, truth, sanctity, &c. which proceed, as he doth himself, originally from the Father and Son, and which therefore the Son calls his own; not because they do not as much belong to the Father and the Holy Ghost as to him, but because the Son hath purchased the use of them for the Church by his blood. Now, this method, whereby Christ hath acquired the sole right of propriety in the Church, and the use of such powers as are peculiar to the Holy Spirit, neither derogates from that copartnership of right which he and the Holy Spirit had before, nor from the Divinity of their nature, wherewith it hath nothing to do. The Church belongs to Christ, as its proprietor and governor; which gives him a right to the assistance of both the other Persons, in their respective offices. Accordingly the Father pardons and adopts all those whom Christ intercedes for; and the Holy Ghost, in like manner, concurring, as our Paraclete, to the great work of redemption, hath *prepared a tabernacle* for Christ; hath given him his unction; hath contributed the miraculous and prophetic powers peculiar to him, as previously engaged and made over to the disposal of Christ, on account of his meritorious sufferings, stipulated for from the beginning, and in order to the accomplishment of that gra-

cious scheme of mercy, to which the preparation of that tabernacle, the consecration of that unction, and the exercise of those high powers, are so necessary. Christ is, by right of purchase, the sole Governor and Monarch of the Church, and consequently, by the same right, the proprietor of all things necessary to that government. So far therefore as the Holy Spirit is pleased to interfere in the administration, you see the divine polity requires he should act in subordination to the Father, who is the fountain, and to the Son, who is, in virtue of his conquest, the immediate administrator, of all power. He who is tolerably versed in the Scriptures, cannot but perceive, that this doctrine is sufficiently authenticated thereby; and therefore I shall not now waste the time in quotations on a subject rather explanatory, than probatory, of the point I have undertaken to establish. Give me leave only to observe to you, that all the passages of Scripture, wherein the character of the Holy Spirit seems to be set lower than the supposition of his Divinity can comport with, may be easily reconciled to that supposition on the subordination of his office, thus explained; and that therefore it is highly absurd, if not wicked, to understand those passages of his nature, to which not one of them hath any relation, and in the teeth of many others, which give him the name, the stile, the attributes, and the dignity, of God.

It may indeed be objected, that the same being cannot be, in any sense, superior or inferior to itself. This we own is true of a being wherein there is no personal distinction, and even of a being wherein there is, if the nature of that being only is considered. As my observation, however, on this head, turns on no supposed inequality of nature, but merely on a subordination of offices; and as, in making that observation, I presuppose the personal distinction in the Divine Nature; this objection cannot affect it; for they that are naturally equal, may be employed in unequal offices. There are many passages of Scripture, that must be explained by this observation, if we do not mean to make it contradict itself. Any other way of interpreting those places will do the sacred writings

as little honour, as it does him, who inspired their writers, and who, if he were not God, might possibly be deceived himself, or deceive those who have delivered to us what he dictated to them. This, I trust in God, will fully appear, by the time I shall have finished the present discourse.

It is observable, that the penmen of the holy Scriptures have neither so often, nor so directly and positively, affirmed the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, as of the Son. The reason of this their conduct seems to be obvious. The Son being Man as well as God; and inasmuch as he hungered, thirsted, wept, and died a death seemingly the most dishonourable, to outward appearance a mere man; it was the more necessary to assert, and often inculcate, his Divinity, in order to take away the reproach of the cross, which was *to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness*, 1 Cor. i. 23. But there was far less need of this in respect to the Holy Ghost, who having nothing of humanity, or of an interior nature, in him, and being the very *Spirit of God, who is a Spirit*, it was not so necessary to insist on his Divinity. To say, *He is God*, would be much the same as to say, *The Divine Spirit is God, or God is God*, were it not that as he is personally distinguished from the Father and the Son, and acts in the church by commission from both, it was requisite he also should be exhibited to us in Scripture, as really and truly God, to prevent our taking him for a created spirit, whom we see in the exercise of powers peculiar to God alone. But, as I said, this was less necessary, than in respect to the Son. Accordingly, there is no comparison between the number of those who have questioned the Divinity of the Son, and of those who have objected to that of the Holy Ghost. The former are by far the greater number, notwithstanding the greater variety of evidences, and those more direct and positive, against them. And the latter have, for the most part, rather endeavoured, with the *Sabellians*, to sink the personal distinction of the Holy Ghost, than, with the *Macedonians*, to refute his Divinity.

The proofs, however, for this are sufficiently numerous and clear; and since the Divinity of the Son, as a distinct Person from the Father, hath been already demonstrated, there will be the less difficulty in admitting the full force of those proofs in regard to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity; for, if the Divine Nature admits of one such distinction, it may, for aught the narrow reason of man can tell us to the contrary, admit of another. In this we can have no lights, no warrantable grounds to go on, but what the Scriptures afford us. It is therefore now time to see what they set forth on this subject.

That we may proceed with the greater regularity, let us examine, as briefly as we can, the scriptural proofs for the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, under the following heads; to wit, his name, his attributes, his worship, his works or offices, and the divine stile or title ascribed to him in the word of God.

And, first, As to his name; he is as properly and peculiarly called the *Holy Spirit*, and thereby distinguished, both in the Trinity, and from all other beings, as the First Person is by the name of the *Father*, or the Second by the names of the *Son*, *Word*, or *Jesus Christ*. If then he is thus, by way of eminence and distinction, called Holy, he must be God; for none is holy as the Lord, 1 Sam. ii. 2. nor good, which signifies the same thing, save one, that is, God, Luke xviii. 19. Yet the Third Person is called Good, Pf. cxliii. 10. *Thy Spirit is good*. With the same note of eminence and supremacy, is the word *Spirit* ascribed to him, in the Scriptures, by way of contradistinction to all other spirits. Christ says, *John* iv. 24. *God is a Spirit*; and the Holy Ghost, we know, is every-where called the *Spirit of God*; nay, he is often called *the Spirit*, absolutely, and without reference, as, *Romans* viii. 13. *If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*; and, verse 16. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, &c.* If therefore he is *the Spirit*, if he is *the very Spirit of God*, who is by essence and nature a Spirit, or rather, in the same sense of eminence and distinction, *the Spirit*, then surely he is God.

Secondly,



Secondly, He is proved to be God, from the incommunicable attributes given him in Scripture. That glorious attribute of God, his *holiness*, is, as we have already seen, the peculiar characteristic of his name, not only denoting his office, but his nature, as you may see, *1 Cor.* vi. 19. *Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.* *Matth.* xii. 32. *Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, &c.* where the word *Holy* hath no relation to his office. He is said to be *the Author and Giver of Life*, *Romans* viii. 11. *St. John* says, *he is the Truth*, *1 John* v. 6. *He foresees that which is to come*, *2 Pet.* i. 21. *Joel* ii. 28.; and no wonder, since omniscience is also ascribed to him; *for he searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*, *1 Cor.* ii. 10. and that, as one who *knows them of himself*, in the same manner *as a man knoweth the things of a man*, ver. 11; This proves his Divinity in the clearest manner; for, if he searches all things, he must know all things; because we cannot suppose he searches in vain; indeed the original word signifies to search with success, or to find out. And if he knows the deep and mysterious things of God, he is able to comprehend God, which none but God himself can do. Omnipresence, or immensity, is expressly attributed to him by the Psalmist, *Pf.* cxxxix. 7, 8. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.* He is likewise omnipotent; for he is called *the Power of the Highest*, *Luke* i. 35. And, to put it out of all question that he is God, he is expressly called *the Eternal Spirit*, *Hebr.* ix. 14. Here it is worth observing, against the opposers of his Personality, as well as Divinity, that in this very sentence, which calls him *the Eternal Spirit*, he is distinguished personally both from the Father and the Son: the words are, *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself, without spot, to God [the Father], purge your conscience from dead works, &c.?* As he is *the Truth*, and is *to guide us into all truth*, would he have adorned himself with these divine attributes, had he not known them to be his? Or, if he is but a creature, and they

they are his only by some secret, undiscovered imputation, how can it be said, *he guides us into all truth*, since he thus directly leads us to the adoration of a being that is not God, to *worship the creature as the Creator*, in plain contradiction to what he a thousand times inculcates throughout both Testaments? How can a man make the Scriptures the rule of his faith, when he thinks thus slightly of their Author?

In the third place, He is proved to be God, from the divine worship prescribed and paid to him in the holy Scriptures. The Apostles were commanded, *Matth. xxviii. 19. to go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*. The sacrament of baptism, we are sensible, is a most solemn act of worship, done in the name, and by the authority, of God alone, wherein, at the same time that the new Christian is consecrated to him, the respective blessings of each Person is invoked and conferred. Now, here the Holy Ghost appears in equal authority with both the Father and the Son, and is, by consequence, equally the object of that worship which is paid in this religious act; nay, so far as it is an act of invocation, he seems to be peculiarly addressed; because his descent on the person baptized immediately follows, as that which distinguishes the baptism of Christ from the baptism of *John*. In consequence of this initiation, we are to believe in him, and to pray to him for grace and peace, as well as to the First and Second Persons. Accordingly *St. Paul, 2 Cor. xiii. 14.* prays distinctly to the Three Persons by name: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all*. It was for these and the like reasons, that the church, in every age, hath repeated hymns, and paid divine honours, to the Holy Ghost, as well as to the other Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

Fourthly, The Holy Ghost is most evidently proved to be God, by his works and offices, which carry with them so high a character in Scripture, and require such a plenitude of the divine attributes in the execution, as cannot be ascribed to any but the infinite Being, without  
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a degree of absurdity inconsistent with common sense, and of wickedness unworthy of Christianity.

He is said to have his share in the creation of the world, *Gen. i. 2.* where we are told, *the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*; *Job xxvi. 13.* where it is said of God, *that by his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens*; and, chap. xxxiii. 4. where *Eliku* says, *The Spirit of God hath made me.*

If his Divinity appears by his efficacious power in the works of nature, it demonstrates itself no less gloriously by his miraculous power over nature, and all her laws. Christ's birth, contrary to the course of nature, of a pure virgin, was effected by this power. *The Holy Ghost*, saith the Angel to *Mary*, *shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.* Christ himself acknowledges his miracles to be the works of the Holy Ghost, *Matth. xii. 28.* *If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.* And even that glorious miracle, the resurrection of Christ, and of all men, is ascribed to him, *Rom. viii. 11.* *If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* And that he is not the instrument, qualified extraordinarily by the Father for these supernatural performances, as an angel, or a man, who may be enabled to do the like; but the primary agent acting by his own power, and of his own will, just as he thinks fit; you may be convinced, by considering what is said, *1 Cor. xii. 11.* where you see he gave the first disciples their *miraculous powers, their gifts of wisdom, of knowledge, of healing, of working miracles, of prophesying, of discerning spirits, of speaking divers kinds of tongues; and divided them to every man severally, as he pleased.*

Pray now consider, that miracles performed, or, which is in effect the same thing, prophecies fulfilled, are the only credentials, whereby a revelation can be proved to come from God; and that the force of the proof depends solely on our firm persuasion, that none but God can see  
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into futurity, or controul the course of nature. This duly considered, when we see a miracle, we cannot help believing it was God who wrought it for our own conviction. In like manner, when we see an antient prophecy verified by the event predicted, we must conclude that prophecy was primarily dictated by the Divine foreknowledge. If then the miracles and prophecies, recorded in Scripture, are there ascribed to the Holy Ghost, as their true efficient, and primary source, it follows, that we have the same evidence for his Divinity, that we have for revelation itself. Now, it is no-where in Scripture said, that he did these things by a power not his own, or that he was unable of himself to do them. On the contrary, there is enough said to convince us, that as he was the *eternal*, the *omniscient*, the *omnipotent Spirit of God*, this power must have been naturally inherent in himself. We see the distribution was evidently at his own election, to with-hold or give, to give what, and to whom, he pleased; which is too great a privilege to be trusted to the discretion of a creature, especially considering the immensity of the treasures he distributed, and the grandeur of the ends for which they were dispensed. But, had he been a creature, we shall presently see, it must have been utterly impossible for him to have gone through with this dispensation, although he had been accompanied by the highest conceivable plenitude both of the miraculous and prophetic powers; for who, but the omnipresent God, could have been on the spot with so many men, in so many distant places, at one and the same instant? But of this more hereafter.

What honour does Christ do the Holy Spirit, who was to testify of him after his leaving the world, when he attributes his very *unction* and *mission* to him! *Isaiab lxi. 1. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, &c.; and, chap. xlviii. 16. The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me.* Agreeable to these passages of the Prophet, St. Peter tells us, *Acts x. 38. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power.* Of this unction St. John the

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the Baptist speaks in high terms; for he ascribes to it the divine wisdom and truth wherewith our Saviour spoke, *John* iii. 34. *He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;* alluding, probably, to *Isaiab* xi. 2. *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowlege, and of the fear of the Lord.* Can a Being, who thus assists God the Son with divine wisdom, and supernatural power, be himself a creature? Or, would God the Son owe his incarnation, his unction, his mission, his miraculous and prophetic gifts, to a creature? But it may be asked, Had he not these gifts and powers in himself, as the Son of God? And it may be as easily answered, He had those powers and gifts as God; but, as the Son of Man, he received the exercise and dispensation of them from the Holy Ghost, to whom, we see, that dispensation peculiarly appertained. However, be this as it will, our not being able to account for things so infinitely mysterious, is no reason why we should not submit our understandings, and resign our faith, to scriptural declarations, so very plain in themselves. Infinite difficulties may be struck out from the clearest and most demonstrable points of knowlege; which, since we know them to be demonstrable, we are to consider only as difficulties in regard to our narrow capacities, but by no means in regard to a superior mind, to whom, for aught we know, they may be self-evident.

As the Holy Ghost proceeds, in an eternal and ineffable manner, from the Father and the Son, so he is sent by them to govern the church, which belongs to Christ; because he hath purchased it with his precious blood, and in the merits of his purchase hath acquired a right to all the mercies of his Father, and all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, necessary to the salvation of that church. We see, in the xii. of the first epistle to the *Corinthians*, how absolutely the Holy Spirit dispenses his miraculous gifts, and saving graces, to the church of Christ; and thereby are made sensible both of his divine authority and power; for none but God can confer such  
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gifts; and none but God hath a right to confer them as he pleases. *All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will,* ver. 11. Here we have a general and comprehensive view of the ecclesiastical government administered by the Holy Spirit. We see the same in particulars. He vouchsafes his presence to whom he pleases, in such manner and measure as he pleases; sometimes on the administration of baptism; sometimes on the imposition of hands; and sometimes, previous to both, on a mere conversion; *Acts* x. 44. 47.; which shews, that he was not confined to the ordinances even of Christ's own institution. He *forbids* the apostles *to preach the word* in one country, *Acts* xvi. 6, 7.; and sends them to another, *Acts* viii. 39, 40. He orders whom he thinks fit *to be separated for the work of the ministry,* *Acts* xiii. 2. He *creates the overseers, or bishops, of the Church,* *Acts* xx. 28. He *abolishes the Mosaic law or dispensation, although instituted by God,* *Acts* xv. 28. Was ever an authority like this committed to a creature? Or, is it possible for a creature to be present every-where, in order to the discharge of such an office as this? To believe he may, is to confound the finite with the infinite, or to deify a creature, by giving him the essential attributes of God.

As the Holy Ghost is the governor, so he is also the instructor, of the Church. *I will,* saith God, by *Isaiah* xliv. 3. *pour out my Spirit upon thy seed;* and, by *Joel* ii. 28. *I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, &c.* St. Paul, *Ephes.* i. 17, 18. prays, *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto his disciples the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowlege of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.* It was the Holy Spirit that dictated both the Testaments, insomuch that the *inspiration*, by which the sacred penmen both spoke and wrote, hath its very name from his. When the Prophets preface what they are going to say, with, *Thus saith the Lord,* or, *Thus saith God,* do they not quote him who spoke

spoke to them, or inspired them? And is not our faith, in regard to this inspiration, rightly called a divine faith? But surely, if it were founded only on the dictates of a creature, it could not be called originally divine. If the Holy Ghost, who gave the Scriptures, is a creature; to make our faith divine, that is, to make it a faith in God, the Holy Ghost himself must have been inspired by God. But what part of revelation authorizes such absurdity and blasphemy as this? Behold to what an issue the tenets of our adversaries must lead them!

By what hath been said, you see how evidently the Holy Ghost appears to be God, from his extraordinary works and offices. You will see the same no less clearly in his ordinary offices of regeneration and sanctification. That it is his immediate office to regenerate, is fully proved by the words of our Saviour, *John iii. 3. 5, 6. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.* St. Paul tells us, *1 Cor. vi. 10, 11. that such sinners, as he had enumerated, should not inherit the kingdom of God; that some of those to whom he was writing, had been such; but that they were then sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* I need not multiply passages of Scripture in support of a point so obvious to every reader. It will be more to our purpose to consider a little what the new birth or regeneration is, that we may the better judge, whether it requires the immediate interposition of God, or may be effected by a creature.

The new birth then consists in repentance, faith, and charity. I need not quote the Scriptures to satisfy you, that whosoever wants these graces, is what is there called an *old* or *unregenerate* man; and that whosoever hath them, is, what is stiled in the sacred language, a *new man*, or a *new creature*. If it is then the Holy Spirit that regenerates us, it is he that gives us these graces. We may surely say of ourselves, as St. Paul did of him-

self, and his colleagues, 2 Cor. iii. 5. *that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God*; and should be as ready to acknowledge it the gift of God's Holy Spirit, if we are become new creatures. We see it was he who changed the disciples, mentioned 1 Cor. vi. 11. from the vilest to the best of men. We see, Titus iii. 3. 5. *that we, who were sometimes foolish, deceived, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and bating one another, are now, according to his mercy, saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*. We see, 1 Cor. xii. 3. *No man can say, Jesus is the Lord, that is, can believe, but by the Holy Ghost, who is called the Giver of faith*, ver. 9. and the Spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13. We see, that *the fruit of this Spirit is love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, towards men*, Gal. v. 22, 23.; and *that, by the same Spirit, the love of God also is shed abroad in our hearts*, Rom. v. 5. And, as the resurrection of our Saviour is elsewhere ascribed to the Spirit, we may see, 1 Pet. i. 21, 22. *that we are beholden to him for all these three graces, which concur in the new birth, God raised him [Christ] from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls, in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently*.

Can this now be the work of any but God? Can a creature make a creature? Or, is the new creature a work less demonstrative of God's goodness and power, than the old? Must not he who performs this office search and know the heart? Must he not be able to make what impressions he pleases, both on our understandings and affections, howsoever hard and averſive the one, or howsoever dark and prejudiced the other, may be? If he does this throughout the world at once, shall we not be forced to ascribe ubiquity to him? But why forced to do it by a necessary deduction, when the Psalmist hath already done it in express terms? *Pſ. cxxxix. 7, 8.* We know, that, through the faith and repentance given us by the Holy Ghost.



Ghost, the merits of our Redeemer are applied to us, and our sins washed away in his blood. We know also, that, being thus *purified from sin, and sprinkled with the blood of Christ Jesus, we have grace and peace multiplied unto us, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience,* 1 Pet. i. 2. If then we are regenerated, if we are pardoned, if we are sanctified, if we are strengthened, and established in true holiness, we must be justified, we must be saved. And to whom are we indebted for all this? No doubt, to the mercy of the Father, to the merits of the Son, and no less to the grace and assistance of the Holy Spirit; without which it would be impossible for us to keep the covenant made by the Son, between the Father and us; without which therefore we should be in a far worse state, than if Christ had never died for us, or we had never been baptized into his death. Is it possible for any man, who is sanctified, and made holy, himself, to believe, that he derives his holiness from his own strength, or from that of any other creature? No; the truly holy see in the word of God, and feel in themselves, the glorious source of spiritual light and warmth, from whence this reviving beam of joy, this principle of life, proceeds. It is with them a primary article of faith to believe, that, as God only is absolutely and originally holy, so he only can bestow any degree of it on his creatures; and that therefore the Holy Spirit, who hath begun or perfected it in them, is really and truly God. Their reason is shocked at the thoughts of having greater obligations to a creature, than to God; and they cannot but be sensible, it had been far better for them never to have been, than not to have been reclaimed and regenerated; because, without their second creation, the first must have put them unavoidably in the way of everlasting misery; whereas, by the second, an entrance into eternal life and glory is laid open to them. Men or angels, they know, may be ministers and instruments in the work of their reformation; but they can never believe God would only have made them, and left it to a creature to save them, to a creature acting voluntarily, and consequently claiming to himself the sole merit of all he did; observe, I say voluntarily

tarily, and I mean it in the highest sense of the word; for so it is that the Scriptures represent the Holy Ghost as acting; and therefore, I hope, no one will presume to say he acted by compulsion, or under fear of punishment, in case he had done otherwise; yet we know it is by the first that all instruments, and under the last that all ministers or delegates, do act, or rather are acted. Blessed be that gracious and holy Spirit, who hath given us grace to believe, that, as the *Father, of his own will, begat us with the word of truth*, James i. 18. and the Son *laid down his life for us of himself*, John x. 18. so the Holy Ghost, freely, and from the abundance of his love, is *grieved at our sins*, Eph. iv. 30. *maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered*, Rom. viii. 26. and *distributes his glorious gifts, and saving graces, among us, as he will*, 1 Cor. xii. 11. And let others, who believe him to be a creature, denying his grace, and trusting to their own strength, consider a little better than they have yet done, what their belief leads to. If he is a creature, he must be fallible; and then, how are we sure the Scriptures, which he hath dictated, are true? he must be accountable, and therefore may be judged, and, possibly, punished; than which, I will be bold to say, no one proposition, conceivable by the mind, or utterable by the tongue, of man, can be more repugnant to the faith of a Christian, or wound his ears with a deeper horror.

Let us now, in the last place, consider some of those Scriptures, wherein his divine stile and title of *the Holy Spirit* are more clearly expressed, although his office is at the same time intimated; or wherein, the office being passed over in silence, his nature only, with the proper appellations of that nature, is plainly represented.

But, before I proceed to this, it will be proper to remark here, that the Demi-christians frequently call on us for a direct and express proposition, asserting the Divinity of the Third Person. That they deal unfairly in this, we may be convinced by two substantial reasons; first, because the same men, in all other things, are ready to give as full an assent to necessary consequences and implications, when they are, in sense and effect, tantamount, as to direct

direct and positive propositions; and, secondly, because, although the Divinity of our Saviour is often asserted in such propositions, they will not be concluded by them, but fly to forced interpretations of those propositions; and, having, by this expedient, as they think, somewhat lessened their cogency, set up consequences of their own drawing, from other parts of Scripture, against them. Can they, however, assign us a single proposition, in which the Divinity of the Holy Spirit is directly and positively denied? Are they not forced to support their side of this argument by consequences and implications only, and those miserably extorted from Scripture, although, considering the force of our proofs, they seem to stand in need, at least, of one decisive assertion? No conduct can be more disingenuous than this, nor more fully prove, that their cause is bad, and the ends they pursue in defending it worse; for it is evident, from what hath been remarked, that, even in this most sacred inquiry, they do not so much seek for truth, as for the credit of a triumph, acquired, not by the merits, but the management, of the debate.

There are several passages of Scripture, in which the office of the Holy Ghost is intimated, and, at the same time, his Divinity asserted. We are told, *1 Cor. xii. 4, 5, 6.* that *there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; diversities of administrations, but the same Lord; and that there are also diversities of operations, but that it is the same God which worketh all in all.* Here the word God is given both to the Holy Spirit, and to Christ; for although the *gifts* of the Spirit are distinguished from the *administrations* of the Lord, and both from the *operations* of the Father, yet it is *God that worketh all* the gifts, the administrations, the operations, in all Christians. The offices are distinctly attributed to the respective Persons; but it is God that performs them all. It is God therefore that confers the diversities of gifts; and he is, as to that operation, distinguished by his personal name of Spirit. Nay, to make the point still clearer, the working of miracles, the speaking divers kinds of tongues, which are properly operations, are immediately ascribed to the Spirit,

ver. 10. And, to put the matter out of all doubt, the very thing that is said of God, ver. 6. *It is the same God which worketh all in all*, is said of the Spirit, ver. 11. *All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit*. But our adversaries will object here, that, by *God*, ver. 6. is to be understood the Father only. We grant the Father is to be understood by it, but not only; because that would infer a flat contradiction to other members of the passage, and most directly to the verse itself; for it is evident, that, while the Spirit bestows the gifts, and the Son exercises the administrations, it is God who worketh all in all; nay, that all these, as well operations as gifts, are immediately wrought by one and the self-same Spirit, who disposes of them according to his own uncontrollable will and pleasure, and who is therefore God. The strong analogy, or rather sameness of expression, between the 11th verse of this chapter, and the 13th of the ii. chapter of the epistle to the *Philippians*, *It is God that worketh in you, both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure*; together with this consideration, that, of the Three Persons, it is the Holy Spirit, who, by his office, is properly said to dwell and work in us; induces me to believe this latter passage is to be understood of him; and the rather, because what he is here said to do, namely, to work on our wills, and govern our actions, is so peculiarly a part, or rather now the main branch and end, of his office, that it cannot, without great confusion, be ascribed either to the Father, or the Son.

That it was the Holy Ghost who inspired all the penmen of both Testaments, we are assured in an hundred places. I will not detain you with particular proofs of this. Take it in general, as *St. Peter* expresses it, *2 Pet. i. 21. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. Now, that the Holy Ghost was this very God, by whom they were moved, and spake, is as clear as the light. That which is called *the word of God*, *Eph. vi. 17.* is there also called *the sword of the Spirit*. These dictates of the Holy Spirit are called, *in truth, the word of God*, *1 Theff. ii. 13.* This inspirer of all Scripture is expressly called *God*, *2 Tim. iii. 16. All Scripture is given*  
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by inspiration of God. *Zacharias*, who was himself filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied and said, *Luke* i. 68, 69, 70. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel! for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.* Behold how he styles him who spake by the prophets, the Lord God of *Israel*. Hear also *St. Paul* calling him by his personal name, in reference to his inspiring *Isaiab*, *Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaias the prophet*, *Acts* xxviii. 25. Then listen to what *Isaiab*, chap. vi. 8. calls him in that very place which *St. Paul* here repeats, *I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Go and tell this people, &c.* as *St. Paul* recites his words. I must observe to you, that the word *Lord*, here applied to the Holy Ghost, is put for *Adonai* in the original, a name given to God an hundred and thirty-four times in the Old Testament, as the *Masoreths* have observed. The objection, that this name is sometimes given to creatures, is of no weight; for the Prophet, in the same passage, ver. 5. calls him, whose voice he heard, *the Lord [Jehovah] of hosts*. He is also called, both the *Spirit of God*, and *God* himself, *Numb.* xxiv. 1. 4. *Balaam lift up his eyes—and the Spirit of God came upon him. And he took up his parable, and said,—He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty.*

God promised, *Is.* xliv. 3. to *pour out his Spirit upon the seed of Jacob*; and, *Joel* ii. 28. to *pour out his Spirit upon all flesh*. Pursuant hereunto, our Saviour, *John* xvi. 7. and *Acts* i. 5. promises to send *the Holy Ghost on his disciples*. Accordingly, *Acts* ii. 2, 3, 4. this promise was performed, and *they were all filled with the Holy Ghost*. This glorious gift, whereby God communicates himself to man, and makes his abode in the soul, was not restrained to the Apostles; all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, agreeably to the prophecy by *Joel*, received it, and manifested the fruits of it, either miraculously, in the work of the ministry, or morally, in newness of life and conversation. It is true, *Christ* hath

promised, *John xiv. 23. that both the Father and he will make their abode with those who love Christ*; but it is easily seen, that Christ speaks concerning the gift or indwelling of the Holy Spirit, whereby, as he was the same God with them, they were truly said to dwell where he dwelt. He speaks in the very same manner, ver. 9. to *Philip, who desired to see the Father, Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.* He is therefore to be understood as promising the presence both of the Father and himself, when he promises that of the Holy Spirit, in these words, ver. 16, 17. *I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter [another personally, but not essentially], who dwelleth with you, and shall be in you, who, ver. 26. shall teach you all things*; which verifies the prophecies of *Isaiab* and *Jeremiah*, quoted by our blessed Saviour, *John vi. 45. They shall be all taught of God*; and, at the same time, expressly proves the Divinity of their teacher.

This argument goes yet farther, and brings forth another evident proof of his Divinity. *St. Paul*, attentive to this inhabitation of the Holy Ghost, infers from it, that every believer is the temple of God. *Know you not, saith he, 1 Cor. iii. 16. that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? Know you not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you? chap. vi. 19.* That which is called the temple of God in the one place, is, you see, called the temple of the Holy Ghost in the other; and for the one only reason, because the Holy Ghost is in it. Surely no inhabitation, but that of a Divinity, can make a temple, a temple not to be defiled without the wrath of God, to whom it is dedicated, and the destruction of him who defiles it, *1 Cor. iii. 17.* But, lest any blasphemer of the Holy Ghost should say, he makes us the temples of God, only by representing God in us, and ministerially consecrating us to his service, see what the same Apostle says, *2 Cor. vi. 16. Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people*; and, ver. 18. *I will be*

a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Observe, I beseech you, that the Holy Ghost, who, in the former passages, was said to dwell in us, and thereby to make us his temple, is here again said to dwell in us, to walk in us, to make us his temple; and is called, by the Apostle, the *living God*, and by himself the *Lord Almighty*; that is, the *Jehovah*, who appeared to *Moses*, who gave the Law, who inspired the Prophets; for it is evident, the Apostle here quotes, and directly applies to the Spirit, two passages; the first, *Levit. xxvi. 12. I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people*; the second, *Jeremiah xxxi. 9. I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born*; wherein the one only God, the Lord, or *Jehovah*, speaks. This seems sufficient, of itself, to clear the point; but the tracing this argument from the indwelling of God will carry us still farther. If the Holy Ghost is he of the Divine Persons who dwells in us, and, being the Lord our God, makes us his temple, then he is the same who thus expresses himself, *Isa. lvii. 15. Thus saith the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* Observe here both his peculiar name *Holy*, and also his peculiar office of *dwelling with us*, in order to *revive the humble*, and *comfort the contrite*. *St. John*, first epistle, iii. 24. may serve to finish and ascertain this application of the passage from *Isaiab*; not that he quotes it, but by saying the same thing. *Hereby we know that he* (that is, God, as the context evidently shews) *abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* By what means is it, that we know God dwelleth in us? The Apostle tells us, it is by the evidence we have of the Spirit given to us, and residing within us. The indwelling of the Spirit can no otherwise be a sure proof of the indwelling of God, but on some previous proof, or firm belief, that the Spirit is really God. It is easy to see, if we take in the three foregoing verses, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are here personally distinguished; and that, though  
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the First Person only is expressly called God, yet the Third is, by necessary consequence, called God also; for he alone of the Three is that Person who can properly be said to dwell or abide in us. The Apostle's argument, expressed at large, is plainly this: We know the Holy Ghost abideth in us, and therefore we know God abideth in us; because we know the Holy Ghost is God.

If the Scriptures, while they intimated the office of the Holy Ghost, which hath somewhat of subordination in it, have, nevertheless, so strongly set forth his Divinity, we may expect to find them yet more positive in this great point, when they speak purely of himself, and not of his offices. Three or four passages will shew they actually do.

*Moses* says, *Exod. xxxiv. 34. That when he went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off until he came out.* Now, *St. Paul*, having quoted *Moses* by name, saith, *2 Cor. iii. 15, 16, 17. That even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now, the Lord is that Spirit, that very Spirit, whose ministration he says is glorious, ver. 8. and whom, that he may not be thought to mean the spirit in contradistinction to the letter, he calls, ver. 17. the Spirit of the Lord.* If then *the Lord* is *that Spirit, that Spirit* must be *the Lord*. What *Lord*? No doubt, *Jehovah*, whom *Moses* went to address, as he expressly tells us, *when he took off the veil.* The Spirit, therefore, if we may believe himself, speaking by *Moses* and *St. Paul*, is the one only God: *For who is God, save the Lord?* *Psalms xviii. 31. Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts—Besides me there is no God, Isa. xlv. 6.*

The words of *St. Peter* to *Ananias*, *Acts v. 3, 4.* always brought to prove the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, are not indeed brought in vain; for nothing can be more clear and convincing. *Why hath Satan, saith the Apostle, filled thine heart, to lye to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lyled unto men, but unto God.* This humble and faithful apostle took care always, when he wrought a miracle, to put aside the admiration of the beholders from himself,



and to fix it on him, to whom he was but an instrument in the performance. When he restored the lame man, and observed the people flocking about him, and filled with wonder, he said, *Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? Or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?* Acts iii.

12. Here, in like manner, when the dreadful punishment of *Ananias* was about to follow his words, he puts himself and his brethren quite out of the question, and speaks of them as no way concerned in the business, which he represents as transacted between the all-knowing God only on the one side, and *Ananias* on the other, without the least intervention of a third party. His meaning cannot be rationally taken in any other light; and, therefore, we may thus exactly paraphrase his words: “ You cannot but be convinced, O *Ananias*, by the variety of languages we illiterate men can speak, and the miracles which persons so impotent in themselves, as we are, can perform, that the Holy Ghost is with us. How comes it to pass then, that the devil should have prevailed on you to lye, not to us, who are nothing in an affair of this nature, but to the Holy Ghost, who, you see, is with us, and who, you know, or ought to know, is God?” This is a true, an honest representation of the Apostle’s meaning, whose words are so clear, that, had not our adversaries attempted, by a violent strain on the words, to confound the sense of *St. Peter*, I should have been ashamed to give another dress to expressions, which strike the understanding sufficiently with their own native light. These bold and artful interpreters tell us, *St. Peter* spoke of the Holy Ghost as the representative of God; and that therefore lying to him, was lying to God, in the same sense as, *He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God*, 1 *Theff.* iv. 8. This *Bishop Pearson* hath answered incomparably well: “ If, says he, the apostles would have aggravated the sin of *Ananias* with the full propriety and iniquity, in the sense of these expositors, he must have said, Thou hast not lyed unto men, nor unto the Spirit of God, but unto God.”

*David,*

David, with his last breath, 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3. in plain, positive, and direct terms, sets forth the Divinity of the Holy Ghost: *The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, the God of Israel said.* Surely, if nothing else can do it, this may satisfy our adversaries, who are so ready to ask us for a plain and positive proof on our side, while they give us none on their own, but deductions and implications, haughtily expecting to pass them on us for convincing arguments, although nothing ever invented by man can be more disingenuous or perverse. Blame me not, my brethren, for this and the like instances of warmth. I have always thought, that to be cool and indifferent in a case of this nature, and to let practices so base, so unbecoming the profession of Christianity, go unstigmatized, is to betray its cause, and to sink the value of truth, like sceptics, in a promiscuous disregard for that and falsehood, as if it were no great matter, whether the one or the other were preferred.

The last proof I shall offer for the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, is found in the xii. chapter of the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, where our Saviour, on hearing those miracles, which he had wrought by the Spirit of God, ver. 28. ascribed, through malice, directly in the teeth of conviction, to the devil, says, ver. 31, 32. *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come. God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved;* John iii. 17. It was peculiarly the office of the Son to suffer, that he might save; and therefore forgiveness of injuries, although never so cruel, made a necessary part of his amiable character. But as it is the office of the Holy Ghost to dictate the truth, and fully evidence the same by miracles, that all may believe, so it is an awful part of that office to convince the world of sin, because they believe not in Christ, John xvi. 8, 9. He is the giver of light and grace; but

if they are despised, and thereby *despite is done to him*, what then remains, but that *fery indignation which shall devour the adversaries?* Hebr. x. 27.

I have given you this short, but clear, view of the unpardonable sin, that you may the better perceive the force of the proof contained in it for the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. The two great aggravations of this sin are, first, that it is a wilful, a malicious, and contemptuous, offence against light; and, secondly, that it sets the devil in the place of God. So far as it is a malicious offence against light, it is an immediate insult upon God, who is light, and who, in the office of our illumination, affording us a plentiful and irresistible light by such wisdom as none but he could utter, and such miracles as none but he could work, is, at one and the same time, acknowledged by the conviction of conscience, and blasphemed by the pride and malice of the tongue. You cannot but be sensible, this aggravation of the sin derives its very essence from this consideration, that God is the immediate object of it; for no creature could give that miraculous evidence, which is thereby resisted and despised. And so far as this sin sets the devil in the place of God, it carries with it a degree of wickedness peculiar to itself, and far exceeding the heinousness of all other sins. But this is not all; while it gives the honour of God's most holy truths, revealed for the reformation of mankind, and of his glorious miracles, wrought for their relief and cure, to the devil, it ascribes to God the infamy of an opposition to so good a work, and consequently puts him in the place of the devil. The inconceivable blackness of this blasphemy, we see, consists in calling him, who performed the miracles, that is, the Spirit of God, a devil. Now, suppose him but a creature, and the sin, you perceive, immediately discharged of all its diabolical rebellion and presumption, dwindles to the size of other sins. Were it possible to commit a sin of the same nature against the Father, or the Son, I confess it would be equally unpardonable; because each is God. But, considering the part the Holy Ghost had to act, which was to dictate the doctrines of our religion, to work the miracles in evidence of those doctrines, and inwardly to urge  
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the force of the one, and the excellency of the other, both on the understanding and heart, it seems impossible the Divinity could be equally vilified by any resistance given to the Person of the Father, or the Son, who throughout the whole dispensation, whenever the minds of men were to be wrought on, acted by the intervention of the Holy Spirit. To him therefore, directly, immediately, was this blasphemous insult offered, which could not be offered to any other; and that by men, who either knew him, or, by our Saviour's supposition, had sufficient reason for knowing him, to be God.

Far be it from me to say, that any man, at this distance of time from what was then done, either is, or can be, guilty of this horrible sin. But this I will be bold to say, that a very high degree of pride, of self-sufficiency, and of presumption, in resisting the evidences of divine truth, which the Spirit of God still affords, partakes in the nature of that sin, and approaches nearer to its utmost guilt, in proportion to the measure of those infernal qualities, as well as to the degrees of sense and knowledge, wherewith they happen to be accompanied. This may be truly said of every attack on the truths conveyed to us in those sacred writings, whereof the Holy Spirit is author; but of none more truly, of none so immediately, as of those made on the Divinity of his Person, and the efficacy, I should rather say, the reality, of his grace. That presumption at large is the worst disposition the heart of man can be cursed with, we may learn of *David: Keep back thy servant, says that royal Prophet, from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, then shall I be innocent from the great transgression: Ps. xix. 13.* But of all kinds or degrees of presumption, there is none so horrible in itself, or so pernicious in its effects, as that species of presumption, which will not suffer God to speak for himself, nor call himself God; but sets up to prompt him with its own detestable conceits. That in what I have this day delivered, I have not incurred the guilt of this frightful crime, I can honestly and confidently appeal to my own heart; and the Scriptures I have quoted will, I hope, satisfy those who hear me, that I have not laboured

the point without reason. As to what our adversaries will be able to offer to God, or their own consciences, in justification of their dealings with his word, let them look to it. But I yet can see no other fruits of what they have done, than a growing contempt for the authority of the Scriptures, and a proportionable indifference to their blessed Author.

May God, of his infinite goodness, be pleased, by his divine grace, notwithstanding the contempt in which it is held by many, to remedy this greatest of all evils, for the sake of Christ Jesus our blessed Saviour! Amen.

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## DISCOURSE VIII.

The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity vindicated.

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J O B xi. 7.

*Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?*

**H**AVING formerly proved, that there is but one God, and that no new God can be produced by adoption, by generation, by creation, or delegation; and having also proved, that Christ and the Holy Ghost are, each of them, that one God; what now is left to be done by us as Christians, but to believe what God hath told us concerning himself? Is there any room left for our own speculations on the awful subject of the Trinity? God alone knows himself; and we neither know, nor can know, any thing of him, but what he hath been pleased to reveal. No man knows the Father, but the Son; nor can any man impart to us that share of this knowlege we are capable of, but the Son. Hear his own words, *Matth. xi. 27. No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* He must be infinite, who perfectly knows the Infinite. Christ alone is equal to this. *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father,* John x. 15. For this reason he saith,  
*John*

*John xvii. 25. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee ; but I have known thee. Well therefore might Zophar say to Job, in the words of my text, Canst thou by searching find out God ? Canst thou know the Almighty unto perfection ? It is as high as heaven ; what canst thou do ? deeper than hell ; what canst thou know ? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.*

From hence a reasonable, a modest, a pious, man would conclude, that God is incomprehensible to our minds ; and that we cannot go an hair's breadth farther in the knowlege of him, than he is pleased to lead us by the light of revelation. Yet, unhappily, the mind of man, proud, petulant, and distempered, even to madness, with its own conceit, is for going farther, and putting its counter-questions to those of Zophar. *How can these things be ?* How can it be true, that there is but one God, and yet true, that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost God ? O infinitely incomprehensible and awful Being ! impute it not to us for a crime, if we presume *to answer these men according to their folly.* He, who asks such questions, asks them not of men, but of God ; and, if he believes the Scriptures to be the word of God, is impious ; if he does not, he hath no right to be answered under this head of inquiry, but must be sent back to this other question, Are the Scriptures the word of God ? If God, as I have clearly proved to every Christian, hath affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity, then he, who demands a reason for the consistency or truth of that doctrine, demands it of God ; and will not believe it, though God says it, till God shall give him a reason ; whereas, sure I am, it is reason sufficient, that God hath said it. And that he hath often, in the strongest terms, said it, I have sufficiently shewn in the four preceding discourses ; so that I insist, if these men are still to debate the point, it must be with God. If they have presumption enough for this undertaking (and what is it they cannot presume to do ?), *Let them bring forth their strong reasons,* and God shall answer them out of the whirlwind ; *Who are these that darken counsel by words*

without knowledge? and will send them to his works, to try the strength and stretch of their talents on them, before he admits them to a speculation on himself.

But if we must engage in this impious controversy, let those answer for it, that drag us into it; for we cannot be silent, when the honour of our Redeemer and Comforter is called in question.

Have the *Sabellians*, the *Macedonians*, the *Arians*, the *Semi-arians*, found out a middle point of inquiry between these two, Whether the Scriptures are the word of God, and whether the doctrine of the Trinity, as set forth in the *Athanasian* creed, is a true doctrine? For my part, I think it impossible. If the Scriptures were dictated by God himself, this doctrine must be true; for those Scriptures, as I have fully shewn, set it forth in clear and strong terms; nay, in such a multitude and variety of terms, as leaves no other possible way of evading the doctrine, but by denying the Scriptures.

But our Anti-trinitarian adversaries think they have found out a middle question; which is this, Whether the Scriptures alleged for this doctrine are rightly understood and applied by us who hold it. Let the Scriptures speak for themselves, in God's name. I have cited them as naked and free from commentaries of my own, as the necessity of shewing why I cited them would permit. The truth is, I think they need none; nor should we ever attempt to give them any, had we not the mortification to see them handled by our adversaries with a freedom so disingenuous, and even contemptuous, that we should ill answer for our charge of so sacred a deposit, did we not endeavour to clear it of the false colours, wherewith they labour to dawb it.

The *Sabellians* allowed the Divinity, but denied the Personality, of the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The *Arians* and *Semi-arians* allowed their Personality, but denied their Divinity, as the *Macedonians* did that of the Holy Ghost in particular. Of our modern Anti-trinitarians, some side with the *Arians*, some with the *Semi-arians*; but the greater number of them are *Socinians*, who utterly deny the Divinity of Christ, and either join with the

*Sabellians*



*Sabellians* in sinking the Personality of the Holy Ghost, or with the *Macedonians*, in denying his Divinity; which latter proceeding seems at present to prevail, though the former was that which their leaders generally leaned most to. They all in common hold a Trinity, and give the name, stile, and worship, of God to the Son and the Holy Ghost; but deny that either of them is truly and really God, insisting that either is God only by the appointment of the one true God. Hence the amazing distinctions of *self-existent, self-originated, eternal*, God, in opposition to those supposed created and delegated gods. Most astonishing! Have we more gods than one? Have we one self-existent, and two other derivative gods? gods dependent on one another for their very being? Have we one eternal, and two new, or temporary, gods? And is this horrible system of Polytheism to be fathered on the Scriptures? No, no; it is derived from the enormous presumption of men, who would be wiser than God; but who, however pretending infinite veneration for his words, would give those words a meaning wholly opposite to their natural import, in order to screw them to their own impious hypothesis. When the Scriptures say, *The Word was God*, they must not mean, that he was truly God. When they call the Holy Ghost *The eternal Spirit*, they must not mean, that he was from all eternity; for these men will have him to be a creature produced in time. Thus the express passages of Scripture must be explained away; or so enfeebled by an artful, an arbitrary, exposition, that consequences of their own drawing, or of their own forcing, from other passages of Scripture, neither very clear, nor pertinent, may be set up against them. How would a *Lipsius*, or a *Bentley*, maul these expositors, if he caught them chicaning in this manner with a place in *Livy* or *Horace*! If any man apprehends I wrong them, let him look into *Waterland's Queries*, or *Leslie's Socinian Controversy*; after which, I will venture to say, if he is an honest man, he will find in his heart more indignation against their practices, than I shall help him to express.

As to those, who sink the Personality of the Son and

the Holy Ghost in the attributes of God, or mere modes of acting, there are now so few of them in the world, and the heretics with whom we have to do, being much apter to assign them a distinction of nature, than to deny them that of persons, we shall, for proof of this Personality, only refer you to the baptism of our Saviour, *Matth. iii. 16, 17.* where the three Persons are clearly distinguished to the senses; the Father, by a voice from heaven, *This is my beloved Son*; the Son, by going *visibly out of the water*; and the Spirit of God, by *descending like a dove, and lighting on him.* This distinction is also evident from *John xiv. 16, 17. 26.* where Christ saith, *I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter—even the Spirit of truth, whom the Father will send in my name.* No actions can more fully demonstrate a personal distinction, than these which exhibit *Christ praying to the Father, and the Father, at his request, sending the Holy Ghost.* How does it reflect on the understanding of man, that the truth, in this plain particular, should be attacked on the two opposite sides! that some should find but one person in these transactions, while others find three beings in them! But both the errors proceed from a wrong construction of other parts of Scripture, tinged with the self-sufficient dependence of conceited men on their own understandings. The *Sabellians*, seeing Christ, and the Holy Ghost, so often set forth, each as God, in expressions so clear, as if no other person were God but himself; in order to preserve the Unity, destroyed the Personality; and all this purely because their reason must be superior to Scripture, as if it could so far comprehend God, as to see there could be no personal distinction in him. The *Arians*, &c. on the other side, seeing Christ and the Holy Ghost set forth, each as God, but spoken of as acting in subordination to the Father, must have one *supreme*, and two created, gods, merely because their own reason, or rather conceit, could not digest the belief of three Persons in the Godhead itself. You see how both, by various ways, but with one and the same view, namely, to preserve the Unity, trample on the truths of Scripture; and you see also what a monstrous expedient the latter

latter have pitched on for this purpose, since to preserve the Unity of God, they have given themselves three gods instead of one. Had they only considered, that, as God is incomprehensible, there may be a personal distinction in his nature, which no way affects the unity of that nature, for aught their reason can discover to the contrary, they had never been in the least danger of falling into the very error they would avoid. How could they have found out assuredly and clearly, that there is but one God, if the Scriptures had not revealed it to them? And if the same Scriptures give the name and attributes of the one God to three persons, why do not they as readily admit the latter as the former? Is it not because their reason cannot so easily account for the one as the other? And is not this to prefer their reason to God's word? Nay, is it not to confound their very reason, and set it at variance with itself, since they acknowledge the Divine Being incomprehensible? They ought certainly to take his word for it, that he consists of Three Divine Persons, rather than contradict him in this, when, in the same breath, they own, they know no more of him, than what he is pleased to discover. If the *Sabellians* could lay aside their conceit, and cease to understand that of the offices of Christ and the Holy Ghost, which is said of their nature; and if the *Arians*, &c. could lay aside theirs, and cease, on the contrary, to understand that of their nature, which is said of their offices; we should soon be all of one mind. But whether ever they will have candour enough to do this, or not, one thing we must do; which is, ever firmly to believe, there is but one Divine Nature, one only God, in whom there are Three Persons, all equally divine by nature, but distinguished by a subordination in their offices, as well as by a different signification of their names; and one of them by the assumption of an inferior nature. This makes the exposition and reconciliation of all the Scriptures, relative to the Trinity, easy and natural to us.

It would also greatly help to extricate our opponents from their difficulties, if they would seriously consider, why the properties and operations of the One Person are

often ascribed to another ; namely, because each Person is God ; and therefore God, in one place, is said to do that, which, in another, the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost, is said to do, in virtue of attributes and powers common to all the Three. And further, they would do well to consider, which indeed they are apt enough to do, but for a wrong purpose, that the actions of one person are often ascribed to another ; because the one, in the divine œconomy, acts by commission from the other, as both Christ and the Holy Ghost are, in different places, distinctly said to regenerate and sanctify us ; and further still to consider, that the Father, being the fountain of the Deity, and, by the œconomy, the sender, while the other persons are sent, is sometimes called God in passages where neither the Son, nor the Holy Ghost, is so stiled ; not because they are not God, or less properly God than the Father, for each is often set forth as God, and there is but one God ; but purely because, equal as they are in nature with the Father, they act in the work of our salvation by authority and mission from him. If God hath a Son begotten of him, and a Spirit proceeding from him, may he not send and employ them without derogation to their nature ? Does it follow, that, because they are sent, they are therefore of a different or inferior nature ? Or, if the Scriptures often call them God, are we nevertheless to understand they are not truly God ; because, in the same passage, where the two last are mentioned by their personal appellations, the first, without his personal appellation, is mentioned only by the name of God ? He whom the Scriptures in many places, or even in one place, call God, is God, although in never so many other places they should happen to call him by another name, and not by the name of God ; since in none of those places do they say, or so much as intimate, that he is not God. I speak as plainly as I can ; but I shall perhaps make myself more intelligible by an instance. In the first epistle to the *Corinthians*, xii. 4, 5, 6. we are told, that *There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit ; differences of administrations, but the same Lord ; and diversities of operations, but the same God,*

God, which worketh all in all. Here the Second and Third Persons are mentioned by the names of Lord and Spirit, while the First only is stiled God. But does it not appear from this very passage, that, if God works all, he must work the gifts and administrations, as well as the operations? And what follows, but that he who confers the gifts, and he who performs the administrations, is God, as well as he who works the operations? But, supposing this did not so clearly appear from the passage, as it does, Is the Son, or the Holy Ghost, to be deprived of their title to the Divinity, merely because they are not here directly called God, when, in so many other places, they actually are? This, if it were rightly attended to, might serve for a solution to above one half of all our difficulties. But to return a little closer to my text;

I may venture to lay it down for a rule, that, in treating of God, and his revelation, especially of that which is most mysterious in reference to either, we ought to proceed with at least as much method and caution as we do in lower sciences, wherein there is not so great danger of error, nor so much mischief arising from it. We are therefore not to reason about God without axioms to found our reasonings on; nor to build on certain axioms at one time, and to depart from them at another, just as our caprice, or the pinch of an argument, may tempt us. Now what is the grand axiom of Christianity? Is it not agreed, that the Scriptures are the word of God, and, as such, implicitly to be believed? If this is the case, our apprehensions have nothing to do, but to imbibe the plain notices of Scripture; nor our reason, but to argue from Scripture. What master in any science disputes the axioms, or self-evident propositions, of that science, or asks a reason for them? Who, in physics, asks a reason why the whole is greater than any of its parts? And what Christian, in theology, shall ask a reason for that which the Scripture affirms? Although what God tells us in Scripture is not evident of itself, but requires his veracity to evidence it; yet, when once it is so evidenced, common sense will allow, it is then on a level with that which is self-evident; or, rather, is more  
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evident ; for God's affirmation can give more evidence to a thing, than any thing can give to itself. We may take that for self-evident which is not ; but God cannot be mistaken.

Now I have given abundant proof, that God affirms his own Unity, as also the Divinity of the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To ask a reason for either, or how the one can consist with the other, is to speak like a Deist, or an Atheist ; is to doubt whether the Scriptures are the word of God ; or to deny the veracity of God, and to prefer reason, in a matter confessedly above reason, to his word and affirmation. Let our opponents, therefore, tell us, whether they mean to enter into debate with us, as Christians, or Deists (for it is indeed no easy matter to distinguish, when we are every moment to be dodged from bare reason to Scripture, and back again from Scripture to independent reason), that we may know under what principles or axioms we are to dispute. If they declare for Christianity and Scripture, and then tell us our doctrine of the Trinity is unintelligible and inconsistent ; we confidently answer, there is not a more intelligible doctrine in the world than that of the Trinity, as we hold it. This and other inexplicable doctrines of our religion were not revealed, either as mysteries, or as trials of our faith. The doctrines themselves, like the works of God, are plain and obvious, so far as we are concerned to know them ; and never become dark or mysterious to us, till we begin to pry farther than our wants require, or our capacities extend. The mystery therefore lies not in the doctrine itself, but in the application of our understandings to it. Now, as this happens in all other parts of knowledge, let us only deal by religion as we do by other things, and every difficulty will vanish. Let us believe and practise, as far as we understand, and not attempt to examine, much less to pronounce, an hair's breadth beyond those bounds, to which God hath confined our intellect. And do we not understand the doctrine of the Trinity ? Can any thing be more easily understood than these propositions ? There is but one God. The Father is that one God. The Son is that one God. The Holy Ghost is that one God.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are three distinct persons.

This is the doctrine of the Trinity, which every clown can understand ; and our adversaries perfectly well understand it, or they could not ask us to account for the consistency of the propositions which contain it, nor argue against that consistency in the manner they do. Now it is nonsense in them to ask for this, without premising, that they cannot believe in contradictions, and that those propositions appear contradictory to them. How contradictory? That is contradictory, and nothing but that, which affirms and denies the connexion between the same set of ideas and terms. Surely this is not the case here. Do we say there is but one God, and yet three gods? Or, do we say there is but one Divine Person, and yet three divine persons? Or, do we, they, or common sense, ever say, God and person are synonymous terms? Do we, or can they, say, Scripture makes them synonymous? Where then is the contradiction? But they say, they cannot conceive the possibility of Three Persons in one God. In this they express themselves ill. They should say, they cannot conceive *how* it is possible. If they will be so modest as to say this only, we will say the very same ; for although we take God's word for it, that it is so in fact, and therefore must be not only possible, but true, yet we own we cannot see *how* ; that is, we cannot shew the very possibility ; and we give a reason which ought to silence them ; for they agree with us in it ; namely, because God is *incomprehensible*. Before, therefore, they can have a right to proceed one step farther with us, they must give up this point, and prove to us, that God is, in respect at least to the point under debate, *comprehensible* to them and us. But, previous to this wonderful demonstration of omniscience in man, we beg they would let us see whether they comprehend any one of all God's works ; for it would be a strange presumption to attempt the Infinite before they have made themselves competent masters of the finite. Here God rebates their vanity, and sets them at an infinite distance from himself ; for they are utterly unable to  
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comprehend any thing, even a mite, or a grain of sand. *How marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty ! How infinitely more great and marvellous thou thyself ! Great things dost thou, which we cannot comprehend ; how then shall we comprehend thyself !*

Notwithstanding what hath been said, the persons we have to deal with still insist, that our doctrine of the Trinity is contradictory. Although the words *God* and *person*, say they, are not synonymous, yet *God* and *Divine Person* are. They define a person to be an intelligent being or agent, and say, *God* is a divine Person ; and therefore, according to them, to maintain that there is but one *God*, and Three *Divine Persons*, is the same as to affirm, that there is but one *God*, and yet three gods.

It is obvious, that this objection to the doctrine of the Trinity is purely philosophical ; that the Scriptures nowhere give us any term for *Person*, nor define the idea of *Personality* ; that revelation, neither expecting to find all men philosophers, nor intending to make any man a philosopher, speaks to us, as to plain illiterate men, in common and ordinary words, whereby ideas familiar to us are usually conveyed ; and that therefore we are seldom or never to examine or interpret its doctrines by the vain philosophy and refinements of men. Nay, it is further to be observed, that *God*, speaking in condescension to the capacities of the vulgar, sometimes delivers that, which, although most true in effect, and in regard to the purpose for which it is spoken, is nevertheless, if literally taken, inconsistent with the known nature of things. His word, for instance, tells us, that the sun stood still in the days of *Joshua* ; which was true in effect, for the day was protracted. But had that which was true in philosophy been said ; namely, that the earth stood still ; it could not have been understood. Whatsoever philosophy may dislike in this manner of speaking, it hath less reason to be surpris'd, that *God*, in communicating the knowlege of high and mysterious things, particularly of himself, to the bulk of mankind, that is, to the unlearned, should shadow those things by others that are common and familiar to their apprehensions ; because thus  
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only it is possible, even for the most knowing, to conceive any idea of that which is supernatural and incomprehensible. Now, to apply this to our purpose; it appears that the personal distinction between man and man is, throughout the Scriptures, taken, as in all other historical accounts of human transactions, from common use and observation; that is, men are there differenced by their outward appearances, by their figure, features, &c. This man is commended, that censured; this rewarded, that punished; as one who is known by his face, voice, and the like, to be the very person who did such or such actions. It is no more necessary in such narratives, than it is in the tryals of a civil court, to tell wherein personality, or personal identity, consists, in order to distinguish one person from another. It is in the same manner, and with an eye to the same way of distinguishing one person from another, that their peculiar actions are ascribed by name, and, in one instance, by sensible manifestations, respectively to the Three Persons in the blessed Trinity. Thus, and thus only, they seem to be personally distinguished, while each is stiled God; and we are assured, there is but one God. Hence it is that we conceive there is in God some unknown incomprehensible distinction, which the personal distinction of man from man, as it is apprehended, not philosophically, but in common use, is made to represent. As to the definition of personality, it is by no means settled among the philosophers, some placing it in the will, some in consciousness, and some in the soul itself; and therefore nothing certain can be drawn from any one definition of it, to affect the present debate. That in the objection is liable to great exceptions. First, it denies personality to idiots, who, as such, are not intelligent beings or agents. And, in the next place, it makes God a person, though he is never so called, either in common propriety of speech, or sound logic; although now that the doctrine of the Trinity hath been revealed, a person, analogically understood, may be called God; I say, analogically; for what is a person? Is it not an human creature, consisting of an angelic or rational spirit, an animal soul, and an organized body?

body? This is its true and proper signification, which, in its true, proper, and immediate sense, may be given to Christ, because he is perfect man; but cannot, otherwise than by analogy, be given to the Father, or the Holy Ghost; for neither hath the properties of a person, as just now defined, but such unknown, unknowable properties only, as are analogous thereunto. In Scripture, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are spoken of as distinct persons; each is there called God; and we are there assured, there is but one God. The one God, therefore, considered as not personally distinguished, cannot be a person, even by analogy; for this would imply a contradiction, both in terms and ideas; which no Christian can ever ascribe to the word of God, nor any Deist convict it of.

But, since our adversaries have forced us to answer for the perspicuity and consistence of our doctrine, we have a right to retort the same questions on them. Be pleased, O ye *Arians*, and *Socinians*, to tell us in the name of common sense, what you mean by saying, there is but one God, and yet saying, that Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost ought to be called gods. You say, they are delegated gods. If they are, then there are more gods than one; so that your propositions, though very intelligible, are flatly contradictory in terms. You endeavour indeed to save them from contrariety of ideas; because you say, you mean one thing by God, in the first proposition, and another by God, in the second. But pray observe, that, if your propositions are not contrary to each other in idea, the last, however, is diametrically contrary to both the Testaments, both in idea and terms. Now, why such an equivocation on so awful a word? Or is there any one word that less admits of a double meaning? We may, on the strength of that analogy, which runs thro' all created nature, couple the highest and lowest creature in the universe together, so as to give them one name. But why will you give the only name of our language, by which the infinite Being may be distinguished in our understandings, our affections, our worship, to creatures; when the difference is infinite, and the consequences shocking

shocking to the first principle of all true religion? How provokingly impudent is the outcry you set up against us for breaking in on the Unity of God, when you have reason to know in your consciences, that we, who hold the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, as it hath always been deservedly called, are the only men in the world, who adhere both to that Unity, and the truth of Scripture; while you yourselves have three gods, whom you avowedly believe in and worship! If you know these things, and how is it possible you should not, why do you, to cover your own impiety, and throw an odium on us, labour to blacken our characters with the guilt and absurdity of a contradictory Tritheism, which you now openly avow on all occasions? How can you pretend to censure the church of *Rome* for her worship of saints and angels, when you are guilty of a worse idolatry yourselves? She distinguishes the degree of worship which she pays to the supreme Being, from that which she pays to creatures; and makes the latter inferior; whereas you pay but one kind of worship, namely, divine worship, to what you call creatures, as well as to God. You agree with her in the adoration of angels; for you place Christ and the Holy Ghost in the angelic order; and you differ with her in this, that whereas she gives inferior worship to all the angels, you give divine worship to two only. Pray consider the censure of *St. Paul* against you both, *Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshiping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, Colos. ii. 18.* You condemn the innocent use of unscriptural words in us, and yet allow yourselves a most disingenuous use of the word *Trinity*, calling it the *holy Trinity*, the *ever-blessed Trinity*, &c. whereas you blasphemously mean by it, such an union of God with two creatures, as Reason and Scripture strongly protest against. If we are resolved to equivocate, it is better, I own, to employ our own, than God's words, in so scandalous a practice. But, surely, whatever words we employ, it must be very uncouth in you, to tolerate in your own writings the equivocal use of a word, which you will not suffer us to use in

one plain consistent sense. And to what purpose do you thus apply this word? Is it not to give yourselves an air of orthodoxy with the people, who have an high veneration for the term; and at the same time, to obtrude the worship of creatures? If you are right in this, our Saviour, his Apostles, and all the primitive Fathers, must have been wrong in so peremptorily inculcating the worship of one God only, at a time, and in a country where all the *Gentiles*, as you do, worshiped one supreme, and other subordinate gods. If the Christians in those days worshiped one supreme God, and two subordinate deities, why did not the *Gentiles* retort their own arguments against Polytheism on themselves? The *Gentiles* knew they worshiped Christ, as appears by *Pliny's* letter to *Trajan*; and yet they never said, Why do you blame us for adoring subordinate deities, when you do the same yourselves? No, the *Greek* and *Roman* Polytheists could not do this; because the Christians made it evident in all their disputes and apologies, that they adored Christ as one God with the Father. But pray consider further, what sort of a being it is, that you have placed in the holy Trinity, and called your Saviour, under the name of Christ. You say, he hath not the essence or nature of the one true eternal God; you say, he hath not the essence or nature of a man; for you peremptorily insist, that the *Logos*, or *Word*, is to him in the place of an human soul, and that he hath no human soul; while the Scriptures assure us, *he took not on him the nature of angels*. Compare this astonishing doctrine with these Scriptures, which so often call him God, and tell us, there is but one God; and again with those that call him a man; and then tell us, with what conformity to common sense and Scripture, you call that being a true God, who is neither eternal nor supreme, or that being a true man, who hath not an human soul. Tell us, if you can, what or who this is, in whose name you are baptized; this that is, by nature, neither God, nor an angel, nor even a man. Is he but a mere animal? O impious consequence! Yet how you can draw one less irrational, less unscriptural, or less shocking either to the understanding or heart of a

Christian, from your principles, we cannot possibly apprehend. Here, we know, you will be greatly distressed; for if you allow it possible, that God and man may be united in one person, you can with no shadow of reason disallow the union of Three Divine Persons in one God. We know you only oppose the mystery in the former instance, lest it should lead the way to the mystery in the latter; for your understandings, like those of the Deists, have a strange reluctance to mysteries, even in supernatural and incomprehensible things, wherein they are unavoidable. It is to evade these, that you so often run counter to Scripture and common sense, and shamelessly manage the debate with us by equivocations on almost every material word to be used between us.

Let us, in the name of God, and common honesty, make use, on this as well as on all occasions, of such words as best express our meaning; but let each word have one open determinate sense of its own. Let us have some peculiar name for the infinite Being, consecrated to that application only, and not degraded to the signification of creatures, that we may know whether we are speaking of, and worshipping, the same God, or not. As there is no medium between God and his creatures; as there is no lowering the idea of God, nor raising the idea of a creature; let us never give that name to a creature which we give to God, nor that name to God which we assign to a creature. Either Christ is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, or they are but creatures. Let us, therefore, either call them God, or creatures, and deal with them as such in our reasonings and services. Let us not call them both; for both they cannot possibly be.

We cannot tell how great, how powerful, how glorious, a creature, God can make; nor to what high degrees of goodness, wisdom, and perfection, he may exalt him in a progress upward, through an inconceivable number of ages. Neither can we guess how swift this progress may be rendered through the infinite bounty of God, and the vehement love of his creature. But I will suppose it as rapid as thought itself; and, to help our imaginations, I will suppose this creature to arise, in one moment, from  
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the rank of a mite, to that of the lowest angelic nature ; and from thence, the next moment, to the very highest. I will suppose him to rise with the same rapidity through every moment of more ages than arithmetic can stretch to, allowing every figure, if you please, to stand for ten thousand million times its own usual number ; and now let us examine what he is at the end of this progress. Is he not still a creature ? May it not be as truly said of him now, as it was when he was a mite, that there is an infinite distance between God and him ? May it not be said, with the strictest truth and propriety, that he is as nothing in comparison of the Infinite ? How then dare we give him one name with God ? He is still a bounded, whereas God is an infinite, Being. He can be present only somewhere, whereas God is present every-where. He can only know some things, whereas God knows all things. He can only know some part of what is, whereas God knows all things that are, and even the things that are not yet in being. He can do some things only, whereas God is almighty. He is only temporary, as to his origin, and depends for his duration on the will of God, who can reduce him to nothing in a moment ; whereas God sets out with eternity, holds on with eternity, and exists of himself. That could not be said of this creature, which is said of the Son, that *he is equal with God* ; or, under his name of the *Word*, that *he was from the beginning God*. Neither could that be said of this creature, which is said of the Holy Ghost, that he is *the eternal Spirit*. Let us therefore be content to confound all created natures by the preposterous use of terms ; let us give the same name to matter and motion, to light and darkness, to truth and falsehood, to life and death, to happiness and misery ; let us *put evil for good, and good for evil* ; but let us not put the infinite Creator for the finite creature, nor the finite creature for the infinite Creator.

Enough hath been said concerning the monstrous Trinity of the Anti-trinitarians. It is now time to return to the true Trinity, demonstrated already from Scripture in the four former Discourses, which have left us in reality nothing to do here by way of proof, but only to make  
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some remarks on the awful subject, such as may tend either to illustrate the thing itself, or to reconcile us to it as an article of *faith*, which reason hath no right to protest against, since reason can form no judgment, whether it is consistent in itself or not.

Let the first remark be, that the doctrine of the Trinity is collectively set forth in many passages both of the Old and New Testament. What hath been formerly said prevents the necessity of multiplying passages for this purpose; wherefore I shall content myself with two or three from each. And first from the Old Testament.

God saith, *Gen. i. 26. Let us make man in our own image*; and, *iii. 22. Behold, the man is become like one of us*. He saith also, *Gen. xi. 7. Let us go down, and there confound their language*. These, with several other places to the like effect, shew a plurality of persons in the divine nature.

But there are others, wherein the Three Persons are distinctly mentioned, either by some separate name and title, or by a separate operation, as *Isa. lxiii. 7, 8, 9, 10. I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord—for he said, Surely they are my people—So he was their Saviour. In all their afflictions he was afflicted. In his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them—but they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit*. Here the Three Persons, *the Lord, the Saviour, the Holy Spirit*, are mentioned by three distinct names, and in three distinct operations. They are likewise distinctly set forth, *Isai. lxi. 1, 2. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings* (or the Gospel, as Christ, applying the prophecy to himself, words it) *to the meek—to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to comfort all that mourn*. Here is one person *sending*, a second *anointing*, and a third both *sent* and *anointed*. Their distinction appears also from the vi. of the same Prophet, where the Seraphim say, *verse 3. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts*; and, *verse 8. The Lord saith, Who will go for us?* The latter words plainly intimate a plurality of Persons, and the former shew them to be the Three Divine Persons; for that Christ and the Holy Ghost are included, is plain, be-

Cause the words are expressly applied to Christ, *John* xii. 41. and to the Holy Ghost, *Acts* xxviii. 25. as I formerly remarked. God, as some of the best divines and commentators think, plainly intimates the same distinction, *Hagg.* ii. 4, 5. *I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts, according to the word that I covenanted with you, when you came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you.* That the First and the Third Person are here distinctly mentioned, is too plain to bear a question; but the matter is not so plain as to the Second, which nevertheless may be expressed by *the Word*. The *Hebrew*, literally translated, runs thus, *I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts, the Word, which I struck, or cut, with you in your coming out of Egypt, and my Spirit standing in the midst of you:* the *Syriac* version thus, *I am with you, saith the most Mighty, the Word, which I established with you when you went out of Egypt, and my Spirit remaineth among you.* The *Septuagint*, and the *Arabic* version, which follows it, seems to sink what relates to the Second Person; giving us no translation of it, excepting in the *Aldine* and *Complute* editions of the *Septuagint*, where the sense is found indeed, but expressed by words so different in the one from those of the other, that they rather give us reason to think, this part of the text was not originally in the *Septuagint*, than that it was. But the *Targum* of *Jonathan* affords us a paraphrase agreeable enough both to the *Hebrew*, and our purpose: it is this; *Bestir yourselves, because my Word shall be your help, saith the Lord of hosts, the Word which I decreed with you, when I led you out of Egypt.* In the *Hebrew* and *Syriac*, *the Word*, being placed between the First and Third Person, appears to be taken personally; and *Jonathan's* calling this *Word*, *their help*, makes it still more clearly seem to be so. And lest any one should think it odd, that Christ should be called the Covenant, let him consider, that the Covenant is here called *the Word*, which is a peculiar name or title of Christ; and that God twice saith, *Isaiab* xlii. 6. and xlix. 8. to Christ, *I will give thee for a covenant of the people.* A further argument, in favour of this interpretation, may be drawn from what follows; namely, the famous prophecy



phesy concerning the glory of the second temple, which it was to owe to Christ's appearance in it, and which, by a close connexion with the verse in question, God makes use of to comfort the *Israelites* under their trouble at the mean appearance of that temple, in comparison of the first. This makes it not improbable, that the Second Person of the Trinity was intended to be mentioned, as well as the First and Third, in the 4th and 5th verses. *Junius* and *Tremellius* assign very plausible reasons for translating the passage thus, *I am with you, the saying of the Lord of hosts, with the Word, by whom I covenanted with you, when you went out of Egypt, and with my Spirit, &c.* It is certain, the antient Fathers applied the passage to the Trinity; and *Ludovicus Capellus*, together with many other eminent masters of the *Hebrew*, agree, that the translation, just now mentioned, is well warranted by the original. However, as the *Septuagint* have not translated the words in question, and as in all ways of translating them they seem a little to embarrass the passage, it is possible they may at first have been put on the *Hebrew* margin by way of explication, which end they certainly answer extremely well, by referring the reader to *Exodus* vi. 4. and to *Lev.* xxvi. 12. from whence they may, after the *Septuagint* translation was made, have been transcribed into the text.

Be this as it will, we cannot help concluding from the other passages cited, and from more, to the same effect, which might be cited, that the antient *Israelites* had this necessary article of faith concerning the Trinity revealed to them, although with somewhat of that obscurity, which was thrown over their whole dispensation, and which the Gospel was afterwards to dissipate.

Under the new dispensation, this doctrine, so high and incomprehensible in itself, was, so far as concerns our apprehension and faith, made as plain as the most obvious practical precepts therein delivered. How manifestly the Divinity of the Second and Third Person is declared in the New Testament, we have already seen. And this, of necessity, infers the doctrine of the Trinity, since there can possibly be but one God. But, to take the doctrine collectively, it appears, that all the Three Persons must

be that one God; for Christ says, *I and the Father are one Being*, John x. 30. and *John* xiv. 9. *He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father*; which evidently proves the essential unity of the Two First Persons. Now the unity of the Holy Ghost with the Father is proved from *Matt.* x. 20. where he is called *the Spirit of the Father*; and his unity with Christ, from *Gal.* iv. 6. where he is called *the Spirit of the Son*. He is also called *the Spirit of Christ*, *Rom.* viii. 9. and *1 Pet.* i. 11. He is so often peculiarly, and by way of distinction from all other spirits, called *the Spirit of God*, that there is no room left to suppose him a creature. If then he is a Divine Person, he is as much one Being with the Father, as the Father is one Being with the Son. The Trinity is clearly represented to us, *1 John* v. 7. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one Being*. Although the sense of these words needs no comment, yet their genuineness requires some defence. But I shall not here enter into the discussion of a point, that would ask a long discourse to itself. I shall only observe to you, that it was a much easier matter for a copier to omit these words, which begin exactly as the following verse does, supposing them originally in the text, than to foist them in, supposing them spurious; that *St. Cyprian* actually quoted them, before the *Arian* and *Macedonian* controversies were broached; that, if these words are left out, then *the heavenly witness* is taken away, and *the earthly witness*, in the 8th verse, is left standing by itself, which appears to render the 9th verse utterly incoherent and absurd; for if there are not the two kinds of witnesses premised, where is the sense of saying, *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater?* However, it is needless to contend about this passage, since all it sets forth is so abundantly cleared up and established in other parts of Scripture, whereof there is no doubt. The Trinity is so strongly and clearly revealed to us at the baptism of our Saviour, that the primitive Christians were wont to say, *Go to Jordan, thou Arian, and there thou wilt see the Trinity*. *Go ye*, saith Christ to his apostles, *Matt.* xxviii. 19. *teach all nations, baptizing them*

them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Would it not be a strange imagination to suppose, our Saviour should order all nations to be baptized in the name, and by the authority, of God, and two creatures? and that he should not have foreseen, on this most important occasion, what was so likely to follow, what did actually follow, that all nations, being thus baptized, looked on themselves as thereby obliged to believe in, and worship, the two last on a level with the first? How strongly is this argument enforced against our adversaries by what they themselves allow; namely, that these words, *I believe in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, was the answer which every one, who was to be baptized, was obliged to give at the font to his baptizer, down from the Apostles time, through all ages of the church, as often as adults were admitted to that sacrament! No words can more clearly express the Divinity of each Person; for, that the word *God* is given to each, the *Greek* original, used in the primitive church, manifestly shews; because the article, which is prefixed to God, is also prefixed to the Father, again to the Son, and again to the Holy Ghost. I will translate it as closely into *English* as our language will bear, *I believe in the God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*; which is strictly the same as, *I believe in God, who is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost*. To put it out of all doubt, that the primitive Christians thus precisely understood it, hear *Tertullian's* paraphrase on it, in his treatise against *Praxeas*, "*The Father God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God; each and every of them God.*" There is a remarkable passage to this effect in *Cyprian's* epistle to *Jubaianus*, which, both because it is so strong a proof of what I am saying, and also because it is that very passage wherein he cites the controverted text from the first epistle of *St. John*, just now mentioned, is very well worthy our hearing. He is arguing against the validity of heretical baptism. "If any one can be baptized among the heretics, he must receive remission of sins; if he does receive remission of sins, he is also sanctified, and made the temple of God. But I ask, of what God? If of

“ the Creator, this he could not be ; because he did not  
 “ believe in him : if of Christ ; neither can he become his  
 “ temple, who denies Christ to be God : if of the Holy  
 “ Ghost ; *since these Three are one Being*, how can the  
 “ Holy Ghost be reconciled to him, who is the enemy  
 “ of the Father and the Son ?” Did this holy martyr  
 mistake the faith he died for ? Did he die by the hands  
 of idolaters, for idolatry ? Give me leave to add the  
 confession of faith reported by *Cyril of Jerusalem*, who  
 wrote about forty years before the heresy of *Macedonius*  
 was condemned by the council of *Constantinople*, and who  
 was not altogether unsuspected of *Arianism*, on account  
 of an epithet therein given to the Holy Ghost. The words  
 are these, “ I believe in one God, the Father almighty,  
 “ and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of  
 “ God himself, and in the *consubstantial* Holy Ghost, the  
 “ Paraclete.” The doctrine of the Trinity, as we hold it  
 at this day, was what the whole body of the church  
 adhered to, for the three first hundred years after Christ,  
 and what the three hundred and eighteen bishops, in the  
 council of *Nice*, unanimously agreed in. Were they all  
 mistaken ? Had the true religion no adherents, but a  
 few *Ebionites*, *Cerinthians*, *Nicolaitans*, *Gnostics*, *Photi-*  
*nians* ? Did *John*, at the request of the *Asiatic* bishops,  
 write his Gospel against the true Christianity ? How  
 much in vain, on this amazing supposition, which now  
 so strongly prevails against the authority of the Fathers,  
 were all the preachings of Christ, and all the inspirations  
 of the Holy Ghost, when so few of their followers could  
 be persuaded to worship them under the belief of their  
 being creatures !

But here now it may be asked, how it comes to pass,  
 if this doctrine had been so very intelligible, that so many  
 in all ages have opposed it ? In answer to this, give me  
 leave to remark, that there are always numbers who are  
 much apter to controvert a point from motives of preju-  
 dice, pride, ambition, disappointment, &c. working in  
 their own corrupt hearts, than on account of any absurdity  
 or obscurity in the point itself. How otherwise, than on  
 the truth of this remark, shall we be able to assign a cause,  
 why

why so many millions, in every age of the world, have, and still do adhere to the grossest errors, in opposition to the clearest truths?

As to the doctrine under consideration, I will be bold to say, there is not, in any branch of knowledge, a more intelligible set of propositions, than those in which it is contained, considered in themselves; nor more easily demonstrated; if we will exclude all foreign principles, and only look for the axioms of this demonstration in the word of God, where the propositions themselves are laid before us. There is but one faith for the profound doctor, and the illiterate labourer: that faith, therefore, must be plain and intelligible. When the *Athanasian* creed, or the laboured performances of divines, exhibit a more intricate view of it, who is to be blamed? Are not they, who, by infinite subtilties and refinements, constrain us either to refine on our side, or suffer the truth to be rarefied into a smoke, and the people, over whom we are to watch, blinded, and turned aside from the path of light, in that cloud? Whether there are in the one only God Three distinct Persons, each eternal, each omnipotent, the plain unlearned man cannot determine by his own reason; neither can the ablest metaphysical divine. But, by the help of Scripture, the plain man may determine the question himself; and is not this enough for him? Or, ought it not to be enough for the greatest casuist? But, if the distempered curiosity of men will itch after refinements on so sacred a subject, let them deal fairly by their own understandings, and read with impartiality on both sides; let them read *Episcopius* and *Clarke* on the one, with *Bull* and *Waterland* on the other. What a reproach is it to our adversaries, that they have never solidly answered these two clear and demonstrative reasoners, nor *Pearson's Commentary on the Creed*, which stare them in the face, while they are every day pelting their tenets with sly, but trifling performances, that take no more notice of their arguments, than if no such books had ever been published! Are they not worth their animadversion? If they are, why so many paltry nibbling trifles of their own, and the arguments of these

unnoticed? Till they are solidly answered, we shall take the liberty to look on the controversy as decided. If our adversaries themselves think them unanswerable, how does it impeach their honesty, not only not to submit, but to leave these bulwarks unassaulted at their backs, while they go on emptily bravading in one quarter, and cunningly stealing little marches in another? It is a glorious evidence for the truths we maintain, that, in all ages, their abettors have been ready openly to declare for them, publicly to defend them, and, when they were called to it, nobly to die for them; while deceit and cunning have generally been the characteristics of their opponents, who, pretending one thing, and aiming at another, artfully lurk under subtle refinements, and skulk behind double meanings.

Long as I have already trespassed on your patience, I should not do justice either to you, or my subject, if I dismissed it, without observing to you the true basis, whereon the difficulties started, as to this doctrine, ought to be treated, in order to a thorough and satisfactory removal of them all. We cannot think or speak of God, as we do of sensible things, without presumption, and great danger of error. There is in reality nothing common between the Infinite and finite. It is, therefore, only by analogy, that we can form any idea of God. There is nothing in God, that does, or in creatures, that does not, admit of increase or diminution. There is nothing, therefore, the same in both. Were it possible, that any thing in the creature could be so improved, enlarged, and exalted, as to become infinite; the creature might be transformed into God. Were it possible, that any thing in God could be so lowered and contracted, as to become finite, God might be debased into a finite being. These two impossibilities may be reduced into one; it is utterly impossible to render the distance between God and the creature less than infinite. Now, of all impossibilities, this is unquestionably the greatest. I conclude, therefore, that there is no one thing in God, and in us, the same; for, if there were, we might possibly come to be, in respect to that thing, on a level with him,  
either

either by diminishing it in him, or enlarging it in us. We are not of the same nature then with God ; but infinitely different, even in our spiritual capacities and thoughts. *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.* Notwithstanding this infinite distance between him and us, he hath laid out a way for us to know him, so far as is necessary to the ends of that knowledge ; and that is, by the resemblance of himself, in which he hath been pleased to frame our nature. As a man is but the image of God, so the *personality* of man is but the image of *Personality* in God ; and therefore we can know nothing of this distinction in the Divine nature, as it is in itself, but only by the shadow of it in our own. Where then is the difficulty of admitting such a distinction in God, since it is only like that among men ; when, for aught we can possibly imagine, it may be so different in some unknown, some unknowable, respects, as that, instead of bearing on the unity of his nature, it may be even more consistent with it, than the want of such a distinction could be ? If it is strictly true, that in God there is a distinction, so resembling that of person from person among men, as, when revealed to us, may furnish a basis for that knowledge of him, which is necessary to us, this surely is sufficient ; and, if we are not excessively vain and presumptuous, we can be under no temptation to the denial of such a distinction in him, while we do not suppose that distinction to be in itself exactly the same with the personal distinction among ourselves. Now, to suppose any thing in the infinite Being the same with any thing in us, who are creatures and finite, is the wildest flight the distemperature of imagination can take. What makes it still wilder is, that, in the philosophical way, the true idea of our own personality hath not been yet agreed on, some placing it in consciousness, some in the will, and others in the individuality of the soul. How absurdly unphilosophical is he, who, not being able, either to comprehend

the Divine nature, or to penetrate into the internal source and nature of his own personality, will nevertheless presume to pronounce any thing, from his own researches, concerning the sameness or similarity of this distinction in God and men! If he would so far honour the subject, as not to treat it with nonsense, he must take his idea of human personality from common sense and experience, and that of the Divine from revelation. If he does this, he will find them similar and analogous throughout.

As, therefore, the Divine Being is of no *genus* or *species*, that is, of no kind or sort of being, so it is impossible for us to conceive it, as it is in itself, or to give a proper and immediate definition of it, as we do of those things, whose essential differences are known to us. When we say, God is the infinite Being, we sufficiently distinguish him from all other beings; altho', in so saying, we both think and speak by a negative, which may discriminate, but can never define the nature of any thing. How is it then that we come by the knowledge of God? No doubt, by a revealed similitude or representation. However, as I observed before, this sort of knowledge serves all the purposes of intercourse between him and us, as well as a proper immediate knowledge of him could do; because, by this conception of him, we may as deeply reverence that majesty, as gratefully love that goodness, as awfully fear that justice, as dutifully obey that power, in him, which are analogous to the like attributes in us, as we could do, were we capable of it, by the immediate and proper conception of him. In like manner, so far as we are concerned to know the dispensation of his goodness, wisdom, and power, towards ourselves; and so far as the knowledge of a personal distinction in him is necessary to the knowledge of that dispensation, particularly in the scheme of our redemption; the strict and close resemblance between the personal distinction in him, and the like distinction among men, as effectually answers every end, both in our understandings, and on our affections,



affections, as it could do, were the personality precisely the same in both. Were they set forth as actually the very same in both, it would be perfectly senseless and presumptuous to deny the possibility of such a distinction in a nature confessedly incomprehensible. But since there are all the grounds in the world for our believing them to be only analogous, the mystery, which before was reconcilable to reason, although above it, leaves reason now so far behind it, that we too must lose sight of her, before we presume to say, there can be no resemblance of such a distinction in God.

The gracious Being, foreknowing our utter incapacity of conceiving him, as he is in himself, hath provided such resemblances of himself in the works of his creation, as do aptly and sufficiently represent him to us, as soon as he discovers that resemblance. But that we may not mistake those things for representations which are not, nor miss those that are, he hath pointed them out to us in his word. And, lest any share of our adoration should stop and terminate in the representation, he hath, by two express commandments, the one restraining all worship to himself, and the other absolutely forbidding all representative worship, so limited the use of these resemblances, as to preclude the possibility of a misapplication, while his commandments are at all attended to.

Now the resemblances he hath thus provided, and pointed out to us, are, first, The nature of man; for we are told, *Gen. i. 26.* that *He hath formed us in his own image, or after his likeness*; so that our souls represent his spiritual nature; our reason, his wisdom; our justice, his righteousness; our compassion, his mercy; our dominion over the creatures, his power, &c. Here the Godhead is simply, and without distinction, represented to us. But as some knowledge of the personal distinction in his nature became necessary to us, in order that we might understand the scheme of our redemption, wherein each Divine Person assumed a distinct office, the personal distinction between man and man is made use of to represent:

represent the like distinction in God. And further, that we may the more readily believe the consistency of this distinction with the Unity of God, there are three essences or natures united in that of man; the vegetative, the animal, and the angelic, nature, which constitute one individual man. It is true, there is but one nature in God; and therefore this is not a parallel instance, but a partial image. But, if three different natures can be united into one individual essence, why shall we think it impossible, that Three Persons (person being taken analogically), all of the same nature, should constitute one incomprehensible Essence?

And further still, to figure to us, in a lively and striking manner, the properties peculiarly active in each Person for the accomplishment of so glorious a scheme, he hath in holy Scripture set forth a luminous body as the representation of the Divinity, or of God the Father, who is the fountain of the Divinity. He hath here also represented Christ by light, and the Holy Ghost by fire, or heat. God was instead of a *sun*, and Christ, of light, to that new *Jerusalem*, which St. *John* saw in the *xxi.* of the *Revelations*. *The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* So, *Isaiab* *lx.* *The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee for an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.* In pursuance of the same beautiful figure, God is called a *Sun* in the *lxxxiv.* Psalm. Our Saviour calls himself *The Light of the World*, *John* *viii.* *12.* and St. *John* is so fond of the figure, that he applies it to Christ, and his religion, on all occasions. The Holy Ghost is figured by *fire*, *Matt.* *iii.* *11.* where *John* the Baptist says, *Christ shall baptize his disciples with the Holy Ghost, and with fire,* which *Isaiab* calls the spirit of burning, *iv.* *4.* *Acts* *ii.* *3.* *the Holy Ghost descends on the apostles in the appearance of cloven tongues, like as of fire.* Christ seems to be represented by light, and the Holy Ghost by fire, in one and the same place, *Isaiab* *x.* *17.* *The Light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy one*  
for

for a flame. Similitudes of our own adapting to God, or the Trinity, are dangerous things. But this, which the Scriptures themselves have painted out, and the primitive Fathers therefore made so frequent use of, is both safe, and highly serviceable in the application. As the luminous body is the source of light and heat, so the Father is the fountain, from whence the Son is generated, and the Holy Spirit proceeds. As light and heat are of the same nature and substance, and coeval, with the luminous body from whence they flow, so Christ and the Holy Ghost are consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father. As light dispels the darkness, clearing and directing us in all the offices of life, so Christ, dispersing the night of superstition and idolatry, sheds the light of true religion on the soul, and guides it in the way of eternal life. As fire or heat prevails against that cold which benumbs the body, so the Holy Ghost, driving out the stupefaction and insensibility of our hearts, revives our pious reflections, quickens our consciences, and gives warmth and vigour to our love of God; and therefore St. Paul saith, *1 Thes. v. 19. Quench not the Spirit.* As we neither see the luminous body, nor direct our steps towards it, but by its own light, so Christ saith, *John xiv. 6. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father,* John xiv. 9. As a pleasing warmth both moves and guides us to the fire, from whence it proceeds; so *have we an access by one Spirit to the Father,* Ephes. ii. 18. This glorious similitude might be traced much farther, through the purity, the activity, the immensity, of God; but I forbear, having touched on it only for these two reasons; first, because a great part of the Scriptures will seem to lose their force and beauty to a reader that is not aware of the true application made of it in those holy writings; and, secondly, because it removes all the difficulty of conceiving how Christ could be eternally generated, and the Holy Ghost from all eternity proceed, from the Father; how they can be of the same substance with him, and yet distinct, both from each other, and from him; since

since we see in this similitude an instance of all these, even in matter.

Having already thrown together all the reflections I had to make on this subject, it is high time to finish this long Discourse. Let us therefore try whether we can answer the two questions started in my text; *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?* As to the first, we may venture to say, we can by searching find him out; but by searching what? No doubt, his word, and his works. We see in each an evident proof of his existence. But, as to the second question, we cannot possibly *know him to perfection*; because both his word, and the comparison of his nature with our own, represent him as altogether incomprehensible to our minds, and therefore forbid the possibility of such knowledge. So far as he hath taught us in his word, we may know him; but no farther. We there see him eternal, almighty, omnipresent, omniscient; we there see him infinitely just, infinitely holy, infinitely merciful; a bountiful Creator and Provider; an awful Governor; a compassionate Saviour; a kind Comforter; we there see him distinguished into Three divine Personalities, each whereof is employed in a distinct office, while they all, with one unbounded power, one unbounded wisdom, one unbounded mercy, pursue the blessed work of our reformation and happiness. No essential part of this work is left to the ministry of creatures. The glorious spirits of all orders superior to our own act only an under-part in it. The renovation of the moral world had too much of creation in it to admit the agency of limited beings. They are sufficiently honoured in being permitted to carry messages between God and his other intellectual creatures, to publish the approach, or to follow in the train, of him who was to perform any primary part in a scheme infinitely transcending the capacities and powers of all limited natures. Besides, though the angels had been capable of taking an higher or greater share therein, it was by no means fit they should, inasmuch as such an interposition might have diverted the current of

our gratitude to God, who, as he is the author of our being, and the donor of our happiness, ought also to be the sole object and centre of our love. God therefore chose to tread the wine-press of this warfare alone; and he alone was equal to it; for he was mighty to save.

This now is the most glorious, the most gracious, discovery ever made to mankind; a discovery wherein every necessary intimation, and even mystery, is laid open for our instruction; every virtue exemplified for our imitation; every condescension vouchsafed; every frightful danger encountered; every seemingly unsurmountable obstacle removed; and, O the unconceivable goodness of God! even every disgrace and misery, banishment, poverty, death, endured; that *we may become the children of God, and heirs of eternal life.*

What an understanding! what an heart! how low! how narrow! how despicable! that meets the boundless love of God, thus exemplified, with nothing but cavils and objections; that cavils, when it should wonder! that objects, when it should adore! that either proudly flights the immense obligation! or sneakingly pays its thanks for it to a creature!

Let others attack this truth with as much boldness as they please; I thank God for it, I have had the grace, knowing it to be a truth, to defend it with fear and trembling. The infinite dignity of the subject, and the miserable indignity of the preacher, would have held me back, had not an honest zeal, and an unhappy necessity, arising from the odious treatment given in this detestable age to the great fundamentals of our religion, forced me forward. But I will end where St. *Augustine* began.

“ After all I have said, I shall neither be grieved, in case  
“ I hesitate, to inquire; nor ashamed, in case I mistake,  
“ to learn. Furthermore, whosoever hears, or reads,  
“ what I have said, where he is alike certain, let him go  
“ on with me; where he is alike in doubt, let him search  
“ with me; where he discovers his own error, let him re-  
“ turn to me; where he discovers mine, let him call me  
“ back;

“ back ; so may we, entering the road of charity together, press forward towards him, of whom it is said, “ *Seek ye his face evermore* \*.”

And now, O infinitely gracious Being, be pleased so to enlighten our understandings, and move our hearts, that we may both see and feel what we ought to know of thee ; and at the same time to bless us with such humility, as may prevent in us the presumptuous sin of all further inquiries. Grant us this, in compassion to our miserable infirmities, for the sake of our dear Redeemer ; to whom, with thee, O merciful Father, and thee, O Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

\* *St. Augustine, Lib. I. de Trinitate.*

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## DISCOURSE IX.

Christ the true and proper Sacrifice for Sin.

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I COR. XV. 22.

*As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

**W**ITH the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity is connected that of Christ's incarnation, and sufferings for the sins of men; and so close and necessary is this connexion, that neither Scripture nor reason will suffer us to receive the one without the other. If Christ had no being before he was conceived in the womb of the Virgin, what sense is there in these and such-like expressions? *A body hast thou prepared for me*, Heb. x. 5. *He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham*, Heb. ii. 16. *The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us*, John i. 14. And, if he had not a being from all eternity, that is, if he was no more than a creature, he could not make an atonement for the sins of other creatures; for it is, at least, as much as the best creature can do, to be solvent for himself; more, infinitely, than he can do, by his highest merits, to bring in God his debtor for eternal happiness. How, then, can he merit this for another? An angel cannot do it; *for God*

*chargeth his angels with folly*, Job iv. 18. Every creature, as such, is fallible, corruptible, and perishable; *but we neither were*, nor could have been, *redeemed with corruptible things—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot*, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. He, who by his blood obtained eternal redemption for us, Heb. ix. 12. *is the First and the Last*, Rev. i. 17. and, consequently, neither did nor could sin.

*The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 23. Sin, we see, is punished with death, that is, with a separation of soul and body here, and from God both here and hereafter. If the Scripture had not assured us of it, we should, by a parity of reason, have concluded, that righteousness must be rewarded with life, temporal and eternal; because the opposition between sin and righteousness must, according to the rules of justice, be found between the reward of the one, and the punishment of the other.

Here, however, we must distinguish as the Apostle hath done, who calls *death the wages of sin*, because it is deserved; whereas he calls *eternal life the gift*, and elsewhere *the free gift, of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*, because our highest righteousness could never intitle us to it. Although, therefore, the wicked are said to be punished, in the strict and proper sense of the word, the happiness of the righteous is represented not as a proper reward, nor as an effect of justice, inasmuch as they are not properly righteous; but an effect of Divine grace and goodness. Yet now, that eternal life or happiness is stipulated for by the covenant, we in some sense ascribe it to justice, and call it a reward.

It is farther to be observed, that *if in Adam all die*, in him also they must all have sinned, and forfeited their title to eternal life, as the Apostle informs us, Rom. v. 12. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed on all men, as the wages of sin*. On the other hand, *if in Christ all shall be made alive*, all must first be made righteous in him; because eternal life is the gift of God to righteousness alone. If faith and reformation have qualified us to receive this gift, *we shall all*



all be made alive at the last day, that is, shall not only live in a reunion of soul and body, but also in an eternal reunion with God the source of life, through Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

If this doctrine is sound and true, it teaches us to believe, that, beside the good or evil of our own actions, the sin of Adam, and the righteousness of Christ, are imputed to all who derive by natural descent under the former, and by grace and faith under the latter. But, for the further establishment of this doctrine, I shall endeavour, with the assistance of God's word, first to clear the imputation, on which it is founded, of the difficulties wherewith some think it clogged; and then to prove the satisfaction made for sin, by the death of Christ, so fully, as to leave no doubts on that subject in the minds of my hearers.

In the first place, then, among the many arguments, or rather cavils, raised against this imputation, I shall only take notice of such as the Scriptures seem to give some weight to; for I speak not now to those who reject the Scriptures.

It is objected by some, that justice can never allow one man either to be punished for the sin, or rewarded for the righteousness, of another; and that, accordingly, God tells us by *Ezekiel xviii. 20.* *The soul that sinneth, it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*

These words, and a good deal more in that chapter to the same effect, are God's reply to the *Israelites*, who, alluding to the second commandment, had said, *Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the childrens teeth are set on edge.* They are likewise a close paraphrase on *Deut. xxiv. 16.* *The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.* Now, as the second commandment was a part of the moral, so this is a part of the judicial, or civil, law given by Mo-

ses; and therefore the one is, as to the *Mosaic* œconomy, appositely returned in answer to the other. Yet herein it is by no means said, God will not, in his general and providential œconomy, *visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation.* These words of the second commandment must be true, as well as those of the Prophet; as true, I mean, in respect to God's providential visitations, as those of the Prophet are in respect to the afore-mentioned precept of the judicial law: which precept is here made the basis, for so much, as a new and spiritual dispensation, namely, of the Christian; for it does not appear, that, from the days of the Prophet to those of Christ, the *Jews* were on a different footing, as to this matter, from that on which they had been before the prophecy was uttered. This is still made more evident by *Jeremiah xxxi. 29.* where the same proverb is objected, and thus answered: *Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. But every man shall die for his own iniquity; every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, ver. 30, 31, 32.* From hence it is plain, that the entail of punishment is considered as founded on the moral part of the *Mosaic* dispensation, and the reversal of it promised as a part of the Christian. Experience makes it plain also, that this dispensation of reward or punishment to every man, according to his own deeds, is to be taken in a spiritual sense, and in reference to the equity of a future judgment; for, in this world, Christians, as well as others, suffer, both naturally and providentially, by the iniquity of their fathers. And here it may be observed, that, when Christians are so visited at this day, it is not in consequence of the Christian law; nor does it even seem any otherwise the effect of a particular Providence, than as their sins, which have left them nothing but the mere name of Christians, have excluded them from the benefits of the Christian covenant. If such pretended

pretended Christians, and real transgressors, lie exposed to the natural course of things, and are made to bear the iniquities of their fathers, as well as their own, this can neither impeach the justice of Providence, nor be so construed as to contradict the sense of the Prophets. Enough, I think, hath been said to clear the meaning of both the Prophets on this subject.

And now, what, after all, hath this to do with the imputation of *Adam's* sin? Is there a single word concerning him, his sin, or the imputation of it, in these passages? No; but the same rule of equity, say the objectors, holds good in respect to all fathers, and their children. We must beg their pardon for demurring to this bold assertion; because, as we presently shall see, the case may be so differently circumstanced, as to make a different rule equitable. It will be sufficient for the present to observe, that the case of mere personal sins is very different from that of public and common sins; and that, altho' the crimes of a private person are not to be punished in another private person, which is the precise thing forbidden in the xxiv. of *Deuteronomy*, it does not follow, that those of a representative shall in no sense, or degree, be visited on the community he represents.

The other part of this objection, which is purely Deistical, appears to have more in it, because it seems to be founded on natural reason and equity. Justice, say the objectors, can never allow one man either to be punished for the sin, or rewarded for the righteousness, of another. But, Deistical as this argument is, I shall not pass it by unnoticed; because the *Arians*, and others, pretending to be Christians, having endeavoured to graft it on the Scriptures, press us with it on all occasions.

It is not needful, on either side of this question, to make any distinction between degrees of punishment, or of reward; what is true of one degree being true of all, namely, that it is just or unjust, either fit or unfit, to be the matter of Divine appointment. But it ought here to be laid down, that the question is, not whether one man's good or evil actions can become the very actions of another, which none but a fool will affirm; nor whether

the merit or demerit of actions can so pass out of one into another, as to become the proper inherent merit or demerit of that other; but whether either may not be justly so imputed to, or entailed on, another, as that the other may enjoy the effects of the first, or suffer those of the last, in the same manner as if they were properly his own. In this case, the person to whom the imputation is made, is said to be rewarded or punished; not, I own, in the strict sense of the words, but in a sense of equal significance as to the question in hand, which turns, not on the supposition of a transfer, acknowledged impossible, but on the justice or injustice of an imputation. In speaking to this subject, I shall draw my arguments from known facts, whether civil, natural, providential, or scriptural, as they occur.

And, to begin with the imputation of actual merit, or, according to our state of the question, with that enjoyment of good which one man reaps by the merit of another; we know, that, in most countries, estates and honours are conferred on the son solely for the merit of his father. We know also, that, for this, the equity of national communities is never called in question, nor indeed ought to be, since the thing is not unlawful in itself, and may be turned to good account in the society; but more especially since God, in a natural way, does the same. God hath, by nature, impressed on the heart of a father an ardent love of his son. This puts him on a proportionable endeavour to acquire a fortune for that son; which fortune, so acquired, the son enjoys on a right as indisputable as that of the father who made it, altho' the son did not labour for it; altho' perhaps he does not, in any respect, deserve it. What God does thus naturally, he likewise does providentially. The covenant or promise made to *David*, that *his childrens children should sit on his throne for evermore*, was only on condition that they should keep this covenant on their part, *Psal. cxxxii. 11.*; yet, wicked as *Abijam* was, *the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, 1 Kings xv. 4, 5.* How often do we see, both in sacred

sacred and profane history, a whole people blessed for the goodness of their ruler! a people who are wicked, and ripe for that punishment which awaits them at the end of his reign! This sort of imputation, however, is easily admitted, because men are seldom ready to dispute their own title to a benefit.

But the imputation of sin, or, what, on the present state of the question, is the same thing, the sharing in the miserable effects of other mens sins, is a doctrine more likely to be questioned. Yet that high-treason is a sin, or that forfeiture of estates and titles is a punishment, can hardly be doubted. Now we know there are few countries in the world where this transgression of the father is not deemed justly punished by that forfeiture, as to all his posterity. The whoredom of the father is not only punished by certain disorders inflicted on himself, but visited in a sickly habit of body on his children. The equity of nations, and the natural course of things, which is fixed by the hand of their Creator, hath, we see, made one to suffer for the crimes of another. Wicked princes bring innumerable evils, often total destruction, or captivity, on their subjects, in which the children are involved with those of riper years, and the innocent with the guilty. How often does this happen under ambitious kings, who, having unjustly made war with their neighbours, are worsted, and, in their turns, invaded, to the ruin and desolation of their subjects, as well innocent as guilty! *The people, says Horace, are punished for the madness of their kings. An whole city, says Hesiod, often suffers on account of one bad man.* This now, whenever it happens, is the necessary consequence of living in society. Yet such is the nature God hath given us, that we cannot live out of society. Wherefore to object this as unjust, is atheism, or blasphemy. *I will visit, saith God in the second commandment, the sins of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation.* If men may not in any case justly suffer for the sins of others, why did the hardness of *Pharoah's* heart bring so many plagues and deaths on his subjects? Why were the wives and children of *Korah, Daiban, and Abiram*, swallowed up in the earth

with those contumacious transgressors? Why were the *Israelites*, by the appointment of God, worsted in their first attempt on *Ai*, for the sin of *Achan*, who had secreted a share of the spoil taken at *Jericho*? And why was this sin of one imputed or charged, as well as punished, on the people in general, as appears by God's own words on this occasion? *Israel have sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded; for they have taken the accursed thing, and have stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.* Why was *Saul* ordered, by the express commandment of God, to extirpate the *Amalekites* for that which their ancestors had done 400 years before? Why were the seven sons of *Saul* hanged in *Gibeab*, after the death of their father, for his having slain the *Gibeonites*, and that in order to avert a famine wherewith God had afflicted the *Israelites* for this crime of their first king? Why is untimely death, and total destruction, prophesied to the family of *Jeroboam*, for the idolatry of this prince, who himself reigned two-and-twenty years, and died in his bed? Why is the like foretold to *Abab's* posterity, on account of his sins? Why does *Zion* say, *Lam. v. 7. Our fathers have sinned, and are not, and we have borne their iniquities?* And, to make an end of instances, why does our Saviour tell the *Jews*, *Mat. xxiii. 35. That upon them should come all the blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar?* It is true, the *Jews*, who were thus threatened, deserved the predicted judgments of God for their own sins. But did they not suffer for the cruelty of their ancestors to the Prophets, as well as for that which they themselves shewed to Christ and his Apostles? Did they not desire, that the blood of Christ should fall on them, and their children? And did it not fall in the horrible destruction of their city and nation, so as that all the world may see, to this day, *they bear the iniquity of their fathers*, as well as their own? It had been foretold indeed, that, under the Christian dispensation, no man should suffer for the sins of another, that is, should providentially suffer; but

but the *Jews*, having rejected that dispensation, could not expect the benefit of this prophetic promise; neither can such pretended Christians, as act against all the laws of Christian charity and equity, and thereby forfeit all the privileges of the covenant they nominally lay claim to.

Thus we see, both in scriptural history, and in the natural course of things, how the entail of guilt and punishment descends on the subjects or posterity of the wicked; to all worldly intents and purposes, just in the same manner as it would do, did the subjects actually sin in their king, and the children in their fathers. These things may seem unaccountable to some; but they cannot appear strange to any who consider, that every age and nation of the world can give instances of the like nature in the ordinary course of things; and therefore we must conclude, that these phænomena of the moral world are as just and fit, tho' we should be unable to account for them, as those of the physical, whereof human sagacity cannot assign the reasons. Should I trace this matter any farther, it would lead me from my design into a debate with Atheists; whereas my argument is with men who say they are Christians.

The objection being thus answered in general, it is now time to consider it more particularly, as levelled directly against the satisfaction made for sin by the death of Christ. Such is the justice of God, say the objectors, that he could never have accepted the sufferings of one being as an expiation for the sin of another; and therefore could not have punished his innocent Son for the sins of men.

The antecedent of this argument, when offered by a Deist, must be answered on the footing of natural reason only. But, when it is used by such as agree to be concluded by revelation, it ought to be examined by Scripture alone. In the mouths of these men, it manifestly subverts itself; because it strikes directly at the truth of Scripture, which, they say, can neither lye nor err; and flatly contradicts this assertion of the Holy Ghost, *1 Pet. iii. 18.* *Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust (that he might bring us to God), being put to death in the flesh.* It charges all the antient world, the *Hebrews* not excepted,

excepted, with something worse than superstition; nay, and denies that God could have ever instituted the death of a beast, as in any sense propitiatory for the sins of man. If they insist, that these sacrifices were, in themselves, of no value, we shall readily grant they drew their value from somewhat else than the death of a beast, which, simply considered, hath no relation to sin, or the forgiveness of sin. But then it lies as much on the objectors as on us, either to assign or suppose a sufficient end and reason for the divine appointment of rites so operose and expensive as the sacrificial. It can be no more their business than it is ours, till they are ready to avow a yet greater contempt for revelation, to urge a rule against the institution, which, if admitted, would prove it absurd and superstitious. To say, the repentance of the offerer gave these sacrifices their value, is saying nothing; for, whatsoever the intrinsic value of repentance is supposed to be, it cannot be increased by a mere external rite of no value. What the rite in that case borrows from repentance, it can by no means repay, at least with any interest, or increase of value, unless it is of some worth in itself; and therefore why superadded? Neither is that plea of any weight, which urges, that this species of worship derived its worth simply from the appointment of God. Would God appoint a rite, which, neither before nor after institution, could answer any good end? No: infinite Wisdom never institutes any thing purely for the sake of institution. But he instituted this, say our adversaries, to punish the transgressions, and exercise the obedience, of his people; and, at the same time, to remind them of death, the wages of sin. And were God's people to consider their offerings, that is, their devotions, which ought to flow from piety and love, as a punishment? Were they to look on themselves as doing penance in the loss of their cattle? or to give that for lost, which they presented to God? Again; if these acts of devotion were intended mainly for an exercise of obedience, why was the slaughter of the most harmless animals chosen for this purpose? Why not some other performance, more moral in its tendency, or more demonstrative



strative of submission? In one sense, indeed, the bloody sacrifices must have reminded the assistants of death, as the wages of sin; but, so far as they were encouraged to believe them piacular, they rather gave hopes of exemption from that punishment, than inculcated it as a terror to sin. But, whether it was at all understood, that God instituted any kind of sacrifices for these or the like ends, about which the Scriptures are silent; it is certain, that some of them were set forth, if the strongest terms could do it, as in some sense or measure propitiatory, and that they were so considered by the offerers. But how propitiatory? If one man cannot bear, in any sense, the sins of another, much less surely can a beast. The true end and value of these sacrifices we shall see hereafter. As to that of Christ, let us think what we will of it, we cannot have the confidence to say it was absurd or unjust, till we have first said, and proved, that all sacrifices were such; and, consequently, denied that God ever instituted any. He who makes the Bible his creed, and yet does this, at once owns and denies it to be the word of God.

Nothing can serve so well, as the argument couched in this very objection, either to refute those that bring it, or to establish the doctrine of the satisfaction. The objectors join with us in acknowledging, nay, in strongly asserting, the perfect and sinless innocence of Christ, throughout the whole of his life and conversation. Their very objection is no objection without it. And, that we may see what will be the issue, we join with them in asserting, that the infinitely just God could not have punished his innocent Son for the sins of men. How then are the unexampled sufferings of Christ to be reconciled to this maxim? Is not death the wages of sin? Is not life, for the same reason, the reward of righteousness? And was not Christ perfectly righteous? Yet did not his Father send him to suffer death, as well as to preach the Gospel? *Did he not make his soul an offering for sin?* Isa. liii. 10. *Was he not delivered by the aeternitate counsel and foreknowledge of God, that he might be taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain?* Acts ii. 23. It was, therefore, surely the will of God, that this his perfectly innocent and well-

well-beloved Son should die the death of a criminal. Now let those who say the innocent cannot justly suffer for the guilty, and that Christ was innocent, reconcile these their assertions with the two passages just now quoted; or account for his death, if they can, on their hypothesis. It is evident at first sight, that they, who deny the doctrine of imputation, can never possibly do this. But we, who maintain that doctrine, are under no difficulty about it, because we say, Christ did not suffer till *he was made sin for us*, that is, till he, by a voluntary imputation, charged himself with our sins, and thereby became guilty in the eye of the law. If it is true, that the innocent ought not to suffer for the guilty, it is certainly as true, that the innocent ought not to suffer at all, at least by divine appointment. This is one of the fundamental maxims of judicial equity. If Christ, then, suffered, was it for nothing? No. Was it for his own sins? No. Was it for our sins? Here, too, the adversaries say, No. But the Scriptures say, Yes; and common sense and equity say, he could not have suffered at the hand of a just and good God for any thing else but sin.

*Eusebius*, in the 10th book of his *Evangelic Demonstration*, sets this matter in a very clear and strong light; he clearly shews, I mean, the sense of the church in his days on this head. In treating of the xli. Psalm, he observes, that Christ, *John* xiii. 18. applies the 9th verse of that Psalm to himself: *That the Scripture might be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me, hath lift up his heel against me.* Having by this shewn, that the Psalm may be understood of our Saviour, who seems to speak from the 4th verse inclusive to the end, he takes notice of these words in that verse; *Lord, be merciful unto me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee*; and then thus proceeds: “ *The Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of*  
 “ *the world, was made a curse for us; him God made sin*  
 “ *for us, although he knew no sin, delivering him as an*  
 “ *equivalent price for us all, that we might become the*  
 “ *righteousness of God in him.* But forasmuch as he,  
 “ *being made in the likeness of human flesh, condemned sin*  
 “ *in the flesh,* these things are rightly alleged of him.  
 “ Yet,

“ Yet, that he said this (namely, that *he had sinned*)  
“ only because he had appropriated our sins to himself  
“ through charity, and love of mankind, appears from  
“ what follows; for he proceeds in the same Psalm, and  
“ says, *Thou hast accepted me in lieu of others, on account*  
“ *of my innocence*<sup>a</sup>. By which words he plainly sets  
“ forth the Lamb of God as free from all sin. But how  
“ then did he appropriate our sins to himself? How is  
“ he said *to bear our transgressions*? Is it not from hence,  
“ that we are said to be his body, as the Apostle expresses  
“ it, *We are the body of Christ, and members in particular*?  
“ As also from hence; that, *while one member suffers, all*  
“ *the members suffer with it*? So, while many members  
“ suffer and sin, he also, according to the rules of sym-  
“ pathy (since, being the *Word of God*, he vouchsafed to  
“ *take on him the form of a servant*, and to be united to  
“ mankind in our common *tabernacle*), took to himself  
“ the labours and miseries of the suffering members, made  
“ our disorders his own, and, pursuant to the laws of  
“ philanthropy, grieves and labours for us all. Nor is  
“ this all the Lamb of God hath done for us; for, sub-  
“ mitting to the punishment and torment, which he by  
“ no means deserved, and which we, for the multitude  
“ of our sins, ought to have suffered, he procured us for-  
“ giveness of sins, inasmuch as he suffered death in our  
“ stead, and transferred to himself the stripes, the re-  
“ proaches, the contumelies, whereof we were worthy;  
“ and, being *made a curse for us*, drew on himself the  
“ curse that was due to us; for what else was he, than  
“ the equivalent of our souls? Wherefore the divine ora-  
“ cle saith, *By his stripes we are healed; and the Lord*  
“ *hath given him up for the iniquities of us all*<sup>b</sup>. It is  
“ therefore with good reason that, while he unites him-  
“ self to us, and us to him, and makes our sins his own,  
“ he saith, *Lord, be merciful to me; heal my soul, for I*  
“ *have sinned against thee.*”

To this judicious observation of *Eusebius* on the xli. Psalm, we may add another of our own, to the like effect,

<sup>a</sup> So the *Septuagint*, quoted by *Eusebius*, translate the 12th verse.

<sup>b</sup> *Septuagint*.

on a passage of the xl. Psalm, wherein, at verse the 12th, our Saviour saith, *Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head.* Here it is evident, that he speaks as the head of the church, or as the representative of all mankind; and, in that capacity, charges himself with the guilt of all our sins, tho' absolutely free from all actual sin. We may justly presume it was because he was innocent of all sin, and yet guilty of all sin, that when *Pilate*, putting him on his defence, said, *What hast thou done?* he neither pleaded guilty nor innocent. He could not plead guilty, because he had committed no sin; nor could he plead innocent, because the sins of all men lay on his head. As, therefore, he could not explain this to a Pagan judge, he fulfilled the prophecy, and was silent.

If, as Christians, we can be content to follow the directions of divine revelation, we shall soon see the affair of imputation in such a light, as cannot but reconcile us to it. Revelation represents all the dispensations of God to man, as regulated by covenants. Thus only could we be dealt with as rational, as free and accountable creatures. Our Maker had a right to impose on us what laws he pleased; but he chose to govern us by the proposal of certain terms and conditions, and left it to our own choice to be so governed, or to abide the consequence, in case of refusal.

The first covenant with *Adam*, as he was created perfectly innocent, and morally free, was a covenant of works only, and subsisted on a footing of pure justice. *Abstain from the fruit of the tree, and you shall live, immortal and happy. But, in the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die.* It is plain, beyond all controversy, that this law or covenant included *Eve*, and all the posterity of *Adam*, as well as himself; for all were expelled or excluded from paradise on his transgression.

After *Adam* had transgressed this covenant, and had thereby not only forfeited for himself, and his posterity, the tenure by which life and happiness were granted, but also entailed corruption, and sinful dispositions, on all men; God seems to have made a new covenant of mercy with

with him and us, whereof his only-begotten Son became even then the Mediator. Peace could not be restored between God and his rebellious creatures, without atonement and intercession. For this purpose the *Lamb of our salvation* is said to have been slain from the foundation of the world, Rev. xiii. 8. This was figuratively and prophetically intimated to our first parents by the promise, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent*, Gen. iii. 15.

Thus the true and great sacrifice, whereby the new covenant was procured and ratified, was, from the fall of man, devoted, and, in effect, offered up, that men, now prone to sin, might find means of forgiveness, and not abandon themselves, thro' despair, to all manner of wickedness. But, till the fulness of time should come, in which the great sacrifice was to be actually offered, the benefit thereof was applied to them by vicarious and representative sacrifices. That those offered by *Abel* were instituted with this view, we cannot doubt; first, Because they were accepted on account of his faith in Christ Jesus, as *St. Paul* plainly intimates, *Heb. xi. 4.* and probably for this reason also, that they were of the bloody kind, and therefore more agreeable both to the institution, and the end, than those of *Cain*, which were only the fruits of the earth; secondly, Because mankind could never have thought of such a practice, had it not been prescribed; thirdly, Because the *blood of beasts could not, of itself, purge sin*; fourthly, Because the same sacrifices under the law appear to have been only typical of the great sacrifice; and, lastly, Because they ceased, when that was slain for the sins of the world. Hence, probably, arose the generally prevailing custom of confirming all manner of covenants between kings and nations by sacrifices.

In the covenant which God gave to *Noah*, after the sins of mankind had brought on the flood, he promises him, and all his posterity, exemption from the like judgment for the future; and forbids them to commit murder, or to eat the blood of beasts, as that *which maketh an atonement for the soul*, Levit. xvii. ver. 11. by representing the *blood* of the true sacrifice, or of the  
covenant,

*covenant*, Heb. x. 29. God seems to speak of his dispensation to *Noah* as of a covenant not altogether new; for he says, *With thee will I establish my covenant*, Gen. vi. 18. He does not say, I will make a covenant with thee (which is the proper expression to intimate a covenant not yet heard of); but he says, *I will establish my covenant*; that is, one should think, I will renew and confirm with thee my covenant of mercy which I gave to mankind after the fall, which they broke; and were therefore destroyed; but whereas you alone have observed it, with you therefore only, and your posterity, will I ratify it. This appears to be that *everlasting covenant*, which, *Isaiah* says, *the inhabitants of the earth had almost universally broken*, Isa. xxiv. 5. We see by what *St. Paul* says, Heb. xi. 7. *that Noah became heir of the righteousness which is by faith; that righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all*, Rom. iii. 22. His sacrifices were accepted, it is to be presumed, on account of his faith in the great sacrifice, which alone could recommend them in the sight of God, and give them their *sweet savour*, Gen. viii. 20, 21.

For the faith of *Abraham*, who looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, Heb. xi. 10. the *Lamb*, or he that was to bruise the head of the serpent, and to be the blessing of all nations, was promised particularly to his family, Gen. xxii. 18. Here God promised to *Abraham* by a covenant, confirmed with an oath, that the great sacrifice should descend from him; and he accordingly went on, applying to himself the benefits thereof by the practice of those vicarious sacrifices, which had been used with that view from the days of *Abel*. Well might *Christ*, therefore, say, *Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad*, John viii. 56.

To this covenant, thus carried down, the *Mosaic* was afterwards added, as *St. Paul* expresses it, Gal. iii. 19. As this is a matter of great consequence, let us hear the *Apostle's* explanation of it in the passage referred to: *To Abraham, and his seed, were the promises made, ver. 16.—But the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ viz. to Abraham], the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years*

years after, cannot disannul, ver. 17.—Wherefore, then, serveth the Law? It was added [to the promise, or covenant] because of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made, ver. 19. Abraham, we see, was by covenant a Christian; for, as the Apostle says, ver. 8. the Gospel was preached to him. Hence we must conclude, that Moses, and the Israelites under the Law, were, or ought to have been, Christians also; for the promise was still extant in their books, and well understood by their lawgiver and teacher, who wrote them. Nay, the Law itself was calculated to instruct them in the knowledge of Christianity: it was *their schoolmaster to bring them to Christ*, ver. 24. That whole dispensation was so contrived, as to prefigure the Christian, and to serve as *the shadow of good things to come*, Heb. x. 1. under Jesus, who was made a surety of a better testament, or covenant, Heb. vii. 22. To shew the analogy of every particular, would take up too much time. It is enough to observe, that the particular sacrifices of the Law, more especially the paschal lamb, and the scape-goat, were virtual and efficacious types of Christ. This covenant, it is plain, was made not only with the *Israelites* then in being, but, through them, with all the succeeding generations of that people.

Several remarks, pertinent to our present purpose, that is, to the imputation of *Adam's* sin, and of Christ's righteousness, are to be made on these contracts, or covenants.

In the first place, Large bodies of men, of whom few, in comparison, were yet in being, covenanted in a single representative; and were as absolutely tied to the conditions, as if every particular man had personally stipulated for himself.

Secondly, In each covenant, the contracting parties on both sides were so bound, as to become debtors to each other for the articles respectively promised, in case of due performance on the other side. God became debtor to the family or people for certain privileges or blessings, provided they acted up to their engagements, *Rom. iv. 4.*; and the family or people became debtors jointly, as well

as severally, for the observation of that which they had promised, *Gal. v. 3.*; and forfeited the benefits of the covenant, as often as they failed of performance.

Thirdly, These covenants, being great and distinguishing blessings, were freely bestowed, and, by the absolute commandment of God, imposed on the other contracting parties, as appears plainly in every one of them, and expressly in that through *Joshua at Jericho: Israel hath sinned, saith God, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them, Josh. vii. 11.*

Fourthly, The representative might forfeit, as in the case of *Adam*, or secure, as in the case of *David*, the benefits of the covenant, as well for the people he represented, as for himself.

Fifthly, Every covenant, excepting the first, the parties to which were previously at peace, was ratified by sacrifices, all of them representing the grand sacrifice, whereby the pardon of sin promised, and the peace commenced or renewed, were obtained.

Lastly, The benefits of each covenant, procured by the sacrifice, were restrained to those who embraced that covenant, and, by so doing, entered into an inclosure, or church, from which all recusants were excluded. This God intimates, *Psal. l. 5.* where he saith, *Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me with sacrifice.*

As the choice of this conditional method, whereby God was pleased to dispense his favours, was a pure act of goodness and mercy in him, the persons, with whom it was taken, had not only no pretence to dislike the manner of it, but all the reason in the world to be thankful, because it put them on a better footing than formerly, when they were under no contract at all. It was on this footing they received life and being, with all the happiness thereby rendered possible to them, and, if it was not their own fault, easily attainable also. They must therefore, have been extremely wanting to themselves, had they not joyfully received the favours of God on the terms he was pleased to grant them, since he might have justly granted none of them on any terms at all.

But



But now, as to the covenant with *Adam*, and his posterity, it is to be observed, either that God actually made, or, without injustice, might have made, man naturally mortal; but, as a free act of grace, promised him immortality, in case he should keep the covenant. The covenant, therefore, put him on a better footing than his nature had done, or than any claim he could form, as the creature of God, could do. When he transgressed, he justly forfeited what had been only conditionally promised; and, instead of continuing to be an object of grace and favour, and consequently of living for ever, he sunk into an object of justice, and died, like other animals, the death his nature seems to have marked him out for. If it was a free act of goodness in God to annex eternal life to the observation of his covenant, it was surely but an act of justice in him to resume the grant from all men, on the disobedience of their representative; and the rather, because they also became disobedient, and seconded what he had done by their own actual sins.

Howsoever we may be obliged to answer to the Deists for the reasonableness of this doctrine, there can certainly be no room for a debate about it among ourselves. Are we not agreed, that *Adam* was created innocent; that he was placed in paradise, that is, in a state of worldly felicity; that he held his tenure of life, and that happiness, on the covenanted condition of obedience; and that he forfeited his tenure, at least for himself, by transgression? But how came his children, yet unborn, to be shut out of paradise? If he did not forfeit for them, as well as for himself, why were they not all admitted, and blessed with that happy condition, till their own sins expelled them? Is not that infant, who hath yet committed no sin, a fit inhabitant for paradise? If he is, why was not that happy place reserved for him? Paradise was not made for, nor the covenant established with, *Adam* alone. Had not *Adam* sinned, he had been alive, and happy in that garden of delights, to this day, with all his posterity about him, in case they likewise had all of them kept the covenant. But, instead of enjoying this happy state, or even having the benefit of a trial for it, our right to either was

nulled, and paradise itself demolished, long before we were in being. Nay, what is worse, all men are become subject to miseries of a thousand kinds, to sickness, and to death (to say nothing of that which introduces death), and that by a necessity of nature, which they cannot possibly elude; a necessity of nature, some way or other brought upon them ere they can distinguish good from evil. If paradise was destroyed, only because God foresaw no human creature should be so pure from sin, as to deserve admission there, how came this to pass? Did the sin of *Adam* corrupt all his posterity? Or do they corrupt themselves, as he did? Who then corrupts the newborn infant? Or, if he is not corrupt, why is he not in paradise? Nay, why is he subject to sickness and death? If the scriptural history of our first parents is true, there is no answering these questions, founded on that history, and on facts universally notorious, but by admitting, that *Adam* not only covenanted and forfeited for all mankind, but likewise entailed on all men the sinful dispositions of his own corrupted nature. And what is there absurd in the supposition of his having so covenanted and forfeited? Why might not God have granted a tenure of paradise to him, and his heirs, on the same terms as absolute princes frequently do the property of their own lands? Such a prince, out of his singular favour, conveys an estate by patent to a particular subject, and his heirs for ever, on condition that he and they shall always render him such and such services. If that subject fails to render him those services, it is but reasonable and just, that the grant should become void, as well in respect to his descendants, as himself. But, in case the grantee shall take up arms against his prince, and lead his children into rebellion; or, together with them, shall otherwise violate the laws of that prince; hath he not a right to put the severity of those laws in force against such subjects? Now it was on a like tenure that God granted paradise and immortality to the first man, and his heirs; and it was by a like failure, and rebellion, that this tenure was lost.

Dr. *Sherlock*, in his most excellent treatise on *Death*, hath so well applied the reasonings of *St. Paul* to the sup-  
port

port of this doctrine, that I must beg leave to give you an extract of those reasonings, as exhibited by that truly pious and judicious divine :

“ The sentence of death and mortality, saith he, which  
“ was pronounced on *Adam*, fell on all his posterity. St.  
“ *Paul* tells us, 1 *Cor.* xv. 21, 22. *That by man came*  
“ *death* ; and in *Adam* all die ; which he does not only  
“ assert, but prove, *Rom.* v. 12, 13, 14. *Wherefore by*  
“ *man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so*  
“ *death passed upon all ; for that all have sinned ; for,*  
“ *until the Law, sin was in the world ; but sin is not im-*  
“ *puted where there is no law ; nevertheless death reigned*  
“ *from Adam until Moses, even over them who had not*  
“ *sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.* The  
“ design of all which is to prove, that men die, or are  
“ mortal, not for their own sins, but for the sin of *Adam* ;  
“ which the Apostle proves by this argument ; because,  
“ though all men, as well as *Adam*, have sinned, yet,  
“ till the giving the Law of *Moses*, there was no law  
“ which threatened death against sin, but only that law  
“ given to *Adam* in paradise, which no man else ever did,  
“ or ever could, transgress, but he. Now sin is not imputed  
“ where there is no law ; that is, is not imputed to any  
“ man to death, before there is any law which threatens  
“ death against it—Upon what account, then, says the  
“ Apostle, could these men die, who lived between *Adam*  
“ and *Moses*, before the Law was given which threatens  
“ death ? And yet die they did ; even those who had not  
“ sinned after the similitude of *Adam's* transgression.  
“ This could have been for no sin but *Adam's*, who  
“ sinned, and brought death into the world, and so death  
“ passed upon all men. To hinder this from seeming  
“ hard, he shews, that all men are, thro' their bodies,  
“ naturally mortal ; that they held immortality only on  
“ such terms as God was pleased to bestow it ; that they  
“ forfeited that tenure by the transgression of their com-  
“ mon parent and representative ; and that as *Adam*, now  
“ corrupt, could beget none but corrupt children, im-  
“ mortality became here unreasonable and impossible, thro'  
“ the universal prevalence of sin.”

Thus, I apprehend, are we said to sin and die in *Adam*. So much for the introduction and imputation of sin.

It is now time to turn our eyes on the introduction and imputation of righteousness by Christ Jesus. When Christ came into the world, he was so far from departing from this method of dealing with us by covenant, that all he did terminated in the re-establishment and completion of the covenant between God and us, which had been prophetically and typically introduced after the fall, and in different periods of the world, from that time to his incarnation, occasionally diversified as to its outward form; but, at every change, still rendered more plain and intelligible by the new promises or institutions wherewith it was accompanied. What *Solomon* said concerning the way of the just man, may be very properly applied to the gospel; namely, that, *like the shining light, it hath shined more and more unto the perfect day*. St. *Paul*, who speaking of it as literally and fully preached by Christ, calls it, with *Jeremiah*, a new covenant, in contradistinction to that of the law, gives it nevertheless a much higher date, as revealed to *Abraham*, nay, and even as believed in by *Noah* and *Abel*.

Of this covenant Christ, by his mission, became the Messenger, and, by his death, the Mediator. In pursuance of his mission, he preached the kingdom of heaven, or the new and holy community of believers. By his death he purchased this kingdom, community, or church; and therein acquired a right to mediate a peace between his offended Father and mankind, who had been enemies and aliens by wicked works. This peace he settled by the covenant founded in his blood, which was the grand sacrifice or atonement made to divine justice for the transgression of the first covenant, whereby *Adam* had rendered all his posterity both imputative and actual sinners. In this covenant, heaven, or eternal life, is promised on God's part; while repentance, faith, and peace with him and one another, are promised on ours. In order to bring the parties to this blessed agreement, Christ pleaded with his Father the merits of that sacrifice or price he had paid for us; and he pleaded with men the infinite benefits

benefits arising from the covenant, if embraced and kept. Having by these means gathered together a church, he became, of course, the guarantee and sponsor to us of his Father's promises; and to his Father, for our faith and obedience.

As *Adam*, immediately on the establishment of the first covenant, became thereto a debtor; and, by his transgression thereof, rendered himself, and all his unhappily corrupted descendents, insolvent debtors; so *Christ*, the head, the father, the representative, and sponsor, of the church, having paid this debt both of entailed and actual sin, hath, according to the promise of *Isaiab*, *proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.* He hath, by an infinitely gracious exchange, imparted his merits to us, and taken our demerits to himself; for his *Father hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,* 2 Cor. v. 21. His being made sin for us, or, as our sponsor, taking our sins on himself, is further explained and proved, *Isaiab* liii. where, concerning him and us, it is said, *All we, like sheep, have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He hath poured out his soul unto death: he was numbered with the transgressors; he bare the sin of many; and made intercession for the transgressors.* In the epistle to the *Galatians* iii. 13. *St. Paul* strongly enforces the same doctrine: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* *St. Peter*, speaking of *Christ*, says, *He, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed,* 1 Pet. ii. 24. That we are made the righteousness of God in *Christ*, appears from other places besides this alleged. We are told, *Rom.* v. 18, 19. that, *by the righteousness of one, namely, Christ, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life; and that, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.*

It is a gross absurdity to suppose we can rightly conceive of the Christian religion without a right idea of our

redemption ; for that religion, and that redemption, are but one and the same thing. It is equally absurd to talk of redemption, without acknowledging two things ; first, that Christ, in order to reclaim us, gave us his word, his ordinances, and his Spirit ; and, secondly, that he suffered death, to save us from that death which is the wages or punishment of sin. For, having done these two things, he is called *Jesus*, or our Saviour. Now the atonement made by his death is nonsense, without the supposition of a double imputation ; first, of sin in *Adam* ; and, secondly, of righteousness in *Jesus Christ*. Our adversaries will gain nothing by denying the first, because they cannot but own, that we are by nature corrupt and sinful ; that God did not make us so ; and that this natural corruption, which is worse than the entail of *Adam's* sin, was brought upon us by one man, namely, by *Adam*. It is in vain to say every man corrupts himself ; for, if all men had not a natural and previous disposition to corruption, some men might happen not to corrupt themselves ; neither would children shew a tendency to vice, as they all do, from the time they are able to speak and act ; much less would they be subject to pain, sickness, and death, were they intirely free from sin, it being impossible the innocent should suffer. “ Who dares deny, saith *St. Augustine*, that Christ is the Saviour of infants ? But how is he said to save them, if there is in them no distemperature of original sin ? How does he redeem them, if they are not, by their original, sold under the sin of the first man ? ”

But here it is worth observing, that though children, dying unbaptized, die formal heirs to *Adam*, having no other covenant but his, under which they can derive ; yet, as they have neither transgressed that covenant by actual sin, nor rejected the new one, we may presume they are actual objects, at least, of God's uncovenanted mercy ; or I should rather say, as *Adam's* transgression was imputed to them without a voluntary act of their own, so Christ's merit is imputed to them, without the requisition of any such act ; because it is to be laid down for a maxim, that, in respect to souls, circumstanced as theirs are, Christ came to undo whatsoever *Adam* did. Nay, he came to do  
more ;

more; for, as it is not in the power of man to do so much evil as God is both able and willing to do good, so our blessed Saviour came to bestow heaven on those whom *Adam* had deprived of paradise only.

Since, then, the sin and corruption of our first parents are entailed on us; and experience tells us, we can neither retrieve ourselves from sin, nor save our souls from the punishment of sin; we stand in need of a Redeemer who is able to do both; who can cure the disorders of our minds by divine wisdom, and clear the debt that is against us by an equivalent price. This Christ alone was able to do, both because he was *the wisdom of God*, 1 Cor. i. 24. and, through the sinless purity of his nature, and the infinite dignity of his person, could lay down a sufficient ransom for us. *Such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as the high-priests of the law did, to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself*, Heb. vii. 26, 27. But further; as it is not enough barely to be forgiven, in order to our exaltation to a state of glory, to which no merit of our own can ever intitle us; we must borrow the merit necessary to that purpose from our representative, and found our title to so great a reward on the covenant he hath procured for us.

On the whole of this matter; whosoever conceives any other system of redemption than that which is here set forth, draws it from his own imaginations and prejudices; by no means from the word of God. The fifth chapter of *St. Paul's* epistle to the *Romans* alone is sufficient to establish what I have maintained. Whosoever candidly considers the doctrine therein laid down, from the 6th verse inclusive, to the end, will plainly see, that *for us, ungodly, and destitute of strength to help or redeem ourselves, Christ died; that herein God commendeth his love towards us, who were yet sinners; that if his love so abounded towards us, even when we were in sin, and unredeemed, we may hope for a still greater degree of it,*

now that *we are justified by the blood of his Son*, which is sufficient to save us from his wrath; that if, *when we were enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, we have much greater reason to hope, after such a reconciliation, to be saved by his life; that we have not only cause of hope, but of joy in God, through Christ, having already received the atonement. The candid reader of this passage, having thus seen the redemption of man through the blood of Christ enlarged on, will be further instructed by a comparison drawn between Christ and Adam, which will shew him how sin and death came into the world by means of the one; and how they are to be taken out of it again by means of the other: *By one man*, saith the Apostle, *sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* Although sin is not imputed where there is no law, nevertheless death (through the breach of the first law) reigned from Adam to Moses, even over such as had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him, that is, Christ, who was to come; for he represented, and covenanted for, all mankind; inasmuch that since by this man came death, by man, namely, Christ, came also the resurrection of the dead, 1 Cor. xv. 21. However, though they are alike in this, that they both communicated on entail, the former of sin, and the latter of grace, to all who derive under them respectively; yet they differ in this, that we have less reason to complain, if, through the offence of one, many should have died, inasmuch as all have sinned, than we have to rejoice, and be thankful, for the grace afforded to many through one, since that grace was a free gift, bestowed on persons no-way resembling the donor in righteousness; through whose righteousness, nevertheless, if it is not their own fault, they may reign in life eternal. But to conclude; as, by the offence of one (the first Adam), judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one (the last Adam), the free gift came upon all men unto the justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.



Here the doctrine of the satisfaction is expressly asserted, and the parallel between Christ and *Adam*, between grace and guilt, between life and death; as also between the free gift of grace and life through Christ on the one side, and the entail of sin and death through *Adam* on the other; is too clearly stated not to convince us, who submit our private opinions to the word of God, that, by nature, we inherit the guilt and punishment of *Adam*, and, by adoption, the righteousness and reward of Christ; that, according to my text, as in *Adam* we all die, so in him we must all have sinned, death being the consequence of sin only; and that as in Christ we shall all be made alive, so in him we must all be first rendered righteous, because life is the effect, or reward, of righteousness alone.

It is true, indeed, that actual rivets the imputation of original sin; as, on the other hand, repentance and faith secure to us the imputation of Christ's merit. He who sins, consents to what *Adam* did, and makes himself of a party with the father and representative of sinners. He who repents and believes under the Christian covenant, makes himself a party with the father and representative of believers. The sinner inherits death under *Adam*; and the believer life under Christ. Either inheritance is chosen by an actual, and strengthened by an habitual, imitation of him who established the original title. The natural birth is the initial form whereby possession of the former, and the new birth in baptism that whereby possession of the latter, is conveyed. To this we must particularly attend, because it depends on ourselves to make good our title through Christ; and therefore we are exhorted by St. *Peter to give diligence, that we may make our calling and election sure.*

The satisfaction made for sin by the death of Christ, is, I think, sufficiently proved already in this Discourse; but, whereas that is a subject of infinite importance, and much disputed, I should, according to the second head proposed in this Discourse, proceed to a more full and ample proof of it, were it not that I have taken up too

much

much of your time with the first. For this reason I shall defer this proof to another occasion :

Humbly beseeching Him, in the mean time, who *giveth us the victory over death, through our Lord Jesus Christ*, that he would make us truly thankful for this great mercy, and inspire our minds with the true principles of eternal life promised to us in and through his Son, and our Saviour ; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE X.

Christ the true and proper Sacrifice for Sin.

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I COR. XV. 22.

*As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

**T**AKING it for granted, that, in my former Discourse on these words, the doctrine of imputation, both as to the sin of *Adam*, and the righteousness of Christ, was sufficiently established on a scriptural foundation, against the only objections that seemed materially to affect it; I shall endeavour, in this, more fully to prove from Scripture, that Christ hath not only made satisfaction to his offended Father, for our sins, by his blood, so as to exempt us from the punishment of sin; but hath also, by the merits of his obedience, perfected in the reproachful death of the cross, and, through faith, imputed to us, intitled us to eternal life, or the full reward of that righteousness, which results from a strict observance of the divine law in all its parts. After this, I shall endeavour to shew on what terms these inestimable blessings are offered to us by the evangetic dispensation.

That we may proceed in this matter with the greater clearness and certainty, let us consider, first, That the holy

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holy and good God hates sin; that *he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that he cannot even look on iniquity*, Hab. i. 13.; secondly, That *there is no peace between God and the wicked*, Isaiah xlviii. 22. but *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, denounced against every soul that doth evil*, Rom. ii. 8, 9.; and, thirdly, That we, being born under the breach of God's covenant, and universally prone to wickedness, are, in the eye of Divine justice, *all concluded under sin*, Gal. iii. 22. and, consequently, *by nature the children of wrath*, Ephes. ii. 3. and *strangers from the covenants of promise*, ver. 12. In the next place, let us consider what are the effects of this indignation and wrath thus threatened on account of the natural state of sin into which we are born, and wherein we must unavoidably continue, if we are not born again unto a new and better life. They are, exclusion from the sight and enjoyment of God, together with death temporal and eternal. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. *The wages of sin is death*, Rom. vi. 23. *The wicked shall go away into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels*, Mat. xxv. 41. Such is the state we are in by nature; and such must be its end, if God do not deliver us from it. *Without him we can do nothing*, John xv. 5. *for we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Every text here quoted might be supported with many others, equally express and plain, whereby it might appear, that we are *by nature the servants of sin*, Rom. vi. 17.; that we were *sold under sin*, vii. 14.; that we were *set at a distance from God*, Ephes. ii. 13.; and that we were *alienated from him, and enemies in our minds, by wicked works*, Coloss. i. 21.

Now if it shall appear as plainly from the same Scriptures, that Christ hath taken our sins on himself; hath suffered the punishment appointed for them by the justice of God, in order to set us free; and hath, by his covenant, imparted his own righteousness to us; and if it shall also appear, that God, on this account, hath been reconciled to us, and adopted us for his children and heirs; this ought surely to end all disputes about the doctrine

trine of the satisfaction among Christians, and free that doctrine from every opposer, but the open and professed Deist.

To prove the first of these points, it will be necessary to consider what is meant in holy Scripture by a sacrifice for sin, especially when Christ is represented as such. The common method of doing this is, by weighing the nature and end of the piacular sacrifices under the law, in order to come at the right notion of the great sacrifice, and its effects. And whereas the *Septuagint* translators were obliged to give, for the *Hebrew* terms relating to this subject, such *Greek* ones as expressed the same intent or effect in the Gentile way of worship; which *Greek* terms, so applied in that translation, the penmen of the New Testament made use of in quoting the Old, and in writing to both the *Jews* and Gentiles; it hath also been thought expedient to search the antient Pagan writers for the true sense of these terms. The method is good in respect to the one course of inquiry as well as the other, and can hardly deceive him who pursues it with candour and diligence. But we have a shorter and surer method, as you shall presently perceive.

However, as to this longer one, no ordinary reader of the *Greek* classics can help observing, that they considered the Deity as angry at their crimes, and disposed to punish them; that they offered sacrifices to appease his wrath, and avert its penal effects; and that they regarded those sacrifices as representatives of the transgressor, and slain in his stead. He, who, having observed this (which *Grotius* and *Lomierus* will help him to do), casts his eyes afterwards over the *Greek* of the Old and New Testament, cannot but take notice, that the same terms used by the *Greek* Pagans, in speaking of their sacrifices, for remission, redemption, expiation, atonement, &c. are applied to the piacular sacrifices treated of in both Testaments, not only without any warning given to the Gentile reader of a change of meaning, but evidently to the same effect, and in the same sense; as appears almost every-where by the context, and by the confidence which the performers of these sacred rites appear always to have reposed in them.

On the modest supposition, that the Holy Spirit, in writing to the Gentile reader in terms familiar to that reader, did not intend to impose on him, we must take it for granted, since no new sense is professedly given to those terms in Scripture, that they are to be understood in the old ordinary sense. *Lucian*, who had read the Scriptures, must have thus understood them, or he could not have said, that Christ, by the punishment of the cross, had introduced into *Palestine* a new sacrifice or expiation.

We will now suppose a *Greek* reader of the Old Testament to have taken the *Septuagint* translation into his hands, in order, by a search into that, on the strength of his acquaintance with the terms relating to sacrifices, to find out the meaning of what is said in the New, concerning the great sacrifice. In the book before him, he sees God's anger strongly expressed. He sees also the sacrifice of bulls, goats, rams, lambs, &c. appointed by the Law to atone for sin, and appease the wrath of God, not only for small sins, or sins of ignorance, but for great and wilful sins, such as denying a deposit, robbery, and perjury, even after the delinquent had repented, and made restitution, *Levit. vi. 6, 7.* He sees by some instances, particularly by that of the scape-goat, *Levit. xvi. 21.* that the animal offered was put in the place of the offerers, and bore their sins, just as the piacular sacrifices of the Pagans were supposed to do. And, further, he sees these sacrifices actually taking effect; and the death of men averted by the sacrificial death of beasts, as in the atonement made by *Aaron, Numb. xvi. 47, 48.* in the sacrifice offered by *David* at the threshing-floor of *Araunah, 2 Sam. xxiv.* and in various other instances.

But, in the midst of all this, his reason tells him, that a beast can in reality by no means be made guilty of sin, nor become a true and proper sacrifice for the transgressions of men, because utterly unequal. The Scriptures of the Old Testament strongly intimate, and those of the New expressly tell him, the same thing; namely, that *the blood of bulls and goats cannot possibly take away sins, Heb. x. 4.*

Here it is natural for him to inquire how this seeming contradiction may be reconciled; which if he does, he will perceive, by what *St. Paul* says in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, that the sacrifices of the Law were in themselves of no value; but rendered, however, in a certain degree, efficacious, as types and shadows of good things to come, that is, of the true and great sacrifice offered up by *Christ*, ch. x. 1, &c. In the New Testament he will find all the terms relating to propitiatory sacrifices, made use of by the *Septuagint* translators, so applied to the death of *Christ* on the cross, as to give no room for a suspicion, that they are not there applied in their strict and proper sense.

On this occasion he will observe, what I hinted just now, that there was no need to take such a compass to come at the right notion of the great sacrifice exhibited in the New Testament. He will be convinced, that, in all his long inquiry, he had been only endeavouring to trace the substance by the shadow, when the substance itself was openly offered to his view, in such a manner, as to throw light on the piacular sacrifices of that figurative dispensation, through which he had preposterously chosen to examine it. The true intent and use of *Christ's* sacrifice is to be sought in the plain and literal account which he and his apostles give of it, rather than in the darkness of the legal symbols appointed to prefigure it. The *Jews*, indeed, as *St. Paul* observes, might have been thus led by the Law, *as by a schoolmaster, to Christ*; but we, who have been taught better things, ought not to use so faint a candle to find out what we seek, in the full light of the Gospel. The justness of this assertion you will quickly be made sensible of by an easy method, which leaves no room for mistakes.

You have seen already, that God, as a just Governor of the world, hates sin, is angry with those who commit it, and, consequently, disposed to punish it in the guilty. But the same Scriptures that tell you this, tell you also, that he is merciful; and hath made an atonement for sin, in the blood of his Son *Christ Jesus*, who hath taken our sins upon him; suffered the punishment due to them; and, if we are not wanting to the conditions required of

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us, as effectually cleared us in the sight of God, as if we had never transgressed.

Now, that Christ was the true propitiation, the real original atonement for sin, you may perceive; because those essential properties of a sacrifice, which were only either imaginarily, or, at best, but representatively, in other sacrifices, are really found in this, and in this alone.

First, Christ was a voluntary victim, who, from the beginning, devoted himself to death for his church; which no other victim ever had a right to do, because no other was the proprietor of its own life. Wherefore he saith, *I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep*, John x. 11. *I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again*, ver. 17, 18.

Secondly, Christ was a victim of sufficient value. It is not possible the blood of any other, such as of bulls and goats, should take away sins. *Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering [of beasts] thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings, and sacrifices for sin, thou hast had no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God*, Heb. x. 5, 6, 7. Thus we see, that, other sacrifices being of themselves of no value, Christ comes to perfect the purpose of those sacrifices, and to *fulfil the Law*, as he says himself, *Mat. v. 17.*; in order to which, we see also there is a body prepared for him, that he might be capable of those sufferings, whereto his Divinity giving sufficient dignity, the sacrifice becomes equivalent.

Thirdly, According to the property of a true sacrifice, he exchanged places and conditions with us. *He hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us, that through him the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, and that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through saith*, Gal. iii. 13, 14. *He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21.

Fourthly,



Fourthly, The sacrifice made by Christ was, in a strict and true sense, propitiatory : *We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins,* 1 John ii. 1, 2. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son for the propitiation of our sins,* 1 John iv. 10. *by whom we have now received the atonement,* Rom. v. 11. In these expressions the genuine effect of a true sacrifice is asserted in the terms of the Old Testament, but here applied in their proper and immediate sense.

Lastly, The grand end of a propitiatory sacrifice, namely, peace and reconciliation with the offended Deity, is also strongly and expressly asserted in many places ; whereof I shall at present only instance two, because they are full and clear enough to serve for a thousand. *Daniel predicts his coming, when he was to finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and to be cut off, but not for himself ;* and, having offered up the great efficacious sacrifice, was to cause the typical sacrifice, the representative oblation, to cease, Dan. ix. 24. 26, 27. *It pleased the Father,* saith St. Paul, *that in him [Christ] should all fulness dwell, and (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things to himself ; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were some time alienated, and enemies in your minds, by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unapproachable, in his sight,* Coloss. i. 19, 20, 21, 22. In these remarkable passages, the terms properly relative to the great and real sacrifice are made use of in their true and genuine import. The parties, God and man, formerly at enmity through the sins of the latter, are here represented as reconciled, and at peace, by the sacrifice of the cross, or the blood of Christ. Here the true sacrifice is represented to us as cut off, not for his own sins, but to make reconciliation for our sins ; on which all other sacrifices were, of course, to be done away. This, I think, is sufficient to establish the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction for sin, without going further.

But, as the adversaries of this comfortable truth have, with amazing assurance, endeavoured to puzzle this controversy with I know not what forced interpretations of all the sacrificial terms thus applied to Christ as the true and proper sacrifice; I shall now enforce that truth by scriptural quotations, couched in terms so common, and so universally understood, as to take away all pretence of doubt or debate among such as retain any sense of shame.

*The Lord, saith Isaiah, ch. liii. 6. hath laid on him [Christ] the iniquity of us all; and, ver. 12. He bore the sin of many. He, his own self, bare our sins in his body on the tree, 1 Pet. ii. 24. Christ was once offered, to bear the sins of many, Heb. ix. 28. He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, 2 Cor. v. 21. He was also made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree, Gal. iii. 13. Thus it is plain he took our sins to himself.*

And it is as plain, that he endured the punishment of those sins, which *is death, Rom. vi. 23.; for he hath tasted of death for every man, Heb. ii. 9. In due time Christ died for the ungodly, Rom. v. 6. Died for our sins, 1 Cor. xv. 3. Thus was he, according to the prophecy of Isaiah liii. 5. wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him; for the transgression of God's people was he stricken, ver. 8.; and his soul was made an offering for sin, ver. 10.*

Christ, having taken our sins on himself, and suffered the punishment due to them by the law of God, hath paid our debt, and set us, who were sold under sin, at liberty. He who denies this, *denies the Lord that bought him, 2 Pet. ii. 1.; that bought him with a price, 1 Cor. vi. 20.; that purchased him with his own blood, Acts xx. 28.; that came, as the Son of man, to give his life a ransom for him, and for many, Mat. xx. 28.; that he might thereby proclaim liberty to the captives, Luke iv. 18.; and deliver them out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 26.*

Our Saviour, who hath, as you hear, made our sins his own, suffered for them, and paid the debt of sin,  
under

under which we were sold, is also represented as washing and cleansing us from all sin in his blood: *If we walk in the light, saith St. John, 1 epist. i. 7. the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth us from all sin. For he hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, Rev. i. 5. If the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God! Heb. ix. 13, 14.* Our blessed Saviour, having thus by himself purged our sins, *sat down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high, Heb. i. 3.*

Now, there is no darkness or equivocation in these expressions. They give us the strongest assurances of pardon and remission of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. *As almost all things were, by the Law, purged with blood; and as, without shedding of blood, there is no remission; it was therefore necessary, that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these—that is, by the blood of Christ, who now once, in the end of the world, hath appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 22, 23, 26.; by which blood he hath entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us, ver. 12. For his sake God hath forgiven us, Ephes. iv. 32. We all have sinned—but are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath taken to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, Rom. iii. 23, 24, 25. Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins—Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no-wise believe, though a man declare it unto you, Acts xiii. 38, 40, 41.*

That both the meaning and truth of all this may be ascertained by suitable effects; in the first place, the en-

mity between God and us is abolished in the flesh of Christ—Peace is made, *and both Jew and Gentile are reconciled unto God in one body by the cross of Christ, having slain the enmity thereby*, Ephes. ii. 15, 16. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*, Rom. viii. 16, 17. We, therefore, have infinite reason to give thanks unto the Father, *who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*, Coloss. i. 12, 13, 14.

After having thus seen the *Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world*, Rev. xiii. 8. *taking away the sin of the world*, John i. 29. and *putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, Heb. ix. 26. are we not to conclude, that he was, to all intents and purposes, a true, proper, and efficacious, propitiation for the sins of men? But, if there are men of so perverse a turn of mind, as to refine away such glaring proofs by a forced construction of all the terms relating to sacrifices in every language, dead as well as living, surely even they ought to be convinced, when they see the doctrine of the satisfaction asserted by the Scriptures, not only in what they would represent as technical and learned terms, but in common words, understood alike by all men; such as, Christ taking our sins on himself, enduring the punishment of those sins, paying our debt or ransom, washing and cleansing us in his blood, and thereby obtaining redemption and remission of sins for us. Can a doctrine, set in such a variety of lights, fail to strike every one? If one manner of expressing it seems obscure or doubtful, are there not an hundred others, all enlightening and urging the same point, to direct us? The Scriptures, indeed, have left no room for debates on this important article, among sensible and well-meaning Christians.

But there are those among us, who, pretending to be Christians, will not be concluded by the word of God,  
which

which faith, *Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust (that he might bring us to God), being put to death in the flesh,* 1 Pet. iii. 18. The strictness of law and justice, they say, require that the delinquent only should suffer for his offences, and not another who is guiltless. Why, then, did Christ suffer, who committed no sin? The Scriptures, however, in one sense, represent us as suffering for our own sins, in Christ our head; for, *as by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body [of Christ],* 1 Cor. xii. 13. *and so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death,* Rom. vi. 3. it appears, that we have legally suffered and died in him our head. The strictest justice charges the sin of every offence committed by the members, on the head; so that when that is cut off, the whole body is punished. These, our adversaries will say, are figurative expressions, only representing a death unto sin. We grant the Scriptures speak figuratively, when they tell us we are one being, or one body, with Christ; but it must be observed, that they call this *a great mystery*, Ephes. v. 32. and lay too great a stress on it, to leave room for a supposition, that they mean it for nothing but a bare similitude. All the real members of Christ's mystical body are so closely joined to him by love or charity, that whatsoever he suffers, they must suffer with him, through that tender sense of gratitude which makes them feel in him, as he does through compassion in them. If the love between Christ and his church is reciprocal, neither can suffer apart. Every Christian, in proportion to the degree of piety he is warmed with, must take a greater or less share in those persecutions, those buffetings, those spittings, and that horribly contemptuous and painful death, which his Saviour endured. I must needs say, he hath little Christianity, little right in Christ, to whom this is not a severe and terrible suffering. That man only, who, from a mixture of compunction and gratitude, thus sympathizes in the pangs of his Redeemer, can be said to have been *planted in the likeness of his death*, to have *crucified the old man*, and to have been *dead with Christ*; he only can be *dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through*

*Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 5, 6. 8. 11. He never truly repented, who never truly pledged his Saviour in the cup embittered with the infusion of death. He never saw his sins in their true scarlet, who hath not yet read the catalogue of them written in the blood of Christ. We are baptized into the death of Christ, that we may die to sin, as he did for it. But, we may assure ourselves, it is impossible to die effectually to sin, without partaking in the mortal agonies of him who died for it. He is not a real member of Christ's body, who does not in some measure feel those agonies, and, in them, the heinousness of his sins, thus only to be felt at the point of their sting.

Having, I hope, sufficiently proved, that Christ hath, by his blood, made a full atonement or satisfaction for the sins of men, I shall now endeavour, as briefly as I can, to shew, that he hath imparted his own righteousness to us. If we embrace his covenant, we are, by the former, exempted from the punishment of sin; and, by the latter, intitled to the reward appointed by the law of God for those who keep his commandments.

The Scriptures, after telling us, that we *are justified*, that is, cleared and acquitted, by the blood of Christ, Rom. v. 9. do further assure us, as of a much higher blessing, that we *are sanctified*, or made holy, also, by the same blood, Heb. x. 29. *Christ so loved the church, that he gave himself [died] for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water, by the Word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish*, Ephes. v. 25, 26, 27.

The Scriptures likewise give us to understand, that Christ's righteousness is communicated to us. *Now the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe*, Rom. iii. 21, 22. For this purpose it was that *Christ was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*. *Christ Jesus, we are told, is of God made unto*

unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. So that, by his obedience, many are made righteous, Rom. v. 19. 2 Cor. v. 21. Thus hath he by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified, Heb. x. 14.

The happy effect of this sanctification thro' the blood of Christ is eternal life. *We are hereby made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*; we are hereby not only delivered from the power of darkness, but translated into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, Coloss. i. 12, 13, 14. The gift of God is eternal life, through Christ, Rom. vi. 23. who saith, *Who so drinketh my blood hath eternal life*, John vi. 54. But, forasmuch as we are baptized into Christ, and, by the new covenant, made one body with him, we are thereby tully assured both of holiness and happiness. Whosoever is joined to Christ, is governed by his holy will, and must be happy with him; for he saith, *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him shall my Father honour*, John xii. 26. *Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me;—and that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them*, John xvii. 24. 26.

On the whole, it may be observed, that, as the blood of the paschal lamb distinguished between the *Israelites* and the *Egyptians*, and preserved the former from the hand of that angel who destroyed the latter; so the blood of Christ, the Lamb of our salvation, wherewith the true believers are sprinkled, distinguishing them from such as reject it, preserves their souls from that other destroyer, who is not content with the death of the body only; and, by so doing, is compared, 1 Cor. v. 7. to the passover, where, in the proper sense of the word, Christ is set forth as our sacrifice; *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*. To denote his personal innocence, he is represented by the figure of a lamb; and, to denote the imputed guilt for which he died, he is here, and in I know not how many other places, expressly called a sacrifice. He is the

*Lamb slain*, by stipulation with his Father, and by promise to *Adam*, from the foundation of the world, Revel. xiii. 8. He is the *Lamb of God*, which taketh away the sin of the world, John i. 29. He is that *Lamb*, in whose blood, and not their own, high as its estimation is in the sight of God, the martyrs, who were *cloathed in white*, had washed their robes, Rev. vii. 14. Since they who were baptized in their own blood, stood in need of his to purify and whiten their garments, we are not to be surprised, that the blood of Jesus Christ should be necessary to cleanse us from all sin, 1 John i. 7. ; that *not we, but he himself, must purge our sins*, Heb. i. 3. and *our conscience from the guilt of dead works*, Heb. ix. 14. On these accounts, and for these blessed purposes, it is that we are told, *He loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God*, Ephes. v. 2.

It now remains to be shewn, on what terms the inestimable blessings and benefits of Christ's death are offered to us by the Gospel dispensation. This will not take up much time; altho' it is very necessary to be clearly ascertained, that a mistaken dependence on the blood and merits of Christ may not encourage us to sin, as our adversaries object it does, and as it hath actually done in some.

Christ is compared, Heb. ix. 13, 14. as a more true and perfect sacrifice, to those of the Old Testament: *If the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God!* The Apostle shews afterwards, in the same chapter, that, by this sacrifice, he becomes the *Mediator of the new testament, or covenant*, ver. 15. which is ratified in his blood, as *the old testament, or covenant, was by the blood of calves and goats*, ver. 19. pursuant to the universal custom of confirming covenants with sacrifices. Having enlarged on this comparison, he says, ver. 26. 28. *Now, in the end of the world, hath he [Christ] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, being once offered*



to bear the sins of many, that he might mediate a covenant for those whom he had thus purchased. It is in the same sense, and for the same reason, that our Saviour, delivering the cup in his last supper, *Mat. xxvi. 28.* says, *This is my blood of the new testament, or covenant*; on which words it ought carefully to be remarked, that they are the same with those of the *Septuagint, Exod. xxiv. 8.* where the covenant by *Moses* is concluded and ratified between God and the *Israelites*, and where we find the people sprinkled with the blood of these sacrifices that had been offered up to God, as they are, in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, with the blood of the great and true sacrifice offered by the Son of God to his Father. Thus God and the communicating Christian confirm the new covenant by a mutual participation of the sacrifice on which it is founded; the Christian taking it as the very covenant itself, and God accepting it as the atonement for sins past, and the faithful pledge of obedience for the time to come. *St. Luke, xxii. 20.* and *St. Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 25.* deliver these words of our Saviour in somewhat a different manner, but to the very same effect; namely, *This is the new testament, or covenant, in my blood.* The latter of these Apostles sufficiently explains the meaning of these words, *Heb. ix. 14, 15, 16, 17.* and shews both how remission of sins is obtained through the blood and death of Christ; and how the covenant, procured by a mediation founded on his blood, comes to be called a testament, or will.

If our blessed Saviour, then, hath, by dying, satisfied the justice of his Father for our sins, and, by his mediation, sued out the pardon of these sins, we must thankfully receive these inestimable benefits on such terms as he hath pleased to annex; and ought to consider every thing he hath enjoined us in the New Testament, not only as consistent with, but as actually comprised in, the testamentary covenant or dispensation delivered to us by his Gospel.

Now there is nothing more evident, than that he requires faith, and reformation of manners, in all who receive his covenant; and, to perfect both, requires also,  
that

that they should terminate in charity, or the love of God and man.

That faith on our part is a necessary condition of the covenant, we must have concluded, had the Scriptures been silent on the subject; because without it we could not possibly receive Christ either as a Teacher, or a Redeemer. But there is nothing the Scriptures express more strongly. *St. Paul* says, *Gal. iii. 26, 27. Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, that is, as have been admitted into the covenant, have put on Christ.* And our Saviour himself saith, *John iii. 36. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not on the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.* He also saith, *Mark xvi. 16. He that believeth, and is baptized, or admitted into the covenant, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.*

That reformation of manners, or obedience to the will of God, is a necessary condition of the covenant in all who receive it, is evident also both from the nature of the thing, and from Scripture. It is evident from the nature of the thing, because the obstinately wicked cannot possibly be united to God, nor made happy; for it is against the nature of an infinitely just and good Being to tempt his creatures to sin; which he must do, did he bestow happiness, that is, the enjoyment of himself, on the wicked as well as the good. And this is likewise made evident from the holy Scriptures; for therein *all men every-where are commanded to repent, Acts xvii. 30.*; and *to do good, that is, to bring forth fruit meet for repentance, Mat. iii. 8.* Hence it is that the baptism of *John* is called the baptism of repentance, *Mark i. 4.* and that *St. Peter* says to the disciples, *Repent, and be baptized, or received into the covenant, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, Acts ii. 38.*

And, lastly, That the faith, repentance, and obedience, of all who covenant with God in Christ Jesus, should terminate in the love of God and man, is manifest both from reason and revelation. Reason tells us, that, altho' God

God is to be feared both for his justice and power, yet that our duty to him, when improved by repeated meditations on his excellence, and grateful recollections of his goodness, ought to end in an ardent and lasting love of a Being so infinitely glorious in himself, and so full of compassion towards us. It also tells us, we ought to love those who are joined to us by one common nature, especially when to the ties of humanity those by which we are united to one another, and to God; are added. Revelation tells us the same thing. When the Pharisee asked our Saviour this question, *Which is the great commandment in the Law?* Jesus said unto him, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets,* Mat. xxii. 35, 36, 37, 39, 40. Well, therefore, might St. Paul say, that *love is the fulfilling of the Law,* Rom. xiii. 10. and that *charity is greater than faith and hope,* 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

I might have taken a much greater compass both in the reasoning, and textuary proof of the conditions on which salvation is offered us through the blood of our Redeemer Christ Jesus; but I have said enough to hearers who may, if they please, consider the subject more at large, and who, by the assistance of God's word, can easily see and judge for themselves.

However, while I am thus proving, that the conditional tender of salvation through the blood of Christ, instead of encouraging us to sin, calls us to newness and holiness of life; I foresee it will be objected, that, if this be the case, our covenant founded in that blood is but a covenant of works, after all; from whence it will follow, that we gain nothing by the death of Christ. Now this objection acquires a still greater degree of strength, when it is considered, that higher purity and holiness are expected of Christians than of other men, even on account of the covenant, and of the sacrifice that procured it. *God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness,* 1 Thess. iv. 7. We are obliged henceforth to walk, not

as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But we have not so learned Christ.—No; We must put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and must be renewed in the spirit of our mind; that we may put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness, Ephes. iv. 17, 18, 19, 20. 22, 23, 24. It is now high time to awake out of sleep—The night is far spent, the day is at hand; we must therefore cast off the works of darkness, we must put on the armour of light; we must walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; for we have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. xiii. 11, 12, 13, 14. Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, we must arm ourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God, 1 Pet. iv. 1, 2. How is the blood of Christ, who offered himself without spot to God, to cleanse us? Is it not by purifying our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? Heb. ix. 14.

I answer, It certainly is; and surely, if it produces this effect, we have therein an immense advantage. If, in the death of Christ, we see more clearly than ever the abominable heinousness and danger of sin, we must, from his cross, hear the loudest call to repentance. If, by his blood, he hath obtained the pardon of all our past sins duly repented of, we have undoubtedly, in that pardon, the most comfortable encouragement to newness of life. We are no longer tempted, as the men of Judah were in the days of Jeremiah, to say, *There is no hope, and therefore we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart*, Jerem. xviii. 12. It is not so with those who are made the sons of God by Christ Jesus. They know, that *when he shall appear, they shall*

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*shall be like him. Every man, therefore, that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as He is pure, 1 John iii. 2, 3. For we are saved by hope, Rom. viii. 24.*

Besides, is it not an immense advantage, that we, who were by nature the children of wrath, even as others, Eph. ii. 3. have power now given us to become the sons of God, John i. 12.; that we, who were some time alienated, and enemies in our mind, by wicked works, yet now hath Christ reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to present us holy, and unblameable, and unreproueable, in the sight of God? Coloss. i. 21, 22. While God considered us as enemies, all we did was displeasing to him, not excepting our best actions, which were done without any regard to his will or service. But now that Christ hath made peace for us through the blood of his cross, Coloss. i. 20. and hath redeemed us that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons, Gal. iv. 5. God dealeth with us as with sons, Heb. xii. 7.; and, because we are sons, hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, Gal. iv. 6. If, then, this Holy Spirit lovingly chasteneth us at one time, Heb. xii. 6.; and bestoweth his fruit of love, joy, peace, upon us at another, Gal. v. 22.; if he also helpeth our infirmities, Rom. viii. 26.; if it is by him that we have faith, 1 Cor. xii. 9.; that our souls are purified in obeying the truth, 1 Pet. i. 22.; that we are sanctified, 1 Cor. vi. 11.; that we have power, and love, and a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7.; how can we look upon ourselves as hardly dealt with by the covenant, for requiring reformation and good works of us, since, at the same time that we are commanded to use our utmost endeavours to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, we are also assured, that it is God which worketh in us both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure? Phil. ii. 12, 13.

When we consider the powerful instruments made use of by the Holy Spirit to keep us within the terms of the covenant, we shall be the more clearly convinced, that infinite wisdom, as well as mercy, is employed in the scheme of our salvation; and shall blame ourselves alone, if we are not happy. All the miracles recorded in the

Old and New Testament were wrought to satisfy us, that the Scriptures are the word of God. Being satisfied of this, we then hear God speaking to us the words of eternal wisdom, and enforcing his injunctions, not only with the most affecting examples, with temporal blessings and judgments, but with sanctions of infinite weight. And, that our attention may be perpetually awakened, and fixed on these things, he hath solemnly sanctified a seventh part of our time, which is to be spent in learning our duty, in searching the Scriptures, in examining ourselves, and in meditating on all the proofs and motives wherewith the faith and practice of a Christian are enforced. He hath also instituted a ministry to assist us in every part of this important work ; and given us a covenant, contained in two solemn ordinances, which, by an awful promise, or vow, binds the whole of his religion on our consciences. Now the Holy Spirit, who is the fountain both of faith and good works, communicates to us the necessary portions of grace, through the word, through the sabbath, through the ministry, and through the covenant of God, which we enter into by the one sacrament, and continually renew by the other.

Such means can hardly fail of success in any man who diligently applies them. But, forasmuch as *there is no man who liveth, and sinneth not*, the door of mercy is still open, provided we repent, and do our best to amend what is amiss in our behaviour ; for we are the children of God, who knows we are but dust, and looks upon us, through the merits of Christ our head, with all the patience and pity of a compassionate father, who willeth not the death of any sinner, much less of that poor sinner whom he hath adopted for his own child.

Let us not therefore say our case under covenant is hard, because it ties us to faith, and reformation of manners ; for Christ saith, *My grace is sufficient for you. Come, therefore, unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* “ Provided you do but “ feel the weight of your own sins, and apply to me for “ relief, I will lighten you of that load ; and, in lieu of “ it, will lay on you a *yoke that is easy, and a burden* “ *that*

“ that is light, namely, the covenant purchased with my  
“ blood, which, both on account of the peace it brings  
“ with it, and the assistance I will give you in keeping  
“ it, you will find to be not only easy, but delightful.”

Neither let us say, we believe in the merits of Christ, who hath already suffered the punishment of our sins; and therefore we may persevere in sin, forasmuch as God will not punish it over again in us: for Christ will say, *I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels.* And St. James saith, *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? Know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*

We are not to run into extremes, nor to wrest one part of the Scripture to a sense opposed by another. He understands not the word of God, who thinks we must give up this passage of St. James; or others of St. Paul, where the chief stress is laid on faith. *To him that worketh, saith the latter, Rom. iv. 4, 5. is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.* And, in the foregoing chapter, at the 27th and 28th, he saith, *Where is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law.*

To shew the perfect consonancy of the Spirit speaking by these two writers, nothing more will be needful, than to observe, first, That the faith which St. James tells us is not sufficient alone to justify us, is an historical unfruitful faith; whereas that which St. Paul says justifieth without the deeds of the Law, is a lively operative faith; for none of the scriptural writers lay greater stress on the necessity of repentance and holiness, than he: secondly, That the works recommended by St. James, are works done in consequence of a lively and operative faith; where-

as those condemned by *St Paul*, are works done before, or without faith: thirdly, That *St. James* does by no means exclude the necessity of faith; nor *St. Paul*, of works done in consequence of faith; the one only making faith in the blood of Christ the necessary immediate instrument of our salvation; and the other requiring, that this faith shall not be deemed efficacious, till it hath proved itself a true and lively faith by its fruits. *St. James*, therefore, is not to be understood as contradicting or correcting *St. Paul*; but as correcting the erroneous readers of *St. Paul*, who, misinterpreting his words, expected salvation from a faith in Christ which had no effect on their morals. The substance of both their doctrines, laid together, is this: He who believes in the sacrifice made by the death of Christ for the sins of the world, hath a right to the covenant of peace with God, through the righteousness of Christ applied to him by faith, and not through his own righteousness; which could not, exclusive of that faith, have intitled him to the benefit of that covenant; but, however, he is not to expect salvation through that faith alone, if it should prove dead, inactive, or unfruitful, because repentance, and reformation of manners, is, by the whole tenor of the Scriptures, made a necessary condition of the covenant. *Christ came into the world to save sinners*: but how? By calling them to faith and repentance; and, under these circumstances, by imputing the merits of his own sinless obedience to them, and satisfying the justice of his Father for them. Thus we see ourselves obliged to do what we can, and Christ's merits and blood laid down to pay for the rest. But what is it we can do? We can honour and please God by a life and conversation conformable to his will, and the example of his Son, whereof nothing but his grace, and, the effect of that grace, a lively faith in us, can be either the rule or motive; but, by such a life, we can in no sort atone for our past and present sins, nor intitle ourselves to the glories of heaven. But this Christ hath done for us, having bought us, who were sold under sin, with such a price as we never can repay, much less overpay; and therefore, when we have done all we can, we must say, *We are*



are unprofitable servants; for that servant only is profitable, who brings in some gain to his master, over and above the price that was paid for him.

But, since St. *Paul* exhorts us to stand fast in the faith, *1 Cor.* xvi. 13.; and St. *Peter*, in the first chapter of his second epistle, to give diligence to make our calling and election sure, by adding virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity, to faith; we are to conclude, that these things are in some measure placed within our own power; and ought to resolve on a strict obedience to the voice of God, thus speaking to us by his Apostles.

Give me leave now to conclude with reminding you, that the death of Christ is a fact acknowledged by all; that it is set forth in the strongest scriptural terms, as a true and an effectual sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; and that we must either firmly believe in it as such, or give the lye to God, and undertake to answer ourselves for all we do. Let him that needeth no physician, rely on his own health and strength; but let us, who are sick, and sensible also of our sickness, repose our trust in the prescriptions offered us by the great Healer of souls, who directs us to his blood as a precious balsam for the conscientious wounds of guilt; and to repentance, as a regimen preservative of our future innocence. Let us apply both by a lively faith to ourselves. Let us also entertain that sense of gratitude which is due to the inconceivable goodness of our Redeemer, *who, while we were yet sinners, died for us*; who, great as he is in himself, and glorious on his throne in heaven, *took on him the form of a servant, and humbled himself to the death of the cross, despising the shame*, that he might save us his poor offending creatures from the eternal punishment of our sins, and exalt us to the endless joys of heaven. If we are not wholly lost to all goodness, our faith must excite in us this grateful sense of his compassion for us; and this sense, to a mind capable of entertaining it in proportion as it does the sense of infinitely less considerable favours, will be a more powerful motive to a good life, than even the expectation of eternal retribution. Such a mind must

have a deep abhorrence of, and a settled indignation at, sin ; because it betrays the infinite Benefactor anew ; it puts him to open shame again ; it crucifies him afresh, in his spiritual body. And to such a mind, nothing—less than the possession of heaven itself, can give a pleasure so lasting, or a joy so exalted, as acts of virtue, which, in our case, are all acts of gratitude, whereby the infinitely gracious Being is pleased and honoured.

*Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh ; let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for he is faithful that promised) ; and let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works, Heb. x. 19, 20. 23, 24.*

And now let us humbly beseech the Holy Spirit to quicken our hearts with this faith ; let us earnestly beseech our gracious Saviour powerfully to intercede for us, and all other believers ; and, finally, let us humbly beseech the Father of mercies to accept of us, through the effectual merit and mediation of our Redeemer ; to whom, in the Unity of the ever-blessed Trinity, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE XI.

The Sanctions of the Christian Law.

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MATTHEW XXV. 46.

*These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the Righteous into life eternal.*

**T**HE Christian religion is every-where represented to us in Scripture, as a covenant between God and each particular Christian. The promise of God, who will never deceive us, is sufficient to assure us of the performance on his part. But as we were by the fallibility of our original nature capable of non-performance on our part; and as we are, under the present corruption of that nature, strongly disposed to falsify our promises to him; so it is necessary, in order to a firm perseverance in our engagements, that we should have somewhat of much greater strength to bind us, than the mere abstracted virtue of a promise. What, or how great, this should be, he can best conjecture, who best knows the depravity of his own nature, and the violence of the temptations to which he is exposed. Such an one will not take the covenant upon him, if he does not expect the greatest advantages from keeping it, unless the disadvantages arising from a total refusal of it should, in his judgment, be nearly equal to those he might apprehend from

a failure on his side, in case he should enter into it. But as all men are *by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath*, a covenant of peace with God, on any terms, must be highly eligible to every man, provided that peace is to be followed by an ability bestowed on the new Christian to keep his part of the covenant, and by the greatest happiness his nature is capable of receiving, expressly engaged to him by the promise of God, on his duly observing the articles he stipulates for. This will continue true, although he should be by the same covenant threatened with an equal degree of misery on non-performance; first, Because he hath no reason to expect exemption from that misery, in case he should not covenant at all; that is, in case he should still remain in his original state of enmity with God; and secondly, Because, be the misery never so great, as he hath it in his power to avoid it, he can have no reasonable objection to the covenant on that account, while he considers himself as a rational creature, whose lowest character it is, to choose good rather than evil, the greatest good rather than the greatest evil.

This is a true account of the Christian covenant, so far as the justice and goodness of God, and the happiness of men, can be considered as affected by it. It proposes infinite happiness, to which we have previously no right. It threatens eternal misery, to which we were liable however. It does both, to beings who have sense enough to prefer the pleasure they find in the smell of a rose, to the pain they feel in the prick of a pin. Whatsoever the weakness of man may really be, the self-sufficient, who thinks his reason a wise enough guide, who loves virtue for its own abstracted beauty, who hates vice for its own abstracted deformity, and who therefore insists he needs nothing but his own nature to make him live a life acceptable to God, hath not the shadow of a pretence for declining this covenant. The observation of its articles will not put him an hair's breadth out of his own way; and, if its motives are not necessary to him, they will not, however, lessen the force of those he borrows from the excellence of his nature. As to us, who confess our-

selves

selves corrupt and ill-disposed by nature, we stand in need of strong hopes and fears to keep us in our duty ; and therefore have reason, as often as we fall into temptation, to look on the eternal Sanctions of our covenant as necessary and happy preservatives of our virtue. Sure I am, we never find them too cogent. Nay, were it not for the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, which he always lends to such as covenant with him, and do their best to stand fast in that covenant, great and powerful as its Sanctions are, so miserably are we enslaved, through the corruption of our nature, to sin, that we should never be able to perform the conditions requisite on our part.

The happy self-sufficient may, on this confession, treat us with contempt, as creatures of very bad dispositions, or of such meanness and folly, as to confess a weakness we are perhaps no more addicted to than others ; they may call us mercenary wretches, and wholly destitute of virtue, because we do good through hope of reward, and abstain from evil through dread of punishment ; but they must own we are humble ; especially when they hear we lay claim to no other merit, than that of humility, and a just sense of our own infirmities. It is true, we hope this diffidence of ourselves may make us watchful, and careful to apply for greater strength than our own ; may preserve in us a lively attention to the Sanctions of our covenant, as necessary to creatures so full of frailty ; we hope these helps may keep us in our duty, till that duty becomes agreeable to us on its own account ; but infinitely more because it is most pleasing in his sight, to whom we owe our being, and all the good annexed to that being. We think the scheme of improvement, chalked out by the Christian covenant, bids fairer for this effect in us than any other ; which if, with the blessing of God, it should at length produce, we shall then have no great reason to envy others, who could begin a course of virtue without, as they tell us, the least regard to their own happiness.

But should these men ask us how we came to think so very meanly of ourselves, since we were cast in the same

mold with them, and had originally an equal chance for excellence of nature ; we shall readily own, it was experience and Scripture that taught us this lesson of humility, and convinced us we could not be reformed without hopes and fears in futurity. We found so great a weakness in our judgment, that we often took a thing for good, merely because it was pleasant ; and a thing for evil, merely because it was disagreeable ; which we afterwards found, to our cost, the very reverse. We also found, that when we judged best of things, it was often impossible to bring our affections and passions so to second our judgment, as to procure it the direction of our wills. Whether we ever saw the beauty of virtue with such enamoured eyes, or the ugliness of vice with so deep a distaste, as the men we are speaking to did, we cannot tell : taking them by their professions, we believe we did not ; for we often found vice pleasant, and virtue disagreeable : but if we are to judge by their actions, compared with our own, we cannot see reason to think there was originally any great difference between them and us. Of the difference, as it stands at present, there is but one who hath a right to judge. Having long smarted under the rod of experience, which, they say, is the tutors of fools, we at length recovered sense enough to find out our own defects ; which put us on applying to God for assistance.

But we no sooner opened his word with this view, than we saw, what our own experience had told us, that we are *conceived and born in sin* ; that *the thoughts of our hearts are only evil continually* ; that *our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked* ; and that *we are unable, of ourselves, to help ourselves* to better dispositions. We there saw this corruption of our nature accounted for ; and a method of cure provided for it in the Christian covenant, which, laying hold of our affections and passions, those instruments of sin, in our present natural state of depravity, hath converted them into so many engines of reformation, by proposing the eternal joys of heaven, as a proper object of the first ; and the  
endless

endless miseries of hell, as a bridle to the last. The more these joys engaged our desires, and the more these terrors alarmed our fears, the less sensibly did we feel the force of temptation. Hence it was, that, although the effect of our fears was very shocking, we did not wish it less; because we found, the more agreeable impressions made on our desires would not have been sufficient without it. We were so depraved and stupefied in sin, so thoroughly convinced of our own inability to subdue it in ourselves, and so much afraid of feeling its dreadful effects in our state of separation from, and enmity with, God, that we were glad of peace and reformation on any terms; and therefore closed with the covenant, as well satisfied with its dreadful threatenings, which we saw necessary, as with its sweetest promises, which our corrupt nature forbade us to hope for, without a due attention to those threatenings. Bad as we still are, we are sensible we should have been much worse, had we wanted either the happiness of futurity, as an incitement to good, or the terrors of eternity, as a dissuasive from bad, actions.

Thus you have our confession honestly laid before you. Do not despise us altogether for the judgment we have made of the covenant and ourselves; you, I mean, who own the Scriptures, and yet look on our motives as mercenary and slavish; till you have better considered, that those *Scriptures have concluded all*, not excepting even you, *under sin*, Galat. iii. 22. that they tell you, *The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God; but found reason to say, They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doth good, no, not one*, Psalm xiv. 2, 3. and that, in order to reclaim mankind, he hath promised us, on the dissolution of this earthly tabernacle, *a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*, 2 Cor. v. 1. and threatened, in case of disobedience, *to cast us into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched*, Mark ix. 45. There is no honorary exception for you here. You may, in as high terms as you please, declare your disinterested love of virtue, and tell us you disclaim to pursue it for the sake of heaven;

but

but you see the all-knowing God hath *concluded you under sin*, as well as us ; hath pronounced your *hearts deceitful, and desperately wicked*, as well as ours ; perhaps not the less deceitful and wicked, for your high opinion of them ; and hath proposed the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell, as the means of reformation, even to you, with all your beauty of virtue, and deformity of vice. This I know must be very mortifying to men, who set up for such refinements in morality, as not only to object to God's threatenings against sin, but even to despise the promises he makes to righteousness, as unworthy of their attention. There must be an error somewhere here. Either your Maker is mistaken in offering you such motives, as you ought to disdain ; or you must be mistaken in thinking you have no need of them. You are but men, and may possibly err. Pride is a most insinuating flatterer. If ever there is reason to suspect its influence, it is when men think highly of themselves, in opposition to the peremptory judgment pronounced on them by the Searcher of hearts ; or when they treat with contempt such methods of reformation, as cost the blood of his only-begotten Son to purchase for them. Let me advise you, in the bowels of charity, to examine yourselves more closely on this subject ; for, if you cannot return to an humbler way of thinking concerning yourselves, you must inevitably fall into a total apostasy from the word and covenant of God, which set forth sentiments of you directly contrary to your own.

Try yourself by facts. Can you resist the allurements of a wanton beauty, merely because virtue is more beautiful ? Or, does the deformity of fornication or adultery, to which she invites you, give her face the aspect of a fiend in your eyes ? However, this perhaps may be no fair trial of your principle. Try yourself in a case of less difficulty. Fraud or imposition is naturally a filthy, a despicable vice. Are you sure you never attempted the property of another by undue arts in trade, gaming, horse-racing, or the like ? I ask this the rather, because the low pitiful vice under consideration often disguises itself in lace and jewels ; at which times it hath so much the



air of a gentleman, that possibly it might pass, on your principle, as a thing not altogether contemptible. I know few vices that make a more abominable figure than drunkenness, or to which a rational creature can have less temptation; yet it may be, for all that, you have been sometimes drunk. If you ever were, where was your passion then for the beauty of virtue, and your aversion to the foulness of vice? Or rather, where were they, when you, yet sober, yielded to the other bottle, or schemed the very carousal itself? Is pride no vice? Or, have you always so abhorred it for its deformity, as never once to have thought too meanly of another, nor too highly of yourself, I mean particularly in point of understanding? Are you sure you never preferred your own opinion on a weak reason, purely because it was your own, to that of another man, founded on a stronger, merely because it was not yours? Have you never attempted, in dispute, or otherwise, to make even the Scriptures ply a little to your preconception? Or, how often have you resigned your judgment to the dictates of the divine oracles? Try yourself on the point at present under debate. You believe God requires, we should be virtuous. You believe also, there can be no virtue in doing good for the sake of reward; or in abstaining from bad actions for fear of punishment. Yet you know God hath in his word promised infinite rewards to the first, and threatened endless punishments to the last. You know there is nothing he inculcates oftener, nor in stronger terms, throughout his word. How can you, on your principle, clear him of an intention to destroy all virtue? Was it for nothing that he thought fit to bear so strongly on our hopes and fears? Did he intend we should altogether neglect what he so emphatically urges on the reader? If, on this trial, you still continue to cherish your own opinion, I must tell you, there is one virtue you think very ugly, and that is, the love of truth; and one vice you think very beautiful, and that is, the conceit you have of your own judgments, which, in this instance, is the judgment of an egregious fool; because it judges the Scriptures to be the word of God, who cannot err; and yet holds to its

own opinion as right, directly in opposition to the Scriptures.

But here you will retort, that we Christians, with all the force of our Sanctions, can no more stand this examination than you. If this is true, you cannot say, the Sanctions of our covenant deprive us of our freedom, or make us so slavishly regular in our lives, as you foreboded. But our vices do not render you virtuous. You say your Sanctions are sufficient. That this is mere speculation, the trial recommended to you clearly proves; for, in fact, you find your love of virtue for its own sake cannot make you virtuous; nor your hatred of vice, on its own account, hinder you from being vicious. This being the real case, you have as much reason as we to look out for stronger inducements to a good life. We recommend ours as the best, not only because they are the strongest (and yet proved not too strong by the truth of your own retort), but because they are the choice of him who made you, who best knows what you want, who is too wise to err in the choice of means, and too good not to accept of your services on terms of his own proposing. If you are as virtuous as he desires you should be, and on the footing he requires, what else, or what more, can you wish for? But if, through a conceited supposition of your own excellence, and a chimerical attempt to be virtuous, on principles of your own contrivance, which have little or no force, you aim at an unaccountable and unattainable virtue, and fall short of the reality, while you catch at the shadow, will you not have reason, in the end, to curse your own vanity and folly? What is the virtue and goodness of an accountable creature? Is it any thing else than duty, than the performance of that duty we owe to the Governor of the world, whom we ought infinitely to revere, because he is just, and will punish, if we sin; whom we ought infinitely to love, because he is the most excellent and beneficent of all beings, and will, if we obey, reward us beyond our merits? If you fear and love him as reason requires you should, you will, to the uttermost of your power, discharge your duty to him; that is, you will be virtuous, you will be good, you will be

be what he intended you should be when he gave you being. If virtue is any thing distinct from God, will he be better pleased with your regulating your actions in regard to that, than in regard to his own majesty and goodness? Take care you do not excite his jealousy by a preference of your own ideal virtue to his real prerogative, by setting up an idol of your own making in your heart, to intercept that duty and devotion, whereof he only ought to be the object. You cannot be guilty either of a greater absurdity, or a greater crime, than a resolution to be accountable to yourself only. You do not depend more on God as a physical being, than as a moral agent. He is the Governor, as well as the Creator, of the world. As your Creator, he knows what you are, infinitely better than you do yourself; and as your Governor, he chooses to rule over you, according to his own attributes, and the nature he hath given you. Judge therefore of your own nature by his commands, rather than by the airy whims of your own brain. If he tells you, *The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment*, you must believe it to be true, that they actually will; just that they should; and most fit for you, whose affections are so corrupt, and passions so disorderly, to be seriously and awfully laid to heart. If he tells you, *the righteous shall go into life eternal*, this also you must believe to be true, consistent with the justice and goodness of God, and perfectly suitable to your nature, that cannot be reduced to its duty without an expectation so highly interesting. If you candidly consult your own experience, you will find this to be the very best method of proceeding with you.

Put the case then, that you have found out God will not be really so bountiful as he promises to the good, nor so very severe as he threatens to the wicked, it will be but prudence in you to conceal your discovery, and to content yourself with living as you list, on the strength of it; for, should you publish it, you will lose the benefit of the secret. Your neighbours will be as wise as you, and will begin to practise those arts of living, those outrages, perhaps on yourself, which the discovery will encourage

rage them to, and which you might have enjoyed the use of alone, while they, poor simpletons! had they still believed in heaven and hell, being tied up by their faith, must have left you, who are loose, a wider field to range in, and have fallen themselves an easy prey to the designs of a man unawed by expectations so apt to hamper the believer. It will be a silly vanity in you to preach up a doctrine you might otherwise have turned to so good account.

However, to be a little more serious; if the belief of future retributions, in their full extent, is really so necessary to the good government of the world, can that belief be an error? Is God able to manage a world of his own making no otherwise than by idle fears, and groundless hopes? Or, is the world able to govern itself without him, or his expedients? Or, will mankind be happier, if they shake off all government, and live at random? No; such suppositions would do too much violence to common sense; and therefore we must have recourse to the doctrine of my text, as the great fundamental of all morality, of all society, of all government.

On looking carefully into our own nature, and considering that we are made by a Being of infinite wisdom, goodness, justice, and power, we find it probable, that our souls are intended for immortality. The capacities of the soul are greater than its present occasions require. The vessel is too large for what we have here to put into it. Its thirst of knowledge, and appetite of grandeur, appear unbounded; at least, there is nothing attainable in this world that can satisfy them. Considered in this light, it assumes the air of somewhat above its present condition; and seems, on many occasions, like a prince in disguise, to move and act with a part superior to the dress it outwardly appears in. If we add to this its eager desire of immortality, and abhorrence of annihilation, and then ask, Why such capacities? why such desires? we shall find reason to conclude, either that they are unnatural, which cannot possibly be true of the capacities, nor probably of the desires, because proportionate to the capacities; or that

that they were given us by our Maker for purposes more adequate to their size, than we can discover, in a state of greater importance. This must appear still more probable, when we reflect, that, just as the Governor of the world is, he does not always reward or punish, in this life, the actions of us his subjects ; nay, that he never rewards here in proportion to the ideas we have of his goodness, nor punishes in proportion to those we have of his justice. From hence it is but natural to conclude, he will do both hereafter. But whether our future existence will be endless, is another question, and of more difficult resolution. However, as there is some reason to believe it will, and none to believe it will not, we cannot help concluding in favour of the former. We grant God can, and may, annihilate our souls, if he pleases ; but it appears probable he will not ; for to what end ? May they not be turned to good account in the creation ? May not his justice, his wisdom, his goodness and power, be glorified in their existence to all eternity ? To some it seems rational to believe, that, now they are in being, it will as absolutely require an act of omnipotence to annihilate, as it did to create them. If it will, what reason is there for supposing omnipotence thus exerted in contrary effects, in the destruction of its own works ? Such a supposition seems to arraign the wisdom of the First Cause ; and would, one should think, reflect more strongly on him who foresaw all things, than on a less knowing workman, who destroys what he makes, when it wears old, and becomes useless.

But all these things are matter only of probable conjecture, which, without revelation, we should never have been able to build on with any certainty. That indeed hath confirmed these conjectures, and *brought life and immortality to light*, which were before covered with such a degree of darkness, as rendered them scarcely discernible. It is, however, observable, that the immortality of the soul is no otherwise discovered in Scripture than by the eternity of the rewards or punishments, to which it is to be adjudged ; so that we can draw no argument from thence for our existence, beyond the duration of our hap-  
piness

piness or misery. In speculation, the belief of immortality precedes the belief of retribution ; but in revelation, which is practical, not speculative, the eternity of the retribution is all that is inculcated ; and we are left to infer from thence, by a necessary consequence, the immortality. The truth is, happiness is always represented in Scripture as the same thing with life, and misery as the same thing with death or destruction ; which opens a much nobler field for reflection than hath been commonly imagined. It intimates to us, that the soul, once called into being, can be truly said to live and exist, only in its piety, virtue, and happiness ; that is, in its union with God ; and that it admits of no other death but sin, and separation from the source of all good. Its endless happiness results necessarily from its goodness, and its love ; and why should God ever destroy that which is good, that which loves him ? And its endless misery results as necessarily and naturally from its wickedness and aversion from God ; and why should he reduce that to nothing, which he did not make merely that it might be wicked for some time, and then ceasing to be, should wholly disappoint the wise ends he had in creating ?

The punishment of the wicked is said in my text to be *everlasting*, and the reward of the righteous *eternal*. *Everlasting*, and *eternal*, signify the same thing in our language, and are put for one and the same word in the *Greek* original : wherefore in that passage of Scripture they are to be taken as precisely importing the same thing ; because it cannot be supposed, that any writer, much less that Christ, could have two very different senses to the same word, repeated in the same short sentence, without giving the least warning of his change of meaning, or adding any mark of limitation to it in either place of that sentence. We are then to look for but one interpretation of the word in this place, when applied both to the reward and punishment.

But here it is to be noted, that the word is sometimes applied to things that had both a beginning, an end, as well as to such things as had a beginning, but shall  
never

never have an end; or that being, that is without beginning and end. It must, therefore, be determined by Scripture, and the reason of the thing, what extent of duration is to be understood by it here.

The happiness and misery of our future state have their duration expressed to us, *Daniel* xii. 2. by the same term our Saviour uses, *Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame, and everlasting contempt.* For the reason already given, the word applied to both must signify the same thing; and that this is the same as *eternal*, appears from ver. 3. where we are told, *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.* That in the original *Hebrew*, which is translated by *for ever and ever*, expresses endless duration so strongly, that all the ancient translations render it by the words which, in their several languages, best intimate eternity, or duration absolutely without end. Our future happiness is called, *Luke* xii. 33. *a treasure in the heavens that faileth not,* and *1 Pet.* i. 4. *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens.* By these expressions, and many more that might be brought for the same purpose, we may see the sense of *eternal* applied in my text to the joys of the righteous after this life; which may serve to give us the sense of it likewise when applied to the torments of the damned.

But those torments also are expressed in other places by terms that set forth an endless duration. Our Saviour represents them, *Mark* ix. 43. by *an inextinguishable fire,* and thrice over in the same chapter by *a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched.* But why an immortal worm, and an inextinguishable fire, so often reiterated, and so alarmingly inculcated, if the thing to be tormented were, after some time, to be delivered from them? To tell us we should suffer by two eternal instruments of vengeance, and to mean only, that we should suffer under them for an age, a year, or a day, would be nonsense, or a wretched shuffle of words, calculated merely to frighten us. Why should the worm

be called *immortal*, and the fire *inextinguishable*, if we were no way concerned in either of the epithets? But the eternity of hell-torments is still more directly expressed, *Revel. xiv. 11.* where, in relation to such as had *received the mark of the beast*, the words intimating the endless duration are applied to the very torments, *the smoke of their torments ascendeth up for ever and ever.* He, saith *St. James ii. 13.* *shall have judgment without mercy, that shewed no mercy.* Here is a particular instance, wherein a criminal is assured of punishment without end; for, if it were to have an end, it could, with no regard to truth, be said to be without mercy.

Since the eternity of future rewards and punishments is thus exhibited in terms admitting no limitation, we must take those that do, in the same unlimited sense, especially as they are the very terms appropriated to the eternity of God himself, and in so great a variety of places applied to the happiness and misery to come, that we cannot rationally believe the inspired writers could have used them to express a certain portion of time only. Surely, if they had, they must, in some one place among so many, have hinted that intention, which they never do.

As to the rewards to be conferred on the obedient and the good, they are every-where represented as endless and everlasting. *I know*, saith Christ, speaking of his Father, *John xii. 50.* *that his commandment is life everlasting;* that is, that he who keepeth it shall live for ever. *St. Paul*, *Rom. vi. 22.* thus comforts the penitent converts to Christianity, *Now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.* Thus also he encourages such as are in trouble, *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,* *2 Cor. iv. 17.* *I give unto my sheep eternal life*, saith Christ, *John x. 28.* Passages to this purpose so abound in all parts of the New Testament, that, unless we think the Holy Spirit intended to deceive us, we must believe the blessed reward of a good life here will be life, and joy, and glory, without end hereafter.

And



And are not the punishments of the wicked said to be eternal, as frequently, and in terms as express? Are they not called *everlasting burnings*? Isa. xxxiii. 14. *everlasting shame and contempt*? Dan. xii. 2. *everlasting fire*? Matt. xviii. 8. *everlasting punishment*? Matt. xxv. 46. *eternal judgment*? Hebr. vi. 2. *eternal damnation*? Mark iii. 29. *The blackness of darkness for ever*? Jude 13. Were these expressions thrown out only to frighten us into our duty with false terrors? Doth God, who forbids us *to do evil that good may come of it*, use equivocal words, and pious frauds, in order to make us honest men, and lovers of truth? No; but these epithets of *everlasting* and *eternal*, although applied here to that which may last for ever, must signify only a limited time; because they are so to be understood, when applied to things that of necessity must have an end. Is this a consequence? I may venture to say it can only be such to a very bad head, governed by a worse heart, that cherishes in itself the hope of a temporary punishment, in order that it may sin with less restraint or fear.

Who expects eternal happiness on any other footing than God's promise? And hath he not the menaces of God to fill him with the dread of eternal punishment, couched in the same terms, as to its duration? Is the God of truth less to be believed when he threatens us with what we deserve, than when he promises what we neither do, nor ever can, deserve? No; but God is just, say the objectors to this doctrine, and therefore will not punish a temporary offence with eternal misery. But I say God is just in having set eternal happiness and misery before free and rational beings, and left them to choose which they will. If they choose the latter, who is it makes them eternally miserable? Not God surely, *who willeth not the death of a sinner*; but themselves, who, for the pleasures of sin, trample on all his goodness, violate all his laws, proclaim open war with him, associate with the devil, and so debase and pollute their own nature, as to render it for ever incapable of glory and happiness. That such men are very unfit to prescribe their own punishment, is plain; because they say, vice sufficiently

punishes itself here, and have found a way to make their vices sit so easy on them, that, were they to submit to a future suffering of any sort, we may be sure it would be a very gentle one, and of a mere momentary continuance. He who chooses hell, rather than heaven, for any consideration in this world, as the difference is doubly infinite, sins infinitely against his own reason. And he who wilfully insults God with his vices, sins infinitely; because he sins against infinite Majesty. All indignities rise in proportion to the known grandeur of him, to whom they are offered, and in strict justice ought to be punished in the same proportion; if offered to our earthly father, they are an unnatural breach of filial duty, and are punishable with the forfeiture of his favour; if offered to our king, they are rebellion and high treason, and are punishable with the loss of honour, fortune, and life; if offered to God, they are blasphemy and impiety, and punishable, as they are committed against the infinite Being, with endless disgrace and misery. This gradation cannot be denied without levelling God and all his creatures, and confounding all distinctions. Wherefore sins of indignity are to be rated and punished according to the known dignity of the being offended; and the littleness or insignificance of him who commits them rather aggravates than lessens their guilt, the offence being always esteemed so much the more provoking, as the offender is more inferior to the party offended. Besides, there is another consideration whereby the heinousness of sins is to be esteemed; and that is the importance of the law, and the ends of the government, against which they are perpetrated. Now the importance of the law we transgress, and the ends of God's government over the world, which sin tends to frustrate, are both infinitely great; and therefore, if the duty and happiness of the intellectual world are to be provided for, it must be by the eternity of punishments inflicted on the offenders, as well as of the rewards conferred on the obedient, that the free, the moral part of the creation may in no period of duration want the benefit of the necessary example arising from the effects both of obedience and transgression. Before it was known

in what degree God would punish sin, the enjoyment of his favour, and of celestial glory, was not sufficient to keep even the angels in their duty, and to prevent rebellion in heaven. What remedy now can we conceive for the like evil in time to come, but that sin should be as lastingly penal, as obedience is rewardable ?

Here it is objected, first, That this doctrine makes all sins equal, because infinite ; which is false ; for all infinites of the same kind are not equal. A cubical foot of gold contains more parts than a cubical inch, although the latter is infinitely divisible. And all sins, directly and intentionally committed against God, are rendered infinite in regard to the infinity of the object, which by no means takes away the greater or less aggravations, where-with, in other respects, they were attended. For instance, murder is a greater sin than adultery, and that than theft, considered in themselves, or in respect to the temptations to each, and the injury done by each ; but, in regard to God, and his law, they fall under quite another consideration ; for the committal of any one is, in his sight, as the committal of all the rest, because his authority and law are equally despised in them all. *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all ; for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law,* James ii. 10, 11.

Again, it is observed, that if one sin may be thus rendered infinite, another may, for the same reason ; and the same man may be guilty of both, and consequently can be punished only for one ; because he hath merited an infinite punishment by the one, and cannot be twice infinitely punished ; whereas justice requires he should be proportionably punished for the other.

This at first sight looks like a shrewd objection, and the more so, as it is introduced by a very great man <sup>a</sup>. But in truth it is but a mere quibble. He who hath been guilty of many sins may be punished with more stripes, than he who was guilty of fewer, and yet both for ever. As

<sup>a</sup> *Episcopus.*

their crimes were infinite, but unequal; so their punishment may be infinite, and yet unequal. That all transgressions of God's law are, in respect to him, equal, St. James hath already told us. But that in themselves they are unequal, and will, though everlastingly, be unequally punished, our Saviour hath plainly assured us. *The servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes, Luke xii. 47, 48.* He also gives us to understand, *Matt. xxiv. 51. that he who, in the absence of his master, began to smite his fellow-servants, &c. shall have his portion with the hypocrites, or, as it is, Luke xii. 46. with the unbelievers;* that is, with dissemblers and infidels, the very worst of men, who are to undergo the severest punishment; because they pretend to that religion which they have not, and commit all manner of wickedness under the mask of piety, and in the name of God. It is with an eye to the same persons that he saith, *Matt. xxiii. 14. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: for ye devour widows houses, and for a pretence make long prayer; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.* The inhabitants of *Sodom* and *Capernaum* will both be condemned at the last day; but *it will be more tolerable for the former, as our Saviour assured the latter, Matt. xi. 23, 24.*

On the whole, our sins are committed against infinite reason to the contrary, against infinite Majesty, against infinite goodness, against a law of infinite importance, against a government of infinite utility. They are committed voluntarily by men, who, in the act of sin, know they offend God, and please the devil. They shew a contempt of all God hath done for us, even of his own precious blood, the value of which is infinite; and therefore are, in these respects, infinitely heinous; from whence it follows, that they may justly be punished with endless disgrace and misery.

Some, more ingenious than wise <sup>b</sup>, are for splitting the difference between God's word and their own opinions,

<sup>b</sup> *Episcopus.*

on this important article of our faith. They allow the eternal separation of the wicked from God and heaven, or the punishment of loss; but deny the reality of positive pains, or torments, to be endured for ever. But is not eternal exclusion, eternal shame, disgrace, remorse, an infinite punishment? And why, if as they insist, sins are to be punished in proportion to their size, are they thus infinitely punished, unless their sins are infinite? Their own principle, we see, condemns their concession; but, tenacious as they are of that principle, the Scriptures extort the concession, to the confusion of those who make it, and who by the same rule ought to allow also the positive punishments of the damned, since they are as expressly affirmed in Scripture, as the negative. Besides, this scheme actually makes all sins equal, if estimated by the punishment, which is one and the same for all delinquents; namely, separation from God, and exclusion from the joys of heaven; at least, if there is any inequality, or degrees, in this purely exclusive punishment, the more inveterately wicked any soul thus excluded is, the less grievous will this punishment be to such a soul, because the less fitted to relish the joys of that place out of which it is shut, and consequently the less inclined to regret its loss. Thus, on this wise hypothesis, the greater the sinner is, the more mildly shall he be punished, directly contrary to the rules of justice.

Others take upon them to say, the wicked, after enduring the torments of hell for a certain time, will be thereby reformed, and restored to the favour of God. Who hath told them this? What is there either in Reason or Scripture, to make us believe the pains of hell have this purgative quality; that hell is a nursery for heaven; or that the devil, who tempts us in this life, will become a preacher of righteousness, and the pastor of a flock for Christ, in the next? No, no; as the mercy and long-suffering patience of God encourages the perversely foolish to the sins of impenitence and presumption here, so it is most rationally to be apprehended, his vengeance will drive them to the sins of blasphemy and despair hereafter. Can hell purge those, who could not

be cleansed by the blood of Christ? Or will the damned permit the devil to work that in them by fire and brimstone, which they would not suffer God to work by grace, and the tenders of his mercy, when they were free? But even supposing they should, what figure will these forced reformades, converted by the devil, make in heaven on the strength of a renovation, wherein the providence of the Father, the gospel of Christ, and the grace of the Holy Ghost, had no hand; wherein choice, liberty, or the love of God and goodness, had no share; whereof anguish or terror was the only cause; whereto relief from the horrible effects of sin, not hatred of sin itself, was the only motive?

In opposition to this amazing supposition, we are told, that *those who were unjust, must be unjust still; and those who were filthy, must be filthy still.* We are told, that *without shedding of blood there is no remission*; that the blood of Christ is that alone which *taketh away sin*; and that *there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin*, for the sins of such as *transgress wilfully after they have received the knowlege of the truth*, of such as *have trodden under-foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing*; and have done *despite unto the Spirit of grace*; but a certain *fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* We are also assured, that *it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame.* If this is true of the wicked, even in this life, why shall it not be true of the damned after the final sentence shall be passed upon them?

There are others again, who maintain that God, after punishing the wicked in proportion to their sins, will annihilate them all. For an opinion so bold, and attended with consequences of such importance to the moral world, they give us two reasons, neither of them at all convincing.

First,

First, They say, our sins are temporary and finite, and therefore cannot justly be punished with endless torments. And, secondly, They judge, the wicked cannot be reformed in hell, nor ever rendered fit for an admission into heaven; and therefore must be reduced to nothing. This piece of practical Atheism prevails strangely at present, even among men who would take it very ill to be told, they are no Christians.

Whether this opinion is founded in truth, or not, the best way is, according to our Saviour's rule, to judge of it by its fruits. Do these men, who have such a fellow-feeling with the devil and the damned, stand in no need of the indulgence, afforded by their principle, to vice and wickedness of all kinds? Have they no reason to apprehend themselves concerned in the question about eternal torments? Nothing in their consciences to whisper a wish to their judgments, that they themselves should hereafter be nothing? Is it all pure, abstracted, disinterested, pity for others, without the least mixture of compassion? How godlike is their goodness, who being free from sin themselves, and assured of their own happiness, find such tenderness for the sinner, for the reprobate, even for the author of all evil! This is indeed a very soothing opinion, and wonderfully serves to set forth both his good-nature who holds it, and to mollify the severity of guilt in those who feel it. Were there no other reason but this, I should be apt to suspect its truth; for it seems to be a maxim, that nothing can be true, which, of its own nature, encourages sin; as it does, that nothing can be false, which is necessary to the prevention or cure of sin; because, otherwise, sin would have a foundation in the nature of things, and one truth, at least, to countenance it; from whence it would follow, that an evil principle must have had an hand in the creation, and therefore probably in the government, of the world. If a good Being supremely and uncontrollably governs the world, he must do every thing consistent with the freedom of his moral creatures, to prevent their falling into sin and misery. Should he so contrive things, as that temptations to sin should be great and present, and his rewards and punishments little and future, he could

could not expect to be well obeyed. That our temptations to sin are present, and also very strong, the Nihilators themselves will readily grant; because they make it a reason for that indulgence their principle promises. Now is it not evident, that he, who believes the punishment of sin will be temporary, hath less, infinitely less, reason to resist temptation, than he who believes it will be eternal? And is there not therefore infinitely less reason to hope, he will never fall, or, if fallen, that he should rise again? If there is but one supreme, eternal Being; if that Being is infinitely good, just, and powerful; there must be an infinite reason against moral evil, that is, against the only possible evil; and this reason may lie as well in the infinity of punishment, as in that of reward. It can indeed be nothing else, but one or both. But creatures can neither enjoy nor suffer infinitely, any otherwise than in point of duration; which proves the eternity, either of the reward or punishment. Now, there is not so much reason for the eternity of a reward, which we can never deserve, as for the eternity of a punishment, which we may, if our sins are infinite. Since I have been here again obliged to mention the infinity of sin, I beg leave to be understood in this sense, not that such sins are infinite as are committed under the ignorance of God's law, or without any tincture of contempt, or an intentional insult on his Majesty; but such only as give a character to our whole lives; such as we persevere in to the last, although we know God abhors them, and us for committing them; such in a word, as on the whole, shew we are by choice the servants of *Satan*, and not of God.

A man of this stamp is infinitely guilty in the sight of God; because, as far as in him lies, he disappoints the whole intention of the creation. God made all things here for man, and man for himself. But if man turns every thing here to an occasion of sin, and himself to rebellion, how are the wise and gracious intentions of God to be answered? Will a temporary punishment, followed by annihilation, make amends? No; God did not make him in vain; yet in vain he must have been made, if, after a life of sin, and a short punishment, he is to be un-



made again. Surely, the infinitely wise Being, who created and disposes all things, can turn this his creature, who would not be his servant, to a better account. He can even make him serve the purposes of righteousness by exhibiting in him to all eternity a wholesome example of his indignation at sin, that angels and men may see, and fear to offend. This way, and this only, God may bring universal good out of moral evil, and make either happy, or at least useful, servants, of all his moral creatures; insomuch that what *St. Paul* said, *Rom. xi.* to the Gentile converts, concerning the unbelieving Jews, may for ever be truly said to the just, concerning the benefits they will derive from the example made of the wicked; *If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world—behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards you goodness, if you continue in his goodness; otherwise you also shall be cut off.*

But, over and above all this, God may apply the wicked to other uses, of which, at present, we can form no determinate idea. Throughout his universal empire he may have offices and stations of inconceivable use to the whole, which none can so well fill as the wicked; because confinement, disgrace, and pain, may be as essential to those offices, as they are to the business of a miner, or a gally-slave. As, for instance, they are threatened in Scripture with a punishment of fire; how do we know but the inscrutable phenomena of that element may arise from the agency of evil spirits, who, although chained themselves in the blackness of darkness toward the centre of a luminous body, may, in order to some small mitigation of their pain, so elaborate the combustible matter as to be the cause of that motion whereby the rays of light and heat are propelled towards, and from, the surface? This supposition will always have a possibility to countenance it, till the nature of fire, and the activity of light, are discovered to be the effects of some other cause. But be this as it will, there is all the reason in the world for supposing, God obliges them to answer some other ends of their creation, besides that of exemplifying his justice; and, in order to it, assigns them such a situation as may render them physically,

physically, as well as morally, useful. The devil, who, from a prince in heaven, is become a tyrant in hell, is continued in being, not for the evil he is permitted, but for the good he is forced, to do. While he is himself the highest example of God's justice, he is also the punisher of those he tempts to sin ; and will, as the executioner of vengeance, be compelled to do more good, on the whole, to the moral world, than God will suffer him, as a tempter, to do evil. What other services he renders to God against his will, in his station as *prince of the air*, we know not ; but we are sure he does not hold that principality merely on the merit of doing mischief. To shut up this argument ; we are not to conclude for the annihilation of the damned, till we are sure infinite Wisdom and Power can by no means serve itself either of them, or their punishment.

It is to no manner of purpose, that the favourers of annihilation make use of the words *death* and *destruction*, as applied to the wicked in Scripture, in order to wrest a proof from thence of their falling into nothing. The word *death* is used by the sacred writers in four different senses. Sometimes it signifies *a death unto sin*, sometimes *a separation of soul and body*, and sometimes *a separation of the soul from God*, in order to its eternal confinement in hell, which is called *the second death*. The two first happen to men while yet alive. The third, when the soul and body are disunited. And the last is called death ; not because it is attended with annihilation, which hath no analogy with any kind of death ; but metaphorically ; because, as, in a natural death, the body is cut off from the soul, its only principle of life, so, in this, the soul is cut off from God, who is the life, that is, the happiness and joy, of the soul. If a wicked soul ceased to exist on its departure from the body, how could it be *judged, or sent away into punishment with the devil and his angels at the last day* ? Now, after this, we are assured, *there shall be no more death* ; that is, no new deaths of any kind ; so that, if there is to be an annihilation of the damned, no argument can be drawn for it from any use of the word *death* in Scripture.

Neither

Neither does the word *destruction* afford them any advantage, there being no one place in all the Bible where it signifies an absolute annihilation of any substance; no, not even when it is called *utter destruction*, as in *Zechar. xiv. 11*. Indeed, when it is applied to worldly power, sin, death, &c. which are either but non-entities, or mere modes of things, it sometimes, not always, intimates a total abolition of the subject. When it is applied to kingdoms or cities, it threatens dissolution to societies, and ruin to houses; that is, dissipation to the mere assemblages; but by no means annihilation to the men or materials whereof they consist. When it is applied to men simply, it often signifies disappointment to their schemes, downfall to their ambition or power; or a substitution of poverty and affliction, for wealth and pleasure; never more than a natural death. But when it is applied to the incorrigibly wicked, it signifies expressly their final punishment or damnation, not annihilation; for, after all that is intimated by *destruction* is actually executed on them, we hear of them again existing in their torments. This might easily be shewn from many passages. I shall only take notice of two. Our Saviour saith, *Matt. vii. 13. Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, or hell, and many there be which go in thereat.* Now, that hell does not annihilate the damned, though it is here called destruction, is plain from the parable of the rich man, whom we find existing in the midst of its torments. Hence it appears, that destruction only signifies misery without hope of relief. Again St. Paul tells us, *Heb. ii. 14. that our Saviour took on him the flesh and blood of a man, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.* Here the devil is expressly said to have been destroyed by the death of Christ; but surely not annihilated; for we know he is to be judged at the last day, and punished afterwards; and therefore what follows, but that, by *destruction* in this place, we are to understand the abolition of his empire, namely, sin, and its effects, in all who should embrace the Gospel of Christ, and believe in his death?

It is easy to see what men mean by such dissolute objections, founded on arguments so evasive. They pretend the honour of God, and tenderness to their fellow-creatures ; whereas nothing can be more manifest, than that they mean all the time an indulgence for themselves, for the vilest part of themselves ; and preach up this indulgence among their acquaintances for no other reason, than because they cannot securely enough believe in it, till they have a croud to believe with. For this goodly end they represent us, who believe in the eternity of future torments, as cruel and inhuman ; not seeming to consider, that, although the infliction of such torments should be never so unjust and cruel, we are not to be blamed for it, since we are not the inflictors ; nay, nor considering, that, while we believe their eternity, we must be really cruel and unfaithful in the highest degree, should we be silent on the awful subject. But they indeed ought to reflect a little more closely, whether, as they cannot be absolutely sure, that the punishment of the wicked will be only temporary, they do not act a most ensnaring and cruel part in giving vice such hopes of indulgence, as, in the generality of men, will have the same effects with the hope of total impunity. For my own part, I solemnly declare, there is nothing in revelation I am more thoroughly convinced of than the eternity of those torments. This declaration I make, not that I presume to hope it will have any weight, merely because it is mine, but that it may be my apology for often and strongly insisting on the terrible doctrine ; and surely it is a sufficient one. That clergyman, who believes, as I do, can in nothing shew himself so truly tender and affectionate to his flock, as in dwelling often on the dreadful subject, in painting it to the life in all its horrors, and in urging it home on the hearts of the insensible with every argument that can convince, and every expression that can alarm. He cannot possibly exceed on such a subject ; for, say what he will, he must still be short of infinity. The Scriptures will best supply him with materials, whether he aims at convincing or rousing. Let him say after God, and fear not, though the wicked should wince, when he  
lances ;

lances ; and the affectedly nice ascribe that shock to their delicacy, which is felt only in their guilt. They may say he is unmannerly for talking of hell to the genteel ; but this is not to move him ; for hell was made for the genteel, and for them that *fare sumptuously every day*, as well as for meaner mortals. If they would have him speak to them only of heaven, let them shew him in their lives, that they are in the way to heaven. But if avarice, or ambition, or pride, or oppression, or if riot, sensuality, lust, and villainy, shew themselves triumphant in their actions, he ought to shew them the latitude of the road they are in, and *the fire and brimstone*, yes, I say, *fire and brimstone*, in which it ends. If they would have him delicate in his preaching, let them be delicate in the morality of their actions. But what right hath the stupid drunkard to soft words ; or the hardened adulterer, to delicate expressions ; or the despicable trickster, to honorary addresses ; or the infernal perverter of justice, the cruel oppressor, the horrid murderer, to tender or distant admonitions, from him who delivers a message of vengeance from the Lord of hosts, and the Judge of heaven and earth ?

The truth is, they who call themselves the polite people of the world, and have indeed some delicacy in matters of ceremony, and external civility, are, generally speaking, so grossly corrupt and wicked, so foul in their affections, so outrageous in their passions, so enormous in their actions, that hell, opened in the most heightened descriptions, seems to be the very doctrine of all Christianity that is peculiarly adapted to them. But if they will not bear such descriptions, let them stay away from the house of God ; and then we shall have less foppery and vanity, less bowing and grimace, less whispering and ogling, less inattention in the house of prayer ; less pride, pomp, and parade, in the house of humiliation ; we shall, in a word, have again congregations of Christians in our churches, instead of our present very genteel assemblies ; which want nothing else but wine, dancing, and cards, to turn them into ridottoes. Then the plain, well-meaning, people, who come hither to confess their sins, and deprecate the judgments of an offended God, will not be perpetually

petually called off from that solemn work, by every new idol that enters to flaunt it in silk and jewels. We Christians meet here for no other purpose, but to worship God, and hear his word ; and we shall do both the better for having none among us, but such as come with the same intention. If the mention of hell and damnation from the pulpit should scare others away, it is neither a loss to religion nor us, even although they should go to sooth their guilt with cards and dice, which is but an insult on God's day ; whereas they seldom come hither, but to insult that, his house and worship.

It is surely the business of every one who appears here as a Christian, to give all his attention to the prayers, while they are repeated ; and to the word of God, when that is read or explained. If the Lord promises, let them hope and rejoice ; if he threatens, let them fear and tremble. We must think both alike useful, both highly necessary, if we know ourselves. And it is the business of us, who officiate, not only to display the gracious promises of our Master to such as *diligently seek for glory, honour, and immortality* ; but also faithfully to inculcate his menaces of *judgment, and fiery indignation*, to the stupid, the hardened, and impenitent ; that, *knowing the terror of the Lord, we may thereby persuade men to forsake their sins, and turn to God.*

And now, may the Holy and All-powerful Spirit prosper this blessed work in our hands, and your hearts, that all our hopes and fears may operate together for our intire conversion, and eternal salvation, through Christ our Saviour ; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE XII.

The Fundamentals of Christianity, and the  
Necessity of Faith therein.

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HEBREWS X. 38, 39.

*The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

*But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them who believe, to the saving of the soul.*

**T**HERE are two things strongly set before us in this passage of Scripture; first, That it is *by faith* we are to hope for salvation and eternal life; and, secondly, That, of consequence, he who *draws back* from this faith, or apostatizes, having lost the principle of life, brings on himself *perdition*, or damnation. Immediately after asserting, in these words, the importance of faith, the Apostle goes on to tell us what faith is; and then, by a long enumeration of its effects, shews what it had done before, and under, the Law, in them who had not received the promise, that is, the thing promised, which was *Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God*, chap. xii. ver. 2. In this we see the Christian faith sufficiently distinguished from all other

kinds of faith, both by him in whom we are to believe, and by that which we are to believe of him; namely, that it was he who was promised by God, not only as a redeemer to *Israel*, but as that *seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed* with light, through his instructions; and with remission of sins, through his blood. To inculcate this doctrine, and thereby to shew the superiority of the Christian above the *Mosaic* dispensation, was the scope of the whole epistle, the substance whereof the inspired author recapitulates, and further enforces, as he proceeds, from my text to the end.

Whatsoever therefore this great Teacher hath told us, either in person, or by his Spirit, speaking through the Apostles, is the matter of that faith, on which so great a stress is laid. God did not become our Redeemer and Comforter, to teach us trifles, or things of so little moment, as to leave us excusable, if inattentive to them. If He speaks, we may be sure it is on a subject of great importance; we may be sure it is perfectly true in itself, and highly useful to mankind; and therefore cannot be neglected by us, without a grievous crime; nor contradicted, without a mortal sin. But as what he hath delivered, although highly important in all its parts, is not equally important; so the ignorance of some things is both a smaller loss, and a less sin, than that of others. By faith, when it is made necessary to the salvation of all, to whom sufficient evidence is offered, is to be understood a firm belief of the more important articles, or doctrines, which relate alike to all mankind, as containing whatsoever is to be universally known or practised. What these are we must know, and that they are true, we must believe, or we cannot be saved; we, I mean, to whom God hath been pleased to communicate the means of this knowledge and faith.

Nothing in Scripture is more clearly and strongly declared, than that faith in Christ is the first, the fundamental means of salvation. St. *Paul* takes a world of pains to shew us, that it is *faith which justifies*; and not only in my text, but in the first chapter of his epistle to the  
*Romans,*



Romans, and in the third of his epistle to the *Galatians*, repeats what we find, *Hab. ii. 4.* *The just shall live by his faith*; plainly intimating, that he is rendered just in the sight of God by faith, and, being justified, is rewarded, through the imputed merits of Christ, applied by faith, with eternal life. Christ himself lays this down as the great fundamental: *As Moses, says he, lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life,* John iii. 14, 15. *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 is passed from death unto life;* chap. v. ver. 24. *I am the Resurrection, and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth on me, shall never die;* John xi. 25, 26.

On the other hand, death, or damnation, is no less unquestionably and peremptorily threatened to unbelief; that is, to a want of faith in Christ, as already explained; and no wonder; for, if life is the consequent or reward of faith, death, by the rule of opposites, must be the consequent or punishment of infidelity. *He that believeth not, saith Christ, John iii. 18. is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him;* John iii. 36.

Here we see faith imputed to us for righteousness, and followed by the proper reward of righteousness, eternal life; and here also we see unbelief imputed to us for sin, and pursued with the proper punishment of sin, eternal death. To this not only the Deists, but the deistical Christians also, object, as a thing wholly unreasonable; for, say they, faith is not in our power; we neither choose nor refuse it; but always passively give it to that testimony which appears sufficient; and as passively withhold it, when the evidence appears defective. For this reason, we cannot look on it as matter of morality, nor consequently be persuaded, that God would declare it rewardable, or its opposite punishable, both being involuntary.

In answer to this, it must first be observed, that whereas the question is not about belief in general, but about Christian faith, which requiring an assent to certain mysteries, with a contempt whereof the pride man takes in his own conceitedly supposed wisdom, is oftentimes apt to fill him; and the practice of certain virtues and austerities, which his dissolute heart is still more averse to; the receiving, or rejecting it, may depend materially on the will of him to whom it is proposed. He who receives it, not only because he thinks it hath God for its voucher, but because he hopes it will subdue in him those sinful inclinations his nature delights in, and who, before he received it, did, for the latter reason, give the due attention to its evidence, was, in so doing, both voluntary and virtuous. On the contrary, he who, foreseeing the disagreeable restraints it must lay him under, if embraced, will not, for that reason, give the requisite attention to its evidence, lest he should, in the end, find himself convinced of its truth, bewrays a very vicious disposition. Nay, as in this case God is concerned, the conduct of a man, to whom the Christian evidence is offered, becomes, on that account, infinitely more delicate; insomuch that if he refuses fully and fairly to examine, he adds impiety to his vice, even whether the evidence is qualified to stand the test or not; for it may, for aught he can judge, who will not properly inquire. Although the seat of faith is in the understanding, it is nevertheless as much influenced by the will, as that is by the affections, and the heart. Hence it comes, that more evidence is requisite to convince a man of a truth he does not like, than is necessary for the conviction of another under no such byass. Experience even shews us, that where the byass is very prevalent, it averts the mind from all consideration of the proofs offered, or arms and hardens it against them, when they are obtruded. Piety, humility, self-diffidence, and integrity, which are all of them virtuous dispositions, are as so many preparatives to the faith of a Christian; for they dispose him to a ready reception of its doctrines, in case his understanding shall be satisfied with the sufficiency of its vouchers. But negligence

gence will not suffer a man to examine, because it is attended with trouble; concupiscence, because conviction may lead to mortification; avarice, because it may inculcate restitution; fear, because it may awaken guilt. *Woe unto him, says the wise son of Sirach, that is faint-hearted! for he believeth not.* Suspicion and jealousy seldom fail to produce incredulity; and as, generally speaking, they are but the imputation of a man's own falshood to others, so they forbid his reposing a confidence in any, though reason should never so strongly encourage it. Of all passions, pride is the greatest enemy to faith; because it is always too wise to be taught; too sagacious to rely on reports; too wary to believe what it does not see; too sufficient to need assistance; so conscious of its own merit, as to need no Redeemer; so satisfied with its dignity, as to need no intercessor; and, in a word, so every way capable of directing itself, and dictating to the whole world, that if it hath not chanced to be born to Christianity, that religion must not presume to expect the honour of its assent. Our Saviour was well aware of this, when he spoke thus to such as despised his mission, notwithstanding the evidence of his miracles, wrought before their eyes, to prove it; *How can ye believe, which receive honour of one another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?*

If our religion is from God, the arguments which support it must be sufficient to convince the rational, the candid, and the well-disposed, who, in case he closes with it, closes in opposition to all the corruptions and sinful dispositions of his nature; and, even in him, these may be enough, to make his faith an high and noble instance of virtue, in the sight of that Master, who will receive and reward every thing as such, that does honour to his Son.

If our religion is from God, its evidence must be sufficient; for God knew what was sufficient, and was too wise and good to leave the proofs of a religion defective, which cost him the life of his Son to introduce. If, nevertheless, any one shall resist this evidence, where are we to look for the source of his infidelity? Is it not in his

will, corrupted and perverted by a bad heart, which either suffers him not sensibly to consider that evidence, or so blinds the eye of his judgment, as to leave him but a very faint perception of its light? St. Paul tells us, *the Israelites, who fell in the wilderness, could not enter into the promised rest, because of unbelief*, Heb. iii. 18, 19.; and, making use of them as an example, he says, ver. 12. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.* Hence it evidently appears, that the inspired Apostle charges infidelity on the obliquity of the heart. Since this is the case, it is not without good reason that God threatens unbelief with damnation, thereby giving that sin a very high rank in the catalogue of immoralities; and no wonder; for all that God hath done to prove, and thereby to introduce and perpetuate, his religion, is trampled on by the infidel, who, byassed by his corrupt dispositions, will neither be guided by his own reason, nor suffer it to listen to the word of God; and therefore is answerable for all the revelations communicated in order to his instruction, all the miracles performed for his conviction, and, what is more than all, for the blood of Christ spilt, in order to his pardon and salvation.

The objection thus answered, it will be now worth our while to consider, as life eternal is annexed to faith, and as faith is of different degrees, whether any degree might be sufficient. We may easily regulate our judgment on this point, if we know what is the end of faith. The end of faith is twofold; first, To call us to repentance, and newness of life, by placing strongly before our eyes the great things of another world, that we may *walk by faith, and not by sight*, 2 Cor. v. 7. as men who expect to *appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*, ver. 10.; secondly, To intitle us to salvation, through the sacrifice of our Saviour's blood. In respect to the first end, faith is the only efficacious instrument of our reformation, whereby a good life for the future may be secured. And, in respect to the last, it is the only means of applying to ourselves the benefits

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of Christ's death, in order to pardon for what is past. Now, if faith be not strong and operative, it can never reform our lives; because it hath the world, the devil, and the flesh, enemies not easily subdued, to contend with. And yet, if it fails as to the first end, it must, of consequence, fail also as to the second; because we can have no title to the benefits of Christ's death, but through the covenant, whereof repentance is one condition. *As the body, says St. James, without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also,* James ii. 26. This divine grace, when it rises to a sufficient height and strength, never fails to reform the manners of him who is blessed with it; and then, as soon as it hath done this, ripens into a comfortable hope, which can never be well founded, but on reformation, the only fruit and proof of a saving faith. But in case this grace is defective, as it works no amendment, so it degenerates into fear and despair, which, if the person thus unhappily circumstanced can reflect at all, are in him the natural result of faith, and sin unreformed. The former is the faith of saints, which fills them with bright expectations, and heavenly raptures; the latter is the faith of *devils, who believe and tremble,* James ii. 19.

Since it pleased Almighty God to bestow on us, who live under the light of the Gospel, sufficient means of faith, we are guilty of a great and horrible sin, both against God, and our own souls, if we pass our days in ignorance of its fundamental articles; or even if, ascending a little above a state of mere ignorance, on a slight inquiry, we stop short in the region of doubts; because, in either case, the whole of divine revelation, with the blood of Christ, and eternity, are held by us at so low a price, as not to be deemed deserving of even a less anxious search, than we should readily enough bestow on a yet dubious title to a very inconsiderable estate. Nothing can be more indispensably our duty, than carefully to examine into the grounds and reasons of a religion, which, for aught we can possibly know, before we fairly try it, may give sufficient evidence of its truth, and prove itself a matter of infinitely higher concern to us, than all we can hope for, or even desire, in this world. But if, on ex-

mination, Christianity should appear to be the true religion, it will be then our duty to inquire as carefully after its fundamental articles of faith and practice; because on them our attention ought chiefly to be turned, in order to secure the titles, and reap the benefits therein proposed to us by its Author. Nothing we can do will so much contribute to the establishment of our faith, as inquiries of this nature, provided they set out with an hearty and honest desire to know the truth, and are conducted with due diligence and candour. However, as, on our own strength, we can proceed no farther than to a rational conviction, and as the Holy Spirit only can raise us to an active saving faith, it is our business earnestly to solicit his assistance, that we may neither in our researches miss the truth, nor, when we have found it, *hold it in unrighteousness*, like men who carry a light that serves for no better purpose, than to shew others, that the bearers are out of their way.

Having seen what ought to be the degree or strength of an effectual saving faith, let us now so far inquire into the object-matter of this faith, as to find out, if we can, the fundamental articles necessary to be believed by all Christians, in order to their eternal salvation; observe, I say, Christians, because I am speaking only to such, and endeavouring to shew, what ought to be the fundamentals of their faith, who agree in this, that the Scriptures are the word of God, but differ widely as to the articles made necessary by those Scriptures to the eternal salvation of believers. For this reason, although to believe, that the Bible is the word of God, is a primary fundamental, I shall say nothing more of it here, but that, as we all believe in this fundamental, we are to make the sacred books the rule of our faith, and, by the use of that rule, to trace out the other fundamentals, so as, if possible, to remove the unhappy disputes concerning them, that no rational and well-meaning Christian may be at an uncertainty about a matter of such infinite consequence to him.

As the holy Scriptures then are the word of that infinitely wise and gracious God, who gave them to us for

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our edification, that we might know what we are to believe and practise, we must take it for granted, they are sufficiently qualified to answer this end; for, if otherwise, they must argue a defect either in the wisdom or goodness of their Author. He was surely wise enough to know what was necessary to our instruction, and too compassionate to leave us in the dark about that which was necessary.

Whatsoever obscurity therefore there may be in some parts of Scripture; yet the revelation therein given must have been in vain, if there are not other parts so necessary as to be plain, and so plain as to be intelligible in the same sense to all, who are disposed to believe God, rather than themselves.

If now the word of God plainly sets forth any thing to us as necessary, it must so set forth these two things:

First, What we are to worship.

Secondly, How we are to be saved.

Yet, absolutely necessary as these points undoubtedly are, we have, to the reproach of Christianity among Infidels, a world of disputes about them; so that even, in respect to them, either the Scriptures must be as obscure and defective, as the open enemies of Christ, on account of these very disputes, insist they are; or they, whoever they may be, who hold the wrong side in such disputes, are in fact his worst enemies, though they call themselves by his name.

As to the first head; if Idolatry, or Polytheism, is a damnable sin, insomuch that no one, who hath an opportunity of knowing there is but one only God, can be saved, if he worships any other, or any more gods; the worship of the one only true God must be a fundamental. Now, that there is but one infinite Being, or God; that worship consists in dependence and prayer; and that this worship is intirely restrained to him alone; I have, in a former Discourse, fully proved, by the express words of Scripture.

The Antitrinitarians, however, as well as we, worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, believing them to be three distinct Persons. But whereas we believe  
*them*

them to be of one nature and substance, whereby we sufficiently defend ourselves against the charge, at least, of avowed, intentional, Polytheism; they deny the sameness of their nature and substance, affirm the two last to be creatures, and call each God, but say he is only a delegated god; by which it is evident, they avow the worship of three gods; and are therefore, to all intents and purposes, actually intentional Polytheists. They will not indeed admit the appellation; because it is, among Christians, a name of the highest reproach; but such is the notoriety and flagrancy of the fact, as any one may see in the writings not only of their private authors, but of public bodies, that no name can more properly fit the sect it is given to, than that of Polytheists does the Antitrinitarian, or Unitarian, as it falsely and impudently calls itself; I say *falsely*, because it worships a Trinity of three gods; and therefore judge ye whether I wrong them in adding *impudently* also.

If the worship of the one only God were not a fundamental, why is the worship of all other gods absolutely forbidden in the first commandment, which is the basis of all faith and duty? Why does our Saviour say, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, pursuant to what is written in the Law? If this were not a fundamental, why is the worship of other gods made so very penal? *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods—(for the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth*, Deut. vi. 13, 14, 15. I might add numberless texts to these; but to what purpose? Our adversaries will readily distinguish them all away, by saying, they worship the delegated gods only on account of the Supreme, in whom that worship terminates. But where in Scripture is that distinction made? Where is there any thing to give the least encouragement to it? Is there the least hint of a permission to worship, that is, to depend on, or pray to, more gods than one? Nay, is there not every thing said and done to prevent it, that might be expected from the



true God, who represents himself to us as, in this respect, *a jealous God, a God that will not give his honour to another?* By the same authority, and in the same sense of the words *God* and *worship*, we are commanded to worship the one true God, and forbidden to worship any other gods but him. Who shall presume to give other senses to these words, in order to countenance that very crime, which is every-where represented as so extremely heinous in the sight of God, and threatened with his utmost vengeance?

We, it is true, worship Christ, and the Holy Ghost; but this can by no means bring on us the charge of Polytheism; first, Because we say, the Three Persons constitute but one God; which shews, at least, we do not profess the worship of more gods than one. Secondly, We insist, that Christ and the Holy Ghost are each called God in Scripture, and worshiped as such. That, in this case, we insist on nothing but the truth, I formerly shewed in two set Discourses, which, I hope, put both those points beyond the possibility of a doubt with all who are willing to be concluded by Scripture, naked, and unsophisticated with forced interpretations. If Christ is God; if the Holy Ghost is God; if they are set forth as such in Scripture; it is blasphemy to deny, that either is God; and profaneness to refuse divine worship, in the highest propriety of the words, to either. However, resolve the debate which way you will, it must end in a fundamental; that is, either in an absolute command, or in an absolute prohibition, to worship the Second and Third Persons. As there is no medium between the nature of God and a creature; and as we are to demean ourselves to both, according to their respective natures; so the worship we pay to God ought infinitely to transcend the respect we pay to the highest creature; and therefore can in no sense admit of the same name. The infinite and finite can by no confusion of ideas, or juggle of words, be excusably expressed by the same term. Neither therefore can the sentiments of love, veneration, and dependence, wherewith our hearts are affected towards them, admit of the same expressions, without absurdity and blasphemy.

An indifferent person, who had not read the Scriptures, on considering the tenets of the Antitrinitarians, could not avoid presuming, that the Divinity and worship of the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are strongly insisted on in those Scriptures, since the opposers of their real Divinity are forced to assign them a delegated Divinity, and a subordinate worship, directly in the teeth of their own avowed principle, that there is but one God. Were he afterwards fairly to examine the sacred books, and to take their sense concerning God, as he does the sense of other books, he must be astonished to find a plurality of gods deduced from writings, wherein it is so often and so peremptorily condemned; and the worship of more gods than one so severely prohibited, or so dreadfully punished, in almost every page. He would find all divine worship absolutely appropriated to the one infinite Being only, and this appropriation made the source and basis of all the religion prescribed in either Testament. He would find the distinction between God, or the infinite Being, and the creature, set so wide, as to forbid the possibility of another distinction, consistent with Scripture, between a false and a subordinate God. In short, he could not help observing, that either the faith and practice of an Antitrinitarian are directly opposite to each other, inasmuch as he pays divine honours to that which he does not believe to be God; or, at least, that his faith is opposite and contradictory to itself, inasmuch as he believes the same Being to be God, and yet but a creature.

To tell him there is one supreme, and other subordinate gods, could not satisfy him; because the Scriptures have restrained the word *God* to one sense only, when worship is annexed to it, and have laid down this restriction as the first fundamental of true religion. If, after all, he found the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, set forth, each as God, by the same writer, who insists there is but one God, whatsoever inconsistency he might charge that writer with, he could not suppose him guilty of an intention to contradict himself; which he must have had, if he intended to say there is but one God, and yet three gods, without giving warning, that he took the word *God* in

two infinitely different senses. So far a candid and indifferent reader of the Scriptures must condemn the Antitrinitarians, in case he brought the same mind with him to those writings, that he brings to all other books. On the contrary, howsoever he might, at first, be surpris'd at our notions of the Trinity, he must, even from the beginning, perceive a close congruity between them and the Scriptures; an impossibility of avoiding them, without rejecting or doing violence to those Scriptures; and, on further consideration, no other appearance of an objection to them, than what arises from the supposed inconsistency of a personal distinction in God, which his reason indeed might demur to, but could not, in the result, charge with a contradiction, as well because God is incomprehensible, as because *God* and *Person* are quite different ideas, and are never, either in reason or Scripture, put for each other.

These things being premis'd, it will be easy to prove, that faith in the holy Trinity, that is, in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost (God throughout, in the same sense of the word, and free of all equivocation), is fundamentally necessary to the very essence of Christianity. By the express command of Christ, *Matth. xxviii. 19.* we are all baptized in the name and authority of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that is, by the outward washing, our spiritual purgation from sin is signified, while the soul, thus cleans'd, is initiated into the grand article of the Christian faith, by the form of words. We may be sure, had any other article been more fundamental, or more essentially comprehensive of Christianity, this must have given place to it, as fitter for so great a purpose, when the soul is first dedicated to God, and engaged, by covenant, to that faith or religion, the whole of which is contained in, or necessarily results from, the form authoritatively used in this introductory contract. To understand these words rightly, and to believe in them firmly, is to understand and believe as a Christian ought to do. But to know the stress that is laid on them, and how far they are made fundamental, is every whit as necessary, as either to understand or believe the words

themselves; for how otherwise shall our attention or inquiry, as to either, be sufficiently roused? Our blessed Saviour, at the same time that he commands his disciples to baptize all nations by this form, shews how necessary it is, that all who are baptized, should believe in that form; for he says, *Mark xvi. 15, 16. Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.*

Now, it is to be remarked here, that, by this form of words, we are received into the body of Christ, jointly and equally, in the name, and by the authority, of the Three Persons; that hereby God sets his seal to the covenant, authorizing the institution in these very words; that the new Christian also sets his seal to that covenant, solemnly promising faith, in the true and real meaning of the same words. Now, if there should be any difficulty in apprehending the meaning of the form, or any dispute about it, how is either to be removed? Is it not by recourse to other parts of Scripture? The word God is not affixed in the form to any of the Three Persons. But in the Scripture, at large, each Person is represented to us as God, in one unequivocal import of the word. This I have abundantly proved, in former Discourses. If then Scripture is the safest expositor of itself, if we are obliged to believe other parts of Scripture as well as this, and if other Scriptures give us all the reason divine revelation can give, for believing the Father to be God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God, it follows, indisputably, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as we hold it, is a fundamental, or rather the great fundamental, of our religion. The Church, in the earliest ages, looked on it as such, and considered it as comprehending the whole of Christianity. Accordingly, out of this they framed the first Creed, whereby the Catechumens answered at baptism, only rendering it, for that purpose, a little more explanatory. The answer of a Catechumen, fairly and closely translated, was this, *I believe in the one God, who is the Father, who is the Son, and who is the Holy Ghost.* The article in the original Greek set before God, and then separately

separately before each of the Three Persons, shews, that the word God was distinctly applied to each. This I formerly observed, as also that *Tertullian* expresses this common faith of Christians as strictly as truth, and the *Latin* tongue, will bear it: His words are to this effect; *The Father God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God; every one of them God.* All the Fathers writing against heretics, or, on any occasion, declaring the Christian faith, did it on the basis of this form; or rather did hardly any thing else, than set forth the doctrine of the Trinity. Throughout all ages of the Church, as heresies and contentions concerning the faith arose, all the Creeds drawn up by particular Bishops, or Councils, howsoever enlarged by explanatory clauses, for the censure of those heresies, were planned on the form of words used at baptism, and had the doctrine of the Trinity for their basis.

Nothing more need be said to shew, that this doctrine is actually the great fundamental of our faith, or that the anathemas denounced in Scripture, by our Saviour, and by the Holy Spirit, against unbelievers, were really and truly denounced against such as should disbelieve or corrupt this doctrine.

Let those now, who, pretending to be Christians, would represent this doctrine as erroneous, or those who, with more cunning, endeavour to persuade us it is not fundamental, in order the more easily to reconcile our minds, thus rendered indifferent, to an opposite doctrine, consider, whether the point, held one way or the other, can be less than fundamental. They may read us fine lectures on charity, and tell us, that all anathemas pronounced on others, be their tenets what they will, are grievous breaches of Christian charity. They may represent the doctrine of the Trinity as too mysterious and subtle to be made an article of Faith necessary to the salvation of mankind. And all this may sound plausibly in the ears of an age not distinguishable among other ages, for a propensity to faith and fidelity, in any sense. Yet it should still be remembered, that we call ourselves Christians; that we call the Scriptures the rule of our faith; and that, consequently, we must either give the lye to our own professions, or be ready

ready to say, after Christ and his Apostles, whatsoever they have thought fit to say, *lest we be found to contradict the Holy Ghost*. Now, the anathemas pronounced on the impugnors of the Trinity are pronounced by the Holy Ghost. Let us therefore have a care of saying, they are uncharitable in themselves; for, in that case, we charge the Author with a crime, which we look on as highly heinous in a man. And why heinous in a man, who only repeats what the Holy Ghost hath first uttered, and wishes, from his soul, that every human creature was of this faith, to which alone salvation is promised? It hath been already seen, that faith is, in its own nature, a rewardable, and infidelity a punishable, turn of mind. God therefore is justified in denouncing damnation to the one, and eternal life to the other; and since, consistently with justice, he may, and, in pursuance of infinite wisdom, he actually hath determined thus to punish and reward them, it is an effect of his goodness to declare this determination in time, that mankind, sufficiently warned thereby, may not presume to slight that revelation, which it cost so much to introduce into the world.

It is from the publication of this divine anathema that the very essence of a fundamental, or that without which we cannot be saved, is gathered. But were we not at liberty to repeat this anathema, nor to apply it, as it is already applied in Scripture, the first publication of it must have been in vain; because a subsequent silence on the subject would, in a great measure, stifle the knowledge, and prevent the use God intended to make of the thing. Our adversaries may, as they usually do, endeavour to represent it, and the faith to which it is annexed, as matters of little consequence; but it is our business to think quite otherwise of that, which the infinitely awful Being thought proper to lay so great a stress on. Much good may their very prudential neutrality do them, who can so comfortably, and often so profitably, join in a communion with a church that holds the Divinity of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, or with one that denies it! For my part, I shall never make one among men, who change the *word*  
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of God into a lye, who worship and serve the creature even as the Creator, who alone is God over all, blessed for ever. And sure I am, were it in my firm persuasion, that the Second and Third Persons in the Trinity are but creatures, no consideration in this world could ever induce me to communicate at the Lord's table with such, as make it a fundamental article to believe them equal with the Father.

But, while we thus pronounce the anathema of Christ on such as disbelieve this, and the other fundamental articles of religion, it must be remembred, that we presume not to condemn any man; for, as to this matter, we know no man. We know not the capacities of men; what judgment this or the other person hath to discern the evidence of truth; what passions or prejudices to cope with; what strength of resolution to combat them. These things are known only to the Judge of all men. He therefore alone hath a right to punish the crime of infidelity, inasmuch as he only knows when, and how far, it is a crime. All we mean by repeating his anathema, is to affirm what he affirms, in a matter of so great concernment; to inculcate on our own, and other mens minds, the great duty of candour and diligence in our inquiries about religion; and to say, in short, what is most true, that every one who hath sufficient means of faith in the fundamental articles of Christianity, and yet disbelieves them, is in a state of damnation.

It is now time to take notice of the other point, which the Scriptures must make fundamental; namely, how we must be saved.

*What must I do to be saved?* said the keeper of the prison to *Paul and Silas*, whom he held in confinement. They answered, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*, Acts xvi. 30, 31. Here faith in Christ, without an explanation, as yet, added, is made the necessary and infallible means of salvation, purely because, from that, all the other doctrines taught personally by Christ himself, or, in his name, by the Apostles, will follow as requisite to be believed. Accordingly, on the gaoler's closing with this, *they spake unto him the word of*

*the Lord*, ver. 32. and then *baptized him*, ver. 33. We can be in no doubt whether, by *the word of the Lord*, we are to understand the Christian covenant, since it was preached immediately preparatory to baptism. In preaching the word, therefore, they must have taught their new disciple the articles and sanctions of the covenant, and given him to understand likewise how that covenant of peace was procured by the death and intercession of Christ; or how otherwise could he know what was required of him, as a Christian, or what it was to be *baptized into the death of Christ*? Rom. vi. 3. And, as the very foundation of all, they must have instructed him in the doctrine of the Trinity; because he was to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Now, the conditions of this covenant are *repentance, faith, and charity*; and its sanctions, *the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell*; and that which procured the covenant, was the satisfaction, or atonement, made to the justice of God, for the sins of all men, by the death of Christ. Of faith I have spoken already. Of repentance and charity I need say nothing; both because there is no controversy about them, and also because they relate not to my design in this Discourse, which is to shew, that the doctrines proved in the foregoing Discourses are necessary to be believed, in order to eternal salvation. It remains now, that I should, pursuant to that design, prove that a belief in the satisfaction made by Christ's death, and in the sanctions of the new covenant, is as necessary to salvation, as the doctrines are true in themselves.

Two things are necessary to save a soul; the first, that the justice of God be satisfied for its sins; and the second, that the soul itself, by a thorough reformation of its sinful dispositions, be rendered an object of God's mercy.

The first, I have already proved, in a former Discourse, is done by the death of Christ; and here it is my business to shew, as briefly as I can, that the benefits of his death are applied to us by faith; which, when shewn, will prove this article of faith to be fundamental.



The words of our Saviour, *John* iii. 14, 15. already cited, shew this sufficiently: *As Moses, says he, lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up [that is, crucified], that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Here we see, that Christ must have been crucified, in order that through faith in him, not simply, but as thus crucified and slain, we might be saved from eternal death, and crowned with everlasting life.

St. Paul, in his epistle to the *Hebrews*, having compared the sacrifices of the law with that of Christ, and shewn that the latter only was efficacious, draws this conclusion; *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus—let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith,* Heb. x. 19. 22. Faith in what? No doubt, in that which gives us *boldness*, namely, *the blood of Jesus.* This shews, as plainly as words can do it, that the benefit of Christ's blood, which is no less than remission of sins, is applied to the soul by faith. And, that we may see the necessity of this faith in a still stronger light, he proceeds to shew us what must follow, in case this faith should fail: *He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy—Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under-foot the Son of God; and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing; and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?* ver. 28, 29. If faith in the blood of Christ is not a fundamental, why is the contrary here represented as so great a crime, and threatened with a sorer punishment than that death which was inflicted on the despisers of *Moses' law*? Or why is it said, *1 Cor.* xi. 29. *He that eateth and drinketh the supper of the Lord unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body?* In this sacrament the sacrifice of Christ is represented, and the benefits of his death conveyed to the worthy communicant, while damnation is denounced to the unworthy. Now, what can so effectually disqualify a man, on this occasion, as a want of that faith in the efficacy of the great sacrifice, which alone can teach

him to discern or distinguish between the Lord's body, and the body of any other sacrifice, whereof the Jewish or Pagan worshiper might eat? Christ, by his blood, had made propitiation for the sins of all men; but they, to whom this is revealed, must believe it, or they cannot be intitled to the benefit of it. This *St. Paul* plainly shews us, *Rom. iii. 25.* *Him God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past.* But I should be obliged to take too great a compass, should I quote all the passages in which eternal life is promised to faith in Christ's blood, and eternal death threatened to the contrary. I shall therefore pass to the other thing requisite to save a soul; namely, a lively faith in that which the word of God makes necessary to reform the soul, and render it an object of God's mercy.

This now is the new covenant, the sanctions whereof are all that remains to be handled. That faith in the new covenant is necessary to salvation, and, consequently, that the covenant itself is a fundamental, will not be disputed. But it cannot be a fundamental, if faith in those sanctions, which God hath expressly annexed to it, and which, in respect to our part in it, give it all its practical efficacy, is not also a fundamental. They are indeed so essential to it, that if we take them away, or do not as firmly believe in them, and stand to them, as to the rest of the covenant, it ceases to be a covenant at all; for, in that case, God's part is annulled, and we are left without an inducement to observe ours. Now, the sanctions are, *everlasting life*, promised to the keepers, and *eternal death*, threatened to the transgressors, of this covenant; which is the very rule or law, whereby we are to live here, and be judged hereafter, when the reward will be conferred, or the punishment inflicted, according to that rule.

The necessity of this article may be considered in a two-fold light; first, As it arises from the testimony of Scripture; and, secondly, As it may be deduced from the nature of the thing. As to the Scriptures, eternal life, or the joys of heaven, and eternal death, or the torments of hell, are so plainly, and so abundantly, set forth therein, that

to deny them is to contradict God himself; and to prove them, after all that was formerly said, by quotations again repeated from Scripture, is to wrong the audience I am speaking to. The application of them also to the observance, or transgression, of the covenant, is no less plain and clear; and therefore, if faith in the covenant is, by Scripture, made necessary to salvation, so is also faith in the sanctions of that covenant.

Besides, as faith in the redemption wrought by the death of Christ is necessary, it must be equally necessary to believe in eternal rewards and punishments; because otherwise we cannot have a right idea of that redemption, whereby we are so delivered from the one, and intitled to the other, that, unless we fall from the covenant, the promise of God, in regard to both, must have its accomplishment. Now, if the reward be really so glorious, and the punishment so grievous, as the Scripture represents them, we ought, of all things, most firmly to believe in them as such, that we may have a right sense of that gratitude, which is due for a mercy rendered doubly infinite, as well by the immensity of the benefit, as of his dignity and sufferings who procured it. That part of charity that hath God for its object, is the noble principle on which he chooses to finish the scriptural refinement of our nature, and on which the happiness of eternity must be founded. Let the work of reformation begin on what motives it will, it cannot be brought to perfection, till it ends in this: wherefore, nothing can concern either God's glory, or our happiness, more, than a lively faith in the eternity of future retributions, which must excite in us a proportionable sense of God's goodness; this sense, an adequate love; and this love cannot fail, on the one side, to make all our services acceptable, nor, on the other, to afford us an eternal inlet to that enjoyment of God, which, keeping pace with our love, constitutes the happiness of heaven, and determines the height to which it shall rise.

The necessity of faith in the sanctions of the Christian covenant may also be deduced from the nature of the thing; that is, from the effect, which such motives may

be naturally expected to have on the heart of man, and from the apparent impossibility of working a thorough reformation in that heart by motives less efficacious. Some men there may be, of so happy a make, as to stand in need of no other helps to reformation, than the abstracted love of virtue; and there may be also such a bird as the phenix, and such a beast as the chimera; but it will be equally hard to persuade me, that any of the three ever existed. In all the men I know, or ever heard of, who were really reformed, self-love began the work of reformation. *The substance of things hoped for* gave birth to the resolutions of one; and *the fear of God was the beginning of wisdom*, in another. Our Maker did not give us our affections and passions, only to be so many handles for the tempter to lay hold of, but with a gracious design to use them as springs and engines to work his own will in our hearts. Fear therefore, and desire, and love, have a natural relation to God and religion, as well as reason. If it is by this that our understandings receive conviction, it is by those that our hearts are either deterred from evil, or animated to the pursuit of good. Where is the use of passion or affection, if there is no rational principle to bound and direct them? And where is the use of reason, if there is nothing to prompt us to action, when reason represents it as fit and good? Our Maker, taking us as he made us, accommodates his religion to our whole nature, setting evidence before the understanding, and somewhat infinitely to be desired, or feared, before our affections. Were either omitted, the world, bad as it is, would be so much worse, that nothing but hell could be set in competition with it.

Libertines, who know nothing of reformation, because they never felt it, and, if we believe themselves, never needed it, may talk on about the beauty of virtue, of which they know and feel as little; but experience tells us, all this is nonsensical cant, and silly spite at religion, the only mother of real virtue, which, if we may judge by their actions, they hate, notwithstanding all they say of its beauty, as, cordially as they do the wrinkles and hoary hairs of its antiquated parent. If they were not,

on the contrary, deeply smitten with the beauty of vice, why is hell to be converted into a purgatory, for the purification of virtue's admirers? Or why is annihilation, that horror of the soul, next to hell, called in to the relief of those goodly philosophers, of whom, to the disgrace of common sense, and common honesty, not a few call themselves Christians, and would needs father their infernal notions about an universal purgatory, or annihilation, on the word of God, just as others do theirs about a plurality of gods? Pardon me; I should not say others, when I am really speaking of the same people. There is hardly a single man to be found, who is an *Arian* in regard to the Trinity, that is not either a *Platonist*, or an *Atheist*, in regard to a future state. These men have no objections to the eternity of rewards. Those they will vouchsafe to receive; because they please. But the eternity of punishments is not to be digested; because it is just as irksome, as all their vices are sweet and soothing. I know they pretend other reasons; but they are so purely deistical, that we shall defer our answer, till these gentlemen find it convenient to throw off the mask of Christianity, and cease to talk with respect of the Scriptures.

One thing more, however, I will observe concerning these men, and then have done. It is their constant practice to declaim against the Creeds so long used in the church; not, say they, because we dislike the principles contained in those Creeds, but because none but God ought to give a Creed. Their conversations, however, and writings, sufficiently shew, they have other reasons, not so fit to own; and that they actually disbelieve the doctrines of the Trinity, the satisfaction, &c. as set forth in our Creeds. To lessen the stress laid on these doctrines, as articles of faith necessary to salvation, they speak very slightly of faith itself, and nonsensically confound it with works; as if the principle on which our actions are done, and those actions, were the same thing. They also cry up morality, and good works, as the only fundamental required by the word of God; and make it a matter of little consequence whether those works are performed on scriptural principles, or not. Nay, for the most part, they actually

SERM. storing Medicines can have no Effect, yet

X. Palliating ones may be successfully applied; and the bare Mitigation of Smart, though it is sure to return again, is a very desirable Relief. To those who have groaned under a continued Torture, every Abatement of Anguish, every Interval even of Stupefaction is a Degree of Pleasure; but the Absence of Pain, joined with a Sense of its being absent, is a kind of Paradise.

THUS is human Life, even in its most lost and deplorable State, capable of being profited, and of enjoying the Fruits of such charitable Gifts, as the pious Liberality of good Christians has, or shall destine to the Patients Use and Comfort.

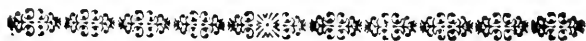
*MAY THE GOD OF LOVE continue to raise up a Succession of friendly Contributors toward the Relief of such Objects, and may He prosper the State of all those charitable Communities, of which you have the Care and Management, and grant that all who are Partakers of your Bounty, may prove grateful to their Benefactors, useful to the Commonwealth, and give Praise and Glory to Almighty God. Amen.*

SERMON XI.



# S E R M O N   X I .

A Sermon before the Lord-Mayor,  
*Jan. 30, 1709-10.*



I KINGS XXI. 9, 10.

*Proclaim a Fast, and set Naboth  
 on high among the People :  
 And set two Men, Sons of Belial,  
 before him, to bear Witness against  
 him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme  
 God and the King : and then  
 carry him out and stone him, that  
 he may die.*

**T**HERE is scarce any one In-<sup>SERM.</sup>stance of the shedding innocent <sup>XI.</sup>Blood, recorded in Holy Scrip-  
 ture, which has not, at some  
 Time or other, been applied to the Occa-  
 sion of this Day's Solemnity, even that of  
 our

to reason than this, that because a man believes there is one who justifies the ungodly, that man therefore shall have his belief counted to him for virtue and goodness, although he works not himself. So much for redemption and grace.

In the third place, We believe there is an heaven, and we believe there may be an hell; but that the wicked shall be tormented in the latter to all eternity, we utterly deny. We also deny the locality of this punishment; insisting, that it is in no particular place, nor inflicted by real fire. We interpret metaphorically all the expressions relating to it in Scripture; particularly, we believe, the word *everlasting*, when applied to it, should be interpreted by the word *tedious*, or, *of long continuance*; for, notwithstanding that shocking epithet, we are firmly persuaded, the future punishment will be only temporary. But, be these rewards and punishments what they will, we do not admit them as sanctions of our morality, lest they should destroy the very essence of virtue, and render us, in all we do, slavish and mercenary. Wherefore we think of them as seldom, and as slightly, as we can; and never make the one an hindrance to any thing we have a mind to do, nor the other a motive to any thing we think fit to be done. The reasons of our actions are drawn only from the fitnesses of things; and the motives, from the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice. So much for the sanctions.

In the last place, We look on the subject-matter of these doctrines as of too little importance to make either them, or their contraries, fundamental articles of faith. We think it of no great consequence to the salvation of any man, which way he thinks on these points, provided he is sincere; that is, provided he is really of his own opinion; for we do not believe the arbitrary governors of churches have any right to know his real sentiments, by his answers, his subscriptions, his declarations, with whatsoever farcical solemnities they may endeavour to pump out the secrets of his heart. We have two Creeds, a short and a long one. The short one is this; Christ is the Messiah. This we believe to be fundamental; but will not be held



to any consequences, excepting such as we draw ourselves. And the long one is the Bible, whereof we will admit of no interpretations of other mens devising, having a peculiar method of our own, which we find answers better than any other hitherto found out. But although we differ widely with the generality of Christians about the object of worship, the Unity of God, the Trinity, the necessary means of salvation, and the like speculative points; yet we love all men, we anathematize none, we endeavour to lead moral lives; and are ready, as often as we think it may be turned to good account, either to ourselves or others, to hold communion with Christians of all denominations.

Such is the system set up against that I have been labouring to defend, when openly expressed, without the shuffle of ambiguous words, and double meanings. And such is the effect, in perverse and overweening men, of holding the Scriptures to be the word of God, and yet denying the doctrines, that are most plainly, and most copiously, insisted on, in those Scriptures. Whether ever there hath appeared, in any age of the world, a system of any kind so big with blasphemy and absurdity, is hard to say. This is the body of divinity preferred to the *Athanasian* Creed, as more intelligible, more consistent, and more scriptural. This is the scheme of ethics preferred to that of Christianity, which terminates in the judgment of the great day. The word of God, however, vouches for the one, and the vain philosophy of men would advance the other. It is our business to choose which we would adhere to.

Although there should be no necessity for believing, either in what I have been labouring to prove fundamental, or in the contrary; yet it must be necessary, at least, to know, whether such belief is necessary or not. The subject does not seem to be of so little consequence, as not to merit even this preliminary attention. Can it be less than absolutely necessary to salvation, that we should know whom we are to worship, and by what means we are to be saved? The Holy Ghost tells us, over and over again, *That we are to worship God, the one only eternal*  
God,

*God, alone; that we are justified by faith; and that the just shall live by his faith.* If we resolve to be concluded by the word of God, we must leave all our own opinions, prejudices, and preconceptions, behind us, that our faculties may have nothing else to do, but to receive the dictates of divine wisdom, which, in that case, we shall easily apprehend, and clearly understand. Where God hath been pleased to be silent, it becomes us to be dumb. So far as he hath vouchsafed to reveal himself, it is our duty, our highest wisdom, to believe, and to adore; not choosing to be of them, who draw back unto perdition, but of them who believe, to the saving of the soul; not choosing, that our faith should stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God; not choosing that wisdom of the wise, which God will destroy; nor that understanding of the prudent, which he will bring to nothing; because it lyeth against the truth; because it descendeth not from above; but is earthly, sensual, devilish; but choosing that wisdom which is really from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy; that sound wisdom which the Lord layeth up for the righteous, which is with the lowly, who ceaseth from his own wisdom, and, like Solomon, asketh of God that wisdom which is better than rubies, so that all things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it. To conclude, we can in nothing so safely consult our own happiness, as in avoiding the example of that man, who, through desire, or vain curiosity, having separated himself from the true teacher of his church, vainly seeketh, and impertinently intermeddleth with, all wisdom, though never so foreign to his purpose, though never so high above his reach, *Prov. xviii. 1.* Nor can we, after renouncing the wisdom of the world, and emptying our understandings of vain refinements, do any thing so pleasing to God, or so highly beneficial to ourselves, as to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, *Coloss. iii. 16.*

But whereas the true wisdom or religion is thy gift, O God, alone; so, in a deep sense of our own blindness and folly, we most humbly beseech thee, of thy infinite goodness,

goodness, to bestow on us thy Spirit, *that we may know the holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus*; to whom, in the Unity of the ever-blessed Trinity, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE XIII.

A Test necessary before Admission into the  
Ministry.

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2 TIM. i. 13, 14.

*Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.*

*That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us.*

**A**LTHO' there is sufficient reason to doubt whether what we call the Apostles Creed was the form of sound words here spoken of, or not; yet there is no room to question the general persuasion, that it was some such form, or brief summary of articles, necessary to the belief and practice of the church. That the Apostle did not mean the instructions at large which he gave to *Timothy*, is plain from the word in the original, rendered by *form*, which properly signifies the sketch or outlines of a picture. This form he charges his favourite disciple to *hold fast in a firm faith*, as to himself, and in *love* or charity towards others, who are united to him in Christ Jesus; that, by the first, he might ensure the salvation of  
a true

a true believer to his own soul; and, by the latter, be moved to propagate the same saving faith, and no other, among the people committed to his care. The matter of this form he calls a *good* or excellent *deposit*, requiring *Timothy* to *keep*, or, as it is in the original, to *guard it safely*, that is, to preserve it pure and intire, *by the grace of the Holy Ghost*, which alone can enable us to *stand fast in the faith*, in that faith which is *not of ourselves, but the gift of God*.

Two things merit our observation in regard to this faith; its unity, and its necessity. As to the first, the Holy Spirit assures us, that, as there is *but one God, and one Lord, so there is likewise but one faith*, Eph. iv. ; and, in the same chapter tells us, *God gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, for the edification of Christ's body, or church, that we may all come, by the sound and uniform instructions of those teachers, to the unity of the faith*. And, as to the necessity of this one only faith, it is set forth to us in the strongest terms: *Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*, Rom. xiv. *Without faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him*, Heb. xi. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. v. 1. *Our Saviour faith, John iii. 18. He that believeth on him, is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the only-begotten Son of God*.

As, then, there is but one faith, and that faith so necessary; and since the Scriptures were given us by God purely to instruct us in the matter of that faith, and to convince us of its truth; we cannot, without blaspheming the wisdom and goodness of God, suppose this faith either obscurely or imperfectly declared to us in those Scriptures; for, if it were, how could his Spirit, taking occasion from differences that arose on subjects of far less consequence, 1 Cor. i. 11, 12. than such as related to the faith, exhort us to uniformity in all things; and, ver. 10. so earnestly beseech us, *by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we should all speak the same thing; that there should be no divisions*

*sions among us; but that we should be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and the same judgment? It is in regard to faith especially, perhaps only, that revelation is so often called light, the great, the marvellous light, the day, and the day-spring.*

This being the case, it may seem astonishing, that such infinite diversities and oppositions should have risen among Christians about the articles of faith, about their number, their meaning, their necessity; whether we are to be justified by the righteousness of Christ, or by our own; whether the torments of hell will be eternal, or temporary; whether we may worship and pray to any being but God; whether there is only one God, or three; &c. Who, that ever looked into the word of God with open eyes, could conceive it possible for the readers and believers of that word to be in doubt about such things?

The odium of this wonder might, with some colour of justice, be thrown on the Scriptures, had not men differed as widely, according to their prejudices and passions, about other branches of knowledge sufficiently plain. There is nothing so plain in the whole circle of science, as to have been always undisputed. Neither is there any thing so remote from right reason, as not, at one time or another, to have been the favourite opinion of some uncouth head, or even of some party. If any one should take the pains to write, with freedom and impartiality, a dogmatical history, it would be no easy matter to distinguish it from an history of *Bedlam*. Its true character would be a vast mass of subtle reasonings, serued and distorted, to support a proportionable variety of wild, whimsical, or wicked, notions. To say nothing of logics, physics, metaphysics, &c. is it possible for the lodgers in *Moorfields* to think more differently, that is, in effect, more wildly, than the learned in morality and politics have both thought and written in those practical sciences wherein mankind are most concerned, and, of consequence, one should imagine, ought to be most clear and determinate? As to religious matters, which are often high and spiritual, and, in some measure, incomprehensible in their very nature, that they should, altho' never so clearly revealed, afford room for  
 difference

difference and dispute among mankind, who are more tempted to deviate from reason in this than in any other kind of knowlege, is a thing not much to be wondered at, if we consider it as the growth of minds so naturally various in their judgments, and so apt to be opinionated in what springs from within themselves; altho', indeed, nothing can be more unaccountable in men who make, or pretend to make, the plain word of God the only rule of their faith. As men, it may well be expected of us, that we should differ, especially about remote and less necessary points of theology; but whosoever candidly reads the Scriptures, must be amazed at our differing, as Christians, at least concerning the very fundamentals of our religion. Be this, however, as it will, surely these diversities of opinions, and the contentions arising from thence, are an evil, which, of all others, the sober and pious part of the world should most earnestly desire to see cured.

And therefore we may venture to say, that, of all the extravagancies, in relation to religion, which the wrong heads, and of all the fallacies, which the deceitful hearts, of the present age, so fertile in both, have engendered, none seems so wild in itself, nor so dangerous in its consequences, as the now prevailing notion of many, who represent the care taken by each Christian church to provide for the choice of teachers conformable to herself in principles, as the greatest bar to truth, the most grievous encroachment on the natural liberty of mankind, and, therefore, as a thing wholly unlawful in itself. This is the general cry of all who have only a smattering either of knowlege or religion; and we can easily see what are the motives that serve them instead of reasons. They are miserably hampered with principles opposite to those of the church, and, at the same time, with no small longings after her preferments. Streightened, therefore, as they are, between conscience on the one hand, and the love of lucre on the other; and finding it difficult, on account of the first, to squeeze through the present subscriptions and declarations to the latter; they are forced to have recourse to this artful plea, in hopes thereby to throw open the doors of the

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church,

church, and procure an indiscriminate admission for all. But from how many different quarters this plea is pushed, is not easy to say. This, however, is certain, were it allowed to be valid, and reduced to practice by a total abolition of all articles, creeds, declarations, &c. the *Arian*, the *Socinian*, the *Papist*, the *Mahometan*, would all equally find their account in it, and therefore have equal reason to urge it for the present turn; tho' the world knows there is not one denomination of them that would grant what they now demand, could they once get the church to themselves. Indeed they ought not; for with what conscience could a *Popish* church admit such men for teachers as they esteem heretics? Or how could an *Arian* or a *Socinian* church admit into the ministry a set of men, who, they are sensible, would teach the people the coequality of the Three Persons in the Trinity, which they regard as a most pernicious doctrine? Sure I am, if they did, they must be very unfaithful to the most awful trust that ever was reposed in man.

It will not, I hope, be denied, that some care ought to be taken by those who have any authority (howsoever they come by it) in any church, that the members of that church be taught Christianity, and not any other religion or superstition, such as *Mahometism*, *Manicheism*, *Paganism*, &c. If they do not take this care, how can they answer for the trust they conceive to be reposed in them, on the strength of which they meddle with the affairs of religion?

But they can in no sort shew themselves thus careful, without a strict inquiry into the principles, the morals, the capacities, and the knowlege, of such as they permit and appoint to be teachers of the people. If there is no inquiry into their principles, the people may have instructors who shall teach them to trust in *Mahomet*, or worship the devil. If there is no inquiry into their morals, the sheep may have goats and wolves for pastors. If there is no inquiry into their capacity and knowlege, the blind must be led by the blind; or the ignorant must be set up to teach those who have more understanding than themselves;



themselves; which can tend to nothing but the utter contempt of the ministry, and, thro' that, of religion.

If, then, they who are already in authority may, or rather ought thus to inquire, it follows, that they ought, by the most effectual methods they can think of, to sound the capacities of such as sue for the ministry, to examine their skill in Scripture, to demand ample certificates of their good behaviour; and, as no man is morally good but on principle, nor fit to be the guide of others, if he hath not somewhat to guide himself, they ought, above all things, to ask the candidates what their principles are; and to receive their answers, with the most solemn protestations of sincerity, either in the words of the candidates themselves, or by forms prepared and authorized in the church for that purpose, or by both; for it is impossible to be too careful in an affair of this consequence. But, as it is perfectly equal to the honest candidate, whether he discovers his religious sentiments in the words of the church, or his own; and as there is less danger of equivocal terms in a form warily prepared by the church; so the use of such forms is chiefly to be depended on. And, to answer the important end proposed by them, they cannot be too full, too express, too explicit; or, in case of prevarication, too severely damnatory. If, on the application of these means, the present governors of the church should judge the candidates to be, either in principle or practice, no Christians, I hope I may be allowed to say, they ought to reject them.

Now, altho' these governors should be never so really heterodox in themselves, yet, as they think their principles right, they cannot judge the candidates to be Christians, if they find their sentiments essentially opposite to their own; or, even if they find them to be indifferent to what they take to be essential, they cannot think them fit instructors for the people. The *Athanasian* cannot, as an honest man, admit the *Arian*, nor the *Arian* the *Athanasian*; the Protestant cannot, without doing violence to his conscience, admit the Papist; nor the Papist, without the like violence, ordain the Protestant, any more than he could the *Mahometan*, knowing him to be such.

Now it is no objection to this method, that the candidate, after all, may have prevaricated, because the governors of the church are not obliged to search the heart ; but they are certainly obliged to do, in this behalf, the best they can ; and when they have done it, but not till then, they have discharged their consciences in the sight of God.

That it is the indispensable duty of church-governors, especially in times like these, to take this method, is so very obvious to common sense, that, I own, my being particular on this subject might give this Discourse an air of puerility, were not all I have said disputed by a numerous party among us, and that so gravely, as to satisfy the unwary they are in good earnest.

But if I stand in need of an apology to men of reason, in thus taking up their time by the proof of positions so indisputable ; how shall I excuse myself to the honest part of my audience for the descant I am going to give on the necessity of sincerity in those who subscribe, and solemnly declare for, such forms as I have been recommending ? Surely, you will say, it must be as needless to expatiate on such a point, as to prove, that sacrilege or perjury is a crime. Is it possible for the most abandoned of mankind to prevaricate, on so solemn an occasion, with the governors of the church, with the all-seeing God, even while the holy mysteries are in view ? How am I overwhelmed with shame and sorrow, when I tell you, that numbers have not only the baseness of soul thus to prevaricate, but even the impudence of face to defend it when it is done ! O tell it not, my brethren, at *Edinburgh*, publish it not in the streets of *Rome* ; lest the disciples of *Knox* rejoice, lest the bigots of *Hildebrand* triumph !

They say, our articles and creeds do not set forth the doctrines of the Trinity, of the satisfaction, of eternal punishments, &c. in terms so strict, but that he who believes the contrary may honestly subscribe them all. They say, a man may solemnly declare before God his unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in the book of Common Prayer ; may solemnly undertake, when  
he

he is ordained, to teach its doctrines, and no other ; may solemnly repeat its prayers, tho' he utterly disbelieves the doctrines just now mentioned, and teaches the very reverse ; and yet—amazing ! may be an—honest man ; for no other reason, that I can find, but because, by so doing, he may acquire a place wherein to make his abilities useful, and a power to do good, that is, to disabuse the people in relation to these very doctrines, thus solemnly assented to. However, as they cannot help looking on this practice as a sort of indecorum, they are ever scheming the repeal of these subscriptions and declarations. I may say on this, as *Tertullian* did on a different occasion : “ How miserably is the conduct of these men con-  
 “ founded, and rendered inconsistent with itself, by ne-  
 “ cessity !” They subscribe the articles as orthodox, and solicit the repeal of them as unsound. They publicly declare for them as consonant to Scripture, and privately undermine them as contrary thereunto. And this they do, that they may have it in their power to serve the God of truth in his vineyard, by pruning away those branches, as mere excrescences, which they promised to support with all their skill. Are we, in such a service, *to do evil, that good may come of it ? God forbid.* Let those who defend the practice of subscribing forms directly repugnant to their real sentiments, on the pretence of thereby acquiring an opportunity to insinuate sounder principles than those contained in the forms, by the aid of double meanings supposed in the forms, or of secret reservations conceived in their own minds, consider seriously, how such a scheme, with its excuse, would have sounded in the ears of our blessed Saviour. Suppose one of his disciples, *Judas* for instance, none of the rest being capable of the thing, should have thus addressed him :

“ O divine Master, I have with concern observed,  
 “ that mankind are averse to the truths of thy holy reli-  
 “ gion, when openly and nakedly proposed ; and still  
 “ more unwilling to receive a system of morality so pure  
 “ and severe, if it is not recommended to them by the  
 “ appearance of somewhat more indulgent. They will  
 “ not, I foresee, be persuaded to quit their pleasing pre-  
 “ possessions,

“ possessions, for a set of principles that are as disagree-  
 “ able as they are new to them. Wilt thou, therefore,  
 “ permit me to declare myself a worshiper of the heathen  
 “ gods, that I may, by this expedient, insinuate myself  
 “ into the priesthood of *Baal* or *Jupiter*, and, in that  
 “ situation, artfully pass thy religion and worship on the  
 “ people, under the mask of their own? In taking this  
 “ course, I intend to graft on the minds of the Pagans  
 “ such unsuspected principles, in the disguise of other  
 “ philosophical opinions which they favour, and by the  
 “ assistance of ambiguous terms, as may serve for the  
 “ seeds of truth, and be afterwards so effectually urged,  
 “ as to procure a total admission of our religion. They  
 “ will not receive the first principles of a system they are  
 “ so averse to, while they are aware of the tendency;  
 “ but if these principles are once admitted, which, by  
 “ prudently concealing the consequences, they may, we  
 “ can, at our leisure, teach them to draw the conclusion,  
 “ and hold them to it, till they are wholly ours.”

Let the *Socinian* and *Arian* subscribers of our articles consider how Christ would have received such a proposal. And let them not presume to vindicate themselves by saying, their conduct is different from that in the supposition. That in the supposition, which would have stirred the indignation of Christ, is the base profession of Paganism, and the actual worship of its gods, against the conviction of him who was to do it, in order to insinuate an ingenuous system of truths, and promote the credit of a Master who could not but disdain such a service. Now the same idolatrous disingenuity, with a notable aggravation, is found in the conduct of an *Arian* or *Socinian*, who subscribes our articles, declares for our creeds, and repeats the liturgy as a solemn act of worship to Christ and the Holy Ghost, whom he believes to be creatures. Is he not as truly an idolater, or at least a prevaricator, as *Judas* could have been in the first case? Nay, does he not act rather a viler part; since there was no form of heathen principles, so strict and explicit as the *Athanasian* creed, tendered to the candidates for the Pagan priesthood?

Dr. Clarke, who, altho' a *Semi-arian*, was, by virtue of the subscriptions and declarations we are speaking of, possessed of the Rectory of *St. James's*, to apologize in this behalf for himself, and others alike circumstanced, hath, in a most elaborate work, endeavoured to reconcile his principles, first with the holy Scriptures, and then with the liturgy, and even the *Nicene* and *Athanasian* creeds. If he hath succeeded in this attempt to the satisfaction of his admirers, they need not, surely, wish for the abolition of these creeds. But I will venture to say, it is as easy to accommodate the first article of either to Atheism or Polytheism, as the subsequent ones to *Socinianism*, *Arianism*, or *Semi-arianism*. The framers of these forms were certainly the most unhappy of all men in expressing themselves. They intended, I believe, to be very precise in their terms, very strong and close in their propositions, and thereby to anathematize the *Arian* opinions among others. The abettors of those opinions thought so, and complained. But behold the strange mistake of both! Those creeds either maintain the contrary principles agitated at the councils of *Nice* and *Constantinople*, or the *Arian*, *Semi-arian*, and *Macedonian*, only; anathematizing that which was called orthodox, and held by those who drew them up. Of all the works the world hath ever seen, this is the most impudent and disingenuous, and shews the greatest contempt for the understanding of its readers.

Does Christianity teach us honesty and sincerity? And shall we Christians, thus taught, use nothing but jugglery and deceit in speaking to one another, or in writing to the world, about Christ and Christianity? Nay, shall we use this deceit even in our solemn professions to the church, even in our devout addresses to God? If Christianity could countenance such a conduct as this, I should renounce it with as much horror as hell itself. If the God of truth, angry at *the deceiverableness of unrighteousness that is in us*, as *St. Paul* expresses it, hath not, for this cause, sent us strong delusion, that we should believe a lie, he will blast the deceitful practices of these men. If the god of this world hath not been permitted to blind our

*minds, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto us, we shall, with just indignation, detect and avoid the snares of these deceivers. Indeed it is happy for the people, that the teachers of lyes, afraid of offending the orthodox ears of their hearers, are forced to use such expressions as may bear a good as well as an ill sense, insomuch that the ignorant are in little danger of being perverted by their discourses. The antient Arians, from whom the modern have copied their dissimulation as well as heresy, were obliged, as Waterland observes, even in the zenith of their power, to follow the same method; whereby it came to pass, that the people escaped the infection which had seized almost the whole body of the clergy. The poison, which was wrapped up in a word of double meaning, evaporated in the air between the mouth of the speaker, and the ear of the hearer. St. Hilary observed the same thing. "By the fraud," saith he, "wherewith this impious practice is carried on, it hath happened, that the people of Christ do not perish under the priests of Antichrist, while they take that to be the faith of their teachers which their words express. They hear Christ called God by their clergy; and they believe him to be what he is called. They hear him stiled the Son of God; and they believe the truth of his Divinity to be contained in his divine nativity. They hear, he was before all time; and this they take to be the same as if he were called eternal. The ears of the people are more holy than the hearts of their teachers." Such was the dissimulation of the Arians, when they were troubled with no forms but of their own composition. The present Arians and Socinians go a great deal farther. They step into the preferments of the church by solemnly subscribing, and declaring for, creeds, that, in the strongest terms, anathematize their principles; and, after all, they are not only tolerated by the times, but caressed and promoted by those who have discernment enough to see into their dissimulation. How truly may God say of us, as he did of the Jews in the time of Jeremiah! A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and*

*and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people, my once favourite people, love to have it so.*

But, horrible and wonderful as this practice must seem to an honest mind, it is, as I have already observed, defended both in conversation, and through the press. Yet, that they who make the defence, are by no means satisfied with the validity of it themselves, is manifest from their every day publishing books and pamphlets against the expediency of the subscriptions and declarations mentioned; which shew, that their consciences, though large enough to swallow them, are not strong enough to digest them. Give me leave to make some observations on a few of their most distinguished objections.

First, They say these subscriptions bear too hard on Christian liberty, which gives every man a right to think and judge for himself; whereas the subscriptions tend either to deprive them of their natural right to the ecclesiastical emoluments of their country, or to deprive the church of their services.

I shall readily grant, that Christian liberty gives a right, nay, requires us, to think for ourselves; but not for others, because this would be a contradiction in terms. Now, he who desires the ministry, takes upon him, in some measure, to think for the ignorant, whom he would instruct. If he does not take himself to be more knowing than they, why does he desire to be their teacher? He may say, indeed, he does not propose to give them any documents on his own authority, but on that of Scripture. He knows, however, that they will, they must, take his word for a great part of what he shall deliver to them as scriptural. He, again, who desires the ministry, but peremptorily objects to the subscriptions that stand in his way to it, and would remove them, if he could, pretends to think for the governors of the church, who require them, because they judge them expedient; that is, he demands a liberty from men in authority, which he, who hath none, will not give them. They think they are in conscience bound to preserve the people from the infection of his principles; for which reason they look on it as their duty to exclude him from the ministry;

ministry ; and he would force them to act the contrary part, if he could persuade the legislature to help him. Is this allowing the liberty he pleads for ? As to the benefit the church might receive from his abilities and services, thinking for himself will not do in respect to that, whereof others must unavoidably be judges. And, as to the profits he might receive from the church, thinking for himself, where the motive is apt to be so unallowably selfish, is still more unreasonable and dangerous than in the former case. The Scripture, it is true, does not anywhere exclude him by name from a rich benefice ; but it stigmatizes those, *who, for filthy lucre, make merchandize of mens souls*, in such a manner, as leaves it not in the power of church-governors to turn the house of God into a shop, or market, for a man who shews himself to be but a money-changer, by his throwing this lucrative argument into his plea.

These men object also, That our subscriptions are productive of divisions, and uncharitable disturbances ; and that, instead of procuring peace by means of uniformity, they only serve to widen the breaches that are already made ; to open new ones ; and to inflame the minds of men on such religious differences, as, otherwise, would occasion no animosities in the church.

What ! no animosities ? Is not the controversy about the Trinity, or the Pope's infallibility, of moment enough to warm us a little, unless the wealth of the church be added, as the only bone worth contending for ? With what face can a man declare it of himself, that his avarice is so much apter to give him warmth, than his zeal for the propagation of necessary Christian truths ? I cannot do the objectors, even on their own testimony, so great injustice, as to imagine them perfectly indifferent in these important points, when worldly profits are not annexed. Were all subscriptions laid aside, and a free admission given to Papists, *Arians*, *Socinians*, *Quakers*, *Moravians*, &c. would it procure us peace and charity ? Perhaps, for a time, it might give us the peace of men who are asleep or dead ; but sure I am, it would not be long ere we should be totally corrupted both in principle and practice,



and all together by the ears about controversies of as little moment as those trifles that occasion the scuffles of our children. Whatever the state may do with religion, we may presume it will never distribute its places of trust and power among sects thus religiously animated, or capable of being animated, against one another. A religious sect, converted by the possession of civil power into a political faction, cannot but give the judicious an hopeful prospect of peace!

It is further objected also, That, whereas uniformity is the end proposed by our subscriptions, it is an end, which, as Christians, we ought not to be solicitous about, because God does not approve of it, delighting rather in variety, and with equal complacency receiving the worship of his creatures, howsoever diversified over the face of the whole earth.

This objection is false in all its parts. Our church does not propose to convert men, by her articles, to her principles. Nor does she aim, by her subscriptions, any otherwise at uniformity, than that her communion may be granted only to such as think with her in essentials. She shuts out no man from her ministry, purely because he differs with her in what she takes to be essential; but because, if she should admit him, she knows he will propagate such opinions among the people under her care, as she firmly believes to be pernicious and damnable. That she is in the right so to do, hath been sufficiently proved already; altho', I must confess, no point in the world stands less in need of a proof.

But I hope, if she in her homilies, and her divines in their private writings, have endeavoured, by justifying her doctrines, to bring the whole nation to conformity with her, this will not be imputed to her as a crime, especially by those who labour to draw all mankind into their own opinions, tho' never so far detached from a probability of establishment, or, I might say, from even a shew of Reason and Scripture. The very objectors, who tell us (I know not who revealed it to them), that God is best pleased with variety of religions, use their utmost endeavours to make the whole world *Arian* or *Socinian*; which  
must

must be highly wicked in them, since it is their principle, that God would rather have intire nations to worship idols and devils, as they have done, and do to this day. If God had never commanded us to *be all of one mind, to think and speak the same thing*, we ought to have known it to be his will, because as in any particular point truth is one, and error various, or rather infinite; and as God cannot but love the truth, and hate the contrary; so, in respect to religious matters especially, wherein he himself is our teacher, he must be pleased to see us embrace the truth, and displeas'd with all our avoidable errors. It is true, he permits error; and so he does sin. But we ought no more to infer his approbation, from his permission, of the one, than of the other. Besides, if error be a main cause, or rather, strictly speaking, the only cause, of sin, he must abhor the cause in the same proportion as he detests the effect.

But some of our wise objectors, having found out the necessity of subscriptions under some regulation or other; and disliking our method, for no better reason, as you will probably perceive just now, than because it is ours, and not their own; propose two other kinds of subscriptions, as vastly more convenient and adviseable.

The first is, That every candidate for holy orders be oblig'd to give in a schedule or summary of his principles drawn up in his own words; by which, say they, the slavery of saying after others, whatever they think fit to dictate, will be avoided, and his sentiments as thoroughly known.

The proposing this expedient, and actually reducing it to practice, as in many places is done, hath somewhat in it either very knavish, or very foolish. When it is practis'd by men of sense, as preferable to our method, it gives shrewd cause of suspicion, that they have no other end in it, but to give the candidate an opportunity of concealing his real sentiments on some important points of controvery, wherein his silence or ambiguity is taken for a sufficient token, that his principles are more conformable to the minds of the examiners, than to those of Christians in general.

But

But when it is preferred to our method, without any such by-end as this, it is the effect of mere prejudice, and altogether foolish. Men of any understanding cannot but know, that there is no difference between the two methods, unless purely in the point of convenience, which is plainly on the side of ours, when both the examiners and the candidate have honestly the same intention, they to know his real sentiments, and he to declare them freely. If a form is to be subscribed at all, what is the use of it? Is it not that the ordainers may find out, as far as they can trust the solemn declarations of a man suing for holy orders, what are his real principles, in order, if they approve of them, to admit him, or, if they find them unsound, that is, essentially contrary to their own, to reject him? If this is the end, surely there can be no difference between their tendering him such a form, and his tendering one to them, excepting that the one may be more full and express than the other. Since some confession is on this occasion to be made and subscribed, will the examiners, or ought they to ordain him, till his form of confession comes up in sum and substance to that which they would propose to him, were they desirous to know his mind? And, if they will not, where is the sense of choosing his form, rather than one of their own, or of that church in which their consciences lead them to communicate? His privilege of expressing himself by his own words, a thing extolled by these men, as if it were the only barrier of Christian liberty, will be found to be a very frivolous privilege indeed; since, do what he will, he must so express himself, as to set forth precisely their meaning, or, otherwise, the end of forms and subscriptions is wholly frustrated. If they do not perceive his meaning by his words, or do not like it, they must send him away to mend it; and they can never think it sufficiently mended, till it becomes, to all intents and purposes, their form, rather than his. All this while, how shall he know what are the heads they deem necessary for him to declare himself on, and what kind of declaration they would approve, if they do not tell him? But, if they do tell him, had they not as good tell it him by some creed, or formula

of confession, well considered and prepared beforehand? What, in the name of common sense, will either party lose or gain by the difference?

The other expedient, or subscription, proposed by our worthy opponents, hath, at first, more appearance, than the former, of piety and reason; altho', when it is well considered, it will deserve, from a sound judge, the same censure of dissimulation or folly. They say, as our faith depends on Scripture only, we ought to use no other form, for the purpose in hand, but such as is conceived in the very words of Scripture, without the least mixture, tho' it were merely for connexion, of human words or terms. In this case, they are willing to let the examiners make the extracts themselves. Or, to mend their scheme, they think it best to subscribe the Bible at large, as the word of God. Thus, say they, we shall be sure we do right, because we make use of a confession of faith drawn up by God himself, and stick precisely to his own words.

Is it words, then, only, which we are to be so careful about in our subscriptions, and not meanings? Does that word of God, whereof Christ says, *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away*, consist in the dead letter, than which nothing can be more perishable, and not in the truth and spirit intimated to us under that letter? If it lies in the letter only, Papists, *Arians*, *Socinians*, *Manichees*, &c. are all of one mind; for they are all ready to subscribe to the letter, all ready to recognize the book as the word of God, and to subscribe it as such. But, if it is the sense of this holy book which we mean, when we call it God's word, we must, in subscribing it, tell what the sense of it is, or we do nothing. And yet, if we do this, we shall, even in points acknowledged to be fundamental by all, have I know not how many Bibles, as opposite in their meanings as they are uniform in their words. The Papist and the *Socinian* shall communicate together, and peace shall be restored; but it must be at the expence of truth. If the Bible in the original languages is to be subscribed, it is manifest, that not one in ten of the candidates can subscribe the far greater part of it, any otherwise than as blank paper,

or as paper filled with unmeaning words. But, if a translation may be used for this purpose, then it may be asked, Whose translation? A Popish or a Protestant translation? The proposers of this scheme are not aware, that it is as dangerous to translate the Scriptures for vulgar use, as for subscription; and that, if we do translate them, we must depart from God's words, and dress up in our own such meanings as we have collected, or rather sometimes extorted, from his. This considered, is it not evident, that all the subscribers of a translation will set their hands, not to one Bible, but each of them to a Bible of his own? As the devil quoted Scripture against Christ, so numbers quote it every day against truth, against the very truths of Scripture, nay, even against its own authority and divinity. That they quote it absurdly, and wrest it wickedly, is true. But who shall judge them in this? None but God, who knows he hath made it sufficiently intelligible to answer his gracious ends in giving it to us; and who clearly sees in the hearts of men those abominable byasses, and detestable passions, through which they view it all distorted and confounded. Now, altho' the governors of no church can justly pretend to the gift of infallible interpretation; yet, as it is acknowledged by the objection, that they ought, by some means or other, to ask the candidates for holy orders what are their religious principles; as the candidates must, some way or other, return a satisfactory answer, before the askers can be justified in ordaining them; and as, in fact, subscribing the Bible will by no means bring them to the necessary end proposed; this new scheme of subscription must be laid aside, as wholly useless.

Perhaps, had I staid a few years, I might have saved myself the trouble of stating and answering this proposal for subscribing the Bible; because, it is probable, they who offer it, will in a little time give it up. They have gradually gone on, for fifty years past, laying aside confessions, abolishing creeds, and inveighing against all human compositions, as tests of orthodoxy; and now, to serve a turn, they insist on the Bible as the only test. But, whereas they already begin to deny the divine inspiration

of the Bible in part, and can by no means settle what parts were given by the Spirit, and what by the scriptural writers, purely as the dictates of their own minds; the word of God itself must soon lose its credit with these enemies to uninspired tests. And this is the more probable, since they have long ago reduced the religion contained in it to almost nothing; taking such liberties, in order thereunto, in explaining it, as no just critic would allow himself or others to take with the compositions of the meanest writers. They whittle away the Divinity of Christ and the Holy Ghost, which the Scriptures represent in the strongest terms, in shameless equivocations. They deny the atonement made by the death of Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, than which nothing is more insisted on in the word of God. They sink the necessity of revelation to a mere trifling expediency; and cry up the light of nature as a sufficient guide both in religion and morality. How long, then, think you, will they continue to insist on the Scriptures as the only creed, or test of true religion? Shall men, who conceive quite otherwise of religion on all these heads, admit such libertines into the office of teaching the people committed to their charge? If they do, how will they answer it to their consciences here, or the God of truth hereafter? No forms of confession can possibly be conceived in terms too strict or full, or with clauses too awfully damnatory, in order to exclude such candidates from the holy ministry. But if they will subscribe all sorts of forms, tho' never so contrary to their principles (I will not say consciences, for surely they have none), as we see they are every day ready to do, allured with the prospect of gain; the governors of the church, however, having done their utmost to prevent it by close examinations, by strict subscriptions, by ample, explicit, and solemn, declarations, exacted of them, are excusable in the sight of God, who knows they can do no more; who knows they are not able to penetrate into the secrets of mens hearts.

But, to obviate the reasons for this only expedient in a matter of so high concern, the adversaries insist, that altho' we are obliged to hold the truth, so far forth as

we are able to find it out, yet we are not obliged, on such occasions, to declare what we understand by the truth; that the Scriptures no-where tie us to this as our duty; and that, were it nevertheless so necessary, they would somewhere have prescribed it. Such declarations might, they say, be, in many cases, attended with persecution, and, in some, with exclusions little short of persecution.

Had the disciples of our Saviour been so tender of themselves, there had been few preachers, of the Gospel, not one effectual preacher, no confessors, no martyrs, and, consequently, no Christian church now in the world. But are we not to *confess with the mouth*, as well as *believe with the heart*? Can we all *speak the same thing*, as we are commanded, if we do not speak at all? Does not the Holy Ghost expressly order us to *be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us*? And how can we give a reason of our hope, if we do not tell what our hope is? Or can we discover our hope, and yet conceal our faith, on which that hope is founded? Or can we be under an obligation to discover our faith and hope, and even the reasons for both, while no man hath a right to ask what they are? But if other Christians have no right to ask, or be answered, as to these matters, surely the church, or they who are to call and ordain, must, at least, have a right to inquire, of those who desire holy orders, what are the principles they intend to teach? If a candidate is obliged to give an answer to every man, he must undoubtedly answer his ordainers, unless he takes them to be no men. Sure I am, were not such a candidate ashamed of his own principles, or afraid of incurring some worldly loss or inconvenience, he would never scruple to answer by any form or method his examiners should be pleased to take. Were he already ordained, he could not take it amiss to be asked his judgment concerning the faith, by the meanest of his hearers; and why is he more nice, when the like question is proposed to him by the ordainers? Why, they might refuse him orders, if they did not like his answers, and he does not care to prevaricate. Hath he reason to blame

them for this? If he himself had the power of ordaining, would he ordain a man, who, he had reason to think, would instil into the people principles not only contrary to his own, but such as, in his judgment, are destructive of all their hopes in futurity? Or, if he did, surely we may be allowed to call him a most unfaithful shepherd. Now what he would, in conscience, be obliged to do, on pain of his own damnation, he can have no pretence so bitterly to inveigh against others for doing.

But the goodly objectors tell us, they could with the less scruple subscribe, were it not for the damnatory clauses wherewith one of our Creeds is clogged. The articles of that Creed, say they, are too many, and too nicely scholastic, to be necessary to a faith which is itself necessary to salvation; and besides, altho' we are never so clearly convinced of them ourselves, we think it a shocking breach of Christian charity to pronounce damnation on those who do not believe them all.

Now, I insist on it, these articles are very few, if counted as they lie; and fewer still, if it is considered, that all the rest, not found in the other Creeds expressly or virtually, are necessarily explanatory of two points only; the Trinity, and the Incarnation; which, if not so explained and guarded, must be sunk in one or other of the heresies that have infested the church. So this Creed is more explicit indeed, but not longer, as to its real content of articles, than any of the rest.

As to the nicety, the curiosity, and difficulty, of the terms wherein it is conceived; had it been clothed in terms less express and apposite, it could not so perfectly have exhibited the faith, nor so well have answered the end proposed by a declaration of that faith; for a declaration that is not full, particular, and clear, is a contradiction in terms, and can answer no other end, but to amuse and deceive. That the terms are not all scriptural, we own; nor was it possible they should; but, till they are shewn to contain meanings not warranted by Scripture, we have a right to use them; because we can in no language, but *Hebrew*, and *Greek*, preserve the pre-  
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esse terms of Scripture ; and because we are under a necessity, nevertheless, of declaring our faith in other languages. The whole merit of the question, therefore, resting in this, whether the terms of that Creed convey scriptural meanings only, we ought to be attacked merely on the subject of their scriptural rectitude in point of sense, and not on the nicety of their choice, who were forced to use them, because no other words could so well have set forth the sense of Scripture on those heads.

Now, as to the damnatory clauses, annexed to the articles of this Creed ; if the belief of the articles themselves is necessary, those clauses must be necessary too ; for why should not the necessity of that faith be declared, as well as the faith itself ? Christ saith, *He that believeth not, is condemned already.* Believeth not what ? What Christ himself, and what the Holy Ghost, tell us in Scripture ; namely, that *Jesus is Christ*, or the Messiah ; that he is *the only-begotten Son of God* ; that he is *a Teacher sent from God* ; that all his words are *the words of truth, and eternal life* ; that he is *God himself* ; that he *took our nature on him*, and died *a sacrifice for the sins of believers* ; that *he arose again from the dead, and shall judge the world* ; that the Holy Ghost is the very *Spirit of God, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent* ; that *he shall guide us into all truth* ; and that therefore whatsoever he communicates to us is truth, and necessary to be believed by us, if we will not give the lye to God, and thereby destroy our own souls. Such is our faith, and such the necessity of standing fast in it. Does the Creed in question say more ? Or ought it to say less ? Surely a Christian may safely speak after Christ ; and say again what the Holy Ghost hath said already.

What hath been urged is sufficient to shew, that the damnatory clauses are not of man's invention, and, consequently, no breach of Christian charity in those who pronounce them. But this will appear still more demonstrable, if we never so little consider what are the true nature and use of those clauses, and what it is we do when we utter them as an appendage to our faith.

As to the first; these clauses were inserted in this Creed, and in most of the ancient creeds, the *Arian* as well as others, by no means to intimate the condemnation, for want of faith, of such as had no opportunity of receiving the Christian religion; but of such only, as, having it duly preached to them, should *receive it in an evil heart of unbelief*, and, *holding it in unrighteousness*, should mutilate or corrupt its essentials. Accordingly, the Creed in question says, not that all are damned who never heard of Christ; but, “*Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary, that he hold the catholic faith; which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.*” You see here the true meaning and use of this clause; by which the other shorter, and seemingly more severe, clauses in the same Creed are to be restrained and illustrated. Now, if the faith contained in the Creed is necessary, thus its necessity must be expressed, in case we mean to be full and explicit.

And, that we may be so, without the smallest breach of charity on this occasion, we shall be clearly convinced, the moment we consider what that charity is. Now charity is the love of God and men. It will not, I believe, be alleged, that the pronouncing this clause hath any thing to do with the love of God; at least, I may venture to say, it is no sign of our want of love for him, that we utter that condemnation of those who deny the truth of his words, which he hath already uttered. Nor is it at all an instance of our want of love towards men, if we are so far from doing it with pleasure, that we do it with grief of heart, and a tender concern for the dangerous state of unbelievers, nay, with an earnest endeavour after their conversion. Besides, we are far from pronouncing this as our own sentence, or taking on us the authority of judges; we are far from levelling it at any particular man; but, on the contrary, include ourselves, in case we dissemble in our professions, or shall hereafter fall from the faith. There is, surely, a wide difference between condemning with severity; and believing, with sorrow and compassion, that another is condemned. A man who  
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pronounces this sentence, because he sees it pronounced in the word of God, might die for the conversion and retrieval of those, on whom he is forced, by the conviction of his faith, to pronounce it. And surely, if this is very possible, it must be very plain, his heart was as far from want of charity towards his unbelieving neighbour, as theirs who make a difficulty of these clauses. The truth is, this whole cry of uncharitableness, on account of the use which the church makes of these clauses, is but a mere cant; and they who raise or keep it up among Protestants, with whom it is a primary principle to show all possible kindness to such as differ with them even in fundamentals, know it to be but a cant; yet fail not to lay as much stress on it, as if they thought it a solid argument, in order to throw an odium on that particular church, which hath distinguished itself throughout the world for its charity to all men, but more especially to these very objectors.

I have now gone through with what I had to say on this important, tho' controverted, subject; and have only this to add, that they, whose principles are conformable to those of our Creeds, ought by no means to suffer their artful, their interested, adversaries to amuse them with their cry of, *No Articles, no Creeds*; but ought rather to consider coolly what would be the consequence, if we had none; what an anarchy of opposite principles, of horrible corruptions, of scandalous arts, and bloody dissensions, must immediately break in upon us, and throw all into confusion, both in church and state. He, who loves his religion and country, cannot without horror behold, from the rock of safety he at present stands on, this inundation of imposture, superstition, hypocrisy, cruelty, and, in the end, of universal ruin. Till, therefore, he is on good grounds convinced the principles of our Articles and Creeds are erroneous, let him never wish to see himself, and the flock he belongs to, committed to the tuition of a teacher, who hath not, with full conviction of mind, and with a sincere heart, subscribed the Articles of our church. Let him never wish to see her communion shared by Papists; *Arians, Socinians*, and God knows who, inrolled in her

ministry, perverting her people, undermining her foundations; and, after ruining her, tearing one another to pieces; all which, it is easy to foresee, must be the effects of either laying aside the present subscriptions, in complaisance to the plea of our adversaries, or of suffering them to be eluded by the artifices of the very worst of men. Such I must call those men, who have consciences capable of subscribing, and declaring for, the articles, as they stand, with principles directly opposite to the most essential. Good God! cannot cunning and dissimulation be satisfied to take up their abode with the viler sort of politicians; with the sharpers in gaming; with the sharks of law or trade; or with common cheats and thieves? but must the church of Christ be invaded by them? Must the house of God be polluted with them? Must the holy altar groan under the abuse of this infernal imposture, which, paying more respect to men than God, amuses them with a shew of principles they approve of, while it insults Him, who cannot be amused, with a bold and impious prevarication, in that very thing whereby he proposes to teach all men the fear of himself, and the love of truth?

May God, of his infinite goodness, after having so far left us to the trial of our own infirmity, be graciously pleased to avert the horrible evil from us, and to give us truth and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

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## DISCOURSE XIV.

Christianity proved by Miracles.

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JOHN v. 36.

*The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.*

**O**UR blessed Saviour, having every-where represented himself as the Messiah, or Messenger of God, sent into the world to teach and redeem mankind, here pleads the credentials of his mission, and appeals to the *works which the Father had given him to finish*, as a full proof, that he came immediately from the Father, and was then employed in executing the gracious purposes of his Father. That these works were thoroughly well qualified to prove this great point to all men, and more especially to the Jews, who knew, or ought to have known, that the prophets had foretold them as the peculiar distinguishing works of Christ, I shall endeavour to shew, in this and the following Discourse. In this I shall treat of the works only.

What these were, we may see throughout the Gospels; namely, *Miracles*; such as, giving health to the sick, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead, and driving out devils.

I shall shew, in the first place, That this was a demonstrative proof of our Saviour's mission ;

And, in the second, That it was actually given.

From whence we must conclude, that all he taught, or impowered others to teach, under the authority of this proof, was true, and ought to be believed, as uttered and revealed by God himself.

To clear up the first point, it will be proper to begin with stating the right notion of a *Miracle*. A *Miracle* then is a work so evidently superior or contrary to the known nature of things, that nothing, but the power of God, can be supposed to effect it. Although the work of creation required this power, and therefore demonstrates the being of a God, yet we do not call it properly a *Miracle* ; because from thence arose that nature of things, which we regard as ordinary and stated, and therefore do not wonder at, or, at least, do not take it for a proof of any thing more, than the existence of its own proper cause. In this I accommodate myself to the general use or acceptation of the word ; although, otherwise, there is no difference between the exemplification of the Divine power in nature, or against it. They equally demonstrate the finger of God, and, to a rational mind, are equally wonderful. As none but God could make the world, we may be sure, none but God can change the natural course of things, can reverse the stated chain of causes and effects or produce any effect without a natural cause. We must also take it for granted, that if God, in any particular instance, or for any occasional purpose, communicates such a power, it must be confined to certain bounds, and cannot be exercised otherwise, than according to the commission or licence granted with it, by the Fountain of all power.

If any of the *Miracles*, wrought in attestation of our religion, may be ascribed to a less powerful agent than God ; for instance, walking on the water, or causing iron to swim ; we have, nevertheless, a right to insist on them as authentic proofs of a divine mission in the workers ; because they are evidently contrary to the known course of nature ; because they are performed in order to an end  
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worthy of the divine intendment; and because we have sufficient reason to judge, that God, the source of all power, could not have impowered, either in the way of command or permission, any creature so to interpose in a work of this nature, as that his intelligent creatures should be deceived in the only criterion, whereby a real mission from him may be distinguished from that which is only pretended. All works therefore performed, as in the foregoing instances, against the known course of nature, and avowedly for a good end, of the highest importance, must be attributed to God, either as immediately causing, or else as commanding, or, at least, as permitting them, for that good end; and consequently, take them in what light you will, must prove the Divinity of the worker's mission.

Pursuant to what hath been laid down, were any thing, directly contrary to nature, performed in the sight of one wholly unacquainted with nature, he could not understand it as a Miracle, that is, as supernatural, or as a proof of any point whatsoever, beyond that of an equivalent cause. It would be really a Miracle, or a wonderful effect of the Divine power, but not to his understanding. This shews, that the naturally invariable course of things, or agency of causes, must be so far clearly understood by those to whom a Miracle is exhibited in the way of proof, as nature is counteracted, reversed, or suspended, by that Miracle; or it can neither appear a Miracle, nor a proof, to them. A man may be greatly surpris'd at a very striking effect or performance, which he never saw, nor heard of, before; but he can with no certainty conclude it the effect of a divine and supernatural cause, if he knows no part of nature, to which it is evidently contrary; or knows not so much of nature in general, as to see nature alone could not possibly produce it. We cannot conceive, that *Adam*, supposing him destitute of all knowlege, but what he acquired by experience, could have been affected with the sight of his son *Abel* alive, some days after he knew him to be dead, in the same manner, as one of us should be, did the like happen to ourselves, now that we  
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know, by the experience of all men, in all ages, what death is, and that no dead man naturally revives.

There is no other method by which the stated laws and principles of nature may be known, but by experiment. The natural philosophers of former ages, although they all planned their systems on this basis (for they could not possibly have another), yet, paying too little respect to it, and building on too few, or too hasty, experiments, did but bewilder themselves in the search of natural causes, and gave us little else than mere whims and dreams, for discoveries. *Bacon* was the first who put the study of nature in a proper course; and *Boyle* and *Newton*, following that course, arrived at certainty in many things, that had been utterly unknown, or but darkly guessed at, before their times. But they sought only for hidden principles, or remote causes; whereas all the rest of mankind have been, since the creation, employed, by an unavoidable necessity, in making such experiments as discover the ordinary and common causes of things. In this respect, every plain illiterate man is an experimental philosopher, who, by infinite trials, hath made himself so far acquainted with nature, as his own occasions require. Hence it is, that he knows the difference between sight and blindness, between hearing and deafness, between the free use of his limbs and lameness, between health and sickness, and between life and death, with more certainty, because on the strength of more experiments, made either by himself or others, than *Newton* did the difference between his own attraction, and the pressure of *Cartesius*. Yet had any one, in the midst of Sir *Isaac's* successful experiments, made in proof of his attraction, come in, and, by a single word, taught his ball of lead to ascend in open air, or caused his two bodies, already approaching by the force of attraction, suddenly to fly asunder, he must have taken the phænomenon for the effect of a supernatural cause, or else, contrary to all his experience, have given up his attraction, as neither natural nor stated. And why is the plain man to form any other conclusion, when, in direct opposition to the uniform experience of himself and all other men, he sees the blind endued with sight, the sick restored



to health, or the dead raised to life, in a moment, and by a word or touch; or actually feels the delightful change wrought in himself?

But here the objector says, These changes may proceed from natural causes, unknown to us. The powers of nature, he tells us, and we grant it, are very great, and often hidden from the bulk of mankind; while some men, or some other creatures superior to men, who happen to be acquainted with them, may so turn the force of these prepollent natural powers against the operation of weaker, but more obvious, causes, as to produce those effects we call Miracles. Of this, he says, we see instances every day; as, in the cure of agues, by the bark; of rheumatisms, by the electrical shock; and of various other disorders, by secret nostrums. He says, moreover, that many common experiments in natural philosophy, and the tricks of legerdemain, seem perfectly miraculous to the vulgar. How far, he further urges, the powers of nature may go, or may be known, and applied, by men, or separate spirits, we cannot tell; and therefore cannot be sure the performances we Christians call miraculous, might not have been effected without having recourse to a Divine power.

We are obliged to hear him out, and must own, his objection might have a great deal in it, were it not for one defect; namely, that it is nothing to the purpose. Surely common sense must tell us, there is an immense difference between such effects as are produced by medicines, by instruments, by a long apparatus, and never without them; and such as are exhibited by a word or touch, without medicines, without instruments, without any apparatus. It is no matter what the secret powers of nature may be; it is evident, that, in the case before us, no power of nature was applied, but a power, if we may judge by ourselves, and universal experience, directly contrary, or quite superior, to those powers of nature, that are known to act with the greatest force, and without the smallest variation, since the origin of things.

As to the agency of separate spirits; allowing the objector a right to call them in, which is more perhaps than he will, in good earnest, allow himself, we may say the  
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same of them that we do of men; they cannot supersede that course of nature, which God hath impressed on his works, without his assistance. If they are good beings, they will not choose to do it, in case they can; if they are evil beings, God will neither impower nor permit them to overturn what he hath established in the natural, in order only to introduce enormities in the moral world. It may seem somewhat odd, that men who believe little or nothing of angels, devils, or separate spirits, and, on most occasions, make a jest of such beings, should nevertheless, to serve the present turn, introduce them in a serious argument, by way of poetical machinery, when nothing else can extricate them from a difficulty that pinches too close for their skill in sophistry; although, at other times, they speak of their own reason as too sufficient to fly to any other being for higher wisdom; and do not readily allow, there is any thing in the creation that can do much more than themselves. But if those performances wrought by the prophets, by Christ, and by his apostles, which we call Miracles, were only the effect of skill and legerdemain, or of a deeper insight into nature, than any other men were ever masters of, the world hath been more beholden to those deceivers, than ever it was to all the speakers of truth, and doers of right things, since the creation; for they died to bring credit to their illusions, and performed those illusions for no other intelligible purpose, but to reclaim mankind from sin and wickedness. It was impossible for them to give their doctrines the least air of divine revelations by any other means, than that of ascribing them to God, and proving they came from him by their wonderful works, which, as well as the doctrines, they ascribed also to God, in the words of my text, and an hundred other places. After all, were neither the doctrines the dictates of divine wisdom, nor the works the effect of divine power; were the whole a mere imposition; what did the impostors gain, or hope to gain, by it, but persecution, misery, and death? And what did the great deceiver, who, as they could never have willingly undertaken a design so destructive to themselves, must have forced them on it, gain by it,

but the reformation and happiness of mankind, whom to render as corrupt and miserable as himself, is all he could possibly have had in view? We do not find, on other occasions, that imposition is made the introduction to truth, nor falshood the means of establishing honesty, and integrity of manners, in the world; nor do we hear, that other deceivers designedly labour to serve the rest of mankind, to the loss of all their own worldly comforts, and at the expence of their lives.

Here the objector puts us in mind of the wonders performed by the *Egyptian* magicians, at a trial between them and *Moses*, before *Pharaoh*; of the secrets whereby, *Josephus* says, *Solomon* could cast out devils, and whereby one *Eleazar* actually expelled a devil, before *Vespasian*, and his army; and of the Miracles wrought by that emperor, on two men, the one blind, the other lame, at *Alexandria*. If these things, saith the objector, were done by natural secrets, or by invisible agents, so might those which you Christians stile Miracles. If they were done by the power of God, why should not those *Egyptians* and *Romans*, who did them, insist on the divinity of their religions, respectively, as well as others, for the like reasons, do on theirs?

But does the objector believe these accounts, or not? If he does, he can no longer surely call in question the truth of evangelical history, in relation to the facts we call miraculous, since those facts are infinitely better attested; but, if he does not, why does he sing the unscriptural Miracles in our faces? Have we not as good a right to disbelieve them as he? It is true, as to the performances of the *Egyptian* magicians, they make a part of that history, which we, as Christians, do profess the belief of, and therefore are obliged to answer on this particular fact.

In the first place, What they did does by no means appear to have been performed, either by the power of their gods, or in vindication of their religion, but merely in ostentation of their own power, and in opposition to *Moses* and *Aaron*; and therefore ought to have no consequences as to religious faith of any kind. In the second

place, Whatever power it was, it could not have been the power of God ; because it was baffled and overpowered by his, in the hands of his servants ; and the magicians themselves acknowledged it, when they had unsuccessfully attempted to turn the dust into lice, as *Aaron* had done : *This*, said they, *is the finger of God*, *Exod. viii. 19.* Besides, they were afflicted with the miraculous plague of boils, as well as the other *Egyptians* ; and probably suffered, not only in the destruction of the first-born, because there was *no house in Egypt* exempted, but likewise in all the other plagues. This could not have been the case, nor could they have failed in any of their attempts, had they acted by a commission from God. In the third place, All they did, was done to gratify a tyrant, and to support the cause of injustice and oppression. And, in the fourth place, Their skill, or power, extended only to the doing mischief : neither could they undo what they had done ; which shews their art was defective and confined, and gives it the air of a trick, far short of a real power over the nature of things. Hence we may fairly conclude, the whole was either a mere juggle, or a diabolical delusion. But, if it was only a juggle, why, saith the objector, may not our eyes be deceived in other wonderful performances, as well as these ? In some others they may ; but not in those of *Moses*, to go no farther than the present trial ; not only because the magicians themselves, who suffered, attested the reality of the plagues, but because the whole nation of the *Egyptians* both saw and felt the severe effects of a truly miraculous power in the messengers of God. Here surely was no room for deceit. But if, saith the objector, the magicians acted by a diabolical power, why may not others have done so too ? Or was not that power sufficient to controul the laws of nature, contrary to the doctrine laid down, that nothing but the power of God can do this ? Our Saviour hath already returned a full answer to the first part of this objection ; intimating, that though the devil may be well enough presumed at the bottom of such apparent wonders, as are calculated to do mischief, which was the case in what the magicians did, or attempted ; yet

it would be absurd to suppose this malignant spirit should employ the power he hath, be it more or less, in promoting virtue, and reformation of manners. But, in the last place, Although the performances of the magicians appear to have been supernatural, it is possible enough they may have had no real title to that character; nay, it is evident they had not; because these men could not go through with what they attempted; which sufficiently shews, they did not act by a power superior to nature; for such would have enabled them to produce lice, as well as frogs; but here they failed, and immediately confessed the finger of God; which was as much as to say, "Here stops our art; and here it is, we acknowledge, distinguished from the truly supernatural power, by which our adversaries perform these amazing Miracles." But whereas the performances of these *Egyptians* seem altogether astonishing, and such as never, in any other instance, were exhibited in a bad cause; we may presume God permitted them, for this once, when he intended so thoroughly to display the infinite superiority of his own power, that, for the future, all attempts of the like kind, and for the like purpose, might be stigmatized in the disappointment and exposure of this. And indeed, if we consider their performances, and those of *Moses* and *Aaron*, in one view, they will not bear a comparison. The magicians could do only mischief; whereas the servants of God could only do good; I call it good, as well when they afflicted a guilty nation, in order to relieve one that was innocent and oppressed, as when they withdrew the plagues on the slightest signs of repentance in *Pharaoh*. The former were confined to three experiments, every one of them perhaps within the circle of natural magic; and when the latter proceeded, as far as the occasion required, to more proofs of divine power, were forced to confess the finger of God in these; which was the same as owning, what they did themselves, was no more than a stroke of art.

But the objector further urges, That Miracles, although confessedly the effects of divine power, are no proofs of a revelation; because there is no connexion, in the nature  
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of things, between a Miracle, and the matter of a revelation, whereby the one may be inferred from the other. How does it follow, quoth he, that because sight is bestowed miraculously on the blind, he that does it, speaks the dictates of God, and can speak nothing but the truth? His power cannot prove him proportionably endued with wisdom and integrity.

No! Although it does not prove it by immediate consequence, does it not prove it by a consequence so necessary, and so clearly cogent, as not to be resisted by a fair reasoner? God, we all acknowledge, hath wisdom and truth equal to his power. Where-ever we see his power exerted, we must infer the presence of his wisdom and truth; and therefore the end, to which that power is applied, can neither be a trivial nor a bad end. If he who works a Miracle says, he is impowered to do it by God, in order to prove the truth of a message which he brings from God, this certainly is sufficient to convince us, both of the importance and truth of the message; because, if we know any thing, we must know, that God would never lend his power to be debased to a trifling, or prostituted to a fallacious, purpose. But is there any natural immediate connexion between the formality of an oath, and the fact for which it is brought in evidence? No, surely; and yet it would be madness to deny, for this reason, that an oath is evidence; for all the world knows, that he who swears appeals to the all-knowing avenger of falsehood; and therefore, if they believe he fears God, they must, in proportion, give credit to what he avers, under the sanction of that appeal, although the fact sworn to is not, by the nature of things, made the immediate, nor indeed the necessary, consequent to the antecedent appeal. But our assent to the truth and reality of the fact sworn to, results immediately from our opinion of the swearer's piety; and that from the trials or character we have had of the man's religious principles, now put to the test by solemnly calling God to witness the truth of what he says, and eternally to punish him, in case it is false. Yet, strong as the reason is for relying on this sort of testimony, it may deceive us; whereas the testimony of Mi-  
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acles cannot, for it is the testimony of God, who neither will nor can deceive; and he who credits and receives it as such, hath only *set to his seal, that God is true.*

I hope you have already so clearly seen the emptiness and folly of this fine-spun objection, that I need say no more to it. But it will be proper to observe, that it strikes directly at the very root of revelation, which cannot possibly give any other evidence of itself, as the dictate of God, but what must be drawn from Miracles, wrought to prove the divine mission of those who publish it to the world. When I say, Miracles are the only possible proof of a revelation, I include such prophecies as are attested, either by the event, to all who are apprised both of that and the prediction, or to the prophet himself, by the manner of his inspiration, which can be no other than preternatural and miraculous.

If the natural ignorance, together with both the natural and acquired corruptions of mankind, have made a divine revelation necessary to their reformation and happiness, <sup>a</sup> they have made Miracles necessary also. Why should not the Governor of the world sometimes speak to us his subjects? Are we either so good as not to need it, or so very knowing, as to require no instruction? Or, on the other hand, are we so irretrievably lost, as to forbid, for ever, the divine interposition? Is God so destitute of justice, as to rest satisfied with universal wickedness; or so void of mercy and goodness, as to give us up to total ruin? We can no more avoid inferring the absolute necessity of a revelation, from the wants of man, than we can the highest probability of it, from the relative attributes of God.

Now, that both these inferences are equally conclusive for Miracles, will be glaringly evident to any one who considers, that as a revelation is itself quite beside the natural course of things, so its evidence must be preternatural also. It is impossible for any man to prove, by arguments drawn from the nature or necessity of his instructions, that God hath sent him in particular to teach

<sup>a</sup> See *Deism revealed*, Dial. I. and V.

the world. He may reason more convincingly, and speak more persuasively, than other men, as *Socrates*, *Confucius*, and *Cicero*, did; and another man, of still greater abilities, may outdo him in these talents; but as all this is purely natural and human, it must be attended with two defects, either of them capable of rendering almost wholly vain whatsoever he can say. In the first place, He may be mistaken, and therefore may be misled. And, in the next place, Although he should not, yet they who hear him can never be sure of this, nor with any certainty distinguish between his truths and errors; for they know all men are liable to mistakes, men of great abilities, as well as small.

But if a superior being should come to teach us, and give us a law, this cannot be done without a Miracle. If therefore this necessary work cannot be effected, but by Miracles, God may as well employ a man for that purpose, as an angel; because he can render the man infallible, as to the matter of his instructions, by an immediate inspiration, and, at the same time, give full evidence of that infallibility by the Miracles he impowers him to perform. Thus were the prophets and apostles qualified for the promulgation and proof of revelation. The Miracle of their own inspiration gave them full assurance as to the truth of every thing they were commissioned to declare. The accomplishment in part of what they foretold, and the Miracles they were enabled to work, gave equal evidence of that truth to others. Such was the method God took to instruct the world in a right religion, and law. Whether it was matter of choice, and another might have been taken, we know not. That it was the best, we have reason to believe, because it was employed; and the rather, as we cannot conceive the possibility of any other. The enemies of Christianity, sensible of this, have endeavoured to prove a revelation needless, from the sufficiency of natural light. They have likewise laboured to shew, as you have just now heard, that Miracles can be no proof of a revelation. But, these arguments failing, they have had recourse to an attack on the Miracles themselves, by a ludicrous attempt to represent them as empty



and senseless allegories; by observing, that all religions, howsoever absurd or false in themselves, have ever pleaded Miracles for vouchers; and insinuating, that the Miracles, pretended to by all religions, are equally legendary and incredible; and, by sophistical arguments, levelled against the credibility of the scriptural Miracles in particular. Thus hath distaste to the duties raised objections to the proofs of our religion; and the wrong head but hath schemed what the corrupt heart had suggested.

We are not to wonder, that the propagators of a false religion should pretend to Miracles, inasmuch as there is no other way of proving any religion, whether true or false. But, with men of sense and candour, the pretended can no more bring the real miracle into suspicion, than the hypocrisy of one man can bring the imputation of villainy on another. Credit is necessary to the execution of every dishonest practice; he therefore who carries on such practices, in order to credit, gives all the signs he can, of an honest and upright meaning. But does this prove, there is no such thing as honesty in the world? Or ought this to have any other effect on us, than to rouse us to a cautious circumspection in our dealings with mankind? But, after we have sufficiently distinguished the real from the counterfeit honest man, what then remains, but that we are to have nothing to do with the one, and to repose an intire confidence in the other? Just so we ought to deal in matters of religion. If a religion talks nonsense to me, or tells me what I know to be false, I need never stay to inquire about its vouchers, but turn from it, as I would do from a man, whom I knew to be a fool, or a liar. But if nothing of either kind occurs, nay, if the revelation under inquiry seems not only agreeable to reason, but proposes matters of great consequence to me, whereof I was not well aware before, it is then worth my while to examine its vouchers; for howsoever excellent it may appear in its doctrines and institutions, yet I cannot receive it as infallibly right and true, that is, as the dictates of God himself, till I find it can plead the genuine signs of divine authority. If I find its signs can stand the test of a close scrutiny, why should I be staggered in my re-

liance on these, merely because I see another religion, which I know to be nothing but imposture, pretending to the like signs, when, with half an eye, I can perceive those signs are as spurious, as the religion they are brought to prove is in itself both false and pernicious?

That the miraculous vouchers for Christianity are fully qualified to stand the severest test of reason, hath been so often, and so unanswerably, proved, that to go about the proof of it here, would be either to repeat what others have better said, or to add the light of a candle to that of the sun. In consequence, however, of the principles I have laid down in regard to Miracles, I must observe to you, that those related in Scripture, as wrought in confirmation of our religion, were open and glaring facts, performed before multitudes of people, at all times, and in all places, as the performers were summoned to the work at the discretion of every one who stood in need of their assistance; that they were performed without preparation, without natural instruments, without human means; that they were acts of the highest beneficence and compassion; that they were unsparingly dispensed, in prodigious numbers, throughout a great variety of countries, and for a long course of years, as often as misery, no otherwise to be relieved, called for help; that they were such as no power but his, who can create, reverse, annihilate, as he pleases, could possibly effect; touching the sick into health! speaking the dead into life! walking on the surface of the sea! rebuking the winds, and the waves, and, in a moment, reducing an outrageous storm to a calm, by two or three words! What other performances could more evidently demonstrate the finger of God? If an unassisted man can do these things, can thus arrest the course of nature, what difference is there between the power of God and man? But he who performed them, and best knew by what power he did them, ascribed them to God alone, and pleaded them in proof of such a religion as, of all others, stood least in need of external proofs; because it speaks itself divine, in the distinguishing purity of all its precepts, and the visible superiority of its wisdom.

Here the caviller again puts in his word. Christ, he says, could not always exercise his miraculous power, *Mark vi. 5.* but only when the faith of the person disordered assisted his own cure; whereas the evidence of his mission arising from the performance of his Miracles, the Miracle ought to have been previously exhibited, that the faith might follow.

It is said, indeed, that Christ *could do no mighty work in his own country, because of their unbelief*; but it is also said, in the same place, that *he laid his hands on a few sick folk, and healed them.* Our blessed Saviour did not come into the world to *cast pearls before swine*, nor to heal such scornful wretches, as were made infidels purely by their pride. At the time when he was repulsed by his countrymen, they had sufficient evidence both of his wisdom and power; for they could say, *What wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?* They, nevertheless, asked, with the utmost contempt, *Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?* Were Miracles to be thrown away on people: this way of thinking? When it is said, *he do no mighty work* among such, the *Event*, no doubt, meant, that he could not, *consequently* with his mission, and with the infinite dignity of his person, exhibit the effects of his divine power, in a place where they were to be treated with contempt, or, at best, only gazed at, as food for their impertinent curiosity. It was for the same reason that the saucy desire of *Herod* was not gratified, nor any Miracles wrought, by way of experiment; but only when the wants and distresses of mankind, of the humble, and of the well-disposed, rendered them proper objects of compassion. As to faith in the sick, it was not always made necessary to his cure; for the absent were often healed, and the dead raised to life. But as often as faith might be reasonably expected, it was required; because they who did not believe what *Moses* and the prophets had said concerning Christ, were very unworthy, and, in all probability, as unfit, to receive further opportunity of conviction by the Miracles of our Saviour. Miracles, indeed, must go before faith, where no foundation of belief

could have been previously laid; but where it could, and through pride and contempt was not, new missions, either from above or below, could not in reason be expected, although by an *Herod*, a *Dives*, or the very eminent inhabitants of *Nazareth*, who were too great truly to believe, unless on the preaching of a man of quality. With such personages religion, and its proofs, never had, never can have, any thing to do. They have infinitely more respect for a civil lye from the mouth of a dignified sharper, than for a plain truth from the worthiest man that lives, if his hands have ever earned him a morsel of bread. The objectors of rank and figure take it very ill too, for the same reason, I suppose, that Christ did not prove the Miracle of his resurrection by a personal appearance before *Pilate*, *Herod*, the high-priest, and sanhedrim; as if religion, after repeated neglects and contempts, were to wait on the grandes with evidence proportionable to the infidel slowness of their assent. Our blessed Saviour, however, judged infinitely better in not meanly courting the testimony of men, who had already basely bought, sold, and compromised away, his life; men corrupt enough to be capable of stifling any truth, or vouching any falshood, or, in short, committing any villainy, that might help to support a granduer, already raised up by vile intrigues, and infamous enormities, of the same kind.

But, after all, they who object, that faith ought to follow the Miracles, and not go before them, as Christ required it should, do not consider, that the Miracles were by no means wrought merely for the sake of the persons on whom they were wrought, but chiefly for the conviction of others, and indeed of all mankind. Christ shews this was the intention, when he is about to raise *Lazarus* from the dead; for he saith, *John xi. 14, 15. Lazarus is dead; and I am glad, for your sakes, that I was not there (to the intent ye may believe)*. Here conviction and faith are made the natural consequence of a Miracle performed on one who was dead; that is, in a case where the faith of the person to be restored was out of the question. Such was the effect proposed by all the other Miracles. They were not to be performed, it is true, for the benefit of hardened and contemptuous

temptuous infidels, but of such persons as had that degree of faith, which might be reasonably expected of them; and were not performed even on them, but in order principally to the conviction of millions, who neither had, nor could have, the faith intended, without them. The objection therefore is impertinent; because the thing it requires, is the very thing proposed, and provided for, by all the Miracles.

As we have already shewn, that real Miracles are the only conceivable proofs of a true revelation, and that those which vouch Christianity to us, were real Miracles, it now only remains to be shewn, that these Miracles were actually wrought. But here, as in the last head, I am prevented by such performances, as have put this matter beyond all question. Yet I shall, as briefly as I can, sketch out the evidence, on which we believe the Miracles of our blessed Saviour were really exhibited, as they are set forth in the New Testament.

There is no historical fact better known, than that Christianity took its rise in an age when human learning, philosophy, and refinements of all kinds, were carried as high as the wit of man was able to push them. It is equally well known, that this system of religion was not propagated by policy, by power, or by men of great abilities and address, but by men every way unqualified for great attempts, in opposition to all the learning, all the bigotry, all the force and cruelty, that both Judaism and Paganism could muster against it. It is notwithstanding further known, that our religion made a most rapid progress over the world, and, in the space of two centuries, drew in above one half of the *Roman* empire, and had, moreover, rooted itself in many other nations beyond the verges of that empire.

Now, to a rational man, this must seem utterly unaccountable, by all the rules and methods from whence success in human affairs is always known to proceed. In this instance, the illiterate baffle the learned, the simple outwit the politic, and the weak subdue the strong, with infinitely greater expedition, than was ever known in any other, where the contrary qualities had the ascendant.

Hence it is but natural to suppose the interposition of some power more than human. As Christianity confessedly inculcates a pure, a rational, and a most operative, system of morality, this must be supposed a good rather than an evil power.

If the mind, after having taken this distant view of Christianity, in its marvelous progress, hath the curiosity to draw a little nearer, and inquire into the antient records of a phænomenon so very extraordinary, it finds all ascribed, as it was ready to conjecture, to a conviction raised by Miracles, whereof an historical account, kept with a watchfulness and scrupulosity, not known in any other case, hath been all along preserved from the days of those who penned it immediately after they saw the Miracles performed. In this account he sees Christ frequently appealing to the eyes and senses of all men, on the spot, and at the instant, he performed his Miracles. He sees his immediate followers, who also wrought the like wonders themselves, and spoke to all nations in their mother tongue, though they neither did, nor possibly could have, learned their languages, preaching up their Master, and his religion, to the world, in the teeth of continual and terrible persecutions, and dying on crosses, and in flames, rather than recede, in the smallest tittle, from either the history of their Master, wonderful, as it is, or his principles, irksome as they seem to flesh and blood. If he guides his eye a little lower into the Christian history, he sees the same work carried on with the same spirit, by a much greater number of preachers, and mankind running over by thousands to them, in every country, in spite of repeated persecutions, persevered in with such an obstinate fury, as was never heard of in cases where the provocation was most irritating, although, in this, there was absolutely none; but, on the part of the Christians, every-where a perfectly passive resignation; nay, a joy in tortures, and a sort of rapture in the very agonies of a frightful and untimely death; which demonstrated the presence of an invisible Comforter.

After seeing all this, our inquirer can now easily account for the progress of Christianity, a thing impossible on any other

other footing, and wonders only at the Miracles, to which it was owing. But let him not wonder, that an Almighty Being can, or an infinitely gracious Being should, do such things for the salvation of his creatures. Considering God's goodness, and our wants, it must have been by far more wonderful, if such things had never been done. Without a revelation, we could not have been reclaimed; without Miracles, a revelation could not have been proved, or propagated; without both, man, the creature, the image of God, must have lived in sin, and died in despair, and the infinitely merciful Being must have looked on, without concern. Miracles therefore are rather causes of conviction, than surprize. Cast your eyes over the face of the earth, and up to heaven: Do you see any thing but Miracles? Is not nature herself a Miracle? Was not all raised out of nothing by the Divine power? Was not every thing adapted, beautified, stationed, by a Miracle of wisdom, and bestowed on God's intellectual creatures, by a Miracle of goodness? And can you still be surprised at the Miracles of his providence, and at his suspending the course of nature, for a time, in order to the redemption of mankind? It is true, a Miracle is, by its etymology, somewhat that is wonderful; but as man himself, and the whole world round him, is a system of Miracles, he is apt to consider all this, purely because it is ordinary and common, as no way surprising; and wonders, with an hesitating belief, at such occurrences as are by no means more marvelous, only because they are more unusual. This, however, hath something in it too low and gross, too like the vulgar, to be found in a man of elevated thoughts, and sound judgment. Bad as the world is, such a man is not apt to be surprised, when he sees another acting the part that becomes him, though such sights are not very common. And why should he think it strange, that the gracious Father of all should care for the happiness of his creatures; or, caring, should provide for that happiness by extraordinary means, when the ordinary are incapable of answering that beneficent end? If such performances as we call Miracles, because they are against the nature of things, and are rarely seen, were exhibited

exhibited every day, they would cease to strike us, or prove any thing, although still as really Miracles, as at the first. Their frequency would deprive them of our attention, and sink them, in common estimation, to a level with the Miracles of nature. But he who looks on nature itself as a most astonishing production of infinite wisdom and power, would continue for ever to regard them in the same light; because he could not but see their contrariety to nature, nor avoid considering, that the production and reversal of nature require an equal power. If there were any intellectual spirits in being before the creation of the first material system, they must have considered that creation in the same light as we do a Miracle, that is, as an astonishing effect of infinite power. But they would not have been at all surpris'd to see the Creator manifest his wisdom and power; because they must have considered those attributes as active and operative principles in the mind of the Deity. Neither ought we to be surpris'd, that his mercy and goodness should be equally operative in the work of redemption, or that his power, prompted by those amiable attributes, should have displayed itself in this, as well as in the work of creation. God had at least as strong reasons for redeeming as for creating the world; or, to speak a little nearer to the language of Scripture, he had as many, and as inducing, motives to the new as to the old creation. As it is therefore no way surpris'ing, either that a Being infinitely communicative should create, or a Being infinitely gracious should repair; so our wonder is not to be excited at the exertion of his power in the one instance, more than in the other, but only at the amazing effects of its immensity in both.

If this doctrine is received as true (and it is certainly too well founded to be rejected by right reason), it will prepare the mind, as readily to receive the proofs of revelation, from the extraordinary Miracles exhibited in attestation of it, as the proofs of God's existence, from the more ordinary Miracles of nature. Hence it will appear, that there is nothing wanting to make the Deist a Christian, on his own principles, but to satisfy him, that the scriptural

Miracles



Miracles were really wrought. And it will be infinitely easier to give him that satisfaction, if he comes to the inquiry under a clear conviction; first, That mankind required a reformation; secondly, That none but he who made them could reform them; and, thirdly, That the repair and reformation of the intellectual world, once perverted, must be as strongly the object of divine intention, as the creation both of that, and of the material world, which was made only for that. Now, I will be bold to say, these three points are as evident, as reason and experience can make any thing. Yet God hath never, to this day, taken the necessary steps to our reformation, if the Christian revelation is not from him, if its inspirations are not his dictates, and its other Miracles his peculiar works. No religion, pretending to revelation, carries the genuine signs of divine original, but this. This therefore alone hath a full right to the reasonings here laid down, and consequently is the only true religion.

Let us then, without reserve, give our understandings to its proofs, and our hearts to the methods of reformation it proposes; and may its gracious Author bless it to us, for the sake of his own infinite merits. Now, to the ever-blessed Trinity be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, henceforward for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE XV.

Christianity proved by Prophecies.

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REVEL. XIX. 10.

—*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

**B***Y the testimony of Jesus* here is to be understood, that proof which Christ hath given of himself, as the Saviour of mankind, and which he hath also enabled his servants to give, by the spirit of Prophecy, or the power of foretelling future events. That this is a strong and undeniable proof of a mission from God, cannot be doubted by him who considers, that none but God can foresee such events as depend on the free elections of men, not yet in being. When such events are predicted long before, and do actually happen, we must ascribe the prediction to infinite Wisdom, and take it for granted, that the angel, or man, employed to utter it, was impowered by God himself so to do. And whatsoever point *such* predictions are brought to prove, we must receive as a truth, because the wisdom of God cannot be employed to attest a falsehood. Common sense tells us, the God of truth would never lend his prescience for evil purposes, such as, to support imposture, and give credit to lyes.

As therefore we prove the being of God by the works of creation, inasmuch as none but he can create; and his interposition by miracles, inasmuch as none but he can  
reverse

reverse the laws of nature and creation ; so likewise, when such events as none but he can foresee are predicted long before they happen, we cannot but look on the purposes, for which predictions of this kind are made, as matters of the greatest importance, and every way suitable to the truth and goodness of him who lends his infinite wisdom to support them with this sort of proof.

Now, if Jesus, and his religion, can produce this prophetic testimony in evidence of their truth, the former must be the real Saviour, and the latter, the true means of salvation, to all men. But that they have already done this in the amplest manner, I shall now endeavour to shew ;

First, By some observations on certain Prophecies concerning Christ, delivered to the world long before he was born ;

And, secondly, By the like observations applied to such Prophecies as he and his apostles published, in relation to some important events that have happened chiefly since they left the world.

Let it then be observed, in reference to all proofs founded on Prophecy, that such proofs must have little in them, if the Prophecy predicts something soon to happen, and not improbable in itself ; because an event of that kind may be guessed at by men who know the world, and are well acquainted with the common course of things ; the *Greek* poet having rightly observed, in relation to such predictions, that the best gesser or conjecturer is the best prophet. But that Prophecy, which foretels something highly improbable in itself, and very distant in point of time, if verified by the event, gives as high a proof as can be conceived of its own divinity. And, in case the event results immediately from the free election of those who bring it about ; and further, in case the persons who transact the event, being aware of the Prophecy, endeavour to traverse it to the utmost of their power, but in vain, then both taken together fully prove, that God dictated the Prophecy, and that, for the very end and purpose to which it is applied. But whereas it is possible, that one Prophecy of this kind may be thus acci-

dentally

dentially verified, though by an event the most unlikely ; if a great number of Prophecies, all predicting improbable events at a considerable distance in futurity, shall happen to be fulfilled ; we can by no means avoid concluding, that the prophet or prophets did speak the very dictates of God, and that the end proposed by their predictions was such as become the truth, the wisdom, and goodness of God, to promote.

Let us now apply these observations, the truth and justice of which no one in his senses can dispute, to the Prophecies concerning Christ, delivered before his incarnation, and to such also, as he and his apostles uttered in relation to events subsequent to his appearance in the flesh. I do not intend to instance them all, which would be a work of several days ; but only to take notice of a few, that answer, as you will presently see, the particular design of this Discourse.

The reign of *Augustus*, in which our Saviour was born, and that of *Tiberius*, in which he was put to death, happened, by common computation, at the distance of about 4000 years from the creation of the world. *Malachi*, whom some make the same with *Ezra*, though the latest of all the prophets that foretold the coming of our Saviour, lived and published his predictions near 400 years before the Christian æra. The other prophets, whom I shall have occasion to quote, lived considerably earlier, and *David* in particular, about a thousand years before the birth of Christ.

At so great a distance of time did these prophets foretel such things of Christ, as not only depended on the freedom of those who were to perform them, but appear to be contrary, incompatible, and, to common apprehension, impossible ; and yet the time of his coming is fairly fixed by *Daniel*, in the ix. chapter of his Prophecies ; and the place of his birth, by *Micah*, in the v. of his. At this very time, and in this very place, did our Saviour appear, and afterwards performed all the amazing things that had been predicted of him. You will quickly see why I call them amazing.

It was predicted, that *his own familiar friend, in whom he trusted, who did eat of his bread, should lift up his heel against him, and betray him*, Psalm xli. 9. that he should be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, Isaiah liii. 3. that he should give his back to the smiters or scourgers, his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and his face to shame and spitting, Isaiah l. 6. that he should be wounded, Isaiah liii. 5. oppressed and afflicted, ver. 7. and cut off out of the land of the living, ver. 8. and Daniel ix. 26.

How contrary to this, in all appearance, are the other predictions, which speak of him as an happy king, as a prosperous and triumphant conqueror! *Behold, saith Isaiah xxxii. 1. speaking of Christ, a King shall reign in righteousness. Behold, saith the Lord, Jerem. xxiii. 5. the days come that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and judgment in the earth—and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.* Thus God speaks to his Son, in the second Psalm, and that by the name of Christ, *Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.* The xlv. Psalm is one intire hymn to Christ, wherein the Psalmist says, *My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made unto the King. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth, of meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.* The rest of the psalm is laid out in describing the happiness and glory of Christ as a King.

This opposition in the predictions concerning our Saviour's success in the world descends even to those which characterize his person. *Thou art fairer than the children of men, saith David in the Psalm just now quoted. He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there*

*there is no beauty that we should desire him, saith Isaiah in his liii. chapter.*

Now, all this, so seemingly contradictory, was exactly verified in our Saviour. To the generality of the *Jews*, neither he, nor his doctrine, appeared to have any thing amiable in them. He was despised; he was afflicted; he was persecuted; he was scourged, spit upon, and crucified. On the other side, *the pleasure of the Lord*, as *Isaiab* said, *prospered in his hands*; his doctrine spread; mankind were brought under his laws; the kingdoms of the world submitted to his. He is esteemed *fairer than the children of men*; and, as such, he is beloved, obeyed, adored. Nay, what the *Jews*, blinded by pride and ambition, could not see, we have now seen; namely, his humiliation and sufferings, according to the Prophecies, made the means of his exaltation and success; for it hath happened exactly according to the Prediction of *Isaiab* liii. 11, 12. *Because of the travel of his soul, he hath seen his desire, and hath been satisfied. Therefore hath God divided him a portion with the great, and he hath shared the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.* What human wisdom could have foreseen, that one of these seeming opposites should have been made the very means and reason of the other? The *Jews*, who could not foresee it, because they did not understand this Prophecy, persecuted him, put him to death, and did all they could to destroy his kingdom in its infancy; but by these very means they proved him to be the Messiah, procured him success with the world, and both ways verified the seemingly contradictory Predictions, in him and themselves.

I mention themselves; because this leads me to another seeming opposition between the Prophecies that foretel the strength and happiness of Christ's people, and those that predict their misery and ruin. No terms can be stronger, nor plainer, than those in which both are foretold by the prophets, and both foretold as attendants on Christ's appearing in the world.

You may see the miseries threatened by Almighty God to his people in the lxxv. of *Isaiab*. *Ye are they that forsake*

sake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain, ver. 11. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter; because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not bear, ver. 12. Therefore thus saith the Lord God—Ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen; for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name, ver. 14, 15. The angel Gabriel acquaints Daniel with the precise time of this calamity, which having pointed out by the famous Prophecy of 70 weeks, he says, *The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city [Jerusalem] and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease; and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate,* Daniel ix. 26, 27. This dreadful destruction, according to the Prophecy, is soon to follow the cutting off, or murder, of the Messiah. The Prophet *Malachi* sets this alarming event in a yet stronger light, and affixes it to the time of the Messiah. *Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea and all they that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch,* iv. 1. But lest his people should not be apprised of the time when these calamities were to befall them, God says, *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord,* ver. 5.

Directly opposite to these judgments are the blessings promised by Almighty God to his people on the coming of Christ. *In his days, that is, in the days of the Messiah, saith God by Jerem. xxiii. 6. Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely. They shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid,* Micah iv. 4. *I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and*

will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen, Hosea i. 7. The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, Isaiah lix. 20. He will make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant. He will place his tabernacle also with them: yea, he will be their God, and they shall be his people, Ezek. xxxvii. 26, 27. In those days, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more, Isa. ii. 4. And it shall come to pass, that I will bear, saith the Lord; I will bear the heavens, and they shall bear the earth; and the earth shall bear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall bear Jezreel, Hosea ii. 21, 22. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, Amos ix. 13. For the happiness of the blessed state under the Messiah, the prophets proclaim a jubilee to the whole world. Sing, O heavens, saith Isaiah, and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people, Isaiah xlix. 13. Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel, xlv. 23.

Here now are misery and destruction threatened, happiness and salvation promised, to God's people, and both at the coming of the Messiah. Before he did come, who could have reconciled these things, or pointed out a possibility of completion to Prophecies so directly contrary?

The Jews dwelt only on the promises, and understood them in no other than a gross and carnal sense. The generality of them were not to be disabused of this mistake. In them was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall bear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for these peoples heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see



see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them, *Isaiah vi. 9, 10.* This our Saviour quotes and applies, *Matt. xiii.* and *St. Paul, Acts xxviii.* On this account Christ beheld the city of Jerusalem, and wept over it, saying, *If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! —but now are they hid from thine eyes: for the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation,* *Luke xix. 42, 43, 44.*

Accordingly, the *Jews*, not knowing the time of their visitation by Christ, though so clearly pointed out by the angel in *Daniel*, treated their heavenly visitor with contempt, persecuted him, crucified him, and, praying that his blood might fall on their heads, and the heads of their children, were soon after visited by the most dreadful calamities, and extirpated by the most exemplary destruction, that ever befel any nation under heaven. Thus were the prophetic threatenings verified, on the one side; while, on the other, the promises were no less signally made good to such *Jews*, and *Gentiles* also, as believed in Christ, and, by virtue of the new covenant, became the people of God. These, warned by their Master, fled to *Pella*, a little city beyond the *Jordan*, and so escaped the calamity. Here they lived in peace and plenty, while the unbelievers were tearing and eating one another in the besieged city; and thus the Prophecy by *Isaiah* was literally fulfilled: *Thus saith the Lord, Behold, my servants shall eat; but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink; but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice; but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart; but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit,* *Isaiah lxxv. 13, 14.* Never was there on earth so happy a people as the Christians. They were sometimes persecuted indeed; but in that they rejoiced, and gloried;

because it was for the sake of him who had bought them with his blood. There were none poor or distressed among them ; for they enjoyed all things in common, and, as occasion required, sent relief to one another from distant countries. They were all brothers and sisters in love, all saints in piety and integrity. Among them, *mercy and truth had met together ; righteousness and peace had kissed each other.* How happy must a people be, who, in all their intercourse, were governed by such principles ! But they were still infinitely happier in their expectations, founded on the true spiritual construction of the Prophecies and Promises. They then saw where their beautiful *Canaan*, and glorious *Jerusalem*, lay. They counted it a thing of little consequence to them, how they fared in this world ; because they exulted in the sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life. Here lay their happy *abiding-place* ; and hither they hastened with all the speed an innocent and holy life could give them. The prophetic promises were more than fulfilled in the consolations of the Holy Spirit. Those foretold plenty of corn, wine, and oil, and temporal peace ; these conferred inspirations, miracles, virtues, and ensured eternal peace and happiness. Those were the *shadows* ; these the *substance*. Those were given to minds yet carnal ; these to the regenerate and spiritual.

There was another thing prophesied of our Saviour, which it was much more improbable he should perform, than that the seeming opposites, already mentioned, should be reconciled in him ; which was, that he should work miracles. The pretended prophet who tells the world, a divine person, not to be born for five or six hundred years after him, shall, at a certain period, spring from a particular family, and work the most stupendous miracles, must take it for granted, that when the period predicted shall arrive, the whole world will take him for an impudent impostor ; because he can have no hope, that God will enable any one to fulfil his prediction, and he knows none but God can. That prophet may have some chance for a completion, who foretels a natural event, though never so uncommon or strange ; but he who fore-

foretels a miracle, must either do it on a full assurance, that God speaks by him, or take it for granted, that time will prove him a deceiver. But if a prediction of this kind actually finds its completion in the event foretold, it is then as evident, the prophet spoke by divine wisdom, as it is, that the performer of the miracle acted by divine power; and the truth and goodness of that purpose, be it what it will, for which the one was wrought, and the other pronounced, are doubly demonstrated. We cannot conceive a possibility of higher evidence than this; yet this hath been amply given to our holy religion. God, speaking by *Isaiah*, xxix. 18, 19. and xxxv. 5, 6. saith, *In that day [in the days of Christ] shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord; the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.* He also saith, xxvi. 19. *The dead men shall live.* To this Prophecy, and the completion of it, our blessed Saviour made one and the same appeal, when John sent his disciples to inquire of him, whether he were the Messiah or no. He dismissed the messengers, after they had seen him work several miracles, with this answer; *Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.* Now, if this Prophecy is genuine, and Christ did actually work the miracles, therein predicted, the proof in favour of him and his religion, resulting from both, is the highest proof can possibly be offered to the understanding of man. But, that the Prophecy was published by *Isaiah* 700 years before the birth of our Saviour, we have the *Jews*, our adversaries, for witnesses; and that the miracles were really wrought, those eye-witnesses, who sealed their testimony with their blood, give unquestionable evidence.

Such proof for the truth of our religion meets the eyes of him, who candidly looks backward at the Prophecies, that were published concerning Christ, long before he came into the world. He will meet with equal evidence, if he looks forward at those which our Saviour and his apostles delivered in relation to events then future, but since brought to pass, some of them by a supernatural power, and others by the voluntary uncompelled elections of men, who had nothing less in view than to verify these predictions. Whichever way the understanding turns itself, light and demonstration pour in irresistibly upon it.

Our Saviour had, by *David*, Psalm xvi. 10. foretold his own resurrection in these words; *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* Before he was put to death, he so openly predicted the same event, that not only his disciples, but also his enemies, were fully apprised of it. These latter, after having crucified him, and pierced his very heart with a spear, said to *Pilate*, *Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead; and so the last error shall be worse than the first.* On this, *Pilate* having given the necessary directions, *they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch*, Matt. xxvii. 62, 63, 64, 65, 66. Yet, either he was seen alive again by his disciples, or those disciples did a thing to the full as wonderful as his resurrection could have been; that is, altho' they had no reason to believe he came to life again, which is the same as to believe he was still dead, they all nevertheless preached up his resurrection, and faced every danger, every terror, death itself not excepted, rather than even stifle in silence the amazing completion of this prediction.

Now, let any one fairly weigh the force of this proof given to confirm the truth of our religion, and he will find it by far the strongest that ever was given for any fact

fact since the creation of the world. The stupendous event is foretold 1000 years before. He who was to rise again, lest his enemies should mistake, or forget, the Prophecy, as the time set for its completion approached, gave them fair warning, that, after they had crucified him, he would rise again from the dead the third day. Here they had every thing in their power requisite to prove him an impostor, could that have been done. Had they not put him to death, this must have proved him such; for they knew he had foretold his murder, as well as his resurrection. But, as their malice would not suffer them to take this course, wherein perhaps consisted what they, on second thoughts, called *the first error*, Matt. xxvii. 64. why did they suffer him, if he was but an impostor, to get out of their hands, before they had cut him to pieces? Or, why did they leave his disciples a possibility of recovering his corpse? When he was condemned, they could do with him what they pleased. When he was dead, if he was no more than another man, his working pretended miracles was then at an end, so that he could not possibly help himself. The truth is, they did every thing that could be done. They knew he was really dead, and they made it a thing impossible for his disciples to carry off his body. Yet they had not that body to produce, on the third day, nor any time after, when his followers proclaimed his resurrection.

The next Prophecy I shall take notice of is that wherein our Saviour foretels his own ascension. No event could be more improbable than this, nor therefore, if brought to pass, more demonstrative of a divine power. The tendency of matter to matter, and the actual approach of smaller bodies to the greater, when denser and heavier portions of matter do not intervene to hinder it, or, in other words, the gravitation of bodies towards the centre of the nearest system, is a law of nature, from which she never does, nor can, depart, while left to herself. So far is the most illiterate acquainted with this law, that he knows, no stone, no tree, no body of a man, can possibly be carried up from the surface of the earth into heaven, without a miracle. Our Saviour nevertheless

foretold this of his own body. After having told *Nicodemus*, *John* iii. 13. that *no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven*, he says to an audience of disciples, and unbelieving Jews, *I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world*, vi. 51. Perceiving his hearers shocked at this, he says further, *Doth this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?* as much as to say, “ You will be infinitely more surpris’d, when you shall, “ with your own eyes, behold this very body of mine “ ascending up into heaven; but after you shall have “ actually seen it, you will surely, from that time forward, have no doubts about either my prescience or “ power, be the thing I predict never so contrary to the “ otherwise invariable course of nature.” Pursuant to this astonishing prediction, he was actually, in the sight of his apostles, taken up bodily into heaven, *Acts* i. 9, 10, 11.

But, before he thus ascended, he gave them another promise no less amazing than this, namely, the descent of the Holy Ghost, with the power of working miracles, and, among the rest, of speaking languages, which they knew nothing of before. This promise you may read in the xvi. chapter of the gospel according to *St. John*, and at the 7. and 8. verses; and in the second of the *Acts* you may see it performed; for there we are told, that *the apostles being assembled at the feast of Pentecost, there suddenly came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, which filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, than those which they had before, as the Holy Ghost gave them utterance.* It happened at this time, that the celebration of the feast had drawn together an infinite multitude of people, who, though most of them Jews, spoke the languages of the countries they lived

lived in, and were therefore to be addressed in those languages. This mixed multitude, having heard what had happened to the apostles, crowded round them, and, to their unspeakable amazement, heard the Gospel preached by twelve illiterate men, in twelve different tongues, to so many different nations. This wonderful accomplishment of the Prophecy was attended with a suitable effect, that is, with the conversion and baptism of about three thousand souls. Never was there a more striking, or a more convincing, miracle performed, than this. Never was there so great a number of converts made in one day to any set of principles. The number of the converts proves the reality of the miracles ; for all men know how difficult a matter it is to bring over one person, even from the most absurd to the most rational religious principle, by the ordinary methods of argumentation or persuasion. But, when such a miracle is considered as predicted some time before, the assurance of the predictor gives a vast additional force to the assurance and conviction of the believer. What prophet, but he who spoke by divine wisdom, durst have put his veracity to such a test as this, which nothing but the Divine Power could have borne him out in ?

As to the Prophecy uttered by our Saviour, concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, wherewith he intermixes another concerning that of the world, of which he seems to make the former a figure, so far as it relates to either of these events, considered strictly in itself, I shall not bring it for my purpose ; because the first is the prediction of the angel to *Daniel*, and the second is not yet come to pass.

But in the words of our Saviour, whereof I am speaking, and which are found in the twenty-fourth of *St. Matthew's*, the thirteenth of *St. Mark's*, and the twenty-first of *St. Luke's*, Gospel, there is a particular event foretold in *St. Luke's* account, ver. 24. whereby the kind of proof I am urging may be greatly enforced. Our Saviour there saith, *They* [the *Jews* in the reign of *Vespasian*] *shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles,*

*Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.* St. Paul, in his epistle to the *Romans*, xi. 25, 26. joining this Prophecy with another of *Isaiab*, gives us to understand, that *blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so shall all Israel be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* The apostle saw the blindness of the *Jews*, excepting the remnant, as he calls them, ver. 5. in his own days, and knew that the Prophecy was soon to be fulfilled in the ruin of their country. But he also saw by what he quotes from *Isaiab*, that the *Jews*, though carried captives, and dispersed among all nations, were to remain in their then present blindness, till the other nations of the earth had received the Gospel, when his countrymen also should be converted and saved.

These passages, thus laid together, and compared with what hath happened to the *Jews* since, do justice to the veracity of the prophets, and afford our religion a monumental proof of its divinity. *Jerusalem* was totally ruined at the time prefixed. One part of the unbelieving *Jews* were, on that occasion, put to the sword, and the rest scattered over the face of the earth; and to this day, long after the extinction of all the other antient nations of the world, remain a numerous people, distinguished in every country, no less by the universal contempt and hatred of all other men, than by a tenacious adherence to the law of *Moses*, to which they could never long be kept firm during their prosperity. Were they not thus preserved distinct from the rest of mankind, we should want the useful testimony of adversaries for the authenticity of the Prophecies; and it could never appear, that the prediction, concerning their conversion and restoration, was really an oracle of God. It is indeed as evident, as any thing of the kind can be, that they are reserved by Providence for this great event; that they shall be found distinct from all the other tribes and nations of the world, when the time of their conversion shall come; and that consequently the whole race of mankind must then see demonstrably the truth of our religion. I say these



these things are evident ; because they tally exactly with Prophecies already fulfilled in every other title, and because the preservation of a people, under such circumstances, for so long a tract of time, contrary to the constant course of all human affairs, gives high proof of a particular providence ; a better proof surely for the use we make of it, than could have been drawn from this people, had the fulness of the Gentiles, and their universal conversion, happened two or three ages ago. We could have only had an historical report, at this day, of the extraordinary event, the truth of which the incredulous might have questioned ; as they do all other reports ; were the distinction between *Jew* and *Gentile* wholly lost, as it must have been in that case ; whereas, the case standing as it does, we have every-where before our eyes a miracle wrought, and a Prophecy fulfilled, to refresh our faith. Hence it is, that *St. Paul*, speaking of them and us, saith, *Through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles*, Rom. xi. 11. *The fall of them is the riches of the world*, ver. 12. *The casting away of them is the reconciling of the world*, ver. 15.

We ought not to forget, on this occasion, a fact, which may serve to shew, that the hand of God was employed, not only in the ordinary course of his providence, but even miraculously, to prevent all schemes for the re-establishment of the *Jews* before their conversion, that the ends proposed by their long apostasy might be answered, and the Prophecies fulfilled. The emperor *Julian*, who declared himself a Pagan, after having professed Christianity, took it into his head to convict the prophecy of our Saviour, that *Jerusalem* should be trodden down by the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled, of falsehood. In order to this, he offered to restore the *Jews* to their own country ; he encouraged them to rebuild their temple ; raised vast contributions ; and gave them all the assistance in his power. The materials were all prepared, and laid convenient, and the foundation opened. But, when they began the work, balls of fire broke from the ground, and destroyed the artificers with their apparatus. A modern libertine might have laughed

at this miracle as fictitious, had it been reported only by Christians ; but as it is confirmed by *Ammianus Marcellinus*, a Pagan historian, and no ordinary admirer of *Julian*, probably on account of his paganism, its truth cannot be opposed with any thing but impudence and nonsense. Had this design taken place, it could have only gratified the *Jews*, who were a weak and inconsiderable people ; but must have thrown an indelible blot on the Christian cause, which was then abetted by a great majority in the empire. This *Julian* knew, and therefore espoused the party of the *Jews* against that of the Christians, although the principles of both were equally opposite to his own. Here we see the power of the *Roman* empire was not able to baffle a single sentence uttered by our blessed Saviour, nor to reverse the fate of a people defecrated by their own bloody imprecations, and the curse of Almighty God.

I shall give but one instance more of Prophecies uttered by our Saviour, whereof the completion, had it not already happened, must have seemed almost impossible ; and it is of such as relate to the persecutions and successes of his apostles, and other preachers of the Gospel. To be continually and severely persecuted for any practice, and yet always to prosper therein, may reasonably be looked on as a thing highly improbable, if not inconsistent. And that the first should be withstood, and the second effected, by such instruments as our Saviour chose for that purpose, that is, the lowest, the most ignorant and dastardly kind of men, makes the event, on the whole, still more surprising.

But our Saviour, who saw with better eyes than those of men, singled out these, as the fittest agents in a cause, to which man was to contribute nothing but a tongue, God intending, for the conviction of the world, to supply every other instrument himself. These men, weak as they were in themselves, could do all things in him ; could boldly face every terror, and every torment, notwithstanding their natural timidity ; could speak persuasively, and reason convincingly, notwithstanding their  
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utter ignorance of eloquence, and learning in all its branches.

However, the men were not only weak and contemptible in themselves, but the religion they were to preach was infinitely distasteful and offensive to the world. The worship of a crucified Jesus was abhorred by the *Jews*; the worship of one only God was equally offensive to the Gentiles; mortification and self-denial, in order to a thorough reformation of manners, and in pain of eternal fire, were doctrines infinitely shocking to both. As the disciples of our Saviour were to preach up to the world a religion so very forbidding as this, it is not to be wondered at, that their Master should tell them, *Behold, I send you forth as sheep among wolves*, Matt. x. 16. *Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues*, ver. 17. *And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake*, ver. 18. *Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake*, ver. 22. *Ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kins-folks, and some of you shall they cause to be put to death*, Luke xxi. 16. All this might have been expected; but it is not a little surprizing, that such men, so forewarned, should resolutely encounter these difficulties and terrors, and stand it out to the last.

It is still more surprizing, that they should prevail, as they did, over a world, either so atheistical and wicked, or so bigotted to their old religions. But this also their Master prophetically promised; for he said, *All power is given unto me in heaven, and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations. Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20. *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*, John xx. 21. that is, with authority and power. Besides the *Jews*, *other sheep I have* [meaning the Gentile world] *which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall bear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd*, John x. 16. That the work I commit to you may not fail through your ignorance, and want of elocution, *I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries*

*adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist, Luke xxi. 15. In that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, ye shall build, Matt. xvi. 18. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, or crucified, will draw all men unto me, John xii. 32. when the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled, Luke xxi. 24. that is, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in, Rom. xi. 25. Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; and your accuser shall be cast down, which accused you before God day and night. And ye shall overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of your testimony, and shall not love your lives unto death, Rev. xii. 10, 11. Under your ministry, the marriage of the Lamb with his wife the church shall be celebrated, Rev. xix. 7. Blessed are they which are called unto his marriage-supper, ver. 9. When he arises to chastise the infidel and guilty world, you shall know him by his vesture dypt in blood, ver. 13. and by his names, the Word of God, ver. 13. the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, ver. 16. Out of his mouth shall go a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations, ver. 15.*

All the persecutions, thus predicted, the apostles and preachers of the Gospel have already suffered. And all these triumphs, promised, they have already made. The world combined hath tried its strength upon them. Every severity, every outrage, that an ingenious cruelty could invent, hath bent its force against them, during ten long and bloody persecutions; but all in vain. They have overcome the world by the miraculous power of God, and by his word, *that sharp two-edged sword, which proceedeth out of his mouth.* According to the wise choice and purpose of God, *the foolish things of the world have confounded the wise; the weak things of the world have confounded the things which are mighty; the base things of the world, and the things which are despised, yea, and the things which are not, have brought to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence, 1 Cor. i. 27, 28, 29.* The wisdom of God only could foresee an event so strange. His power only could bring it to pass. The instruments were small and weak; but the hand  
which

which wielded them, almighty. The contemptible weakness of the instruments, and the amazing grandeur of the work, demonstrate the omnipotence of the Worker. *He looked, and there was none to help; he wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore his own arm brought salvation, his fury it upheld him; he hath trodden the wine-press alone,* *Isai. lxxiii. 3. 5.*

What now shall we say? Is not the execution of such a purpose, so good, and so great, by such agents, so ignorant, and so weak, sufficient of itself to point out the finger of God? But if this is not sufficient, surely when we consider, that all this, astonishing and almost impossible as it may seem in prospect, was foreseen, was foretold to the world, so many ages ere it happened, this at least must convince the most incredulous. Is there an understanding so stupid, or so immured in conceit, and false learning, as to be impenetrable to this beam of piercing light, which strikes through the mind with a double exemplification; to wit, both of infinite wisdom and power? Or, is there an heart so congealed to all sense of goodness by long habitual depravity, as not to melt at the intense warmth of that beautiful and powerful morality, which accompanies, and is mixed with, the light of this irresistible demonstration? Yes, there are still men, who, as *Isaiab* foretold, and our Saviour and *St. Paul* found by experience, *can hear the Prophecies, and not understand them; can see their wonderful accomplishment, and not perceive the evidence it inculcates; and why? because the heart of these people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and healed,* *Acts xxviii. 26, 27.* This Prophecy, and its completion, are not less wonderful than the rest; to hear, and not hear! to see, and not see! both to hear and see, and yet not to understand! No man uninspired durst have predicted a resistance to proofs, so glaringly strong, in minds not altogether destitute of sense and reason. But this Prophecy is so literally verified before our eyes, that I trust, it will prove no small refreshment

refreshment to our faith. We may make the same use of it, that St. *Paul* did, in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the *Romans*, where he observes its completion on the unbelieving *Jews*, and tells us, that *through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles*. In this light, I cannot help looking on it as equally surprizing and demonstrative.

Let us, however, leave these unhappy men to their *evil heart of unbelief*; and let us *hold fast the faith*, together with the blessed hope of everlasting life, which God hath given us in his Son, our Saviour *Jesus Christ*; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE XVI.

Faith well founded on Christ's Resurrection.

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ACTS X. 40, 41.

*Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;*

*Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.*

**T**O fill the character, and answer the purposes, of a Mediator, it was judged necessary by Almighty God, that Christ should suffer death, and rise again from the dead, before he had seen corruption. His sufferings gave weight to his intercessions; and no other miracle could so strongly prove his mission, as his Resurrection.

If the latter was a real Resurrection, then the truth of Christianity is equal to its importance; but if it was not, if Christ did not come to life again after he was dead, then our religion was an imposture from the beginning, and we are deceived in adhering to it. *If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain.*

The apostles, and the rest of Christ's disciples, after seeing all his other miracles, and working many themselves, rested their faith, or disbelief, on the experiment about to be made upon his dead body, in order to see whether the Divine power would actually attend him in his grave. And the *Jews*, who had him now at the utmost disadvantage, when, as they thought, he could not make even an attempt to impose on them with an appearance of a Resurrection, took all the proper precautions to prevent its being attempted by any body else. For this purpose they *sealed his tomb*, which was in a rock, and *set a guard of soldiers* to watch the entrance.

Impositions of all kinds are most easily passed upon the world in ignorance and obscurity, and by surprize. They who carry them on, do it among the ignorant, and without giving sufficient warning beforehand of what they intend to do; lest the persons whom they would impose on, being prepared, should look sharp, and, by examining closely into every circumstance, should discover the deceit.

Far otherwise was the case in respect to the Resurrection of Christ. It had been foretold many ages before, that *God would not leave his Holy One, the Messiah, in hell*, that is, the grave, *nor suffer his flesh to see corruption*; and, when the time drew near in which this wonderful experiment was to be made, lest the persons concerned should not be sufficiently attentive, Christ took care to give both his friends and enemies timely warning of his intention to rise the third day after his death, that the latter might do their utmost to prevent it; and the former have the fullest evidence of the fact, when done.

Now his enemies were persons of great understanding, and of malice, in regard to him, sufficient to put them upon doing every thing that could prevent the possibility of imposition. They had him intirely in their power; they took care to have more than sufficient proof of his death, before they suffered him to be taken from the cross; and, although they permitted him to be buried in the tomb of a disciple, yet they kept that tomb absolutely in their power, and subject to their own inspection.

Taking



Taking it for granted, that Christ was, at least, a man of common sense (and his enemies allow him to have had a very extraordinary understanding), how can we account for his putting the Divinity of his person, the credit of his mission, and the success of his religion in all ages, on so difficult a proof, nay, on a proof so impossible to be given, had he not known, that infinite power was ready to give it? No one, who attempts to impose on others, gives warning long and often beforehand of what he intends to do.

Our Saviour, considered merely as a man of common sense, could not have proposed suffering death only to impose on others, especially as death must deprive him of all power to deceive, and of all advantages to be hoped for from the deceit.

As a man of common sense, he could not hope, that the *Jews*, who were his bitter enemies, and many ways interested to prevent his being taken for the Messiah, would let him slip out of their hands, till they had made sure work of his death.

As a man of common sense, he must have known, that, being once dead, if he could not raise himself again to life, his disciples would be as much interested to give him up, as his persecutors to destroy him, for an impostor; and that, even if they could have been, one and all of them, so mad as to assist in carrying on so fruitless a cheat in the teeth of a persecution already begun in the blood of their Master, they had neither resolution nor cunning sufficient for so difficult an enterprize; that, in short, they were almost as unable to carry on such a cheat successfully, as they were to give new life in reality to his body.

Supposing, then, that Christ knew himself to have no miraculous power more than other men, and that he was only a pretender, and a deceiver, he must have deliberately schemed his own misery, and untimely death. And for what? Not for even the wild hope of credit and success with the world after he was dead; for, having put the reality of his mission from God on his rising from death the third day, being sure to fail in this decisive proof, he must have schemed his own disgrace and infamy with all man-

kind; he must have courted misery and death, for no other end, but to make his memory scandalous and odious to all ages.

Surely none but an idiot could have taken such a course as this, when he might have put his credit and success upon a more promising footing; when he might have rested both on the miracles he was believed to have already wrought; when he might, as *Mahomet* did, have assumed the character, not of a sufferer, but of a conqueror, and that with infinitely more hope of gaining a powerful army to support him; because he could do things that looked so like miracles, that the wisest and most malicious of his enemies took them for such; and because the *Jews* were, at that very time, ready to rise in favour of any one who should attempt to restore the kingdom again to Israel. A nation so numerous, so enthusiastic, and so obstinate, must have afforded the most hopeful prospect of success to the projected insurrection.

From this plain way of reasoning it follows, that we must either believe Christ knew he could raise himself from the dead, or take him to have been the most weak and stupid of all men: yet, such must we be ourselves in the strongest sense of the words, if we do not look upon his understanding as superior to that of other men; for, in all parts of his conduct, he discovered surprising gravity and wisdom; and, as a speaker, could please without ornament, could do what he would with the head and heart of his hearer, without logic or rhetoric, without the least assistance of art. Or, if we will suppose all this the effect of superior art; yet we cannot do so, without allowing him superior understanding. And could such a man deliberately set himself in such a course of life as must be miserable, and soon end in a shocking death, merely to prove, by a Resurrection which he promised, but knew he could by no means perform, that he was the Son and Messenger of God, in order to be adored after he was dead, when he could not possibly avoid foreseeing, that, by this very expedient, he should prove himself to have been a most impudent and scandalous impostor? It shocks common sense to suppose this; and therefore we must

must conclude, that Christ, in promising to return again to life the third day, did no more than he well knew he could easily perform; and further, if we have good reason to believe he did actually rise again to life, we must ourselves be something less than men, if we do not take him to have been more, to have been the Son and Messenger of God, the Instructor and Saviour of men.

As to the proofs and evidences of his having risen from the dead, they are such as never appeared to vouch any other fact. His disciples, who in a manner gave him up upon his being put to death, having been eye-witnesses of his Resurrection; having over and over again seen him alive after he was dead; having conversed with him, eat with him, felt him, for forty days successively; became the witnesses of his Resurrection; and rejoiced to prove its reality, and their own veracity, to the world, by all the sufferings, and variety of deaths, that human nature is most apt to fear and decline, rather than give up a cause in which they saw the honour of God, and the salvation of men, were so immediately concerned. They had every worldly advantage to hope for, if they betrayed this cause; they had every worldly evil to encounter with, if they stood to it: yet every man of them did stand to it to the last; which is a thing utterly inconceivable, upon a supposition that they were cheats; for such always seek to impose on others, not themselves; and never fail, in cases like this, to detect and betray one another. Their Master had been crucified, their friend and fellow-disciple stoned to death in their sight, and the spirit of persecution was growing warmer and warmer both in the *Jews* and *Romans*; yet not one of them ever entertained a single thought of deserting the cause they had espoused. Now let common sense judge whether this is not, morally speaking, an impossibility, supposing them to have known their Master to be an impostor, and his Resurrection a figment.

To all this there is but one objection that seems to deserve our consideration. The adversaries of Christianity ask, Why did not Christ appear, after his Resurrection, to the unbelieving *Jews*, particularly to the high-priest

and fanhedrim? Why were his own disciples singled out to be his witnesses, and not his enemies, whose conviction must have weighed more with posterity than that of his disciples, who were ignorant, prejudiced in his favour, and persons of too little importance or esteem to evidence so great and so extraordinary a fact?

In answer to this, it must be observed, that the enemies of Christ, and the unbelieving *Jews*, had abundant evidence of his Mission and Resurrection. As to his Mission, they saw him do and suffer all the prophecies had foretold of him. And, as to his Resurrection, what further evidence did they want of that, than was actually given them? Did he not tell them, he would rise again the third day? Had they not his person in their power? Did they not pursue him till it was impossible to doubt of his death; and use the most unsurmountable precautions to prevent the stealing away his body? And when, nevertheless, they had not his body to produce, how could they question the reality of his Resurrection? They had, in short, evidence of this great event, sufficient for their own conviction, had they not been the most blind and perverse of mankind. All further evidence must have been thrown away on such men, both in respect to their conviction, and that of others through them.

As to the attestation of this fact to the world, it required two qualifications in the witnesses, knowledge and integrity. In both respects the disciples of our Lord were the fittest witnesses. They could see, hear, feel, as well as men of higher note, and greater learning. They had received the instructions, and seen the other miracles, of their Master, which were to be attested, as well as this. When one was to be elected into the place of *Judas*, this was the qualification judged necessary to the candidate: *Of these men, saith St. Peter, that have accompanied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his Resurrection.* This apostle, in like manner, shews elsewhere the propriety of the same qualification: *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the*  
*Holy*

*Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew, and hanged on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.*

The disciples of Christ were also infinitely better fitted, in point of integrity, than his adversaries, to attest his Resurrection. One artless honest witness, staking his life on his testimony, was more capable of evidencing such a fact, than an hundred cunning, designing, and worldly-minded, men could be. No instance of folly and madness could equal that of Christ, in putting the proof of his Mission on his Resurrection, in case he had not been sure he should rise again; excepting that of his disciples, in attesting this Resurrection, supposing the fact to have been in their judgment at all doubtful. But such was the nature of the fact, that it was impossible they should have any doubt concerning it. They must have had the highest certainty, either that their Master did, or did not, rise again. If they knew he did not, what was the nature and end of their evidence? Why, its nature consisted in evidencing a lye; and its end was misery and death, to be suffered for a known impostor. This proves beyond all question, that their evidence was the evidence of honest men. We believe two witnesses, on their oaths; but would not the testimony of one sober and rational man, on his blood, weigh more with us than an hundred oaths?

Had our Saviour appeared to the unbelieving *Jews* after he rose from the dead, it must have been either in order to their conversion, or, through their conviction, to the higher attestation of his Resurrection.

As to their conversion, which would have been an act of grace and mercy from God, Christ did not appear to them, because they were excluded from this favour already by their own pride, obstinacy, and malice; and by the

just curse of God, whose Son had already pronounced them guilty of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, for ascribing his other miracles to the power of the devil. Besides, they who were so blinded as not to be convinced by the former miracles, or so ill-hearted as to stifle their conviction, and persecute to death the worker of them, had Christ appeared to them after his death, would have ascribed this miracle also to *Beelzebub*. Undoubtedly they would have attempted to crucify him afresh; in which case, he must either have suffered a second death, which was contrary to all reason; or vanished out of their hands, which would have given them an occasion to say, they saw nothing but a phantom or apparition, and to call that phantom an evil spirit. In sober earnest, did such men as these deserve higher means of faith than we do? Or was it a fit thing, that they should be forced to believe? It is true, our Saviour appeared, after his Resurrection, to St. *Paul*, at that time his bitterest enemy; and, by so doing, forced his faith. But here the case was quite different. St. *Paul* opposed Christianity, like an honest man, from a strong persuasion, that it was an imposture; and as, in this, he acted sincerely, according to his conscience, and could not be converted without a special miracle, our blessed Lord vouchsafed it to him, not so much for his own sake neither, as to make him a glorious instrument for the conversion of thousands.

As St. *Paul* acted an upright part before his conversion, he was a fit person to be employed in the service of the good cause he had opposed; and accordingly, when his conscience became Christian, it was, to the full, as warm and active as formerly, when it was altogether *Jewish*.

But was this to have been expected from the high-priest, the members of the sanhedrim, or the Pharisees, those masters of dissimulation, those monsters of cruelty, those worldly-minded wretches, whose consciences lay in their hearts, and whose hearts were wholly given up to wealth and ambition? No; such persons were very unfit to become martyrs to a self-denying religion, which they had already engaged against by an act of murder. From  
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men of this stamp nothing was to be expected but a flat denial of what they had seen, in case Christ had appeared to them. This would have put the evidence for the Resurrection on a more doubtful footing, than trusting it to the disciples alone did. Besides, a truth may be evaded, and the belief of it enfeebled, by explaining it away, and giving it a suspicious turn, much better than by a flat denial. For example; in the present case, had Christ appeared to the high-priest and Pharisees, they might, and probably would, have said, they saw something that looked like him, in their opinion, either an empty delusion, or some one who resembled Christ in his person and countenance a little; but that it could not have been he, because, when they went to lay hands on him, he fled, or vanished out of their sight; for one of the two he must have done, or else suffered himself to be seized, and treated as before. Besides, many of them did not so much as know his face; and others, that did, would probably have dissembled ignorance thereof.

But, that we may not only, by probable conjectures, suppose what these men would have done, had Christ appeared to them after his Resurrection, we have a full proof, in the gospel according to St. *Matthew*, which demonstrates what I have been saying. Altho' they knew the prophets had foretold the Resurrection of the Messiah; altho' they knew Christ had fulfilled all the other prophecies concerning the Messiah; altho' they were sensible he had wrought such miracles as were alone sufficient to prove his mission from God; yet, when the soldiers who had been set to guard his tomb, and who had been terrified, while on their duty, with the earthquake, and the vision of an angel, had given them a full account of all the things that were done in relation to the fact of his resurrection; instead of being made proselytes by this extraordinary evidence, or being led thereby to inquire farther into the matter, *they bribed the soldiers to say his disciples had stolen him away while they slept.* Now let any man of common sense tell us whether these men were either deserving of higher proof than they had already received, or capable of receiving it; whether they were either likely to have been made witnesses of the fact, had Christ shewn himself

self to them after his Resurrection ; or, in case they had been gained, whether they had been fit witnesses to attest such a truth. Would they have gone about through the world to preach Christ? Would they have forsaken all their pomp and wealth, to follow a persecuted cause? Would they have sealed their testimony with their blood? No ; this cause required honest and faithful witnesses ; but these men were altogether false and treacherous. This cause required witnesses who were *zealous of good works*, and willing to suffer the utmost severities for it ; but these men were more disposed to exercise the most inhuman cruelties for a bad cause, than to suffer the least inconveniency or loss for the best cause in the world.

Had Christ appeared to these men, either they would have continued in their unbelief, which would have greatly hurt the cause of Christianity, because it would have furnished such as had an aversion to the faith of a Christian with a pretence to say, his appearances satisfied none but his own ignorant and bigotted disciples ; or they would have suffered themselves to be convinced, and have declared for Christianity. Now it is a question worth considering, whether this, which was the best that could have been expected, would have served the cause of Christianity, or not. For my part, I am clear in it, that it would have done infinite mischief to it. Had these men, together with *Pontius Pilate*, and the *Romans* who were on the spot, become evidences for the Resurrection, either they must have converted all the rest of the *Jews* and *Romans*, or only some of them. Had they converted them all, we, in these later ages, would have suspected the whole of Christianity as a political contrivance, cooked up and vouched for by these artful statesmen, to take the place of Paganism, which was then losing its credit with the world, in order to keep the populace in awe. Besides, in this case, the grand evidence for Christianity, which arose from the martyrdoms of its first preachers, had been wanting ; for, if all had been Christians, as there had been none to persecute, so there had been none to suffer.

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But if these great persons, becoming witnesses for the Resurrection, had only brought over to Christianity some of their contemporary *Jews* and *Romans*, then nothing had been done by their attestation, but what was done without it; and sure I am, that, had the unbelieving *Jews* and *Romans* put them to the test of martyrdom, they would have shamefully deserted and betrayed the truth, through their excessive fondness for life, together with the grandeur and pleasures of this world. This, humanly speaking, would have wholly ruined Christianity. For men, at first professing it, afterwards to renounce it, nay, to declare it an imposture (which, to satisfy their persecutors, and save their lives, they must have done), had been enough to render ridiculous the martyrdom of lower, but honest witnesses, who continued to profess it in flames. As these men had already bought our Saviour, so we may be sure they would have sold him, as soon as their own lives became the price of his discredit.

From hence, and from a great deal more that might be said on the same subject, it appears, that Christ judged infinitely better in not appearing, after his Resurrection, to those who crucified him, than the short-sighted unbelievers, who make this an objection to the truth of his Resurrection.

This only objection of weight being thus removed, and the evidence given to the Resurrection of Christ being proved irresistible, it is scarcely in our power to suspect the fact.

It is true, the strangeness of that fact is apt to stagger the faith of such as measure credibility only by what is common, or frequently brought under their own observation. Such people should consider, that the Resurrection is said to be the work of God; that *all his works are marvellous, though in wisdom he hath made them all*; nay, that his works which we see every moment, such as the light, the motion of bodies, the growth of plants, the production of animals, are all infinitely more wonderful in themselves than the Resurrection of Christ, or any other man. Nay, all that we see and know of God's works, great and excellent as they are, is not more necessary

fary to the belief of his wisdom and goodness, than the Resurrection of Christ.

Indeed, if Christ did not rise, Christianity is altogether an imposture; so is *Judaism*; and, consequently, as no other species of religion hath the least shadow or mark of a divine original, it follows, that God never made any revelation to mankind; that is, that altho' he made it impossible for mankind to subsist without religion, or to be happy without the true religion, yet he never afforded them the means of attaining to it.

To evade the imputation of this blasphemous conclusion, our modern infidels say, God hath given to all men sufficient means of knowing the true religion by the mere light of nature, altho' no mortal should ever talk one word to them about it, or teach them a tittle of it. This most extravagant assertion, which the continual experience of every mortal fully refutes, is all that Infidelity or Deism hath to build on.

But let this pass; and let us, who firmly believe in the Resurrection of our blessed Saviour, consider it as the *first-fruits* of an universal Resurrection, since it is so set forth to us in holy Scripture. Let us continually reflect, that *God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by his Son Christ Jesus, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him up from the dead.* Let us consider, that, as sure as Christ is risen, as sure as man is a free and accountable creature, as sure as God is a just Governor of the world, and an infallible performer both of what he promises and threatens; so surely shall we all arise from the earth, and, *standing before the judgment-seat of God, shall receive the full reward of that which we have done in the flesh, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* That infinitely wise and powerful Being, who hath weighed every thing in a balance, who hath given proportion, beauty, convenience, and order, to all the works of nature, will most assuredly, at his own appointed time, put the moral world also into the balance, and assign the righteous and the wicked their respective stations, as well as the water  
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and the fire. The material elements lay at first in a frightful confusion, till, by the operation of Divine wisdom and power, they fell into their proper places; so that, in their present state, they do infinite honour to the great Artificer of nature. In like manner, the moral world, which is by far the more excellent part of the creation, altho' it now lies in confusion, good and evil being intermixed, and the righteous and wicked perpetually interfering, shall be reduced to order; insomuch that the good and the bad shall no longer contend for superiority, nor shake God's kingdom with trials or convulsions. When the day appointed for judgment shall arrive, *the righteous shall have dominion over the wicked in the very morning* of that day; and shall have power to compel them, altho' against their wills, to obey and answer the purposes of Providence. To suppose the contrary; to believe that accountable beings shall never be called to account, and that the moral or intellectual world shall never be cleared up and regulated; would reflect more dishonour on God, and argue greater weakness in our reason, than the supposition of endless confusion in the material world. To preserve the heavenly bodies in their courses: to confine the elements to their stations; to promote the birth, and ensure the being, of the vegetable and animal species; are not as necessarily the effects of God's wisdom, goodness, and power, as to relieve the virtuous from their distresses, and crown them with eternal peace and joy; as to put an end to the insolence of the vicious, and make them everlasting examples of Divine justice. The faith of the good man may be sometimes so staggered with his afflictions, and that of the wicked so lost in his successes and triumphs, as to suppress the fears of the one, and cloud the hopes of the other; but he who at present guides the year, and brings round the seasons, without even a momentary variation, is, with the same steady and irresistible hand, leading us all to the seat of judgment, making the necessary dispositions, and ripening the course of things for the proper season, marked out, in his unalterable decree, for the great event. Howsoever vice may feed it-

self up with false reasonings, or amuse itself with sensual pleasures, or lull itself in stupidity and security; yet it is as certain, as that we are now alive, and shall soon die, that, after death, we shall arise from the grave, and be judged in the flesh for what we have done in the flesh.

Since, then, God cannot be wise, nor good, nor just, nor powerful, if we be not judged; since the only religion that hath any right to the title of truth, hath given us strong and repeated assurances of a judgment to come; *what manner of persons ought we to be, in all godliness and true holiness!* This is an event we cannot possibly shun, and ought therefore continually to apprehend. What are the things of this world, that they should turn our eyes aside from that awful throne, from whence we are to be either carried to the eternal enjoyment of God, or sent away to the endless torture of fire! What are the pleasures and honours of this life, when compared with the joys and glories of heaven! What are the sufferings of the righteous here, when set against the miseries of the damned hereafter! What is time, when placed in the balance with vast eternity! What is reason, if she cannot apprehend a difference that is so immensely wide! And what is the will or heart of man, if, when his reason rightly apprehends the difference, it cannot be brought to submit itself to reason, and act accordingly!

But as our *hearts* are indeed *very deceitful, and desperately wicked*, insomuch that reason can by no means govern them, let us, in the spirit of deep contrition and fear, smite upon our breasts, and cry aloud to God for the assistance of his Holy Spirit, that he may enliven our faith, and, through that only instrument of salvation, strike upon our insensible hearts such an impression of God's final judgments, as cannot be resisted, nor for a moment suspended; that we may so conduct our lives, as if the whole of them were to be passed at the very footstool of God's throne, and we saw him entering every thought, word, and action, in the great book of our account: so shall we please and honour him here, and he shall bless and make us happy hereafter.

Grant this, we most humbly and earnestly beseech thee,  
O Fountain of all good, for the sake of Christ Jesus, our  
dear Redeemer ; to whom, with Thee, and the Holy  
Ghost, one glorious and eternal Trinity, be all might,  
majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore.  
Amen.

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## DISCOURSE XVII.

*Judas a Preacher of Righteousness.*

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St. MARK xiv. 43, 44, 45.

*And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords, from the Chief-priests, and the Scribes, and the Elders.*

*And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: take him, and lead him away safely.*

*And as soon as he was come, he goeth straitway to him, and saith, Master, Master; and kissed him.*

**I**HAVE not chosen these words to be the subject of an invective on the baseness of that man who hath outdone all other traitors in villainy, and hath made the name of *Judas*, to all succeeding generations, as strong an expression for ingratitude and falshood, as that of the devil himself; but from this passage I shall take an occasion to try, whether the whole of his history, as set forth here, and elsewhere in Scripture, doth not furnish us with a good argument in favour of the Master he betrayed, and the Religion he deserted.

If, on the one hand, the great facts of our Saviour's history are fully proved to be true by the readiness of his first

first witnesses to brave the fury of persecution in its utmost cruelties, rather than to give up the truth of those facts, or even to stifle it in silence; an argument as strong, on the other, for the reality of his miracles, and the purity of his whole life, may be brought from the spirit and conduct of those who persecuted him, as also of the wretch who betrayed him.

The chief-priests, the scribes, and elders of the *Jews*, despised him for the meanness of his parentage, and lowness of the character he appeared in. They hated him for the freedom of his reproofs. They envied him for the superiority of his wisdom. They persecuted him, because they could not refute him. They ascribed his miracles, which they could not deny, to the devil. They purchased evidence against him; and, when that evidence proved insufficient, they helped it out with factious clamours, and a popular demand for his blood. They bought off the soldiers, who otherwise would have been witnesses of his resurrection. And, as his disciples were poor and needy men, the money of these wealthy enemies was always ready for such of his followers as would betray him.

These things considered, we may reasonably presume such adversaries would leave no methods untried to destroy him, or throw discredit on the work he had in hand. Nor are we to wonder, if, among so many necessitous followers of Christ, one was found, who was base enough to prefer their money to the service of a Master so often in distress for the necessaries of life.

If this traitor was capable of selling the liberty of his Master, and betraying his person into the hands of his most virulent enemies, we may be sure he would have made no scruple to expose the artifice of his preachings, or to detect the deceit of his miracles, had there been any thing dark or fraudulent in either. In the first place, this would have better served the purposes of the *Jewish* rulers, than any thing that could have been done to Christ's person; for this would have ruined his cause, and suppressed his religion, the propagation of which did not depend, as the event fully proved, on the liberty or life of Christ.

What was the life of Christ, considered in itself, to the Jews, more than that of another man? Or had they any other reason for desiring his death, but that they might by that means stop the progress of his religion, by destroying its author, and intimidating his disciples? *Judas*, therefore, could by no other means have merited so great a reward from them, as by proving his Master to be an impostor, and furnishing them with materials whereby they might expose his miracles to the contempt, his doctrines to the suspicion, and his name, of consequence, to the abhorrence, of mankind.

In the next place, This was what *Judas* would have much rather chosen to have done, because this would have given him the character of a friend to truth, not a traitor; and would have really been the action of an honest man, rather than of a villain. It would have been no fault in him to follow *Jesus*, while he thought him the Messiah; and, when he found him to be a cheat, it would have been a virtue to expose his practices, and to prevent the credulity of the world from being abused by falshood instead of truth, and legerdemain instead of miracles. Besides, if we may judge by his conduct, we cannot help concluding, that, next to the enriching himself, his grand aim was to assist the Chief-priests and Elders in stifling the new sect and religion of his Master; but by no means to take away the life of that Master.

How the thoughts of *Judas* wrought from the time that *Satan* entered into him, and put him upon consulting with the enemies of Christ, he who tempted him to so foul a treachery may best explain; or they, who have hearts like his own, may guess; but it is pretty clear from his conduct, that he rather intended to strike at his Master's credit and liberty, than his life; for, when he saw how things were going, and that Christ was condemned, he repented of what he had done, returned the money, and destroyed himself, either by hanging himself, as the word in St. *Matthew* is translated, or rather, as Dr. *Hammond* expounds it, by giving himself up to an outrageous fit of despair, that strangled, and tore him to pieces. Be this as it will, it is plain the effects of his  
treachery



treachery had taken a turn he by no means expected, or indeed had any reason to expect; for he knew nothing could be laid to his Master's charge, which either the *Jewish* or *Roman* laws had made capital; he knew the *Jews*, who alone were his enemies, had no power at that time to put any man to death; and he thought it highly improbable, that the *Roman* equity would take away the life of a man who could be accused of nothing but what related to the religion of the *Jews*, which the *Romans* laughed at, as a matter altogether superstitious and trifling.

From hence it appears, as clearly as any thing can do, that *Judas*, in betraying his Master, had no design to assist the *Jews* in the murder of that Master. What, then, was his design? Why, it was to get money for gratifying the *Jews*, by putting Christ into their hands, in order, at most, to stop the progress of his religion by the imprisonment, banishment, or disgrace, of its author. Something he must do, to earn the money he coveted; and this seemed more agreeable to his nature, which was treacherous, not bloody, than any other service he could do.

But if, notwithstanding all that hath been said, it is still insisted, that he must, all along, have had the death of his Master in view, inasmuch as he could have expected nothing less from the implacable spirit of the *Jews*, and the iniquity of the judge; it will follow, that *Judas* could have had no thoughts of sparing the practices of his Master, since he had no tenderness for his life. If he could resolve to spill the blood of one who had treated him, and every-body else, with a mildness and sweetness exceeding those of all other men, he could not, surely, think of concealing the disingenuous artifices, or screening the pretended miracles, of a man whose life he hunted with the heart of a bloodhound.

In which-ever light we take his conduct, he must have been ready to do all the mischief in his power to the religion from which he had apostatized. Now, could he have shewn the miracles of Christ to have been wrought by magic, or the power of natural causes, or to be no miracles, but mere tricks or deceits; or could he have proved

his Master, from any thing in the secret instructions he gave his disciples, or from any thing in his private life or conversation, to be a bad man, and an impostor ; these proofs, put into the hands of the *Jewish* Rulers, must have enabled them all at once to throw contempt on the apostles, and to ruin the religion they preached.

It is now time to observe, that, had Christ been only a mere man, or any thing less than what he gave himself out for, the Messiah, and the Son of God, he must have been an impostor ; and *Judas* must have known it, and been able to prove it. It is certain Christ took on him the prophetic character and stile of the Messiah, and called himself the Son of God. In this light he set himself not only in private to his own disciples, but publicly to the unbelieving *Jews* who attempted to stone him, for so doing. It is certain also, that he every day did such things as convinced numbers, that the power of God was with him ; and forced those who hated him, to own, performances of that kind could not be effected by virtue of mere natural causes. These things he did so often, and so openly ; and appealed so confidently to them, as proofs of his Divine mission, that his disciples, who saw them all, must have examined them with all the attention and sagacity they were masters of ; and, that they were not ready to swallow every juggling trick for a miracle, is plain from their unaccountable doubts, and strange incredulity. If, on the one side, such miracles were exceedingly convincing ; it was, on the other, no easy matter to believe, that a man, subject to hunger, thirst, and other human infirmities, was the Son of God ; or that, if he was, he should suffer himself to be put to death ; and that, being dead, he should rise again to life the third day, and ascend openly into heaven. Before they could believe things so incredible on the strength of miracles, those miracles must have been closely attended to, and severely scanned. Had they been found to have any deceit or management in them, they must have proved him who wrought them, to be a cheat ; and, considering the little worldly advantage, or rather the danger, there was in following him, the detection of any one pretended miracle

miracle must have ruined his credit with his disciples, and banished them all from about him. Had *Judas*, in particular, found out any thing of this sort, he would probably have taken an earlier opportunity of making his fortune by accusing such a Master; at least, one so little subject to scruples would not, after he had done the thing, have suffered so violent a remorse.

But what puts this matter out of all dispute, and fully demonstrates, that, had Christ been an impostor as to his miracles, *Judas* must have known it, is, that *Judas* was not only an eye-witness of the miracles Christ wrought, or pretended to work; but did, by virtue of the powers conferred on him by Christ, work miracles himself. He was sent out with the rest of the twelve; and we have this account of the joint commission, in which the twelve are all set down by name, beginning with *Simon Peter*, and ending with *Judas Iscariot*: *And when Christ had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and said, As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give, Mat. x.* Pursuant to this most extraordinary commission, *they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the Gospel, and healing every-where, Luke ix.*

On this transaction we may make two reflections, extremely to our present purpose. First, If Jesus had not been perfectly sure he could communicate the aforesaid power in the free and ample manner in which his disciples were commanded to use it, he must have been lost to common sense, and all his own designs, to send them out on such an errand; for, in case they should fail of success in their attempts to heal the sick, or raise the dead, the whole world must have treated them as villains or madmen; nor could they help bestowing the like appellations on their Master; which must have been attended with the immediate disappointment of all his schemes. Surely no impostor in the world ever acted such a part as this; nor is

it in the wit of man to contrive a more certain method of ruining his own credit, and proving himself a cheat to all mankind.

In the second place, If the disciples, having tried the virtue of their commission, found they could work none of those miracles which their Master had ordered them to work, had not *Judas*, then, wherewithal sufficiently to instruct the chief priests and elders how to baffle all his Master's pretences to a miraculous power? Could he not at any time appear as a witness, to prove his Master had attempted to communicate that power, and failed? And would not this have shewn, either that his Master had in reality no such power; or that, if he had, it was not to his credit to impart the secret of it even to his greatest confidants? But, if we take the thing in another light, and suppose they did, in some manner or other, do things somewhat like those they were commanded, by virtue of some magical spells, or of some extraordinary natural secrets bestowed on them by their Master; when *Judas* went to sell his Master, would he have failed to give an account of these secrets to the *Jewish* grandees, who would have paid him handsomely, no doubt, for the curious and useful information? Or can we suppose they did receive such information, but, thro' carelessness, neglected to publish and apply it to that important purpose of loading the new religion with infamy, which it would so effectually have served, and which they were above all things so desirous of doing?

Again; had Christ been addicted to sensual pleasure; had he covetously aimed at amassing riches, or ambitiously at raising himself to the temporal throne of *David*; or had he been in any respect a bad man; *Judas*, after so long an acquaintance, must have known it; and might have helped the *Jewish* rulers to set these secret immoralities in so strong an opposition to his repeated precepts for mortification, and for contempt of worldly power and wealth, as could not have failed to paint him, in the eyes of all men, the vilest hypocrite and deceiver. If, after all Christ said concerning the necessity of denying ourselves, and taking up the cross, *Judas* could have proved him a slave to drunkenness, gluttony, or lewdness; if,

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after Christ had forbid his disciples to *lay up for themselves treasures upon earth*, Judas could have discovered his secret hoards of riches; or if, after Christ had declared *his kingdom was not of this world*, Judas could have made it appear, altho' barely on his own testimony, that his Master had been taking steps to arrive at the sovereignty, and, in order to engage a sufficient number of followers, had promised to raise the chief men of his party to the highest places of honour and profit; why did he not appear, and evidence these things at the tryal of his late Master, where they would have done his business effectually before the *Roman* governor, and where there was so great a want of evidence, that he must infallibly have escaped, had not the whole power of the *Jewish* nation strained its interest to have him condemned?

Instead of all this, the unhappy *Judas*, overwhelmed with grief and remorse, confesses, at the approach of death, when truth is wont to be uppermost, that he had sinned, in that he had betrayed the innocent blood. And did *Judas*, the very traitor who brought him to the cross, with his dying breath pronounce him innocent? Could not even he that betrayed him, accuse him? Or, after betraying him, can we suppose he would scruple to accuse him, had he known any crime with which he could have charged him? Had he known any thing of this nature, surely it must have prevented so shocking a repentance; surely he could never have taken it into his head to punish himself in so horrid a manner for bringing a known impostor to justice, much less would he have declared him innocent.

Now it must be observed here, that, if *Judas* thought him innocent, he must, on the strength of all the foregoing reasonings, have been actually innocent. His miracles must have been real miracles; his wise precepts, and excellent exhortations, must have come from his heart; his whole behaviour must have been a strict and close exemplification of his doctrines; his preachings must have been the voice, and he himself the Son, of God.

We are told in the Gospel, that Christ, before he was taken, intimated to his apostles, even to *Judas* himself,

that he should betray him. There is all the reason in the world for considering this as a real prophecy, and, consequently, for looking on Christ as divinely commissioned. But if we take it only for a probable guess, or an assurance founded on somewhat Christ had discovered of the traitor's secret designs; and if, in like manner, we consider Christ as no prophet at all; we must allow there could be no reason why he should both retain *Judas* in his service, and yet at the same time reserve the secrets and stratagems, on which he planned his imposture, from him alone of all his disciples. Taking Christ, in all respects, to be no more than a common man, had he, as one man does another, found out *Judas* to be of a false and fickle disposition, he would that moment have dismissed him, or, rather, had him privately put out of the way. But, if he did not find him out to be such a man till just before he was betrayed, he must have communicated all his secrets to him with the same confidence as to the rest, when he had the same opinion of him that he had of the other eleven.

Now, if I mistake not, it hath been already made to common sense an evident truth, that *Judas* would have accused his Master of imposture, if he could. But that he did not, is as undeniable a truth; for, in case he had, the enemies of Christ would have urged that imposture, at his tryal, against him, and afterwards against his religion; and must, with such a key, have easily detected all the pretended miracles of the apostles, and, by that means, have rendered abortive the infant religion they maintained. Had they been able to bring so thorough a refutation against the Author and preachers of Christianity, we cannot doubt they would have done it; nor that, in doing it, they must have stifled our religion in its birth. This duly considered, the ground Christianity gained immediately after the crucifixion of its Author, in spite of the most bloody persecutions, which was all the enemy could then employ against it; and doth still maintain, in opposition to all the vices and sophistry of mankind, which is all he can now combat it with; is a full, an irresistible  
proof,

proof, that Christ was the Son of God, and his religion a divine revelation.

The minds of men, according to their make, are apt to be variously affected with different arguments, tho' in themselves perhaps nearly equal, and tho' applied to the same purpose. But, of all the arguments in favour of Christianity, none strikes me with greater force than this, drawn from the history of *Judas*; especially when I consider, that the *Jewish* Priests and Rabbi's might, on looking into the prophecies, so easily have seen, that the Messiah must have come at the time Christ appeared, and must have been sold, betrayed, and put to death, precisely at the time, and in the manner, he was. That these wise and learned men should, directly against their own intention, have been, by their plotting and bribing for his destruction, the chief instruments to prove Christ the Messiah, hath something in it very astonishing; something that cannot be rationally traced up to any other cause, but that over-ruling Providence which dictated the prophecies, and was concerned to see them fulfilled. Had not *king Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, taken counsel together against the Lord, and against his Christ*; and had he not been sold to them exactly for *thirty pieces of silver*; the prophecies of *David* and *Zechary* must have been false. Since, by their own computation, the time must have been at hand, when, according to *Daniel, the Prince must be cut off*, how could they avoid, either when they were consulting about his death, or when they were telling out the pieces to *Judas*; how, I say, could they avoid reflecting on the qualities of the metal, or the number of the pieces? Had they paid him in gold, or given him one piece more or less, they might have afterwards proved Jesus not to be the Messiah. Had not *Judas* been an apottle and bishop, Jesus could not have been the Messiah; for the prophecy of *David*, in the six. Psalm, where, speaking of the traitor, he says, *Let his days be few, and let another take his bishoprick*, could not have been verified, as it was by his disastrous death, and the election of *Matthias* into his place. Let infidelity behold, and be amazed (for it cannot

not be convinced), when it finds the *Jewish* Rulers chafing and cheapening with *Judas* about the blood of his Master, and at length, contrary to the treacherous intention of his heart, and the malicious designs of theirs, unwittingly agreeing on the single scheme that could fulfil the prophecies, and prove, beyond question, what they were that instant labouring to disprove, that Christ was actually the Messiah; that the wonders he wrought were true and genuine miracles; and that the religion he preached was the very will and word of God.

But, I foresee, an infidel will be ready enough to object here, That the story about *Judas* tells ill, and seems improbable; alleging, that, if *Judas* had known his Master to be an impostor, his conscience could never have thrown him into such deadly agonies for having brought him to the cross; and that, if he had not only seen Christ work so many miracles, but also wrought some himself in the name, and by the power of Christ, it had been impossible for him to turn either apostate or traitor.

If historical facts, so very possible, and so well vouched, as this, may be refuted by surmises, then it will be unsafe to build any thing on the accounts of former times. But, that the objector may not think this altogether so extraordinary a phænomenon in a very depraved mind, let him strictly examine his past life, and perhaps he may recollect his having acted, on some occasions, directly against the convictions of reason, and the admonitions of conscience, when, as in the case of *Judas*, the prospect of some worldly advantage, or the dread of some very threatening evil, or both at once, have, for the time, proved too strong for all his prudence and principles. This is no uncommon case; altho' I shall readily own, that it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to find a case so hard to be reconciled to reason, as that of *Judas*; which, considering what he had formerly seen Christ do, and what he had done himself, may require a mind as irregular and black as his own, to account for. It may be, a man, whose mind was so untowardly turned as his, might have doubted whether the miracles he wrought himself were the effects of a good or evil power. We have too much reason



son to think there are men, who, from the inveterate habits and violent motions of a bad heart, are capable of acting against the clearest convictions a bad head can receive. Besides, I believe we should not be far from the truth, if we should say, conviction is never perfect, I mean in matters of morality or religion, if the heart does not second it. It is, however, after all, by no means so strange, that a very ill-minded man, like him, should fall, as that the better disciples of our Saviour should stagger in the faith, as we find they were inclined to do, after all they had seen and done, upon their Saviour's crucifixion. If so honest a man, and so zealous a servant, as *Peter*, could, through fear, forswear his Master, notwithstanding the reasons for his faith were so strong; we are not to be surpris'd, that such a monster as *Judas* should, in spite of the like reasons for his faith, through covetousness, sell the same Master.

If parallel instances from Scripture might be allowed on this occasion, we might serve ourselves with several. *Simon Magus* saw the miracles wrought by *Peter* and *John* at *Samaria*; but, instead of becoming by that means a true and real Christian, he would have purchased the same power with money, in order to make ten times the sum by it, and to get himself the name of something more than man. Was not *Balaam* a real prophet? And yet was he not a very bad man? Did he not give advice to the enemies of the *Israelites*, advice the most dangerous and pernicious to that people, whom God, by a very extraordinary revelation, had taught him to distinguish from all others, as his peculiar people? Wholsome food turns to corruption on a vitiated stomach; and truth itself to intellectual poison, in a depraved and wicked mind. But why should we seek to account for this difficulty by other means, since the Gospel itself clears up the point? *Judas* was in himself a dishonest and bad man. When *Mary*, in the zeal of her heart, had anointed the feet of *Jesus* with the precious ointment, and wiped them with her hair; *Judas* said, in the hypocrisy of his, *Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? But this he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he*

was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Yet, thief and hypocrite as he was, it is probable his own unassisted wickedness might not have carried him to such an height of villainy, as to betray his Master, had not *Satan*, immediately on his receiving the sop, entered into him, and added all the wickedness of a devil to his own. *Satan*, who, from an angel, became a devil, could easily teach an apostle how to become an apostate, and a traitor.

But he could not teach him how to betray the religion of Christ, when he betrayed Christ himself. Neither could they, who put Christ to death, extinguish that religion. On the contrary, by so doing, they took the only way that could be taken to perfect the great work, and to establish it in the world. They intended the murder of one man; but, without knowing what they did, they wrought the salvation of all men. Wicked as they were, they did the work of God. The storms of the natural, and the crimes of the moral, world, be they never so boisterous or enormous, are forced to promote the designs of him who permits the one, and causes the other. If a man will be wicked, will be rebellious against God, will be malicious towards men, will set himself to do all the mischief he can towards all men, and, as far as in him lies, endeavour to disappoint the very end of his creation; Providence will not, indeed, always hinder him (any more than it will a plague from spreading misery or death) from pursuing the dictates of his own infernal heart; but it will bring a greater good out of all that evil, and only permits the evil for the sake of the good. The wickedest of men must still, altho' against his intention, be the servant of God who made him. And, altho' he will not be good, he shall be an useful servant too; for God will not be disappointed. It is true, he hath made angels and men free; but, free as they are, and wicked as they may be, he will, as their Maker and Governor, be served by them, one way or another. If they will not serve him willingly, and be happy; they must serve him against their wills, and be miserable; for he did not make them altogether for their own sakes, much less for the service of his enemy.

Accordingly,

Accordingly, *Herod* may persecute or despise; the *Jewish* chiefs may plot and bribe; *Judas* may sell and betray; *Pilate* may compliment the mob with the life of a man whom he found innocent; and the devil may, by his power over their hearts, inspire and manage this whole scheme of iniquity and murder; but still *there is one higher than the highest, that regardeth*. There is one higher than them all, that shall controul and over-rule the whole transaction, altho' the blackest hell ever contrived, and turn it to the most glorious exemplification of goodness; to the happiest of all events; to the retrieval of a lost, and to the salvation of a desperate, world.

How ought we to admire the goodness, and adore the wisdom, and revere the power, of God, in this most important, this most amazing, piece of history! Can any thing give such a rock for faith to build on, or ground for such a battery against sin? If *Judas*, without speaking or writing, demonstrates the truth of a religion he did all he could to suppress, who will not believe it to be true? If our infidels will not listen to the arguments of *Peter* or *Paul*, upon a supposition that they were deceivers, surely they will admit *Judas*, who acted a contrary part, and was of a spirit truly modern, to be their apostle. Whoever considers attentively his whole story, must go away either a fool, or a Christian.

Nor does this history furnish stronger arguments *for* faith, than it does *against* sin. To the man whose conviction it hath already wrought, it will set the sins of covetousness, dissimulation, treachery, and murder, in a stronger light, and paint them in fouler colours, than they can otherwise be possibly seen in. It will shew him what conscience, enraged to the highest, can do, even in the most hardened minds. It will give him a most sensible and awful proof of speedy vengeance, executed by the devil, in a mortal fit of despair, on the wretch he had so lately seduced. To conclude; it will lead his eyes forward to the cross of Christ, and shew him what sin is, by the infinite value and dignity of the atonement made for it; and, while he beholds the blood streaming from his Saviour's wounds, it will remind him, that he too  
must

must be a traitor, and a *Judas*, if, by his sins, he again puts Christ to open shame, and crucifies him afresh. We are all the disciples, and some of us the apostles, of Christ, enlisted into his service, as well as the twelve, by a solemn vow or covenant. The honour of him and his holy religion, and the well-being of his spiritual body the church, are entrusted with us. If, therefore, we grossly or perseveringly sin, we are traitors and *Judas's*, as well as he, whose treachery gave occasion to this Discourse; for do we not expose the name of Christ, and the credit of his religion, to the contempt and ridicule of infidels, for the pleasure or profit accruing from our sins? Do we not sell and betray our Master to a severer cross than that on mount *Calvary*? I say, severer; for surely such it was in the estimation of Christ himself, who willingly suffered death in his natural, that he might give life to his mystical, body, which we, by our sins, corrupt, deface, and do all we can to destroy. But, whatever the debauched, or the ambitious, may say, to clear himself of a copartnership in sin with *Iscariot*, let not the covetous, or the treacherous, who postpone the honour and service of Christ to the peculiar vices of that traitor, deny that he is a *Judas*. What can so strongly demonstrate the force of that unhappy prejudice, wherewith the minds of people, otherwise of the clearest understandings, are blinded by a too close conversation with the seducing world, as that they cannot see their sins in this just and affecting light, in which both reason and Scripture represent them!

God grant, however, that we may at length lay these things to heart, as we ought to do; and to him be the praise, and the honour, and the glory, of our faith and obedience, now, and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE XVIII.

Human Liberty, what; and how to be obtained.

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JOHN viii. 31, 32.

—*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.  
And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

OUR Saviour here calls such as believe in his word, and always continue stedfast in that belief, his real disciples; who, in consequence of their faith, steadily adhered to, have his promise, that they *shall know the truth*, the great truth, that is, the true religion; and that *this truth*, so known, *shall make them free*. The Jews, who heard him, looking on themselves as free already, took this amiss, and said, *We be Abraham's children, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou then, ye shall be made free?* Jesus answered them, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin*; by which he delicately intimates, that, although they were not servants to any particular man, yet they were the slaves of sin; and promises, that the truths of his word shall deliver them from this worst sort of bondage, by reforming

reforming their future lives, and discharging them from the punishment of past sins.

Here it is to be observed in general, that liberty is connected with truth, and slavery with error, in the very nature of things. He who knows the truth in any branch of knowledge, knows how to direct and govern himself in that respect, and therefore is so far free ; whereas he who is ignorant of it, or, what is worse, who holds errors opposite to it, must, in every thought or action relative to that part of knowledge, either think and act absurdly, or be led and governed by others, which is so far an instance of servitude, as it implies subjection and dependence. If a close observer of things will be at the pains to trace this doctrine upward, he will find every being possessed of so much liberty, or self-government, as he is possessed of wisdom, till he arrives at that being, who is infinitely free, because he is infinitely wise. And if he pursues the same doctrine downward, he will find every being so far necessarily subject, that is, either governed or enslaved, as he hath less reason and wisdom, till he comes to the fool and madman, who are wholly deprived of liberty. Hence it appears, that liberty, and even power, are the prerogative of wisdom ; and subjection, nay, slavery, are the consequence of folly. It sometimes happens indeed, that in the communities of this world wisdom must truckle to folly ; but this is nevertheless against the nature of things, and falls out only either by accident, or by the curse of God, who sets a fool to rule over such as are wiser than himself, for the punishment of a guilty nation.

It is evident, that our Saviour, in the passage from whence my text is taken, sets forth virtue or goodness, as freedom ; and vice, as slavery ; assigning to the former, as its principle, the knowledge of true religion ; and to the latter, as its cause and source, the ignorance of that religion. It is also evident, that he points to his word, as the treasury, from whence this knowledge is to be drawn. Hence it follows, that faith and freedom, that true Christianity and true liberty, are but different names for the same thing.

The libertine finds it hard to digest this doctrine. To believe in mysteries, to submit to positive institutions, and to regulate his life by an expectation of rewards and punishments, appear to him, as instances of a too mean compliance in us; and the expectation of such compliance, as a proof of a too arbitrary will in its author. Now, this proceeds from his entertaining a wrong notion both of human nature, and of human liberty.

In the first place, He does not consider, that man is, not only by his original nature, a subordinate and dependent, but also by his present nature, a corrupt and vicious, creature; and that, while common sense vouches for the truth of the former observation, universal experience forces us to confess that of the latter.

Neither does he, in the second place, consider, as he ought to do, that a being, so subordinate, must be governed; nor that a being, so corrupt, requires correction; or, if he should admit the necessity both of government and correction, yet, having too slight notions of our dependence and corruption, and too airy an idea of liberty, he thinks he ought neither to be governed, nor corrected, by such a faith, nor by such maxims, as those of Christianity. He therefore pleads for an unlimited liberty of thinking, and for a less limited liberty of acting, than it is fit to give him.

Perhaps we shall do some service to him, or at least to others, not altogether so overweening, if we, with a just eye to human nature, state the right notion of liberty, in respect both to thought and action; and afterwards shew, that Christianity, truly such, tends directly, and more powerfully, than any thing else, to promote and preserve this liberty.

When we speak of liberty, as a thing we either wish for, or would keep, we mean by it something that is *good*, nay, highly conducive to our own happiness. Liberty, therefore, of thought, must be the power or faculty of thinking in such a manner as may make us truly wise. Whatsoever helps us to do this, promotes the liberty; and whatsoever hinders us to do it, causes or increases the slavery, of our minds. So likewise liberty

of acting must be the power or privilege of carrying into execution that wisdom we have acquired by liberty of thinking, or, in other words, of acting in such a manner as may conduce to our real happiness. Whatsoever helps us to do this, befriends our liberty ; whatsoever hinders, enslaves us.

These positions are, and for ever will be, true ; although, in order to think wisely, we should be confined to a particular way of thinking ; and, in order to act rightly, should be obliged to act by certain rules ; nay, although that way of thinking should not square in all things with our previous judgment, nor those rules of action with our humour and inclination ; because, of ourselves, we are neither so wise, nor so well inclined, as to need no direction. Who are we ? Are we not, in respect to knowledge, *born as the wild asses colt*, that is, totally ignorant ? And when afterwards we set ourselves to the acquisition of religious knowledge, are we not liable to infinite errors, and those of the grossest kinds ? Do we not, therefore, stand in need of a teacher ? Again, are we not subordinate beings ? Are we not corrupt and sinful creatures ? And do we not, therefore, stand in need of a governor ?

Now, if God shall offer himself to be our teacher, surely the matter of his instructions must be true wisdom, and consequently conducive to our real liberty, although, in some instances, it should be mysterious. To believe it, therefore, on his word, can be no infringement on our liberty of thinking. And further, if God shall vouchsafe to be our governor, his laws must undoubtedly be the best rules of action, the most conformable to true wisdom, the most productive of our real happiness, and consequently of our liberty, as well when they oppose, as when they fall in with, our inclinations. True religion consists, no doubt, in the knowledge of God, and his will, and also of such helps and motives to obedience in us, as he shall judge expedient. Now, as he is incomprehensible, the knowledge of him must be in some degree mysterious. And, as we are extremely inattentive to our duty, and perversely wicked, the institution of positive duties,



duties, and the proposal of future rewards and punishments, may be highly conducive, may be necessary, to our reformation. Who is to judge in this case? The infinitely wise Teacher, and the unerring Governor? Or the foolish disciple, the refractory subject?

The truth is, man, ignorant and ill-disposed, must be both taught and governed. He is not to stomach it, if, at the best, he was made for subjection, as well as the angels; and if, now he is become corrupt and wicked, he is put under such rules, as are morally coercive. His liberty, at first, was but that of a subject and dependent; but since he is turned a rebel, must be reduced to narrower bounds. With the liberty these allow him he must be content, until submission and obedience have fitted him for larger limits. If, dissatisfied with these, he seeks for greater liberty, before he is reclaimed to a greater degree of virtue, let him know, that he cannot elope from the service of his natural Lord, but into a licentious kind of slavery to things, that have no right to rule over him, wherein he will have no other liberty, but to be wicked and miserable.

A being destitute of reason is fit only for absolute subjection, and total restraint. But a being, not only foolish, but perversely wicked, is the proper subject of severity and correction, as well as of restraint; and, if found incorrigible, must either be destroyed, or put under an endless incapacity of doing mischief. Although, in civil society, the madman, the robber, and the cut-throat, object to these rules, and plead for immunity; yet the wisdom of all lawgivers in this world adheres invariably to them, and makes the objection of such men one reason for its so doing. Yet this is so far from being an incroachment on civil liberty, that, without it, no shadow of such liberty can be secured to men of better minds, nor any prospect of reformation provided for the yet dissolute and lawless part of mankind. Now, why shall that be objected to in God's kingdom, which is found so necessary in all other kingdoms? Or, in what respect does the expectation of punishments and rewards abridge our liberty more in his community, than in any other? Hath

he not *made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his own counsel* ? Hath he not *set before him good and evil, life and death*, and left it to himself to choose ? What greater liberty would he desire than this ? Would he have leave to choose the evil of sin, without the evil of punishment ? If this is the liberty he aims at, the laws neither of God, nor man, will allow it. But if, in his nature, there should be an unhappy disposition to choose the evil, he ought not surely to think it an infringement of his liberty, if God, by the aids of religion, should balance that disposition, and qualify him for a free and rational choice.

On the whole then, who is free ? Not he who can think of every thing just as he pleases ; not he whose thoughts move, like the wind, without any path or track ; not he who, against the sense and reason of all other men, and the very nature of things, can take light or darkness, truth or falsehood, right or wrong, indifferently for each other ; not the Sceptic, to whom nothing is either self-evident or conclusive ; not the brute, disguised in the figure of a man, whose affections and appetites go foremost, and force his head to follow. Neither is he free, who is subject to no laws of God or man, but is driven at random, as whim or passion dictate, into endless inconsistencies and excesses, in almost all the transactions of his life. If irregularity or vice are proofs of freedom, the madman and the murderer must be more at liberty than other men. He only is free, who, having wisely united into one, his real interest or chief good, and his pleasure, is enabled by the assistance of true religion to pursue that steadily, in spite of all obstructions. This man is happy, both in his pursuits and events ; because success attends the one, and pleasure the other. He therefore is free ; because he thinks rightly, acts wisely, and enjoys fully, without either disappointment or repentance. He cannot be disappointed ; for God hath so constituted the nature of things, and, by his providence, so directs the current of events, as to give success to the endeavours of such a man. The world itself was made, and is governed, for men like this. Again, as he cannot be dis-

appointed

appointed of the happy ends he pursues, he hath no room for regret or repentance. God is the guardian of his liberty, and a sponsor for his happiness.

And who now, on the other hand, is the slave? It is not he who is imprisoned or in chains; nor he who is sold by one master to another, for a sum of money; for such restraints and hardships lie only on the body, and cannot last. Nor is he a slave who is taught to think justly, and act regularly, by the laws of God and man; nay, and hindered by both from so thinking and acting, as to hurt himself. But he is a slave, who, by ignorance, or prejudice, or passion, is tied down to a wrong way of thinking, and, in consequence of that, to such a foolish or wicked way of acting, as tends only to his own misery or destruction. This man is not only a slave, but a blind brute, fit only to be led or driven by one who sees the way. "What is liberty, says *Cicero*? It is the power of living as we please. Who, therefore, lives as he pleases, but he that follows that which is right? It happens to the wise man only to do nothing unwillingly, nothing with grief, or compulsion. Who can deny, that all the trivial, all the covetous, all the wicked and dissolute part of mankind, are slaves? Shall I esteem him free, whom a woman governs and gives law to; whom she orders, commands, forbids, as she pleases? Who can decline nothing she imposes; who dare refuse nothing she asks? She demands, and he must give; she calls, and he must come; she turns him out, and he must be gone; she threatens, and he must tremble. Now I think we ought to call this man, not only a slave, but the very worst of slaves, although never so highly dignified in point of family and fortune." He who will not take this doctrine from our Saviour, may perhaps pay it some respect, when he sees it issue from the pen of a philosopher. But what does his own experience tell him? Does it not speak the same language? Hath he not himself sometimes groaned under this very species of slavery? Or, if free from this, hath no other tyrant used him as scurvily? Perhaps, when the bottle calls him, he cannot

hinder his hand from raising that liquor to his mouth, which, he knows, will degrade him to the condition of a brute. Or perhaps his imperious money, although he hath purchased it with his conscience and his soul, will not suffer the covetous wretch to touch it, when he is perishing for want of food and raiment. With what assurance can one, subject to these, or the like passions, call himself a free man, when his whole conduct, with an infinite train of sufferings, are prescribed to him by an internal tyrant, that employs its absolute power over him, to no other end, but to make him despicable and miserable?

But there are a sort of men who cannot be persuaded, that any thing from within themselves can possibly enslave them; whereas the truth is, if they can guard against slavery from this quarter, we may venture to ensure their liberty against all attacks from without. God hath bestowed this happy, this glorious, privilege on man, that nothing, but himself, can enslave him; that nothing outward can bring him into subjection, who is master of his own passions and desires. “Whosoever is his own,” as *Seneca* expresses it, “cannot possibly be the property of another.” It is owing to a gross mistake on this head, that a libertine jealousy about freedom is always carried outward. It suspects reports, authorities, injunctions; but is in no pain about its own prejudices or passions. The civil libertine is apprehensive only of the magistrate; the theological, of revelation. Against these they watch; the one with his polemical, the other with his political, eye, turned always outward, while self-inspection is wholly neglected, as if there were nothing within that could possibly endanger their liberty. Hence it is, that we see so many of those abject slaves, I just now described, disputing and fighting for freedom with a zeal utterly preposterous in every one, but him who is already free within. If we look a little deeper into these men, we shall find, that, notwithstanding all their pretences, they only contend for slavery against liberty. The laws of God and of civil society would correct their vices, and give them liberty; but they are enslaved to their vices,

and therefore struggle only for the glorious privilege of continuing slaves to those vices. Their present principles have granted them a charter to be wicked. Religion and government would revoke or annul this grant ; and consequently every thing they prescribe must be regarded as an encroachment on liberty, if it hath never so remote a tendency to this end. Thus it appears, that atheism and anarchy, although they all do not know it, constitute the very essence of that liberty they contend for.

Having thus seen, that such men only are truly free, whom nothing hinders to think and act for their own good ; let us now examine whether Christianity, truly such, is not better fitted, than any thing else, to promote and preserve this liberty.

In order to arrive at satisfaction, in this inquiry, it will be necessary to lay aside our vanity and self-conceit, that we may the more clearly see how miserably our minds are enslaved, both by nature and corruption, and an habitual indulgence of our passions, to a wrong bias of thinking, and a still more depraved disposition in acting. Having by this method found, as we certainly shall, that we are the slaves of such prejudices and passions, as tend only to undo us ; we are then to consider, what the force of that engine must be, which is able to break and throw off a yoke, tied on us both by nature and habit. This duly considered, we shall quickly perceive, that nothing, but the power of God, working by the spirit of true religion, is equal to so arduous an undertaking. Convinced of this, it will then be our business candidly to examine, whether Christianity, as set forth in the Scriptures, is not the only religion, that can prove itself the gift of God ; whether its institutions, its sanctions, and its internal aids of grace, do not bespeak the presence and power of God ; and whether, therefore, it is not through this alone, that we can reasonably hope for his assistance, in order to the recovery of true liberty. The time will not permit me at present to shew, how, in every step of this inquiry, if fairly made, the conclusion must always result in favour of Christianity. All I can do, on this occasion, is to press

for the inquiry, in full assurance, that, once it is made, it must terminate in a clear conviction of the doctrine I would urge under this head. Let a man who finds, with *Socrates* and *Plato*, the necessity of divine assistance, bring his reason alone to this examination, and he will be so far from meeting with any thing at the entrance, which may seem to require too easy assent, or afterwards too great submissions, that we may venture to assure him, he will find every thing calculated to satisfy his judgment, while he inquires, and every thing, once he hath embraced this religion, wisely adapted to the great end of promoting his liberty. He will find, in short, that true Christianity, and true freedom, are but one and the same thing. His Christian faith will bring him under no other governor but God, whom, if we believe *Seneca*, and a greater than *Seneca*, right reason, it is liberty to obey. It will give him no other law, than such as he would enact for himself, if he consulted with reason and nature. It will set eternal happiness and misery before him ; and, if neither the love of the former, nor the terror of the latter, can fix his choice, it will promote his liberty of election by the power of the Holy Spirit, balancing the depravity of his sinful inclinations. And even when all this fails, and he transgresses, it will offer him the benefit of an atonement and pardon, on a sincere repentance. These, and other the like important notices, or gracious overtures, will dilate and enlarge his heart, will rectify and exalt his understanding, and teach him to look up from the wretched vanities that have misled the one, and the detestable pleasures that have enslaved the other, to infinitely greater and better things above. His fears, having taken this upward turn, will be such as true wisdom approves of. His love, and other affections, will acquire a purity and grandeur, suitable to the infinite dignity of the objects they aspire to. Thus, instead of being the despicable slave of a degenerate nature, miserably imposed on and insulted by every contemptible trifle, he will find himself, not only delivered from servitude, but enobled, and exalted into a rank of beings superior to that his nature, even when innocent, could have placed him in.

To conclude ; he will find himself that happy man, of whom St. *Ambrose*, with equal propriety and beauty, observes, that, “ Place him in what circumstances of “ worldly servitude you will, he is always free ; for he it “ is who is not captivated by lust, who is not bound with “ the chains of avarice, who is not imprisoned under the “ dread of accusation, who is not ruffled with things pre- “ sent, nor terrified with things to come.” Philosophy, I own, may speculate in this strain, as well as religion ; but let such, as are acquainted with both, judge, whether of the two hath the better grounds whereon to found the prospect of practice. “ We do not, (saith one of the “ fathers, speaking of his Fellow-christians) talk great “ things, but live them.” This most sensible expression states the real difference, on a fair comparison, between the exemplification of Christian and philosophical principles, when tried in practice. The spirit of the first is a substantial and powerful morality, which rises on the mind, in size and strength, the more it is considered ; whereas that of the latter lies in a pretty turn of words, and a certain pomp of expression, which evaporates into nothing, on a close inquiry into its foundation ; the philosophical morality being unenforced by proper authority and motives.

That I may not seem to have spoken without authority, give me leave now to remind you, that the imperfect sketch, both of our natural slavery, and Christian liberty, here laid before you, is drawn from the holy Scriptures themselves. The Scripture, saith St. *Paul*, *hath concluded all under sin*. It represents us all as *sold under sin*, before baptism ; as the *servants*, or slaves, of *sin*. And, as sin is the transgression of God’s law, it tells us, we are liable to *death, the wages, or punishment, of sin*. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*. In this deplorable condition did the Gospel find us, when Christ was sent to *proclaim liberty to the captives, to preach the perfect law of liberty*, whereby we are to be reformed and set free from the yoke of sin itself ; and to *offer up his life a sacrifice for sin*, whereby we are exempted from death,

death, the punishment of sin, and intitled to eternal life; as the *free subjects and children of God*. We, being thus *delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God*, are exhorted to *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*, as the most exalted privilege of our new birth-right.

What then ? Shall we sin, because we are redeemed both from the rigour and curse of the law ? God forbid. We are so far from being called to a liberty of sinning, that we are made the *servants of God*, and called to a freedom from sin, in a thorough reformation. We are no longer to be *the servants of sin, but of God* ; and being now *made free from sin, and become the servants of God*, we are *to have our fruit unto holiness, that the end may be everlasting life*. Although we are free, we are to remember, that our freedom is only that of creatures and subordinate beings. We are to look upon ourselves as free indeed, yet not so as *to use our liberty for a cloke of maliciousness ; but as the servants of God*, as still dependent on him, who *cannot look on iniquity without indignation*. We have been called, it is true, *unto liberty* ; *only we are not to use our liberty for an occasion to the flesh ; for whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful bearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed*. Our Christian liberty is so far from rendering obedience needless, or countenancing sin, that it puts us under infinitely stronger obligations to holiness, than we were before, and that in order to preserve us free ; for what is our freedom, but a freedom from the slavery of sin ? We are to know, that, *if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowlege of the truth (that truth, which my text says should make us free from sin) there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain looking for of judgment and fiery indignation*. *He that despised Moses law died without mercy*. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholly thing ; and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace ?

Although



Although our liberty is the highest excellence our nature, in its best state, or utmost improvement, can boast of; yet we are never to forget, that we owe all our sin and misery to an abuse of this excellence. We are, therefore, with all possible diligence, to guard against new instances of a like misapplication, now that the restoration of our liberty hath cost so much. And this we are to do the rather, on account of that too natural ambition, which is ever prompting us to wish for greater degrees of liberty, without teaching us to pursue it through the purification of our nature; but, on the contrary, tempting us to extend it, with a view to the gratification of our pride and other lawless passions, with impunity. This is that dangerous lust of liberty, or rather licence, to which we owe the present dissolute cry for freedom of thought and action. There are many who can brook no restraint, although it is never so apparently necessary to the recovery or preservation of their true liberty. The winds of their doctrines, or opinions, must, for a time, have leave to blow which way they will, and as high as they please, that the waves of their passions may toss and swell. The Divine wisdom, which hath taught us to think more soberly of liberty, tells us, that *these men, while they promise themselves, and such as listen to them, liberty, are themselves the servants or slaves of sin.* Altho' we claim the privilege of thinking freely, as well as them, yet we do it with due deference and submission to God's infinitely better judgment, and are ready to employ his word, his sacraments, and other spiritual weapons of our warfare, in casting down our own vain imaginations, or reasonings, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and in bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Such is our free-thinking, free, and unlimited, but by the rules of reason, as to every thing not prejudged by God; but as to such things as he hath pronounced on, absolutely determined by his sentence; and yet not the less free for this; for surely he who thinks freely must think justly, that infinite wisdom cannot err, and that human reason may. And as we thus submit our thoughts, so we make a like voluntary tender of our actions, looking only for such a liberty

berty as is consistent with duty, that God's commandments and our freedom may both have scope. Nay, we think, we cannot act freely, if we do not obey his injunctions; for, as we think with *David* on this subject, so, as far as in us lies, we resolve with him, *to walk at liberty; because we seek the precepts of God*, the due observation whereof being necessary to free us from the tyranny of sin, and consequently the most powerful ally of that liberty we aspire to. And whereas, on the other hand, no heart is fit for a thorough active service of God, but such as is free, disengaged, and greatly resolved, so we *beseech him* to dilate and *enlarge our hearts, that we may run the way of his commandments*. Thus it is, that we, as Christians, judge of that liberty our religion confers on us, and endeavour to improve it.

To recapitulate and apply what hath been said, give me leave to conclude with an observation or two. In the first place, to be hindered from doing such things as may hurt ourselves is, in no sense nor propriety, an encroachment on our liberty; for no one thinks his liberty infringed by being debarred of that which he does not desire; and no one desires that which will do him more harm than good, in which case it is said to hurt him on the whole, provided he foresees the overplus of evil it threatens him with. And even when he does not, if he is convinced the authority that forbids it does, he will think it no detriment to his liberty to have an evil prevented, wherein, as he did not foresee it, he might have involved himself.

In the next place, to be enjoined that which is good for us, is no diminution of our liberty, whether we be sensible of its expediency or not; for, if we are, then the commandment, falling in with our judgment and desire, can be no encroachment on the freedom of our will. And when we are not sensible the commandment enjoins that which is beneficial to us; I mean, when we know not this of ourselves; we may be convinced of it by our knowledge of his equity and goodness, who imposes it; which brings it under the same rule with a commandment, the tendency whereof we know of ourselves to be beneficial.

Now,

Now, we are neither to act like a conceited child, who refuses what his parent desires him to take, because he does not see the good of it ; nor like a froward one, who refuses what he knows is good, and actually desires, merely because he is bid to take it, out of a notion, that it is slavish to have what we know to be good imposed on us by authority. If the law is general, although it may be intended principally, or only, for the weak and wicked ; yet he who is otherwise cannot think it slavish to conform, because he sees its general use.

We can have hardly a temptation to think our liberty curtailed by any of the injunctions laid on us by revealed religion, but what may arise from our ignorance of the connexion between the injunction and our happiness. But if we have reason to believe the former is the will of God, our suspicions, as to that connexion, must be wholly groundless. We know so little of natural connexions, that there are but few cases wherein we can safely say, this can, or cannot, be the cause of that. But as all the powers of nature are known to God, and as he can supernaturally annex his graces or assistances to what means he pleases, we may be sure all means of his appointment must be efficacious, though we do not, cannot, see how. Fasting is in itself a thing morally indifferent ; but if God should enjoin it, and we by experience should find it, when religiously practised, exceedingly conducive to the reduction of our inordinate affections, and to the ardour of our devotions, we ought to think it equally conducive to our liberty, on the supposition that an heart, warm only to God, enjoys the highest freedom, though we cannot see, how effects so purely spiritual are produced by a cause altogether corporeal. In like manner, the being sprinkled with water, or the receiving of bread and wine, are things perfectly indifferent in themselves, as to our souls ; yet may be so applied to religious purposes, and so connected with God's grace, as to produce, by methods wholly inconceivable to us, such happy effects, as it would be high presumption in us to hope for, without the promise and appointment of God.

Whom

Whom now, or what are we to obey ; for obey we must, as we neither are, nor ever can be, absolutely independent ? Shall we, in order to be free, associate with the libertine, who flies to infidel harranguers, as he does to lewd women ; and to irreligious books, as he does to a bottle ; who goes a whoring after loose principles, and fuddles his understanding with the sweet poison of unbelief ; who thinks it freedom to wallow in stupidity and corruption, as long as an insensible conscience can give countenance to his gaiety ? What, in the name of common sense, is liberty, if this is not slavery ? Does liberty consist in a total subversion or extinction of reason ? Is it an irretrievable servitude to lust and passion ? If it is, then the worst man is always the most free ; and he only is at liberty, who ought to lie for ever in chains. Let us not, if we have any affection for liberty, join ourselves to such a slavish crew. Let us not be frightened at the name of government ; nor, because passion and appetite have in themselves no tincture of order or government, imagine we shall be free under their influence. Although such masters cannot rule, they can conquer, they can captivate, they can torture and oppress. Any one of them, if indulged to an excess, will turn a tyrant ; that is, a governor, without a rule to govern by.

No : Let us voluntarily give the reins to him who made us, because we know he is gracious ; or, at least, prudently, as men who have a just apprehension of his power. Him we must either obey for his goodness, or fear for his indignation. Our subjection to him depends not on our will ; but our obedience he leaves to our own free election. Since we *must be subject, ought we not also to obey ?* But why should we deduce our duty from our subjection ? Is it not perfect freedom to serve him ? Is it not joy and rapture to please him ? Are we so mean-spirited as to stoop to the service of the creature, who were born for that of the Creator ; or so stupid as to call this slavery, and that freedom ? We only want a little grandeur of soul to fill us with disdain for the pitiful masters, that may have hitherto usurped a dominion over us, and with a just indignation at ourselves for having meanly crouched to a servitude,

servitude, every way infamous and shameful. This will be sufficient to make us shake off the despicable yoke. If to this we add a little true ambition, it will teach us to look upward, and aim our services at an object, infinitely amiable and excellent, infinitely great and glorious; whom to serve is not only liberty, but honour and grandeur. And, for our encouragement, there is no master, whom it will be so much in our power to please, if inclination be not wanting; because *his yoke is easy, and his burden light*; because *he loves us*, and because he hath promised to assist us.

Let us, therefore, humbly apply to him for the aids of his Holy Spirit, that, strengthened by his all-powerful grace, we may be delivered from the slavery of sin, and raised to the service of him, who is the Lord of lords, and the King of kings, the only eternal and adorable God; to whom be all service and duty, all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE XIX.

Religion necessary to Civil Society.

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I PET. ii. 17.

*Fear God. Honour the King.*

**T**H<sup>O</sup>' these, considered in themselves, are two distinct and independent precepts; yet they seem to be so connected in this place by the Apostle, that the latter may be looked upon as the consequence of the former; not only because it is placed immediately after it, and therefore, for coherence-sake, must be supposed to be some way deducible from it; but because it follows in the nature of things. *The king* can never hope to be effectually *honoured*, where *God* is not *feared*; and therefore the Apostle bids us, a little above, *submit ourselves to every ordinance of man* (i. e. every law imposed on us by proper authority) *for the Lord's sake*; to whom *belongeth all power*, and whom if we duly fear and reverence, we cannot but obey those who act under him, and share his power in this world.

Agreeable

Agreeable to this, is that passage in the xiii. of the epistle to the *Romans*, where St. *Paul* bids every soul be subject to the higher powers; for this reason, because there is no power, but of God; and because he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation. It is for this reason that we must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

It cannot be denied, that the Christians of the first age had reasons, peculiar to themselves, for honouring the king, and obeying the civil magistrate; such as, to prevent persecution; and to shew the world, that they did not intend to stir up rebellion under pretence of introducing a new Religion. These, no doubt, the two apostles had in view, when they delivered the precepts already cited; especially St. *Paul*, who was then writing to such converts to Christianity as lived immediately under that power, which it would have been most scandalous and most dangerous to provoke.

But, beside these, they intended chiefly to apply our Religion to the assistance and preservation of civil government in general; commanding all Christians, by virtue of their faith in Christ, as they feared God, and expected to be judged by him, to honour and obey the king, *i. e.* to observe the laws, to preserve the peace, of society; and to submit patiently to whatsoever the supreme governor should think proper to lay upon them.

This was putting their civil obedience upon the same footing with their religious; and teaching them to make the whole strength of their Christian principles as useful to the state in this life, as they were to their souls in order to the next. This was backing their reverence of the king with their fear of God, and threatening eternal damnation to rebellion.

This doctrine, thus strongly inculcated, intimates also to us the true origin or basis of civil power, which is God. He is the sole Owner and Proprietor of all power, particularly of the civil. *By Him, kings reign, and princes decree justice. He is the Lord of lords, and King of kings.* Through whatsoever chanel of election, compact, conquest, or hereditary right, the civil power is derived, from

this its only source, it still belongs to God, and must be accounted for to him, Now, that which the absolute supremacy of God thus authorizes, the nature of man renders perpetually necessary. Considered in himself, and without respect to God, as his supreme Governor, he can neither subsist in society, nor out of it. How can a creature, so crooked and so untoward as we are in our dispositions, so corrupt and wild by nature, converse together with safety? And how, on the other hand, can creatures, so infirm and helpless as each of us is by himself, subsist apart from the rest of mankind? Our natural wants call us together, indeed, with a voice as pressing as necessity can make it; but, at the same time, selfishness, lust, pride, resentment, with a large train of violent appetites, and fierce desires, in a manner forbid all commerce with one another. It is in vain to deny, that the present nature of man, before it is moulded into a better form by religious culture, and taught to fear and obey Almighty God, places him in this unhappy situation. His natural ignorance likewise, not only of Religion, but a thousand other articles of knowledge, necessary to him in every condition of life, makes it still more evident, that, unless he hath the benefit of instruction, which God and society only can give him, he must perish, long before he can possibly acquire a competency of knowledge. Hence it may appear, that he is as absolutely dependent on society, as society is on God, for subsistence. We cannot live out of society; nor can society subsist without laws and sanctions; nor is that to be expected without magistrates. And, after all, there is no integrity to be expected from the magistrates, nor honesty and obedience from the people, unless an infinitely wise, just, and powerful Being, is believed to superintend and govern the whole.

So then Religion is so far from dwindling down into mere human laws, and civil government, or vanishing into mere morality, according to the senseless and wicked notion now in vogue, that civil government is no government, and morality an empty name, if they do not both borrow their very soul and being from Religion. When we say civil power is derived from God, we do not mean,



mean, that, like a person who once founded a kingdom, and, dying, left it to his successors, he hath retired from the government, and given up his supreme authority to a succession of men. No ; he is always on the throne. He interferes in all that passes ; and, were it not generally believed that he does so, the race of mankind must either perish off the earth ; or God must, contrary to the infinite majesty of his being, and contrary to the whole scheme of nature, assume a sensible appearance, and interpose miraculously on every particular occasion. But, without doing this, the very subsistence of society shews, he not only was the origin, but still is, and must be, the basis, of civil power ; insomuch that it is impossible to assign any one act of authority in the community, wherein God is not visible to a thinking mind. From what hath been said, it follows, that the utmost care ought to be taken, in every society, to turn the attention of all its magistrates and members strongly on God's continual inspection, and future judgment.

This is undoubtedly the only true foundation to build the peace, the security, and happiness, of any state on.

First, Because no nation, nor form of government, can either long or happily subsist without virtue ; nor virtue, at all, without Religion. The history of all the commonwealths and kingdoms in the world verify this undeniably to us. The power of any constitution has always grown and declined, according to the rise and fall of frugality, industry, courage, and justice.

Again ; It is as observable, that these virtues have always flourished exactly in proportion to the strength of Religion, where any thing like a rational scheme of Religion hath obtained ; and still, as reverence for a Divine Nature, and faith in a future life, have abated, so virtue too, by the same steps, hath decreased.

All lawgivers, whether made sensible of this by maturely weighing the nature of man, or by observations made on what happened to other states before theirs, have used their utmost endeavours to propagate the expectation of a future distribution of punishments to vice, and rewards to virtue, among their people.

Some have made this observation to create a suspicion, that all Religion, and the Christian among the rest, is a state trick, and owes its being to the invention of politicians. But to suppose this, is to suppose, that God, who knows we cannot live out of society, and that society cannot subsist without Religion, would leave us to support ourselves and society upon falshood and imposture. But, however, this suspicion can never be rationally fixed on Christianity; since it is so well known to the knowing part of the world, that this Religion, contrary to the manner of introducing and establishing all other Religions, made its way into the world, and at length attained to establishment, in opposition to kings and emperors, to state-stratagem and power,

However, it is only our business at present to observe, that there hath never yet been a constitution put together, without great regard had to the establishment of some kind of Religion or other; that, while that Religion supported its credit, and was zealously adhered to, the virtue of particular men, and the strength of the state, grew, and rested secure, in proportion to the soundness of that Religion, and the strength of that faith wherewith it was believed in; but that dissolution of manners and government both hath soon followed the contempt of Religion.

From this distant view, we may easily see the stately pile of civil power, firmly founded, and highly exalted, by the influence of Religion and virtue; and thrown to the ground again by the malignant effects of infidelity and vice. We may see it rise in a rude age of Religion, and rigid virtue; and moulder away to nothing in another refined age of religious incredulity, and luxury.

But, if we afford it a nearer inspection, we shall soon perceive, that these effects are unavoidable; that, to the credit of Religion, no constitution ever rose to any considerable height, without its necessary assistance; and that, to the eternal shame of infidelity, no constitution was ever ruined, but by forgetting, that *there is a God who judgeth the earth*; and this, not so much by bringing the wrath of God on it (for God could never be moved to  
revenge

revenge the contempt of a false and idolatrous Religion), as by a consequence absolutely necessary in the nature of things.

For, wheresoever the sense of a Divine presence, and the expectation of immortality, have prevailed, there honesty, humanity, and virtue of every kind, have, for the same reason, prevailed; there trade has flourished, supported by frugality and industry, the constant attendants of Religion and virtue, and nourished by the security of property, in the midst of integrity, and universal credit. How cheerfully could they, who believed in God, and a future judgment, believe and trust each other? There the laws must have been strictly obeyed, because the obedience proceeded not from the fear of human justice, which may be byassed; not from the fear of temporal punishments, which may be evaded; but of Divine justice, which there is no evading; and of eternal penalties, which there is no avoiding. There the laws must have been faithfully and impartially put in execution; because the magistrates and judges, afraid of appeals to God's judgment, could not but have had particular regard to the justice of their own. There alone the sanctity of oaths, by which all laws operate, and without which no nation can subsist, must have been religiously preserved, where Religion itself was zealously cultivated.

Now, as it is unreasonable to expect virtue where there is no Religion, so it is, humanly speaking, impossible that a society should not thrive apace, where Religion has planted the virtues of industry and frugality among the lower kind of people, and temperance and justice among the higher; and those of honesty, humanity, and universal trust, among all. Each member of such a society must, in his private capacity, effectually promote the public welfare, because he pursues his own particular benefit by such a life as tends directly to the profit of the public. He only is to be suffered in any society, whose good coincides with that of his country: Now this is never to be expected, but where Religion and honesty are to be found. Whosoever is void of these, will be apt to set up a separate and inconsistent interest of his own. The

religiously honest, therefore, is the best friend to his country in the time of peace and prosperity.

Nor does he less distinguish himself in its service, when wars attack, or other publick calamities afflict, it. As he has no way of securing his own person or fortune, but by protecting his country; so he is always ready to share the one with it, and hazard the other for it. He looks upon it as the storehouse of all his temporal peace, and wealth, and happiness. He, therefore, loves it; he, therefore, fights with resolution round it; and, like a wise as well as honest man, does all he can to defend it. It is not so with the irreligious and dishonest. He hath interests that may be secured, without securing his country; nay, his notions of interest will suffer him to sell his country, he having no Religion to tie his conscience to the prospect of an higher and more lasting interest, than such as may be made here by direct or indirect means, as either shall serve his turn.

That country or society must undoubtedly be in the fairest way to be powerful and happy, whose members consider themselves as qualifying their souls for an infinitely more glorious society, by serving, promoting, and protecting, the present; and whose Religion and Virtue have assigned them, for their own private interests, a share of the public good.

If experience had not proved it to us, reason itself might shew us, that this must be the case. But, if it be otherwise, all history must be false, and all observation wrong. It is certain, any constitution that provides sufficiently for the cultivation of Religion, must, in so doing, make the best provision for its own security and welfare every way; and must accordingly flourish secure and happy, if it be not very deficient in other respects. So, on the other hand, when once faith, and religious principles, begin to be generally disregarded by the people of any nation, that nation must decline apace. And if the legislative part of it shall make laws prejudicial to its credit and efficacy, or take no care about it, as a matter unworthy their regard, that nation must rush headlong

to its own destruction ; no wealth, no power, no policy being sufficient to stay it.

In a constitution like ours, liberty is only to be preserved by an exact balance of power, among the several constituent parts. But how shall such a balance be preserved without Religion ? What is there else to hinder the ambition of one part from swelling and encroaching upon the other, or the avarice and fervility of the other from selling that share of power it is trusted with ? And when ambition hath actually raised a competition, for instance, between prerogative and privilege, what is there to moderate that ambition, or so to decide the difference, that liberty, and the constitution, may be preserved ? Are we to call in a foreign power ? Or are we to make the sword our umpire ? From neither of these can we safely hope for a just decision. The influence of conscience and Religion only, over the great, and over the bulk of the people, can keep the balance even.

Nor is there any safety for property, where there is no Religion. Locks, and bolts, and human laws, are no sufficient defence against fraud, which can evade the laws ; and force, that can easily break through the slight security of a bolt or door ; when there is no conscience to manacle the one, nor fear of Divine justice to restrain the other. Nay, there can be no fear of even human laws ; because truth can never be known, nor facts proved, without oaths ; nor can oaths, without a sense of Religion, prove any thing.

Peace, too, is as little to be expected in an infidel constitution. Wrath and resentment, and false notions of honour, must prevail, and fill the minds of those, who ought to live in harmony and good neighbourhood, with fury and revenge, unless they think, that *vengeance belongeth unto the Lord, and that he will repay* ; unless Religion have taught them to expect a temporal blessing as a reward for meek-spiritedness, as well as forgiveness of their own sins, upon a generous forgiveness of their neighbours.

And if, where there is no Religion, nor faith in a future state, malice and revenge are at full liberty, how shall life

be safe? The proud, the wrathful, and the envious, may, when they please, without fear of punishment in this life (for perjury can screen them), drive the souls of their weaker brethren from their bodies, and this world, if they do not expect to meet them in another, before the great Author and Guardian of human life.

As a constitution, then, that is irreligious, can give no security to liberty, property, peace, or life, it is infinitely worse than no constitution at all; for when laws, I mean operative laws, do no good, they must do harm. Every prudent and honest man will endeavour to remove himself, as fast as he can, from under such a ruinous and tottering heap of iniquity and oppression; and, when such are once removed, the degenerate mass that is left behind must soon be destroyed. A society, made up of none but dishonest members, can never subsist. Their own injustice and wickedness will save Divine vengeance a blow, and pull confusion and judgment on themselves, by an unavoidable and inseparable connexion between wickedness and ruin, which, sooner or later, will always be found naturally necessary in human affairs.

Some of our modern refiners of philosophy would needs persuade us, that revealed religion is not necessary to the well ordering and government of human affairs; and that our natural sentiments of honesty, with the native beauty of virtue, would be sufficient to keep us within such bounds as are necessary to the well-being of society.

But as crimes of all shapes and sizes, though never so differently circumstanced, have broke through the feeble cobweb of natural morality, with almost as much ease as if there had been nothing to oppose them; so common experience and observation can sufficiently refute the thin and subtle reasonings of these notional libertines, who would persuade us, that human nature, left to itself, would cultivate virtue, and be happy; when it cannot even do it with the help of human laws: No; nor, say they, with the help of Christianity. But it is certain, that as honesty and virtue do still prevail among some, it is as certain, that, if Christianity were intirely laid aside, and no religious alternative substituted in its place,

virtue

virtue must be effectually banished with it, even from the breasts of those who are now honest ; for, in a state of pure infidelity, a temporal self-interest, in which there is no virtue, would always predominate, tho' never so much in prejudice of right, tho' never so much against those sentiments of morality which we now reverence as natural.

Now if, with the little religion that is left, the little honesty too were once banished, our country, like *Sodom*, after the departure of *Lot*, must perish, even tho' there were no Providence to pour down fire and brimstone on it from heaven.

Since, then, society cannot subsist without virtue, nor virtue be expected without Religion ; and since every constitution, as well as every particular man, hath a principle of self-preservation ; it is its chief business and interest to secure to itself so necessary a preservative. And as it is its interest to be religious, so it has the same right, with an individual, to choose its Religion ; for, if it is absolutely necessary, that it should be religious, considered as a society, it must be as necessary, that it should have some particular Religion. Now this is impossible, unless it have a right to choose ; for civil constitutions, or societies, no more than single persons, since they are made up of such, can believe without due conviction, or embrace without choice.

It may be asked here, How can a society choose one Religion to be publicly adhered to, without taking away from its several members their individual right of choice ? I answer, That, by society, I only mean such a combination of men as approve one form of government, and one Religion ; and who are therefore determined, by their own particular choice, to profess the one, and enter into the other. If, in any country, there is a mixture of such as do dissent from the constitution, either on a civil or spiritual account, they are only members in part, and not properly ; and, if they dissent on both accounts, they are no members at all. Every man hath a right to choose a Religion for himself, which no power on earth can take from him ; but, if it be his choice to join himself to a  
Religion

Religion different from, or contrary to, that of the society of which in civil matters he is a member, the society has as undoubted a right to preserve itself, and its Religion, from the inconsistent or opposite effects of his, by laying him under such constitutional disabilities as may answer that end, without bearing on his conscience, in what regards himself only.

A constitution without Religion in it, or a God above it, must be such as none but devils could desire to enter into, and none but devils could live in. An infidel society, or an atheistical nation, if it could be supposed, must be shocking to reason and humanity, and a monster infinitely more fierce and misshapen than even the *Leviathan* of *Hobbes*. Our nature turns from it with terror and abhorrence, as a thing hideous to the imagination and heart of man.

Some Religion, therefore, the constitution must choose. But there are certain difficulties in relation to the extent of this right to choose a Religion, which have given society no small disturbance, and which are not yet adjusted.

There is certainly a wide difference as to the merits of various Religions; I mean such merits, more especially, as come under the political consideration of a civil community; for, while some systems of Religion tend more or less to promote honesty, and preserve the public peace; others, for instance Popery, by I know not what species of superstition, priestcraft, and dispensing powers, tend as directly to frustrate the good intention of the laws, to pervert or nullify the power of the magistrates, and, in the end, to dissolve society. It therefore seems a thing evident to common sense, that, as one sort of Religion may greatly hurt, and another as considerably serve, society, society ought to lend its countenance and encouragement to such principles of Religion, and such only, as are most likely to promote social virtue, and civil obedience. But to what degree of encouragement, on the one side, or discountenance, on the other, society may or ought to proceed, is a point which it concerns us all thoroughly to consider; and on which, therefore, I beg  
leave



leave to enter a little, promising to avoid prolixity as much as the nature of the subject will permit.

If a Religion is to be chosen by the state, it must be by the supreme power. But if this power shall attempt to impose its own religious choice universally on all its members, it will thereby effectually frustrate all the ends and intentions of Religion; because the force of Religion on the conscience proceeds from the belief of its coming from God, and being derived from Divine authority; which can never be the case, where it is manifestly imposed by the civil power. For, tho' it were really and truly a Divine revelation, yet if it came to those, who are not yet convinced of its truth, in the form of a statute, or human law, it must expect a very cold reception. Our inward thoughts have a right to be free; and, if the magistrate shall presume to exercise the same dominion over them that he does over our outward actions, they will give a strong resistance, as well when he imposes the belief of what is true, as that which is false.

Besides, if that, which should be derived from Divine authority, be transferred, and founded on mere human power, the people who are to receive it immediately from the hands of the magistrate, and who, generally speaking, can look no higher than the hand that is next, and delivers it immediately to themselves, will never embrace it, instead of their old Religion, which they believe to be from God. Civil power, therefore, can be no instrument of conversion.

A Religion imposed by the magistrate might, indeed, be outwardly professed by some; but could only teach them falsehood and hypocrisy; so far would it be from inspiring them with that honesty and virtue which the well-being of society so necessarily requires.

All revealed Religion is founded on faith: Now faith can never be the matter or object of human law. There is no commanding one to believe. Such an usurpation on the mind, which can only believe on credibilities, would rather prevent than hinder belief; because it would immediately be supposed, that a Religion, relying on such foreign

reign helps, had no truth nor likelihood of its own to support it.

A system of religious principles, imposed by the magistrate, could, at least, have but the force and virtue of an human law ; and, consequently, could never reach the conscience ; could never guard the society from secret frauds ; could never establish a court in the heart, sufficient to see justice done in times and places that are out of the reach of the civil court.

The use of religion to society, is, to support and enforce the laws by an higher law, a law of conscience. But this it can never do, if it is to borrow its own force and authority from those very human laws which it ought to back and fortify with the strength of an obligation superior to that with which they are imposed.

No power but that of the Divine can impose a Religion. God, we see, distinguished between his own power, and that of human laws, when he imposed the Christian. He supported it with miracles, which were the signs and credentials of his authority, which no civil power could counterfeit ; nay, he planted and established his Religion in direct opposition to all civil power. Thus only the mind can be convinced : Thus only the conscience and the heart can be converted. As to the magistrate, or the legislature, they can only give the encouragements of the state to the professors of that Religion they like best ; and leave others to their own consciences or humours, without attempting either to intice or terrify them into a conformity with their establishment.

The civil magistrate, therefore, cannot impose a Religion ; and yet, if he establishes no Religion, but leaves the power of the constitution to be shared by the professors of any Religion, he will soon find the constitution destroyed by that which alone can preserve it : For,

The professors of each Religion will either be zealous for it, or they will not ; if they will not, then there is, in effect, no Religion in the society. A Religion merely professed, but neither preferred to other Religions, nor zealously loved, and adhered to, can have no influence on the lives of its professors ; can neither make them honest,

nor answer any ends of the society. Such a lukewarmness is next to infidelity; in which it must soon end, if some novelty in Religion do not prevent it, and excite a new spirit. Nay, I will be bold to say, that, unless a man loves his Religion more than riches, power, in short, than every thing in the world; unless he is more afraid of acting against its rules, than of offending the greatest man on earth, or all mankind; unless it hath engaged and subdued all his affections, and attached to itself the whole force of all his passions; it can by no means make him a good member of society, although it is the only thing that can.

But if each religious system is zealously maintained, it must also be warmly contended for, by its adherents; for such is the nature of man, that, generally speaking, he cannot help thinking his disputing, or even fighting, for his Religion, must be highly serviceable to it, and therefore his duty; and no doubt so it is, as often as the tongues, the pens, or the swords, of its adversaries, happen to be employed against it. Contentions about Religion, if they were confined to words only, would not much concern society. But this is not always the case. They frequently end in the most outrageous battles and bloodshed; for wars, commenced on religious differences, are always the most bitter and furious. The souls on each side are engaged, as well as the bodies; and the spirit of opposition is strained infinitely higher than when mere earthly possessions are contended for, by the imagination that the glory of God, and heaven itself, are at stake.

Now the society has no other way of guarding against the mischievous effects of these religious bickerings, and preventing its own ruin, but by restraining the civil power to the professors of one Religion. By this means the rest, having no power, can give no disturbance; and, lest they should be disturbed by the established party, such laws must be provided, as may not only secure to them their own possessions on the same footing with the rest of their fellow-subjects, but also effectually secure to them the free and peaceable exercise of those several Religions their

their consciences have embraced. If this be not done, the power of the society, which ought by all means to be firmly and inseparably united, will be unavoidably divided, and divided too by such a cause of division, as will set it in the most direct and fierce opposition to itself. When religious differences tear the members of any society asunder, if the civil power be parcelled out among them, no civil expedient will be strong enough to keep them together.

If, to clear up the afore-mentioned difficulties, we would trace the true bounds of civil power in relation to religious matters, we must do it by considering from whence that power is derived. It is derived from, and founded on, these two maxims. The society has a right to preserve itself, and the society has a right to choose a Religion for itself.

If, according to the first, the society has a right to preserve itself, in the same manner with a single person, then it must of necessity have a right to lodge or trust its power only with such as will employ it in the service, and to the preservation of itself. No man would willingly give another power to destroy him, especially if he had any reason to suspect him capable of being tempted so to do. And why a nation or society should be excluded from the first law of nature, more than a single person, I cannot see.

Again; Since a society has a right to preserve itself, and since Religion is necessary to the preservation of society, it follows, that a society must have a right to choose some Religion; because, if it has a right of self-preservation, it must have a right to the necessary means.

Now then, from these two maxims laid together, it appears, that the supreme legislative power in any society has a right to establish some one Religion, and to trust its power in the hands of those only who profess and adhere to that Religion.

But as there is no establishing Religion without establishing the necessary means; so, therefore, the society must also have an undoubted right to settle and fix such means as it finds requisite to preserve that Religion, on  
which

which its own preservation depends: such are the maintenance of persons to preach it; the decent ordering of ceremonies, and mere modes of worship; the building of public places of worship; the lending its power to suppress immoralities, and stubborn offenders; and the like.

But as a single person has only a right to preserve himself, and to the means of his own preservation, and not at all to annoy another; so neither has a society any other right. Once it hath chosen a religion for itself, and laid down ways and means for the support and security of it, it hath done all that it lawfully can. And if it shall persecute those who dissent from its established Religion, for no other reason but because they dissent, it is then guilty of usurping upon the conscience, over which neither God nor reason has permitted it to exercise any jurisdiction.

Now the society may be said to persecute for Religion, when it exercises any severities upon dissenters, that are not necessary to its own preservation; that is, when it either deprives them of their lives, their liberties, or their possessions, merely because they differ from it in point of Religion, when they are quiet, and offer no disturbance to the state.

But, on the other hand, if those who differ from the establishment in religious matters, shall attempt any thing against the state, tho' it be from a religious motive, the society, as it hath a right to preserve itself, must also have a right to treat them as rebels; and, according to the degree of their obstinacy, rather than be destroyed itself, to deprive them of their possessions, their liberties, or even their lives. This is not persecution, but self-preservation.

If dissenters from the established Religion rebel, thro' a mistaken notion, that the principles and interests of their Religion require it, then the society has a right to suppress them; but not to prohibit or persecute their Religion, on which their rebellion cannot be justly chargeable.

But, if the true genius and spirit of their Religion stirs them up to civil discord and rebellion, then the society has an undoubted right to prohibit and extirpate their  
Religion

Religion itself, as contrary to the very laws of nature, and inconsistent with the preservation of the government.

The body politic has the same right with the natural, to remove every thing from itself that is hurtful and destructive to it; and this it hath from its natural right to preserve itself.

Upon the whole; The supreme power can expect no perfect obedience, nor can the state subsist in any tolerable manner, without Religion. It is therefore the interest of every constitution to choose to itself some Religion, to which it has as undoubted a right as any single person can have. States may be converted, may believe, may be called religious, as well as men. As the civil magistrate, on the one hand, must not presume to impose a Religion; so neither must he leave the constitution exposed to the ruinous effects of civil discord, by permitting vulgar diversity of opinion to parcel out and divide the power of the state. He hath a right to keep that power, with which he is vested, together and intire: He hath also the same right to apply the necessary means for this purpose, which can never interfere with the conscience, nor with any lawful system of Religion. But, if he proceeds further, he is guilty of tyranny and usurpation.

It is our happiness to live under a constitution wherein the rules laid down in this Discourse for the political choice of a Religion, have been exactly observed; nay, more, wherein the choice of the legislature hath happily fallen on that Religion, which, of all others, is best fitted both to promote the salvation of its professors, and to bestow peace and happiness on the community. It hath shewn its wisdom, not only by its choice, but by the manner of securing to itself the many good effects of that choice. It hath, by the most wholesome laws, guarded the civil power from being divided by religious differences; and yet, with an unexampled lenity, hath afforded all who differ from the established Religion more liberty of conscience than is enjoyed in any other country.

Were this duly considered by those who worship God according to the established Religion, they would find reason to be more thankful to Providence than they generally

rally are. Whence the infatuation proceeds, I will not invidiously attempt to determine; but true it is, that no people under the sun have more reason to be zealously affected towards their Religion, than we; yet there neither is, nor ever was, a people so very regardless of their Religion. On the other hand, were the nature of our establishment, in respect to Religion, as impartially considered by those who dissent from that establishment, as it ought to be, they would find more reason to rest satisfied with the truly Christian indulgence it affords them, than they seem at present to be sensible of.

May it not be reasonably expected, that they who sit at the helm, and see, better than others can do, the ill effects of being thus either becalmed, or tossed about by contrary winds, should use their utmost endeavours to rekindle in our minds a due regard for so excellent a Religion, and to assuage that spirit of dissension and strife which formerly did so much mischief, and threatens us with more.

There are two kinds of men whom the state ought to discountenance, if it fears God, or loves his Religion, or wishes for perpetuity and happiness to itself; I mean those who would talk us out of all Religion; and those, who, on all occasions, are for new-modelling that we have. If the civil constitution hath a right to preserve itself, it hath a right to discourage such books as are written against that Religion on which it subsists; for these, whether we consider them in the pernicious matter they contain, or in the base dissingenuous artifice wherewith they are penned, can be regarded by a rational lover of his country only as so many masses of poison to the body politic.

It must also be equally the right and interest of the constitution to silence those little petulant talkers, whom we find in every corner, prating and declaiming against that Religion, which, by giving strength to the government, and the laws, preserves us from the villainous designs of those wretches. Till these vermin, wherewith our country has swarmed of late, are utterly extirpated, there can be no rational hope of health. They can do no

hurt among people of sound understandings, because they dabble only in the shallows of knowlege, and read no higher than is requisite for the paltry retale of libertinism among the ignorant and the vicious. But among these, who make up an huge body, there are absolute dictators, infallible oracles, and perfect libraries of learning.

It is almost as necessary to discountenance those who would innovate, and new-model our Religion. If Religion is the work of God, its fundamentals are not to be changed for the satisfaction of every conceited and giddy-headed wretch, who can never be pleased with any-thing whereof he was not himself the contriver. And, so far as its externals have taken their rise or authority from the public wisdom of the church and state, they are not to be laid aside for others that have nothing but ignorance, ill-humour, and prejudice, to recommend them. Yet their abettors urge them with a degree of zeal they seldom shew for their souls. In order to effect their designs, the lees of old parties, and the corrosive settlings of half-exploded disputes, are stirred up in the minds of a giddy people, by those who love to fish in troubled waters, because their hooks and nets can be the better concealed. Never was there a constitution so subject to these religious and political fevers, which, as it hath not vigour enough to throw them off, fall heavily on its vitals, Religion, loyalty, and common honesty. Unless the fashion of Religion is changed as often as that of our cloaths, we are presently out of humour with it. It is old; it is stale; it looks as if our ancestors had worn it quite out. Then we are all for cutting and modelling; and he who hath the best talent at new and whimsical inventions, is our most orthodox doctor, and our ablest politician.

And what benefit hath the community derived from the eternal changes, from the endless reformations, made among some, and artfully recommended to all? Why, in diversifying the form of Religion, they have almost destroyed the substance; whereas that which they ought to have reformed, was the petulance and conceit of their own giddy minds.

Changes,



Changes, it is true, are always to be wished for, when there is reasonable hope of putting matters on a better footing. But to love changes, merely for the sake of novelty, is a despicable humour; and to push for them, in obedience to party-prejudice, is a very dangerous practice. On these, when once become rampant, if designing persons or factions should happen to lay hold, to forward their own private ends, there is no foreseeing what mischiefs may attend the innovation, during the struggle to bring it about; nor how deep, how general, how dangerous, a discontent may arise out of it, after it is brought to bear. The persons, who most eagerly wished for it, may happen not to find their account in it; and they who did not, are never likely to be reconciled to it.

On the whole; it is the duty, it is the interest, of every one in authority, to shew his love for the country he belongs to, by using all his influence to promote the credit of Religion, the parent of sobriety, industry, liberty, justice, and all the public virtues; and to suppress Infidelity, the source of all wickedness, of private misery, and public calamity.

If some of those who preside over us shall continue, as they have for some time done, to neglect this duty; nay, to act a part directly contrary to it, to make a jest of Religion, both in their discourse and actions, and to encourage every upstart innovation therein; they ought to know, that such a proceeding is the sure way to make slaves and beggars of their posterity; because it is the sure way to undo that country, in which, unhappily for others, they now bear their foolish heads so high. Hence it is, that irreligion runs so fast down among the lower ranks of people. Hence it is, that the vulgar hardly think of any other power, than that of the next little man who is over them; that oaths of office are forgotten as soon as sworn; that oaths of evidence are bought, sold, and used, like any other tools; and that, *because of swearing, the land mourneth* under rapine, injustice, and oppression. It would be happy for us, *if every man did that which is right in his own eyes, as if we had no king*; but they do that which in their own consciences they know to be

wrong, as if they had no God. If these things do not, as they unavoidably must, ruin our country of themselves, yet shall not he, to whom all power and authority over all the nations of the earth belongeth, *visit for these things? shall not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Tho' the Lord hath instructed it, and tho' he hath kept it as the apple of his eye; though, as an eagle stirreth upon her nest, fluttereth over her young ones, spreadeth out her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead it; though it hath been as the signet on his right hand,* yet, if it continues thus to treat Him, and his Religion, *he will pluck it thence, and give it into the hands of them that seek its destruction; he will set his face against it for evil, and not for good. That which he hath built, will he break down; and that which he hath planted, will he pluck up; even this whole land.* He who so often fought for it when it fought and served him, *shall himself fight against it with an outstretched arm, with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath, if his displeasure is not averted by a speedy return to his service.*

And now to the infinitely wise, just, and powerful, God, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, ascribed, as they do of right belong, now, and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE XX.

The Marks of dangerous Corruption found  
in the Church of *Rome*.

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I St. JOHN IV. I.

*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; b. cause many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

**A**LTHOUGH the holy Evangelist levels this caution against those early heretics, who denied that *Christ was come in the flesh*, yet, as he couches it in general terms, it is of universal use to all Christians, in times like these we live in, when there is such a variety, not only of teachers, but of churches, maintaining principles too opposite to one another, to be all right and sound, and often of too much consequence in themselves, to be either received or rejected, without the utmost care and circumspection. We may safely venture to say, it was never more necessary than at present, *to try the spirits* of all who undertake to teach others, *whether they be of God or not*. I need not, in proof of this, tell you, who know it as well as I do, how many different kinds of professions, of persuasions, of teachers, of churches, there are now in the Christian world, nor on what important, nay fundamental, articles of doctrine they oppose one another. But

it is worth while to remind you, that unless you duly lay to heart the admonition in my text, you are in danger of being seduced from the faith, of falling from that virtue and goodness which is the end of true religion, and of thereby making shipwreck of your souls.

But here you will naturally ask, How the spirits are to be tried? By what signs those teachers, or churches, that either artfully insinuate, or arbitrarily presume to impose, false doctrines, may be distinguished from such as inculcate the truth, and nothing but the truth? In regard to the passions and prejudices of mankind, which have always been too busy in matters of religion, it is indeed no easy task to assign the marks whereby this distinction may be made; because every man is too apt to take that for a sign of truth, which having been long connected in his mind with his old opinions, speaks the pleasing language of his heart. But to the eye of unprejudiced reason, and of common sense, to which alone the Author of truth, as such, addresses himself, in his word, the signs by which this important distinction may be made, are there too evidently declared, to be mistaken. All we are to believe and do, is, with the utmost plainness, set forth in holy Scripture; and besides, the genuine characters, both of the true and false teachers, are therein made as clear and glaring as we can desire.

Cardinal *Bellarmino*, that most distinguished champion of the Church of *Rome*, hath given us fifteen notes, or marks, which he takes to be those of the true Church, and whereby he endeavours to prove that his own, and no other, is that very church. He observes, very justly, that such marks as serve for this distinction, ought, with full and sufficient notoriety, to be found in the true Church, and in that alone. Unhappily for him, and his cause, some of his marks are not to be found in any church; many of them not in his; some of them are not marks either of a true or false church; and others, while they are manifestly wanting in his, are as manifestly found in such as he condemns of heresy. These things have been fully made out against him, by the answers of our Protestant divines.

His method, however, is good; and he fails only in the application and execution, which, as it cannot be ascribed to his want of talents, must, we may presume, have been owing purely to the badness of the cause he espoused. Give me leave, in pursuance of his method, to point out the signs of a corrupt church, or a church so exceedingly depraved, that he who communicates with it, must, by so doing, endanger the salvation of his soul; and to shew that these signs are found in the Church of *Rome*. In doing this, I shall proceed on fair reasons, and unsophisticated Scriptures; so that he who contradicts me, shall be forced to contradict the common sense of mankind, and the word of God.

Let the first sign of such a church be this, That it opposes sense and reason, and makes it impossible for any man sincerely to communicate with it, who is not ready to believe, and, in consequence of his belief, to act, directly against the testimony of those senses God hath given him, as the only inlets, and that reason bestowed on him, as the only test, of all his knowledge. That church must certainly be a very depraved one, which, in any instance, degrades its members, not only below the rank of human creatures, by prohibiting the use of their reason, but even below that of brutes, by obliging them to disbelieve their very senses, and that in pain of damnation. God, who knows we can receive no possible evidence of revelation, but through sense and reason, could never have intended to try our faith, by a flat contradiction to both. The Source of truth and goodness knows we can have no apprehension of any revelation, but by our senses, nor judge of its meaning, but by our reason; and therefore cannot be supposed to have required of us the belief of any thing as revealed by him, which those senses, and that reason, pronounce, and must invariably pronounce, impossible. It would be as needless to enlarge on the proof of this, as on that of his goodness, or any other attribute essential to him. It is enough, it is even more than enough, to observe, that, throughout his word, he deals with us according to the perceptions and faculties he hath given us. He condescends to prove the points he would have us

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believe, by miracles wrought before our eyes. Christ, in order to satisfy *John* of his mission, said to the messengers, *Go and shew John again, those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up.* In delivering his doctrines, he appeals to our senses; *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;* and upbraiding his hearers, who knew the signs of the weather, for not distinguishing the much more evident and certain signs of his coming, he calls them to the use of their own reason; *Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?*

All this, notwithstanding, the Church of *Rome* hath made it a part of her creed, and denounces damnation against every one who cannot believe it, that the bread and wine in the Eucharist are transubstantiated into that very flesh and blood of *Christ*, which hung on the cross, and are now in heaven, although our senses tell us, as clearly as they do any thing else, that these elements are still real bread and wine. We should be the less surpris'd at this their literal interpretation of our Saviour's words, did they not put a figurative construction on numberless other parts of Scripture, and even on many that are purely historical. But they say, though the substance is changed, the accidents remain the same; and we say, that we know nothing of bodies, but their accidents; that seeing is believing at least; that all bodies are limited; that no body can be in two distant places at once; and that we are sure, were what they maintain never so true, God could not have made the belief of it a duty necessary to our eternal salvation; because the distinction between the substances and accidents of bodies, is a thing that cannot be made good by the greatest philosophers, nor at all apprehended by the bulk of mankind. But though this distinction were both intelligible and demonstrable, yet as bread, wine, flesh, and blood, are objects of our senses, the senses here, if any where, have a right to give testimony; and, to our senses, the elements in the Eucharist, after, as well as before, consecration, are truly bread and wine. If therefore our senses are not to be trusted in this their proper  
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and immediate province, they are not to be trusted at all, and consequently, the thorough-paced Papist is reduced to the condition of a senseless block, of which those who have thus metamorphosed him may make what use they please, may either canonize him for a saint, or set him up for a god, or make a stool of him, to seat themselves at ease on.

In numberless other instances, this church presumes to interdict the use of reason, as severely as she does that of the senses in this. It is the characteristic merit of a Papist, to believe, against his natural judgment, whatsoever his unerring church, or rather its infallible head, shall dictate. In times of ignorance and superstition, this church was corrupted with infinite errors, both in faith and practice, which she, being too much attached to at the Reformation, to give up, defended herself with high pretensions to infallibility. If she had taught her children to believe in purgatory, to trust in indulgences, to be content with a mutilated Eucharist, to pray to creatures, and to fall down before graven images, all this, and a great deal more, directly contrary to the reason of every one, who could read the Scriptures, must be right; because she could not be in the wrong. But how shall we know, that a church enjoining the belief and practice of such things is infallible? If neither our senses nor our reason are to be trusted in matters so naturally obvious to both, we are incapable of knowing any thing, and consequently can know nothing of her infallibility; for belief of any kind must have some appearance, at least, of sense or reason to build on; and therefore, as we are but mere stocks and stones, it is ridiculous in her to expect we should believe any thing. If, to draw us in, she allows us but the smallest use of either, we shall presently see, by the injunctions just now mentioned, that she is far enough from infallibility. How can Popery make a convert? Surely she will not presume to reason with him, in order to his conversion; or if she does, how will he like it, to be reasoned as far as the church door, and then to be stripped of his rationality, that he may the better digest what he finds within? Need I say more to prove this church deceived

ceived herself, and a deceiver of all who communicate with her, to men who are determined to use the senses of an animal, and the reason of a rational animal? Whether it is necessary or not, I will go further.

Let the second note, or mark, of a corrupt church be this, That she enjoins things contrary to the express injunctions of holy Scripture. I must ask you here, Whether you expect I should prove this to be the infallible mark of a corrupt church? Can that church possibly be a true and pure one, that bids us do what God peremptorily forbids, or prohibits that which he commands? Will the infallibility of the church do on this occasion, wherein it is opposed directly to the infallibility of God? If we have not been beat out of our reason, it will answer, No. With great modesty, surely, may it venture on that negative, for which it neither hath, nor can have, any other alternative, than downright blasphemy.

But wherein does the Church of *Rome* thus directly countermand the orders of Almighty God? Why, God says, *Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, or the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them:* And the Church of *Rome* says, Thou shalt bow down to graven images, and worship them. God says of the cup in the Eucharist, *Drink ye all of this:* And the Church of *Rome* says, Ye shall not all drink of this. God says, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve:* And the Church of *Rome* says, Thou shalt worship the *Virgin Mary*; thou shalt also pray to her, and serve her. Many other instances, as strongly contradictory as these, though perhaps not altogether so obvious, might be assigned; but one may be sufficient: For what church shall dare to oppose the will of God? It is but an aggravation of the presumption, to say, he authorizes us thus to contradict himself.

But, on this head, the Church of *Rome* defends herself, not only with her infallibility, but with her oral traditions. She says, God's word is twofold, either written or unwritten. She says also, that both were committed to her



keeping, and subjected to her construction. The oral traditions she calls the unwritten word, and by them interprets that which is written. When the Protestants urge her with the Scriptures, she erects her own corrupt customs into traditions, and would have the Scriptures bend to these. It happens unluckily for her, that from the writings of the fathers, which is tradition on record, and to which therefore we allow its proper weight, we can shew in what remote ages, from the apostolic times, her corrupt customs were introduced. Now, we ask, Whether the traditions that authorize these customs lay dormant from the days of the apostles, until the introduction of the said customs? Whether it was lawful to commit these traditions to writing, or not? Why, if it was, the fathers of the earlier ages don't mention them in their works? Why, if it was not lawful, the *Romish* writers have ventured to insert them in theirs? As they are used for a check, to say no worse, on the word of God, we ought to be very scrupulous about their genuineness and authority. We therefore further ask, Whether, as it always happens in things transmitted by word of mouth, through so many reporters, these traditions, supposing they could have had a real apostolical original, may not have been enlarged, mutilated, or corrupted, in a course of so many years, and in passing through so many hands, whereof those in later ages have given us so much reason to suspect their integrity? For our parts, we think a stream may as well be supposed to run through an hundred dunghills, and come out pure and limpid from the last. But when they happen, as in respect to image-worship, and many other points, flatly to contradict the express appointment of God, there is then no longer room for suspicion; we are sure, they could not have flowed from the Spirit of God; and we say to their vouchers, as Christ did to the Pharisees, *Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.* We add also, you have left out the particular commandment here hinted at, in many of your manuals, published for vulgar use, and divided the tenth into two, that the ignorant may not perceive they are robbed of one. Is not this a gross and impudent

impudent cheat? What ought we to think of a church that dares to juggle thus with the commands of God, and the souls of men?

Let the third mark of a corrupt church be this, That she is idolatrous; that is, that she both prescribes and practises the worship of creatures. We may amuse ourselves as long as we please with idle distinctions about degrees of worship. The worship so severely prohibited in Scripture, and by all true religion, is prayer to, and dependance on, an absent creature. Either this is idolatry, or there can be no such thing. When either on common occasions, or in our extraordinary distresses, we kneel down, and offer up our prayers to any being, whom we believe in heaven, we attribute to that being the omnipresence or omniscience of God; we love and trust in that being, as more ready and able to help us than any other, or why should we thus address ourselves to him? It is ridiculous to plead humility, when we thus apply to an absent creature, not only because he may happen not to hear us, but because we know God is infinitely condescending to the addresses of his creatures, or why do we ever presume to pray immediately to him; because we know he hath commanded us to pray directly to himself; and also because we know, that, so far as we stand in need of a mediator, we have one at the right hand of God, who hath already shewn us infinitely greater marks of his condescension and readiness to help us, than that of attending to our prayers?

Having shewn that praying to absent creatures is idolatry, we ought also to observe, that idolatry is a damnable sin, and represented to us as such, both by reason and Scripture. Does not reason and common sense tell us, that, since there is but one God, he alone ought to be worshiped, and prayed to? The love and dependance of an intelligent creature are not to be alienated from its Maker, without an infinite offence to the former, and an equal loss to the latter. But when creatures become, in any degree, the objects of our worship, in the same degree are our hearts estranged and turned aside from God; and turned aside to what? Why, to beings as little able to help

help themselves as we are; to beings, whose happiness, whose very subsistence, results from perpetual acts of worship paid to God, on their own account. Does not the infinitely gracious Being, in condescending to make, to teach, to redeem, to comfort us, call up our affections and dependance to himself, and sufficiently encourage our continual addresses? Nay, does he not evidently appear, by all his dealings with us, earnestly to court our love, in a manner, infinitely more tender, and more engaging, than that of our fellow-creatures, who cannot be happy without it? and does he not, in his word, represent himself as a husband jealous of our affections on this very subject of his worship? How often does he peremptorily forbid us to have any other object of adoration but himself; awfully inculcating his justice, his power, his majesty, that we may fear him; pathetically pleading his mercy, and bounty, that we love him; and strongly assuring us of his truth, and faithfulness, that we may depend upon him? Shall we, thus solicited by the infinite Being himself, foolishly and impiously solicit any other? No, my brethren; let us, from our very souls, detest the most distant thought of so enormous a practice; and look, with a mixture of horror and pity, on that church, which prescribes it, as abandoned to a most unhappy infatuation. Fly far from her, you whom God, in mercy to your souls, hath already taught to see her danger. And you, who have been unhappily educated in her communion, hear his voice, who cries from heaven, saying, *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.*

Let the fourth mark of a corrupt church be this, That she still pretends to the power of working miracles, in confirmation of such doctrines and practices as those I have mentioned, although every rational creature sees she is wholly destitute of that power, and, instead of miracles, only palms on the undiscerning a miserable legerdemain of pranks, so impudent in the performance, and so impious in the application, that she is in the right on't to extinguish the sense and reason of her votaries, before she

she attempts to feed their credulity with such a juggle. God was pleased to make use of miracles, truly such, as the best, or, I should rather say, as the only satisfactory proofs of divine revelation. But as real miracles give the highest attestation to the mission of the worker, so, of all things, a pretended miracle detected, is the most apt to throw the imputation of falsity on the cause that employs it; first, Because it amounts, in fact, to a confession, that the want of other proofs makes this necessary; and, secondly, Because there is no believing man, who presumes to deal between God and the world, by a method so impiously disingenuous. He that offers any other kind of proof may think it valid, and therefore it is not demonstration, that he intends to deceive; but, in this kind, every man must know, before he begins, whether he is going to work a real miracle, or to bely the Source of all wisdom and power, by a detestable piece of villainy, than which, if he should chance to be found out, no one thing in the world can more effectually bring suspicion on real miracles, or so deeply wound the true religion. It follows, therefore, that the worker of a pretended miracle must be considered as a man of no religion, as a most atheistical deceiver. It is true, indeed, that a very wrong-headed man, through an unaccountable species of zeal, or a wrong-hearted one, for some bye-ends of his own, may attempt to impose on the superstitious by such a practice, even in favour of the truth. But we are not here speaking of madmen; neither is it our intention to represent any church, or cause, as responsible for the unauthorised conduct of fools and knaves. But we insist, that every church, setting herself forth as impowered to work miracles, when she knows she is not, is a fallacious church, and must be held responsible for all the juggling pranks of her party. Now, the heads of a church cannot possibly be ignorant, whether they are entrusted with the miraculous powers or not; and therefore, if, knowing their own inability herein, they actually set up for these powers, they are infinitely worse than a gang of banditti; because they attempt to spoil us of somewhat, in comparison of which our worldly possessions are nothing, and that

that not without a design on our purses, as well as our minds; they rob on the road to heaven, and commit the vilest sort of crime in the name of God. A sanctified impostor, an holy villain, are, of all others, the most detestable appellations; and he that deserves them may dispute precedency with the grand deceiver.

But can it be possible that this most enormous crime is chargeable on any church presuming to call itself by the name of Christ? Yes; the Church of *Rome* universally lays claim to the power of working miracles; and cardinal *Bellarmino* makes it the eleventh note, whereby that church may be proved to be the true church. But the frequent detection of her miracles, in almost every country of *Europe*, hath thoroughly exposed her claim to the ridicule even of the more rational Papists, if such men may be called rational, who can continue to communicate with a church so palpably convicted of this impious fraud. If these miracles are real, why are they wrought only in Popish countries, and before a mob of bigots, who do not need such food for their credulity? Why not here among us heretics, who cannot be converted to Popery, without more and greater miracles, than were exhibited in proof of Christianity? But, I suppose, our adherence to sense and reason hath rendered us unworthy of this glorious dispensation. Well, if it is so, we must e'en put up with it; and, having the use of our senses, must be contented without the Virgin's milk, and of our reason, without the blood of *Januarius*. Besides, we have the less reason to regret the want of these modern miracles, since we took the liberty to read the Scriptures; for there we find our blessed Saviour, and his apostles, made these very miracles the signs of heresy and imposture. *False Christs*, says our Saviour, *and false prophets, shall arise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.* Then, that is, in the latter times, saith St. Paul, *shall that wicked one be revealed—even he whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

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And who prompts these false teachers to recommend their pernicious doctrines with pretended miracles? *St. John* tells us, he saw these prompters; namely, *three unclean spirits, like frogs, coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet; for they are the spirits of devils, working miracles.* Thus we see what epithet is due to that church, which, pretending to miracles, hath been publicly convicted of imposture, in numberless instances.

Let the fifth mark of a corrupt church be this, That, either by her principles or ordinances, she encourages her members to sin. It is the grand end of true religion, to reform the lives of men, in order to their happiness, both temporal and eternal. The religion that inculcates such principles and motives, as strongly tend to this blessed effect, gives the highest proofs of its truth that can be possibly proposed within the verge of nature. On the other hand, that church, or religion, which gives men hopes of compounding with God for happiness, on any other conditions than those of real piety and goodness, gives as clear proofs of her own falsity, as can be drawn from the nature of things, in any branch of knowledge. Was it not the main end of our religion, to *call us to repentance, and newness of life?* Can he enter into the kingdom of God, who is not reduced to true Christian simplicity, and the harmless disposition of a child? Our religion was not given us to licence sin, but, so far as human infirmity will permit, wholly to remove it. And so far as sinless perfection is impossible, to provide an atonement for the effects of those weaknesses we cannot intirely get the better of; and this only on the terms of sincere repentance, and the utmost endeavours to amend. *Christ our Saviour gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. We are therefore not to walk after the flesh, but the spirit. Now the works of the flesh are manifest; which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.*

like. The Holy Ghost assures us, that *such as do these things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, and, in a word, the virtues opposite to all those vices just now enumerated. They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts; knowing that if they live after the flesh, they shall die; but if they, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, they shall live: for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they, and they only, are the sons of God.* God hath told us what he requires of us, and what is true religion: *What doth God require of thee, O man, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.* The church, that teaches us to hope for salvation on these and such-like terms, deals faithfully between God and us; but that church, which explains away these terms, as the Jesuits do, and, by its dispensations and indulgences, offers hopes of happiness to the unreformed, as the pope and the Church of *Rome* at large do, defeats the very end proposed of true religion.

The Church of *Rome* in vain apologizes for this practice, by saying, she grants her indulgences only for venial sins, and thereby relaxes the temporal punishment due to them in another life. Who told her, there are temporal punishments for sins in the future life? *Plato* did; but the Scriptures say no such thing. They call us to repentance in this life, and say not a word of purgative torments hereafter. Nor do they any-where distinguish between pardonable and unpardonable sins, but in relation to the sin against the Holy Ghost. All sins but that are there represented as pardonable, on the terms of faith and repentance, before we die; and all sins are unpardonable, in such as do not believe, and repent, on this side the grave. Christianity gives no encouragement to the committal of any sin; not only because, *whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all*; but because the author of that holy religion knew, that the committal

mittal of such sins, as the Church of *Rome* calls small or venial sins, is, in itself, a great and heinous sin, and naturally leads to the committal of greater. To give an instance, wanton liberties lead to fornication, and fornication to adultery. But our Saviour, to cut short all impertinent distinctions in vices of this kind, says, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that looketh on a woman, so as to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.* And is not a progress from less to greater in other vices, as bad as in this? If we doubt whether maiming and murder are not as well guarded against, by the prohibition of anger and malice, as adultery is, by that of wanton desires, we may hear what Christ denounces against him who calls his brother, or neighbour, *a fool.* The case is the same in every kind of sin, whether expressly so ruled in Scripture, or not; because the reason is the same, and the prohibition of all sin is peremptorily and awfully delivered, in universal terms. *The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, particularly of such men as hold the truth in unrighteousness.* But why do we stay on this distinction between mortal and venial sins? Are not assassinations, poisonings, massacres, mortal sins? If they are, what shall we think of that church, which encouraged her sons to butcher so many of the Protestants, in cold blood, throughout all the nations of *Europe*, but more particularly in *Savoy, France, and Ireland*; and three of her priests to stab two kings of *France*, and to destroy an emperor by a poisoned wafer, which the giver believed to be the very body of Christ? This is infinitely more than making small sins venial; it is rendering the most atrocious crimes meritorious. If heaven may thus be obtained, who can be so impious, so enormously wicked, as to dread the torments of hell? Is this the only religion, the only Church of Christ, and yet teaches such things as these?

This naturally leads me to a sixth mark, or sign, of a corrupt church; namely, A cruel and persecuting spirit. Is there any necessity to prove, that such a spirit is not the spirit of the meek, the merciful; the forgiving Jesus? that the



genius of his religion is wholly opposite to it; or that, after what I have said already, the Church of *Rome* hath given too evident, and too shocking proofs of a persecuting spirit? On a supposition, that we are all heretics, odious in the sight of God, for not renouncing our senses, and our reason; for not directly violating both his first and second commandment; for not praying to our fellow-creatures; for neither pretending to miraculous powers, nor believing in them that do; and for not trusting our salvation to posthumous purgations, or venal tickets from a bank of supererogatory merit; the fire, the fagot, and the sword, ought not surely to be employed against us, on these accounts. Can they convince us of our errors? Are the debates of Christians to be determined by weapons, instead of arguments; by force, instead of reason? Either we comply through fear, in which case we deserve not admittance into any society made up of honest men; or we stand out, and boldly face the fire; in which case, we give the highest reputation, and, through that, the greatest prospect of success, to the erroneous cause we declare for. But, were it possible that Christianity could be served by blood and slaughter, Christianity itself forbids the use of such means; for it tells us, we are *not to do evil, that good may come of it*; nay, it even reproved the first bishop of *Rome*, for drawing his sword in defence of its Author, and his Master. How can the successors of that bishop, like him only in a readiness to brandish the bloody weapon, forget both the precept and example of Christ, on that occasion; who, to rebate the mistaken zeal of his apostle, *bid him put up his sword; assuring him, that all such as had recourse to the sword, should perish by the sword*; and then healed the wound made with it, in the flesh of him who came to seize his person? Are they not afraid of converting these words to *St. Peter*, into a prophecy concerning themselves, by calling in the sword, which may happen to be employed against them, as well as for them? Our Saviour, one should think, hath, on another occasion, laid an eternal bar against the employing the terrors of compulsion and persecution in his service. *James* and *John* were for calling down fire

from heaven on the *Samaritan* village, that did not receive him; but *he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them.* Never was persecution on the side of truth so justifiable as at that time. Notwithstanding all the prophecies and miracles that proved the mission of our Saviour, he was, in his own person, despised, and his religion rejected; yet he, who could have dethroned *Herod*, arraigned the high-priest and sanhedrim, and crucified *Pilate*, chose to be on the suffering side, rather than employ his power in forcing the assent, or compliance, of any man. Are they the followers, or representatives, of Christ, whose cruelty is thus glaringly condemned, both by his words and actions? As there is no one crime which natural humanity, and our holy religion, so thoroughly detest, as bloodshed and murder, so no church can, by any other mark, more evidently prove itself an adversary to Christ, and Christianity, than by the scarlet colour left on it, after a scene of persecution and slaughter. Whether it is in this kind of *red ink* that the *mark of the beast*, that *persecuted the woman, and her seed, is written on the foreheads, or right-hands, of his followers*, I leave the sacred critics to judge; but the conjecture seems highly probable.

Let the last mark of a corrupt church be this, That she forbids the free use of the Scriptures. If God hath been pleased to write his mind to mankind, who shall dare to stop the way between his pen and their eyes? Since he knows infinitely better how to speak to the understandings and hearts of his hearers than men do, and can speak with authority, surely he should be heard. He *who made the tongue*, shall he not speak? He *who made the ear*, shall he not be listened unto? Although, as the talents of men are different, one man may understand him better than another, and more clearly explain his meaning, yet how shall the less knowing judge, whether it is his meaning or not, if they are not permitted to see his words? Is no part of his word intelligible to the capacities of the illiterate? if any part of it is, why the whole shut up? Hath he himself any-where said, that  
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the learned only shall read the Scriptures? No; on the contrary, all sorts of people are expressly commanded to read and meditate on the law, and to teach their children therein. They who do this are pronounced happy, in the first Psalm. Nay, he is said to *be blessed, that readeth and heareth* even the deep and mysterious Revelation of *St. John*; and all this without any distinction, or exception, in regard to the unlearned. *Seek ye out, saith Isaiah, the book of the Lord, and read. Search the Scriptures, saith our Saviour, for in them ye think ye have eternal life.* Here the ignorant are not excepted; and good reason, for they stand most in need of God's instructions. The *Bereans* at large are commended for *daily reading and searching the Scriptures, whether those things which the apostles taught, and proved by miracles, were so, as they set them forth, or not.* *St. Paul* calls on the *Ephesians* at large also, to *judge of his knowlege in the mystery of Christ, by the dispensation of the grace of God given to him for their edification.* He likewise desires them all, laity as well as clergy, ignorant as well as knowing, *to take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, no less than the shield of faith, and the other parts of the sacred armour.* He orders his epistle to the *Colossians* to be read publicly in their church, or congregation, and then in that of the *Laodiceans*. He says also, in his first epistle to the *Thessalonians*, *I charge you, by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.* The same apostle sets it down, as highly to the honour of *Timothy*, *that from a child he had known the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* And who were his guides and assistants in this great and necessary work? Not a learned priest, or scribe; not his father, who was a *Greek*, and probably a Pagan, at least when *Timothy* was a child; but his grandmother *Lois*, and his mother *Eunice*, whose faith is commended as the source of his. Here is a person commended for reading the Scriptures, in his childhood, under the instructions of two women, who must have read the sacred books themselves, or they could not have taught him to do it. The *Ethiopian* eunuch,

who was but a neophyte, or new profelyte, was so intent on the Scriptures, that *he read them by the way in his chariot*, though he did not understand the passage he studied. But God was so well pleased with what he did, that he brought *Philip* to instruct and baptize him; and so blessed the well-meant, though weak endeavours, of this devout person, as to make them the occasion of conversion to a whole nation. *Apollos*, who was a man eloquent, and mighty in the Scriptures, having been already tinctured with Christianity, had the *way of God more perfectly expounded to him by Aquila, and his wife Priscilla*, two tent-makers; which could not possibly have been done by these tradespeople, had they not been first well versed in the Scriptures themselves. Here we see it was the will of God that all should read his word, and that all did read it, at a time when they had inspired teachers, and consequently were under infinitely less necessity of depending on the written word, than the same sort of people are now-a-days, when, God knows, their teachers of all sorts are far enough from infallibility.

It is with a great deal more of policy, than of either honesty or piety, that the Church of *Rome* forbids the laity, unless licensed, to read the Scriptures; because, if such a liberty were allowed, and taken, all the marks of corruption and imposture charged in this Discourse on that church, together with many others, must be found condemned therein as such, and a wide door thereby thrown open for the Reformation.

But that church says, it is not with any apprehension of such effects, that she locks up the Scriptures; but to prevent the infinite errors, and wild or wicked extravagancies, arising from a promiscuous perusal of those books among the ignorant. We confess, the vulgar perusal of the sacred writings hath been, and still may be, attended with this mischief; but we insist, that the common people are not a whit more apt to extract the poison of heresy and schism from the wholesome flowers of God's word, than the learned, who, in all ages of the Church, have been the chief broachers and abettors of pestilent opinions. It is in the writings of polemical divines, and commentators, that

that we find the Scriptures most shamefully wrested, and forced to speak a language foreign to the intention of their Author. Besides, while the vulgar are under the greatest difficulties in propagating their mistakes, the learned, and the eloquent, can spread theirs, as far as the fame of their great abilities is extended. It follows, therefore, that if the word of God is to be shut against the common people, because they may mistake its meaning in some places, while they profit infinitely by it in others, it ought, for a stronger reason, to be shut also against the learned; who, if they are less apt to mistake, are, however, incomparably more disposed to pervert its meaning, in order to serve the purposes of a party, to enhance the credit of their learning, by victories won in the field of controversy, and to coin new systems of religion, accommodated to their luxuriant fancies and affections. If the illiterate ought not to read the Gospel, neither ought they to hear it preached; for, sure I am, it is much safer for the people to hear God speak in his own words, than to hear those who, in these times at least, pretend to speak for him. We may, I think, without a breach of modesty, insist, that one who can only read, will be in much greater danger of being misled by an ordinary sermon, than by a chapter of the Bible.

But, to cut all this short, which is but human reasoning at the best, and therefore may be precarious, and undecided, God, as I have shewn, hath commanded all men to read his word; from whence it follows, that whatsoever church forbids it, high as her claim of infallibility may be carried, she proves herself, by so doing, not only erroneous, but impious, and ought to be answered, in the words of *Peter*, and the other apostles, *we ought to obey God rather than men*. Shall God order *our light*, such as it is, *to shine before men*, and suffer his own, from which alone ours can be borrowed, to *be put under a bushel*? What can men mean, by keeping the word of God, and the office, whereby they publicly worship him, in an unknown tongue, if it is not, lest, in case both were understood, the former should condemn the latter too palpably, to escape the notice of the most illiterate?

And, to say no more on this head, what shall the most ignorant and bigotted members of a church do, as to the duty of conforming with her, or dissenting from her, when they see her compelled to such expedients? Why, she tells them, they must be damned, if they do not absolutely renounce, to all religious intents and purposes, the uninfluenced use of their own sense and reason, and of the word of God. And to what end, but that they may, against the express commands of God, pray to creatures, fall down before graven images; believe that bread is flesh, and wine blood; believe that every paltry trick is a miracle; that venal indulgences may serve for righteousness, or repentance; and that the just and gracious God will reward them with the joys of heaven, for cutting the throats of their neighbours, and burning their fellow-creatures alive, merely because they cannot agree with them, in thinking all this mass of absurdity wisdom; and this scene of cruelty a service acceptable to the God of all mercies? Can they possibly believe their salvation depends on a faith like this?

No; none but the most stupid or abandoned among them have recourse to hopes so strangely founded. There are millions of sensible and worthy men in that communion, who have indeed a mere speculative faith in these things, or rather think they believe them, though in reality they do not, as is manifest from the goodness of their lives, whereby it appears, that they lay little or no stress on them. There are also many of them, who, like *Erasmus*, *Cassander*, and father *Paul*, have knowledge enough to see the folly, and goodness enough to detest the wickedness, of such principles; and yet judge it better to continue as they are, than to break with a church, wherein, notwithstanding their objections to her, they think they may be saved. You see these men going to mass, you see them on their knees before a crucifix, or an image of the blessed Virgin; you ask them, whether they think it possible for one, who dies in a great measure impenitent and unreformed, to be saved by the help of posthumous masses; or whether the commands of the

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pope and the church can sanctify the private murder, of public massacre, of Protestants; and they answer, perhaps, with their church, they believe they may. But, if you consider them in their lives and conversations, you will find this was all pure speculation, which they dare by no means, nor in any measure, trust to; for the men live as if they thought it impossible to be saved, without a good life, or a thorough reformation. And such is their innate humanity, and truly Christian charity, that ten thousand commands of the pope and church could not prevail on them to stain their hands in blood. This they owe to natural good dispositions, and the sounder principles of their religion. They swallow their religion as a healthy man does food, consisting of wholesome and noxious ingredients, too indiscriminately, but so, however, as to be nourished by that which is good, and to pass off that which is bad, without taking it into the habit. Quite contrary is the effect in a mind naturally unsound, or predisposed to superstition and vice. In this the wholesome food goes off undigested, while the mental poison, entering the circulation of thought and opinion, corrupts and assimilates the affections to itself.

In this I represent the Church of *Rome* without prejudice. She was, for three centuries and an half, the glory of all churches. She even yet retains the belief of one God, in a Trinity of Persons. She believes in the satisfaction made for the sins of men, by the death of Christ. She trusts in the assistances of God's Holy Spirit. She regards the sanctions of the Christian law as eternal. In these things she seems to have an immense advantage over many, who call themselves Protestants, and Christians. But how miserably does she defeat her own sounder principles, by adopting others, in a great measure, subversive of these! She believes in one God; but she worships creatures, and images. She trusts in the merits and intercessions of Christ; but she enfeebles and dishonours this dependence, by trusting in the merits and intercessions of saints. She relies on the grace of the Holy Ghost; but leans also on her own strength, and boasts a sort of independent

pendent holiness. She believes in the eternity of future rewards and punishments; but subverts the effects of her own hopes and fears in futurity, by an illusory prospect of reformation in another world, by works of supererogation and indulgences. Thus she adheres to the true religion in speculation; but in practice destroys its power. Besides, she turns devotion into superstition, and buries the spirit of Christian piety under such a load of human ordinances, or rather Pagan ceremonies, that the ordinances of Christ can hardly be found in the motley heap. When we look at her, we see little else than an ostentatious pageant of outward pomp and power, of human inventions, and of human *traditions, which render the commandments of God of none effect*. And, that all her corruptions may become incurable, she looks on herself as infallible. But whether she brings as strong proofs to support her title to this high attribute, as I have alleged to evince the contrary, let the knowing, and the candid, judge. Her direct opposition to the word of God hath been here so glaringly made out, by seven flagrant instances, that either that word, or she, must stand convicted of error. And as the arguments I have used have nothing subtil or evasive in them, so they cannot be refuted by subtilties or evasions. Common sense can sufficiently judge of them, and can judge but one way of them.

To conclude now, let us of this truly reformed Church, with hearts full of gratitude, bless the good God for the wisdom and resolution of those holy men, and martyrs, whom he sent to bring us into the glorious liberty and light of his Gospel. Perhaps had we been born and bred up under the influence of bad principles, and a corrupt church, we should not have had sense and resolution enough, either to cut out so good a system for ourselves, or to come over to this, had it been prepared to our hands. And let us, in the next place, in a spirit of true Christian charity, pitying our brethren, sunk in darkness and error, do all we can to reclaim them. Let us forget, and forgive, the blood, which, in the blindness of their zeal,



zeal, they have drawn from us, and, in a spirit of love and candour, endeavour to convince them of their errors, by reason and Scripture, and not by unchristian retaliations; that they may at length learn to admire in us the lovely exemplification of our principles, by the return of good for evil. Let us also earnestly endeavour to coalesce in that *unity of the Spirit*, as an effect of right reason, and genuine piety, which they vainly boast of, to justify oppression and terror. But, above all, let us use our utmost endeavours to prove our church a true church, and ourselves true Christians, by purity of manners, by a life spent in the rational service of God; that is, in the ardours of heavenly devotion, and in doing good. This is that only powerful, that only convincing, argument, which no jesuitical arts can resist, no sophistical subtilities evade. This argument will give dignity and force to all our other reasonings, and will plead when we do not speak. With this the most illiterate peasant may easily baffle all the learning of his opponent; without it, the knowledge of angels hath no right either to speak, or be heard. If our cause is the cause of God, and our lives such as may be justified by his holy religion, they will speak for themselves, and God will second them in such a manner, that they who argue and fight against us, must appear, in the judgment of all other men, to argue and fight against God. But if, on a fair comparison, the members of the Church of *Rome* do actually demonstrate more piety in their devotions, and more purity and integrity in their actions, let us then for shame hold our peace. Let us prate no more about reformation of churches, nor impudently quote Scripture, when we will neither suffer ourselves to be reformed, nor God's word to sink farther into us than our lips. God, in this case, will be on the side of our adversaries, and will thus answer all we can say, *What have ye to do, to declare my statutes, or that ye should take my covenant in your mouth; seeing ye hate instruction, and cast my words behind you.*

God, of his infinite mercy, enable us to live up to the principles of that religion we profess, lest it rise in  
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judgment against us, and condemn us for sinning against the light. Grant this, we beseech thee, blessed Lord, for the sake of Christ Jesus our Saviour; to whom, with Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

*The End of V O L. I.*





