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A N  
I N Q U I R Y

I N T O T H E

N A T U R E and D E S I G N

O F

Chriſt's Temptation

I N T H E

W I L D E R N E S S.

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The SECOND EDITION, enlarged.

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To which is added,

An A P P E N D I X,

C O N T A I N I N G,

Some farther OBSERVATIONS upon this SUB-  
JECT, and an ANSWER to OBJECTIONS.

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By H U G H F A R M E R.

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T H E  
P R E F A C E.

*T*HE various expositions hitherto given of our Saviour's temptation in the wilderness, being attended with considerable difficulties; any modest attempt to discover and establish one less exceptionable, may hope to be received with candour. How far the author of the following sheets may have succeeded in such an endeavour, is submitted to the judgment of the publick. His motives, he persuades himself, are right, however he may have failed in the execution of his undertaking.

Many former writers upon this subject, have rejected the literal scheme, and have asserted it to be a diabolical vision, or illusion; but none of them which have fallen under the author's notice, have considered it as a divine vision:

tion<sup>a</sup>: *the want of which has prevented a discernment of the wise and benevolent intention of these visionary scenes, as symbolical predictions and representations of the principal trials and difficulties attending Christ's publick ministry. These are the peculiar points, which the present performance endeavours to establish.*

*But though the interpretation here advanced be new<sup>a</sup>, which may be a sufficient reason for submitting it to publick examination; yet unless it appears to have it's foundation in truth, and to set an obscure part of the evangelical history in a less exceptionable, more useful and honourable light, the author wishes it may be rejected.*

*He will only add, that if the principles, upon which this interpretation is founded, are just, they are applicable to various passages in the Old Testament, and may enable us to obviate the objections, to which the literal construction of them is liable.*

<sup>a</sup> See the *Inquiry*, Sect. II. note <sup>k</sup>;





T H E  
C O N T E N T S.

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2.) *Not calculated to promote either the honour of Christ, or the consolation and benefit of his disciples,* p. 12.

3.) *Ascribes to the devil the performance of the greatest miracles,* p. 19.

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a
fullest

*fullest confutation of this, as well as of the literal scheme of interpretation, p. 45.*

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II. scene. *In this, Christ is tempted to cast himself down from a wing of the temple at Jerusalem;*

salem ; to shew, that he was not to expose his person to danger without necessity, from a confidence in the divine protection ; and that he was to avoid an ostentatious display of his divine powers, without suffering others to prescribe to him, what miracles should be wrought for their conviction, p. 89.

III<sup>d</sup> scene. In this, Christ is tempted with the offer of all the kingdoms of the world and all their glory, to fall down and worship the devil ; to shew, that he would be called upon, in consequence of the mistaken notions of his countrymen concerning the Messiah's kingdom, to prostitute himself, with all his divine endowments, to the service of satan, for the sake of worldly advancement, or in order to ascend the throne of Israel, and to spread his conquests over all the heathen nations, p. 97. The peculiar propriety of this vision, considered as a representation of the difficulties of his office and ministry, at this season, p. 101.

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*confirms our faith in his divine mission, p. 110.*

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*The*

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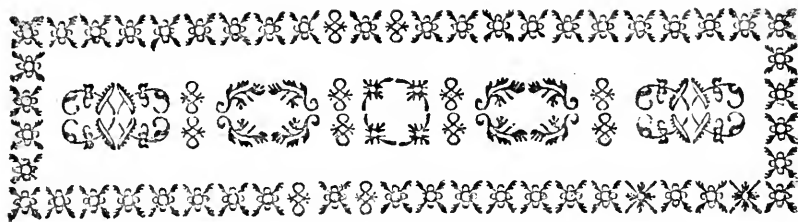


## E R R A T A.

- P**AGE 23. line 30. dele the comma after which,  
37. l. 8. for fenical read scenical.  
75. l. 20. dele comma after vision.  
80. before the first note read <sup>k</sup> instead of <sup>i</sup>, and  
before the second note <sup>l</sup> instead of <sup>k</sup>, and  
line twenty four for <sup>l</sup> read <sup>m</sup>.  
91. line 1. dele *an*.  
153. line ult. after of, read *a*.





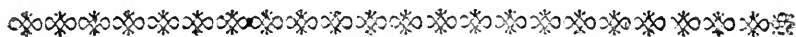


A N

## I N Q U I R Y

I N T O T H E

NATURE and DESIGN of CHRIST'S  
Temptation in the Wilderness.



MAT. IV. I—II.

1. *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.*

2. *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungred.*

3. *And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*

4. *But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

5. *Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,*

B

6. *And*

6. *And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

7. *Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

8. *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them:*

9. *And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

10. *Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

11. *Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him. See likewise Mark i. 12, 13. Luke iv. 1—13.*

✱✱✱✱ HE detection of error being a  
 ✱ T ✱ great help towards the discovery of  
 ✱✱✱✱ truth; it will be proper, before we  
 attempt to settle the true nature and design  
 of Christ's temptation, to consider what ob-  
 jections lye against the several explications,  
 which have hitherto been given of this part  
 of the gospel history. Should those objections  
 appear

appear to be just, we shall, at least, see the necessity of looking out for some new interpretation.

## S E C T I O N I.

**I**T has been generally supposed, that the evangelical history of our Lord's temptation is to be understood, as a narrative of real facts, or outward transactions: that the devil tempted Christ in person, appeared to him in a visible form, spoke to him with an audible voice, and removed him corporeally from one place to another: which opinion, amongst others, seems liable to the following objections.

1.) It is unsuitable to the sagacity and policy of the evil spirit. "Why the devil would at all assault our Lord, and what advantage he could possibly hope to gain over him"<sup>a</sup>, has always been acknowledged to be a great difficulty, by the advocates of the literal interpretation. But this difficulty is greatly increased by a circumstance, which they generally overlook, viz. the *manner* in which, on their hypothesis, the devil proposed his temptations to our Saviour. For this history, if understood literally, manifestly supposes that

B 2

the

<sup>a</sup> See *Dr. Clarke* as cited in the appendix, N<sup>o</sup> I.

the tempter came to him in person ; and appeared before him visibly, and under his own proper character. It represents him as acting under this character, by proposing and urging temptations, such as could proceed from none but an evil being. Now with what prospect of success, could he tempt our Lord, if he thus exposed himself to open view ? By a personal and undisguised appearance, he can never hope to prevail over the feeblest virtue. It is generally admitted, that, to succeed against frail mortals, he has recourse to *secret suggestions*, such as they do not distinguish from the natural and genuine offspring of their own minds : and thus conceals the hand which offers the temptation. Could he then expect, that the illustrious personage, whom he acknowledges as the Son of God, and who had been so lately proclaimed by a voice from heaven as such, and who was filled with the Spirit without measure, should comply with his temptations, notwithstanding his appearing to him in person, so as to be certainly known and distinguished under his proper character <sup>b</sup> ?

If

<sup>b</sup> To evade this difficulty, some have conjectured, that the devil now appeared before Christ under several *borrowed* characters and forms, human and angelic ; and by this imposition upon

If we proceed to examine the particular nature of Christ's successive temptations, it

B 3

will

on our Saviour, hoped the more easily to convince him of the innocence and reasonableness of his proposals, and to deceive him into a compliance. Conjectures are to be regarded, according to the degree in which they are reasonable or plausible. If they are merely arbitrary, and made from necessity, or because men cannot get over a difficulty without their assistance; and especially if they are not only groundless, but *in any degree* improbable; they ought not to be received, and should be regarded only as confessions of the distress of those who have recourse to them. With regard to the particular conjecture in question; it is natural to ask, what foundation is there for it? Where do we read of the devil's appearing to Christ either as a good man, or as a good angel, or under any other disguise? Is there any one circumstance of the history, that favours the supposition of his appearing before Christ under a borrowed character? If there be no foundation for this conjecture, it must be considered as arbitrary, and made from necessity alone. Farther, it is not only unsupported by the history, but contradicted by many circumstances of it, and is highly improbable in itself. How could the devil hope to deceive our Lord, by transforming himself into an angel of light, when his very tempting him to idolatry, was an evident demonstration of his being a fiend of hell? Or, how in this case could he hope to pass for a *good man*? Could he *even wish* that Christ should mistake him for a man; when it must have made his promise of universal empire appear ridiculous? With regard to our Saviour; is it likely, that he considered any one of the temptations, and least of all the last, as proceeding from any *good being*, whether human or angelic; when he rejected them all as *evil* and *impious* in their very nature, and the last with the highest detestation? Is it not, on the contrary, more likely that Christ ascribed these temptations to some *evil being*? This conclusion, which is so probable in its own nature, is confirmed by the history: which, according to its most literal meaning, re-  
presents

will appear yet more incredible, that they should be proposed to him with any prospect of success, in the manner plainly implied in the literal scheme of interpretation. In the first temptation, in which he is solicited to turn stones into bread; nothing is promised on the part of Satan to gain Christ's consent; for the miraculous act he was prompted to perform, depended entirely upon the exertion of his own power. Indeed, so far as this miracle was proper to satisfy Christ's hunger, it seems to  
 carry

presents the tempter as coming to Christ in person, and appearing and acting under his proper character; and consequently without affecting any disguise. And instead of giving any the least intimation of Christ's being ignorant who it was that tempted him; the history even represents Christ as knowing him, and, as occasion required, calling him by name, *Get thee behind me, Satan*, Luke iv. 8. This was said in answer to the second temptation, according to the order of St. *Luke*, who, though we allow he has perhaps neglected the true order, would not have done it, if thereby he had led us into an error with regard to our Saviour, and represented him as knowing the tempter sooner than he really did. The gentlemen whom we oppose, are forced to allow, that Christ knew who proposed the third temptation; and this, if it does not create a presumption that he knew him sooner, certainly deprives them of the benefit of their conjecture, where they most want it, in accounting for that temptation. In a word, the evidence is all on one side, and is sufficient to overturn a conjecture which is destitute of every shadow of support. I only add, that if the devil had disguised himself with the view here supposed, these temptations would have been trials rather of the *understanding*, than of the *heart*, or of our Lord's piety and virtue; the former of which is very different from the scripture idea of temptations.

carry it's own inforcement. But certainly he would not be the more, but the less, ready to satisfy his hunger by this means, upon the open application of an implacable enemy, and a fiend of hell<sup>c</sup>. This was a circumstance, that could answer no other end, than to create a prejudice against the proposal, and furnish a reason for rejecting it. Now could the devil *intend* to defeat his own temptation?

In the second temptation, (here, as in the sequel, I follow the order of St. *Matthew*,) the devil urges Christ to throw himself headlong from the summit of the temple at *Jerusalem*. In this, as in the former case, he does not undertake to do any thing himself for the honour or service of Christ; and yet solicits him to follow his directions. However, there is this difference in the two cases: in the former, the thing itself which was advised, might have been the means of

B 4

his

<sup>c</sup> This reasoning has lately received the sanction of a writer of distinguished learning and abilities. For speaking of *David's* numbering the people, he says, *If the devil had bid him do it, I suppose he might have seen the cloven foot, and would scarce have followed the measure for the sake of the adviser.* Dr. *Candler's* review of the history of *David*, p. 235. This reasoning concludes more strongly in the case of Christ, than in that of *David*, because the devil is not supposed to have appeared in person to the latter.

his support; in the latter, it might have issued in his destruction. Should it be urged, “that if Christ had thrown himself down from the top of the temple, and been preserved unhurt; his miraculous preservation would have been an attestation to his character as the Son of God:” I admit, that the proposal in this view of it, was in itself very alluring. But under the peculiar circumstances here attending it, the devil could scarce hope to see it embraced. The inference drawn from Christ’s miraculous preservation, must be very uncertain upon the common hypothesis, which admits, that the devil did by his own power remove Christ corporeally from the wilderness to the top of the temple<sup>d</sup>. For what greater power could be necessary to the preservation of Christ, in throwing himself down from that eminence; than the devil is supposed to have exerted in raising him to it? How then could it have been more certainly concluded from hence, that

Jesus

<sup>d</sup> Thus *Grotius* in particular compares this case to that of *Philip*, who was caught away by the Spirit from the eunuch to *Azotus*. On *Mat. iv. 5.* he says, παραλαμβάνει, ut *Philippum Dei Spiritus* *Act viii. 39.* And *Doctor Benson* affirms, (*Life of Christ*, p. 35.) that the devil hurried *Christ through the air, and carried him from the wilderness to the temple.* Some however understand the word, παραλαμβάνει, in this place, in a different sense. See below, p. 19, note <sup>p</sup>



Jesus was the Son of God ; than that the devil was so too, had he thought fit to make the pretension ? Besides, if Christ had cast himself down from the temple ; the devil, who was present, and had (as is generally supposed) now assumed a visible form, might have done the very same thing : and thus their respective claims, whatever they had been, would have stood upon a level. What inducement then could Christ have for a compliance with the proposal suggested ? would he be disposed to gratify Satan, by doing an act at his mere motion ? it is absurd to suppose it. Was he to acquire any glory or advantage to himself ? no ; on the contrary, he must have incurred the infamy of having entered the lists with the devil, without acquiring any superiority over that prisoner of hell : which must have been a powerful motive to a refusal, rather than a compliance.

With regard to the third temptation, usually accounted the greatest of all, the offer of the kingdoms of the world with all their glory : it seems as little to deserve the name of a temptation, as that we last considered. The great prophet of the christian church could not be ignorant, that the father of lies, whatever he might boast, had no power to dispose of the empire of the world ; and that *the*

*most High rules in the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whomsoever he will*<sup>e</sup>. Nor can it be pretended, that Christ was ignorant by whom *this* temptation was proposed, whatever was the case with regard to the *others*: for in his reply he calls him *Satan*<sup>f</sup>. So that were we to allow<sup>g</sup>, that the devil, by assuming the appearance of a good angel, hoped to deceive Jesus; yet he was certainly mistaken in his measures; Jesus knew who he was, and consequently that he had no power to bestow what he so liberally promised. Now the largest offer which can be conceived, is the offer of nothing, if he who makes it, be unable to make it good: and if he is known to be so, by the person to whom it is made, the offer will be deemed an insult, rather than a temptation, and will provoke either scorn or resentment. Could the devil then hope by such contemptuous treatment, to engage the Son of God to listen to his accursed councils, and to seduce him to an act of the highest dishonour to his heavenly Father, such as no one can think of without horror; the falling down  
and

<sup>e</sup> Dan. iv. 17.

<sup>f</sup> See above p. 4. note <sup>b</sup>.

<sup>g</sup> According to the conjectures of Dr. Doddridge, Dr. Macknight, and others.

and paying divine homage to this infernal spirit?

If the foregoing reflections are just; the common explication of this history gives such an account of Christ's temptations, of the two last especially, as is subversive of their main intention; disarming them of all inducement to a compliance, and even furnishing the strongest motives for rejecting them. All the use I would make of these reflections in this place, is to observe, that this interpretation represents the old serpent as acting quite out of character: inasmuch as it supposes him to be as perfectly void of policy, as he is of goodness; and that he used the least art and address in proposing and enforcing his temptations, in a case, in which the greatest would have been insufficient to insure his success<sup>h</sup>. It is more material to observe,

## 2.) That

<sup>h</sup> Our learned divines, in order to account for the devil's assaulting our Lord with any hope of success, generally suppose, that he was somewhat *uncertain* whether our Lord was indeed the Messiah; and admit, that *unless the tempter had been in doubt as to the character of Jesus, it is not to be imagined he should have attempted to seduce him at all.* Dr. Macknight's commentary, and Dr. Clarke V. 1. serm. 93. It is not, I hope, inconsistent with the deference due to these gentlemen, to observe, 1. That upon the common hypothesis concerning this temptation and the author of it, there is no reason to believe he was ignorant or doubtful who Jesus was. If the devil is well acquainted with  
the

2.) That this explication is very ill calculated to promote either the honour of Christ,  
 or

the scriptures, and particularly with the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah; if he knew all the wonderful circumstances which accompanied the birth of Jesus, and was so lately a witness to the testimonies born to him from heaven, both by the descent of the spirit, and by the voice which proclaimed him the Son of God; he could not but know with certainty who Jesus was. This Dr. *Lightfoot* has fully proved, in his first volume, p. 503. fol. ed. Accordingly these words which introduce two of his temptations, do not express doubt, but assurance, *If thou be*, that is, *seeing thou art*, (or *inasmuch as thou art*) *the Son of God*. It is here taken for granted, that Jesus was the Son of God; and his being so, is the very reason by which the devil urges him to comply with his proposals: “ Since you  
 “ are the Messiah, it is fit you should act as such, and exert  
 “ your divine power in turning stones into bread, and in flying  
 “ down from the temple.” Thus, as Dr. *Lightfoot* observes, (ubi supra) the word *if* is used in the speech of *Lamech*, Gen. iv. 24. *If Cain shall be avenged seven fold*, which was with *Lamech* a thing undoubted. He who desires the fullest evidence that *εἰ* and *εἴτε* are frequently affirmative particles, may consult *Locke* and *Doddridge* on *Ephes.* iii. 2. *Peirce* on *Col.* i. 23. but especially *Noldii Concordant. Partic.* under the correspondent hebrew particle *כִּי* which is often rendered *certe, omnino, quia, quandoquidem, quod*. Even Dr. *Macknight* himself, who in p. 64. of his *Commentary* (second edition) urges these words, *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence*, in support of the devil’s being in doubt as to the character of Jesus, does in p. 66. explain them in their true sense, though it subverts his own hypothesis: *SINCE thou art the Son of God, thou shouldst cast thyself down*.

2. Were we to allow, that the devil was in doubt who Jesus was, and that otherwise he could not possibly have hoped to gain any advantage over him; this will not account for his proposing his temptations in an *open and visible manner*; nay, it proves

or the instruction and consolation of his disciples. Scarce can we preserve upon our minds a sufficient reverence of the sanctity and dignity of the Redeemer, when we behold him in such familiar conference with, and under the power of, an unclean spirit; who at pleasure transports <sup>i</sup> his sovereign and his judge from  
place

proves that this manner ought of all others to have been most carefully avoided, because the least likely to succeed. For certainly the strongest temptations of the devil are those wherein he least appears. I am not therefore so happy, as to be able to acquiesce in the explication, these gentlemen have given of the motives, which induced the devil to undertake this temptation; because in the method he took, he could have no *expectation*, nor scarce a *thought* of success; at least he could not have taken a more likely method to miscarry.

<sup>i</sup> Those who are of opinion, that the devil did not transport Christ through the air, but only led him on foot, from place to place, (see below p. 19. note P) would, I should think, find it difficult to account for Christ's suffering himself to be led to the temple, (where the Jews always resorted) and back again through the streets of *Jerusalem*, in such company. Could the inhabitants have been witnesses to a sight so wonderful and so horrible, and yet take no notice of it? Would not their seeing Christ in company with the devil, at the very *first opening of his ministry*, before he had afforded them any evidences of his divine mission, and while they were strangers to his genuine character; have necessarily made even upon honest minds strong impressions to his disadvantage? Would not such a sight at this season especially, have raised some suspicion of his being an associate and confederate with the devil? And would Christ unnecessarily create a prejudice against himself in good minds, and give any occasion to that most blasphemous of all calumnies, which his enemies, even without the least colour, and after the  
fullest

place to place, raises him to the most conspicuous stations to expose him to publick derision, and wantonly and arrogantly propounds to him one foolish enterprize after another<sup>k</sup>. It fills us with horror as well as astonishment, to consider farther, that during all this transaction, Christ must have yielded voluntarily to the mere motion and instigation of the devil. For, though it was by the Spirit of God that he was carried into the wilderness, yet it was by the devil that he was conveyed from thence to the temple, and placed upon its battlements: a most dangerous and formidable

fullest evidence to the contrary, endeavoured to fix upon him? But the very supposition of Christ's suffering himself to be led about by the devil, in places of the most publick resort, and of the most sacred nature, for no imaginable end whatever; does so shock the human imagination, that one would think there could be no occasion to confute it. There would be scarce decency, in exposing it as it deserves.

\* It has indeed been said, "that it was no more unworthy the Son of God to undergo the assaults of *evil spirits*, than to suffer indignities and death from the hands of *wicked men*." But by partaking of flesh and blood, he became liable to the latter, and nothing but a miracle could have saved him from them. But with regard to the former, it is certain, that such assaults of the devil as these are supposed to have been, are not the lot of humanity. Besides, the most important ends of Christ's coming into the world, required his submission to death; but no valuable end whatever was answered, by his putting himself entirely into the power of devils, the most accursed part of the creation, in the manner here pretended.

dable eminence<sup>1</sup>! And therefore as the devil could have no power over our Lord, unless by his free consent, Christ must have been accessory to his own dishonour, danger, and temptation<sup>m</sup>. Such a conduct as this would have been the more unworthy of him, as no good end could be answered by it, either with respect to himself or his followers. His own character would have been degraded, rather than exalted. The temptations themselves to which he was exposed, were very far from carrying any force; as was observed above: what extraordinary merit then, nay, what virtue in the lowest degree, could there be in resisting them? And if there was no proper temptation presented to Christ, none that could serve as an evidence or exercise of his obedience; what suitable consolation or useful instruction,

<sup>1</sup> Some parts of the temple (being built upon the edge of a rock, under which was a valley of a prodigious depth) were of so vast a height, that it was impossible to look down without making the head to swim; nor could the sight reach to the bottom; as we learn from *Josephus*, *Antiq. Jud.* l. 15. c. 11. §. 5.

<sup>m</sup> Should it be said, that Christ had an order from God, to suffer himself to be brought into this dangerous situation; the assertion could not be proved from the text. Nor is it likely any such order was given; because no good end could be answered by it. Christ might be carried into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil; but not that he might, in any measure, yield to his temptations.

struction, under real and powerful temptations, can his followers derive from this history?

What has been already offered under this and the foregoing heads, will enable us to form a right judgment concerning the reasons commonly offered, for Christ's submitting to be *tempted by the devil*, in the manner here supposed. 1. It has been, I think, universally asserted, that the apostle *expressly* assigns this as one reason, that hereby he might <sup>n</sup> *be made like unto his brethren*, and become *a merciful and faithful high priest, for in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted*. This is one proof amongst many more, how ready all men are, at least occasionally, to be governed by the sound, rather than the sense of Scripture: for it is manifest that the apostle in these passages, refers to those temptations and sufferings to which the Hebrew Christians were exposed by their new profession. To encourage them under these trials, he properly reminds them, that Christ had been exercised with the very same, called out to struggle not only with all the common difficulties of human life, but also with the severest *persecutions*. In this respect, there was a real resemblance between his case and their's. And this is the subject of the apostle's discourse. Nor could he

\* Heb. ii. 14—18. ch. iv. 15.



he refer to the devil's assaulting Christ in a visible form, and with an audible voice; for it could not be necessary that he should be tempted in so very *singular* a manner, in order to *his being made like unto his brethren*, who are not themselves thus tempted<sup>n</sup>. 2. A farther reason assigned for his submitting to thus tempted, is, that his example might be a complete pattern of every virtue. But according to the common explication of Christ's temptations, they did not display any of his virtues to advantage, as we have already proved; nor was his behaviour under them proper for the imitation of his followers.

For if the devil's bringing him into circumstances of danger, and placing him upon the brink of a stupendous precipice, from whence he was to be instigated to throw himself down, and from whence, indeed, it was difficult not to fall; if this could not have been effected without his free consent and choice, his example may be injurious, rather than beneficial, to such creatures as we are, who are more likely to preserve our innocence, by fly-

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<sup>n</sup> See Sect. IV. N<sup>o</sup> 1. It is very remarkable, that there should be no reference at all in any part of the New Testament to Christ's temptation in the wilderness; if it be, what, according to the received interpretation, it certainly was, the most astonishing and miraculous event which ever befel him.

ing from temptation, than by incountring it; and who are accordingly warned, never voluntarily to rush upon it, but, as far as we are able, to prevent it's approach. Can it then be conceived, that Christ, if he knew the devil, would suffer himself to be transported by him to a scene of the greatest danger, whereby he would enervate all his exhortations to caution in declining it, and more especially that excellent maxim, delivered on this very occasion, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*, which he might have inculcated to much greater advantage, by refusing to have left the wilderness? If Christ was ignorant who his companion was, as some endeavour to persuade us; would he go along with a *stranger*, go with him in quest of temptations, and run into the way of them? There are many who contend for the literal interpretation of this history, from a regard to the honour of Christ, and to the benefit of his disciples; whereas in truth it is equally injurious to both, and subverts the very foundation on which they rest, the strength and reality of these temptations. And supposing the temptations to have been real and powerful, the conduct here ascribed to Christ is not calculated for the imitation or instruction of his followers.

3.) It is a farther objection to the common opinion, that it ascribes to the devil the performance of the greatest miracles. (1.) It supposes that the devil, by nature a spiritual and invisible agent, has a power of assuming at pleasure a corporeal and visible form, and of speaking with an audible voice; though there is no more ground from experience, (our sole instructor in the established laws of nature,) to ascribe this power to the devil, than to ascribe life to the inanimate, or speech to the brute creation; and though the scripture represents the appearance or vision of a spiritual being as an incontestable miracle: for *Zacharias* was struck dumb for not giving credit to such an evidence of a divine interposition°. (2.) It supposes farther, that the devil has a power of conveying men from place to place, and that he did actually exert this power over his great Lord, by transporting him through the air<sup>p</sup>, from the wilderness to the summit

° Luke i. 20.

<sup>p</sup> I here argue on the supposition, that the devil did not lead Christ on foot from place to place, but conveyed him through the air; because the advocates of the literal scheme generally suppose this to have been the case. Those who plead that the word, *παραλαμβάνει*, imports no more than to *conduct a person*, or to *take him with us as a companion*; may more easily shew this to be the sense of it upon other occasions, than upon the present.

summit of the Jewish temple ; and from thence to the top of an exceeding high mountain.

sent. For they cannot account for Christ and the devil's reaching the top of the temple without a miracle, which nevertheless they are not willing to allow ; affirming that the devil did not fly through the air with our Lord, but only went up with him to the summit of the temple. It appears by the description given of the temple by *Jesephus*, (*Antiq.* l. 15. c. 11. §. 3, 5. and *B. J.* l. 5. c. 5.) and from some passages from other Jewish writers, (cited by *Dr. Whitby* on *Luke* xxii. 52.) that it was so inclosed by walls, and so constantly guarded, that all access to it was impracticable, but by such persons, and under such conditions, as the law allowed. Now by law, no *foreigner* could pass the first inclosure or court under pain of death ; the *Jewish people* could not pass the second ; the *priests* alone could enter the third. The temple itself was within this court ; from which Christ was excluded, not being a Jewish priest. As to the devil, those who know under what different disguises he imposed upon Christ, (see above p. 4. note *b*) can with equal certainty inform us by what stratagems he might advance forward to the temple. Christ however, *in whom there was no guile*, could not have been permitted to follow. With regard to the temple itself, properly so called ; on the top of it *there were spikes, with sharp points, to prevent so much as a bird from resting upon it.* The wings (*πτερυγίων*) of the temple stretched out on either side, at the eastern front of it, which was by far the most magnificent, and commanded a view of the entire body of worshippers. These wings were twenty cubits higher than the temple ; the height of the temple being 100 cubits, and the height of the *πτερυγίων* 20 cubits, at the top of which, the history (according to it's literal interpretation) affirms, the devil did set our Saviour. That the word *πτερυγίων* denotes the *wing* (not the *pin-nacle*) of the temple ; that most valuable expositor *Dr. Light-foot* long since observed, (*Works* V. II. p. 130.) And his opinion was adopted by the learned *Dr. Prideaux*, (*Connect.* V. I.

tain. But this could not have been done, but by repeated displays of a power truly miraculous,

p. 200.) and lately by Dr. *Benson*, (*Life of Christ*, p. 35.) These circumstances serve to shew, that the devil could not lead Christ on foot to the top of one of these wings of the temple, in the manner some allege; but must (if he placed him there at all) have carried him through the air, or afforded him some other miraculous assistance: (unless they can suppose, that the devil first applied for leave to the officers and guards of the temple; which was very unlikely to have been asked, or obtained, or passed over in silence.) And as the sacred writers were well acquainted with all these circumstances, they could never design to affirm, that the devil did what they knew was impossible to be done. Dr. *Macknight* (to avoid this difficulty) maintains, that it was *from the battlement of one of the cloysters, that the devil desired Jesus to throw himself down*; and he affirms (but without producing any authority) *that the people were at liberty to walk on the roof of the cloysters*. This last assertion seems to me somewhat improbable, both because the cloysters were *sacred buildings*; and because no such liberty as the doctor speaks of, was allowed even with regard to *common houses*, to which no peculiar reverence was due. For the door which opened upon the roof was constantly kept shut, to prevent their domestic animals from daubing the terrace, and thereby spoiling the water which falls from thence into the cisterns below the court: and the stairs which conducted to the roof were not placed on the outside of the house, but either in the porch, or at the entrance into the court; and consequently strangers could not have access to them without the consent of the family. See Dr. *Shaw's* travels as cited by Dr. *Macknight* in his harmony, part I, p. 123. 2d. ed. But whether the people were at liberty to walk upon the roofs of the cloysters, is a point of no importance, because the evangelists are not speaking of any of the *cloysters*, not one of which was called the *wing of the temple*. The word *ἱερόν* is used with great latitude in the Gospels,

lous, and even equally stupenduous with that by which *Philip* was transported from *Gaza* to *Azotus*<sup>a</sup>; and by no means inferior, as was observed above, to that which would have been necessary to the preservation of Christ, had he thrown himself down from the temple, in proof of his being the Messiah; though his answer implies, that his preservation must have depended on the interposition of God, whom it was not lawful to tempt. (3.) It supposes, that the devil having placed Christ upon an exceeding high mountain, could from thence shew him all the kingdoms of the world<sup>r</sup>. Now there being no mountain upon the

(Mat. xxi. 12. ch. xxiv. 1. Mark xi. 11, 15, 17.) so as to include the temple and all the buildings and courts belonging to it: and the part of the *ἱερόν* here specified, was the *πέπλος* or *wing*; so called, because like wings it extended itself in breadth on each side, far beyond the breadth of the temple.

<sup>a</sup> Acts viii. 39, 40.

<sup>r</sup> Some learned persons, and Dr. *Macknight* in particular, being sensible on the one hand, that a real sight of all the kingdoms of the world from any high mountain whatsoever, is an impossible thing; and being willing on the other, to understand this article of the history in the literal sense; would restrain the prospect to the *land of promise*. And so they think the word *κόσμος* is used Rom. iv. 13. *The promise that he should be heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith*. In answer to which I observe, 1. That the *world*, in the passage here cited from St. *Paul*, cannot be restrained to the land of *Canaan*. For the promise referred to by the apostle, is that whereby *Abraham* was

*made*

the face of the earth, which commands the view of every part of it, (or indeed of any single

*made the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, and are scattered all over the world, ver. 11. And it is for this very reason, that Abraham is called the heir of the world; because believers of all nations of the world, Gentiles as well as Jews, were to have him for their father, and inherit the blessing of justification by faith. To confine the word κόσμος here to Canaan or to any one country, is to destroy the whole reasoning of the apostle, which is manifestly designed to shew, that Abraham was to inherit a seed out of all nations. Nor has any instance been hitherto produced, in which κόσμος signifies only one particular country; though it may be applied to the Roman empire, when it is spoken of as including in it all the countries and kingdoms of the then known world. 2. And even were the word κόσμος sometimes applied to one particular country; it could not be used in this confined sense in the history of Christ's temptation. For it is not said, the devil shewed Christ the world, but all the kingdoms of the world: A phrase that cannot be limited to the narrow territory of Canaan, which at the time of Christ's temptation was no kingdom at all. Judea was now a province of the Roman empire, an appendage of the province of Syria. See Luke iii. 1. 3. Nay, were we to admit, that the land of promise alone is here spoken of; this could not be shewn to Christ from any mountain, but by a miracle. For the land of promise, in it's largest signification, reached, (as Dr. Macknight observes, p. 67.) from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, east and west, and from Egypt on the south, to beyond Sidon northwards: an immense tract of country, which, no mountain commands, and which no human eye can take in. And yet the doctor adds, All these the devil pointed out to Jesus in the temptation, taking particular notice of their glory, that is, their great and opulent cities, their rich fields, their hills covered with wood and cattle, their rivers, &c. It was the LORD who shewed Moses all the land, or enabled him to take a more distinct*

gle kingdom of it;) and if there were, no human eye being strong enough to take in the prospect; the shewing Christ all the kingdoms of the world, had it been possible, could have been effected only by a miracle; by a miracle a thousand times greater in it's own nature, than that performed by God, when from mount *Nebo* he shewed *Moses* the narrow territory of *Canaan*<sup>s</sup>? Besides, the devil shewed Christ not only all the kingdoms of the world, but also all the *glory* of them; that is, † the wealth and treasures of their subjects, and what-

prospect of it's several quarters, than his own unassisted sight would have permitted him to do. *Deut.* xxxiv. 1. Lastly, it was absolutely impossible that the devil should shew Christ the land of promise, to it's utmost limits on every hand, (and still more impossible that he should shew him the whole world,) *in a moment of time*: a circumstance entirely dropt by Dr. *Macknight* in his first edition, and left unexplained in the second. This omission is the more to be lamented, as our ablest commentators, and the christian world in general, have thought themselves under a necessity of receding from the literal sense of the history in this article, very much on account of this circumstance. (See below, p. 33, 35.) — With regard to the reason which the doctor assigns for asserting a *real* sight of the kingdoms of the world, viz. *the devil's carrying our Lord up into an exceeding high mountain, to view them*; it would equally prove that it was really, and not in vision, that *St. John* was carried away to a great and high mountain, in order to his being *shewn the holy Jerusalem*. *Rev.* xxi. 10.

<sup>s</sup> *Deut* xxxiv. 1 — 3.

† Compare *Gen.* xxxi. 1. *ch.* xlv. 13. *1 Chron.* xxix. 25, *2 Chron.* xxxii. 27. *If.* lxi. 6.



whatever constitutes the splendor and magnificence of their sovereigns, imperial robes, and crowns, and thrones, and palaces, and courts, and guards, and armies : which must all have been produced into view, and exhibited in a manner proper to strike the imagination, and fire the passions. And what still increases the miracle, all these numerous objects, as well as the whole exterior surface of the globe, the devil must have shewed to Christ at one view, and in a single instant of time<sup>u</sup>. Supposing this to be possible, it is one of the greatest miracles we can conceive. But it seems very unreasonable to ascribe to the devil the power of performing any miracles ; inasmuch as even good angels (who cannot be supposed to have a more limited sphere of action, than those accursed spirits, *who are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day*,<sup>x</sup>) never perform any miracles at their own pleasure ; never appear to men, and remove them from  
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<sup>u</sup> ἐν στιγμήν χρόνου, *in an instant, or point of time.* Luke iv. 5. The word, στιγμή, is taken from a mathematical point, and is used to denote the most minute and indivisible part of duration, such wherein we can conceive no succession, or which takes up the time of only one idea in the mind. See Erasmus and Casaubon on Luke iv. 5. Vatablus likewise, and Grotius and Beza, and all the best judges of the greek language, render the phrase to the same effect, *in puncto temporis.* This rendering is very agreeable to all the antient versions, except the Syriac,

<sup>x</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6.

one place to another, as they see fit themselves ; nor do they ever gratify them by such marvellous and magnificent prospects as those, which, it is here supposed, were shewn to Christ. Besides, the allowing a miraculous power to the devil, destroys the credit and use<sup>y</sup> of miracles, and contradicts such declarations of scripture, as confine<sup>z</sup> them to the Deity, either operating immediately by himself, or by the instrumentality of such beings as act by his commif-

<sup>y</sup> Miracles are always represented in Scripture as in themselves decisive and absolute demonstrations of the divinity and sole dominion of *Jehovah*, and as an immediate divine testimony to his messengers. Exod. iv. 5 — 9. ch. vii, 5, 17. ch. viii. 10 22. ch. ix. 14, 16, 29. ch. x. 1, 2. ch. xi. 7. ch. xiv. 4, 18. Deut. iv. 34 — 39. 2 Sam. vii 22 — 24. Numb. xvi. 28 — 30. John v 36, 37. ch. xi. 41, 42. Acts ii 10. Mat. xii. 28. John x. 24, 25, 36 — 38. ch. xiv. 10, 11. Heb. ii. 4. 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. This view of miracles is utterly inconsistent with the supposition, that evil spirits possess the power and liberty of performing them.

<sup>z</sup> Both prophecies and miracles are absolutely appropriated to God: *He only doeth wondrous works*, Pf. lxxii. 18. Pf. lxxxvi. 10. Exod. xv. 11 *He revealeth secrets, and maketh known what shall come to pass*. Dan ii. 28, 29, 47. Idolaters are challenged to justify their worship of idols, and the idol gods themselves to give proof of their divinity, by suitable displays of power or knowlege, Is. xli. 21 — 24. ch. xlii 8 — 13. ch. xliv. 7. ch. xlv. 20, 21. ch. xlvi. 3. And if invisible evil agents had (as some have supposed) supported the claims of the heathen deities: this would have been the very same thing in appearance, and with regard to all the mischievous consequences attending it, as if the heathen deities had themselves interposed in support of those claims.

commission. Indeed, such a power could not consist with the regular course of nature, and the established order of providence, which would suffer from it perpetual interruptions<sup>a</sup>. And it is abundantly confuted by the experience of near six thousand ages; there not being one well attested example of the exercise of it, from the beginning of the creation to this day.

4.) It is a still greater objection to the common opinion, that it ascribes to the devil the performance of things not only preternatural, but absurd and impossible. Such we must reckon, his shewing Christ all the kingdoms of the world from an exceeding high mountain: for the earth being of a spheroidical figure, what single mountain can command a view of all the parts of it, of those in particular which are opposite to each other? The sun itself, at it's immense height above the loftiest mountains of our globe, commands and enlightens at once, only a single hemisphere.

Could

<sup>a</sup> The scripture very rationally represents the whole course of nature as universally and invariably fulfilling the will of God, as fixed by his *decree which shall not pass away*, as governed by his laws *which shall not be broken*, by laws *which he has established for ever and ever*: which must therefore be unalterable by any authority, but his who at first ordained them. Ps. cxlviii. 6,

Could the devil then from one point of view, shew Christ not only the entire circumference of the globe, but also whatever constitutes the glory and grandeur of it's kingdoms; and shew him such infinitely numerous objects, in situations so distant, and so opposite, not gradually and successively, but in one and the same instant of time? This does not seem so properly a miracle, as an absurdity and contradiction, such as is not the object of any power.

Now in the interpretation of scripture, it is a rule allowed 'by all, and such as ought never to be forgot, that we are to have recourse to a figurative sense, whenever the nature of the thing will not admit a proper and literal one; and that to distinguish what is to be literally, and what figuratively understood; depends on a previous knowledge of the subject. Thus when we read of the eyes, ears, hands of God, all allow these to be figures; reason as well as revelation assuring us, that God is a spiritual incorporeal substance. And there is just the same necessity for receding from the literal sense of the passage under consideration, if it implies manifest and palpable contradictions.

It is the more necessary in the interpretation of the sacred writings, to make the absurdity

furdity of the literal construction, a reason for adopting a figurative one ; as they are allowed by Christians to have God for their author. If it be a just observation, “ that what God “ says must be true ;” it is no less certain, “ that whatever is false and absurd can never “ have been spoken by God.” And therefore if any thing of this kind is asserted by the interpreters of his word, we may be very sure they mistake it’s meaning.

We are likewise to consider, that it is very common in the sacred writings on other occasions, to relate things as actually done, which yet were only transacted in a vision. And sometimes, perhaps, the scripture relates visions or representations made to the mind of a prophet, as if they were real transactions, without giving express notice to the contrary <sup>b</sup>;

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<sup>b</sup> Many learned writers have attempted to shew, that *Hosea’s* marrying *Gomer*, and taking to himself children of whoredom, ch. i. and iii ; — that *Jeremiab’s* putting a linen girdle upon his loins, going to *Euphrates*, and hiding it in the hole of a rock, ch. xiii ; his carrying a wine cup from God up and down to all nations, and causing them to drink it, ch. xxv ; and his putting yokes upon the necks of several kings, ch. xxvii. — and that *Ezekiel’s* eating a roll, ch. iii. his taking a tile, portraying the city of *Jerusalem* upon it, and laying siege against it, ch. iv ; and his shaving his head and beard with a barber’s razor, ch. v ; learned writers have attempted to shew, that these and many other actions ascribed to the antient prophets,

were

any more than they do, when they introduce a metaphor, a parable or allegory. Nor need we wonder to find visions related as facts; inasmuch

were only imaginary and scenical; and that narratives of this kind are to be understood as a history only of prophetic visions, though it be not positively said, (as these writers apprehend,) that the things related were no where performed but upon the stage of fancy. See Mr. *John Smith's* select discourses, p. 220 — 229. We may well allow, that all these things, or most of them, were transacted only in vision; not merely because we hereby avoid the inconveniencies attending the literal interpretation; but also because the lively representation of these things in vision, conveyed the same instruction, and answered every purpose as well as the real performance of them could have done.

I would only add, that perhaps *Jacob's* wrestling with the angel, the night in which he prayed so earnestly to be delivered from the hands of his brother *Esau*, and his prevailing in the combat, in token of the efficacy of his prayer with God, and of the consequent victory he was to gain over his brother; this might be done in a prophetic vision, and yet the design of it be sufficiently answered. *Jacob's* lameness (like *Zacharias's* loss of speech after his vision in the temple, *Luke* i. 22.) lasted but for a time, (for he came safe and sound to a city of *Shechem*, *Gen.* xxxiii. 18.) and served to convince him of the divine original of this vision; and consequently to reprove his doubts, and to raise and confirm his faith in God. Certainly a spirit has not flesh and bones, so as to be laid hold of by man: nor could *Jacob* intend to be literally understood, when he says, he *had seen God face to face*, *Gen.* xxxii. 30. The expression itself imports, that he was favoured with a vision of God, a clear revelation of his will, and the manifest tokens of his peculiar presence. Dr. E. *Larv*, in his *Considerations*, p. 75, 76. 5th. ed. has taken notice of several revelations made in vision, though not distinguished from real facts: which may serve to confirm what is advanced here.

asmuch as they pass for such in the mind of the prophet. The representation is so strong and lively, that he cannot distinguish a vision from a real scene, and is affected by the former in the same manner as he would have been by the latter. St. Paul calls his *being caught up into the third heaven, and into paradise, a vision and revelation of the Lord<sup>c</sup>*; but such were the impressions which it made upon him, that he could not determine with certainty, whether this happened by a literal and corporeal translation, or only by a mental representation<sup>d</sup>. Besides, in this and the like cases,

<sup>c</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 1—4.

<sup>d</sup> This seems to be his meaning, when speaking of his being caught up to the third heaven, he says, *whether in the body, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell.* 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3. And it is said of St. Peter, when an angel presented himself to him in prison, smote him on the side, caused the chains to fall off from his hands, bid him arise quickly, gird himself, bind on his sandals, throw his mantle round him, and follow him out; all which he accordingly did; yet it is said, *that he wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision;* Acts xii. 7—9. He understood the nature of visions, having been favoured with them, ch. x. 10; and yet at first he could not determine, whether what now happened to him was a real fact, or a visionary representation, and he rather thought it was the latter. It is evident from hence, that all these facts might have been transacted only upon the mind and imagination of the apostle; that the representations of a vision are as clear and lively, as objects that lye open to the senses; and that it is difficult

cases, a lively exhibition of certain images before the mind produces the same effect with the sight of their corresponding objects ; and transactions upon the stage of fancy answer the same end as a real performance. For these reasons, the relation corresponds to the apprehensions of the prophet, while the appearances are placed before his mind ; and though those appearances are fictitious, yet neither the credit of the historian, nor the use of the relation are impaired. Nor does it hereby become difficult to distinguish fiction from fact<sup>e</sup>, while the nature and scope of the relation sufficiently ascertains what it is. If the occurrence be possible and probable, so as to admit, and the manifest intention and other circumstances of it require, a literal construction ; it would be very absurd to have recourse to any other.

distinguish between them, by the bare impression made at the time, however other circumstances might afterwards enable men to do it. — There will be farther use made of this observation, Sect. IV. N<sup>o</sup>. 2.

<sup>e</sup> The observation which follows, is designed to vindicate the scripture, on the supposition that it does not at every turn give express notice, that what it relates as matter of fact, is nothing more than the history of a vision. But perhaps the context, or some declaration of the sacred penman, would generally prevent a mistake, no less than the nature of the things related. In some particular cases, as in that of *St. Paul* mentioned above, it might be a matter of no importance to be determined, even with regard to the prophet himself, whether the objects presented to him were real or imaginary.



other. Whereas on the other hand, if neither the nature of the things themselves which are related, do admit, nor the design of them require, a real performance ; it would be equally unreasonable not to look out for some figurative interpretation.

If we proceed by these rules in forming our judgment concerning Christ's temptations, we must conclude, (unless the objections here urged against them are capable of receiving a just solution,) that they are not to be understood as real facts or outward transactions ; inasmuch as the things themselves were improbable, and even impracticable in their own nature ; and inasmuch as the real performance could answer no valuable purpose.

5.) It is needless to pursue this subject, and to shew by a long train of consequences, what absurdities follow from the literal construction of this passage ; since such as are more obvious carry almost universal conviction, and force even those to depart from the letter, who have been most inclined to adhere to it, and best able to defend it. *Calvin* §, though he does not absolutely determine the matter, was of opinion, that several circumstances in this history agreed best to a vision. And the gene-

§ See his note on Mat. iv. 5.

ality of later writers do readily admit, that the devil's shewing Christ all the kingdoms of the world, and all their glory, in a moment of time, was done by some fictitious scenery <sup>h</sup>; from a persuasion, as they frankly acknowledge, that it could not be done in any other manner. But if *one* of the temptations was presented to Christ in vision only; why might not the *two others* be presented to him in the same manner? It offers no greater violence to the text, to recede from the literal construction in all these instances, than in one. Most of the reasons assigned for doing this in part, extend equally to the entire narrative. Nay, it is apparently unnatural and arbitrary <sup>i</sup>, not to put the same construction upon the several parts of the same relation; but to understand one part of it according to the letter, and the

<sup>h</sup> Some indeed, and particularly our famous countrymen *Hugh Broughton*, (see *Wolfius* on Mat. iv. 8.) and *Milton*, (see *Paradise Regained*, B. 4. l. 40.) suppose that the devil shewed our Saviour all the kingdoms of the world by the help of *optic instruments*: but it is more generally asserted, that he did it either by visionary impressions upon his mind, or by external representations to his sight.

<sup>i</sup> This is acknowledged by the candid and judicious *Spanheim*, (*Dubia Evangel.* pars III. dub. 55. p. 247.) a very able advocate for the literal interpretation, *Causæ etiam nihil est cur interpretum quorundam opinioni subscribamus, qui primam tentationem realiter & historicè contigisse arbitrantur, posteriores duas in visione duntaxat, eadem enim & uniformis narrationis contextura utrobique reperitur.*

the other in a figurative sense. If therefore there be a necessity, a necessity so evident and cogent as not to be denied by learned and candid adversaries, for departing from the literal interpretation with regard to one of the temptations; the uniformity of the history obliges us to do the same with regard to the rest.

The foregoing considerations would require us to reject the common explication of Christ's temptation, even though it had been related (as we have hitherto supposed, but not admitted,) altogether as a plain matter of fact, and we had been left to construe it merely by the nature and intention of the relation. Nevertheless this is far from being the case: for

6.) The text itself, (on the letter of which the common hypothesis rests as it's sole foundation,) instead of positively and expressly asserting, that the temptation of Christ was a real outward transaction, contains clear intimations, and even direct assertions, of the very contrary. Thus when it is said, in the fore-cited passage, that the devil shewed Christ all the kingdoms of the world, and all their glory, in one view, or in a single point of time; the expression itself sufficiently intimates, that the evangelist is not speaking of the real sight of all these objects. For were there any mountain which commanded so extensive a prospect,

Christ must have changed his position, and gradually turned himself round in order to take a distinct view of the several parts of it; or had all the parts in a miraculous manner been placed before his bodily sight, he must have surveyed them in succession, one after another. The evangelist, therefore, must certainly design to be understood of what was instantaneously exhibited to his mind. Other very plain intimations, that the history of Christ's temptation is to be taken, not in a proper and literal, but in a spiritual and allegorical construction, will be produced in the third section. There likewise we shall attempt to shew, that all the evangelists who have mentioned this affair, do, in express terms, affirm, that it passed *spiritually* and *in vision*, that it was an ideal or mental representation; and consequently could not be an outward transaction. And if this point should be made good, it will be allowed that the very letter of the text, instead of supporting, confutes the common interpretation. Before we proceed to the consideration of this point, it will be proper to take notice,

## SECTION II.

**T**HAT there are some, who, allowing that the whole of this history is to be understood as a recital of visionary representations, contend that these visions were framed by the devil, and that the temptations are to be ascribed to his immediate agency<sup>k</sup>.

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This

<sup>k</sup> That those who formerly held the temptations of Christ to be a *vision* or *senical representation*, did not therefore maintain it to be a *divine vision*, (whatever some of late have suggested to the contrary ;) appears by their writings. The question concerning Christ's temptations, which had been agitated before the publication of the 1st edition of this *Inquiry*, was this, *Were they proposed to him outwardly, or in the way of vision?* Those who asserted that all, or any of them were supernatural *visions*, ascribed them to the *devil*, no less than those who believed them to be outward transactions. The learned Spanheim (*Dubia Evang. pars tertia, dub. 55. p. 240, 241.*) states the point in dispute in the following manner: *Quæri enim potest, nec sine causâ, an de historiâ hic agatur, an de visione, & utrum externo congressu adortus fuerit Christum tentator, an potius Christo in visionem & ecclâsin rapto species ejusmodi duntaxat objectæ fuerint a tentatore?* He knew of no *third* opinion, for he adds, *Duplex hinc eruditorum sententia.* And in the sequel he argues against the temptations being visions, because it derogated from the dignity of Christ, to allow, *that the devil could act upon his mind or imagination, and deceive him by various fictitious representations.* This subject, so far as concerns the removal of Christ from place to place, was afterwards discussed by that prodigy of learning, S. Bochart, who states the controversy in the following terms; *Utrum scilicet Christus reipsâ, an verò imaginatione tantum, a Diabolo in montem, templique pinnaculum, fuerit translatus.*

This interpretation, it must be confessed, has one advantage above the former, that it does

translatus. Oper. V. 1. p. 942. ed. Lugduni Batav. 1712. And in the following pages he presses his opponents, as Spanheim also had done, with the difficulties of their avowed principle, *that the devil deceived Christ in vision*. Most of our modern writers assert, that it was the devil who made a visionary representation of all the kingdoms of the world to Christ. And very lately Mr. Mason (in a sermon upon Christ's temptations in the wilderness, published in the 2d volume of the *Protestant System*, 1758.) undertook to shew, that the whole of what is related in the history was not *real fact*, but passed in a *trance, dream* or *vision*. He affirms after others, that the phrase, *in the spirit*, here signifies, in a *spiritual manner*, as he thinks it does in John vi. 63. and also in Ezek. xxxvii. 1, where the prophet says, *he was carried out in the spirit*, not really, but in imagination only, (*mente non revera*) or in vision: (compare Bochart v. 1. p. 954.) At the same time, like all others who asserted the temptations of Christ to be visions, he did not refer them to God, but maintained that the *devil* painted and exhibited the scenes here described, and strongly presented them, not to the *senses*, but *imagination* of our Lord. See p. 308, 311, 314, 315, 317.

Since the publication of the 1st. edition of this inquiry, some have thought, that Le Clerc believed this to be a *divine vision*, merely because he was once inclined to think it *a vision*. And very happy, I acknowledge, would it have been, if (what I esteem) the true opinion concerning Christ's temptations, could have boasted so great a patron, whose name could not have failed procuring it a general attention, and doing it much honour. But we have already shewn, that those who believed the temptations of Christ to be visions, did never assert their *divinity*, but on the contrary took it for granted, that they were framed by the devil, whose agency the history was thought to assert in the strongest manner, and which the principles

does not destroy the uniformity of the history, nor represent the evangelists, as blending together,

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together,

ciples of Le Clerc did not at all incline him to call into question : for a vision is only one species of miracles, and he always taught that the devil may perform *true miracles*. See his note on Exod. vii. 11. What Le Clerc controverts, is just the same with what others had done before, Whether what the devil said and did to our Saviour, was said and done to him when *awake* or *asleep* ; whether this was an *outward* transaction in the *day time*, or only a *mental* representation in a *dream* or *vision*. When he published his 1st edition of Hammond, he rather inclined to this latter opinion ; for he begins his note on Mat. iv. 1, with saying, *What is here related* (i. e. Christ's being led up into the wilderness *to be tempted of the devil*) *may more safely be conceived to have happened to Christ in a vision or dream than really*, or in the outward manner related in the history. In his 2d edition he retracts this opinion, and asserts, *Possunt hæc interdiu contigisse, et a vigilante Christo visa, audita & dicta* ; adding, *itaque nihil est cur ad somnium confugiamus*. All his doubt was about the *manner* in which Christ was led and tempted by *the devil* ; and he no more denied the devil's agency, while he thought this happened to Christ in a dream, than when he afterwards admitted that it might happen to him when awake. The *objections* which he once made to the literal interpretation, and afterwards overcame, farther shew this to be the case. His first objection is to the devil's being permitted *to carry our Saviour through the air*. To destroy the force of this objection, *Whitby* (on Mat. iv. 8.) very pertinently asks, *Looks it not far more odd, to give the devil power over the PHANSIE of our Lord to raise such imaginations in him, and suggest such dreams to him, than barely to give him that power over our Lord's BODY, which neither did nor could do him any hurt*. And Le Clerc's second objection also, which is drawn from the *impossibility* of shewing Christ from a mountain all the kingdoms of the world and all their glory in a moment of time, *if he was awake*, though he says, it might be done *in a dream* ; plainly admits the devil's power to shew

Christ

gether, indiscriminately, ideal and real objects. Nevertheless, in all other respects it seems liable

Christ the prospect in question in his sleep: a thing judged by him to be no way impossible. Having solved, to his own satisfaction, these two objections against the literal interpretation, he thought there was no reason for departing from it; as appears from his words cited above. So that he never disputed any thing but the *manner* in which the devil tempted Christ. And consequently he could not have the least idea of the scenes here described, as being (what it is attempted in the *Inquiry* to shew they are) a *divine revelation and symbolical prediction of the temptations of Christ's future ministry*. Had he believed God to be the *author* of this vision; he would naturally, when he was explaining the *use*, which he tells us, Christ might make of it, have said somewhat about its *wise and benevolent intention*: whereas he says nothing more on this head, than what all do who ascribe the temptations to the devil, which he might as justly have said, if he believed the devil tempted Christ in a dream. Even when he explains the phrase, ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος, *of the spirit*, he attempts to shew, just as Mr. Mason and others who ascribe this vision to the devil do, that it imports only *in spiritu*, that is, *spiritually, mentally* or with respect to the mind (see his *Harmony* on John iii. 5,) and, as he afterwards explains it, in *vision or imagination*, in opposition to an outward transaction. Nay, though here in confirmation of this meaning of the phrase, he refers to passages which describe divine visions, (Ezek. ii. 2. ch. iii. 12. Rev. i. 10. Ezek. xl. 2. Rev. xxi. 10.) he makes no more use of them to prove the vision in question to be divine, than those who believed it to be a diabolical one, who likewise appeal to these passages. And if the phrase does import *no more*, than what both he and they say it does; this alone will not enable us to determine who was the *author* of this vision. Upon Le Clerc's and their principles, this must be determined by other circumstances, either by some additional words, as in Ezek. xl. 2. "the visions of GOD", and ch. xxxvii. 1, "the Spirit of the Lord"; or by the connection, which in the case before



able to equal, or even to greater difficulties than the former.

Those

before us was thought, in the most express manner, to refer to the *devil*, every thing said and done to our Saviour. And it could be with no other view, than to *exclude the agency of God*, and to leave room for *admitting the agency of the devil*, that Le Clerc joins with those who considered this as a diabolical vision, in understanding the phrase with so much latitude, as *possibly* importing only in general, *mentally* or *in vision*; which allowed it's application to *any* vision, *whoever* was the author of it, whether a good or evil spirit. The proper proof of the *divinity* of this vision, arises from a different interpretation of this phrase, as comprehending in it the idea of a *divine* afflatus and inspiration; which the author of the *Inquiry* has endeavoured to shew it does. This *different conduct* in Le Clerc and him, proves their *views* to be *different*.

For these reasons, I think, the world has not been mistaken, in ranking Le Clerc amongst those who [believed the agency of Satan in tempting Christ, though he disputed the *manner* in which it happen'd. Dr. Whitby in particular had no conception that he denied, or that *any one else* could possibly deny, the agency of the devil on this occasion. For in his answer to Le Clerc, after citing the passages which describe the devil as removing Christ from place to place, and afterwards departing from him, asks, *Must not these words UNAVOIDABLY import, that either the devil did really thus tempt him, or else did frame this vision in his brain?* It is plain that Dr. Whitby, than whom no commentator discovers a more extensive acquaintance with books, had never read of any who allowed these scenes to be *visionary*, and at the same time ascribed them to *God*; and that he would have pronounced such an opinion a most flagrant contradiction to the history, which ascribes all to the *devil*. If Le Clerc had entertained this opinion, he certainly would have *attempted* at least to remove so *obvious*, and, in Whitby's judgment, so unanswerable a difficulty. His taking no notice of it, is a farther proof, that his *scheme* was not liable to it. In a word,

Those who will not believe, that the devil could convey Christ, really and corporeally, from one place to another through the air ; do nevertheless admit, that he could raise in Christ a false persuasion that he was thus transported by him. They are cautious indeed how they ascribe to the devil a power of strengthening the bodily sight, that it may reach distant objects ;

word, those, who since the publication of the 1st edition of this *Inquiry*, represent Le Clerc as asserting the divinity of this vision, not only put a *new* and unheard of sense upon his words, but such as, to my apprehension, they are not capable of bearing.

N. B. The 1st edition of Le Clerc's Hammond was printed in 1698, and the 2d in 1714. In this interval, Dr. Whitby published his Commentary. Whether Le Clerc's change of sentiments is to be ascribed to Whitby's reasoning, I know not ; but it is certain the former does not complain of being misrepresented by the latter. I will only add, that Olearius, in his *Observationes Sacræ ad Evang. Matthæi*, having ranked Le Clerc amongst those who asserted Christ's temptation to be a vision; Le Clerc in his account of that author, (*Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne*, Tom. II. p. 349, 350, 351.) declares, that he had never adopted the sentiments of those writers, having only judged it better, *to understand the temptation as a vision, than to allow that the devil carried Christ through the air* ; that he had never denied, but on the contrary had maintained, (both in his *Pneumatology* and his *Logic*,) the power of devils over corporeal substances ; but was now of opinion, that the text in the original imported nothing more, than that the devil *led* or *conducted* Christ. Though Le Clerc had occasion thus accurately to describe and distinguish the different sentiments of divines on this subject, he never drops the least intimation, that either himself or others had ever asserted the *divinity* of this vision. Nor have I been able to discover any traces of this opinion in any writer.

jects; yet readily suppose him capable of placing before the imagination scenes of beauty and grandeur, and of causing it to mistake these shadows for realities. Thus while they deny the power of Satan over the body, they grant him a nobler empire, a sovereign influence over the mind. Nay, to admit Satan to be the author of visionary representations, is to allow him no inconsiderable influence over our corporeal as well as mental faculties; if it be true, as all authors assert, that in a vision the senses themselves are bound up, and the exercise of the bodily organs is suspended, at the time that the mind mistakes those images which are placed before it, for real outward objects. Thus this opinion grants a more astonishing extent and grandeur to the empire of Satan, than the former.

But does *reason* instruct us, that the gracious Parent and Guardian of mankind would entrust their inveterate enemy with so dangerous a power over them as this; and hereby, in effect, commit them, soul and body, into his hands? Does *experience* teach us, that the devil does in fact exercise such power over the human race? most certainly it teaches no such doctrine. And if this be a power which the devil never exerts; upon what grounds can we maintain that he possesses it? *Divine revelation*

*zion* does not run counter either to reason or experience. As it ascribes all miraculous operations in general, so visions<sup>1</sup> in particular, to God as their author; interposing either immediately by himself, or by his angels, those active ministers or symbolical representations of his peculiar providence. It is needless to enlarge under this head; inasmuch as the arguments urged under the former<sup>m</sup>, against the supposition of the devil's possessing a miraculous power over the bodies of men, conclude more strongly against his possessing such a power over their minds and bodies too.

I shall only add, that did the devil really possess the power, which, in contradiction to reason, experience and revelation, some are disposed to allow him; how incredible is it, that it should ever have been exerted upon the Son of God? Can we believe, that this divine person was not only exposed to the suggestions and stratagems of Satan, but overcome by them; that he was possessed and seduced as well as assaulted by the devil, and actually brought under the power of his infernal delusions?

<sup>1</sup> See Gen. xviii. 1, 2. ch. xxviii. 12.—22. ch. xxxi. 11. ch. xxxii. 1, 2, 24.—30. Josh. v. 13.—15. 1 Kings xix. 11, 12. Act. x. 3, 11.—19. ch. xxvii. 23, and the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation.

<sup>m</sup> Sect. I. N<sup>o</sup>. 3. p. 19—27.

sions? The very thought of this strikes the mind with horror! It approaches to blasphemy!

But if the account hereafter to be given of the divine original and benevolent intention of Christ's temptation, shall appear to be just, it will afford the strongest confutation of this, as well as of the foregoing, interpretation. It is a deference due to prevailing opinions, not to reject them without assigning the reasons. And without exploding the old, no new hypothesis can hope to be received, or even to be examined. It was expedient, therefore, previously to propose and consider the objections, which may be raised against the two<sup>n</sup> different explanations of Christ's temptation, which have hitherto generally prevailed. And the obvious difficulties attending both, will at least serve to justify us, in proceeding to enquire,

## S E C T.

\* There is indeed a *third* account of Christ's temptation, which supposes it to have been nothing more, than a bare *meditation* of Christ upon such trials as the devil might possibly propose. But as this opinion does not account for any one circumstance of the history, it does not deserve to be confuted; nor indeed to be mentioned, unless it be merely to shew, how ready persons of reflection were to run to any refuge, rather than acquiesce in either of the foregoing interpretations.

## S E C T III.

**W**HETHER the text itself does not lead us to a very different interpretation, and represent the temptation of Christ as befalling him, while he was under a prophetic vision, of which the Spirit of God himself was the immediate and sole author. This, perhaps, is no more than what follows necessarily, from what has been already suggested. For if the temptation of Christ is neither to be understood as a literal fact, nor diabolical delusion, it must have been a divine vision. And that it was so, may, I apprehend, be fairly argued both from the express letter of the text in the three evangelists, and from several circumstances of the narrative.

St. *Matthew*, after relating the descent of the Spirit of God upon Jesus at his baptism, adds, *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness* °.

It is generally supposed, that these words assert, that he now went into the wilderness in person, under a divine guidance; and that he is said to have been led *up* thither, as the wilderness might lye *high*, in comparison with the

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the banks of *Jordan*. Was it capable of proof, that the banks of *Jordan* in that place, where Christ had been baptized, were lower than the adjacent wilderness; this would not account for the expression; because he had quitted the place where he had been baptized <sup>p</sup>, before it is said that he was *led up* into the wilderness. The expression, therefore, could scarce be referred to the supposed height of the wilderness in that particular place above the banks of *Jordan*. But without insisting upon this; there could be no propriety in saying, that Christ was at this time led up or led into the wilderness; inasmuch as he was there already. It was in the wilderness that *John* exercised his ministry <sup>q</sup>, and baptized our Saviour. Nor did our Saviour quit the wilderness, in the interval between his baptism and his temptation. For it appears, by comparing the several evangelists together <sup>r</sup>, that Christ had but just left  
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<sup>p</sup> *Jesus returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.* Luke iv. 1.

<sup>q</sup> Matt. iii. 1. Mark i. 4.

<sup>r</sup> Mat. iv. 1. Mark i. 12. Luke iv. 1. It has been affirmed, that *Jesus, being baptized of John in the wilderness, returned into Galilee, but was LED BACK AGAIN into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.* And this supposition is absolutely necessary to justify the literal interpretation; but the history, instead of affirming that *Jesus returned into Galilee*, only says, (Luke iv. 1.) *he returned from Jordan, the place of his baptism.* And

the banks of *Jordan*, and therefore was still in the wilderness, at the very time he is said to have been led into it. Now does it not sound very harsh, to speak of any one as going, or being led to a place, where he already is? Interpreters, with a view to solve this difficulty, affirm, that Christ was now led *farther* into the wilderness, and into some more horrid part of it: yet since it is not so much as pretended, that the text itself contains any such intimation; this must be considered as a conjecture entirely groundless; by which the fact is confessed, that Christ was actually in the wilderness, at the very time when he is said to have been led into it. This being allowed; it may very naturally be concluded, that the evangelist cannot be here speaking of Christ's  
being

St. Mark after describing the Baptist as *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*, ch. i. 3, after telling us, that he baptized *in the wilderness, in the river Jordan*, ver. 4, 5. after informing us, that he baptized Jesus in this river, in the wilderness, ver. 9, and relating the heavenly testimony born to Jesus at his baptism; adds, ver. 12, *And immediately* (consequently while he was yet in the wilderness, and even not far from the banks of Jordan) *the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness*. From hence it follows, that as Christ had not yet left the wilderness, he could not be said to be *led back again* into it. It seems likewise to follow farther, that the Spirit's driving Jesus into the wilderness, must refer to Christ's being removed into the wilderness, *spiritually, mentally, and in vision*; because, *corporeally, and personally*, he was in the wilderness before this impulse of the Spirit.



being led, literally and corporeally, into the wilderness; but of his being conducted thither in some different sense and manner. What that was, the following words will explain :

*Then was Jesus led up (or carried<sup>†</sup>) BY THE SPIRIT<sup>‡</sup>. The Spirit, whose afflatus is here spoken of, can be no other than the Spirit of God, with which he was filled at his baptism<sup>u</sup>. Now by the Spirit which Christ received at his baptism, we are here to understand, as all allow, *the extraordinary gifts and inspirations* of the Spirit, bestowed upon the great Prophet of the christian church, to furnish him for the execution of his office, and *in the power of which* he afterwards returned into Galilee<sup>x</sup>. Agreeably to this sense of the*

<sup>†</sup> ἀνίχθην. This word, though it may sometimes signify, *to be led or guided*, yet is often applied to such things as are *lifted up, borne, or carried*.

<sup>‡</sup> ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος. A spiritu sanctitatis, Versio Syriaca. A spiritu sancto, Verf. Persic.

<sup>u</sup> This appears from the manner in which the evangelists connect the account of Christ's temptation with that of his baptism; and from the distinction they make between the Spirit by which he was conveyed into the wilderness, and the tempter. The former is expressly called by St. Luke the *Holy Spirit*, ch. iv. 1. *Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit* (that is, the *Holy Spirit* before mentioned) *into the wilderness*. This justifies the explication given of the language of St. Matthew in the preceding note, and Beza's reading of the parallel passage in St. Mark, which will be mentioned in the sequel.

<sup>x</sup> Luke iv. 1, 14.

word, Christ might be said to be carried into the wilderness *by the Spirit*, if he was carried thither by a *prophetic afflatus*, by immediate revelation or miraculous illumination, in a *vision* or *spiritual rapture*. To this sense of the word, the connexion naturally leads ; and this, the circumstances of the history evidently require. For this alone removes the objection against the literal construction, just now taken notice of. Though it could not with any propriety be said, that Christ was at this time carried into the wilderness in a corporeal manner, in which sense he was there already : yet there is nothing improper in saying, he was now conveyed thither in a spiritual manner, in vision or mental representation, under a divine inspiration.

The sense here affixed to the language of *St. Matthew*, may be justified by the use of the same or similar phrases, in other passages of scripture. The prophet *Ezekiel* was carried away to *Babylon*, with many other of his countrymen, in *Jehoiachin's* captivity ; and the prophetic spirit came upon him, when he was amongst his fellow-exiles by the river *Chebar*, in *Mesopotamia*. Here, as he informs us, he received revelations from God by visions : *The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. The word of the Lord came unto me ; and the*  
*hand*

*band of the Lord was there upon me*<sup>1</sup>. After this general declaration, he goes on to describe the cherubims and other scenes of his vision, in the same manner as if they had been objects of his bodily sight<sup>2</sup>. When he received new visions and revelations from God, such as were particularly designed for the admonition of his fellow-exiles; this new prophetic scene is described in words, which literally import a local translation, which there is not the least reason to suppose; for the prophet, at the time he is represented as conveyed to those of the captivity, was already amongst them in person: *So the Spirit took me up—lifted me up, and took me away*<sup>3</sup>. In the sequel of these prophecies we find *Ezekiel* carried to *Jerusalem*, there shewn the idolatries committed by the *Jews* within the precincts of the temple, and employed in digging in the walls of it, as if he had been actually in that place; notwithstanding these several occurrences, however related as corporeal actions and motions, were undoubtedly transacted in vision only; for he was now at *Babylon*. *The band of the Lord fell upon me, the Spirit lift me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that*  
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looketh

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. i. 1—3. compared with 2 King. iii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. i. 4—28.

<sup>3</sup> Ch. iii. 11—15.

looketh towards the North, &c<sup>b</sup>. When a new scene at Jerusalem was placed before his imagination, it is said, *The Spirit lift him up, and brought him to the place it was designed to represent*<sup>c</sup>. After this he is described as carried back again into Chaldea, from which place he had not, during these successive scenes, been absent in person: *The Spirit took me up, and brought me in vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity; so the vision which I had seen went up from me. Then I spake unto them of the captivity, all the things that the Lord had shewed me*<sup>d</sup>. Upon another occasion he tells us, *The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in (or by) the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones; though what follows is nothing more than the narrative of a vision*<sup>e</sup>. And we find him once more carried to Jerusalem, without stirring from Chaldea: *The hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither. In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel*<sup>f</sup>. From these several passages it appears, that to be brought or carried from one place to another, *in the visions of God*<sup>g</sup>, or (which is a phrase of the like import)

<sup>b</sup> Ch. viii. 1—10.    <sup>c</sup> Ch. xi. 1.    <sup>d</sup> Ch. xi. 24, 25.

<sup>e</sup> Ch. xxxvii. 1.

<sup>f</sup> Ch. xl. 1, 2.

<sup>g</sup> Notwithstanding the positive declaration of the prophet; that

port) *in or by the Spirit* ; does not denote any real local removal, but the being transported from one place to another, by way of mental lively representation, under the power of a divine transe or extacy : and that in this sense, a person may be said to be carried to the very place, where he already was personally and corporeally, if it becomes the scene of his prophetic vision ; or to be returned to that place, though he had never quitted it in the ordinary sense of that expression, if it becomes the scene of new visionary representations ; which, as we observed before, are related as facts, because they appear as such to the prophet. We cannot therefore be at a loss, to understand what St. *Matthew* means<sup>h</sup>, when he tells us, that

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that in the forecited passages he is only reciting visionary representations ; and the obvious absurdities attending the contrary supposition : yet have many contended for a local translation of Ezekiel, either in the body or out of it, from Chaldea to Jerusalem, and for the reality of the scenes and transactions which he describes. But the authors of the *Universal History*, vol. 4. p. 196—198, (8vo. ed. 1747.) have shewn, that the temple described by Ezekiel, had no proportion, as to it's measures, with that of Solomon ; and that it was a prophetic or emblematical one, which never existed but in this prophecy. What end then could be answered by the prophet's being really translated to Jerusalem either in his body or out of it ? The scenes were all painted upon his imagination.

<sup>h</sup> It has been asserted, that the language of Ezekiel is a direct description of visions, which that of the evangelists is not.

But

Jesus was carried up by the Spirit into the wilderness. Thither he seemed to himself to be carried, thither he was transported in vision, under a prophetic divine afflatus.

The expressions used by St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* confirm the explication here given of the language of St. *Matthew*. The words of St. *Mark*<sup>i</sup>, *Immediately* (after his baptism) *the Spirit* (or, according to *Beza's* manuscript, *the Holy*

But whoever will compare the Septuagint version of the passages cited from the prophet *Ezekiel*, with the language of the evangelists, will find a remarkable correspondence between them, such as may farther serve to justify our explaining the latter by the former. Thus *Ezekiel's* saying, πνεῦμα ἤγαγέ με, ch. viii, 3. ch. xi. 1. corresponds to ἀνήχθη ὑπὸ τῷ πνεύματος, in St. *Matthew*. And the ἐν πνεύματι in *Ezekiel*, ch. xxxvii. 1. as it expresses the same thing with St. *Matthew's* ὑπὸ τῷ πνεύματος, so it answers to St. *Luke's* ἐν τῷ πνεύματι, cited below, note <sup>n</sup>. There is no material difference between the ἀνελάβε of *Ezekiel*, ch. iii. 12. ch. ii. 2. ch. viii. 3. ch. xi. 1. and the παραλαμβάνει of St. *Matthew*, ch. iv. 5, 8. The words, ἀναγαγὼν and ἤγαγεν, used by St. *Luke*, ch. iv. 5, 9. in the passages parallel to the last cited ones from St. *Matthew*, correspond to ἤγαγέ εἰς ἠγάγέ and ἐξήγαγέ in *Ezekiel*, ch. viii, 3, 14. ch. xi 1. ch. xxxvii. 1. ch. xl. 3. Now if the language of the evangelists be the same with that of the prophet, it certainly calls for a like construction with that; especially as the style of the new testament is allowed to correspond to the Greek version of the old. And consequently the language of the one is no less expressive than that of the other, both of a prophetic impulse and inspiration of the Spirit, and of the particular mode of that inspiration, which was by vision, as distinct from every other species of revelation,

<sup>i</sup> Ch. i. 12.

*Holy Spirit*) driveth him (or casteth him out <sup>k</sup>) into the wilderness; these words naturally express the divine impulse he was under, and well agree with the supposition of his being thrown into an extacy or trance; and indeed, in the connexion in which they stand, directly and necessarily convey to us the idea of a prophetic rapture or vision; in which method alone Christ could now, with any propriety, be said to be rapt into the wilderness<sup>1</sup>. If any doubt

<sup>k</sup> The original word, ἐκβάλλει, is applied very frequently to describe Christ's expulsion of dæmons. Vid. Mat. viii. 16, 31. ch. ix. 33, 34. ch. x. 1, 8. Mark i. 34, 39. ch. iii. 15. Luke xi. 14. ch. xiii. 32. The word, however, does not always express force and violence; nor is it necessary that it should do so, in order to justify the application here made of it. For in describing *Ezekiel's* vision, ch. viii. 3. ch. xi. 1. ch. xxxvii. 1. the Septuagint says, the Spirit ἡγαγέ led him, or ἐξήγαγέ led him out; which last expression comes very near that of the evangelists, according to the sense in which ἐκβάλλει is used John x. 4. Certain it is, that the language of St. *Mark* cannot intend any thing different from that of St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*; for it appears, by comparing the several passages of *Ezekiel* together, that when he says, *the Spirit led or carried him*, he means the same as when he says, *he was led or carried in the Spirit*.

<sup>1</sup> It has been objected to this explication of the language of St. *Mark*, that if by the *Spirit's* driving *Jesus* into the wilderness, ch. i. ver. 12, he means, that the Spirit drove *Jesus* there mentally and in vision, that is, into an *ideal* wilderness; it will be difficult to reconcile this with what follows, ver. 13, where he certainly speaks of a *literal* one, *And he was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts*. I answer, 1. That it is without doubt of *one* and the *same* wilderness, that St. *Mark* speaks in both these verses. This wilder-

doubt yet remains concerning the manner, in which Christ was now conveyed into the wilderness; it will, perhaps, be removed by St. Luke, who tells us, *That Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost*, (as St. Stephen<sup>m</sup> is also said to be,

ness was a *real* one, the external archetype of the chief scenes of Christ's prophetic vision, and the place where he was in person. Here he continued forty days, and from hence returned into Galilee. The circumstance of *his being with the wild beasts*, proves, without doubt, that the evangelist speaks of a real wilderness; but at the same time rather confirms, than destroys the supposition of Christ's being there in a state of trance, which deprived him of all power of self-defence; and which made it as absolutely necessary that he should, during the continuance of that state, which lasted forty days, be miraculously protected from the wild beasts, as that he should be miraculously supported without food. 2. Were we to suppose, that Mark and the other evangelists speak of Christ's being led or drove into the wilderness personally and corporeally; (which entirely obviates the above objection :) it may nevertheless be true, that his temptation was a mere vision; if these phrases, *the Spirit, in or by the Spirit*, import here, as they certainly do elsewhere, a *miraculous impulse and illumination of the Spirit, discovering new truths to a prophet, opening extraordinary scenes before him, and revealing future events*. See the instances cited below note<sup>o</sup> and<sup>t</sup>.

On this supposition, the meaning of the evangelists will be, "Christ went into the wilderness," [not merely under a divine direction, the phrases import much more than this, but] "under the full influence of the prophetic Spirit, making suitable revelations to his mind, and giving him a view particularly of his future trials." These trials the evangelists describe *as temptations of the devil*, on account of the particular *mode* of their being revealed, being couched under the figure of Satan coming to him, and urging temptations.

<sup>m</sup> Act. vii. 55. *He being full of the Holy Ghost*, (i. e. under it's miraculous energy and illumination) *looked up stedfastly into heaven, &c.*



be, when he had a divine vision) *was led* (or rather *carried*<sup>n</sup>) *by* (or *in*) *the Spirit into the wilderness*. These words, like those of St. Matthew, cited above, are expressive of a prophetic afflatus and illumination<sup>o</sup>; and are applied

<sup>n</sup> ἤχρητο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι, *he was carried in or by the Spirit*. Luke iv. 1. This answers to ἀνήχθη ὑπὸ τῷ πνεύματος, in St. Matthew, and confirms the explication given of it above.

<sup>o</sup> They sometimes denote a *miraculous divine power*, Mat. i. 18. ch. iii. 1. ch. xii. 28. In the following passages they import a *prophetic illumination or revelation*; (as the phrase, ὑπὸ τῷ πνεύματος, used by St. Matthew also does, Acts xiii. 4. ch. xvi. 6.) *David in Spirit*, ἐν πνεύματι, Mat. xxii. 43. or *by the Holy Ghost*, ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ, as it is expressed in the parallel passage in Mark xii. 36. called the Messiah his Lord; that is, he did this by a prophetic impulse of the Spirit. *To speak mysteries, in the Spirit; to pray with the Spirit; to sing with the Spirit*, is to speak, pray, and sing under a miraculous illumination and influence of the Spirit. 1 Cor. xiv. 2, 15. And in this sense the phrase seems to be used, when it is said of *Simeon*, that he came into the temple *by the Spirit*, Luke ii. 27. He came under the powerful inspiration of the prophetic Spirit, of which he gave proofs by the testimony he bore to Jesus, and the predictions he delivered concerning him. And therefore the meaning cannot be, that he came to the temple only by a *divine direction*, see ver. 25. To mention one instance more; *St. Paul went to Jerusalem bound in the Spirit*, Acts xx. 22, assured by the spirit of prophecy the *Jews* would bind him there, ch. xxi. 4, 11. Agreeably to this sense of the phrase, St. Luke may be understood to affirm, “That Christ was led into the wilderness “ (as Simeon came to the temple) under the inspiration of the “ prophetic spirit;” especially as he tells us in the immediately foregoing words, that Christ was *full of the* (gifts of the) *Holy Ghost*; and informs us that when the temptation was finished, he *returned in or with* (Mark i. 23. ch. v. 2.) *the power of the Spirit into Galilee*, that he might preach the Gospel, and confirm

plied particularly to revelations received in the way of *vision*. When St. *John* says, *He was in the Spirit*<sup>p</sup>, by the consent of all interpreters, he means, what we have seen *Ezekiel* meant by the same phrase, that he was under a spiritual rapture or divine vision. When he repeats the same phrase<sup>q</sup>, he still uses it in the same sense. If I quote two passages more from this book, it is on account of their peculiar affinity to the present subject. *He carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness*<sup>r</sup>. *He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain*<sup>s</sup>. Every one must discern, that  
St.

confirm it by miracles. Now if Christ was led into the wilderness, under the miraculous inspiration of the spirit of *prophecy* and *revelation*, being or that he might be (compare Mat. iv. 1. and Rev. xx. 2. where *ligavit eum* denotes ut esset ligatus) *forty days tempted of the devil*: then this temptation of the devil, his appearance and proposals were the subject matter of the revelation now made to Christ by the Spirit; they were the symbols and emblems under which it was contained. See below, p. 61. Whether St. *Luke* and the other evangelists affirm, that Christ was led into the wilderness *personally and corporeally*, or only *mentally*; his temptation there, on either supposition, was a divine vision, the effect of that prophetic afflatus he was now under, and it's declared intention. His *being tempted by the devil*, while under the immediate illumination of the Spirit making new revelations, must be understood as a description of those revelations, which were made in the form of a vision, or contained under the mental representations here given him of the tempter.

<sup>p</sup> Rev. i. 10.

<sup>q</sup> Ch. iv. 2.

<sup>r</sup> Ch. xvii. 3.

<sup>s</sup> Ch. xxi. 10.

St. *John* can be here speaking of a spiritual rapture or vision only †.

Thus, from the express testimony of the three several evangelists, it appears, that Christ was conveyed into the wilderness in a prophetic vision, trance or extacy, under the afflatus  
or

† A late author, instead of so much as attempting to shew, that in any one of the passages cited above, the phrase, ἐν πνεύματι, does not bear the meaning here assigned it; diverts himself with proving, (what no one ever denied,) that in *other* passages it requires a different interpretation; not considering that the same phrase may have different senses, according to the nature of the subject to which it is joined. The most eminent critics, even though they contended for the literal explication of Christ's temptation; yet frequently assign the same or a similar meaning to the phrase ἐν πνεύματι, as I plead for. Dr. S. Clarke (vol. I. ferm. 46. on Mat. v. 3. p. 286. fol. ed.) observes, "That those two different manners of expression, which we now usually call *literal* and *figurative*, were in the *Jewish* language frequently denoted by the words *flesh* and *spirit*. *The flesh*, says our Saviour, *profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*, John vi. 63. His meaning is; he intended not to be understood *literally*, but *figuratively*. To be therefore, or do any thing *in Spirit*; signifies *being* or *doing* that thing *figuratively*;— in opposition to the *gross* and more *literal* meaning, in which the same words may at *other* times be understood. In proof of this observation, he appeals to Rev. xvii. 3. 1 Cor. v. 3. Col. ii. 5. Aët. xx. 22. John iv. 23. Rom. ii. 28. Phil. iii. 3. Mat. v. 3. Dr. Doddridge likewise in his note on Rev. iv. 2. observes, that this phrase, *I was in the Spirit*, signifies, to be under a *strong* and *supernatural* impulse, caused by the *miraculous* operation of the *Spirit* of God, acting on the imagination in such a manner, as to open extraordinary scenes, which had not any exact external archetype."

or inspiration of the Spirit of God. And from hence it is natural to conclude, that his subsequent translation from the wilderness to the summit of the Jewish temple, and from thence to a distant mountain, was also not real and corporeal, but spiritual and mental only; especially as it appears from the history, that Christ was in the wilderness when the temptation ended <sup>u</sup> as well as when it began, pursuing his journey into *Galilee*; and *St. Mark* has assured us in such express terms, that the wilderness was the place where he sustained his temptation: *He was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts* <sup>x</sup>: language which ill agrees with the supposition that the principal temptations were proposed to him, when he was out of the wilderness <sup>y</sup>.

As

<sup>u</sup> Luke i. 14.

<sup>x</sup> Mark i. 13.

<sup>y</sup> This circumstance seems to afford a farther objection to the common hypothesis, and a fresh argument in favour of the interpretation here offered. For if the whole time of Christ's continuing in the wilderness exposed to temptation, was forty days; as the words of *St. Mark* import, *He was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan*, ch. i. 13. and if those particular temptations which we are here examining, did not begin till he had been tempted forty days; as both *St. Luke*, ch. iv. 2. and *St. Matth.* ch. iv. 2. expressly affirm: they must have been proposed to him, not after the forty days were expired, and at three different times, as a late author supposes; but after the commencement of the fortieth day, and yet before the expiration of

As it was in vision only that Christ was removed from place to place ; so all the parts of this temptation ; as well the several proposals made to Christ, as the different scenes and objects presented to him, were merely ideal and visionary. For St. Matthew affirms, that Christ was carried into the wilderness in a trance or vision, for this very purpose, viz. *that he might be tempted of the devil*<sup>z</sup>. From hence it necessarily follows, that his being tempted of the devil was a trance or vision ; inasmuch as it could not have been said, that his temptation by the devil was the end and design of his trance or vision, if it had not itself been such. And the expression, *that he might be tempted of the devil*, must be intended to specify and describe the *nature* of the vision or representation. The entire meaning of the evangelist is plainly this : “ Jesus was carried  
 “ into the wilderness by a prophetic im-  
 “ pulse of the Spirit in vision ; which (in  
 “ part, at least) consisted in a seeming appear-  
 “ ance of the devil to him proposing and urg-  
 “ ing temptations : and the making this repre-  
 “ sentation to the mind of Christ, was the  
 “ special

it. But in so short a time, how was it possible, that Christ should hold a conversation with the devil, first in the wilderness of *Jordan*, next upon the top of the temple of *Jerusalem*, and at last upon a high mountain, and after travelling to such distant places, return again to that from which he set out at first ?

<sup>z</sup> Mat. iv. 1.

“ special end of his trance or vision in the wilderness.” It would not therefore be more unreasonable, to construe the prophetic visions of *Ezekiel* and St. *John* referred to above, as relations of a series of real occurrences; than it is to put the like construction upon this vision of Christ; since both are introduced in the same manner, that is, with express declarations to the contrary.

But if Christ’s temptation was a visionary representation, some may be ready to ask, Why is it said, that he was led up into the wilderness to be tempted *of the devil*? And why is the devil described as coming to him and tempting him accordingly, and taking him from one place to another; just in the same manner as if he had been really present, and actually done these things? The answer to these questions may be gathered, from what was said above concerning the nature of prophetic visions, and the manner in which they are related in scripture. In a vision, the *images* of things appear, not the *objects themselves*: and therefore the devil was not really and personally present with Christ, but only in mental representation; and consequently could act no part in this whole transaction. If what is here said concerning his presence and agency be a reality, and not a mental exhibition, this was

no vision. But though there was no real presence or agency of Satan upon this occasion; yet was his image now placed before the imagination of Christ, and he seemed to him to say and do all that is ascribed to him in the history: which was, *in effect*, the same thing with regard to Christ, as if this had been the very case, and the devil had appeared and tempted him in person, and translated him from place to place by his proper agency. It is for this reason, that the history affirms, that the devil did all these things. In all visions, (as in all dreams, which may be considered as natural visions,) the images pass for the objects they represent, make the same impression, and answer the same end with them; and in correspondence to these inward views and apprehensions of the prophet, is the narrative of his visions always framed. He takes them for facts, and they are related as such; as we have shewn in a great variety of instances<sup>a</sup>. The evangelists, therefore, in ascribing the temptation to the devil, have used no other language, than what it was to be expected they would use, no other than what was common on all such occasions. In conformity to the same manner of speaking, they tell us, that at  
the

<sup>a</sup> See above, p. 29—31. and p. 50—54. and below, p. 72—74.

the close of the temptations, the devil *departed from him*<sup>b</sup>; when nothing more is to be understood, than that the image of the devil now disappeared. Such language as this cannot be mistaken by those, who remember, that images impressed, and actions performed upon a prophet's imagination, are always related in the same manner, as if they had been real objects and outward transactions; and that the temptation of Christ is declared by the evangelists, to be a prophetic trance and revelation.

This passage of scripture then, is to be understood as a history, not of a fact, but of a vision. As such the writers of the gospel expressly represent it, without leaving us (as the sacred penmen have been thought to do in other

<sup>b</sup> Mat. iv. 11. Luke iv. 13. St. *Luke* says, *He departed from him for a season*. The several scenes of this vision being, as will be shewn below, prophetic emblems of Christ's future temptations, and the sacred writers every where supposing that all temptations are urged by the devil; the season here referred to, is probably that of the accomplishment of these predictions, when the devil who now proposed these temptations in appearance, would assault him again, though after *another* manner. Particular notice is taken of his attempts against Christ at the close of his ministry, by the instrumentality of wicked men, John xiv. 30. ch. xiii. 2. Luke xxii. 3, 53. The advocates of the literal interpretation, can not reasonably object to that here given of this passage: for they themselves do not plead, that the devil ever assaulted Christ at any other time in the *same* manner, they suppose he now did; and admit that the passage refers to the persecutions he suffered at the close of his ministry.



other instances) to collect it from the nature and circumstances of the relation. They likewise represent this vision, not as diabolical, but divine; ascribing it to the Spirit of God. So that to all the other arguments urged above, we may add (what we before promised to produce) the authority of the evangelists, and the express letter of the text, in confutation of those, who misconstrue Christ's temptation, either as an outward transaction, or as an illusion of Satan<sup>c</sup>. Nor are the evangelists at all answer-

<sup>c</sup> Should it be objected, that by asserting the visionary nature of Christ's temptation, while we allow the reality of his forty days fast, and subsequent hunger, the history appears a confused mixture of facts and visions: I answer, that there are certain rules by which facts and visions may (very generally at least) be distinguished from each other; which were laid down above, p. 30—33. If the historian makes no particular and express declaration, that what he relates as matter of fact, is only a vision; we are to be determined by the nature and scope of the relation. But in the present case, the language of the sacred penmen guards us from mistake. By telling us that Christ was carried into the wilderness by a miraculous operation of the Spirit *in vision*, to be tempted of the devil; they lead us to conceive of every part of the temptation as visionary. And this declaration does not affect any other branch of the history; which ought therefore to be literally understood, as the nature and intention of the facts themselves manifestly require. It is further urged, “ that it is unnatural  
 “ to suppose, Christ was carried into the wilderness *spiritually*  
 “ in order to his having a visionary representation of the devil's  
 “ temptations; inasmuch as there intervened the space of forty  
 “ days, between his supposed spiritual rapture into the wilder-  
 “ nefs and those temptations; in which intervening space of  
 “ time

answerable for those misconstructions which have been put upon it.

But

“ time Christ’s fast and hunger, which we allow to be real occurrences, took place.” But though there was indeed the space of forty days between Christ’s being carried into the desert in vision, and those particular temptations which are recorded by St. Mathew and St. Luke, (probably because they referred to Christ’s *publick ministry*, while they omitted others of a more personal and private nature;) yet we are expressly told by St. Mark (ch. i. 13.) *That he was there in the wilderness* (in the same place, and in the same state of trance or extacy, as he was when the Spirit at first carried him into the wilderness. See above p. 47. note <sup>r</sup>. and p. 54.) *forty days tempted of the devil*. And since we have proved, that by his being tempted by the devil, we are to understand his having a representation of the devil as coming to him, and proposing temptations; he must have been during the entire space of forty days under the power of a divine vision. The other circumstances of the history, instead of destroying, confirm this opinion. His being supported forty days without food, and without feeling the sensation of hunger, was itself a perpetual miracle wrought upon his body, and one very proper to preserve his mind in the most fit state for receiving supernatural communications from God. Towards the close of the fortieth day, the divine power was suspended, and Christ was permitted to feel the sensation of hunger, in order to prepare the way to the first temptation, (just as Peter *became very hungry* before his vision of the sheet containing all manner of animals, Act. x. 10;) and to give him a juster sense of what was afterwards to befall him. And lastly, Christ’s miraculous protection through the whole space of forty days, from the commencement to the conclusion of his vision, during which he could be in no capacity of defending himself, (as was observed above p. 41.) agrees better with our hypothesis, than with any other. Now if Christ’s vision commenced at the time of his being carried into the wilderness in the Spirit, and continued  
through

But some, perhaps, may still imagine, that this state of the case, while it solves some difficulties, raises others; since it may seem hard to conceive, that a divine hand should present such scenes as these before the mind of Christ, or what purposes worthy the wisdom of God could be thereby answered. This brings us,

#### S E C T. IV.

**T**O examine the proper intention of this prophetic vision. Here I will endeavour to shew, that the several scenes which it contains, though presented to Christ in the form, and capable of answering the end, of a present trial; were directly intended as a symbolical prediction and representation of the future difficulties of his office and ministry. But what occurs in this and the former section, I offer with a just diffidence; and having no guide to follow, it behoves me to proceed with caution, and to prepare the way for the proof of what is advanced, by premising a few general observations.

1.) It may be observed, that Christ was liable to temptations. This is plainly implied

F 2 in

through the entire space of forty days, till it was closed with those representations of Satan described by St. Mathew and St. Luke; the objection under consideration falls to the ground.

in that declaration of Christ to his disciples, *Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations*<sup>d</sup>; and expressly asserted in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, *He himself hath suffered, being tempted*<sup>e</sup>. In terms of yet larger import it is said, *He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*<sup>f</sup>. There is in these several passages a very peculiar reference to the outward sufferings and persecutions which he underwent. . But these were not the only trials to which he was exposed. The most innocent affections, the desire of esteem, the dread of poverty or reproach, resentment against injury or wickedness, and other passions belonging to our original frame, whenever they interfere with the conviction of duty, cannot but serve for our trial, whether we will be governed by them or by conscience. And therefore amongst innumerable other triumphs of the Redeemer's virtue, we read, that *he did not seek his own glory*<sup>g</sup>, that he *became poor*<sup>h</sup> *for our sakes*, that he tempered his *anger* with compassion<sup>i</sup>, endured

<sup>d</sup> Luke xxii. 28.<sup>e</sup> Heb. ii. 18.<sup>f</sup> Ch. iv. 15.<sup>g</sup> John vii. 14.<sup>h</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 9.

<sup>i</sup> Mark iii. 5. *And when he had looked round about on them with anger, συλλυπούμενος at the same time grieving for the hardness of their hearts.* He was at once touched both with displeasure and compassion at the malice and obstinacy of the Pharisees.

dured the *same*<sup>k</sup> as well as torture of the cross, and restrained his own inclinations out of regard to the benefit of others; for *be pleased not himself*<sup>l</sup>. In a word, there is no passion, if it be not kept under discipline, which may not hold us back from our duty, or lead us into sin. The first *Adam*, though he came out of the hands of his maker in a state of innocence, was liable to temptations; and he fell by them: the second *Adam* was as liable to them as the first, though he overcame them. This observation, (which is not always carried to it's just extent,) is very necessary to the right understanding of this passage, whether it describes a present or foretels a future trial. It may likewise serve to illustrate many other passages of scripture, and to set the character of our Redeemer in a just point of light; for his merit rises in proportion to the number and strength of those temptations which he overcame. We may observe farther,

2.) That it is possible, this vision might contain a present trial. \* The two most common ways, in which God revealed himself to the prophets, were visions and  
 F 3 dreams.

<sup>k</sup> Heb. xii. 2.

<sup>l</sup> Rom. xv. 3.

\* How far, and in what sense, this vision might be a present trial, is shewn in the Appendix, N<sup>o</sup>. V.

dreams<sup>m</sup>. In both these, the divine will was generally communicated by emblematical images and appearances<sup>n</sup>; and therefore they are opposed to a direct and plain revelation, in which there was no enigmatical or parabolical representation<sup>o</sup>. But there was this difference between visions and dreams: in a dream, the inspired person was asleep, all his external senses were bound up, and the ordinary operation of his reason suspended; but in a vision, he was awake, and had the regular exercise of his understanding and judgment<sup>p</sup>. This kind  
of

<sup>m</sup> Numb. xii. 6. Joel ii. 28.

<sup>n</sup> Dan. viii. 1—10, 15. Gen. xxviii. 12. ch. xl. 9—11, 16, 17. ch. xli. 1—7. Hof. xii. 10. Visions and dreams seem sometimes to have succeeded one another, Gen. xv. 1, 12. Dan. vii. 1, 2. ch. viii. 16—18.

<sup>o</sup> Numb. xii. 6—8.

<sup>p</sup> It has, indeed, been generally said, that in visions as well as in dreams, the external senses were laid asleep; but as this is said without evidence, so it destroys the distinction between these two different methods of revelation. In a vision, I grant, the mind of the prophet might be so ingrossed by the striking scenes that were presented to it, as to render him quite regardless of the external objects around him; but inasmuch as he was awake, the ordinary exercise of his understanding could not be suspended, as it is when the external senses are asleep. See Numb. xxiv. 2—4, 16. If the senses were indeed bound up in a vision; this was done by a supernatural agency, in order to prevent the mind from being diverted by outward objects and occasions, and to engage it's attention more closely to those miraculous scenes which were spread before it.

of inspiration was called vision or sight<sup>q</sup>, probably not from any use made of the bodily sight, but on account of the analogy between these two methods of information; vision exciting images within us, or enabling the mind to perceive objects, no less than the corporeal faculty of seeing. For this reason prophets are often called *seers*<sup>r</sup>. And though the representations of a vision are only as the images of things in a glass, in which we do not behold the things themselves; yet vision gives as clear a view of what it represents, as if it was the very thing itself, and the notice of it was conveyed by the senses. What is imaginary, no way differs in appearance from that which is real, and has the same effect upon the prophet; who does not at the time distinguish between the images of a vision, and outward objects<sup>s</sup>.

F 4

If

<sup>q</sup> I hear speak of vision, as distinguished from every other species of revelation, not as it denotes prophecy or inspiration in general, or any extraordinary discovery of the mind of God.

If. i. 1. 2 Sam. vii. 4—17. Prov. xxix. 18.

<sup>r</sup> 1 Sam. ix. 9.

<sup>s</sup> See above, Sect. 1. p. 31, note d. In confirmation of what is there argued at large in proof of this point, I add; that when *Saul had a vision of Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight*, Acts ix. 12; this was an exact representation of what was afterwards actually done. And *Saul*, though now *blind*, saw *Ananias* as clearly in representation or vision, as he did when he appeared to him visibly, upon the recovery

If the mind be passive, as no doubt it is, in receiving these images, and cannot but judge according to appearances; let it be remembered, that just thus it is with regard to the impression made by external objects themselves, and the ideas they raise in the mind; the will having no more power to controul our inward views and apprehensions, in this latter case, than in the former. And as in both cases, the mind is alike passive in receiving impressions; so in all other respects, it may enjoy an equal liberty in both. Whether the notice of things is conveyed to it, by the instrumentality of the senses, or by a miraculous agency; it may experience the same dispositions and sentiments with regard to the things themselves. It may be as capable of a rational determination and choice, with respect to the representations of a vision, as with respect to the objects of sense. And consequently, the one may serve for the trial, display and improvement of virtue, no less than the other.

This account of the nature of prophetic visions, is confirmed by the behaviour of those who have been favoured with them. During the super-

recovery of his sight. This is one proof, amongst many others, that the miraculous scenes of a vision were not (always, if ever) placed before the bodily eye, but were discerned by the *mind*, without the assistance of the corporeal organ.



supernatural illumination of their understandings, they were free from that extatic disorder and confusion of mind, as well as from those convulsive agitations of body, with which the pretences to prophecy and divination amongst the Pagans were attended. As their reason was not disturbed, so their passions worked in a natural way; and were affected by the scenes of a vision, just as they would have been by outward objects of a similar nature presented to their senses †. They argued and acted with as much freedom, force and propriety, as they could have done at any other time. Thus<sup>u</sup> when *the word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision, saying, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward; Abraham very rationally represented to God, how little the greatest riches would avail him, if he must at last leave them to the inheritance of a servant. And when God promised him, that a son of his own body should become his heir, and brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars<sup>x</sup>, if thou be able to number them;*

† See Gen. xv. 12, 13. ch. xvii. 17. Isa. xxi. 3, 4. Jer. xxiii. 9. Dan. x. 11, 12, 16, 17. Act. xviii. 9. ch. xxiii. 11, and compare Exod. iii. 3. Dan. v. 5. Act. xxvi. 19.

<sup>u</sup> Gen. xv. 1—6.

<sup>x</sup> This language, *God brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now towards heaven, and tell the stars*, confirms what was observed

them; adding, *so shall thy seed be*; Abraham believed in the Lord, upon due consideration of the omnipotence and truth of God, who *counted it to him for righteousness*, while he was yet under the vision. In like manner, when St. Peter<sup>y</sup> had a visionary representation of a large sheet, let down, as it were, from heaven, full of abundance of animals, clean and unclean, all mixed together; and was bid to take his choice, and satisfy his hunger; he startles at the proposal, and remonstrates just as he would have done, had it been a real scene, not a visionary one; *Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten any thing common or unclean*: for he was not yet aware, that the *Jewish* law was no longer, in any part of it, obligatory upon christians. It were both a needless and an endless talk to adduce all the other examples<sup>z</sup> of this

served above, Sect. 1. p. 29—33, that the representations of a vision are related as facts; and justifies the explication given of the language both of the prophet *Ezekiel*, and of the evangelists, Sect. 3. For that this was nothing more than a visionary representation, is certain from its being called a vision, ver. 1; and from this farther circumstance, that the sun was not yet gone down, ver. 12, and consequently the stars were not visible to the eye.

<sup>y</sup> Acts x. 10—14.

<sup>z</sup> Those, however, who desire more instances, may compare St. Paul's behaviour when he had a vision of Christ in the temple, Act. xxii. 17—20; with his behaviour when he had an actual

this kind which the scripture affords ; since amongst the numerous visions it records, I do not recollect one, in which the prophet does not discover a sound understanding, and make the same reflections upon the imaginary scenes which passed before him, as he would have done had they been real. And if this was the case with the other prophets, during their visions ; it is reasonable to suppose, it was the same with Christ, during his ; and consequently he was capable of returning a rational answer to the proposals made to him in vision, in the manner the history represents ; and his rejecting them would *discover* and *display* the virtuous affections and principles by which he was governed. And so far this vision would serve as a present trial. This however could not be it's direct intention ; as is shewn in the appendix <sup>a</sup>.

3.) This vision, was properly designed as a prediction and symbolical representation of the particular difficulties and temptations, he was to meet with in the execution of his office, and in the exercise of his miraculous powers, as the Messiah. If we examine the other visions recorded

actual sight of him on his way to *Damascus*, ch. ix. 4—6 : and they will find both to be equally rational. Or they may consult Ezek. iv. 9—14, and the passages referred to above, p. 73.

note t.

<sup>a</sup> N<sup>o</sup>. V.

recorded in scripture, we shall find, that all the images they contained, were not designed for their own sakes, without any farther intention and reference; but that they were symbols or emblems, that is, signs and representations of other things<sup>b</sup>. By these images and emblems, God was pleased to signify and express moral instructions, and to foretel and prefigure future events. From hence it will follow, that if the temptation of Christ was a divine vision, as we have already proved it to be; we must allow in general, that the images presented to him in it, were symbolical, or relative to some other matters, of which they were an apt representation; unless we will interpret this vision, in a manner different from all other visions. But if the vision of Christ was figurative and parabolical, it may very naturally be inquired, What is the particular intention of it? and how is this to be learnt? I answer, that as it is no where explained in scripture, the proper meaning of it must be collected from the nature and circumstances of the vision itself, as was usual in the like cases. When the images of a vision bore an  
 obvi-

<sup>b</sup> See the appendix, N<sup>o</sup>. IV. where many proofs of the prophetic and symbolical nature of visions in general, are produced,

obvious meaning, and clearly pointed out the particular instruction they were designed to convey, no formal explanation was given<sup>c</sup>. The enquiry here therefore must be, What do the images or signs in this vision most naturally denote? to what do the symbols most nearly correspond? And if it should appear, when we proceed to examine the particular scenes of this vision, that there is a perfect correspondence and resemblance between them and the several temptations to which Christ was exposed, in the exercise of his ministry and miraculous powers; it may fairly be inferred, that the former were designed as a prediction and prefiguration of the latter. But should it be ever so clearly demonstrated, that this vision contains a representation of the future difficulties of Christ's public ministry; this will rather confirm, than overthrow the opinion of its answering at the same time the end of a present trial; since the very prospect of those difficulties would constitute a very great trial. And surely

<sup>c</sup> When *Daniel* had seen the vision of the ram and he-goat, he sought for the meaning, and it was explained to him. Dan. viii. 15—17. But when *St. Peter* doubted in himself, what his vision (cited above, p. 56, 57,) should mean, no formal explanation of it was given, though it was designed for his own information. He was only directed to go with the messengers of *Cornelius*; which was sufficient to guide him into the true interpretation of his vision. Act. x. 17—20.

surely the wisdom of God might frame such scenes, as should be both probationary in their own nature, and prophetic or symbolical in their principal intention. This leads me to add,

4.) That such scenes as this vision contains, whether considered as probationary or prophetic, might be presented to Christ by a divine hand, without any unworthy imputation upon the divine holiness or goodness. Nothing is more certain, than that *God does not tempt any man*<sup>d</sup>, in the criminal sense of that expression; he never acts with an intention of seducing men into sin; nay, he does every thing consistent with the rules of his moral government, to guard them against it. And in this sense of the word, the scenes of this vision did not contain a present temptation; they were not designed to seduce Christ into sin<sup>e</sup>. Nevertheless, there is a sense of the word, in which God does *tempt*<sup>f</sup> men; that is, he proposeth to them suitable trials, for the discovery, display and improve-

<sup>d</sup> Jam. i. 13.

<sup>e</sup> See Appendix No. V.

<sup>f</sup> The word, *πειράζειν*, imports nothing more, in its primary signification, than *πειραν λαβεῖν*, *periculum facere*, to make a *trial*, *essay* or *proof* of something. Act. xxiv. 6. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Heb. xi. 17. But even in this sense of the word, when God is said to tempt men; this is not designed for his own information, but to serve the ends of his moral government.

improvement of their piety and obedience. Thus God tempted, or made trial of, *Abraham*<sup>e</sup>. And thus he tempteth or trieth all men; having indued them with those affections, and placed them in those circumstances, which necessarily constitute a trial of their integrity. Nor are these trials unworthy of God; but are indeed the very means he uses to exercise, confirm and perfect our virtue. And trials might be proposed to the Son of God, with the same general intention as they are to the children of men. For *though a Son, yet learned he obedience, by the things which he suffered*<sup>h</sup>. It could not therefore be unworthy of God, to spread such scenes before the mind of Christ, as should serve to exercise, to discover and display his virtue: the only sense in which we assert them to be probationary<sup>i</sup>. But what alone would be a full vindication of the divine conduct in the present case, is, that the scenes of this vision were designed to represent the temptations of his future ministry, such as it could not be unworthy of God to place before his view; because they were no other than what God saw fit actually to appoint. They sprung from a divine constitution, were the natural consequence of the humanity of Christ,

of

<sup>e</sup> Gen. xxii. 1.

<sup>h</sup> Heb. v. 8.

<sup>i</sup> See Appendix, No. V.

of the office and powers with which he was invested by the Father, and the wise rules by which he was to conduct himself in the exercise of them. So that he was placed by God in those trying circumstances, which this vision represented. And as the proposals, which were afterwards to occur in real life, now appeared to be made to him by the *devil*; the manifest intention of the vision was to lead him into a just conception of those proposals, as criminal in their nature, and on that account fit to be rejected<sup>k</sup>. Besides, as the best ends were to be answered, (as we shall endeavour to evince,) by this prediction and representation of such future events as were to befall him, it must be esteemed worthy to proceed from the Spirit, not of delusion, but of holiness, truth and wisdom<sup>l</sup>.

Having premised these general observations, I proceed now (as I proposed) distinctly to examine the several scenes of this prophetic vision, in order to point out the peculiar intention of each, and to shew, that though they might contain a present trial<sup>l</sup>, yet that they were

<sup>i</sup> See the Appendix N<sup>o</sup>. VI.

<sup>k</sup> With regard to the objection made to the representation of Satan's promise of the world to Christ, see the Appendix N<sup>o</sup>. VII.

<sup>m</sup> Should it appear doubtful to any, whether the several scenes of this vision were probationary in their nature, and answered



were directly and properly designed as symbolical predictions and representations of the future difficulties of Christ's office and ministry.

I. In the first of these prophetic scenes, the great adversary <sup>n</sup> of mankind seemed to approach our Redeemer, and to accost him in the following manner: *If thou be (or, inasmuch<sup>o</sup> as thou art) the Son of God (or, the Messiah<sup>p</sup>) command that these stones be made bread.*

Christ

answered the end of a present trial; this will not affect what is urged in support of their being a prediction and prefiguration of Christ's future trials; which is here asserted to be their proper intention.

<sup>n</sup> When God revealed to *Abraham* in a deep sleep the afflictions of his posterity, they were represented by the horror of great darkness, Gen. xv. 12, 13. But what more natural emblem of temptations could there be, than the image of the great tempter?

<sup>o</sup> It is generally thought, that these words imply a doubt in the devil, whether Jesus was the Messiah; or that they were intended to raise such a doubt in the breast of Jesus himself. But that the devil could not doubt who Jesus was, has been shewn above, sect. 1. p. 11. note <sup>b</sup>. And when we consider what express testimonies were born to Christ at his baptism, it appears impossible, that Jesus himself should entertain any doubt about his own character. In those words, *If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread*, it is taken for granted, that he was the Son of God; and he is prompted to act as became him under that character. See the note here referred to.

<sup>p</sup> That the Messiah and the Son of God, are equivalent terms, will appear by comparing Mat. xxvi. 63. Luke xxii. 67,

Christ having already continued fasting forty days and forty nights together; and the divine power by which his body had hitherto been sustained without any nourishment, being withdrawn; he now began to feel the keen sensations of hunger<sup>9</sup>: and he was still in the wilderness, remote from all the ordinary means of sustenance. In these circumstances it was suggested to him by the tempter, “That it  
 “ was very unsuitable to his dignity and pe-  
 “ culiar relation to the Father, to remain de-  
 “ stitute of the necessary supports of life; and  
 “ that it became him to exert the miracu-  
 “ lous powers with which he was invested as  
 “ the Messiah, for his own immediate relief.”  
 What temptation could be more specious than this? why might not the Son of the most High, when he felt the severe pressure of bodily wants, and had no prospect of a supply in the ordinary way, exert his power for so important a purpose, as self-preservation?

Yet, forcible as this temptation was, it was rejected, and upon the justest principles; as  
 appears

70. John i. 34, 41, 49. Mat. xvi. 16. Mark viii. 29. Act. viii. 37. — See Pf. ii. 7, from whence the *Jews* might learn to apply this title, *the Son of God*, to the Messiah.

<sup>9</sup> This circumstance was proper to prepare the way to the present temptation, and to give it force. Compare Act x. 10, where we read that St. Peter *became very hungry*, just before his vision of the sheet containing all manner of living creatures.

appears from the following reply of our Lord : *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*<sup>r</sup>. These words, which are borrowed from the writings of *Moses*, refer to the case of the *Israelites* in the wilderness, and assign the reason of God's feeding them there with manna from heaven. In this connection they are very applicable to the case of our Lord, and are to be understood as comprizing in them the following argument: " If God, when he led the  
 " *Israelites* into the wilderness, did not suffer  
 " them to perish in it, but interposed in a mi-  
 " raculous manner for their supply, and fed  
 " them with manna, (which, though a light  
 " kind of food, gave their bodies as much vi-  
 " gour as the bread and flesh of *Egypt*,) in or-  
 " der to convince them, that he could sustain  
 " this animal life, not by bread only, but by  
 " whatever other means he should see fit to  
 " appoint and provide, or even without any  
 " natural means at all, by his own efficacious  
 " word or will alone<sup>s</sup> : why then should I,  
 " from a distrust either of his power or provi-  
 " dential goodness, undertake to supply my  
 " own

G 2

<sup>r</sup> Deut. viii. 3.

<sup>s</sup> As in the case of *Moses*, Exod. xxiv. 18. Deut. ix. 9, 18 ; of *Elijah*, 1 King. xix. 8 ; and of *Christ*, Mat. iv. 2 ; each of whom fasted forty days.

“ own wants in a manner he has not pre-  
 “ scribed? He will not be less ready, at the  
 “ proper season, to interpose on my behalf,  
 “ than he was on their’s; since I was brought  
 “ into the wilderness under his direction †, as  
 “ they were; and have hitherto had experi-  
 “ ence of his power in protecting me from  
 “ the dangers of the place, and in sustaining  
 “ me without food for forty days together. In  
 “ this Exigence, I will trust in God; persua-  
 “ ded that he will himself rather work a mi-  
 “ racle in my favour, than suffer me to want  
 “ necessary sustenance.” Thus did our Lord,  
 from a principle of resignation to God, and re-  
 liance on his power and care, refuse to turn  
 stones into bread. And his piety was speedily  
 rewarded by a miraculous supply of food, pro-  
 vided for him by God †. For, when the temp-  
 tation was ended, *the angels came and mini-  
 stered unto him* \*. And does it not appear, from  
 what has already been offered under this head,  
 that this first scene in Christ’s vision was pro-  
 bationary,

† This amounted to a virtual promise of support, in one method or other.

‡ Compare 1 Kings xix. 5.

\* Mat. iv. 11. The word, *διακονεω*, here rendered to *minister*, very often signifies, *to minister food*, or *to wait at table*. Mat. viii. 15. Luke xvii. 8. ch. xxii. 27. John xii. 2. Numerous instances of this use of the word in heathen authors are produced by *Wetstein* upon the place.

bationary, and served to discover the present turn and temper of his mind ?

No less evident does it seem that this scene was prophetic, and had a reference to his future ministry, through the whole course of which he was pressed with the same kind of temptations, and resisted them upon the same principles. This part of the vision very naturally conveyed this general instruction ; “ That Christ, though the Son of God, was to struggle with the afflicting hardships of hunger and thirst, and all the other evils of humanity, like the lowest of the sons of men : and that he was never to exert his divine power for his own personal relief, under the most pressing difficulties, or for the supply of his most urgent occasions ; but with resignation and faith to wait for the interposition of God in his favour.” Accordingly we find that Christ regulated his conduct by this maxim. He did not subsist by miracles ; but though rich in the possession of a power capable of controuling all the laws of nature, though heir and lord of all, he became poor, lived an indigent life, without any settled habitation or certain provision<sup>y</sup>. He knew how much more blessed it is to give than to receive, and yet disdained not to accept kind-

<sup>y</sup> Mat. viii. 20.

ness from others, or even to stand indebted to their bounty for his support<sup>z</sup>. In some circumstances he felt the pressure of hunger<sup>a</sup>, without having food to eat; at other times he had no leisure to take any, through a zealous application to the duties of his office, such as was not to be interrupted by the pressing calls of nature. He chose rather to deny himself necessary refreshment, than lose an opportunity of healing and instructing the multitude<sup>b</sup>. And neither on these, nor on any other occasions, did he relieve himself by a miracle. This is the more extraordinary, as he interposed with readiness on the behalf of others, who daily rejoiced in the temporal as well as spiritual benefit of his divine power; and at different times fed the hungry multitudes in the desert, by a miraculous increase of his own slender provisions<sup>c</sup>. Nor did he only endure hunger and thirst, but all the other evils incident to human nature. He lived a laborious, and led an itinerant life. Instead of commanding angels to his service, he submitted to the inconveniences and fatigue<sup>d</sup> of travelling on foot from one part of *Judea* and *Galilee* to another,

<sup>z</sup> Luke viii. 3.      <sup>a</sup> Mark xi. 12.

<sup>b</sup> Mark iii. 20, 21. ch. vi. 31—34. Mat. xiv. 13, 14.

<sup>c</sup> Mat. xv. 33, 34. Mark viii. 4, 5. Mat. xiv. 16, 17. Mark vi. 37, 38.

<sup>d</sup> John iv. 6.

another, and was tossed about by tempests at sea. He was exhausted<sup>e</sup> by the incessant labours of his ministry, and that intense application of mind with which he engaged in it. After performing tiresome journies, and preaching to the crowds which followed him, in the day; he often spent a considerable part of the night, sometimes the whole of it, in earnest prayer to God, and in the open air; notwithstanding the copious dews, which fall by night in those parts, must have been very dangerous, especially when the body was heated by the exercise of the preceding day. So many injuries did his constitution suffer, that the crasis, or texture of his blood, was destroyed, and sweated through every pore of his body<sup>f</sup>. And to such a degree was he enfeebled by the violences to which he patiently submitted, as to be unable to bear his cross<sup>g</sup>. He, who in so many thousand instances renewed the health and vigour of others, never exerted any miraculous power either to preserve or restore

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<sup>e</sup> Dr. *Lardner*, in the first volume of his supplement to the credibility of the gospel history, p. 203, observes, that our Lord's sleeping in the midst of a storm was owing to his undertaking the voyage in the evening, after the fatigue of long discourses in publick, and without any refreshment. Mark iv, 36—38.

<sup>f</sup> Luke xxii. 44.

<sup>g</sup> Mat. xxvii. 32.

his own, but sunk under the pressure of his infirmities! In all his exigencies he referred himself to God. Even under that great extremity, his agony in the garden, he fought and waited for the interposition of God; who, in answer to his prayer, sent an angel from heaven to strengthen him<sup>§</sup>. And when the hour of his death approached, he used no means for his rescue<sup>h</sup>, but meekly resigned himself into the hands of his most malicious enemies, in obedience to his Father's will.

The divine powers with which Christ was invested, were designed as the seal of his mission; and accordingly they were never applied to a different purpose. This strict appropriation of his miracles to their proper intention, served to point it out more clearly, and to keep it in constant view; to manifest the wisdom and necessity of the works themselves, and to preserve their dignity and authority, which would have been impaired, if not destroyed, by a more general application of them. As Christ never applied them to any purpose foreign to their grand intention; so it was in a very peculiar manner necessary, that they should never be employed to protect himself from the calamities and distresses to which hu-  
man

§ Luke xxii. 43.    h Mat. xxvi. 52, 53, 54.    John xviii. 6.



man nature is incident. Had he, when made in the likeness of men, saved himself by miracles from the evils of humanity; where had been his conflict, his victory, his triumph? or where the consolation and benefit his followers derive from his example, his merit, his crown? Sufferings were the theatre on which he displayed his divine virtues<sup>i</sup> and they were both the ground of his advancement to the glorious office of our Redeemer<sup>k</sup>, and a natural means of inspiring him with compassion<sup>l</sup> to all who were to follow him<sup>m</sup>.

II. In the second scene of this vision<sup>n</sup>, *the devil taketh Christ into the holy city, Jerusalem, and setteth him on the wing<sup>o</sup> of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be (or, since thou art) the*

<sup>i</sup> Heb. v. 8. cited above, p. 79.

<sup>k</sup> *And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.* Heb. v. 9. see ch. ii. 10.

<sup>l</sup> Heb. ii. 17, 18. ch. iv. 15.

<sup>m</sup> What is urged under this head, answers the old objection of the *Jews* to Christ, when he was hanging on the cross, from his not using his power for his own protection and safety, as it may be thought a wise man ought to have done: an objection that has been repeated in every age from that day to this, by the adversaries of the gospel, without reflecting, that his power of miracles was never designed for any such purpose. See Whitby on John xviii. 4.

<sup>n</sup> Mat. iv. 5, 6.

<sup>o</sup> πτερυγίου, the *wing*, not the *pinnacle*, as it is in the common translation. See *Lightfoot's works*, vol. II. p. 130. See above Sect. I. p. 19. note P.

*the Son of God, cast thyself down : for it is written<sup>p</sup>, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

It is generally supposed, that Christ is here called upon to expose his person to danger without any necessity, from a confidence in the protection of the Almighty, which he, as the Son of God, had peculiar reason to expect ; since even to good men God had promised the guardianship of his angels. But the proposal is very capable of a more comprehensive meaning. For the scene of this vision is different from the former, as several writers<sup>q</sup> have observed. Christ is not placed at the top of a high rock in the wilderness, where he already was ; though by throwing himself down from any formidable precipice in such a solitary place, the divine power must equally have interposed for his preservation, and his faith in that power been put to the trial. The scene of this temptation was *Jerusalem*, the metropolis of *Judea*, and the seat of power ; it was the *temple of Jerusalem*, where the *Jews* expected the first appearance of their Messiah, that

<sup>p</sup> Psal. xci. 11.

<sup>q</sup> Dr. *Lightfoot's* and Mr. *Macknight's* Harmonies.

that an angel of the covenant who was to come suddenly to it<sup>r</sup>; it was the *wing* of the temple, the eastern front of it, which commanded a view of the croud of worshippers below. From this most public eminence, and before immense multitudes, not from the obscurities of the wilderness, is Christ required to throw himself down, in a dependence upon the divine protection, (which none could have so much reason to expect as the Son of God;) that so his miraculous preservation might give evidence of his divine mission, and induce the numerous worshippers, who were eye-witnesses of it, to acknowledge him immediately as the Messiah, visibly descending from heaven, in a manner agreeable to the expectation of the *Jews*. Such was the proposal here made to Christ; and in it's own nature it certainly carried a very powerful temptation. How seemingly honourable and glorious would it have been for the Messiah, to have opened his commission upon such a public theatre, and with such demonstrations of divine power? Let us inquire therefore upon what principles this specious temptation was rejected.

In answer to the quotation from scripture, by which the devil sought to enforce his temptation, our Lord replies, *It is written also, thou shalt*

*shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*<sup>s</sup>. To tempt God, is to make an improper trial of his power, to make new and unreasonable demands upon it, after sufficient evidence has been already afforded; and to do this, not barely from presumption, but from distrust. In this sense the expression is often<sup>t</sup> used in scripture, as well as in the particular instance referred to by our Lord<sup>u</sup>. His meaning, therefore, must be this: “The scripture forbids us to  
 “ prescribe to God in what instances he shall  
 “ exert his power: and as we are not to rush  
 “ upon danger without a call, in expectation  
 “ of an extraordinary deliverance; so neither  
 “ are we to dictate to divine wisdom what  
 “ miracles shall be wrought for mens con-  
 “ viction.”

We are in the next place to inquire, what reference this scene might have to Christ's future

<sup>s</sup> Mat. iv. 7.

<sup>t</sup> Exod. xvii. 2, 7. Numb. xiv. 22. Ps. lxxviii. 18. Ps. cvi. 14, 15. Mat. xvi. 1. Act. xv. 10.

<sup>u</sup> Deut. vi. 16. *Moses* does not here refer to any particular case, in which the *Israelites* were so properly chargeable with *presuming too far* upon the divine power and interposition in their favour, as with *distrusting* it. After all the demonstrations of the divine presence, in dividing the red sea, in supplying them with manna, and going before them in the cloud, they still doubted, *Is the Lord amongst us, or not?* Exod. xvii. 2—7. There might, however, be a mixture of presumption on this occasion, in daring to prescribe to God the time and manner, in which he should interpose on their behalf.

ture ministry. Through the whole course of it, he was assaulted with temptations similar to that here proposed, and repelled them upon the maxim here adopted. Instead of needlessly and unwarrantably running into danger, and then relying upon the divine power to extricate him; which must have occasioned an unnecessary and endless multiplication of miracles: we find him using the utmost caution in declining hazards; avoiding, as far as possible, whatever might exasperate his enemies, and even injoining silence<sup>x</sup> with regard to his miracles, those seals of his mission, when the publication of them in some particular circumstances was likely, by raising envy or popular commotions, to inflame their minds yet more against him. We find him also disappointing their malice, by prudently retreating<sup>y</sup> out of its reach, till the appointed period of his ministry was fulfilled. So that although there were some instances, in which he was protected from his adversaries in a miraculous manner<sup>z</sup>, and in which it was absolutely necessary he should be so protected, that he might not be cut off before the ends of his ministry were accomplished: yet considering how eagerly the  
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<sup>x</sup> Mat. viii. 4. ch. xii. 15—21.

<sup>y</sup> John x. 39, 40. Mat. xii. 15. Mark iii. 7. John viii. 59.

<sup>z</sup> John viii. 20.

the *Jewish* rulers were bent upon his destruction, and how often they attempted it<sup>a</sup>, those instances are very few, compared with what they must have been, had not Christ been perpetually attentive in his whole conduct to this maxim, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

In producing the evidences of his divine mission, he still acted upon the same maxim, though he was often under the strongest temptation to depart from it. Instead of opening his commission at *Jerusalem*, and displaying all at once upon that grand theatre the powers with which he was invested; he performed his first miracle at *Cana in Galilee*, and made that obscure country, for a considerable time, the principal scene of his ministry. On this account he was blamed by his own brethren, as acting unsuitably to his extraordinary character and commission, and urged *to shew himself publicly to the world*<sup>b</sup>. But as he was not influenced by ostentatious views, and was solicitous to answer the ends and fulfil the period of his ministry, in a manner the least likely to create noise and disturbance, or to give offence; he  
kept

<sup>a</sup> Mat. xii. 14. Mark iii. 6. Luke vi. 11. John vii. 1. ch. vii. 25, 31, 32. ch. viii. 20, 37, 39. ch. x. 39, 40. ch. xi. 7—16, 45—57.

<sup>b</sup> John vii. 4.

kept himself as private as the nature of his work would admit; sometimes retiring into deserts, where those who were desirous of his instructions were willing to follow him, and to sustain the inconveniencies of hunger and thirst for several days together. Instead of courting the favour of the opulent and powerful, to engage them to countenance and support his cause; or challenging from the rulers of the *Jewish* nation the homage due to his high character; he did not bear a commission chiefly, or particularly, directed to them, (an honour some of the antient prophets enjoyed,) but conversed freely with all sorts of people, not only with the lowest, but with the worst, in order to bring them to repentance. When he had used sufficient means to satisfy the most scrupulous integrity, to win over those to the faith, who were either piously disposed, or willing to be reformed, agreeably to the commission he had received from heaven; he would not proceed any farther. He refused to comply with the unreasonable demands of those, who, notwithstanding all the proofs of his mission which had been already offered, still demanded farther evidence, and called *for signs from heaven*<sup>c</sup>. Now these circumstances of  
Christ's

<sup>c</sup> John ii. 18. Mat. xii. 38. Luke xi. 14. Mat. xvi. 1. Mark viii. 11.

Christ's ministry correspond to those in his prophetic vision, in which he was tempted to a public and ostentatious display of his miraculous powers. And his answer to this second temptation contained a new limitation, under which those powers were to be used. Even in bringing men to the faith, he was not to exceed the order and appointment of God. And though the determination of God in this respect was certainly founded in the highest wisdom, which ever regulates all the operations of his power; though it was perfectly analogous to the other measures of his government over his moral creatures, who are not formed to religion and virtue by the utmost exertions of Omnipotence, but in such methods as are consistent with their freedom; and though it was well calculated to promote the credit and true interest of the gospel, to establish it on an evidence best adapted to its nature, and to win over those to the faith of it, who were most likely to comply with its holy design: though this determination of God was wise and just; yet did it require the greatest humility, fortitude and piety in him, who had the power of working miracles at pleasure, to acquiesce therein. Ambition and vain glory could never have resisted the temptations Christ was under to an incessant and unlimited exertion of his  
miracu-



miraculous powers ; by which he would have advanced his own honour, rendered his ministry more conspicuous and illustrious, forced universal conviction, and commanded the admiration and applause of the whole world. This temptation was the more difficult to be overcome, as in consequence of the method which was taken, his doctrine was embraced only by a few well-disposed persons, and those generally in the lowest rank of life<sup>d</sup>; while it was despised and persecuted by the rich and great, by the wise and learned, who were enslaved to prejudice, or governed by sensual and ambitious views.

III. In the third temptation the scene changes, *and the devil taketh our Lord up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them : and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me*<sup>e</sup>.

How absurd soever the offer, which the devil here makes to Christ, must have appeared to him in other circumstances<sup>f</sup>; and consequently how little merit soever there might be in rejecting it : yet in a vision the objects pre-

<sup>d</sup> This circumstance gave occasion to the display of the most humble and amiable piety, Mat. xi. 25, 26.

<sup>e</sup> Mat. iv. 8, 9.

<sup>f</sup> See above, Sect. I. p. 9, 10, 11.

presented to the imagination are apprehended to be real<sup>g</sup>, and actually to possess all the powers and properties they claim<sup>h</sup>; and the mind judges concerning things according to their appearance at that time; and discovers the very same turn and temper, as it would have done, if the object had been real, and not imaginary. Hence it is that Christ does not dispute the devil's claim to the disposal of the world. The offer of it in these circumstances, appeared to proceed from one able to make it good; and there was just the same merit in rejecting it, as if it had really done so. How great that merit was, may be judged by the largeness of the offer; which was nothing less than the empire and glory, not of *Judea* only, but of the whole universe. These objects were placed before Christ in their most alluring forms, and all comprized in one view, so as to strike his imagination in their full force. Nevertheless, the proposal was rejected, the very instant it was made; and not without a mixture of just indignation: *Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*<sup>i</sup>. This reply was a  
proof

<sup>g</sup> See above, Sect. 1. p. 30—32. and Sect. 4. p. 71—75.

<sup>h</sup> And consequently, if the devil was represented as having the power of disposing of the empire of the world; this representation of him would appear as real as one perfectly conformable to his true nature. See the Appendix, N<sup>o</sup>. VII. and VIII.

<sup>i</sup> Mat. iv. 10.

proof of the most steady and exalted piety.

But the trial and discovery of his present temper, was not the direct intention of this prophetic scene ; which is to be considered as a pre-signification and warning of the like temptation, to which he was to be exposed in the course of his future ministry ; during which he was called upon to prostitute himself, with all his miraculous endowments, to the service of Satan, for the sake of worldly honours. The *Jewish* nation expected their Messiah to deliver it from the yoke of servitude, to raise it to a pitch of grandeur superior to what it had ever enjoyed under their greatest monarchs, and to extend their conquests over all the *Heathen* nations, to the very ends of the earth. As these were the expectations which the *Jews* entertained ; so they were very solicitous that Jesus should answer them, and would have done every thing in their power to promote the success of such an undertaking. They even would have taken him by force, and made him a king<sup>k</sup>. And it is certain, that had his miraculous powers, which were wholly consecrated to the erecting the kingdom of God amongst men, been employed in paving his way to secular honour, he might not only have escaped

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sufferings

<sup>k</sup> John vi. 15.

sufferings and death, but easily ascended the throne of the universe. How readily would not only the *Jews*, but all other nations have repaired to the standard of a prince, who by a miracle, by a word or silent volition only, could provide for his own armies<sup>l</sup>, or destroy those of his enemies<sup>m</sup>; and under whom therefore they might hope for all the rewards, without the usual toils and hazards, of military achievements? How easily might he, who commanded from a fish that tribute he was to pay to the temple, have enriched himself and his followers with all the treasures of the world? “Why then,” it might have been suggested to him, “instead of spending your life in affliction, and then ending it upon the cross; will you not use your power for your own benefit, to deliver yourself from misery, and make yourself master of the world?” But this temptation did not at any time prevail over our Lord, notwithstanding the desire of honour, wealth and dominion is natural to every human mind, and however innocent in itself, is with greater difficulty than any other subjected to the controul of reason and conscience; and notwithstanding *universal empire* carries with it charms almost irresistible, especially

<sup>l</sup> John vi. 11—13.

<sup>m</sup> Ch. xviii. 6. ch. ii. 15.

cially to noble and heroic minds, conscious of their superior wisdom and abilities, and an intention to employ their power to the true ends for which it is bestowed. If any thing can heighten the virtue of despising worldly greatness, when it comes in competition with our duty; it is the being practised in circumstances of indigence, such as are infinitely beneath that rank to which our merit entitles us. And therefore to refuse, as our Saviour did, grandeur and royalty, and universal empire, while he was more destitute of the accommodations of life, than even the beasts of the field, or birds of the air <sup>n</sup>, and was struggling with poverty, reproach and persecution in the cause of God, and had death itself in certain prospect before him, (all which evils might have been avoided by a misapplication of his miraculous powers,) was the highest act of virtue that humanity could exhibit.

Having endeavoured to shew, by a distinct examination of the several scenes of this vision, that each of them, while it contained the proposal of a present and urgent temptation, was a symbolical prediction and representation of such trials as he was to undergo in the course of his future ministry; I would add, that the ac-

<sup>n</sup> Mat. viii. 2c.

count which has been given of it in this latter view, will be confirmed by reflecting on the peculiar propriety of it in such a view, *at this season*. Christ had been very lately consecrated to the high office of the Messiah by the baptism of his illustrious fore-runner, and at the same time invested and confirmed in this office by a voice from heaven, and amply qualified for it by an unlimited communication of the Spirit of God; and he was just going to enter upon the public execution of it. No sooner did the Spirit of God descend upon him, than he felt the effects of his presence and inspiration; for he was borne away into the wilderness by a prophetic illumination of his mind, in a vision or spiritual rapture. In this state he continued forty days and forty nights together; a divine power, during this whole space of time, both supporting him without food, and protecting him from the dangers of the wilderness, (which was the place where he now was in person as well as the scene of his vision.) Hereby he had an opportunity of preparing ° himself

° Whether he had now an opportunity of exercising any extraordinary devotion, I will not undertake absolutely to determine; the text making express mention only of his fasting. In other cases, fasting was seldom separated from prayer, when persons were set apart to sacred offices, Act. xiii. 2, 3. ch. xiv.

self for his ministry by receiving new communications from God<sup>p</sup>, particularly a revelation of the christian doctrine, which he was now *anointed by the Spirit to preach*<sup>q</sup>. When the forty days were expired, the vision was closed by a prediction and prefiguration of the trials he was to combat, in the execution of that great office he was about to undertake. Now what could be more wisely adapted to his circumstances at this time, than such representations<sup>r</sup>? The view given him of the tempta-

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tions

23. compare Mat. xvii. 21. And why might not the revelations Christ now received from God, both leave room for, and even give occasion to the exercises of his devotion?

<sup>p</sup> Thus *Moses* continued in the mount for the space of forty days without the use of food, receiving instructions from God, Exod. xxxiv. 27, 28, and making intercession for the *Israelites*, Deut. ix. 18.      <sup>q</sup> Luke iv. 18.

<sup>r</sup> In order to discern the propriety and necessity of this revelation; we are to recollect, that Christ's supernatural knowledge was communicated to him, as occasion required, by the Holy Ghost, under whose conduct he continually acted, while he lived upon earth. Luke iv. 18. *It is not unreasonable to suppose* (says Archbishop Tillotson, V. 9. p. 273.) *that the divine wisdom, which dwelt in our Saviour, did communicate itself to his human soul according to his pleasure.*—And if this be not admitted; how can we understand that passage concerning our Saviour, Luke ii. 52. *That Jesus grew in wisdom and stature?* Grotius on Mark xiii. 32, speaks to the same effect, *Videtur mihi, ni meliora docear, hic locus non impiè posse exponi hunc in modum, ut dicamus divinam sapientiam menti humanæ Christi effectus suos impressisse pro temporum ratione.* And Beza, on Luke ii. 52, observes, *Imò & ipsa Δεότιτος plenitudo sese prout & quatenus ipsi libuit, humanitati assumptæ insinuavit.*

tions of his succeeding ministry, was highly proper to afford him an opportunity of arming himself with resolution to encounter them<sup>s</sup>; while the honours he had so lately received, served to support him under the first shock of such discouraging prospects. And when could it be so fit, to state the ends to which his miraculous power was to be applied, and the limits within which it was to be confined, as at the season when he was called forth to exert it? He had a power of performing all sorts of miracles at pleasure, by a sovereign all-commanding word; and by an unlimited exertion of this power, he might have escaped every personal evil, conquered the most vicious prejudices of his enemies, and extended his fame and empire to the utmost limits of the world. But this, he is here shewn, would have been taking part with Satan, or a criminal misapplication of the power of miracles. This power he was not to use, to gratify any separate inclination, or promote any private interest of his own, but was to act on all occasions in perfect correspondence

\* Act. ix. 16. *I will shew him (Saul,) how great things he must suffer for my sake.* Saul, like Christ, continued for some days fasting, and without having any communication with external objects; like Christ, he also received visions and revelations from God, and particularly a revelation of his future sufferings, as a preparation for his publick ministry: at the same time engaging in the exercises of devotion.



spondence to the views, and in compliance with the will of his Father †. Accordingly he never undertook a single miracle from his own motion alone ‡, without some previous address to God ¨, and without an immediate warrant and direction from him. And lastly, since at this time he was declared to be the Messiah, to whom the antient prophecies had promised a power and dominion, boundless both in extent and duration; which the *Jews* universally imagined would have been established in this world, upon the ruins of all the kingdoms of it: how necessary was it to explain the true nature of that dispensation or kingdom he was going to erect? The kingdom of the Messiah could not be of this world, but must be of a superior kind; since he was to rise to the possession of it by a contempt of earthly grandeur, by a superiority to every thing which the world either admires or dreads. On the whole then it appears, that this vision contained a plan of Christ's future ministry; since he passed through all the scenes which it represents, and constantly acted upon the maxims here established: and that the argument drawn from the

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† John v. 19, 20, 30.

¨ When going to raise *Lazarus*, Jesus said, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me ALWAYS.* John xi. 41, 42. compare Mat. xxvi. 53.

correspondence between this vision and the subsequent ministry of Christ, to shew that the former was a designed representation of the latter, is much confirmed by the season of this vision ; which was just when the plan on which it was formed, was going to be carried into execution. Having thus attempted to explain the true nature and intention \* of Christ's temptation, I shall

## S E C T I O N V.

**C**LOSE this inquiry with the three following observations.

I. This account of the temptation of Christ, obviates all the objections made to the common interpretation, and justifies the wisdom of God in this dispensation. It is not a series of external occurrences, some of them absurd and impossible, all of them useless and improbable, which is here related ; but an internal vision : and this is ascribed not to a diabolical, but to a divine agency ; agreeably to its instructive and beneficial design and tendency. The several scenes

\* The whole of what has been urged in this section, to shew the wise and benevolent design of this vision ; confirms all the arguments, which had been used to prove, that God was the author of it ; and supplies a new and unanswerable objection against the opinion of those, who ascribe it to the agency of Satan.

scenes of which it is composed, do each of them contain a real trial, such as occasioned a very bright display of the virtue and piety of our Redeemer; and yet he was not accessary to his own temptation, the mind being passive as to all the scenes which are presented to it in a vision. But upon the common hypothesis, there was no temptation at all<sup>y</sup>; and if there had been any, his being exposed to it was the matter of his own choice<sup>z</sup>. If besides the probationary nature, we take into our account the symbolical design of this vision, it was a proper preparation for that important office, with which Christ was now invested. With what divine skill are the scenes of this vision framed, so as to answer both these purposes? What just ground then do they afford for censure?

Should it seem strange to any, that God should in this, and in so many other instances, reveal his will by emblems and symbolical actions: let it be remembered, that this was done in condescension to the capacities and ways of men. For in the eastern nations, and amongst the *Jews* in particular, it was usual to instruct by *actions* as well as *words*; by such actions as were easy signs of the particular instruction they were designed to impart, and served to convey it

<sup>y</sup> See above, Sect. I, p. 3—11.

<sup>z</sup> P. 12—18.

it into the mind with greater force and a stronger impressi<sup>o</sup>n, than a more plain mode of information would have done. And as actions may inspire and impress sentiments with equal advantage, whether they are really performed, or only represented to the imagination in a vision<sup>a</sup> ; so God made use of either, as he saw fit ; communicating his mind sometimes by real actions, and at other times by sensible signs and images<sup>b</sup> impressed upon the imagination. And what signs or emblems could be more apt and significant, than those we have been examining, or better adapted to answer the end proposed by them ?

If

<sup>a</sup> This will readily be allowed in the present case, and in all others, where nothing was aimed at beyond the instruction of the prophet. But the same method was used, when the instruction was designed to be conveyed by him to the people. The prophets in this case were required to relate their dreams or visions to the people, Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. Ezek. xi. 24, 25 ; and as their visions were of a parabolical nature, they served the same purposes as parables do. The relation of them was more lively and affecting, than the bare naked instruction they contained, would have been.

<sup>b</sup> I am speaking here only of the general intention of this mode of information. For the symbols of a vision, when they referred to future events, like some of Christ's prophetic parables, were sometimes designed to *veil* the truth, rather than to illustrate it ; to insinuate gently and gradually what it was not proper to reveal clearly at the time the prophecy was delivered, which the event would afterwards sufficiently explain.

If the account here given of this matter, be indeed both just and rational; then it is obvious to reflect, how cautious the adversaries of the gospel should be in taking offence at any particular passages in it, which may have been injudiciously explained; and how cautious christians should be in giving offence, by hasty interpretations of it; lest many taking occasion from the absurdity of the explication, should be tempted to reject the gospel itself. The difficulties supposed to lye against the belief of the christian religion are wholly of this sort, owing to certain passages in the sacred writings misunderstood and misapplied. Our Saviour complains of the *Sadducees*, that they rejected the doctrines of revelation, for want of having a just idea of them, and of the writings which contained them: *Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures* <sup>c</sup>. They went upon the supposition, that the prevailing and established doctrine of the *Jewish* church concerning the resurrection, and the sensual gratifications consequent upon it, was true; and then considered the case of the seven brothers, who had all in their turns married the same woman, as an unanswerable objection against it. But there was no colour for their objection, in any thing taught concerning the doctrine of a resurrection in the sacred

<sup>c</sup> Mat. xxii. 29.

sacred writings; and had they formed their judgment by these, the objection would never have been thought of. In like manner, in the present age, many form their notions of the scriptures, not so much by the scriptures themselves, as by received interpretations: and because others put such a meaning upon them as is attended with unanswerable difficulties, they immediately reject them as incredible and indefensible; for want of knowing the scriptures, and distinguishing between what is really contained in the divine word, and what is the offspring of human weakness and prejudice.

II. The account which has been given of the temptation in the wilderness, serves to exalt the character of Christ, and to confirm our faith in his divine mission.

What honour hereby accrues to the character of Christ, appears in some measure from the view we have taken of the several scenes placed before his mind, whether considered as respecting his present trial, or the future difficulties of his ministry. We have already surveyed him as struggling with all manner of hardships, and triumphing over them by a superior principle of piety and goodness. I would only observe farther, that the clear *foreknowledge* which Christ had from the beginning of all the trials and sufferings he was to undergo  
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in the execution of his office, adds the highest lustre to his character. He was not ignorant what difficulties attended the work he was now undertaking, nor was he surprized into one suffering after another, without any previous warning; but before he began his ministry, foresaw all the evils with which he was to combat, the very worst to which human nature is liable. He knew he was to spend his life in want and contumely, and then finish it upon the cross. And having a natural sense and dread of disgrace and suffering, the prospect of them made a very deep impression upon his mind. But the clearest foreknowledge, and the deepest impression of the difficulty and terror of the task assigned him, could not prevent him from undertaking it. Nothing could damp the ardor of his benevolence and piety. The resolution and firmness which those principles inspired, was not to be shaken.

This vision considered under the view of a prediction and prefiguration of the trials of Christ's future ministry, prevents all suspicion of imposture, and establishes our faith in his divine mission. How forward soever enterprising and profligate men may be, to make false pretences to a divine commission and revelation, in order to serve the ends of worldly policy

policy and ambition ; yet no impostor would ever make pretences of this kind, if he previously knew that he should meet with nothing but sufferings and death as his reward. We find the true prophets of God, notwithstanding their immediate call from heaven, entering upon their office with great reluctance<sup>d</sup>, on account of the difficulty and danger attending the faithful discharge of it. For of all employments none are so hazardous, as that of bearing testimony against popular and long established prejudice and vice, which are more easily exasperated, than extirpated, and always aim at the ruin of those who attempt a reformation. With regard to our Saviour, he had a distinct and certain foreknowledge of that long train of sufferings he was to pass through, and which were to be closed by a violent and ignominious death upon the cross. And his peculiar character increased the bitterness of these evils, and rendered the view of them more formidable, than they would otherwise have been. He challenged a character of transcendent dignity, and a peculiar relation to the Father, as his only begotten and beloved Son ; and yet was to live in a state of abasement and affliction, like the meanest and most miserable of the

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<sup>d</sup> Exod. iv. 13. Jerem. i. 6, 7, 8.



the children of men. He was invested with authority over all the laws of nature, which he displayed continually for the conviction and benefit of mankind ; but it was never to be employed for his own personal advantage ; no, not in protecting himself from indigence, or injury, or death. He was the great Messiah, the glorious prince and redeemer promised by God ; and yet he was to renounce the offer of worldly empire, which was accounted by the whole *Jewish* nation to be essential to that character. Nay, those sufferings which do so much credit to other prophets, greatly injured his ; because they were judged inconsistent with his claims, and the predictions concerning him. His very death, which is the strongest pledge that human faith can give, instead of removing, fixed upon him the charge of imposture<sup>e</sup>, with a people who held it as a first

<sup>e</sup> Though the common people were so eager to follow Jesus during the course of his ministry, from the hope of his assuming a temporal kingdom, John vi. 14, 15 ; and though they received him with hosannas when he made his last publick entrance into *Jerusalem*, from the same hope, Mat. xxi. 8, 9 : yet when they found, that his enemies had seized, tried, and condemned him to death, without his interposing for his own deliverance ; and that he had declared in terms, that his kingdom was not of this world, and that he had no intention of rescuing himself out of the hands of his enemies, John xviii. 36 ; they clamorously demanded his crucifixion, and persisted in their demand,

first principle, that the *Messiah* was to abide for ever<sup>f</sup>. How impossible then is it, to entertain a suspicion concerning the truth and sincerity of the great author and founder of our religion? From what motives of interest could he assume the character of the Messiah, when he gave notice beforehand, that sufferings and death were all the reward he expected upon earth? did those impostors who sprung up in *Judea* about the time of Christ, act on such principles? just the contrary. Or did any deceiver ever make his undergoing a violent and publick

demand, notwithstanding the utmost endeavours of *Pilate* to save him. If there were any who did not yet despair of his being the Messiah, they might join in the cry against Jesus the more readily, in order to force him to an open declaration, and miraculous vindication of his character. But when they saw him actually nailed to the cross, the common people could not preserve their opinion of him any longer; they were as forward as their malicious rulers, to revile Jesus as a deceiver and impostor; and they urge his sufferings as a proof that he was so. The faith even of his own disciples was, in a great measure, now lost in despair; for they no longer considered him as *the person who should redeem Israel*, Luke xxiv. 21. The disappointment of the common expectation of a temporal empire, was not only a cruel mortification of the pride and ambition of the *Jewish* people; but was considered as a demonstration of the falsehood of Christ's pretension to the character of the Messiah. In this latter view, (in which it is not so commonly attended to) yet more than in the former, the utter disappointment of the *Jewish* people, when they saw Christ in the hands of his enemies, accounts for the change of their behaviour towards him at that season.

<sup>f</sup> John xii. 34.

publick death by the hands of his enemies, the foundation of his credit? and would Christ, if he had not been a truly divine messenger, have acted thus amongst those, who considered his crucifixion as an unanswerable confutation of his claims? There is not the least room to surmise, that he died from a principle of vain glory; since his death exposed him to universal infamy; and in his peculiar circumstances, must have blasted his reputation for ever, if God had not vindicated it by raising him from the dead. This consideration, while it heightens our admiration of the heroic fortitude and piety of the Redeemer, in submitting to the infamy of a publick execution, (a trial singularly severe in the present case!) serves also fully to convince us, that Christ undertook the office of the Messiah, from no motive of this world, but from a firm assurance of a resurrection to a state of transcendent glory in another, according to his own repeated predictions. And could any thing but the strongest evidence of his being raised from the dead, and exalted to heaven, efface the impresson of his sufferings upon earth, and engage men to adore as their Saviour and Messiah, the very person whom, with so full a bent of their understandings<sup>s</sup> and

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hearts,

<sup>s</sup> See above, note <sup>e</sup>, and Luke xxiii. 34. 1 Cor. ii. 8. Act. iii. 17. ch. xiii. 27.

hearts, they had crucified as a blasphemer and impostor ?

III. This account of Christ's temptation, furnishes ample instruction and consolation to his disciples, under those manifold and great temptations they may be called to encounter. This being a point, which has been often and well urged by many practical writers ; will be only briefly touched upon. But it may be proper to observe, that those writers, by abating the force, nay, destroying the reality of Christ's temptation<sup>h</sup> ; rob us of all the practical improvement of it, and remove the very foundation upon which the comfort and edification of christians should be built. Whereas by considering it as a prophetic vision, in which things are represented to the mind in the same manner as if they really happened, and that representation answers all the ends of an actual performance ; we maintain the reality and strength of Christ's temptation<sup>i</sup>, and consequently secure all the advantages, which are, without reason, ascribed to the common hypothesis, and do properly belong to this interpretation only.

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<sup>h</sup> As was shewn above, Sect. I. p. 3—11.

<sup>i</sup> Besides, the very prospect which Christ now had of the difficulties of his future ministry, constituted a great trial ; as was observed above, Sect. IV. p. 77.

We learn from this history, that human nature, even in its most perfect state, and in all circumstances, is incident to temptations: that a pre-eminence of character, station and endowments, is attended with proportionable difficulties and dangers: that these trials are no signs of God's displeasure, but the appointments of his wisdom and goodness for our benefit, the means of brightening our virtues, and of rendering our future crown more illustrious: that the best method of resisting and vanquishing temptations, is by the assistance of the Spirit, by the exercise of purity and devotion, by arguments drawn from the word of God, and by yielding immediately to the first and unbiassed dictates of conscience, without deliberating a moment in matters of plain duty; the least deliberation in such cases being a sign, that the heart is already swerved from virtue: and that christians have sufficient encouragement from the tenderness and sympathy which Christ acquired by his sufferings<sup>k</sup>, to expect all necessary succour under their various infirmities and trials. We likewise learn from this part of the evangelical history, that when we are set apart to such offices, as bring along with them an obligation to duties of peculiar

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<sup>k</sup> Heb. ii. 14. ch. iv. 15.

difficulty and importance, and require an extraordinary measure of divine assistance; as we ought to consider well the great weight of the work we are going to engage in, take a full view of the difficulties we shall meet with in the prosecution of it, and arm ourselves with resolution to undergo them; so we should, by fasting and the exercises of an extraordinary devotion<sup>1</sup>, engage the divine presence with us in our arduous undertaking. And lastly, we learn what is the temptation, which prevails with the pretended vicar of Christ to corrupt the true religion; and this is the desire of the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, of which the pope challenges the disposal, and with the offer of which he allures men to fall down and pay him divine honours. And alas! in all communions, how many are there who account that the best religion, which most effectually advances their secular interest? how many are tempted to deny or conceal the truth, or to espouse falsehood, by a fondness for power, wealth and popular applause, or a dread of poverty, reproach and persecution? whereas no man is qualified to preach the gospel, or indeed to profess it, who is not fortified against the temptations of ease and affluence, of pride and ambition; and who is not willing to take

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<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 102. note °.

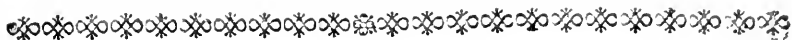
up his cross and follow Christ. A hard saying to flesh and blood ! But the captain of our salvation has given us an example, and shewn us how to conquer. He bids us be courageous in our combat, because he has overcome the world<sup>m</sup>; and will not fail therefore both to assist us in gaining the victory, and to reward our steadfastness with a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Let us contemplate him as the pattern, not only of our duty, but of our recompence. He renounced the kingdoms of this world; but has acquired an infinitely more noble and extensive empire, and is constituted the lord and judge of angels, and of men. Behold him seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, on purpose that he may advance his faithful followers, to proportionate degrees of celestial honour. We cannot faint under difficulties, while we listen to the sound of his animating voice, addressing us from heaven, *To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne<sup>n</sup>.*

<sup>F</sup> John xvi. 33.

<sup>E</sup> Rev. iii. 21.







A N

## A P P E N D I X,

CONTAINING

Some farther OBSERVATIONS upon the  
subject of the preceding INQUIRY,  
and an answer to objections.

**F**ULLY sensible as I was from the be-  
ginning, that the argument of the *In-  
quiry* was repugnant to the strongest preposses-  
sions of every denomination of Christians; yet  
a belief of it's importance induced me to sub-  
mit it to public examination: not without some  
hope, that, in case it was well supported, it  
might gradually make it's way into candid and  
ingenuous minds; or that, if it was ill-ground-  
ed, some friend to truth would correct my  
mistakes, and place the subject in a juster light.  
The success which the *Inquiry* has met with,  
has exceeded my expectations. It is indebted  
to many for their candour<sup>a</sup>; and to some who  
are

<sup>a</sup> The learned and judicious Spanheim, at the same time  
that he pleads for the literal interpretation, recommends can-  
dour

are universally ranked amongst the most capable judges of the subject, for their approbation. This has encouraged me to review it, and to attempt to remove the objections which have been urged against it; still wishing it may undergo an impartial scrutiny by the publick, whatever be the issue. I have used great diligence in collecting the objections, to which it was thought to be liable. And though most of them are in some degree either obviated or answered in the first edition of the *Inquiry*, and, I hope, more fully in the present <sup>b</sup>; nevertheless, it may not be improper to enter on a farther discussion of some of the most material ones, as it may lead us to place the answers in a different light, and to make some farther observations on the general subject.

## I.

But first of all I would take notice, that the publick has been referred to Dr. Clarke's discourses on Christ's temptation <sup>c</sup>, as containing

dour towards those who rejected it, from these two considerations: Quum nec res fidei sit, nec Scriptura id *αυτολεξεί* definiat. *Dubia Evangel. dub.* 55. p. 247: See also p. 244.

<sup>b</sup> The notes added to this edition, would have been inserted in the appendix, if they had not been so numerous, as to make it necessary to insert them in the *Inquiry*, for the ease and convenience of the reader.

<sup>c</sup> They are the 93d and 94th Sermons, vol. 1. p. 585, 591. fol. ed.

ing a satisfactory solution of the difficulties attending the literal interpretation. It will therefore be necessary to examine those discourses; nor will it be improper to subjoin a few observations on what Dr. Benson or others have wrote more lately upon the same subject, and with the same view.

With regard to Dr. Clarke, I readily allow, that such were the abilities and learning of that celebrated writer, as eminently to qualify him for the task he undertook. And had the literal interpretation of this passage of Scripture been capable of a just defence, it would have been successfully defended by this accomplish'd scholar and critic. If he has not succeeded, we may fairly presume, that the fault was in the cause, rather than the advocate.

The doctor begins with observing<sup>d</sup>, that *the history of our Saviour's temptation, is a portion of Scripture, in which there are several difficulties, that deserve particular explication.* And then sets himself to explain the following ones: 1st, *Why our Saviour, whom the Scripture elsewhere declares to have been tempted in all points, as we are, only without sin; is yet by the evangelists recorded, as having been tempted only at this particular time.* 2dly, *Why our Saviour continued so long in the solitary retirement of a desert*

<sup>d</sup> P. 585.

*desert place, and why he fasted through all that space of forty days. 3dly, Why our Saviour, who had power over unclean spirits, and could cast out devils at his pleasure; was yet pleased to submit himself and condescend so far, as to be tempted at all by the enemy. 4thly, Why the tempter would at all assault our Lord, or what advantage he could possibly hope to gain over him. 5thly, and lastly, Since we read no more in the Gospels, of Christ's being tempted after this; how and in what sense, it is said by St. Luke, at the conclusion of this history of our Lord's temptation, that the tempter departed from him, only for a season.*

These are *all* the difficulties which Dr. Clarke saw fit to propose and examine. Whether some of them do really belong to the subject; and whether the rest are fully solved; I shall leave to others to determine. Let us suppose, (what many however would very unwillingly grant) that he has removed all the objections here enumerated; there are many others which he has suffered to pass unnoticed. He did not observe or has passed over in silence most, if not all those which are urged in the Inquiry<sup>e</sup>. Now to *overlook* a difficulty, and  
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<sup>e</sup> Indeed the 4th difficulty which the doctor undertakes to explain, corresponds in some degree with the first objection in the

to *remove* it, are things widely different. It may be said, perhaps, that those objections which to others seem very considerable, appeared to him too trifling to be considered. And I acknowledge candour would oblige us to presume this to be the case, with regard to a writer of such superior abilities, and such unquestionable freedom and fairness as Dr. Clarke, if there were not certain proof of the contrary. It appears from his other writings, that he judged one of the objections to the history of Christ's temptation, which he has omitted in his sermons, and which is urged in the *Inquiry*, to be *unanswerable*, I mean that drawn from the *devil's shewing Christ all the kingdoms of the world*; which he explains by saying, *he made him a representation of them.*<sup>f</sup> And thus this justly celebrated writer, like most other writers of inferior note upon the subject of Christ's temptation, though he undertook to vindicate the literal interpretation; found himself under a necessity, in one instance at least, of receding from it.

The world is just favoured with a work of  
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the *Inquiry*, p. 3. But the doctor entirely overlooks the main circumstance, the absurdity of the devil's assaulting Christ *in an open and visible manner*. This circumstance is likewise dropt, when he returns an answer to his third difficulty, by misapplying Heb. ii. 14—18. ch. iv. 15. See the *Inquiry*, p. 12—18. 2d. ed.

‡ Paraphrase on Mat. iv. 8. and Luke iv. 5.

the late reverend and learned Dr. Benson<sup>z</sup>; and it may reasonably be expected, that some notice should be taken of what such a writer has advanced upon the subject under consideration; especially as he has treated it in an elaborate manner<sup>h</sup>. He rejects the supposition of it's being a dream or vision<sup>i</sup>; and affirms, that *the evangelists seem, plainly, to have represented all these things as historical facts<sup>k</sup>; adding, that he was inclined to understand this part of the four Gospels, as literal, historical, truth; or an account of what actually happened.<sup>k</sup>* We find, however, that at first setting out, he began to feel some *doubt* upon his mind; for thus he expresses himself with regard to one circumstance of the history, viz. the manner of Satan's appearance to Christ: *He seems to have appeared unto Jesus, in a visible manner, at least in VISION<sup>l</sup>*. As the doctor proceeds, new difficulties come in his way; and he not only doubts, but *denies* the truth, and even the possibility, of the literal interpretation. *It is impossible, (says he) from thence (that is, from the top of the highest mountain upon earth) to see the length, breadth, and full extent, of any one large kingdom, much less all the kingdoms of this world, and all the splendor and glory of them<sup>m</sup>*. And notwithstanding

<sup>z</sup> *The History of the life of Christ.*

<sup>h</sup> Chapter 2. <sup>i</sup> P. 36. <sup>k</sup> P. 37. <sup>l</sup> P. 32. <sup>m</sup> P. 39.

notwithstanding his own inclination to understand all the temptations as literal historical truth, he honestly confesses, *As to this part of the representation, there seems to be a necessity of having recourse to vision; or rather, to a fictitious scene, worked up by diabolical power and art*<sup>n</sup>. Nay, the doctor lays down a rule of interpretation, which (in my apprehension) destroys all that he has advanced in favour of the common hypothesis. His rule is this, viz. *we should look upon every thing to be literally, or historically true; but where there are some circumstances to determine us to interpret a passage, in a figurative manner; and especially where the literal sense would lead us into manifest absurdity*<sup>o</sup>. Is it not absurd, that is, contrary to reason and experience, to suppose that the devil can *hurry men through the air*<sup>p</sup>, or so much as *appear to them in a visible manner*<sup>q</sup>? Were it not for the prejudices of education, we should rank these things amongst the most glaring repugnancies to the constitution of the universe, and as a very gross (though undesigned) impeachment of the wisdom of it's sovereign author and lord.

I will take notice of one thing more in the doctor's performance, because he seems to lay much stress upon it; though it has been already considered in the *Inquiry*. I refer to the

general

<sup>n</sup> P. 38.

<sup>o</sup> P. 39.

<sup>p</sup> P. 35.

<sup>q</sup> P. 32.

general reason he assigns for adhering to the literal interpretation, *To say the truth, our Lord's resisting these temptations, in vision only, would not, in my opinion, have been so much to his honour, so glorious an example to his disciples, nor such an illustrious evidence, that he was superior to all the temptations of the devil*<sup>r</sup>. Soon after he adds, *It seems to me altogether worthy of our Lord's high and sacred character, to manifest that the devil could not, by any temptation whatever, prevail with Jesus to commit the least sin; even when the devil was permitted to take his own way, place him in what situation he pleased, and attack him, in such manner, and in such circumstances, as might give his temptations all possible weight or force.* Whether, supposing the scenes to be visionary, they constituted any proper trial, is a point considered elsewhere<sup>s</sup>: here let us examine, whether upon the doctor's hypothesis, the temptations of the devil had *all possible force*, or any force at all. In explaining the first temptation, he tells us, *our Lord was not ignorant, who the person was that accosted him*<sup>t</sup>. Now if Christ knew Satan from the beginning, this circumstance, our most candid adversaries allow, would diminish the force of all his temptations. With respect to the third  
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<sup>r</sup> P. 37.      \* Appendix No. V.

<sup>t</sup> Dr. Benson's life of Christ, p. 34.



and last temptation in particular, Dr. Benson calls it *the greatest of them all*<sup>t</sup>; and yet according to this learned writer, Christ not only knew who made him the offer of all kingdoms of the world, but also that the devil's claim to the disposal of them was *arrogant, usurped, AND INTIRELY GROUNDLESS AND VAIN*<sup>u</sup>. Now even to the warmest Advocate for the literal scheme, I might venture to appeal, whether there was the *least* force in such a temptation? The Doctor admits, that Christ knew the devil's claim to the disposal of the world, and consequently the devil's promise of it to him, to be *intirely groundless*, and therefore that it could not in any degree be fulfilled. And yet as if Christ had known the very contrary to be true, the Doctor exclaims, *to be tempted, at once, with all the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them! must have been such a temptation, as it can hardly enter into the heart of man, to conceive the prodigious and almost irresistible force thereof*<sup>w</sup>. I own, I cannot discern the tempting force, much less the *prodigious and almost irresistible* force, of an offer of *nothing*; or, which is the same, of something which the person who makes it, is known to be utterly unable to make good. The meanest slave of vice would

<sup>t</sup> P. 38.<sup>u</sup> P. 41.<sup>w</sup> P. 40.

turn from such a temptation with scorn. Was it then by resisting assaults of this nature, that Christ was to manifest his superiority to all the temptations of the devil, to advance his own honour, and to set a glorious example to his disciples ! And was it for the sake of such triumphs, that the laws of nature were now suspended, and all those wonderful scenes which the Doctor so affectingly describes, *presented before our Lord's eyes*, by a series of miracles ?

Besides Dr. Benson, Dr. Macknight has lately appeared in defence of the history of Christ's temptation, in the literal sense of it. The reasonings of this gentleman in his *Commentary* upon it, I have carefully examined in my observations on the several passages, as they occurred in the *Inquiry*. And because nothing ought to pass unregarded ; which is advanced by this able and judicious writer ; I would inform the reader, that in his *Truth of the Gospel History*\*, after taking notice of my *Inquiry*, he affirms, “ That the literal sense of the history of the temptation, is agreeable to the representation which the Scriptures have given us of the agency of evil Spirits.” On this passage, I would make the following remarks.

1. The *Inquiry* does not controvert the agency of the devil and other evil Spirits in tempting

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\* P. 173, in the note.

mankind<sup>y</sup>. 2. Nor does the allowing the temptation of Christ in the wilderness to be a vision, contradict the common doctrine concerning the agency of evil Spirits in proposing temptations. On the contrary, the vision is framed agreeably to this hypothesis; the image of the great tempter being used as the symbol and emblem of temptation<sup>y</sup>. 3. In order to subvert the principles laid down in the *Inquiry*, it is necessary to establish, not some agency of Satan in tempting mankind in the general course of things, but the correspondence of such a general agency to the literal sense of this history, which represents him as *appearing to Christ in a visible form, conversing with him openly, and conveying or accompanying him from place to place in a sensible manner*. But this is a point our learned author has not attempted to prove.

Let others judge of the force of the objections against the literal interpretation; with respect to myself, having in vain sought for a satisfactory solution of them, from those most capable of affording it; I still find myself under a necessity of looking out for some different explication. And none appearing to me so

K 2

probable

<sup>y</sup> See the *Inquiry*, the 1st. ed. p. 63, note <sup>r</sup>. and p. 47, note <sup>n</sup>.  
—2d. ed. p. 81, note <sup>n</sup>. and p. 64, note <sup>b</sup>.

probable as that suggested in the *Inquiry*, I will attempt to clear it from objections.

## II.

It has been objected, “ That if this part of  
 “ the Gospel be only the history of a vision,  
 “ the same may be affirmed concerning every  
 “ other part of the Gospel. The whole ac-  
 “ count of our Saviour’s *miracles* in particular,  
 “ may be nothing more than a narrative of so  
 “ many visions.”

This objection manifestly proceeds upon this false principle, viz. “ That there is just the same reason, for affirming the miracles of Christ to be the history of what was transacted only in vision, as there is to affirm the same concerning his temptations in the wilderness.” If there be a just distinction in the two cases, the objection falls to the ground. It has been shewn, that neither the *nature* of Christ’s temptations did admit, nor the *end* proposed by them require, an outward transaction; and also that the historians have clearly *intimated* by many *circumstances* of the relation, that they were visionary representations; and that they have even *positively asserted* them to be such. But this reasoning does not affect the miracles of the Gospel: for they are all, in their own *nature* possible to the power to which they are ascribed; the *end* proposed by them, the con-  
 viction

viſion of mankind, required an actual exhibition and performance; all the *circumſtances* attending them, the reasonings from them, and the effects they produced, farther ſhew that they were real facts; and the evangelists have *affirmed* that they were performed openly and in the moſt publick manner. Thus all the arguments uſed to prove Chriſt's temptations to have been viſions, are ſo far from warranting the ſame concluſion with regard to his miracles, that they demonſtrate the contrary, and prove them to be real facts.

I moſt readily allow, that the literal ſenſe of all authors ought never to be departed from without ſome juſt reaſon or neceſſity; and that very great injury has been done to the Scripture, by making thoſe parts of it ſymbolical, emblematical, or allegorical, which were deſigned to be underſtood literally. This is ſetting aſide the genuine word of God, and ſubſtituting in the room of it the infinitely various fictions of the human imagination. With this fault, the antient writers <sup>a</sup> of the Chriſtian church have been frequently, and juſtly charged.

K 3

Origen,

<sup>a</sup> The *Chriſtian Fathers*, in allegorizing the ſcripture, ſeem to have copied (as *Philo* and other learned *Jews* before them had done) the method of the *Greeks*, in explaining their myſteries. See Le Clerc's *Hiſt. Eccleſ.* p. 24. and compare Dr. Lightfoot's works, Vol. I. p. 373.

Origen, and (in their younger years) Jerome and Augustin, though they did not absolutely reject the literal sense of Scripture; yet led men to neglect and undervalue it as low and trivial, by the preference they gave to mystical interpretations. But may we not be guilty of equal absurdity, and do as great prejudice to the Scripture, by *adhering* to the letter unreasonably, as by unreasonably *departing* from it? When our Saviour speaks of *eating his flesh*, and *drinking his blood*; are we to understand him literally, as the Jews did? He himself has told us, that his *words are spirit*, to be interpreted figuratively or spiritually. On other occasions he uses the like style, and calls himself *the door of the sheep*, *the bread which came down from heaven*, and *the true vine*; leaving it to common sense to explain his meaning. In a word, there is no book contains a greater variety of matter than the Bible. And though many have pleaded, “ That the visions related “ in Scripture, occur only in the *prophetical* “ books, not in the *historical*”; yet it appears from the instances cited in the Inquiry<sup>b</sup>, (to which many more might be added,) that even the

<sup>b</sup> First ed. p. 20, 21, 29, 52, 54, 56, 57, 63. — 2d. ed. p. 29, 30, 31, 44, 70, 73, 74, 81. See also 1 Kings xxii. 19—22. cited below, N<sup>o</sup> III. note <sup>d</sup>

the *historical* books relate parables, fables<sup>c</sup>, revelations or mental illuminations and visions, as well as plain doctrines, and outward events. And the *prophetical* books, not excepting Ezekiel, and the revelation of St. John, have some intermixture of real facts with the history of visions and revelations. Now all these things ought to be understood according to their respective natures. By a diligent and impartial use of our understandings, we may easily distinguish between things that differ. The relation itself or the declaration of the historian,

K 4

<sup>c</sup> *The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them, and they said, &c. Judges ix. 8—15.* Now to borrow the reasoning so often employed against the *Inquiry*, “*We have as little reason to affirm, from the style of the sacred writer, and the manner of his expressions, that this is a parable, as we have to affirm that the miracles of Christ were mere parables: both are equally described as real facts, without any the least intimation of the contrary.*” But who does not see the absurdity of this reasoning? Experience informs us, that trees neither walk nor speak. And the same experience as certainly informs us, that the devil does never appear visibly to mankind, never converses with them in an open manner, neither transports them through the air, nor accompanies or conducts them from the country to the city, or from the city to the country. In both cases therefore the nature of the relation points out the necessity of a figurative interpretation. It is objected, “*That we are ignorant of the powers of superior beings, and know nothing of the other world.*” But we are not unacquainted with the laws and orders of *this* world; we know by experience, that they never are violated; and by reason are assured they never can be violated, but by the great ruler of the world.

torian, if attended to, will preserve us from mistake. To distinguish properly, is the business of the critic. And to plead (as *all* interpreters do occasionally) for some figurative modes of speech; is not to convert every thing into figure and allegory; unless the reasonings made use of are as applicable to the whole, as to particular parts of Scripture.

### III.

It has been objected, “ That supposing the  
 “ temptation of Christ to be a vision, God  
 “ could not be the author of it; inasmuch as  
 “ it contains such representations of the power  
 “ of the devil in making Christ an offer of the  
 “ world, as are not agreeable to his real  
 “ nature.”

This objection, if it proves any thing, would prove too much: for it affects the credit of all visions, which are mere *deceptions*, having no existence out of the mind of the prophet<sup>d</sup>.

Besides,

<sup>d</sup> This is the case, even when the images of a vision are types or representative figures of real objects, and give a just picture of them; as when *Saul saw Ananias in vision*. Acts ix. 12. The appearance or representation was fictitious and delusive, though an object perfectly correspondent to it existed in nature. But very frequently the visionary representation has no corresponding object in nature; or if it bears a resemblance to real beings in some respects, it differs from them in others, and is not framed so much with a view to truth and nature, as to constitute



Besides, it is of no ~~importance~~ whether the images of a vision are borrowed from nature, or whether they vary from it wholly or in part; they are used only as symbols and emblems of other things; and they may answer this end  
equally

constitute a proper symbol, emblem, or hieroglyphic of what it is designed to signify and represent: witness the *cherubim* of *Ezekiel*, chap. i. his emblematical *temple*, chap. xl. (see *Inquiry*, sect. III. p. 53. 2d. ed.) *the lamb having seven horns, and seven eyes*, Rev. v. 6. and the various symbols and emblems of the Divinity, and those in particular which constituted the vision of *Micaiah*, 1 Kings xxii. 19—22. Here the Prophet says, *I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right-hand and on his left*; though God, we are certain, is without bodily parts, spiritual, invisible, and omnipresent. He then tells us, that God advised with the heavenly host what measures to take; and some recommended one thing, some another, till after much deliberation, one of them hit upon an expedient, such as after examination was approved by the Deity; which was that of being a lying spirit in the mouth of *Abab's* prophets. Now if you ask, Has the devil the disposal of the world? And if he has not, could he be represented in a divine vision as actually having it? I also would inquire with the prophet of God, *Who has directed the spirit of the Lord? — With whom took he counsel?* Or when could he stand in need of advice? When did he authorise falsehood and lyes? The answer in both cases is the same; neither are to be understood literally, or as a history of facts, but as visions or parabolical representations; and though the representations are mere fictions, they convey instruction as truly and properly, as if they were exact copies of outward objects. *Micaiah's* vision was a prediction and figurative representation of God's providence in ordering matters so as that *Abab*, by giving credit to his own false prophets, who flattered his pride and prejudices, should fall at *Ramoth Gilead*: just as the tempter's promise was a prophecy and prefiguration of the empire and grandeur with which Christ was afterwards to be tempted.

equally on any of these suppositions. For their propriety does not consist in their being just pictures of real objects, but in their fitness to represent the instruction they contain. In the case before us, the appearance of the tempter to Christ, and his making him the promise of universal empire, was a symbol and emblem, not of the power of the tempter himself, but of the actual offer of grandeur and empire, with which Christ was to be tempted in the course of his ministry. And it was necessary that the promise of the world in vision should appear real; since otherwise it could not have truly represented the temptation he was actually exposed to, of securing the empire of the world by a different application of his miraculous powers, from that which he was appointed to make of them. So that the whole of the objection amounts to this, (which equally affects many other visions in Scripture) that the image has no corresponding object in nature, or no exact external archetype; (a point which we have no inclination to dispute;) while it must be allowed to have been a proper symbol of what it was designed to represent.

If we deny, that any impression can be made upon the mind by God, but such as is conformable to the real nature of external objects; we condemn the constitution of the world

world around us. Without entering into the philosophy either of *Locke* or *Berkeley*, it is certain that the objects around us, (those outward sensible signs, by which God is continually speaking to mankind,) raise in us ideas and sensations very different from the real natures of the things themselves. We ascribe sensible qualities to objects, such as heat, coldness, and the like; though they exist not in the objects, but are solely perceptions in the mind. How various are the aspects of objects, according to their different distances, the nature of the medium, and the disposition of the organ? Nor are we deceived only by those false representations, which the senses make of objects to the mind; but we even mistake those images and representations for the very objects themselves; and in so doing, follow an universal and powerful instinct of nature. Nevertheless it is certain, that though external objects may have a real and absolute existence; the mind has no immediate intercourse with them, but only (through the inlets of the senses) receives the images, copies, and representations of them. The objection therefore here made to *supernatural* vision, equally affects *natural* vision. If the latter be a dispensation not unworthy the God of truth; neither can the former. It is not, perhaps, the intention of providence, by any impressions it makes upon our minds, to lead

lead us into the knowledge of the abstract natures of things, but (more immediately and principally) to convey some useful instruction, such as may serve for the direction of our conduct, to admonish us what to avoid, and what to pursue. In the case before us at least, it is certain that the representation of Satan in vision, was not designed to give Christ any new information concerning the nature of Satan, because here he is only an emblem and symbol of temptation.

If you still plead, "That we may correct the errors of sense by the reflections of reason, which enables us to judge of things, not merely as they appear at first, but as they really are;" the same answer is more fully applicable to the case in question; reason always enabling the prophet, when the vision is ended, to pass a true judgment concerning the nature of its representations.

#### IV.

It is asserted in the *Inquiry*, that the proper intention of this vision was, to predict to our Saviour his future trials; that the several scenes were distinct prophecies and symbols of the different temptations which were to occur in the course of his ministry, and proper premonitions against them. This is argued <sup>a</sup> from two considerations: the general nature of visions as  
symbols

<sup>a</sup> *Inquiry*, 1st ed. p. 58—60 — 2d ed. p. 75—78.

symbolical and prophetic; and the perfect correspondence between the signs in this vision, and the things they signified and represented.

Now though the instances<sup>e</sup> produced in the *Inquiry*, may be sufficient to prove, that visions in general were of an emblematical nature; yet this being a point of very great importance to the right understanding of this and many other passages of Scripture; I will confirm it by some further examples. That God is a spiritual incorporeal being, is equally the doctrine of reason and revelation. And therefore when we read so often in the prophets, that they *saw the Lord sitting upon his throne*<sup>f</sup>; we may be certain, that they had only a mental representation of some *symbol* or *emblem* of the majesty of God<sup>g</sup>. Jacob's ladder standing upon the earth,

<sup>e</sup> First ed. p. 20. note<sup>s</sup> p. 56, 57, 63, 92 — 2d. ed. p. 29. note<sup>b</sup> p. 73, 74, 81, 108.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Kings xxii. 19. Is. vi. 1. Dan. vii. 9, 10. Acts vii. 55. Rev. iv. 2.

<sup>g</sup> Nevertheless, the ancients, taking every thing spoken of God in the Scriptures in a *literal* sense, attributed to him *the figure of a man*, and maintained that he was *the object of bodily sight*. And such was the zeal with which this doctrine was maintained, that the denial of it was branded with impiety, and put men in danger of their lives. Socrat. Hist. Eccles. l. 6. c. 7. I take notice of this here, not only as it is a striking instance of an absurd adherence to the letter of Scripture; but also as it may serve to shew, how little regard is due to the opinions of the ancients, and that it ought to create no prejudice against the explication here given of Christ's temptation, that it

earth, and reaching to heaven, with the angels ascending and descending on it, was the hieroglyphic of God's particular providence, or of his readiness to interpose in an extraordinary manner in favour of the patriarch <sup>h</sup>. In like manner, the persons and things which St. John saw in vision, do all stand for other persons and things; and had themselves no existence, but in the *imagination* of the prophet; (the Spirit of God presenting before it all those appearances and scenes which he describes; which are therefore justly called *a revelation* <sup>i</sup>.) The glorious personage in a human form, at whose feet he fell down as dead <sup>k</sup>, was not Christ himself, but a symbolical representation of him; and such also was *the lamb in the midst of the throne* <sup>l</sup>. *The four living creatures*, and *the four and twenty elders* <sup>m</sup>, were not real beings, but were emblems of such things as did really exist in nature. Sometimes an express declaration is made, what the objects of the vision represent: *The seven stars are the angels*

is contrary to theirs. They who could so far dishonour the omnipresent Deity, as to attribute to him a visible and human form; would hardly scruple to ascribe something of this kind to the devil.

<sup>h</sup> Gen. xxviii. 12, 13. compare John i. 51.

<sup>i</sup> Rev. i. 1.      <sup>k</sup> ch. i. 13—16.

<sup>l</sup> Rev. v. 6.      <sup>m</sup> ch. iv. 4, 6.

angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest, are, i. e. signify and represent, *the seven churches*<sup>n</sup>. At other times, the vision was not explained, and people were at a loss to find out it's meaning and reference; as appears by that complaint of the prophet, *Al Lord God, they say of me, Doth he not speak parables*<sup>o</sup>? It can never be sufficiently lamented, that Christian divines, notwithstanding the clearest evidence that visions were merely mental illuminations, and their several scenes figurative and symbolical; do frequently speak of those scenes as describing real objects and beings, such as have an existence in nature. The *throne of God in heaven, the worship paid him there by the elders*<sup>p</sup>, and *the new Jerusalem*<sup>q</sup>; which St. John saw and described, are too often explained in such a manner as would lead one to suppose, that they contained, in part at least, a description of the true heaven, and the real worship and felicity of the righteous in it. But if these visions of St. John do indeed refer to heaven at all; they are at most only symbols and emblems of it, and as such perfectly distinct from that place or state itself<sup>r</sup>.

Other

<sup>n</sup> ch. i. 20. See Dan. viii. 20, 21.      <sup>o</sup> Ezek. xx. 49.

<sup>p</sup> Rev. iv.      <sup>q</sup> ch. xxi, xxii.

<sup>r</sup> The Mohammedans, when reproached with the low and sensual

Other undoubted examples of the symbolical nature of visionary representations and miraculous appearances, may be found in the passages referred to below<sup>s</sup>. I shall only add, that when God declares by the prophet, *I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes*<sup>t</sup>; this language seems to imply, that the objects of vision were always designed as resemblances and apt representations of other things.

## V.

The most plausible objections against the *Inquiry*, are levelled against those passages which assert, that Christ's vision contained a present trial. It is alledged, " That the same  
" considerations which diminish or destroy the  
" force

of sensual descriptions of paradise, which occur almost in every page of their Koran; retort these passages out of the *Revelation* of St. John, and plead their having the same right to have recourse to figure and allegory, as those Christians who do not understand the forecited passages in a literal sense. But here lies the difference: all the representations in the *Revelation* of St. John, are declared to be *visionary*; and therefore were designed to be understood as figurative and symbolical; and unless they are so understood, cannot be reconciled with other plain passages of the New Testament: but the Mohammedan representations of paradise objected to by Christians, are not declared to be visionary and symbolical; and even have no consistent meaning, unless they are literally understood.

<sup>s</sup> Gen. xv. 17. ch. xxxvii. 7, 9. Exod. iii. 2. Jer. i. 11, 13. Ezek. xxxvii. 1. Zech. i. 7, &c. ch. iv. 2—11. ch. v. 1—5. Acts xvi. 9, 10.

<sup>t</sup> Hosea xii. 10.



“ force of Christ’s temptation upon the com-  
 “ mon hypothesis, equally affect it’s force  
 “ upon mine.” If this allegation be just ;  
 neither of these hypotheses can be true ; since  
 it serves equally for the confutation of both.  
 We hope however to shew, that the allegation  
 has no sufficient foundation to support it. In  
 order to the right understanding of this subject,  
 it will be necessary to observe,

1.) That the *Inquiry* <sup>u</sup> asserts this vision to  
 be directly and properly intended, as *a pre-  
 diction and symbol of Christ’s future temptations*.  
 And against this view of it, no material ob-  
 jection has ever been urged. So that even were  
 we to grant, that this vision was not *probatio-  
 nary* ; this would not affect it’s proper use and  
 intention as *prophetical* and *premonitory*. Though  
 this observation was made in the first edition of  
 the *Inquiry* <sup>u</sup>, it was necessary to repeat it here ;  
 because it seems not to have been attended to,  
 by those who make the objection we are con-  
 sidering.

2.) It is evident, that this vision bore the  
*form* of a present trial. To the view and ap-  
 prehension of Christ at the time, it contained  
 certain alluring proposals made to him by the  
 devil, in order to solicit him to evil. And on

<sup>u</sup> P. 63. 1st ed. — p. 80, 81. 2d ed.

this account it is, that the history relates them as real temptations; and tells us, that Christ was carried into the wilderness, *that he might be tempted of the devil*. This expression describes the *nature of the vision or representation*; for the history of a vision always corresponds to the views of the prophet. Christ likewise rejects the several proposals here made to him, as so many temptations of the devil.

3.) This vision, however could not be designed to *tempt Christ*, if we thereby mean, *soliciting or seducing* him into sin; because it had a divine author, and the several scenes of it were so framed, as to guard or warn a good mind from yielding to any of the proposals it contained. To appearance, these proposals were made by the devil in person; which was designed to awaken an immediate resistance, and was a proper monition against a compliance.

4.) Nevertheless, this vision might (I apprehend) answer the end of a present trial; that is, it might serve to shew, how Christ was disposed to act, or to *discover and display* his virtue; which is a very common meaning of the word temptation or trial in Scripture<sup>x</sup>, and is the sense in which we use it here, when we call

<sup>x</sup> Inquiry, p. 61. 1st ed. — p. 78, 79. 2d ed.

urging the objections against the received exposition, in order to prepare men to embrace that which is offered in it's stead. And in taking this natural method, I had the whole world before me for a precedent, in cases of the like kind. Nor can Christianity suffer any prejudice by this manner of proceeding: for if the objections urged against the history of Christ's temptation are groundless, they may easily be refuted: and if they are well supported, they conclude only against the literal interpretation; it being a rule universally allowed in the interpretation of all authors, never to affix any sense to their words, which is either absurd in itself, or manifestly repugnant to their avowed principles, if they are fairly capable of a more rational and consistent meaning. Nor is there any room in the case before us to suggest, that we have had recourse to a figurative explication from mere necessity, and only to avoid the seeming absurdity of the literal one: for we have produced many circumstances of the history to evince, that the sacred writers themselves did not and could not design to be understood literally. Nay, all the evangelists have, in express terms, declared the whole to be a *spiritual* and mental transaction; and this is proved without offering any violence to their words, or affixing any sense to them,

but

but what they are *allowed to bear in other parts of Scripture*; and what their connexion and other circumstances necessarily require in this. Lastly, the evidence of it's being a vision, is much strengthened, by the rational and wise intentions of such a prophetic representation, as a prediction and forewarning of those severe trials, to which Christ was afterwards to be exposed. Till the reasoning on these several points is confuted, I shall not be without some faint hope, that instead of furnishing new prejudices against the Gospel, I have removed old ones. With this view at least the argument was undertaken; and from a full persuasion, that if Christianity was stripped of all disguises, and shewn in her native simplicity and beauty, just as she descended from heaven; it would obviate at once all objections to her divine origin.

F I N I S.





