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T H E
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O F T H E
O L D a n d N E W T E S T A M E N T
C o n f i d e r ' d a n d I m p r o v ' d .

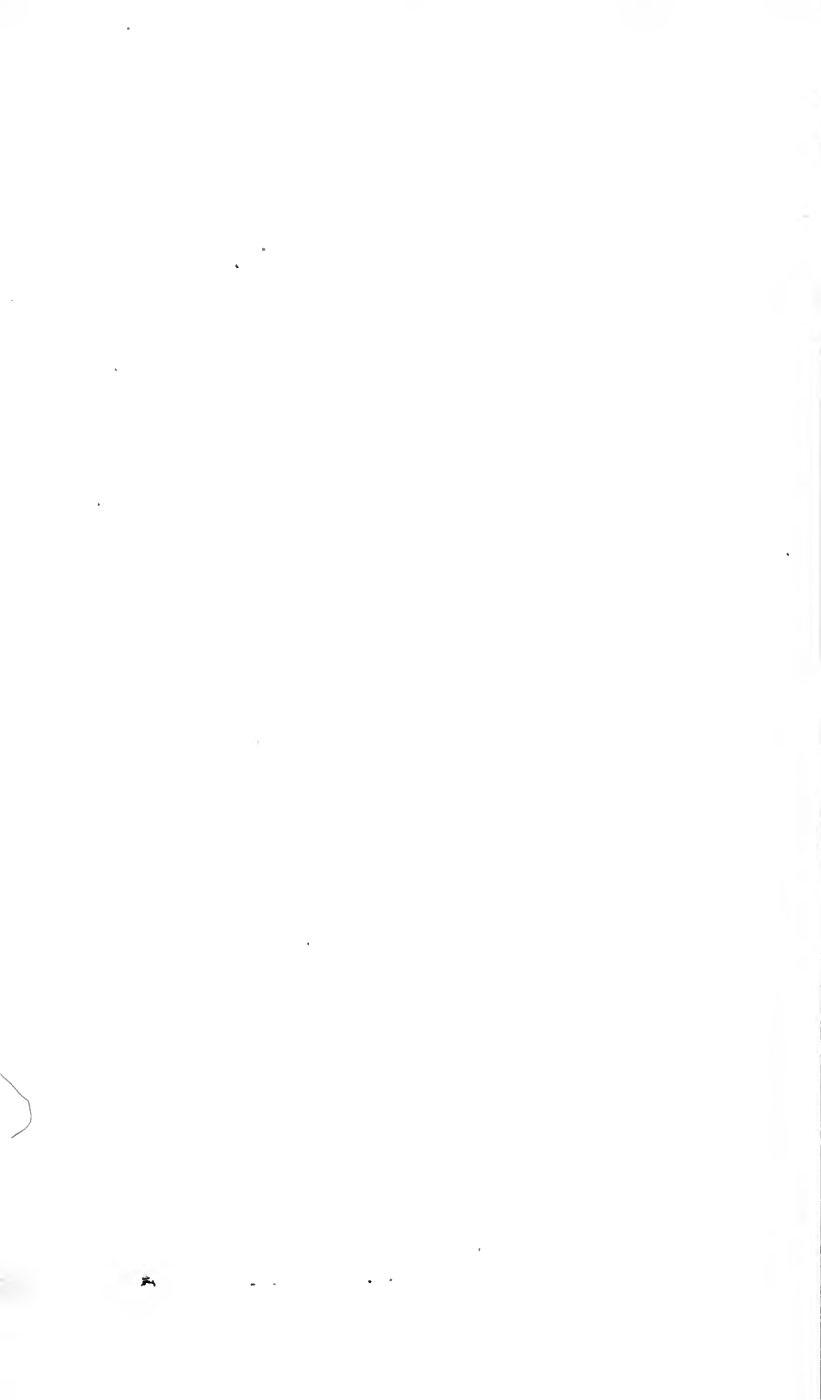
I N F O U R T E E N S E R M O N S p r e a c h ' d a t t h e
M e r c h a n t s L e c t u r e a t *Salters Hall*.

B y *EDMUND CALAMT*, D. D.

T o w h i c h i s a d d e d a S i n g l e S E R M O N
i n V i n d i c a t i o n o f t h e *Divine Institution*
o f t h e O f f i c e o f t h e M I N I S T R Y ,
p r e a c h ' d a t t h e s a m e L e c t u r e .

L O N D O N :

P r i n t e d f o r *T. Parkhurst* a t t h e B i b l e a n d 3
C r o w n s i n *Cheapside* ; *J. Robinson* a t t h e G o l -
d e n L i o n i n *St. Paul's Church-yard* ; a n d
J. Lawrence a t t h e A n g e l i n t h e *Poultry* ; a l s o
s o l d b y *J. Fox* i n *Westminster Hall*. 1710.



E
FBR
21/11/17

TO THE
QUEEN'S

Most Excellent MAJESTY:

May it please Your Majesty,

YOUR Gracious Ac-
ceptance of my En-
deavours in Oppo-
sition to a late *Pretended*
A 2 *Inspira-*

The Dedication.

Inspiration, has encourag'd me with all Humility to present to Your Majesty this Defence of the Antient, but *Real Inspiration*, of the Holy Writings of the Old and New Testament ; which are the Standard of our Religion, and the Foundation both of its Certainty and Authority. If Your Majesty will please to admit these Discourses into Your Royal Hands, I shall hope it may be an Inducement to some to cast their Eyes upon them, who therefore only undervalue the Sacred Scrip-

Scrip-

The Dedication.

Scriptures, because they are not duly Acquainted with them, and take their Notions of them from such as designedly Misrepresent them.

Your Majesty's Reign will be Celebrated in Future Ages for the Steadiness of your Counsels, and the Glorious Success of your Arms; for giving an effectual Check to the aspiring Designs of Universal Monarchy, and fixing the Ballance of *Europe*; for Uniting Your two *British* Kingdoms, and con-

The Dedication.

firming Your Subjects of all Perswasions, in a just Esteem of the great Blessing of MODERATION: May it but be as Remarkable for the Success of Serious Christianity against Infidelity and Prophaneness, and it will be no small Addition to its Lustre.

Never did any Prince more entirely Reign in the Hearts of the Inhabitants of these Islands, than Your Majesty; nor did they ever more tenderly bear a Part in the Joys and Sorrows, and
Cares

The Dedication.

Cares of their Sovereign ,
than since Your Majesty has
been upon the Throne. We
all look upon You as Born
and Preserv'd to make us
Happy : And the longer it
shall please Almighty God to
continue Your Majesty to us,
the greater, and the more
assur'd do we reckon our
Happiness, if want of Love
among our selves be not
the Hindrance ; which all
the World must own Your
Majesty does Your Part to
prevent.

The Dedication.

Your Declar'd Resoluti-
on *Inviolably to maintain the*
Toleration towards such as
Dissent from the Establish'd
Church in *South Britain*, is
what many Thousands of
Your Loyal Subjects are
very Thankful for : And I
dare be bold to assure Your
Majesty, that none go be-
yond them, in Firmness to
Your Title, or Zeal for Your
Service; in Fidelity to Your
Government, Hearty Pray-
ers for Your Prosperity, or
Concern for the Protestant
Succession, as it is Legally
settled. May

The Dedication.

May the God of Heaven, who has made Your Majesty the Greatest, and the Happiest Princess in the World, and the Chief Support of the Reformed Interest, multiply the Blessings of Your Reign, long continue You the Guardian of our Civil and Religious Liberties, and a Comforter of Foreign Protestants ; Grant You Great Success in Your Noble Undertakings for the Publick Good in this Life, and a late, a very late Translation, to the Glorious and Immortal State
of

The Dedication.

of the Life to come: This
is the Daily and Fervent
Prayer, of

May it please Your Majesty,

Your Majesty's Most Loyal,

And Most Obedient Subject,

EDM. CALAMY.

T H E

P R E F A C E.

I Find the World so sick of the common Apologies and Excuses that are prefix'd to the Discourses that come abroad from the Press, that I have no Inclination that way to give Disturbance. And yet should I say nothing by way of Introduction, that also might be misinterpreted. It may suffice the Reader therefore in the General to know, that I chose this Subject of the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, at as publick an Audience as any we that are Dissenters have the Advantage of, because I thought it peculiarly needful: And as for the way of Management, it is such as I hop'd might be most generally useful.

Instead of Contents or Index, I thought it might not be amiss to give this General View of the whole Performance. I begin with considering the grand Advantage of God's antient People the Jews, who in this were peculiarly favour'd above others, that they had the Oracles of God committed to them. The Second Sermon states the No-
tion.

The PREFACE.

tion of Inspiration as applicable to the Sacred Oracles ; and premises some things to make way for the Proof of it ; and contains four Arguments to prove that the whole Body of the antient Oracles, both of the Old Testament and the New, were really given by Inspiration of God. The Third Sermon, beginning with the Writings of the New Testament, for some Reasons which are mention'd, contains five Arguments in proof of their Divine Inspiration ; and considers their Contents as reducible to the three Heads, of Doctrines, Histories, and Prophecies. The Fourth Sermon contains two farther Arguments in proof of the Divine Inspiration of the Writings of the Old Testament ; and considers its Division into the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Chetubim, or Holy Writings. The Fifth Sermon distinctly considers the antient Prophetical Inspiration : to which is added an Appendix concerning Apostolical Inspiration. The Sixth Sermon answers the Objection against the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures, drawn from apprehended Contradictions therein contain'd. The Seventh answers the Objection drawn from the Absurdities and Impossibilities they are suppos'd to contain. The Eighth answers the Objection drawn from the apprehended Meaness, Obscurity, and Flatness of their Style : And also the Objection from their

Imme-

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Immethodicalness. *The Ninth answers the Objection drawn from some Particulars of the Matter of the Scripture : as from what we there meet with about Polygamy, from the Levitical Law, from the Execrations and Imprecations we meet with in Scripture, and from the Citations of the Old Testament that occur in the New. The Tenth answers that common Objection, that a much more effectual Method for Instruction, Conviction, and Excitation in Religion, might have been taken, than the dull and heavy way of a Written Volume. The Eleventh, from the Inspiration of the Scriptures infers their Profitableness for Doctrine, Reproof, Correction, and Instruction in Righteousness. The Twelfth, from the Inspiration of the Scriptures, which are the Foundation of the Protestant Religion, infers the Erroneousness of the Romish Religion both in its Foundation and Superstructure. The Thirteenth draws several other Inferences from the same Principle : And the Fourteenth gives Directions about the profitable Reading of these Inspired Writings.*

I might have cast these Sermons into the Form of a Treatise, which to some Readers would have been more agreeable, because the Method would have been more Regular and Exact : But I must then have been forc'd to have wav'd most of the Reflections which are added in the Close of the several Discourses,
which

The PREFACE.

which cannot well offend the more Judicious; when to the Generality of Readers they are likely to be peculiarly grateful and affecting.

Tho' the anonymous Author of the Five Letters concerning Inspiration, that were translated out of French into English, some Years since, has been already answer'd by several; yet I thought it proper to consider him as I went along, because there is more of Subtilty and Artifice in those Letters, than in any thing of that kind I ever yet met with. And I have not pass'd by any of his Objections that appear'd to me to be material.

I have added in the Close, a Sermon of the Divine Institution of the Office of the Ministry, thinking it not unsuitable nor unseasonable. I have the rather added it, because an ingenious Gentleman, in a Preface to a late valuable Tract, entituled, Directions for the Profitable Reading of the Holy Scriptures, hath this Passage: It were well, says he, if the Teachers of the separate Congregations (I mean as many of them as have any Regard for a Rule of Faith or Discipline) would shew their Zeal upon this Occasion, in standing up for the Maintenance of those common Truths which all that deserve the Name of Christians agree in. Tho' my Sermon was preach'd before this Admonition was publish'd, yet in compliance with it I here send it abroad into the World, and venture to appear

Mr. Wil-
liam
Lowth.

The PREFACE.

in Defence of this Common Truth, that the Ministry is an Office of Divine Appointment in the Church of Christ, and am under no Fear of disobliging any, either apprehended or real Friends, by owning the Jus Divinum of it, as it is here stated. But I hope it may not give Offence, if in return for his friendly Caution, I should move that they who are in possession of Dignities and Preferments, would not think their Brethren, who are very thankful to the Government that they are allow'd to be Teachers of separate Congregations, are oblig'd to be so officious as to undertake to answer the Difficulties which their Schemes are attended with, from which their own are free. And I cannot forbear adding, that whereas standing up for the Maintenance of Common Truths, without being confin'd to one Side only, is a plain Duty on all hands, it may deserve their serious Consideration, whether their Forwardness to run down the Ministry of their Brethren, as labouring under an Essential Defect, for want of the Formality of Episcopal Ordination, (the Jus Divinum of which was never yet prov'd) be very proper and becoming, when they thereby give an Advantage to such as are against any Ministry as an Office of God's Appointment. This does not to indifferent Standers-by appear the way to maintain common Truths, or to do any great Service either to Faith or Discipline.

The PREFACE.

pline. *It seems to shew more Zeal, than either Prudence or Charity, in our present Circumstances.*

If what I here publish may but have this Effect, to ingage any Persons to be more in love with the Holy Scriptures, and to have a just Value for the Office of the Ministry, which are two things upon which real Religion very much depends, God will have Glory from it, the Benefit receiv'd will be considerable, and my End will be answer'd.

S E R.

S E R M O N I.

ROM. III. 2.

-----*Chiefly, because that unto them
were committed the Oracles of God.*

IT is commonly observ'd by such as are most concern'd for real Religion, and there is but too much ground for the Observation, that the Credit of the Scriptures, for which we ought to have the highest Veneration, because they are the *Oracles of God*, runs but very low in the present Age. There are so many that bend their Wits to invent specious Cavils to justify their Infidelity, or that make it their Diversion to toss about the Words of the sacred Text in a way of Banter, or that take the Divinity of the Scriptures upon trust, without being at the pains to search into the Grounds and Reasons by which their Authority is supported: And it is at the same time so common for those that in words make a shew of the greatest respect for these Divine Writings, to mind little more than the History and the Notion of them, without any suitable Care about their Hearts

*At Sal-
ters-Hall
Tuesday
Lecture,
Aug. 22.
1704.*

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and

and their Lives, which they were chiefly design'd to mend and regulate ; that there are but very few left who truly and upon just Grounds, receive these sacred Records as coming from God, and with that Respect, Deference, and Observance, which such a Sense most plainly calls for. Some slight them to that degree, that they reckon it would be but time lost that they should spend in reading them. Others read them indeed, but 'tis much at the same rate as they do other Books ; without any thing of an awe upon their Spirits. And even we that out of a seeming Respect do often appeal to them, unless the Sense we arbitrarily affix to them may pass for Authentick, are many times difficultly brought to be determin'd by them : And tho' we keep up a superficial Acquaintance with them, yet we are wanting in that respect that is due to them. Some reckon it a matter of Judgment to disbelieve them ; and fancy themselves extreme witty in freely scoffing at Revelation : Others in Words applaud them, but make little use of them, either in forming their Opinions or ordering their Practice. We too generally converse with more Freedom and Pleasure with Writings of a vastly inferiour Nature : And take upon us to become Censors where we ought to reckon it our unspeakable Happiness, that we can be humble Learners. Hence is the visible Decay of Religion ; and hence our peculiar Proneness to Atheism. To this may we in a great measure ascribe the little Success of a Gospel-Ministry among us, and the Ineffectualness of those sacred Institutions, which we commonly attend upon to so little purpose. What then can be more seasonable, than an
Endeavour

Endeavour to revive the Credit of these Divine Oracles? What can be more for the Honour of God? Or more for the Advancement of Religion? There have indeed been many Laudable Attempts of this Kind already. But there's no reason any should be thence discourag'd from offering their helping Hand. Where there is so much depending, no Assistance should be slighted.

It shall therefore be my Endeavour (as God shall enable me) to clear to you the Divinity and the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; and to shew you the Grounds of that Respect we Ministers claim from you for these sacred Writings, on which our Discourses are bottom'd; and so to convince you of the Unreasonableness and Folly of such as disesteem them, or who pretending to value them, converse but little and carelessly with them; and can't be induc'd to take their measures from them.

The *Jews* it's well known were a People peculiarly favour'd of God: And it deserves our Observation, that the Text propos'd represents this as their great Advantage, that they had those sacred Writings which to this Day make up a considerable part of our Bible in their Hands, and committed to their Care. This *St. Paul* tells us was an invaluable Privilege which they enjoy'd above the other Nations of the Earth; this was the Favour by which they were most remarkably distinguish'd.

The Apostle was now dealing with these *Jews*, in order to a Conviction of their need of a Saviour, and of Justification in the Gospel-way; in which Attempt he found their

Priding themselves in their Privileges a mighty Obstacle. God had a nearer Intercourse with them than with the Gentile World ; and they hereupon fancy'd that whatever their Carriage was, they could not fail of Acceptance with him. In the foregoing Chapter he herein endeavours to undeceive them, and declares, that being as sinful and vile as the very Gentiles, they were as obnoxious to the Displeasure of an Holy God ; and that their Advantages being misimprov'd, instead of securing them, made them liable to the forer Condemnation. This seeming to set them on a Level with the rest of the World, He in the first Verse of this Chapter, puts that material Question ; *What Advantage then hath the Jew, or what Profit is there of Circumcision ?* If the Jews were as liable to Condemnation as others, and their most valu'd Advantages could not justify them in the sight of God, or bring them off at his Tribunal, it was natural to enquire wherein then lay their Pre-eminence, that they should be so oft represented as favour'd above other People ? The Apostle's Answer is direct and plain. They have *much Advantage*, says he, *every way*. Their Privileges were far from being annull'd and overthrown, by their being represented as incapable of justifying and acquitting them in the sight of God. They were Evidences of God's special Regard to them ; they were Helps that he gave them for their Improvement above others in Holiness ; they were accompany'd with secret Assistances of the Divine Spirit ; they were not only Figures and Shadows of the Gospel, but Preparations to make way for it. Tho' when all is done, their *Chief Privilege*, he says, and that which

which was most to be valu'd and esteem'd was this: That, *unto them were committed the Oracles of God.* And herein their great Fault lay, that they did not duly improve so great an Advantage.

These *Oracles of God*, are the Holy Scriptures, in which many things were discover'd to them, of the utmost Importance, which the mere Light of Nature could never reach to. Dr. *Hammond* apprehends that when they are stil'd God's Oracles, there is a Reference design'd to the Pectoral, which was on the Breast of the High Priest, by viewing which he receiv'd the Responses of God in all matters of Difficulty in which he consulted him: And that *St. Paul* hereby intends to intimate, that the *Jews* had those sacred Writings in their Hands, which contain'd a Collection of such Oracular Responses from the Pectoral. But this, if it were scann'd, would I doubt be found too fine: For the greatest part of the Contents of those sacred Volumes were reveal'd by God in another way, than by the Breastplate of Judgment. However, this is not the only Place where the Scriptures are in whole or in part represented to us as Divine Oracles. For *St. Stephen* tells his Countrey Men, that *Moses* receiv'd the *Lively Oracles*, or the *Living* Acts 7.38. *Oracles*, to give unto them, *i. e.* he receiv'd ^{λόγια} and reported those Significations of God's Will ^{ἑνώσια} that were deliver'd by his own Voice, and were to be regarded as a living Testimony, in opposition to meer Records, which are a sort of dead Witnesses. And elsewhere we have mention made of the *first Principles* or Elements of Heb. 5. *the Oracles of God*: The Doctrines of Christi-^{12.} anity, as reveal'd to the World, being the Ora-

cles of God ; and the most Fundamental Points of that Doctrine the first Principles of those Oracles. And it is observable, that the very same word as is upon these occasions us'd by the sacred Penmen, is commonly us'd among the *Pagans*, to signify the Oracles that were so famous among them. Tho' alas, Light is not more beyond Darkness, nor Clearness beyond the utmost Obscurity, nor Realities beyond the basest Forgeries, than the Oracles of God are beyond those of the Devil. The Oracles which the *Jews* were intrusted with were Divine ; and the Signatures of their Divinity were conspicuous in their Purity and Perspicuity, and Manner of Conveyance, as well as in their Drift and Tendency. And the wisest Heathens were glad to light their Candles at the fire of their Sanctuary ; and derive their Knowledge from the *Oracles of God* seated in their Church.

These Divine Oracles the *Jews* had committed to them : They were put into their Hands as a Trust ; which is the import of the word *ἐμπιστεύσαντες* : And 'tis the same word that is us'd by this Apostle elsewhere, when he intimates the Trust and Duty incumbent on Him in Preaching the Gospel that was committed to him. Here then may our Thoughts fasten :

1 Cor. 9.
17.
Gal. 2. 7.

The Great Advantage of the *Jews* above the Gentile World was this : That God committed to them his Oracles of supernatural Revelation.

In prosecuting this Argument, I propose,

- I. To give General Evidence that this was the Grand Advantage of the *Jews* above the *Gentiles*, that they were intrusted with the Oracles of God.
- II. To

II. To give a particular Account of the main respects in which this Divine Favour was peculiarly Advantageous to them.

III. To specify the Purposes for which the *Jews* had these sacred Oracles committed to them as a Trust. And,

IV. To close with some suitable Reflections.

I. Let us consider the General Evidence that attends this Truth, that the Grand Advantage of the *Jews* above the *Gentiles* was this, that they were entrusted with the Oracles of God. This will be out of the reach of Controversy, if we do but observe that the sacred Penmen do all along represent this as the signal Privilege of God's Peculiar People beyond other Nations: They that were the best Judges of their Advantages, do from time to time herein fix their Pre-eminence, that they were favour'd with peculiar Divine Revelations. To this purpose speaks *Moses*, their first Great Prophet and their Lawgiver: *What* Deur. 48.
*Nation is there so great, that hath Statutes and Judgments so Righteous, as all this Law which I set before you this Day? When he first brought the Lively Oracles to them, He minds them, that this was a special Favour of Heaven, which distinguish'd them from other People. The Psalmist magnifies this Privilege of theirs at a mighty rate. He sheweth his Word unto Jacob, his Statutes Psal. 147.
and his Judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt 19, 20.
so with any Nation: And as for his Judgments they have not known them: And therefore he calls upon them the more cheerfully to praise the Lord. And St. Paul also, who here begins to mention their peculiar Privileges, when he comes afterwards particularly to reckon them up, lays his*

Rom.9.4. greatest stress upon this : *To whom, says he, pertaineth the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promises.* The Covenant that was made with them, the Law that was given to them, the Service of God that was appointed among them, and the Promises that were added to encourage them, are all comprehended in those *Oracles of God*, which are here said to be committed to them : And I think we cannot then need any farther Evidence, that this must be their great *Advantage*. But for the Amplification of it, it may be very well worth our while,

II. In the second place, to consider the main Respects in which this Divine Favour was design'd to be peculiarly advantageous to them ; which the following Particulars will sufficiently account for.

1. By means of these Divine Oracles they had much brighter and more becoming Notions of the Blessed God than the rest of the World. If we consult other Nations, even those that were most refin'd and polish'd, we shall find they strangely multiply'd their Deities, and generally look'd upon the Divinity as corporeal, limited, not existing without a Beginning, weak in manifold Instances, ambitious, and stain'd with a thousand Vices, which draws after it most horrid Consequences : And even their Wisest Philosophers were at great Uncertainties, and knew not where to fix. In the mean time, in a little Corner of the World was this People to be found, who tho' the Objects of a general Contempt and Scorn, yet had a satisfactory Knowledge of the God they had to do with, as far as was necessary to regulate

gulate their Practice : and consulting their Sacred Oracles, they met with such a Representation of him, as was consistent with it self, becoming the Worshippers of a Deity, and justly productive of the utmost Veneration. They were thence taught to conceive of God, as an Eternal and Necessary, One and Simple, and infinitely Perfect Being ; Almighty, and sovereignly Holy and Happy ; Himself Independent, but having All things dependent upon him : And while the Pagan Notions directly contributed to support and spread all manner of Extravagance, it must be own'd such Notions of God as these, tended most directly to engage them to submit to him their Minds and their Wills, and to renounce all corrupt Desires out of regard to him. Whence had this People so much better Notions of God than their Neighbours ? To resolve it into uncertain Chance is the Height of Folly. To ascribe it to any peculiar Sagaciousness of theirs, is to act without Reason ; since there is abundant Evidence that other Nations, particularly the *Greeks* and *Romans* were much more polish'd and refin'd than they, and went far beyond them both in Learning and Civil Prudence. Unless we'll egregiously befool our selves, we must ascribe it to those *Oracles of God* that were committed to them. It was from them they had their Light.

2. They hence also got a more distinct Acquaintance with their own Nature, and with the several Parts of moral Duty, than they had otherwise been capable of. Let us plunge our selves ever so deep in the Writings and Speculations of the several Schools of Philosophers, we cannot find a satisfactory Account either
what

what we are who are for making such a figure, or whence we came, or whither we go; what End we were chiefly design'd to answer, or how we came to be so nobly furnish'd and endow'd. We are put off with Gueffes; and after a great many fine Words and plausible Pretences, are left in the dark. This set many in the Pagan World upon complaining and fretting, but without Relief. Whereas the sober *Jew* consulting his Sacred Oracles, found his Body had its rise from the Dust, and his Spirit from the Father of Spirits: That he was sent into this World to glorify his Maker, in order to the future enjoying him; and was in this Life to prepare for another that was to follow it: And was therefore so nobly furnish'd by his Maker and Lord, that he might be the more capable of reaching that Felicity, of which he had made him earnestly desirous. And this Scheme gives great Satisfaction.

As for the Pagan Morality, it must needs be strangely tainted, when the very Gods they worshipp'd were describ'd to them as most grossly vitious, and guilty of the most horrid Enormities. Whereas the Sacred Oracles that were in the hands of the *Jews*, at the same time as they set a God before them who was fit to be imitated and ador'd, pres'd it also upon them as their Capital Duty to love that God above all things, with all their *Heart, and Soul, and Mind, and Might*: and that way establish'd a solid Principle of all the Duties that were requir'd, went to the Root of all Vice, and enliven'd every Vertue. And while the rest of the World were left to spell out the several particular Parts of their Duty to God, themselves, and one another, by the help of the dim Light
of

of Nature, out of the Works of Creation and Providence; in their Collections from whence they often blunder'd, taking Evil for Good, and Good for Evil; this People had the Moral Law promulgated among them in a most majestic manner by God himself: A Law that was comprehensive and full, and yet plain and clear: A Law that was chargeable neither with Redundancies nor Defects: A Law that deserv'd all the Encomiums given of it by *David* and *In Psal.* the other sacred Penmen: A Law that was ^{19,} & kept in a sacred Repository, first in the Tabernacle, and afterwards in the Temple, and that by God's own Appointment, that it might neither be forgotten nor corrupted.

3. They hence also receiv'd Satisfaction in many other matters, the Knowledge whereof is of the greatest importance, and most desir'd by thoughtful Spirits. I'll only touch upon Three Heads of many; but they are very considerable: They are the Formation of the Universe; the Origin of Evil; and the favourable Inclination of an offended God to Apostate Creatures.

The wisest Philosophers have either ascrib'd the Formation of the World to a casual Course of Atoms; or else they have represented it as Eternal, and a necessary Emanation from the first Cause, as Light from the Sun; or else they have ascrib'd it to Matter and Motion, managing it self according to the Laws of Mechanism. But there is no one of these Hypotheses which does not involve in the grossest Absurdities, and consequentially overthrow Religion. Whereas the Divine Oracles that were committed to the *Jews*, satisfy'd them that the World owes its Rise to the Omnipotent Will and Word of God: They were assur'd, That

by

Pfal. 33. *by the Word of God were the Heavens made, and*
 6, 7, 8, 9. *all the Host of them by the Breath of his Mouth:*
That he gather'd the Waters of the Sea together as
an Heap, and laid up the Depth in Storehouses:
And that all the Earth ought to fear him, because
he spake and it was done; he commanded, and it
stood fast. Before which Representation of the
 matter, all Philosophical Schemes about it dis-
 appear, as so many trifling Fancies and empty
 Dreams.

But tho' God made the World, yet it is many
 ways evident it did not continue long in the
 State wherein he produc'd it. For he is infi-
 nitely Good, and all his Productions, as they
 come from him, must necessarily bear the Sig-
 natures of his Goodness: Whereas looking a-
 bout the World, Evil now appears in all man-
 ner of Forms and Shapes. How this came to
 enter, and whence it had its Rise and Preva-
 lence, has been a most puzzling Difficulty to
 thoughtful Minds. After their utmost Searches,
 they that had only natural Light to guide them,
 have been very much at a loss. They might
 easily argue it to be repugnant to the Nature
 of God, that Evil should come from him; and
 yet how it could come into the World without
 him, they could not discover: And therefore
 they commonly set up two different Principles
 of things; the one of Good, and the other of
 Evil; two Principles and Powers contrary to
 each other: and so by making two Gods, they
 really made none at all, and in effect justled
 Religion out of the World. Some represented
 Evil as entering by a Necessity of Nature, and
 resulting from the Malignity of Matter, the
 Rise of which they yet could not account for:
 whereas the *Jews* consulting the Sacred Oracles
 that

that were committed to them, found that *God made Man upright, but that they have sought out many Inventions.* That Sin, by which Man apostatiz'd from God, was wholly from his own Will and Choice when he was left to himself: and that all the Miseries that have thereupon ensu'd, were the Penal Effects of Divine Justice, for the Evil of Sin, with which all are infected.

God being incens'd by the Apostacy and Revolt of Man, and following him, on this account, with so many Marks of his Displeasure as were obvious, the grand Query remain'd, What Hope there could be of any farther Intercourse with him; and how Men could expect any Favour at his hands? This was a most puzzling Question to those that were left to the meer Light of Nature. But the *Jews consulting the Sacred Oracles that were in their hands, found God thus proclaiming his own Name: The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth; keeping Mercy for thousands, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin.* They found it declar'd by those whom God imploy'd as his Agents, to give them Satisfaction, that there was *Forgiveness with him that he might be feared:* And they were thereupon call'd to *hope in the Lord, for that with him there is Mercy, and plenteous Redemption.* And as far as they found reason to conclude, that these were really the *Oracles of God,* so far had they reason to be easy, and to depend on Declarations of this kind, which they found there so oft repeated. Herein they had a vast Advantage above the rest of the World, who at best could not go further than the Men of *Nineveh, with their Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn from his fierce Anger, that we perish not.* Again,

Eccl. 7.
29.

Exod. 34.

6, 7.

Psal. 130.

ver. 7.

Jonah 3.

9.

4. The

4. The Sacred Oracles which the *Jews* had committed to them, contain'd that Covenant of God with them, which was the Great Charter of their Hopes and Expectations ; and in that respect also were highly advantageous to them. The Apostle says theirs were *the Covenants*. They in these Sacred Writings met with that gracious Covenant which God first made with their Nation in their Father *Abraham* : which Covenant was often afterwards repeated, and re-established. That Covenant, as to the Matter of it, was still the same, tho' as to the Form of it different, in every new Establishment. You have the Substance of it in that Speech of God to *Abraham* ; *I will establish my Covenant between me and thee, and thy Seed after thee in their Generations, for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy Seed after thee.* Nothing could give the *Jews* such a Foundation for Joy, supposing they at all valu'd the Divine Favour ; nothing so distinguish'd them from other Nations whom God suffer'd to walk in their own Ways, as such a Covenant as this, which their Sacred Oracles set before them : By which God took them under his special Patronage and Care, and engag'd to act the part of a God towards them in all respects, for their Benefit and Happiness, if they would but follow his Conduct. Who but must cry out with the Psalmist, *Happy the People in such a case ; yea happy that People whose God is the Lord.* Again,

Pfal. 144.
15.

5. They were also by these Oracles led into a way of Worship, which they might be satisfied, if they were devout and serious, would find Acceptance. And this is what the Apostle means, by mentioning *the Service of God in their*

Rom.9.4.

their Case. While the rest of the Nations were left to most foolish and ridiculous Superstitions, their Worship in all the Parts of it was of God's own Appointment ; and all their Services, even to the minutest Circumstances, were of his particular ordering. And tho' their Sacrifices and Oblations were not of themselves, and separate from Purity and Sincerity of Heart, of any worth or value in the sight of God, yet was it a singular Privilege to be so particularly pointed as they were, to the right Worship of the true God ; and to such a way of Worship, as when they were sincere in it, could not be rejected. This Privilege they enjoyed by means of the *Oracles of God* that were committed to them : And none belonging to any other Nation could have the like Benefit, without being oblig'd to them for it.

6. Sixthly and Lastly : They were hereby also fully certifi'd of the coming of the intended *Messiah*, and his Future Kingdom. This without doubt was one thing the Apostle had here in his Eye : And a main Advantage it was, that they in their sacred Oracles found *the Promises* ; of God's sending his Son at a time appointed into the World, to accomplish the Redemption of it ; to repair the sad Breaches which Sin had made ; and to purchase Remission and Everlasting Salvation. There also they had many Prophecies distinctly foretelling the time and manner of his Appearance, with the Circumstances of his Parentage, Nativity, Education, Life and Doctrine, Miracles and Sufferings, Death, Resurrection and Ascension : All which were therefore foretold so punctually, that when he should come and actually make his Appearance

Rom. 9.4

ance among them, there might be the greater Certainty that this was he that was to Come, and that they needed not to look for another; that this was that Seed of the Woman that was to break the Serpent's Head; that Seed in whom all the Nations of the Earth were to be so remarkably blessed. It was the heightning the Evidence of the *Messiah* upon his Appearance, when he was compar'd with foregoing Types and Shadows, Prophecies and Promises, that was one great end of the Peculiarity of their Inclosure. In this *Messiah*, All the *Oracles of God* that were committed to them directly center'd. To have him who was to be the Great Restorer, and to whom the rest of the World comparatively were Strangers, so distinctly mark'd out to them beforehand, was a mighty Advantage to them that knew how to improve it; an unspeakable Support to Faith and Hope; and a mighty Incentive to all manner of Holiness, with which Happiness is ever straitly connected.

Thus you see what an Advantage the *Jews* had by their Sacred Oracles: Let us now,

III. In the *Third* place, consider for what Purposes they were committed to them. And here I shall only point to three Considerations.

1. They were committed to them for their own Benefit and Support, Conduct and Comfort. Therefore were they favour'd with better Notions of God than others, that Fear, and Reverence, Love, Trust, and Confidence, and all other pious and devout Affections, might be the more effectually stirred up in them. Therefore had they in their Sacred Oracles a Moral Law deliver'd from God himself,

self, that they might be the more thoroughly convinc'd of their Sins and Failures, and the more further'd in an holy Walk with God, by a careful Observance of it. Therefore had they such Satisfaction there given them in sundry Matters of the highest Concernment, on purpose that the clearer Light they enjoy'd above their Neighbours, might both induce and assist them to glorify God in an higher Degree than they could do. Therefore was their Covenant with God therein so particularly set before them, that by being quicken'd to and in that holy Course, which became the Covenant Children and Servants of the Most High, they might the better secure to themselves, and their Posterity after them, the inestimable Blessings which Obedience would draw after it. Therefore were they hereby led into a Way of Worship that was acceptable to God, that their Thankfulness for so great a Favour might be heighten'd and inflam'd. And therefore were they hereby so certified of the Coming of the intended *Messiah*, that they might know him the better when he came; and of his future Kingdom, that they might be the more easily induc'd to subject themselves to it. There's no part of their Privilege but it had a suitable Benefit attending it.

2. The Oracles of God were committed to the Jews, for the Benefit of the rest of Mankind, that would repair to them, and embody with them. Tho' they were particularly intrusted with this invaluable Treasure, yet was it not so appropriated to them, as to exclude Persons of any other Nation, who desir'd part with them, and were willing to join themselves to them, in the same Faith and Worship. They

were selected by God to have the Custody of his Oracles, the Import whereof respected the Accommodation and Benefit of the whole World with them: and they stood bound to manage their Trust in this behalf accordingly; and it was their great Failure that they did not.

3. They were committed to the *Jews*, for the Benefit of the *Gentiles* after the *Messiah* was come; that they by consulting these Oracles might be the more confirm'd in their Faith in him, and Submission to him. They were, after a sort, Trustees of the Promises of God till they came to be put in execution; when they were to be laid open to all the Earth. Thus was it foretold by the Prophet: *Out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And, The Gentiles shall come to thy Light, and Kings to the Brightness of thy Rising. Lift up thine Eyes round about and see, all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: Thy Sons shall come from far, and thy Daughters shall be nurs'd at thy Side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine Heart shall fear and be enlarged, because the Abundance of the Sea shall be converted unto thee, the Forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.* And in this respect 'tis remarkable, that the *Jews* were all along Depositories of what they did not understand: and when the time of Accomplishment arriv'd, would most gladly have hindred the fulfilling of those very Oracles, with which they had been intrusted.

And now let us see whether a Foundation be not laid for sundry Remarks of considerable Weight and Use.

1. We

1. We may be hence led to observe, That whatsoever, with respect to Spirituals, distinguishes some from others, is the Gift of God. Great was the Pre-eminence of the *Jews* of old beyond other Nations: But into what is it to be resolv'd? Must we ascribe it to their peculiar Merits? Were they more worthy than their Neighbours? more dispos'd to improve the Favours of Heaven than other People? Is there any Foundation for such a Thought? Nay have we not reason to conclude the contrary? Never certainly was there a perverser People under Heaven: Never was any People more addicted to Idolatry than they, from the Beginning of the World: And yet it pleas'd God in a special manner to favour them, and to commit his Oracles to them. Both Old Testament and New ascribes this to God's Benignity, and not to any thing that was found in them to induce him to it. 'Tis the like also in the Case of others, as to peculiar Favours. If some have the Gospel while others are without it, we have equal Reason to resolve it into the good Pleasure of God, and not to pretend that they that have it are more worthy than they that want it. This is a Thought that might beat down that Pride, which is as natural as it is pernicious.

2. We may also observe, How easy a thing it is, to have great Advantages, and not improve them. Let us look to the *Jews*, and learn to beware of priding our selves in our spiritual Privileges, which cannot of themselves forward us in our Way to Heaven; nay, which by being misimprov'd, do often aggravate Guilt, and heighten Condemnation. Who could be more highly favour'd than they, who

had the *Oracles of God committed to them?* And yet how little were they, generally speaking, the better! Nay how many of them were sunk the deeper in Condemnation, by what might have further'd their Salvation! Let's think of it and tremble, lest we also under all our Gospel-Helps, should perish at an uncommon rate, through a like evil Heart of Unbelief.

3. Look to the Case of the *Jews*, and observe how little the Applause of the World is to be regarded. None more despised by Men than they; and yet no People more favour'd of God. By the Wise Men of the World they were reckon'd the most despicable Nation under the Sun; and yet they had the *Oracles of God* in their hands: an incomparably greater Treasure than both the *Indies* can afford. How small a thing is it to be slighted of Men, if we are favour'd of God!

4. Let us observe farther, that God excludes none from even the greatest Favours, that are but sensible of their need of them, and of their great Worth and Value, and earnestly desirous of them. To have the *Oracles of God* was one of the highest Privileges: It was the great Advantage of the *Jew*; and yet neither was the *Gentile* World excluded. God excludes none, but such as exclude themselves.

5. Think a little how sad a thing it is for Persons to have a Trust in their hands rising up in Judgment against them. This was the wretched Case of the *Jews*. The *Oracles of God* were committed to them, and yet they not improving them, and at last rejecting the *Messiah*, to whom they pointed them, those very sacred Writings upon which they so much valu'd themselves, rose up in Judgment against them,
and

and condemn'd them. And how many of us Christians, that have both the Volumes of the Oracles of God in our hands, take a course to have them rising up in Judgment against us another Day ; while we either let them lie by us gathering Dust, and make little or no use of them ; or live in direct opposition to those Orders, Commands, and Counsels, which we profess to believe came forth from God.

6. Let us admire the wise Providence of God, which by committing his antient Oracles to the People of the *Jews*,

took such effectual care that they should be safely transmitted even unto us*. We ought not to make light of the Old Testament, which gives us so much Light, and whence we may fetch so great a Confirmation of the New: But we ought to esteem it a very signal Mercy, that the antient Oracles are preserv'd, as well as new ones added, for the peculiar Benefit of us Christians. By committing those antient Oracles to the *Jews*, God took a most wise Method to secure to us the Possession of that invaluable Treas-

** This is oft taken notice of by the Antient Fathers. Says Justin Martyr, in his Exhortation to the Greeks: Nam quod etiamnum apud Judæos pietatis nostræ libri asservantur, divinæ id de nobis est opus providentiæ. Ne enim ex ecclesia eos proferentes, occasionem quasi suppositi à nobis aut corrupti sint, maledictis nos incessanter volentibus præbeamus, ex illorum synagoga producimus: ut ex ipsis huc usque apud eos conservatis libris, ad nos nostramque doctrinam à sanctis viris edita jura, liquidò & manifestò pertinere appareat. And St. Augulline, lib. 12. cont. Faust. cap. 23. Quid aliud gens ipsa Judæorum, nisi quædam scriniaria, bajulans Legem & Prophetas, ad testimonium assertionis Ecclesiæ, ut nos honoremus per sacramentum, quod annunciat illa per literam.*

ure. For that People was ever exceeding careful of that Divine Revelation with which they were intrusted ; and so zealous to preserve it, that they would rather endure the

utmost Severities, than abate their Respect to it, or part with a Tittle of it. In this appears an admirable Reach of Divine Providence. For such were the Circumstances of that People, whom God inclos'd for himself, that the Oracles committed to them contain'd their Grand Charter, on which all their peculiar Pretensions were founded, and by which they held those several Rights and Privileges which distinguish'd them from other Nations. Here was their Title to the Land of *Canaan*; here was their Directory in all sacred Offices and Ministrations; here was their Law, that was their applauded Rule of Life; and here were the Objects of all their Hopes as to Futurities. Nothing then can be more evident than that it was highly for their Interest to preserve them. They were engag'd to it by every thing that could touch their Hearts or quicken their Care; as well as bound to it by Precept as their great Duty. The Tribe of *Levi* were made the peculiar Guardians of them, and had it given them as their Work frequently to explain them. At the same time the most important Facts they ran upon were almost the daily Entertainment of the People; and the Memory of them was also preserv'd by their Worship and sacred Ceremonies, which had a direct Reference to the most signal Facts reported in their Oracles. And it was a common Principle among them,

* *Father Simon himself hath industriously prov'd that the Jews have not corrupted the Hebrew Text. See his Critique upon the Old Testament, l. 1. ch. 18, 19. l. 2. ch. 4.*

that to alter one Letter of the Law was no less a Sin, than to set the World on fire*. Nay so exact were they, as not only to enumerate the Books, Chapters and Lines, but even the

the Words, Syllables, and Letters of their Sacred Oracles, that there might be no Alteration. All which put together is a good Security to us that we have them intire*. And there is one remarkable Instance of their Fidelity that ought not to be overlook'd: They have not so much as alter'd those Passages that are of the most peculiar Use to us Christians, in the things wherein we differ from them. They keep in their Bibles those very Texts which render them infamous in all the Earth, by setting him forth as the *Messiah*, whom their Fathers crucify'd, and whom they with Vehemence still oppose. Thus do they considerably confirm Christianity: So easy a thing is it for God to use Men to serve his Purposes while they are little aware of it.

7. It is natural upon this Occasion to reflect on the Folly and Vanity, and yet the Perfidiousness and Baseness of the *Church of Rome*. Hearing that the *Jews* were peculiarly entrusted with the Oracles of the Old Testament, nothing will satisfy them but they must be peculiarly entrusted with those of the New Testament. This is Foolish and Vain, because there is not a like Need of such special Trustees now as heretofore; nor are they able to alledge any suitable Foundation for such a Pretension. There neither appears the least Ground for it in this Epistle, which was sent to that Church in its Primitive State; nor indeed

* Justin Martyr indeed, in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, asserts that the Jews took out of the Hebrew Text those Words in Jer. ii. 19. Let us destroy the Stalk with his Bread, and let us cut him off from the Land of the Living. But these Words are now found in the Jewish Copies; and if there was such an Attempt to leave them out, it was only made by particular Persons, while the Copies that were in the hands of others remain'd uncorrupt.

in any other of our sacred Records. But were their Pretension just and well grounded (which it is far from) it is yet very evident that they would be guilty of the highest Perfidiousness. For what have they not done in adding to, detracting from, aspersing and corrupting the Scriptures? and is not this as if they study'd to falsify their supposed Trust? They add to them, by equalling their Traditions with them: They corrupt them by preferring a grossly vicious *Latin* Translation to the Originals themselves: They in the foulest manner asperse them by representing them as of no Authority, unless they confirm them. And are they not then admirable Trustees! We have Reason to bless God we are not in such perfidious hands. Let us rejoice and be thankful, that we are not yet at their Mercy, who would either wrest our Bibles from us, and make them so scarce, as that we should be willing to purchase single Leaves of them at a great Price, as some of our Martyrs did in former Times: Or else would leave us only a corrupt Translation, which the Vulgar could not be able to understand.

8. And lastly, If the *Jews* had a great Advantage in having the antient Oracles deliver'd to them, if it was a mighty Privilege for them to be entrusted with the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets, then what an Advantage have we Christians, who are entrusted with the Records of the Gospel, wherein the things that most concern us are reveal'd with so much greater Clearness and Perspicuity: With those Writings in which Life and Immortality is so distinctly brought to light, and by which we have so much brighter Discoveries, as to the
Media-

Mediator, his Person and Offices; his Design and its Accomplishment, the Glories of his Kingdom, and the Blessings he has purchas'd, and in which he is ready to give us all a Share. If they had a great Privilege, certainly ours must be much greater: And yet I doubt we Christians may be sent to the *Jews* to learn to value the *Oracles of God*. They were so zealous in their Regard to that part of them that was committed to them, that they would rather part with their Lives than they would offer them to the Flames, or deliver them up to be destroy'd. I doubt many of us would not have a like Zeal under a like Trial; and yet there's abundant Reason for it. For the *Oracles of God* have much improv'd upon us: and if they were valuable heretofore, they are much more so now, as containing a fuller Account of the Blessed God, and of our way to Blessedness in him thro' a Mediator; a distincter Account of our Misery and our Remedy, and the Way and Method of our Recovery: and a more particular Account of the Grounds of our Duty, and the Rewards that will attend a faithful Discharge of it, both at present and in a future World, than was to be found in the former Revelation. If they then so priz'd one, let us prize both Parts of our Bibles. Let us bless God most heartily for those Sacred Volumes. Let us count them our Treasure, and manage them accordingly. Let us endeavour to relish and favour them in our daily Perusal of them. And let us keep them as a Trust that is deposited with us, for which we are accountable another Day.

SERMON II.

2 TIM. III. 16.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.

*At Sal-
ters-Hall
Tuesday
Lecture,
Octob. 31.
1704.*

THERE is in these Words something suppos'd ; *viz.* That our Scriptures are divinely inspir'd : And something asserted ; *viz.* that they are admirably useful and profitable : not design'd indeed to satisfy our Curiosity, or tickle us with a vain Pleasure, but to profit us in our Way to Heaven, in all the respects in which we need the Assistance of a Written Rule. The thing that is here suppos'd most naturally first falls under our Consideration : And the Inspiration of the Scriptures being once stated and clear'd, we shall find their admirable Usefulness will easily be made appear, in order to the encreasing our Veneration, where we cannot easily exceed.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable, &c. or rather, as the Syriack has it, *All Scripture that is inspir'd of God is profitable,* for these and these excellent Purposes. There

is no doubt but the Writings of the Old Testament were the Scripture here particularly refer'd to : For these were the *Scriptures* which *Timothy* in the Verse immediately foregoing is said to have *learnt from a Child*. However, the Construction of this Verse gives us Ground enough to enlarge in our Meditation. As for those Scriptures which *Timothy* had been so long acquainted with, he intimates, that being *given by Inspiration from God*, they were *profitable for Doctrine, Reproof, Correction and Instruction* ; and to make the *Man of God perfect*. If so ; if the Scriptures of the Old Testament were therefore profitable to such excellent Purposes, because they were Divinely Inspir'd, then does it evidently follow, that the Writings of the New Testament must (to say no more) be to the full as profitable, since they were as really Divinely Inspir'd as the other.

The Argument then that here offers it self to our Distinct Consideration is this : That the sacred Oracles both of the Old and New Testament were Divinely Inspir'd.

In the Management of this Argument I will pursue this easy Method.

- I. I'll endeavour rightly to state the Notion of Inspiration, and shew what is meant by the Apostle when he represents our sacred Oracles as *given by Inspiration of God*.
- II. I'll prove the Truth of the Assertion that they were so Inspir'd, and shew upon what Grounds we ought to believe and firmly to adhere to this Principle.

III. I'll

- III. I'll Consider the most plausible Objections against it I have ever met with. And,
 IV. I'll endeavour to improve this Principle once establish'd, to the best Purposes that may be.

I. I begin with stating the Notion of Divine Inspiration, and shewing what is meant by the Apostle when he represents our sacred Oracles as *given by Inspiration of God*. The matter is important, and deserves close Thoughts. Perhaps upon search it may be found that some have carry'd the Inspiration of our sacred Penmen too high, the doing which is the way to disserve the best Cause in the World: Others at the same time have gone much too low, to the diminishing that Veneration for these sacred Writings, which is so necessary for the supporting of Religion. But whatsoever Inspiration most properly lies in, Two things are clear; *viz.* That something is thereby meant that is so peculiar to our sacred Oracles, that it cannot be said as to any other Books or Writings that are offer'd to our Perusal: And that this, (be it what it will) is so common to all the Parts of our sacred Oracles, that none of them are to be excluded from a share in it, tho' some may be Inspir'd in a manner, and a degree different from others. And these two Remarks will give us Assistance in finding out the true General Notion of Inspiration that is here intended.

1. Then, something is hereby meant that is so peculiar to our sacred Oracles, that it cannot be said as to any other Books or Writings that are offer'd to our Perusal. Whatsoever

ever Writings we take into our Hands, if any thing occurs, that is truly useful, we may with Confidence say it came Originally from God, who is the Source and Fountain of Truth of all sorts. *He is the Father of Lights.* So that if Jam. 1. we find in the Works either of *Christians* or 17. *Jews, Pagans* or *Mahometans*, Antient Philosophers, or Modern Sectaries, any useful Discoveries of what may really contribute to our Improvement in Knowledge, we ought still to refer them to the Eternal Sun, and look upon them as so many *Rays* deriv'd from him: Owning with *Elibu*, that 'tis the *Inspiration of the Almighty* Job. 32.8. that giveth them *Understanding*. This is so agreeable to the common Sentiments of Mankind, who when they meet with any Composure that is peculiarly charming, are apt to cry it up as Divine, that they have fix'd upon that as a standing Maxim: *Nihil magnum sine Afflatu Divino*: There is nothing great without Inspiration. But tho' all Truth is from God, yet what is reveal'd in Scripture, is so in a peculiar manner. Tho' other Writers as far as they suggest what is improving and useful were under a Divine Conduct, yet it is a special Divine Conduct that our sacred Penmen were under, who were to serve special and peculiar Purposes, and therefore were under such an Influence of the most High, as others have no Ground or Reason to pretend to. Tho' other Writings may contain Truths that were at first Inspir'd, yet it is peculiar to our Bible, that the Composition of it was the Work of the Holy Ghost.

2. The Inspiration here spoken of is so common to all the Parts of our sacred Oracles, that none of them are wholly to be excluded

cluded a share in it, tho' some may have been Inspir'd in a manner and a degree different from others. The Apostle in this Text plainly refers to the Old Testament in General, as a Collection of Inspir'd Writings. And as our Blessed Saviour, when he bids the *Jews search* Joh. 5. 39. *the Scriptures*, refers them to that Collection of sacred Writings which they had in their Hands, as sufficient to lead them to Eternal Life; so the Apostle when he here presses *Timothy* to adhere to the Scriptures as Inspir'd of God, and profitable to all desirable Purposes because they were so Inspir'd, plainly insinuates, that this agrees to all the Parts of the Scriptures, which he in the Course of his Education had learnt, and been instructed in. So that whereas those Scriptures contain'd *Prophecies* and *Histories*, and *Doctrines*, they were all Divinely Inspir'd tho' in different Degrees. I say in different Degrees; as concluding there is scarce any Man but will agree in this, that there could be no need of the same Degree of Inspiration to write a History, as was requisite to the making a Man a Prophet.

Our Enquiry then is, what sort of Divine Influence that must be, that was so peculiar to the Penmen of our sacred Oracles, that others have no just Cause to pretend to it; and yet so common to them as that they had it more or less, in all the Parts of that sacred Volume that we call the Bible? And I'll comprize the Answer in a few Words. This Divine Inspiration, I apprehend, implies, that they who deliver'd the Oracles of the Old and New Testament to Mankind, were not only stirr'd up by the Spirit of God to contribute their respective Parts, for the common Benefit, but that they

they therein had his special Assistance, both in the forming their Conceptions, and framing their Writings : And that they had such an Assistance of his in their several Compoſures, as effectually prevented their inserting any thing that was false, or omitting any necessary Truth, out of Ignorance, Forgetfulness, or Ill-will : So that their Report and Representation may be very safely depended on by the Church and People of God from Age to Age, and be abundantly useful to them in their way to Heaven.

But we may be help'd to conceive this matter the more distinctly, by means of the following Observations.

1. Inspiration was by an Impression on the Imagination. A Divine *Impetus* acted such Persons as were Inspir'd. God as it were laid his Hand upon their Spirits. He touch'd them and they acted as under his Influence. When we converse with our Fellow-Creatures by Discourse, the Vibration of the Air on their Ears produces such a Motion in their Brains as conveys our Thoughts to them. Now God who has a near Access to the Spirits of all his Servants, made such Impressions on the Brains of those whom he selected for Penmen of Holy Writ, as suffic'd to convey to them the Notices he intended for them : And to assist them in conveying Notices so receiv'd or reviv'd to others. Should any enquire in what the Impressions that were made upon such an Occasion, differ'd from those which the Saints have at some times been under in after-Ages, I can't see any Damage can arise, from our owning it difficult for us to assign and describe the Difference : For we may upon good Evidence

dence be assur'd the Difference was considerable, tho' we are unable particularly to account for it.

2. This Impression was such, as made it as certain to the Persons Inspir'd that it came from God, as it is to us that we converse with such or such a Friend or Acquaintance, and receive certain Notices from him. This must be allow'd by all that have seriously consider'd the Case of *Abraham*. In his Days particular Inspiration was frequent, tho' there was no written Word. He had a Call in the way of Inspiration, to offer up his only Son, the Son of his Old Age, the Son of his Prayers, and the Son of the Promise, as a Burnt Offering. Nature must necessarily recoil, and the Bowels of a tender Father could not but relent: And had there been the least room for his Questioning whether the Impression made upon him for that purpose came from God, his Refusal to comply had most certainly been justifiable. But behold he freely complies; and God accepts his ready Compliance as an Evidence not only of the Truth, but of the Strength of his Faith. This is inconceivable, had he not had full Satisfaction in the Manner and Attendants of the Impression, that it came from God. And if he could have such full Satisfaction in a matter so nice, as thereupon to act without Fear, and without the least Hesitation or Demur, I think it may easily be conceiv'd, that they whom God selected for the Penmen of Holy Writ, might in the same way have Satisfaction as to the Impressions they were under, that they were really Divine. But lest any should apprehend a Door is this way open'd to *Enthusiasm*, I shall add: That it is one thing
to

to own such Divine Impressions, before there was a Written Rule, and in the Case of those who were to bear a Part in the Compiling of this Rule, and a quite different thing to allow of Pretences to like Impressions, since the Rule has been given and fix'd, and settled. And again ; 'tis one thing for a Servant of God to have such a Divine Impression, meerly for his own Conduct, and to act according to it: And a quite different thing for a Man to pretend by virtue of an Impression he counts Divine, to give Rules to others, expecting they should be influenc'd by them. In this latter Case, some attending Evidence con-See an Es-
say on In-
spiration:
In Two
Parts.
Printed
An. 1707.firming the Divinity of such an Impression, has ever and justly been demanded: And God therefore did not leave his Inspir'd Servants destitute of suitable means, whereby to confirm the Divinity of those Impressions, to which he expected others should have Regard.

3. By such sort of Impressions as those mentioned, the Penmen of our sacred Oracles were stir'd up to write. For *they spake as they* 2 Pet. 1.
19. *were moved by the Holy Ghost.* Our Oracles consist of divers Parts. Some of them gradually give Light in the Doctrines of Religion; while others only contain the History of the Church and People of God: Some contain Predictions of distant Futurities, while others contain Rules and Directions for Duty and Practise. None were left to choose their own Part, any otherwise than under the Conduct of the Holy Spirit, who was the General Overseer. They set themselves to Writing, and to the particular Subjects on which they insisted, and in the Method which they severally

rally pursu'd, just as he inclin'd and mov'd, and led them, and no otherwife.

4. They acted under the Influence of such Impressions in the whole Compiling of their several Writings. The Divine Spirit not only immediately suggested and dictated to them such things as were matters of pure Revelation, but he illuminated their Minds in the several Doctrinal and Practical Truths which they deliver'd in Writing. He refresh'd their Memories as to the things they knew in a Common way. He help'd them to bring forth the things that were Divinely impress'd on their Imagination ; and so conducted them in all their Composures, that they neither omitted any thing which he thought necessary and expedient, nor inserted any thing but what would serve his Purposes : But selected those things that he knew would be most profitable for Doctrine, Reproof, Correction, and Instruction to his People from one Age to another. And yet,

5. These Divine Impressions they were under did not deprive the Persons inspir'd of the Use of their Reason and Understanding ; nor destroy the Difference of their several natural Faculties and Abilities, but were attemper'd to the different Genius of the Writers. The several Penmen of the Holy Scriptures made use of their Natural Abilities as far as they could be serviceable to their purpose, and the Spirit supply'd their Defects. So that the *Poetical Books of the Old Testament may seem to be the Effects of Study and Meditation*, and yet be inspir'd. For Inspiration did not necessarily exclude Thought and Study in sacred Composures, tho' it secur'd from Error. The Holy Ghost us'd the

Five Letters concerning the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures,
p. 27.

sacred

sacred Penmen as reasonable Creatures; and made Use of their Judgments, Memories and Affections: But they acted under his Guidance in the whole of their Work. Their Stile and Language naturally differing, the Spirit did not hinder it from doing so, in those Writings which they drew up under his Conduct: But it was of the same strain and make with what they us'd ordinarily in expressing their Conceptions, saving where God thought fit to interpose in some particular Strains of Majesty and Authority. And tho' it be own'd that the Stile of the Prophets and other sacred Penmen was usually the same when they spake by the Order of God, with that which they us'd in their common Discourse, yet still their being inspir'd, and acting under Divine Conduct in committing their Visions to Writing, is a mighty Security to us. For,

Sixthly and Lastly, These Divine Impressions they were under preserv'd them from Error, with which all meerly Humane Writings are chargeable. They did so not only in a way of immediate Suggestion, when that was necessary to prevent Mistakes and Misrepresentations, but also by a superintending Direction, when in the Writings they drew up, they dilated on things that came to their Knowledge in an ordinary way. It has been suggested by one that delights in starting Difficulties about Inspiration, that *a Man has no need of Inspiration to relate faithfully what he has seen.* 'Tis granted he has no need of it, in writing a Common History; but it is otherwise when God intends to make use of a Man to draw up a Part of the sacred History, not only for the Use and Benefit of his Church in

all succeeding Ages, but with an Intention that they should firmly depend upon it. Then, it is not enough that he that is the Historian be dispos'd as an honest Man, faithfully to relate what he has seen and heard; but it is also necessary that he have the help of the Spirit to bring things to remembrance, to enable him duly to select out of many things that might be related, such things as are most important and needful, and that would be most useful, and to keep from Mistakes and Errors. The Divine Spirit therefore so directed our sacred Penmen, as not to suffer them to miscarry, or let any Dashes of their Pen vary from Truth, as *Faustus Socinus* * would insinuate, and *Episcopus* † after him. Of this we have so good Evidence in the General, that I should think if any Particularities can be produc'd, that are not to be reconcil'd with this Position, it were but a requisite piece of Modesty for us rather to suspect the failure may have been in Copyers and Transcribers, than in the Compilers and Original Writers. Let any say they were capable of mistaking, or did mistake in smaller matters, and they can find out no way for a sufficient Security that they might not mistake in greater also, and in things of the last moment: And so the main Support of our Faith is gone, and we are left in Uncertainty.

In short then, when the Apostle says, *All Scripture was given by the Inspiration of God*, his meaning is this: That it was drawn up by Persons of God's own choosing, who tho' they us'd their own natural Faculties in their several Writings, were yet under the Influence of such Divine Impressions, as kept them from
Mistake

* De Autor. fact. Scrip.
† Disp. de Autor. fact. Scrip.
Thes. 3.

Mistake and Error ; under such a Conduct of the Holy Spirit, as that their Reports might be safely depended on by the People of God from Age to Age.

It now follows, that

II. In the second Place this Truth be clear'd to us. And here I am to set before you the Evidences that attend this Principle, on which our Holy Religion is built, that the Oracles of the Old and New Testament were really thus Divinely inspir'd: But before I enter upon the Proof which offers in this case, I desire the following things may be seriously consider'd.

I. This is a Matter of the last Importance. Let us here be uncertain, and our whole Religion totters. Let us be in doubt as to the Divinity of the Scriptures, and we shall be able to find no safe Bottom whereon to fix. We had need therefore be well establish'd here. Our having been train'd up in this Belief from our Cradles will afford but a poor Security. For besides that upon the same Terms we might have had as great a Veneration for the *Talmud*, or the *Alchoran*, as we now have for the Bible ; if the Report of those among whom we have had our Education be the main Ground of our Satisfaction, it will be in the Power of any Sceptick almost to unhinge us : at least we run a mighty hazard of it. Suppose we that having long apprehended our selves satisfy'd upon this Head, without searching into the Grounds of our Belief, we still take it for granted that the Bible is divinely inspir'd, how do we know how far we may be unsettled, and what the Consequence may be, should the Tempter at any time vigorously assault us ;

which is what we should do well to live in expectation of. If we would not be in danger of bringing a Scandal upon our Profession, and turning Apostates in an Hour of Temptation, we should see to it, that we be confirm'd in this Principle upon solid Grounds.

2. It is very unreasonable for any to pretend, that the Divinity and Inspiration of the Scriptures, is a first Principle in Theology, and therefore to be granted. When indeed we are debating about things built on the Scriptures, it is rationally suppos'd their Divinity is own'd; that being the common Sense of the Christian World: But when the Query is, how we know that the Scriptures upon which we bottom our Faith were given by the Inspiration of God, to say 'tis a Principle, and must therefore be allow'd, will neither satisfy a disturbed Mind, nor convince a Gainfayer, nor repel the Tempter.

3. 'Tis certain that every Book that pretends to be Divinely inspir'd, is not presently to be admitted as such. The *Mahometans* have as great a Veneration for their *Alchoran*, as we for our Bible: That offers it self to them as Divinely inspir'd, as this do's to us. If therefore a Book is to be receiv'd presently as Divinely inspir'd upon its own Report, that is to be embrac'd as well as this; and so we shall be forc'd to swallow many of the absurdest Contradictions that can be conceiv'd. Our Way therefore is to search and try, that we may not be impos'd on; and take a Book for Divinely inspir'd that is not so. And we must have some sure and infallible Marks to try by, or we shall not, when we have taken the utmost Pains, be satisfactorily assur'd that we are not
impos'd

impos'd on. Among the *Jews*, a Prophet that pretended to be come as an Express from the invisible World, was not to be admitted and own'd barely upon his own Report. They were to judge of him by certain Rules. Because there would be false Prophets as well as true, Circumstances were to be consider'd and compar'd in passing a Judgment. And there is equal Reason for the same Procedure in the Case of inspir'd Writings. Since some may be offer'd to us, as drawn up by Divine Inspiration, when they are not, as well as some that are, every Pretence of this nature is not to be own'd and justify'd. We must search and examine in order to Satisfaction. And the Rules by which we judge and try, ought to be select-ed with a most accurate Care.

Deut. 13.
1, &c.

4. To resolve our Satisfaction as to a former Inspiration into a fresh Divine Inspiration, cannot be any other than very hazardous. I have met with an Expression in an Excellent Divine of our own Nation, whose Memory deserves Respect, which I cannot but look upon as dangerous: I mean Mr. *Capel*, who hath written a valuable Discourse upon Temptations. The Expression is this: *This first Principle of our Faith* (says he) *that the Scriptures are the Word of God, is rooted in us by the immediate Inspiration of the Holy Ghost.* And he represents that as the only way of our being satisfy'd upon this Head, for us to have this Perswasion wrought in us by the Spirit of God, tho' we know not why, or upon what Grounds. But if this will hold, we are involv'd in endless Perplexity. Suppose I enquire of a Man how he knows that the Scriptures are given by the Inspiration of God; and he answers me, that he is assur'd of it by the

Inspiration of the same Spirit by which the Scriptures were indited: 'Tis natural to query farther, What Evidence he has that this Inspiration he pretends to is real, and not imaginary? that 'tis from the Spirit of God, and not from a Spirit of Delusion? His only Answer, I suppose, must be this: That he is satisfy'd of it in the same Way, as the Sacred Penmen were satisfy'd at first as to their Inspiration. And let this be admitted, and a wide Gap is open'd to Enthusiasm, and there's no Remedy.

'Tis indeed freely granted, and it admits of an abundant Evidence, that no Man will receive the Scriptures as Divinely inspir'd, so as to be thereby transform'd into the Divine Likeness, and effectually train'd up for Heaven, unless the Spirit of God enlighten his Mind, and impress his Heart. And this is what *Calvin* and the rest of our Reform'd Divines have all along meant by *the Testimony of the Spirit*, which they have represented as so necessary to a full Conviction of the Divinity of the Scriptures. As the Apostle says, that *no Man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*; so may we also affirm, that no Man can say that the Scripture is given by the Inspiration of God, but by the Holy Ghost; *i. e.* he can't so believe it, as that that Faith should be effectual to Salvation, without his powerful Influence: And yet I can't see how any immediate Revelation of the Spirit should be necessary to a rational Conviction in this Case; or how we can suppose the Divine Spirit should whisper it in the Ear of every Man that is satisfy'd upon this Head, that this Book we call the Bible is of Divine Inspiration. The Office of the Divine Spirit in this respect I take to be this:

So

So to work upon our Minds, that being free from those Prejudices and corrupt Affections, which are wont to pervert Men, we may duly attend to those things which both may, and ought to induce a firm Perswasion in us, that the Sacred Scriptures were of his inspiring. This sort of Assistance of his is necessary; and earnestly to be implor'd, and carefully improv'd: But this is as different from a fresh Inspiration, as a rational Conviction is from a strong Impression. It cannot indeed be deny'd but that there may have been some that have so firmly believ'd the Inspiration of our Sacred Writings, that they could have confirm'd their Faith by their Blood, tho' they could not have disputed much for it, or given any distinct Account of the rational Grounds of it: But it by no means follows from thence that rational Evidence is not needful, or is not ordinarily us'd by the Spirit of God in producing a saving Perswasion, and in preserving from Temptation.

5. We ought in this and every other Case to be content with such Evidence, as the Matter depending is capable of, and will admit: and to demand and insist on more, is grossly unreasonable. When the thing asserted is, that the Penmen of Scripture were Divinely inspir'd, to expect Mathematical Demonstration to prove it; is to declare we are resolv'd not to be convinc'd of it: For 'tis to demand more than the thing could bear, supposing it undoubtedly true. He that in this Case won't be satisfy'd with such Considerations as suffice to outweigh any thing that can be alledg'd to the contrary, do's not use the Understanding of a Man.

6. And

6. And lastly, I add farther, that suppose we were not able to give positive Proof of the Divine Inspiration of every particular Book that is contain'd in our Sacred Records, it do's not therefore follow that it was not inspir'd; and yet much less do's it follow that our Religion is without Foundation. Which I therefore add, because it's well known there are some particular Books in our Bibles that have at some times been doubted of in the Church, whether they were inspir'd or no: But I cannot conceive that Doubts concerning such Books, where Persons have suspended their Assent, without casting any unbecoming Reflections, have been a Hindrance to their Salvation, while what they have own'd and acknowledg'd for truly Divine, has had sanctifying Effects upon their Hearts and Lives.

These things being premis'd, I now proceed to the Proof of the Point; that the Oracles both of the Old and New Testament were really divinely inspir'd. And my Proof will be both General and Special. For I'll first prove it as to the Bible in general, taking the Old and New Testament together: and I'll afterwards proceed to prove it distinctly both as to the Old Testament, and the New.

I begin with general Proof, that the whole Body of our Sacred Oracles, as we now have them in our Hands, was given by the Inspiration of God: for which I produce four considerable Arguments.

Arg. I. My First Argument is drawn from the Truth of the Scriptures, thus: If they are true, then they are Divinely inspir'd: But that they are true is easy to be prov'd; and therefore that they

they are Divinely inspir'd, evidently follows.

Two things are requisite to the setting of this Argument in a just Light. (1.) That it be made appear that we have good Evidence of the Truth of the Scriptures. And (2.) that the Justness of the Inference be clear'd, that therefore they are Divinely inspir'd.

I. Then, As for the Truth of the Scriptures, that may be evidenc'd in the very same Way as the Truth of any other Writings of antient Date that pass current among us: Nay we have more and fuller Evidence of it, than we have as to the Truth of any other antient Writings*. Who are there of any Thought but can depend upon the Account

* See Bp. Stillingfleet's Letter to a Deist, p. 14, & 29. — See also the Short and easy Method with the Deists, p. 7, &c.

of the Roman History, given us by such Men as *Livy*, *Suetonius*, *Florus*, and *Tacitus*, and other such Writers? They that can do so, cannot call in question the Truth of our Sacred Writers, without openly proclaiming themselves unreasonable. For we have as much to alledge in their Confirmation, as can be pretended in the Case of any others. He that will but be at the Pains to read *Josephus* his Answer to *Appion* (which he that understands *English* only, may read in his own Tongue) will find that our Sacred Writers are not only the most Antient, but that they have abundant collateral Confirmation. And as for the Writings of the New Testament in particular, 'tis remarkable, that even the greatest Enemies of Christianity have concurr'd in confirming the Truth of many of the most important Facts they run upon. The Penmen of the Bible were as credible as any Persons whatsoever. They appear to have

have firmly believ'd themselves the things they reported to us: and they ventur'd their All upon them, as freely as any could do that have depended on their Report. Some of them were Kings and Princes, and eminent for their Figure in the World: And tho' others of them were of a much meaner Rank, yet they were eminent for their Wisdom, their Piety, and Sincerity, and other most valuable Divine Endowments. They stuck not to report their own Failures, or the Blemishes of those whom they most magnify and extol. They who committed to Writing the Facts that are contain'd in our Sacred History, did themselves for the most part hear and see the things which they report: Neither could they in drawing up an Account of them aim at Wealth or Honour, or any worldly Emolument: They rather ran the hazard of all that could be dear to them. Either then no Human Writings are to be own'd for true, or our Sacred Writings must be acknowledg'd for such. But that they are true, is own'd by those that question their Inspiration, and particularly by him who wrote the Five Letters upon that Head, whom I must confess I cannot forbear having particularly in my Eye in the Prosecution of this Matter. To come therefore in the

Second Place to the Justness of the Inference I draw from hence; which needs not a laborious Proof: If these Writings are really true, they must be Divinely inspir'd, because they offer themselves to us as such: So that if they are not to be depended on in this, they are not to be depended on in any thing, they are the most delusory Writings in the World. A Book indeed that pretends to Divine Inspiration

on is not (as was hinted before) presently to be credited upon its own Report: And yet when a Book, the Truth of which is own'd in all other Respects, does aver its own being inspir'd, it either is so, or it's false: Nay, it's not barely false, but it attempts to impose upon us in the grossest manner possible; which is what they that pretend to raise Doubts about Inspiration, will not own; and therefore with them it must be a good Argument.

That our sacred Penmen pretend to have been divinely inspir'd, is easily prov'd. For we are not only told that *Holy Men of God spake* ^{2 Pet. 1. 21.} *as they were mov'd by the Holy Ghost*, but the Apostles generally don't stick to assert, that as to those things that were written by the Penmen of the Old Testament, it was God that spake them. Thus tho' 'twas well known 'twas *David* that drew up the second Psalm, yet we find the Apostles declaring, that it was God ^{Acts 4. 25.} who by the Mouth of his Servant said what is contain'd in that Psalm. And we are told it was the Holy Ghost that spake by *Esaias* the ^{Acts 28.} Prophet. We may not only observe that the ^{25.} Prophets finding a peculiar Influence and Assistance of the Spirit of God, are bold to discover it, as they were entring upon their several Messages, crying out, The Word of the Lord came to *Isaiab*, to *Hoseab*, to *Amos*, and the rest: But *St. Paul* also declares that he and his Fellow-Apostles spake what they deliver'd, *not in the Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth, but* ^{1 Cor. 2. 13.} *which the Holy Ghost teacheth.*

'Tis commonly observ'd amongst Men, that if any one forfeit his Credit to us in one Case, especially if it be in a matter of Moment, we cannot safely confide in him afterwards. If there-

therefore we can't depend upon the Penmen of our Bible in this, we can depend upon them in nothing. So that our sacred Oracles must be divinely inspir'd, or else they are not true: and if they are not true, all Historical Verity is at once overthrown.

Arg. 2. A second Argument may be this. The Scriptures most certainly are from God: And therefore must be inspir'd in the Sense before explain'd: That the Force of this Argument may be discern'd, there are here also two things to be clear'd: (1.) That the Scriptures are from God: And, (2.) That it thence follows that they must be *given by his Inspiration.*

1. Then, the Scriptures are from God. The more we consider either the Matter of them, or the Manner of Management; their Drift and Design, or the Means and Methods us'd in pursuit of it, the more shall we be convinc'd of this. An Author they must have, not only as to particular Parts, but as to the whole Composition. They must be either from God, or from the Devil, or from Men. It is absolutely impossible they should have their Rise from the Devil, because their great Design is to batter and overthrow his Kingdom. And if they came from Men, it must be either from good Men, or bad. From good Men they could not come, unless they were divinely inspir'd: for they could have nothing of Goodness in them, should they come with a Lie in their Mouths, pretending their Writings were given by the Inspiration of God, if they were not so. Nor could our sacred Writings come from bad Men, and make it their chief Business to promote true Goodness, and to spread the Honour
and

and the Glory of God in the World. This is utterly inconceivable. And if the Scriptures could not come from the Devil, nor from Men, either good or bad, they must come from God.

And indeed had not the Scriptures been from God, we may be assur'd he would never have so remarkably own'd them, and made them so successful to spread serious Piety in the World. He would never have inclin'd those who have had the most of his Spirit to lay the greatest stress upon them from Age to Age. He would never have suffer'd his Counsels to be so laid open there. He would never have fulfill'd the Prophecies therein contain'd. He would never have given the Writers his Broad Seal, by induing them with a Power of working Miracles. Nay, if it were not from him, it is impossible the whole Scripture should have center'd in him from first to last, and have made the exalting him its great Design. But then,

2. If they are from God, they must be given by *Inspiration*: and that for this good Reason; Because otherwise they would not answer their End. Had they not been inspir'd, they would not give us that undoubted Certainty in sacred Matters, as we need. We might lay stress upon them, and yet be deceiv'd. And tho' they were design'd to serve the most valuable Purpose imaginable, even to lead us safe to Heaven, yet they might most miserably impose upon us, and leave us bewildred. They would not be certainly *profitable, either for Doctrine, or Reproof, or Correction, or Instruction in Righteousness*, as they are here represented. Not for *Doctrine*: For if they were not *given by the Inspiration of God*, the Great Truths there insisted on might not be necessary to be believ'd; and
we

we could not be secure, but that other Truths might be necessary to be believ'd, that were not there reveal'd and contain'd. Nor *for Re-proof*: For were not the Scriptures divinely inspir'd, there might be sundry dangerous Errors not at all there laid open; and many corrupt Opinions there represented as so many Truths. Nor *for Correction*: Because Vertues might upon this Supposition, for what we knew, be in some Cases represented as Vices; and Vices as Vertues; which is no uncommon thing with Men whose Notions are form'd by their Affections. Nor Lastly, would they be profitable *for Instruction*: For if they were not inspir'd, they might impose upon us in things on which they laid the greatest stress. These Writings, if they were not inspir'd, could not be a safe and a certain Rule: in many things they might lead us aside. The Promises and Threatnings there contain'd, are indeed manifestly beyond the Line of humane Motives and Dissuasives; and exhibit not temporal Rewards and Punishments only, but the Gift of Eternal Life, and the Vengeance of Eternal Fire: which would signify just nothing, if the urging them were not from God: nor could that be satisfactorily evidenc'd, if the Urgers were not under such a Divine Conduct, as should keep them from Mistakes. 'Tis not enough to say they were Honest and Sincere: Still they might be deceiv'd, as we find many Honest and Upright Persons in all Ages are, in their Application, unless the Holy Ghost was their certain Guide. It is altogether unworthy of God to suppose him to have a Hand in such Writings, as were design'd to serve so great a Purpose as to direct us in the
Way

Way to Heaven, if he kept not the Penmen so under his Influence, as that we may safely adhere to them in every thing, without any Danger of being deceiv'd and impos'd upon.

I draw a Third Argument from the *Harmony* of the Scriptures, which, all things consider'd, would be inconceivable, if they were not Divinely inspir'd. The Notions of Men that are left to themselves are commonly as different as their Faces: And every Man is apt to be fond of his own Apprehensions, and desirous to spread them. Humane Writings therefore differ exceedingly. *Seneca* was us'd to say, Philosophers would then be all of a Mind, when all the Clocks could be brought to strike at a time. Yea, let any Man write much, and at several Times, with different Views, and upon several Occasions, and it is a thousand to one but he may be found by a critical Observer in some things to vary from himself. But among our sacred Writers there is a most Harmonious Consent. The Old Testament and the New, most exactly agree. And tho' we have several Persons in both, that write on the same things, and tho' their Geniusses were different, and they had several Views, and one mentions what the other omits, yet they marvellously agree and harmonize. Our Bible is all of a Piece. Which is inconceivable, if the Spirit of God did not preside over the Composition.

This Argument will appear the more forcible, if we consider a few things. As the different Stiles of the several Penmen, and the Variety of Matter treated on. Here are several Men agree, not in a few plain Points on-

ly, but tho' they have written Historically, Prophetically, and Doctrinally, and that about the sublimest as well as more common Matters, yet they agree. Here are Doctrines, Prophecies, Promises, Types, Histories, all depending one upon another, written by several Persons, and at different Times, without any Possibility of a Combination; and yet they not only agree in their Account, but their Writings conspire together to answer one and the same End. This Harmony and Agreement is the more fully discover'd, the more careful we are in our search, and the more strict we are in our Enquiries. It could not be an Agreement by Concert, for the Writers liv'd in different Ages, and could have no Correspondence: They knew not of one another: Nay, many times they did not distinctly understand their own Writings, but were forc'd to search into their meaning: And yet they agreed with others who wrote about the same Matters. This is a peculiar Divine Signature. Take we any such Number of Men living in several Ages, tho' they wrote about the same Matters, we shall find them as widely different as East from West. But here are Writers, many in number, differing in their Qualities, Conditions and Interests, living in distant Ages, writing with great Variety for Matter and Manner, and under the Influence of several differing Views, who yet all agree in End and Means, *viz.* The Glory of God, in the Happiness of Man, through the Provided *Messiah*. 'Tis impossible for the Wit of Man to account for this, if these Writers were not Divinely inspir'd.

I draw a fourth Argument from the *fulfil- Arg. 4.*
ling of the Scriptures ; * which well weigh'd * *See this*
 has a mighty Force. Do we not find the Ho- *Argument*
 ly Scriptures transcrib'd as it were over again *fully haul-*
 in the Course of Divine Providence, towards *dled, in*
 the Church in every Age, and towards parti- *Mr. Flem-*
 cular Persons also, in all the various Steps and *ings*
 Changes of their Lives? Has not this in all *Excellent*
 times been the Remark of those that have been *Treatise*
 the most observant, and the most careful in *concern-*
 comparing the Scriptures and Providence to- *ing the*
 gether? Now has not this a Language? How *fulfilling*
 could the Word and Providence in every Age *of the*
 so directly answer each other, if that were *Script-*
 not Divinely inspir'd, as well as this is Divinely *ures.*
 directed? How could it be, that under the
 greatest Changes and Overthrows, Hurri-
 canes and Alterations, in the Natural, Moral,
 or Civil World, that which is brought about
 should so exactly answer the Scripture Plan,
 and be so agreeable, not only to set Prophe-
 sies, but even to General Declarations, Pro-
 mises, Threatnings, and Moral Observations,
 without Variation, if the Scriptures were not
 Divinely inspir'd?

Take it as to the Church in General : How
 strangely is it preserv'd? How often has it
 been brought low, and yet it is kept from
 perishing? How marvellously has it oft been
 rais'd again, even out of the Dust? How fore-
 ly has it been visited, when Impure and Dege-
 nerate? And how strangely has it been refin'd
 by the forest Visitations? And how certainly
 does it in the issue triumph over its proudest
 Foes? And all in an exact Conformity to
 Scripture.

And as to particular Christians, how fully do they find the Scripture verify'd in their Case also, as to the standing Remarks of the Christian Warfare ; the usual Measures of God's Proceedings ; the fulfilling of his Promises upon their keeping close to him ; and his Visitations of them upon their Backslidings ; and as to the Methods of God's Assistance, and the like ? And as to all, How visibly may they observe Sin punish'd, and Sincerity rewarded, and the Declarations of Scripture answer'd, and its Promises and Threatnings verify'd ? Now how could this be ? How could the Bible contain such an Account of the Series of Providence in Miniature, and such a Model of the Divine Government, both General and Special, if God had not a peculiar Hand in its Composition ? By answering the Word so exactly in all his Dispensations, God doth as it were solemnly avouch the Scriptures for his, in the Hearing of all the World : He shews that it is he himself, who keeps the Reins in his own Hands, and orders all things as he pleases, who makes them all concur to accomplish the Ends which the Scriptures hold forth : And that so certainly, that the most cross Events can do nothing to frustrate or disappoint them.

I shall only add these four Reflections.

1. Tho' the Scriptures be Divinely inspir'd, yet it's a very false Inference, that we must therefore read no other Books. 'Tis strange to observe how fond Men are of Extremes ! While some run down the Scriptures as flat and dull, and insipid, and declare they can by no means relish such Writings ; there are others on the contrary, that are for reading
nothing

nothing else, and look upon other Writings as needless and useles. As the former are much to blame in that they can't relish what came originally from God ; so the latter also are in no small Fault, to fancy that the Blessed God would go about to debar them of any thing that would contribute to their real Improvement. Converse with Humane Writers is doubtless very allowable, provided it be manag'd with a due regard to the Scriptures. St. *Jerom* indeed tells us, that he was miserably buffeted, because he convers'd so much with Heathen Authors, and was better pleas'd with *Cicero* than with St. *Paul*: And were that Matter really represented, I think his Treatment was as good as he deserv'd; in that he so manag'd his Converse with common Writings, as to put a slight on them that came from God. But still we find a *Moses*, the first Penman of Scripture, and the most celebrated of all the Old Testament Writers, was remarkably *Learned in all the Wisdom of the Egyptians*, and he was thereby fitted for the more eminent Service in the Church of God. Humane Learning, when it is sanctify'd, is in our times also much to be valued either in Ministers, or private Christians; 'tis needful for the former, and ornamental to the latter: But if Endeavours after it hinder serious frequent Converse with the Sacred Scriptures, and any common Writers are so taking, that the Sacred Writers lose their Relish, we are in a great and dangerous Snare, and are making work for Repentance.

2. It highly becomes us all to prize the Scriptures peculiarly. Let us value them as our chief Treasure; and the rather upon this Consideration,

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on, that they were given by the Inspiration of God. *Eusebius* tells a Story of one *Marinus*, a military Man, who, as soon as he was known to be a Christian, was ordered to determine with himself within the space of three Hours, whether he would relinquish his Office or his Religion. *Theoctetus*, in the mean time, the Bishop of *Cæsarea* came to him, and shew'd him a Sword, the Badge of his Office; and a Bible, the Repository of the Christian Faith, crying out to him, Choose which of the two you will, for you mayn't have both: Upon which he presently chose the Bible, and was crown'd with Martyrdom; and herein he made a wise Choice. I doubt many among us that can say fine things of the Bible, and talk big in its Commendation, would not, if try'd in like Circumstances, make a like Choice.

Mr. *Fox* also the Martyrologist tells us a Story of one *Crow* a Seaman, who being Shipwreck'd, lost all his Wares; and also cast 5 *l.* in Money into the Sea; but kept his New Testament hanging about his Neck, as he swam about upon a broken Mast, till four Days after, he was taken up in that Posture and sav'd. This discover'd a mighty Value for the Word of God, that the poor Creature would rather lose every thing else than his Testament. 'Twill be happy for us if we are herein of the same Mind. I'm sure we ought to value the Advantage of having the free use of the Bible in our Mother Tongue: 'Tis not so in many other Parts of *Europe*; particularly 'tis not so in *Spain*: The Bible there in their Vulgar Tongue is rank'd among prohibited Books, and the being known to read it is e-
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nough to expose a Man to the danger of the *Inquisition*. Blessed be God it is otherwise with us. We have the inspir'd Writings in our own Tongue, and shall we not value them? Were there but one Corner in all the Earth, and were that ever so distant and remote, where Men might go and see a Book written by Persons inspir'd of God, on purpose to help us to Heaven, would it not be worth our while to cross the Sea, and be at the utmost Pains to converse with it? And shall we not prize such a Treasure when we have it in our Hands? Would not that be unaccountably foolish and ungrateful?

3. Take care to be well confirm'd in the belief of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Without this, you have little reason to expect to resist Temptation. Says the Apostle, *I write unto you Young Men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the Evil one.* 1 John 2. 14. You will never be strong, and overcome the Evil one, but by the help of the Word of God: And you'll never be able to manage that Weapon successfully, unless you are well establish'd in the Belief of the Divinity of the Scriptures. Take care therefore to strengthen this Foundation, and that the rather, as knowing what an evil Day we live in, in which we are almost every Moment liable to be shaken in that respect, if we are not well settled.

4. If any of you are under Temptations upon this Head at any time, don't smother your Doubts, and keep them to your selves, but open them to such as are capable of giving you Assistance. Keeping the Devil's Counsel in this case has been pernicious to

many. Don't think it a strange thing to be here assaulted: Ben't asham'd to ask Assistance. There is Help provided; there is Evidence sufficient for your Establishment, and you may be the more confirm'd and settled after Doubts and Temptations, as many others have been before you: But if ever we would be throughly satisfy'd, and fully confirm'd, let us live up to our Light, and be true to our Convictions, and make the Bible our constant Rule: And so doing we shall find our Hearts will be established. For our Saviour hath undertaken, and given us his

Joh. 7. 17. *Word for it, that if any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God.*

SERMON III.

2 TIM. III. 16.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.

I Shall now proceed to a more distinct Proof of the Point propos'd, by a separate Consideration both of the Old Testament and the New, both which we hold to have been Divinely inspir'd, and I think upon solid Grounds that will bear scanning: And my only Difficulty here, is, which of the two to begin with. For we may either begin with the Old Testament, and proving that given by Inspiration, may thence argue that the New Testament must be so too, inasmuch as it is but the Accomplishment of the Old: Or else we may begin with the New Testament, and proving that to have been given by Inspiration, may thence argue that it must have been so as to the Old Testament also, since both the New plainly represents it as such; and the Old points directly to the New,

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*At Salters-Hall
Tuesday
Lecture,
Nov. 14.
1704.*

as what would accomplish it, and make it distinctly intelligible.

Some things may be pleaded for beginning with the Old Testament. That is what my Text most directly points at: Nay it was with that, that Inspiration for the general Use of the Church began: Therein is the Foundation laid on which our New Testament Writers have but raised a Superstructure, and therefore it should seem we should do well to begin there with the particular Proof of Inspiration.

On the other hand, the Writings of the New Testament are they that properly make us Christians by believing them: In them have we the clearest Account of the Method and Terms of Salvation; and therefore it is our nearest Concern to be well established as to them; and if we are, we shall find the Inspiration and Divine Authority of the Writings of the Old Testament will follow as a necessary Consequence. And indeed, this is at the same time the shorter Method of the two, and may be brought into a narrower Compass, and for that reason I rather chuse to begin with the New Testament; only think I may by the way advance this as a certain Principle, that if the Old Testament was Divinely inspired, so was the New: And if the New Testament was Divinely inspired, it follows that the Old must be so also: And therefore he that proves it of one, proves it of both; the Reason of which will appear from the sequel.

To begin then with the New Testament. Let us consider the second Part of our Bibles, first in gross, and then more particularly as
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to its Contents, which may be reduc'd to three Heads; *Doctrines, Histories, and Prophecies.* 'Tis asserted they were all inspired, and I am to set before you the Grounds of that Belief and Assertion.

If then we take the New Testament in gross, and consider it as a Collection of seven and twenty several Writings, drawn up for the use of the Church from Age to Age, we may be confirm'd in the Belief of its being given by the Inspiration of God, by these following Arguments.

1. If it was not inspired, it would not have answer'd its End. The general End of the drawing up the New Testament, is plainly this; safely to preserve the Doctrine of Christ, and to perpetuate the Memory of those Facts upon which Christianity is bottom'd, that all Ages might have a satisfactory Certainty concerning them; and to fix an immutable Rule for Faith and Manners. That each of the Writings contain'd in that Collection we call the New Testament was drawn up upon some particular Occasion, is not gainsaid. St. *Luke* ^{Luk. 1.} declares, that the number of Gospels that ran ^{1, 2, 3.} about in his Days put him upon compiling his History: And it has been generally all along asserted, that the Heresy of *Ebion* and *Cerintus* was the occasion of St. *John's* writing his Gospel. 'Tis also undeniable that most of the Apostolical Epistles were written to decide Controversies, and solve Difficulties, that were in those Days stirring in the Church. I am by no means for excluding the special Purposes that were to be serv'd by the several Books that were written upon such and such particular Occasions, and yet it is not there
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that I lay my stress: Tho' I think it would be hard to give any suitable Evidence, how they could answer those Ends to full Satisfaction, without supposing the Penmen under a peculiar Divine Conduct; as to which they who liv'd in those Times might easily be satisfy'd, by repairing to the Apostles themselves, and by viewing and considering the Miracles which they wrought, which were a Divine Attestation to them in all that they pretended to say, or do, or write, as by a Divine Authority: But bating this, and over and above the special Ends to be serv'd by the several Writings of the New Testament, there is one general End, which they all in common aim at, which deserves to be seriously consider'd. They plainly had an Eye, not only to that particular Age in which they were drawn up, but to all succeeding Times. God design'd thereby to provide for the perpetuating of Christianity. These Writings were to supply the Place of the personal Presence of our Lord and his Apostles, and to secure the Continuance of the Christian Religion in the World. I need not, I think, set my self to prove this, since he that takes so much Pains to start Difficulties upon the Head of Inspiration, freely owns it. Taking that therefore for granted, here lies my Argument: This End could not have been effectually, assuredly, or satisfactorily answer'd, if the Writers had not been Divinely inspir'd, and therefore they must be inspir'd. Had they been left at liberty to express themselves as they would, like other Men; had they been left to their own Frailties and Imperfections, nay had they not been under a peculiar Divine Conduct,

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Five Letters.

tho' we suppose them to have been honest and upright Men, yet we should not have had just Grounds for an entire Dependence upon them; we could have had no sufficient Security but that they might have been themselves deceiv'd, and consequently might in many things have impos'd upon us, tho' without any ill Design. Writings that are to convey the Doctrine of a Religion founded upon Facts, and that are to hand down to all Ages an infallible Rule of Faith and Manners, must be Divinely inspir'd, or they'll be comparatively insignificant. Say the Writers were honest Men; yet how easily are such mistaken and impos'd on? How many Ways might they be bias'd? How easily might their Affections transport them beyond bounds, even before they were aware: than which hardly any thing is more common? Say they were so upright as to be incapable of a form'd Design to deceive us; yet how know we but they might run into various Mistakes, and so deceive us without designing it, unless the Holy Spirit guided their Pens, and kept them under such a Conduct, as effectually preserv'd them from Error? The least Doubt here, draws after it most unhappy Consequences.

The better to illustrate this Argument, I'll here briefly touch on two things in the New Testament, which I take to be of considerable moment, which without Inspiration, instead of contributing to the End intended, become vain and ludicrous, and the Occasions of manifold Mistakes. Any Man that converses with those Writings, may observe there sundry Arguings from the Old Testament, as well as direct Positions concerning the Facts and
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Principles upon which Christianity is bottom'd : and many Metaphorical Passages design'd to illustrate some of the most capital Articles of our Faith, as well as plain and simple dogmatical Assertions. If then these Writers were not under the infallible Conduct of the Divine Spirit in their Composures, we could neither lay stress upon such Arguings, nor upon such Metaphorical Passages ; their Pains would in these respects be as good as lost : Nor could we safely, and with certainty depend upon them in other things, if in such things as these, we found them capable of imposing upon us, through their own Mistakes.

I. Then let us consider the Arguings of the Writers of the New Testament, from Passages in the Old Testament. Often do they tell us, that such and such Occurrences in the History of our Saviour and his Apostles, compleatly fulfill'd such and such foregoing Predictions, that are to be met with in the Old Testament. Often do they from thence confirm the Doctrines they advance ; endeavouring to convince the *Jews* that they must renounce those Writings which they held for divinely inspir'd, if they did not admit *Jesus* for the *Messiah*, and embrace his Religion. Besides many Passages of this kind that are interspers'd through the several Writings that make up our New Testament, 'tis easy to be observ'd that the whole Epistle to the *Hebrews* stands upon this bottom. 'Tis the chief Design of that Epistle to prove that our Lord *Jesus* was greater than the Angels, a greater Lawgiver than *Moses*, and a greater Priest than *Aaron*, and that the Levitical Priesthood, Covenant, and Law, were to give way to Christ our great High Priest : And all the

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Proofs are fetch'd from the Old Testament. Let these Writers be divinely inspir'd, and under the infallible Guidance of the Holy Ghost, and there's all the Reason in the World for us to acquiesce in their Arguings, and fully to depend upon them. But if they are suppos'd to be left to themselves in Arguments of this kind, and we stand upon a Level with them, there is fair scope for debating indeed how far their Arguments will hold good, but no ground for a firm Dependence upon them as they propose them, and because they came from them: For when they have said their utmost, they but shew their Willingness to serve their Cause, and might as well be in the wrong as in the right. And if they may so in any thing, they may so in every thing: And so notwithstanding the Honesty of their Design and Intention, their Writings will leave us in Uncertainty. On this account I must confess I am far from wondring to find those whose Opinion of these Writers runs so low, passing their Censures with so much freedom, on their Application of Passages of the Old Testament, upon sundry Occasions: I rather wonder they don't lay aside all Regard to them, which may be justify'd, upon supposition they pursue Measures that are really fallacious and will not hold, which has in this respect been oft assert-ed. But,

2. It also deserves to be consider'd, that our New Testament contains a great variety of Metaphorical and Hyperbolical Passages, that are design'd to illustrate several of the most capital Articles of our Faith, as well as plain and simple Dogmatical Assertions. Passages of this kind are obvious, and have created many De-
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bates in the Church. If our New Testament Writers then were not under a peculiar Conduct of the Holy Ghost, being much addicted to metaphorical and other figurative Expressions, they might use sundry Phrases that might give just Occasion to Mistake and Error; and that in Matters of the greatest Consequence too, as well as in things that are minute, and of less Consideration. Then might they in a most pompous manner represent and dilate upon the Deity of our Saviour, and yet all the while mean no more than that he was a God by Office, and exalted to an Eminence and Dignity beyond all other Creatures. Then might they in a very tragical manner, over and over again, in a thousand several Places, represent his Sufferings and Death as an Oblation to God, that had in it the Nature of a Sacrifice, and truly expiated Sin, and satisfy'd the Justice of God, and yet all the while might mean no more, than that God intended this way to present Man with the strongest Inducement possible, to stop his Rebellion, and return to his Allegiance to him. And if so, then I think it most evidently follows that the Scriptures are a very insignificant Book, and no Man shall certainly know what to make of them, or when and how far to depend upon them. If we can't rely upon their Arguments, nor upon their Phraseology; if we can neither lay stress on the Inferences they draw from Scripture themselves, and the Glosses they put upon the several Passages of the Sacred Penmen that liv'd before them; nor upon their own Way and Manner of expressing themselves, so as certainly to depend upon the proper and natural Sense of their Words as undoubted Truth;

Truth; then can they give us no certain Assurance in our Religion: They cannot answer their End. If we may take Doctrines to be confirm'd by the Arguments they produce, and yet be deceiv'd; if we may take those things for Principles which they most warmly inculcate, and that in a great Variety of Expressions, and yet be impos'd on; then are their Writings ludicrous. In short, if they are not inspir'd, they can't in this case be safely relied on: they can give us no sufficient Certainty in the things we should depend upon them for, which are evidently of the last moment.

2. Another Argument I advance is this: If the Writings of the New Testament were not given by the Inspiration of God, our Lord was not true to his Disciples; he did not keep to, or answer the Promise which he made them, as to the Assistance of his Holy Spirit. That we may the better see the Force of this Argument, it's requisite we distinctly consider, what it was that our Lord had promis'd to his Disciples, by way of Assistance in the Work which he commission'd them for. Of this we have an Account in two several Places. The first runs thus: *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* John 14. 26. In the other place the matter is thus express'd: *When the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all Truth.* John 16. 13. And from hence I thus argue: Either this Promise of our Saviour referr'd to Assistance in Writing as well as Speaking, or it did not. If it did not, then they were tantaliz'd by it, instead of being reliev'd; the Promise reach'd but to half of their Work, and left

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them to themselves as to the other half, which if the Concern of all succeeding Ages be regarded, was the most considerable of the two: And if it did, then were they inspir'd, and under infallible Conduct; for it is not supposable that such an Assistance as that promis'd, for the Benefit of all after-Ages, should leave them expos'd to Mistakes and Errors in their Writings. The Substance of the Promise was *Assistance in the whole of their Apostleship, by the Presence of his Spirit*; by a peculiar Presence of his, beyond what is usual and common. This was suggest-ed to them for their Comfort, when he was just upon leaving them. Our Lord told them, he would give them an infallible Spirit to conduct them; and he should *bring all things to their Remembrance*. Now when did they need this *Remembrancer*, so much as when they were committing our Lord's Miracles and Instructions to Writing, for the Benefit of after-Ages? Nay he tells them *the Holy Ghost should guide them into all Truth*, to the End they might fulfil the Functions of their Apostleship; which in effect is the same as if he had expressly told them in so many Words, that his Holy Spirit should give them all the Assistance that was necessary, to help them to direct the Christian Church to the End of the World in all saving Truth. For if the Assistance of the Spirit was therefore promis'd them in their Preaching, for the Benefit and Security of the Church, that they might guide it in all Truth, without any Mixture of Error; the same Reason holds much stronger for their Writings: and that the rather, because they were not design'd for one Age only, but for all the Ages that were to follow. Remarkable was the Divine Assistance they had
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in their Discourses, especially upon extraordinary Occasions; so that our Lord told them in so many Words, that *it was not they that spake, but* Mat. 10. *the Spirit of the Father that spake in them:* And ^{20.} if they spake by Inspiration, why should we question but they wrote so too? Of the two, the latter seems much more necessary than the former. For had they committed a Mistake in any thing they deliver'd by Word of Mouth, they might easily have rectify'd it: But as for their Writings, which were intended for an immutable Rule of Faith and Manners to all Successions, an Error in them was not to be repair'd, but would have entail'd it self on latest Posterity: Which is a Supposition no way as I can see to be reconcil'd, either with the Goodness of God, if their Writings came from him, or with the Faithfulness of our Saviour, in making good his Promise. If the Holy Ghost did not assist the Disciples, when they were drawing up the perpetual Monuments of the Christian Faith, he left them at that time when they needed him most; and then, when it was most for the Advantage of the Church (whose Benefit and Security the Promise plainly aim'd at) that his Assistance should have been afforded.

3. Since we find the Apostles that were the chief Penmen of the New Testament, openly over and over pretending to Inspiration; if they really had it not, they were Deceivers: Which is an Argument of considerable Force in the Case of those who own the Truth of the Christian Religion, while they demur on the Head of Inspiration. And here 'tis very fitting that we distinctly observe, what Account our Sacred Penmen give us of themselves. Let us

hear St. Paul in the first place, who drew up the most of the Writings in the New Testament.

Gal. 1. 12. He tells us of himself, that he *receiv'd not the Gospel of Man, neither was he taught it, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.* He was taught it by Revelation, not upon his own Account barely, but as one that was a *chosen Vessel unto Christ, to bear his Name before the Gentiles.* He was therefore taught it in this Way, that he might teach it to others also to whom he was sent; that he might teach them with full Assurance and Certainty, and without any Danger of Error. The

1 Cor. 2. 10. same Apostle also tells us, that *God had revealed the deep things, and the Mysteries of the Gospel, to the Apostles by the Spirit.* It deserves a Remark, that he there takes in his Fellow-Apostles with

ver. 12, 13. him: and he thereupon adds, *We have receiv'd not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God: which things also we speak, not in the Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.* If St. Paul then taught the Mysteries of the Gospel, in the very Words which the Holy Ghost taught him, as is here plainly intimated, he must be inspir'd; and if he was inspir'd, so were the rest of the Apostles too; for he does not speak in this, of any thing that was peculiar to himself, but of what was common to the other Apostles with him. And 'tis easy to be observ'd, that this Inspiration was not merely for the personal Instruction of these holy Men, in such things as it was necessary for them to know; it was intended to enable them to give suitable Instruction to the Church of Christ: And therefore he intimates, that according to Order, they communicated these

these things to others; and in the teaching them, made use of Words, that were taught them by the Holy Ghost: He directed them in the Choice of their Phrases and Expressions. And if it was thus in Speech, we may very well conclude it was much more so in Writing, for the Benefit of succeeding Ages. He adds, that they *compar'd spiritual things with spiritual*; i. e. they explain'd and illustrated one Revelation by another. And after all, this comes in the Close; *We have the Mind of Christ*. He plain-^{v. 16.}ly infers, that he and his Fellow Apostles had the Mind of Christ, from the Assistance which he gave them by his Spirit. And if they that were the immediate Auditors of the Apostles, could only be certify'd that they *had the Mind of Christ* in what they spake and deliver'd to them, from the Evidence there was that they had the Assistance of the Spirit; then how could we that live so long after them, be fully certify'd that they deliver'd unto us *the Mind of Christ* in their Writings, unless they had the Assistance of the Spirit of Christ in those Writings? And what can be more express than that Passage? *He that despiseth, despiseth* ^{1 Thess. 4.} *not Man but God, who hath also given to us* ^{8.} (says the Apostle) *his Holy Spirit*. He was there speaking of the Commandments which he gave them by the Lord *Jesus*, or from the Lord *Jesus*: And he charges them not to despise them, for this Reason, because he gave them under the Conduct of the Spirit. These Commandments were the same when given out by Word of Mouth, or in Writing; and if so, 'tis but reasonable to suppose, that the one was as much under the Conduct of the Spirit as the other. Again, saith the same Apostle, *If any* ^{1 Cor. 14.} *Man* ^{37.}

Man think himself to be a Prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the Commandments of the Lord. There he plainly comes down to his very Writings. And it evidently hence appears, that St. Paul expected, that all his Instructions, those that were given in Writing, as well as those by Word of Mouth, should be looked upon as deriv'd from the Spirit of God, and convey'd under his Conduct: And in believing as much, we do but comply with his Admonition.

St. Peter also is herein of the same Mind with St. Paul. He expresses himself thus: I
 2 Pet. 3. 1. *write unto you, that ye may be mindful of the Words which were spoken before by the Holy Prophets, and of the Commandments of us the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour.* By which saying of his, he not only sets a great Value upon his own Epistle as written by an Apostle of Christ, but he directly equals it with one of their Antient Prophetical Writings: And since Inspiration was the peculiar Privilege of Prophectic Writings, it follows that he reckon'd his own Writings, and those of his Fellow-Apostles, were as truly given by Inspiration of God, as any of their Antient Prophecies, and were to be receiv'd with an equal Reverence and Submission. He intimates this a little after as to St. Paul's Epistles in particular. He
 v. 15, 16. *says his Beloved Brother Paul wrote unto them, according to the Wisdom given unto him; which Wisdom you have heard before, came from Heaven; and that he spoke of those things which he had been before insisting on, in all his Epistles; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their*

their own Destruction. That which I here particularly fasten on, is his comparing *St. Paul's Epistles* with *the other Scriptures*, i. e. their other Inspir'd Writings : This must be the Sense, because they were only the Inspir'd Writings which they by way of Eminence call'd the Scriptures. And if *St. Paul's Epistles* stood on a Level with *the other Scriptures*, then to be sure they were held by *St. Peter* to be as really given by *Inspiration of God*, as they were ; and we can be under no mistake in falling in with him in the same Apprehension. Nor was this peculiar to *St. Peter* or *St. Paul* only, but common to all the Apostolical Writings, which are therefore represented as the *Foundation upon* Eph. 2. 20. *which we are built*, as well as the Writings of the Prophets. Put but all these things together, and I think you can't want Evidence, that the Apostles of our Lord are in the New Testament represented to us as Inspir'd Writers.

Here then lies the Argument. If they were not really Inspir'd they were Deceivers: They impose upon us in a most Capital matter: They impose upon us to that degree, that we can depend upon them in nothing, with any Satisfaction: And this way our whole Religion is overthrown at once.

4. The whole Christian Church from the Age of the Apostles down to this very Day, have firmly believ'd the Divine Inspiration of these Writings: So that either the whole Body of Christian People, hath from the first been deceiv'd in their most Fundamental Principle, or they were given by the Inspiration of God. I am indeed sensible that we ought to be very wary in drawing an Argument from Tradition, in matters either of Faith or Pra-

etice: And for that Reason must desire to be here understood with Caution. Let Tradition be ever so General or Universal, Let there be the concurring Consent of ever so many Ages, if the Scripture goes another way 'tis but a poor Argument. For the Holy Scriptures are our Standard in Point of Authority, beyond the Christians of all Ages put together. When therefore the *Romanists* plead Tradition for the Papal Infallibility, it is sufficient for us to answer, that we meet with no Hint of that nature in all our New Testament; and are therefore so far from admitting it as a Principle, that we can't see it is a Truth; nor should we be convinc'd of it, tho' they could bring an Hundred-fold better Proof of the Universality of that Tradition, than we ever yet could find produc'd. Traditions not founded on Scripture we ought always to be jealous of; for 'tis hard to say where we shall stop, if we once give way: But Tradition in Confirmation of what is either directly laid down in Scripture, or what may be inferr'd from thence by just and natural Consequence, we may admit with Safety; and the more General that Concurrence is, 'tis so much the better. In smaller matters, Tradition may easily deceive and impose upon us. Thus was there an early Tradition pleaded for the Millenarian Notion, and it spread pretty generally: And yet it is commonly now agreed that there was a mistake in it; and to be sure there must be so, as we are inform'd *Papias* reported it. But that Christians should have been all along mistaken in the Fundamental Resolution of their Faith, which has been into the Divine Inspiration of our New Testament

Testament Writers, in which they have acted but agreeably to the Scriptures Representation of it self, is so wild a Supposition, that it can hardly be admitted by any Man, but one that looks upon the whole Body of Christians in all Ages as entirely given up to a Spirit of Delusion.

For Proof of what I here suppose and take for granted, *viz.* that the Scriptures have in all Ages been receiv'd and embrac'd in the Christian Church as given by Inspiration of God, I refer you to such as have handled this Argument; and particularly to a Discourse of *Monfieur La Mothe*, concerning *Inspiration*, where you'll find it clear'd abundantly * as to the first and purest Ages. Taking that therefore for granted (which I think may be easily allow'd) I look upon the Argument propos'd as firm and strong. For since the Body of Christians have in all Ages look'd upon the Writings of the New Testament as Divinely inspir'd, and thereupon the Rule of their Faith and Life, and so to be distinguish'd from all other Writings, it follows, that the Church of Christ must even when Purest have been deceiv'd, in the very Essentials of Religion, and that their Faith is entirely false, if these Writings were not really *given by the Inspiration of God*. So Universal a Tradition, that is at the same time not only so agreeable to the Scriptures Representation of it self, but that is so necessary a Foundation to support the whole of our Religion that is built upon it, cannot be suppos'd to deceive us, by any Man that is not for bringing in a New Religion, as being weary of the Old one.

It may possibly by some be query'd, How can you that reject Tradition when it is strenuously pleaded upon the Head of *Episcopacy*, draw an Argument from Tradition, in proof of the Inspiration of the Writings of the New Testament? But the Reply is easy: The two Cases mention'd are very unlike. Such *Episcopacy* as we can truly find in Scripture,

* See an Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity and Worship of the Primitive Church, by Sir Peter King, Part I. Chap. 2, 3.

and as was accordingly kept up in the Time immediately succeeding *, we highly respect and reverence: But as for the after-Improvements upon the Primitive Foundations, (tho' some may be far less dangerous than others) we hope it may be excusable, if we have not a like Respect; and that the rather, because we are able upon good grounds to say in this, as our Saviour in another Case, *From the Beginning it was not thus*. As for the Tradition on the other hand, that is pleaded in confirmation of the Divine Inspiration of the Writings of the New Testament, 'tis all of a piece, and as clear in the most early as in the latest Ages. The same Apprehension as we have of them, prevail'd even while the Writers themselves were living, and they encourag'd instead of opposing it, or warning of any ill Consequences it would be likely to draw after it. From them it spread amongst their immediate Followers, and from them and their Successors in the Christian Church hath it been convey'd down all along to us in this Age, without any Variation.

Again,

Again, none but Bigots can pretend that the Foundation of the Christian Religion depends as much upon the *Hierarchy*, as upon the *Divine Inspiration* of the *Scriptures* :

* Neither therefore is it any thing near so fatal, to suppose a common and prevailing Mistake on the one Head as on the other. Withal, it deserves a Remark, that we find several Predictions in Scripture of great Danger

that would arise to the Church, by an undue Affectation of Superiority among the Guides of it: But we have not the least hint of any Danger that should arise from an over great Veneration for the Scriptures, as drawn up more under the Conduct of the Holy Spirit than they really were. Once more, both Faith and Holiness may be preserv'd entire and untainted, tho' the *Hierarchy* be dropp'd: But the same cannot be said, Let the *Divine Inspiration* of the *Scriptures* be disown'd; for then we lose the Certainty of our Rule of Faith and Life. So that, in short, till it can be made appear that that sort of *Episcopacy* which we have laid aside, is as agreeable to the Representation of the New Testament Writers; as uniformly deliver'd by all that came after them in the most early Ages, as well as in the times that succeeded; and hath as necessary a Relation to the Foundation of our whole Religion, as the *Inspiration* of our Sacred Penmen, we may very safely plead Tradition in Confirmation of the one, without thinking our selves oblig'd to lay that

* Mr. Dodwel indeed in his *Dissertations on Irenæus*, Diff. I. §. 38, 39. endeavours to shew that we have no better Proof for the Scripture, than we have for the *Divine Authority* of *Superiour Bishops*. But I hope in that, as well as in several other things, he's a Man pretty much by himself.

Stress

Stress upon it that is desir'd in the other Case: Especially when that Tradition it self, as apply'd to Modern Practice, is liable to so many Contests as are not easily decided.

5. The last Argument I shall urge in Proof of the Inspiration of our New Testament Writers, is this: It is altogether unconceivable, how such Men as we know them to have been, could have drawn up such Writings, if they had not been Divinely inspir'd. In such a Method of Arguing as I am pursuing, there is no way like driving things to an Absurdity upon the contrary Supposition: For it is reckon'd that such as have the free use of their Reason, will rather yield a Point contested, rather adhere to what is propos'd, tho' they may have some remaining Doubts and Scruples, than they will run themselves into a plain Absurdity: And the grosser the Absurdity is which is prov'd to follow in such a Case, the stronger is the Evidence on the side of the Point to be confirm'd. Now there are an heap of Absurdities will necessarily follow, if it be suppos'd that such Persons as were the Penmen of the New Testament could draw up such Writings as are therein contain'd, if they were not Divinely inspir'd.

They were generally weak and simple Men, and yet their Writings have prov'd vastly more Powerful than those of the ablest Orators. They were for the most part Men of little Learning, and yet their Writings have confounded the most Learned Men in the Pagan World. They liv'd in an obscure Corner, and had comparatively but little Acquaintance with Mankind; and yet their Writings ransack all the corners of Mens Hearts, and have

have made many from Age to Age, much more acquainted with themselves, than they could have been any other way. They were the plainest Persons imaginable, and yet their Writings come with a Majesty that is inimitable. *Matthew* was a Publican, that had spent most of his time in gathering of Toll : And *Peter* and *John* were Fishermen, Strangers to any thing of polite Conversation ; and yet their Writings have made more Converts to God and Goodness, than the greatest Performances of the most celebrated Wits. *St. Paul* indeed had some Learning, being brought up at the Feet of *Gamaliel* ; but he was as unlikely to become a Spreader of Christianity as any Man, till he was miraculously chang'd. And tho' he was chang'd, yet could he not have written with that Exactness that he did, about the Principles and Mysteries of a Religion to which he before was an utter Stranger, unless he had had a special Superiour Conduct.

Consider then the Writers, and consider their Writings. The Writers as little promis'd any thing peculiarly Excellent, as any Men that could have been pitch'd upon : And yet their Doctrine is admirable, and their Scheme beyond Example. I'll give it you in a narrow Compass, and I should think it were easy to discern in it an inimitable Beauty.

Thus then stands their Scheme. “ Man
 “ has Apostatiz'd ; and God is thereupon
 “ highly displeas'd, but unwilling he should
 “ perish. Hereupon he sends his Son, to expi-
 “ ate Sin as a Priest ; to teach us as a Prophet
 “ both by Doctrine and Example ; and to
 “ govern us by his Laws, and defend us from
 “ our

“ our Enemies, as our King. In the Exer-
 “ cise of his Mediatorial Authority, he takes
 “ the special Charge of all those, who under
 “ the Influence of his Spirit are brought to
 “ place their Hope and Trust in him ; and
 “ he trains them up in an Holy Course, for an
 “ Happy Life beyond the Grave ; of his bring-
 “ ing them to which, he has given them As-
 “ surance by his own Resurrection.

Had we met with such a Scheme as this in
 a *Socrates*, a *Plato*, or an *Aristotle*, we should
 have admir'd and applauded it: And is it the
 less admirable for its coming from three such
 Persons as *St. Peter*, *St. John*, and *St. Matthew*?
 Is it at all likely that such a Scheme could be
 their own Contrivance? Let us take three
 vulgar Persons from the Plow, or from the
 Sea, and supposing them to be honest, and to
 mean well, set them but to write on a Scheme
 of this kind, fram'd to their Hands, and we
 shall find a thousand Blunders, and Inconsisten-
 cies without Number: One will mistake on
 this Head, and another on that: They won't
 agree each one with themselves, much less
 with one another; 'twill be all Jargon. Now
 how came it to be otherwise here? It was
 not from themselves: For Men are the same
 in all Ages. It must then be from a special
 Divine Influence. How could such Men as
 these give a better Account how the Blessed
 God stood dispos'd towards fallen Man, than
 all the rest of the World besides? How could
 they with such Assurance point to the certain
 Method of being reconcil'd to him? How
 could they at the same time give Rules of Mo-
 rality, that are more pure and exact than the
 Prescriptions of the most celebrated Philoso-
 phers?

phers? For my Part, I must freely own, it does not appear to me more absurd to suppose an orderly World, resulting from the fortuitous Concourse of unguided Atoms; or a Watch or Clock, that has all the Marks of curious Contrivance, to jumble together of it self, without the Hands of an Artificer, than to suppose such Writings as those of the New Testament, Writings so noble, so sublime and God-like, to proceed from such Persons, if they had not been under a peculiar Divine Conduct. He that can swallow this, need not afterwards stick at any, even the grossest Absurdity that could be mention'd.

I shall only add, that these Considerations relating to the New Testament in general, are to be taken together, and the Evidence will be clear: But we are not to expect that any one single Argument should be capable of representing to us an Evidence that is made up of Dissimilar Parts.

The next thing is to consider the New Testament somewhat more particularly, as to its Contents, which are reducible to three Heads; *viz. Doctrines, Histories, and Prophecies*, of all which we may safely say, that they were given by the Inspiration of God.

1. As for the *Doctrines* of the New Testament, they are many of them supernatural, and could not have been known without Revelation. Now the Argument of the Apostle is unanswerable: *What Man knoweth the things of a Man, save the Spirit of Man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no Man, but the Spirit of God.* God must reveal himself, or Man could not know that there was a Trinity of Persons in his Nature; or
be

1 Cor.
2. 11.

be acquainted with any of his secret Counsels. Nay, should Discoveries be made to any one about such things as these, should the Spirit of God immediately reveal them to him, and he afterwards set himself to commit them to Writing, without any Superiour Conduct, he'd be liable to various Misrepresentations: And if his Writings were of a different Nature, and so requir'd different Turns, he'd be so liable to Mistakes and Errours, that such as came after him could not be able, with Certainty, to rely upon his Account: Were he ever so honest, he might blunder without Design, and give wrong Notions and Apprehensions. The want of Security against this, would be a constant Spring of Uneasiness, Jealousy, and Fear. If our New Testament Writers were not under a special Divine Conduct in the delivery of *Doctrines* to us, their Writings could not be a sufficient and certain Rule of Distinction, between Truth and Errour.

2. The *Prophecies* of the New Testament must also be given by *Inspiration of God*, as well as the *Doctrines* of it. There are several of these *Prophecies* that deserve our Observation, tho' they lie more scatter'd than those in the Old Testament. We have here plain Predictions of the wonderful Propagation of the Gospel, the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the dismal Calamities of the *Jewish Nation*, with the Overthrow of their Civil and Ecclesiastical Polity; the Reduction of Pagan Powers; the Rise of Antichrist; his Progress and Downfall. Now this Prophetick Spirit which we so often meet with in our New Testament Writings, is a strong Argument they were inspir'd.

spir'd. For the foreknowing and foretelling things to come, is a distinguishing Character of the True God. *Let them bring forth, says* Iſa. 41. 22, 23. *God, and ſhew us what ſhall happen; Let them ſhew the former things what they be, that we may conſider them, and know the latter end of them: Or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods.* So that none can certainly reveal Futurities but ſuch as God reveals them to. The Prophetick Part therefore of the New Teſtament, diſcovering a certain and infallible Knowledge of future Contingencies, depending on free Cauſes, muſt be from God. Had not he inſpir'd it, the Event would not ſo punctually have answer'd the Predictions.

3. There are alſo *Hiftories* in the New Teſtament. Indeed if we conſider it as to its Bulk, more than the half of it is *Hiſtorical*: And even to this Part may we apply the Saying of St. *John*, at the latter end of his *Gospel*; all the *Hiſtorical Relations* in the New Teſtament ſpeak to us this common Language, that *they are written that we might believe that Je-* John 20. 31. *ſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God; and that believing, we might have Life thro' his Name.* Tho' it may be aſſerted that honeſt Men might be capable of drawing up an *Hiſtorical Account* of things in which themſelves were concern'd, things of which they were Eye and Ear-Witneſſes; and ſuch an Account as might be depended on too, without *Inſpiration*: Yet if it be conſider'd, that the *Hiftories* of the New Teſtament contain an Account of thoſe *Facts* upon which the whole of *Chriſtianity* is bottom'd, and of which we upon that Account need more than a common *Aſſurance*, it can-

not seem strange it should be asserted, that Assistance by his Spirit in such Composesures, came within the compass of our Saviour's Promise, as has before been clear'd. And how could we be satisfactorily assur'd, that *believing we should have Life thro' the Name of Christ*, if the Penmen that compil'd the *Histories* that contain an Account of those Facts on which our Faith must be bottom'd, and by which it must be supported, had not a peculiar Conduct of the Spirit? And when our Saviour so distinctly declares that his Spirit should *bring all things to their Remembrance*, it cannot seem harsh to such as duly consider the nature of that Expression, that we should assert, that tho' he needed not take that Pains with them about things they knew before, as would have been requisite, had they been perfect Strangers; yet even in compiling the *History* of Facts with which they were well acquainted, they needed his Conduct and Assistance, as a *Remembrancer*, to keep them from any way misrepresenting Truth, or omitting any thing that was needful to be known: And this is Inspiration in their Case.

'Tis objected that the Evangelist St. Luke makes no Pretence to Inspiration in the drawing up his History. He begins his Gospel after this manner. *Forasmuch, says he, as many have taken in hand to set forth in Order a Declaration of those things which are most surely believ'd among us, even as they deliver'd them unto us, who from the beginning were Eye-Witnesses and Ministers of the Word; it seem'd good to me also, having had perfect Understanding of all things, from the very first, to write unto thee in Order, most Excellent Theophilus, that thou might'st know the*

Luke 1.
1, 2, 3, 4.

Cer-

Certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed. Great Strefs is by the Demurrer upon this Head laid on this Passage. *These Words*, says *Five Letters*, p. 34. *are a full Proof that St. Luke learn'd not that which he told us by Inspiration, but by Information from those who knew it exactly.* But let it be observ'd, Inspiration does not necessarily imply that Persons learn what they report to others by immediate Revelation: 'Tis enough to denominate any one an inspir'd Writer, that he be under such a Conduct of the Divine Spirit as secures him from Mistake and Error. In this Sense 'tis agreed, *the Evangelists ought to be inspir'd.* And if St. Luke was not thus far inspir'd, I can't see how we could so certainly depend upon his Report, as to be out of danger of a Mistake. His receiving his Account from others would then be rather against, than for him. For tho' he had been ever so Honest and Faithful, he would have been much more liable to mistake when the Report came to him from others, than if he had only reported what he himself had been an Eye and Ear-Witness of. If St. Luke was not thus far inspir'd, he could not (as has before been clear'd) reach the End propos'd: He could not have given to *Theophilus*, and us after him, a sufficient and infallible Certainty, as to those things in which he and we have been instructed. And besides in this very Preface, St. Luke tells us, that he had his Intelligence and Instructions *from above* *ανωθεν*; but that our Translators have overlook'd it. For what is with us translated, *it seem'd good to me also, having had perfect Understanding of all things from the very first*, might be render'd thus; *it seem'd good to*

me also, having had perfect Understanding of all things from above*. And

* That Word *ανωθεν* is so rendered in the Margin of our Bibles, Joh. 3. 3, 7. and in the Text too, Joh. 3. 31. Joh. 19. 11. Jam. 1. 17. and Jam. 3. 15, 17.

thus taken, it shews the Inspiration of St. Luke from Heaven, and stands in opposition to the many Gospels which he men-

tion'd before, which the Writers might possibly draw up with an Honest Intention, but not with a like Security and Certainty: For that while they did what they did of their own Heads, he acted by Direction and under Influence from above. And if it was so with him, we may reasonably conclude it was the same as to the other Evangelists also.

There being then so good Evidence that the New Testament was given by Inspiration of God, these two Reflections are very just.

I. The Despising it must be a very dangerous Crime. Since God speaks to us by these inspir'd Writers, if we instead of listning to him as speaking by them, treat him contemptuously, our Guilt cannot be small. Our Lord once said to his Disciples with reference to their Preaching, *He that despiseth you, despiseth me*: And it is as true as to their Writings. All the Contempt that is at any time flung on these sacred Composures, rebounds higher; and finally devolves upon the first Author of those Doctrines whereof these are the Registers and Transcripts. *He that despis'd Moses's Law, dy'd without Mercy*: And tho' they that despise the New Testament Revelations may escape present Punishment, yet it does not follow they will be able to avoid the Vengeance of God; which is never the less sure for being delay'd. Contempt in this Case is one

of the worst of Sins, because it undermines all Religion at once.

2. Since our New Testament Writers were so evidently Divinely inspir'd, let us dread the Delusion of those, who leave their Writings, and gape after new and fresh Revelations. There have been some who arrogantly pretending to be taught by the Spirit, have been above conversing with the Scriptures, and have laugh'd at the Simplicity of those who are for adhering to what they call a Dead Letter. But by what Spirit have they in the mean time been acted? Certainly by another Spirit than that which influenc'd our Sacred Penmen; or otherwise they would have reverenc'd their Revelations, and taken them for their Rule: And if by another Spirit, how can they be safe, when he draws them from the *Words of Eternal Life*? It must certainly be a different Spirit that they are acted by, from that which our Lord promis'd his Disciples: For that Spirit was not to speak of himself, but to bring to remembrance what he had said. 'Tis not the Office of the Spirit of Christ to frame new Revelations, or a new sort of Doctrine, to draw aside from the Gospel: But to impress the Doctrine of the Gospel, which was given by the Inspiration of God, upon our Minds and Hearts. It must therefore be a Spirit of Error and Delusion that draws from the Scripture. 'Tis no Dishonour at all to the Spirit of God to compare all that pretends to come from him with the Scriptures; and reject all that is disagreeable thereto: For the Holy Spirit is entirely like himself, and all his Operations necessarily agree with his written Rule, unless he's inconsistent with him-

self. They therefore that leaving our Sacred Oracles follow Whispers, and unaccountable Suggestions, and expect new Revelations to conduct them, they leave a safe Guide for a very uncertain one : They are in constant Danger of being bewilder'd : They lie at the Mercy of the Tempter : And it will be but just with God that their neglect of Scripture should be remarkably punish'd. It was so among the *German* Enthusiasts, and it has been so with others also.

Let us therefore ever cherish a mighty Veneration for our New Testament Writers, as Divinely inspir'd. Let no Insinuations lessen our Esteem of them. Let us converse with them daily. Let us prize them as a Treasure, and govern our Faith and our Life by their Direction : And we shall find they will make us *Wise unto Salvation* : and be profitable for *Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness* : And that by their Means we may be perfect, and thoroughly furnish'd unto all *Good Works*.

SERMON IV.

2 TIM. III. 16.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.

HAVING seen the Evidence of the Inspiration of the New Testament, we are next to consider it as to the Old Testament, which this Text most directly refers to: The whole of that being here said to be given by Inspiration of God, they directly fly in the Face of the Apostle who offer to contest it. And since some don't stick at that, let us see how we may our selves be confirm'd, and how well our Principle may be defended against them.

I shall here consider the Old Testament as I have done the New; both collectively and distributively: And shall first endeavour to prove, that the whole Old Testament, taken in gross, was divinely inspir'd; and then I shall more distinctly consider it, as it has been from antient Times divided into *the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Holy Writings*; and prove that we have good Grounds to assert Divine Inspiration in the Case of each of them.

I begin with considering the Old Testament in the general ; and without repeating what of the Evidence under the former Head is equally applicable to this, shall lay down two Arguments in proof of a Divine Inspiration : The first of them drawn from the Nature, the Duration, and the Unvariableness of the *Jewish* Religion, which was wholly founded on the Writings of the Old Testament ; which were utterly inconceivable, if they were not given by the Inspiration of God. The second Argument is drawn from the Confirmation which the New Testament gives to the whole Canon of the Old.

I. Then, I argue from the Nature, the Duration, and the Unvariableness of the *Jewish Religion*, that was founded upon the Old Testament. The Set of Writings to which we commonly give that Name, brought into the World a Religion that has incontestable Characters of Divinity, and long supported it : That Religion continu'd in a most flourishing State, with a peculiar visible *Glory* attending it for many Ages ; with such Evidence of its Agreableness to the Divinity, as was, and well enough might be, abundantly satisfactory : And tho' upon its receiving a perfecting Stroke by the Addition of Gospel Light, it has been since superseded ; and tho' it has now for many Ages been depriv'd of all visible Props, nay is expos'd to the utmost Contempt and Derision in all Parts and Quarters of the Earth, it yet continues even to this Day, in conformity to Divine Predictions : While other Religions have either utterly vanish'd, as many of the *Pagan* Superstitions have done ; or are kept up
by

by meer Constraint and Force, which is the Case of *Mahometanism*. Now those Writings by which a Religion of such a Nature as the *Jewish*, has been not only introduc'd, but so continu'd, and so supported, must necessarily be given by Inspiration of God; and in joining with those of that Religion in believing them so, we cannot be deceiv'd.

That we may discern the full Force of this Argument, it will be requisite that we consider, I. The Nature of the *Jewish Religion*, that is bottom'd on the Old Testament Writings. II. Its long Continuance in a flourishing State, with a visible *Glory* attending it; having this for its distinguishing Principle, that these Writings were *given by the Inspiration of God*. III. Its Duration even to this Day, upon that Principle, under all the Disadvantages which it is possible for a Religion to have attending it. Let these three things be well weigh'd, and the Argument will be found to have no small Strength in it.

I. Let us consider the Nature of the *Jewish Religion*, which is bottom'd on the Writings of the Old Testament. 'Tis a Religion becoming God, and that relieves the most pressing Necessities of Man: A Religion that clears up the Doubts of his Reason, and quiets the Commotions of his Conscience: A Religion that gives right Notions of God, and represents him as infinitely Great and Good, and so to be supremely fear'd and lov'd; and that at the same time leads into right Apprehensions of the Nature of Man, both as to his original Excellence, and his contracted Weakness and Vileness; and so points to such an Intercourse with the God from whom we are fallen, as tends to promote

a Recovery: A Religion that represents God at once as most Holy and Just, and yet most Good, and Gracious, and Lovely; and represents Man at once as the most excellent, and yet the most miserable Creature in this lower World: A Religion that both in its Doctrine and Worship, and in all the Parts of it, points to a Redeemer, through whom compleat Salvation might be obtain'd: In a word, a Religion supported by various most remarkable *Prophecies*, and back'd by a Multitude of glorious and uncontrollable *Miracles*. This Religion of theirs was wholly bottom'd on their Sacred *Oracles*, which they peculiarly esteem'd, and which were *committed to them* as a signal Trust. Their Religion was the most ridiculous of any in the World, if those *Oracles* were not from God. It could then be no other than one continu'd Train of the grossest Fictions. The whole Nation of the *Jews*, tho' despis'd by their Neighbours, was more fond of their Religion, than of their Possessions, their Liberties, or their Lives. They universally look'd on those Writings that contain'd it, as drawn up by Men inspir'd of God. Was it possible for them to be herein mistaken, and yet all the while to have Intercourse with God, in a Religion made up of Lies? What may not he swallow, that can digest this?

If their Religion was not of God, it must be either from Men or Devils. From Devils it could not be, because its great Aim was to promote Purity both of Heart and Life, and that way to weaken their Kingdom, and supplant their Interest. Neither could it be from Men; because the *Prophecies* and *Miracles* which it had attending it, were beyond their Reach
and

and Power. And if it could not be either from Devils or from Men, it must be from God. And if their Religion was from God, so must those Records be that contain'd it, which were declar'd to come from him; and those *Oracles* in which the Facts were related on which it was built, the Directions contain'd by which they manag'd their Worship, and those *Prophecies* comprehended, by the Accomplishment of which, true Religion was compleated.

II. Consider also the long Continuance of the *Jewish Religion* in a flourishing State, with a visible *Glory* attending it, while this was all along its fundamental Principle, that these Writings were inspir'd of God. As this Religion was the most Antient, so was it also the most Lasting. It did not appear for a little while, and then vanish away: but it continu'd in a Lustre for many Ages. It did not put on a Variety of Forms and Shapes, as other Religions have done; but it continu'd the same, from its first Settlement, to its full Completion, by the Appearance of the *Messiah*, without any very remarkable Variation; saving that at the latter End its Glory abated. They had a *Shechinah*, a visible Emblem of the Divine Presence among them; a Favour that was peculiar to themselves; a satisfying Evidence of God's Well-pleas'dness with them, and of the Acceptableness of their Religion to him. They had this in the Time of *Moses*: They had it all along while the Temple of *Solomon* continu'd standing: And it was their grand Complaint that it was wanting under the second Temple. Now how could it be suppos'd they could have this assuring Sign of the
Pre-

Presence of God among them, if their Religion were not from him? How could such a Favour as this be afforded, and so long continu'd to them, if their Sacred Oracles deceiv'd them? Nay how could they be deceiv'd in Matters so plain, and so liable to common Apprehension, about which they were so inquisitive, and in which they were so much concern'd? The Fathers of their Nation handed down those Parts of the Sacred Canon which were written in their Days, to their Posterity, with this Attestation, that they came from God. They recommended them to them as Divine Records of their Religion. How could they be herein deceiv'd? What moral Certainty can be desir'd, that is not to be met with in this Case?

The first Part of their Oracles contains a History of the Miracles with which God rescu'd that People out of their Bondage in *Egypt*, and settled them in the Land of *Canaan*. If such Miracles were really wrought, thousands must see them. Had they not been truly wrought, they could never have impos'd a Relation of a Parcel of Fables upon their Posterity as an inspir'd Truth. Whatever some few particular Persons might be capable of, a Body of upwards of six hundred thousand People can never be suppos'd so stupid and senseless. But if they really were Eye-witnesses of the Miracles related, they might with good Reason conclude that he that was empower'd by God to work them, was so also for the relating them; especially considering how much was to depend as to all Times to come upon that Relation: And if he was empower'd by God to draw up such a Relation, and by him assisted there-

therein, they might easily gather, that he was equally assisted in relating the signal and remarkable Events from the Creation to that Time in which these Miracles were wrought, which are also reported in those Oracles. Now who can suppose a Religion thus introduc'd, should be so long continu'd, with so many evident Indications of a special Divine Presence among them, with such a visible *Glory*, and such Oracular Responses as they had, if the Records they accounted sacred, had not been divinely inspir'd? This one exceeds all the Difficulties that the believing them to have been divinely inspir'd, can be attended with. Farther,

3. Consider also the Duration of the *Jewish Religion* in a great measure even to this Day, tho' without Altar, High Priest, or Sacrifice, under all the Disadvantages which it is possible for a Religion to have attending it. Consider that Religion, as to its outward Part, and you'll find nothing more burdensome. Its Rites and Ceremonies are extremely troublesome; and Circumcision in particular is very painful and disgraceful. While other Nations then have chang'd many times over, how should it come about that they should never change? Since their cutting off the *Messiah* they have been scatter'd into all Lands, and banish'd into all Countries, without any visible Prospect of returning into their own. They have met with all manner of Threats and hard Usage, to draw them off from their old Customs, but to little purpose. They still retain a Veneration for their Law, and other sacred Writings; and nothing can extort from them any thing like a Confession that they came not from God.

Stub-

Stubbornness may indeed carry some very far in an adherence to Old Customs and Usages: But if this be meer Stubbornness, 'tis such an Instance of it as is unexampled. To those that consider things maturely, this looks like a signal Effort of Providence, to confirm us in the Belief of the Inspiration both of Old Testament and New at once; in as much as their Treatment fulfills the Predictions of the New; and their still-adhering to their Religion accomplishes the Predictions of the Old: And both would be unaccountable, if Old Testament as well as New was not inspir'd of God.

In short: He that observes how firmly the Antient *Jews* believ'd the Divine Inspiration of the Old Testament, not only through the Tradition of their Fathers, but as confirm'd by the Theocracy under which they liv'd, and the immediate Guidance of God they were favour'd with; And how firmly the Modern *Jews* believe the same, notwithstanding they thereby so much confirm the Cause of us Christians whom they mortally hate, won't easily be able to believe that this could be an Accidental thing, or fall out without the special Conduct of Divine Providence, to confirm us in the Belief of the Inspiration of those Writings, in which we now have a much greater Concern than they.

2. But my Second Argument I look upon as fully Conclusive: 'Tis drawn from the New Testament, by which the Divine Inspiration of the Old Testament is abundantly clear'd. The Prophecies of the Old Testament are in the New declar'd to be fulfill'd; and we are at the same time assur'd that they came from God. We are told, that it was *God* that at

sundry

sundry times and in divers manners, spake to the Heb. 1. 1.
Fathers of the Jewish Nation, in the Prophets,
 or by them. 'Tis thereby plainly meant, that
 he did so all along from the time of *Moses*, to
 the Days of *Ezra*. And in General those
 Writings that by the *Jews* were esteem'd fa-
 cred, we are told were the *Oracles of God*. And Rom. 3. 2.
 if they were Inspir'd Persons that tell us so,
 as has been clear'd, then they must necessarily
 be Inspir'd Writings which they commend as
 such. This is a thing so plain that it is obvi-
 ous to the meanest Apprehension, and may
 give full Satisfaction to such as are not able to
 go very deep, or take in abstracted Arguings.
 Should any of you then be tempted to doubt
 of the Divinity of the Scriptures, and per-
 plex'd under that Head, I should think you
 would do well to begin with the New Tes-
 tament: And if you can be satisfy'd upon such
 Evidence as that which is before produc'd,
 that the Writers of that were inspir'd, you
 will find that they recommending the Wri-
 ters of the Old Testament as inspir'd, it by
 an easy Consequence necessarily follows, that
 they must be so: Which is a much plainer
 way to a Rational Satisfaction, than to stay
 till all the Difficulties started, as to some Parts
 of the Old Testament, are solv'd, which per-
 haps may never be. Without perplexing our
 selves with particular Difficulties, here we
 may stick, and safely fasten: The Old Testa-
 ment must be Divinely inspir'd, because it is
 recommended as such in the New Testament,
 which was undoubtedly inspir'd. And here
 let us distinctly observe, what we may learn
 under this Head from our Saviour, and what
 from his immediate Disciples.

I. From our Saviour. He was the Great Prophet of the Church, and it certainly becomes us to listen to his Teachings, and to depend on his Instructions, in this as well as any other Part of our Religion. Now he plainly appears to have look'd upon the Body of Sacred Writings which the *Jews* had in their Hands in his time, which is the same with that which we now commonly call the Old Testament, to have been Divinely inspir'd.

Joh. 5.
39.

He bids the *Jews* search the Scriptures: For in them, says he, ye think ye have Eternal Life.

When he bids them search the Scriptures, he refers them to the Sacred Canon that was in their Hands: And when he adds, that they thought they had in them Eternal Life, he in effect gives them to understand, that in so thinking they were in the right, or otherwise he would have undeceiv'd them. Our Lord did not refer them to one part of their Canon exclusively of the other; but takes in all; *Moses*, the *Prophets*, and the *Psalms*, which was their Celebrated Distinction that I am to come to presently. We are told by the Evangelist, that our Blessed Saviour after his Resurrection

Luk. 24.
44, 45.

open'd the Understandings of his Disciples, that they might understand what was written in each of them concerning him. How can any suppose that if our Lord had found them wretchedly mistaken in their fundamental Principle, in taking a Set of Books for Divinely Inspir'd that were not so, he would have let them alone, and suffer'd them to run on, deceiving and being deceiv'd?

Five Let-
ters. P. 104

'Tis said, There is not any Passage in the Gospel, where Christ tells us that all the Books of the Old Testament were Inspir'd by God. But what then:

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Is it not enough that *he approv'd them in Gross?* Could he have so approv'd them in Gross, if they held them to be Divinely inspir'd, when they were not so? Does not he mention their Apprehension that *in them they had Eternal Life*, without any mark of Disapprobation? But 'tis said, *He never undertook to make a Critical Treatise upon the sacred Books, nor to clear the Historical Differences in them.* Very true: Nor is that the Point in Question, but whether he confirm'd their Inspiration, by not setting them right, if they were herein in the wrong? P. 105. And whether he was not oblig'd to this, by his Office as the great Prophet of his Church? All that is here suggested is only this: That *his Design was not to make us able Criticks, but good Men; and to bring us to render to God the Obedience due to him. He omitted nothing that might instruct us in our Duty, but he never troubled himself to correct certain Errors of small Importance, which might be among the Jews.* As if this was a meer piece of Criticism! Or the holding those Books to be Divinely inspir'd that were not so, was an *Error of small Importance!* How could our Saviour's Indifference here, be reconcil'd with his Zeal for Truth, and his great Concern for the Honour of God, which were so conspicuous in him upon other Occasions, and in Cases far less momentous? Did he not most zealously set himself against Pharaisaical Traditions, by which they overthrew the Word of God? And might it not be very justly expected that he should with equal Zeal oppose the ascribing those Composures to Divine Inspiration, which labour'd under the Effects of Humane Fallibility? Was he so angry at their *teaching for Doctrines the Command-*

ments of Men ; and would it not as much have deserv'd, and drawn forth his Displeasure, had they father'd upon God the Writings of Men, which they drew up without being under any thing of his special and peculiar Conduct? Were not the Errors to which this Mistake expos'd them, of as great Importance at least, and as dangerous Consequence, as any they fell into the other way? Nay really, he that soberly considers Matters, will, I think, without much difficulty agree, that the Necessities of the Church more requir'd his being clear in this than in the other Matter. For it is a much easier thing when we are once certify'd what Books are Divinely inspir'd, to find out what Doctrines and Commands are of God, and what of Men ; than it is to be satisfi'd what to stick to, supposing there to be a Collection of Writings esteem'd Sacred, of which some are Divinely inspir'd, and others not ; some from God, and others meerly of Men. Our Saviour therefore, without designing to make them Criticks, referring the *Jews* in general, and his Disciples in particular, to the Scripture ; to those Scriptures which they esteem'd Divinely inspir'd ; and to all the Parts of those Writings, as they were commonly distinguish'd among them ; confirm'd their Divine Inspiration. Had he found them herein mistaken, his Concern for their Good would have prompted him to have undeceiv'd them : And there is hardly any thing could be mention'd, that more deserv'd, and requir'd, and call'd for his Assistance ; or in which we may reasonably suppose he would have been more free to have given it. But,

2. Let us also observe how much the Apostles of our Lord, and his inspir'd Followers, have done to confirm us under this Head, as to the Divine Inspiration of the Writings of the Old Testament. When St. Paul speaking of the *Jews* tells us, that *unto them were committed the Oracles of God*, 'tis hard to suppose but that if they had so grossly abus'd their Trust, as to intermix meer Humane Composures with Divinely inspir'd Writings, and to recommend them as of equal Authority, he would have tax'd them with Unfaithfulness. And when in the Verse immediately before my Text, he commends *Timothy*, and applauds his Happiness, for knowing the Holy Scriptures, which it is said, were able to make him Wise unto Salvation, and then adds the Words of the Text, he in effect assures him that the Scripture then receiv'd, the whole Canon of the Old Testament in general, was *given by Inspiration of God*. And indeed it is easy to observe, that when the Apostles cite a Place in the Old Testament, tho' for the most part they only call it *the Scripture*, yet they mean by it something that came peculiarly from God. *Scripture* in it self is no more than a Writing: But when they call a Passage cited out of the Old Testament, *Scripture* by way of Eminence, they mean a Divinely inspir'd Writing. Thus St. Paul, speaking of what came directly from the Mouth of God himself, cries out, *What saith the SCRIPTURE?* Gal 4. 30.
Cast out the Bondwoman, and her Son. And again, the SCRIPTURE foreseeing that Gal. 3. 8.
God would justify the Heathen thro' Faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all Nations be Blessed. 'Tis generally own'd
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that God himself spake both those Passages, and yet the Apostle calls them *Scripture*. So that according to his Phraseology, *the Scripture saith thus*, or *God spake thus*, is all one; the Sense is the same. Having therefore told the *Romans*, Rom. 11. that *God had concluded them all in Unbelief, that* 32. *he might have Mercy upon all*; he elsewhere mentions the very same thing, and ascribes it to the *Scripture*, saying, *the Scripture has concluded* Gal. 3. 22. *all under Sin*. So that the *Voice of God*, and the *Scripture* in the New Testament Language signify the same thing: And when the Apostles cited the Oracles of the Old Testament, under the Name of *Scripture*, 'tis as if they had said *the Scripture of God*: And by so citing them, they have confirm'd their Inspiration.

He therefore that disbelieves the Old Testament, must also disbelieve the New: He that questions the Divine Inspiration of one, must question the Inspiration of the other also. Nay in this Respect the Old Testament has an Advantage above the New, that the Canon of it was confirm'd by our Saviour, and his Apostles; which is a Consideration that ought to give us abundant Satisfaction.

Having thus consider'd the Divine Inspiration of the Old Testament taken in gross, I shall proceed to consider the same more distinctly,

* 'Tis probable that our Saviour alluded to this common Jewish Division of the Books of the Bible, when he said that it was necessary that all that was spoken of him in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, should be accomplish'd, Luke 24. 44. For the Psalms were a part of those they call'd the Holy Writings.

ly, as it has been from ancient times divided into the *Law of Moses*, the *Prophets*, and the *Chetubim*, or *Holy Writings* *: And shall see and enquire whether we have not good Grounds to assert Divine Inspiration in the Case of each.

I begin

I begin first with the *Law of Moses*, meaning thereby the *Pentateuch*, which passes for his Law in this Division, tho' the Law be really but a part of it. His Antiquity as a Writer, is something of an Argument in his favour. He wrote long before *Hesiod*, or *Homer*, or *Orpheus*, or *Linus*, or *Trismegist*. This is fully prov'd by *Josephus* the Historian, in his Answer to *Appion*; and by *Eusebius*. The very Antiquity of his Writings in some respects points us to their Divinity. For 'tis not reasonable to believe that the first written Account of the World had of Religion, should be a Cheat: That the first eminent Record of Religion should be a Lie; and not only a Lie, but the worst of Lies, and the most pernicious and destructive Falshood that ever was publish'd amongst Mankind: For so it must needs be, to impose a Law upon the World in God's Name, without his Authority *.

* *Sir Charles Wolfely of the reasonable-ness of Scripture-Belief,* p. 224.

The Writings of *Moses* are partly *Historical*, and partly *Preceptive*. The *Historical* part of them either relates to such things as pass'd from the beginning of the World to his own time; or the Transactions of the Age he liv'd in. As for his Account of the Creation of the World, and the Passages of the several Ages that follow'd before his own time, whatever *Memoirs* he might receive from Tradition, that in the drawing up his Account, he acted as an inspir'd Person, I take to be plain from hence; that he hereby laid the Foundation and Ground-work of all succeeding Revelations; and therefore cannot, as faithful as he was, be therein suppos'd to have been left to his own fallible Conduct. Inspiration was as necessary in this Case as in any: And therefore we may be assur'd it would not be

here deny'd him. As for the Historical Account that *Moses* drew up, and left upon Record, of the Transactions of his own Day, we have hints of a Divine Commission for it. We are told, that he was requir'd of God to write in a Book what pass'd in the Case of the *Amalekites*: And if in that Case, we may conclude it was the same in other Matters, of as great, or greater moment. And where God gave a Commission to write for the use of his Church and People in all after-Ages, 'tis reasonable to believe he gave at least such a Conduct as should preserve from Mistake and Error: Which, as has before been hinted, is all that is meant by Inspiration, with reference to Historical Narratives.

Consider *Moses* as a Lawgiver, and view the *Preceptive* part of his Writings, and there he must be own'd inspir'd, or the Church of God was not secure in its Foundations. He that is represented as entirely *faithful in the House of God*, must to be sure in settling the Laws contain'd in *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy*, most exactly follow Order. And if God in building of his Temple, would give such punctual and exact Orders as to every Particular, that there might not be the least Mistake, it can hardly be conceiv'd that he would leave his Servant *Moses* to himself, and his own Conduct, when he was settling the Church that was to serve him, and the Service that was to be perform'd to him in the Tabernacle, and in the Temple. He wrote *Deuteronomy* in a Book, and that Book was to be preserv'd in the side of the Ark of the Covenant, for the use of the Ages that follow'd after. Then, if ever, Inspiration was needful; and therefore

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Exod.
13. 14.

Hebr.
3. 2.

Deut. 31.
24, 25.

we may conclude it was not deny'd. Besides, even those Writings of *Moses* that are Historical, contain many Predictions that afterwards were fully accomplish'd, which plainly manifest him an inspir'd Person. And he had also peculiar Converse with God, and wrought many Miracles to manifest the Divinity of his Mission, and that he was under peculiar Divine Conduct: And if he was so in acting, 'tis but reasonable to conclude he should be so in Writing too, which was rather of more Moment to that Church which he was to be an Instrument in the Hand of God to settle and establish, than his Acting.

2. The *Prophets* among the *Jews* are generally own'd to have been inspir'd; and therefore the Succession of them which there was in that Church was the greater Favour. Their Predictions verifi'd by the Event, was an irrefragable Proof of their Inspiration. God only can certainly foretel future Contingencies, to happen many Ages after; and none can foretel such things without Inspiration. Now the *Prophets* among the *Jews* foretold many things of which no natural Cause could be given, which were fulfill'd long after they were dead and gone. Consulting the Writings of the *Prophets*, we shall find the exact Time and Date of things often fix'd long beforehand, where the Causes were remote, and out of view. Thus we find the Deliverance of the *Jews* out of their Captivity in *Babylon* foretold a hundred Years before. They have foretold the most arbitrary things that could be. The Prophet that prophesy'd against the Altar at *Bethel*, nam'd the Prince that should offer up the Priests upon it, 350 Years beforehand: *It shall* (says he) *be*

Isa. 44.
24, &c.

1 Kings
13. 2.

JOSIAH by Name. *Isaiab* also did the same as to the Deliverer of the *Jews* out of *Babylon*:
 Isa. 44. 28. He call'd him by his Name *Cyrus* long before he was born. They have foretold things in which many were concern'd, as well as things that related to particular Persons. Thus *Daniel* foretold that the *Affyrian* Monarchy that was so formidable should moulder away in a little time, and be succeeded by the *Persian*; on the Ruins of which the *Grecian* should within the compass of a few Years be erected; which *Grecian* Monarchy should be divided into several lesser Principalities, till the *Romans* came and swallow'd up all. *Alexander* the Great admir'd very much to find himself describ'd so exactly in this Set of Prophecies, as well he might. And 'tis indeed admirable, that so many things, that concern'd so many Nations and Countries, and so many several Ranks of Persons, that had different Views, and Aims, and Projects; and so many Motions of theirs in a continu'd Course for so many successive Ages, should be so exactly describ'd so long beforehand. This is utterly unaccountable, without Inspiration. But the main Evidence under this Head is this: That what we learn in the Gospel-History, concerning the Birth, Life, Death, and Burial of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and concerning his Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven; as also concerning the Fruits and Effects of his Death and Passion, the Calling of the *Gentiles*, the Casting off the *Jews*, and the Abrogation of their Ceremonial Worship, with many of the most remarkable Circumstances with which these things were attended, may be found most punctually foretold in the Writings of the Old Prophets. Among the rest, the
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Three and Fiftieth Chapter of *Isaiab*, is so particular with reference to the Death and Passion of our Saviour, that he seems an Historian rather than a Prophet. And indeed there were scarce any of the Prophets, but foretold something concerning him. That these Prophecies were not forg'd by the Christians, is plain, because they were in being, and read by many, long before the Birth of Christ; long before the Name of his Followers was ever heard of: And 'tis testified by the *Jews* their bitter Enemies, who at the same time as they are so, are extremely zealous for the Honour of their Prophets.

'Tis true some of these Prophets principally imploy'd themselves in moral Instructions, suiting the Circumstances of those they spake to, without any signal Predictions: But they generally introduce their Discourses with a *Thus saith the Lord*; and represent such Admonitions as coming directly from God: And if they did not come from him, they were gross Deceivers; which no Man that gives way to Thought can imagine, concerning Men whose visible Aim, and governing Design, was to promote universal Holiness, and deter from all manner of Iniquity. *They* herein, as well as ^{2 Pet. 1.} in their Predictions, *spake as they were moved by* ^{21.} *the Holy Ghost*. But their Inspiration will be distinctly consider'd in the next Discourse.

3. As to the rest of the *Holy Writings*, that were call'd by the *Jews* the *Chetubim*, the *Hagiographa*, they were also divinely inspir'd. *Daniel* was one of them, tho', as has been hinted, he ought to be rank'd with the Prophets: For he most exactly foretold the *Persian*, *Grecian*, and *Roman* Empire; the Tyranny, Wars,
Victo-

Victories, and Destruction of *Antiochus*, and the Number of the Weeks from the Return of the *Jews* into their own Land, to the Coming of the *Messiah*, and the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, &c. insomuch that *Porphyrus* positively affirm'd, that he did not foretel things future, but describe things past. He is also expressly call'd a *Prophet* by our Saviour; and therefore we may be assur'd he was divinely inspir'd. *David* was another of these Holy Writers, and an inspir'd Person. Our Grand Objector indeed says, that *it is not said in his History, that in his time he past for a Prophet*. Supposing it; I think it might yet satisfy us, that he is by the Apostle *Peter* represented as a *Prophet*, and as speaking *Prophetically*. And besides, tho' I don't remember he is expressly call'd a *Prophet* in the History of the Time he liv'd in, yet we have that which is equivalent to it, and as much to our Purpose: For he plainly asserts his own Inspiration, when stiling himself *the sweet Psalmist of Israel*, he says, *The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his Word was in my Tongue*. And what is this short of Inspiration? The Book of *Job* also was another of these Holy Writings: and it is recommended by the Apostle to the Use of Christians, to teach them Patience under the Hand of God; which it would hardly have been, if he had not look'd upon it as an inspir'd Writing. As for the Book of *Proverbs*, that is also often quoted in the New Testament; and that as profitable for *Exhortation*; nay as coming from God: For we are told *He saith* what is said there. And in short, it is said of all the Writings of the Old Testament in the general, that they were *written for our Instruction, that we through Patience and Comfort of the Scrip-*

Scrip-

Scriptures, might have Hope: And if so, they were, as the Text before us intimates, *given by Inspiration of God*, or else they could not afford us, either certain and satisfying Instruction, or solid Hope.

I shall only subjoin these three Reflections.

I. If the Old Testament was inspir'd as well as the New, we ought to be afraid of slighting it, which is the manner of some, who yet profess a great Veneration for the New Testament Writings. 'Tis true there is a peculiar Veneration due to the latter, which peculiarly contain the Religion we profess, and hope to be fav'd by: but we should have been at a woeful Loss, had the Writings of the Old Testament been either lost or kept from us. Had they been wanting, we should not have known what to have made of a great part of the New Testament which refers to the Old: We should not have been able to have understood a great many Doctrines, or to have taken in the Enforcements of many Duties that are prescrib'd. We should have wanted that great Confirmation to our Faith, which arises from comparing both the Testaments together. The Histories of the Old Testament are of mighty use to us, to make us acquainted with the Creation of the Universe, the Fall of Man, and the Rise of Evil, and God's Management of his Church all along after the Fall, till he brought his Son *Jesus* into the World to save us; with whose Appearance the New Testament begins. Particularly, were not the *Book of Psalms* preserv'd, we should want one of the greatest Helps to Piety, we either have or can have: Because we may there see how a pious Heart tends towards God in all Estates of Life, and

and how its Pulse beats under the many Alterations to which all are at present liable. Had the Old Testament been lost, we had lost the Benefit of the Graces of God's several Servants who liv'd in former Times; and the Help we may also receive by viewing their Failures and Weaknesses for our Warning. We had been depriv'd of the many affecting Instances both of Mercy and Judgment, that are there recorded: And in short, had gone without all that *Doctrine, Reproof, Correction, and Instruction*, which those Sacred Writings are *profitable for*.

Let us not then think it a small Favour, that God has preserv'd them for our Use. Let us repair to the Old Testament as well as the New, for Proof of Truth, and Evidence of Duty, Conviction of Sin, and Satisfaction of Conscience, under Doubts and Difficulties. Let us repair to it for every thing we expect from Writings that are divinely inspir'd; allowing only for a Difference as to the Degree of Clearness, between the Time when those Writings were drawn up, and the Time of the Gospel. Let's bow down and veil to the Authority of the Old Testament as well as of the New. Let us pay that Respect to it, which Divine Inspiration calls for: That is, let us freely submit to it, and give it a Decisive Voice. Without this we dishonour God, and manifest our not believing his having given forth these Writings in a way of Inspiration; in which however, both the *Jewish Church*, our Saviour and his Apostles, and the whole Christian Church agree. We forget that Declaration of the Apostle; *If we receive the Witness of Men, the Witness of God is greater.*

1 John 5.
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2. Let us count it our Glory that we have so firm a Foundation whereon to bottom our Religion, as the Inspir'd Writings of the Old Testament, and the New. This is the Great Happiness both of *Jews* and *Christians*, that their Religion is founded upon Revelation: This distinguishes their Religion, from all other Religions. We know and are assur'd that God hath spoken to us, and inculcated those Instructions which are of the greatest Importance: And our Faith and Worship is no other than such as the Writings which we are satisfy'd came forth from him, warrant and call for. In this we may find great Satisfaction, if we consider the vast Uncertainty of the rest of the World, who are at a woeful Loss about many of the most Important Matters; and what Fables they listen'd to, for want of certain Truth, on which they might depend. A *Plato* and other thoughtful Heathens might be convinc'd of the great need of Revelation, and declare that such and such things would remain incapable of being explain'd till one came that was Divinely inspir'd: But none could point to any such Writers, or give that Satisfaction in Divine things that might justly be expected from such as were so. This was the peculiar Happiness of the *Jews* for many Ages; but is at length become common to us Christians with them: Nay herein our Happiness and Privilege is much beyond theirs, that we not only have the same Inspir'd Writings as they, but the Addition of another Body of the same sort, which gives a great deal of New Light both as to Truth and Duty; makes dark things clear, and hard things easy; takes a
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wider Compass, and gives distincter Notices of the direct way to Happiness, and the terms on which we stand with an offended God; and at the same time brings *Life and Immortality to Light* in our view, to a Degree beyond what the World had ever known before.

Thirdly and Lastly, it highly concerns us, not only to be Thankful for so great a Treasure, but to see to it that we accordingly improve it. We have good Reason to bless the Lord that he in these Later Ages has restor'd those Writings to his Church, which he at first Inspir'd; and that he has by a remarkable *Reformation* again open'd the Mouths of his *Prophets* and *Apostles* in this Land, after they had been kept for a long time mute comparatively, by the Violence of the Emissaries of *Rome*. In these sacred Inspir'd Writings of the Old and New Testament is that Truth preserv'd pure and entire, which would have suffer'd infinite Alterations, if barely committed to the Hands of Men. 'Tis this *Scripture* that *was given by Inspiration of God*, that has in these Last Days purg'd the Christian Doctrine from gross Errors, and the Christian Worship from Idolatrous Superstitions: From hence have our Enemies of *Rome* been confounded; and therefore is it that they speak so ill of it. This Holy Scripture hath on a suddain in these Parts of the World corrected the gross Faults of many Ages: And if by its help Christianity is not even yet rais'd to its Primitive Beauty and Purity, and Perfection, 'tis only because we have not been so free and willing as we ought to have been, to follow it fully. Let us rejoice
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in the Goodness of God, in that we live in such a time as this. Let us see to it that we make a good Use of so inestimable a Gift, as he has bestow'd upon us. All the Acknowledgment he demands of us in return, is that we use it in all the several Respects in which he design'd it should be profitable to us. Let us then *search the Scriptures* daily, and meditate seriously upon them. This is the Manna that all *Israel* is to feed upon. Here we shall find what may nourish and strengthen us, whatever be our Condition, or Age, or Sex, or Circumstance. But let us remember that this Gift of God was not only design'd to improve our Understandings, but also to purify our Hearts and amend our Lives. And what can it avail us to read or hear the Scripture, and take in the Notion of it, if we neglect its Instructions in this respect? 'Tis a great Affront to it to put it under a Bushel, and hide it from Men, as is done in many Countries: But 'tis a much greater Affront, to live in the Light of it as if we were in the thickest Darkness. Hath God set and kept up such a Light among us, and shall we discredit it by delighting in Deeds of Darkness? Shall we be so loudly call'd by the Holy Scripture to repent of our Sins, and return to God, and live to him, and in the mean time wallow in Filth, and in such Impurities, as even the Heathens themselves would have been ashamed of? Never let it be said: For it would turn to a very sad Account another Day. Let us rather endeavour to renounce the Vices of the present Age, as well as its Errors: And let us lead Lives becoming the Profession we make

of being instructed by the Holy Scriptures, in all Piety and Purity, Justice and Honesty. This will be the only way to glorify our God and Saviour: and this way shall we shew that the inspir'd Writings which we have in our hands, have, as the Apostle intimates in the Verse before the Text, made us truly *Wise unto Salvation.*

S E R-

SERMON V.

2 P E T. I. 21.

For the Prophecy came not in Old time by the Will of Man ; but Holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

THERE is no Part of the sacred Scriptures more remarkable than the Prophetical: And yet it is not free of Difficulties, nor has it escap'd Aspersions. The Prophets of the Old Testament were great Eminence ; and their Gifts were design'd to be useful to the Church even to the end of time. Intending some special Remarks upon them, I'll take this Method.

*At Sal- ters-Hall
Tuesday
Lecture,
February
6. 1707.*

I'll consider the Names they were call'd by ; the Ends of their Mission to the Church of God ; the Influence of the Holy Ghost they were under in Prophefying ; and the Notification of this to others, so as to prevent Delusion. These things being well weigh'd will give sufficient Evidence that the highest Respect was due to them in the faithful Discharge of their Office, and is still due to their Writings. And afterwards I'll enquire how far Gospel-Ministers, who tho' destitute of their Inspiration, are call'd to the standing part of the Prophetick Office, may groundedly claim

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any thing of a like Respect: And how that Respect that is due to them, or rather to him that sends and employs them, is to be manifested.

I. I begin with considering the Names which Inspir'd Persons among the *Jews* were call'd by: Which were various.

1. They were call'd *Seers*. Thus we are told that before-time in *Israel*, when a Man went to enquire of God, thus he spake: Come

1 Sam. 9. 9. and let us go to the *Seer*: For he that was afterwards call'd a *Prophet*, was before-time call'd a *Seer*. Among others *Samuel* was thus stil'd:

v. 18.

2 Chron.

35. 15.

1 Chron.

29. 29.

And therefore we are told that *Saul* enquiring for him, ask'd where the *House of the Seer* was. *Jeduthun* also is call'd *the King's Seer*. And *Gad* is call'd *the Seer*. The Reason of the Name was because they saw many things which God did not think fit to discover to others: They saw things in a different Light from the rest of Mankind.

2. They were call'd *Prophets*: Which signifies Bringers and Interpreters of Divine Oracles: And this was their most common Name.

As for the Order of *Prophets* which *Father Simon* so zealously contends for, that were so stil'd because they kept the publick Registers, and wrote *Historical Annals*, from one Period of Time to another, they are not to be trac'd in Scripture; nor can we there find any Foot-steps of their Office. This Name was indeed given to all that apply'd themselves to sacred Studies, for the Service of the Church: But I can't discern that we have any Ground to carry it farther. Thus we are

1 Sam. 19.

26.

told that *Saul's Messengers saw the Company of the Prophets*

Prophets Propheſying, and Samuel *ſtanding as appointed over them*. They ſaw the *Prophetick College Exercifing their Gifts*, with *Samuel* acting the Part of a *President*. All belonging to the *College* are call'd *Prophets*, becauſe they were *Candidates for Propheſy*, tho' not yet *inſpir'd*. As for their *Exercifes*, they were rather *preparatory*, than properly *Prophetical*. We find alſo the ſame *Name* given to thoſe who *prais'd God in Hymns*, with *Muſical Inſtruments*, in a *ſacred Symphony*. Thus was *Saul* told, that *when he came to the Hill of God*, he ſhould meet a *Company of Prophets coming down from the High Place*, with a *Pſaltery*, and a *Tabret*, and a *Pipe*, and a *Harp* before them; and that they ſhould *propheſy*: i. e. ſhould chearfully ſing the *Praifes of God*. But theſe alſo I take to have been the *Sons of the Prophets*; ſuch as had a *Prophetical Education*: And the *Hill* call'd the *Hill of God*, I look upon as ſo ſtil'd, becauſe it was the *Place of their Reſidence and Worſhip*, who were *train'd up* in order to the ſpecial *Service of God*, in that *Age and Day*. However, in this all agree, that thoſe were moſt properly *Prophets* in the *Jewiſh Church*, who either *discover'd things that were ſecret*, or *foretold things future*, by *Divine Aſſiſtance*; or came with an *inſpir'd Meſſage from God*, either *warning of Duty or Danger*. The *Jewiſh Church* had many ſuch. Nay they had a *Promiſe of a conſtant Succeſſion of ſuch*, made them from the *fiſt*. *A Prophet*, ſays their *Law-giver Moſes*, *will the Lord God raiſe up unto thee, like unto me*. i. e. A ſucceſſion of *Prophets*, as well as the *Meſſiah* at the laſt, the great *Prophet of the Church*. He that conſiders the *Connexion*, will eaſily conclud with the

1 Sam. 10. 5.

Deut. 18. 15, 18.

* See his Orig. *Learned Stillingfleet*, * that that was its true Sense : Or had it not, it would be unaccountable, that *Moses* with the same Breath as he makes a Promise about a Prophet, should have given them Rules, by which, such as pretended to be Prophets among them, should be try'd.

3. They were also call'd *Men of God*. Thus *1 Sam. 2. 27.* we are told, that there came a *Man of God* to *Eli* the Priest ; *i. e.* a Prophet of the Lord, as is plain by the Message he brought, with reference to the Judgments that awaited his House and Family, as to which the Event was answerable to his Prediction. *Samuel* is call'd a *Man of God* : And he that cry'd against the Altar at *Bethel*, in the Days of *Feroboam*, is also stil'd a *Man of God*. All that was hereby signify'd, was that they came from God ; and that what they signify'd as from him, was really and truly by his Order and Commission.

1 Sam.
9. 6.
1 Kings
13. 1.

4. They are in the Text stil'd *Holy Men of God*. Which seems to point at that Maxim that was universally laid down by the *Hebrew* Doctors, that *the Spirit of Prophecy never rests upon any but a Holy Man*. And indeed, if we consult our own Reason, it will intimate to us, that it is not likely God would inspire Men, and send them forth as peculiarly Authoriz'd by himself to reveal his Secrets, who were themselves vicious, and of unhallow'd Lives. And yet I'm rather for confining this Character to the Penmen of Sacred Scripture, than for extending it to all that were favoured with the Gift of Prophecy. *St. Peter* is here speaking of Scripture-Prophecy, which he represents as *more sure* even than a Voice from Heaven, and he ascribes it to Holy Men speaking and acting

acting as God inspir'd them. Nor is there any one whose Writings are esteem'd Divinely inspir'd for the use of the Church in all Ages, whose Holiness can by any Man be call'd in question, excepting *Solomon*: And we have probable Reasons that may justly incline us to believe that he was a true Penitent after his Fall; and that he left the Book of *Ecclesiastes* behind him as a Monument of his Repentance. Nor can it seem at all credible to one that weighs Matters considerately, that his Writings should be drawn up by Divine Appointment for the Use of the Church in all Ages, and he be destitute of Divine Grace: Or that he should have such an Honour conferr'd upon him, as that the Church should be oblig'd from one Period to another, to lay Strefs on his Authority, and yet he leave the World in such a State as to be doom'd to Eternal Misery. But tho' all our sacred Penmen were *Holy Men of God*, yet it does not therefore follow that all must be Holy, that had any Degree of the Gift of Prophecy. We are told, *Caiaphas* had a touch of it; and yet we have no reason for such an Apprehension in his Case. *Balaam* also prophesy'd; and yet we are told that he *lov'd the Wages of Unrighteousness*. But we may observe in the Case of both of them, that there was rather a Prophetical Flash, than any considerable Influence of the Spirit of Prophecy; which could not be said to rest upon them, tho' it transiently acted them. They were *Holy Men of God*, that were made use of to draw up the Scriptures; and they spake not of themselves, but as they were mov'd by the *Holy Ghost*.

John 11.
51.

2 Pet.
2. 15.

II. Let us consider the Ends of their Mission to the Church of God, which were various. 'Tis natural to Man to desire to know Futurities. That Desire, if it be not check'd and regulated, and kept under Conduct, draws into a multitude of the most foolish Extravagancies. Of this we have plain Evidence in the Pagan World. The poor Heathens were mighty desirous to know Futurities; and they would conjecture at them from the flight, or the eating of Birds, from the Entrails of Beasts, from their foolish and ridiculous Dreams, or any little Fancies that came in their way, rather than they would be content so much as to seem to remain wholly ignorant of them. 'Tis almost incredible to think how wretchedly many poor blinded Souls were deluded in such ways as these. God aim'd at preserving his People from Follies of this Nature, to which their Neighbours round about them were strangely addicted: And in order to it, he gave them Prophets of their own, to foretell them what would come to pass: And this reason of that Gift of God to the Jewish Church is plainly pointed at by Moses from the first. But tho' this be not wholly to be excluded, yet, without doubt, God had other Reasons, and those more weighty and momentous, for the raising up, and commissionating such an Order of Men as the *Prophets* were. That we may the better discover them, let us consider wherein they differ'd from the *Priests* among the *Israelites*; how subservient their Mission was to the Revelation of the *Messiah*; and what a Light they gave into the Methods of Divine Providence, not only in the times in which they parti-

Deut. 18.
from v. 9.
to 16.

particularly liv'd, but also in all Ages of the World.

1. Then let us consider wherein the *Prophets* differ'd from the *Priests*, among the *Israelites*. The *Levitical Priests* were not only to offer Sacrifice, and minister in the Temple, but also to instruct the People in their Duty; and they were accordingly, *to seek the Law at their Mouths*. That they were to understand the Law, and instruct others in the meaning of it, and teach them the Will of the Law-giver, is plain out of the Law it self. It is bound upon them by a perpetual Statute, that they should *teach the Children of Israel all the Statutes which the Lord had spoken unto them by the hand of Moses*: And this Charge is oft repeated. That they might be the better able to instruct the People, and that universally, God wisely so ordered Matters, that the *Cities* of the *Levites* should be dispers'd up and down in all the several Tribes of *Israel*. Being thus dispos'd of, and thus oblig'd to teach the People all God's Statutes, it was, without doubt, their Duty to instruct them in the Moral as well as the Ceremonial part of the Law of *Moses*. But by degrees they degenerated, running all upon Ceremonials; overlooking the Moral part of Duty, and neglecting the Spiritual part of Divine Worship. Of this the *Prophets*, according to their Commission, oft complain'd, and *Malachi* in particular brings in this heavy Charge against the Body of the Priests on that Account; *Ye have corrupted the Covenant of Levi; saith the Lord of Hosts*. To remedy their Miscarriage, God rais'd up a set of *Prophets*, who were more fully to instruct the People in the whole compass of their

Duty, to reprove them for their Sins, to allure them to Obedience by Promises of Mercies from God; and to denounce his Wrath against them, upon their Impenitence and Disobedience. They were to revive the more Spiritual part of Religion among that People, and reinforce both the Promises and the Threatnings of the Law of *Moses*, as far as concern'd their Morals, which in God's Account were ever vastly more weighty than Ceremonials. The *Prophets* therefore in this Respect were rais'd up to supply the Defects of the *Priests*. They were extraordinary Officers, sent to remedy the Mischief arising from the Neglects and Miscarriages of the ordinary Officers in that Church. They were a sort of supernumerary Instructors; without whom nevertheless the *Jewish Church* had degenerated an hundred fold more than it did. And while the *Priests* generally ran upon the Niceties and Punctilio's of the Ceremonial Law, which were destitute of Intrinsic Goodness, they, with the utmost Earnestness, endeavour'd in the Name of God to persuade Men to break off their Sins by Repentance; to cease to do Evil, and learn to do well; and to be found in the conscientious Practice of Moral Duty.

2. Their Mission was also very subservient to the Revelation of the *Messiah*. He is the Center of all Divine Revelations. In him *all Nations* were to be *Blessed*: And nothing could be of greater moment, either to God's Antient People, or to any that he might take into the same Relation to himself in after-times, than to receive, own, and embrace this *Messiah*. Of him therefore we are told, *God spake by*
the

the Mouth of his Holy Prophets, ever since the World Luk. 1.
began. To give Men notice of the time of his ^{70.}
 coming, the Circumstances of his Appearance,
 the Characters of his Person, the Treatment
 he should meet with, his Sufferings and Death,
 his Resurrection and Ascension; the Nature,
 the Glory, and the Extent of his Kingdom,
 and the Success of his Gospel: to give notice
 of these things was the great End of raising
 up of Prophets, and inspiring them; that so
 the Minds of Men might be the better pre-
 par'd to receive him, when they found a
 number of Predictions most exactly accom-
 plish'd in him: And it was at the same time
 thus order'd, that the Faith of those who should
 live in after-Ages, and whose Lot should be
 cast in the times that should run out after his
 Ascension to Heaven, might be the more fully
 confirm'd, when upon comparing the Writings
 of *Prophets, Apostles, and Evangelists* together,
 they found so exact a Harmony and Corre-
 spondence. This way was effectual Provision
 made that the *Church might be built upon the Foun-* Eph. 2. 20.
ation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ
himself being the chief Corner-Stone. Therefore
 were the *Prophets* rais'd up of old, that they
 might give a distinct Account of the *Messiah*,
 whose Undertaking and Performance may be
 said to have been the Master-piece of God's
 Providence, and the Substance, of which the
 whole *Jewish* Oeconomy was a Shadow, and
 the full Accomplishment of its great Design
 and Drift: After which it could no more
 have place; but must of course give way to
 a nobler and a brighter Dispensation, more for
 the Glory of God, and more for the Benefit
 and Comfort, and Satisfaction of his Servants.
 And then, 3. Ano-

3. Another End of God's sending his anti-ent inspir'd *Prophets*, was to give a peculiar Light into the Methods of his Providence; and that not only in the times in which they particularly liv'd, but also in all Ages of the World. It has been a great Question with a considerable part of Mankind, whether there was a Providence or no: But they that have most freely acknowledg'd one, have own'd its Proceedings to be mysterious. They found a thousand things in the Administration of it that puzzled and confounded them; a thousand unsurmountable Difficulties. Nay indeed, they were embarrass'd, when they set themselves intently to consider even its most common Methods. They could not tell how to reconcile them to fix'd Rules, so as to give any tolerable Account of them. Here the *Prophets* were design'd to give great Relief, not only to their immediate Cotemporaries, but to all into whose Hands their Writings should fall, if they would but study them seriously. 'Tis true, after all the Light their Writings afford us, or any other Writings that were inspir'd, many of the Methods of Divine Providence are still mysterious: And will be so till we have shot the Gulph, and are got within the Vail; when things, about which we are now in the dark, will be plainly unfolded. But still the Church has by means of the *Prophets* of the Lord, been bless'd with a mighty Light in many things relating to the procedures of Providence, very much to its Advantage. I'll only instance in God's Dealings with respect to Communities, as to which the People of God had been at a woeful Loss, had it not been for the Light that was given by the

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the antient Prophets, which is very considerable.

Consulting them soberly, we find both the Wisdom and the Justice of Divine Providence, in its Conduct towards Kingdoms and Nations, Communities and large Bodies of Men, fully clear'd. By them are we assur'd of the tendency of strict Piety and Vertue to promote the publick Prosperity ; both in its own Nature, and by the Divine Blessing superadded : And of the ill Consequences that attend Immorality and Vice when it grows predominant. By them are we assur'd, not only that 'tis entirely in God's Power, and at his Disposal, to make a People either happy or miserable ; but that they must expect to be either the one or the other, according as they either observe or neglect his Commandments. By them are we inform'd, that no Blessings are so assur'd but they may be forfeited by the Sins of a People ; no threatned Evils so impendent, but they may be averted by a general Repentance. And if we considerately survey their Writings, in which they promise Happiness to the *Jews*, or any of their Neighbours, or denounce Judgments against the one or the other, we may be able to extract such Measures as may help us to judge, what a People that are in such or such a Case may most reasonably expect. And on this Account the application of Passages in the Prophetick Writings to after-times is strictly justifiable, as far as by a distinct weighing of Circumstances it can be made appear, that the Cases of those concern'd agree : And they that have taken the Liberty to censure such a sort of Application, have proclaim'd themselves unreasonable.

sonable. These Ends for which the Prophets were rais'd up, and sent by God to his Church, deserve our serious Consideration ; and could not have been satisfactorily answer'd, if they had not been divinely inspir'd.

III. Let us then in the next Place proceed distinctly to consider the Influence of the Holy Ghost, which they were under in Prophefying. As to this, the Apostle is in this Text very plain and positive. He says, *No Prophefisy of the Scripture is of any private Interpretation.* Those Holy Men that spake Prophetically, did not speak at the suggestion of their own private Spirits. *For the Prophefisy came not in old time (or at any time, as 'tis in the Margin) by the Will of Man :* It neither came to them of its own accord ; nor did their Prophefying depend upon their own Pleasure ; nor was it at their disposal when, or how ; about what, or in what manner they should make Discoveries in Divine things, *but they spake as they were mov'd by the Holy Ghost :* And as they spake, so also they wrote under Divine Influence and Direction ; for it was of the *Prophefisy of Scripture*, or written Prophefisy he was speaking ; and therefore we have the more reason to *take heed to their sure Word of Prophefisy*, according to his Admonition. And here let us consider, (1.) The Inspiration of the Holy-Ghost, which the Prophets were under in general. (2.) The Diversity of that Inspiration, as to the Manner of it. (3.) Their speaking as he mov'd them. And yet (4.) Their using their own Language under his Influence and Motion.

1. Let us consider the Inspiration of the Holy-Ghost, which the *Prophets* were under in the general. They were then inspir'd when their Minds were fill'd with an Heavenly Light, that discover'd to them things secret, or things future ; or the Grounds upon which general Principles of Truth and Duty might be certainly apply'd to particular Cases, in their distinguishing Circumstances. This Prophetical Light is not properly immanent in the Understanding, nor does it reside there as a Habit, but 'tis a transient thing. As a Beam of the Sun in the Air, passes through, and does not abide ; tho' that Perspicuity which is occasion'd by the Reflection of the united Rays of the Sun, is a thing that does continue in the Air afterwards : So the Minds of the *Prophets* were suddenly fill'd with a bright Light, that discover'd such things to them as it was necessary for them to know ; and tho' the Coruscation was transient, yet the Perspicuity of the things discover'd by it remain'd afterwards. This Illumination depended wholly on God's good Pleasure. 'Twas afforded no longer or farther than he saw fit. Tho' *Elisha* was a Prophet, yet when the *Shunamite* lay at his Feet, he freely own'd that God had *hid from him the Cause* of her Sorrow. Nay ^{2 Kings} a Man may be enlighten'd by the Spirit of Prophecy as to the Substance of a thing, and yet not be acquainted with many Circumstances of it. Thus *Isaac* gave a Prophetick Blessing to his Son, and was therein inspir'd, and yet mistook as to the Person to whom he apply'd it ; wherein the matter was over-rul'd without his Privity. So *Samuel*, when he was sent to anoint a King in the room of *Saul*, tho' he was

4. 27.

was a *Prophet* of the Lord, was mistaken in the Person, till the Prophetick Spirit pointed him to him. Inspiration therefore is confin'd to the Purposes which God has to serve by it. On which account we need not wonder that some *Prophets*, tho' inspir'd, yet did not understand distinctly their own Predictions. Indeed it was not for God's Purpose in those Cases that they should understand distinctly. He reveal'd himself to them, not so much for themselves, as for others. Much less have we any reason to wonder that some inspir'd Persons should not understand the Predictions of other inspir'd Persons, but search diligently into their Meaning. But then we may observe, that whenever Persons were truly inspir'd of God, their Minds were so enlighten'd, and their Wills so affected, that they had a satisfying Assurance that the Revelation came from God. And tho' it's hard to give a particular Account of this, yet we that know a Friend, and can be able with certainty to say, 'tis such a Friend that speaks to us, and no other, and that with such an Assurance as leaves no room for any possibility of a Mistake: We that can be certain upon this Head every Day, may, I think, without difficulty allow, that as good an Assurance is possible in the other Case, tho' we can't distinctly explain it. For what should hinder it from being possible to be as fully assur'd that God speaks to us, as that such a particular Creature does so?

2. Let us consider the diversity of Prophetick Inspiration as to the manner of it. This is comprehensively signify'd by that Expressi-
 Heb. 1. 1. on of the Apostle; that God at *sundry times*,
 and

1 Pet. 1.
 10, 11.
 Dan. 9. 2.

and in *divers manners*, spake unto the Fathers by the Prophets. All the Prophets of the Old Testament were Divinely inspir'd: But not all in the same way: For God communicated himself to some in one manner, and to others in another. To some by *Visions* in the Day; to others by *Dreams* in the Night: To some by a *Voice* from Heaven; to the others by the *secret suggestion* of his Spirit. Some of them were inform'd by Representations to their outward Senses while they were waking; their Understandings being in the mean time enlightned as to the true intent and meaning of such Representations. Others had Notices of Divine things convey'd to their inward Senses in Dreams or Extasies, their Minds being in the mean time possess'd with a right Sense of the meaning of what was in such Cases transacted upon the Stage of their Fancies: Whereas the Holy Spirit came upon others with yet more noble Illapses, informing them directly by a powerful Penetration with a Divine Light into their Intellectual Spirits. *Moses* is reckon'd to have had a higher Illumination; a more noble sort of Inspiration than the rest of the Prophets. We are told *there arose not a Prophet* Deut. 34. *in Israel like unto Moses whom the Lord knew* 10. *Face to Face*. This points to the Clearness and Evidence of the Intellectual Light wherein God appear'd to *Moses*; which was greater than any of the other Prophets were favour'd with. His Privilege lay here: He went to God whenever he desir'd, and heard him answering him, as with an Humane Voice, from out of the Cloudy Pillar: While to others God reveal'd his Mind and Will, either in Dreams, or Visions, or Raptures; which were much

much less clear and more disturbing Methods, than that in which he was pleas'd to communicate with his Servant *Moses*.

It deserves a particular Remark that the Imagination of many of the Antient *Prophets* was mostly impress'd ; and that carry'd them out to dark Parables, Similitudes and Allegories, as may be seen in the Prophecies of *Ezekiel* and *Daniel*, and *Zachary*, and others.

Ezek. 20. Of *Ezekiel* 'tis said in particular, *Doth he not*
49. *Speak Parables ?* Which yet cannot well be

wondred at by one that considers the Genius of that People he had to do with. We may also farther note ; that when the Prophetick Spirit acted upon the Stage of the Imagination chiefly, there were often great Conster-nations and Tremblings, Pannick Fears, and Bodily Languishings, which were produc'd by the Vehemence of the Impressions made in such a way. Hence *Daniel* complains upon

Dan. 10. 8. Occasion of his Prophetick Visions, that *there*
was no strength left in him ; that his Comeliness
was turn'd into Corruption, and he retain'd no
strength : That when he heard the Voice he was in a
deep sleep, and his Face towards the Ground : That
his Sorrows were turn'd upon him, and no Breath
was left in him. And it was the like with some others also. But this may still be observ'd, that in what manner soever the Spirit reveal'd himself to them, they were assuredly certain by something in the manner of its coming that the Revelation was from God. But,

3. The Prophets being inspir'd, some after one manner, and others after another, *spake*

Ezek. 1. 3. *as the Holy Ghost mov'd them.* Hence it is said, *the Word was to such a Prophet, or the Word*
came to him. It came to be reveal'd to others.

For

For we must distinguish between Prophetical Inspiration, and the Impulse, Charge or Order, or superadded Inclination to communicate what they were inspir'd with to others. The *Prophets* over and above their Inspiration, were under a Divine Impulse to make known to others, the Oracles they had receiv'd, either by Word or Writing, or both: And under such a Conduct therein as kept them from Mistake and Error. And when the Word came to them to be communicated, it often came with such a Majesty as fill'd them with Dread and Reverence. One of them says, *when I heard*, Habak. 3. *my Belly trembled: My Lips quiver'd at the Voice: 16. Rottenness enter'd into my Bones, and I trembled in my self.* And when the Word thus came to the *Prophets*, it was as a Fire within them, it must be deliver'd to those to whom God sent them. Therefore another of them expresses himself thus: *I said I will not make mention of* Jer. 20.9. *him, nor speak any more in his Name. But his Word was in my Heart as a burning Fire, shut up in my Bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.* The Prophet *Jonah* found his Attempt to hide the Word vain and fruitless; and had like to have paid dear for it.

But that we may not here run into a Mistake, I must mind you, that we must distinguish between what the *Prophets* report to us, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost to communicate to others their Visions and Revelations; and the Process of the Influence of the Holy Spirit upon them, as he was revealing himself to them. Their Prophecies which they were mov'd by the Holy Ghost to draw up, are all of them exactly true, and may be certainly depended on; but while they were

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under

under a prophetick Transport, things were acted on the Stage of their Fancies or Imaginations, and not in reality.

* *The Reader may here consult Mr. Smith's elaborate Discourse concerning Prophecy. Chap. 6. 'Tis the sixth of his select Discourses.*

* Their travelling from Place to Place, their propounding Questions, and receiving Answers, their

Motions that appear to us so odd and strange, were imaginary; tho' they in mentioning them, give us but a fair and just Representation of what appear'd to them in their Visions. Upon this Consideration, there is no reason we should at all be startled to hear of

Hol. 1. *Hosea's* marrying a common Harlot, or having Children of Whoredoms; or at *Jeremy's* getting a Linen Girdle, and putting it upon his Loins, and travelling with it to the River *Euphrates*, to hide it in the hole of a Rock; and afterwards going thither again to take it out: Or at *Isaiab's* walking naked and bare-foot; or at *Ezekiel's* laying Siege to a Tile, and baking his Bread with Man's Dung; or any thing of the like Nature we meet with in the Writings of the Prophets. They that take a liberty to ridicule such things as these, plainly shew themselves ignorant of the nature of their Writings; in which they give us a particular Account of their *Visions*, and what pass'd in them upon the stage of their Fancies, without any design to induce us to believe, that any such things as they relate, pass in reality. And in giving us such an Account of their Visions, they acted as they were *moved by the Holy Ghost*; of which they had as good Evidence, as they had that those Visions were from him. But then we may note farther,

4. That

4. That the *Prophets* us'd their own Language, tho' in Writing they acted under the Influence, and at the Motion of the Holy Ghost. Without allowing for this, I can't see how we can avoid Confusion. *Holy Men of God spake indeed as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, but yet they did it in their own Language, and in that variety of Stile and Phraseology, as manifests that their own proper Genius had its scope, tho' under Divine Conduct. St. *Ferom** observes, that the Expressions of *Isaiab* were clean and great, because he was a Man of Quality; whereas *Jeremiab* having been bred up in the Country among Peasants, had always a low and rude Stile, and yet the same Spirit of Prophecy acted in both. *Amos* also makes use of Comparisons taken from Lions, and other Creatures, he having been bred up in the Forests among those sorts of Beasts. And every Prophet has a different Stile and Language, agreeable to his Birth, Education, Disposition, Converse, and manner of Life; and yet all faithfully represent the Mind and Sense of the Holy Ghost, and acted under his Motion: For he superintended in their copying forth his Truth, and the Visions in which it was communicated; and that in such a manner, as not to suffer them in any thing either to misrepresent, or fall short of his Meaning.

* Hieronym.
Pref. in
Isaiam &
Jerem.

IV. It now remains to consider how the prophetick Mission was so notified to others, as to give an assuring Certainty concerning it, and prevent Delusion. And here we may observe, that if a *Prophet* that spake in the Name of God, was in the *Jewish Church* pub-

lickly confirm'd in that Office, he was to be heard without Demurr : But if a new Prophet arose, not publickly own'd, he was to be examin'd before he was acknowledg'd to be a Prophet. The Marks of a Prophet were these.

1. A Sign; that is, a Miracle wrought by him, or about him. Thus the Man of God who prophesied against the Altar at *Bethel*, gave this as a Sign to confirm the People, in believing his Divine Mission, that the Altar should be immediately rent, and it was so: And at the same time the Hand of King *Feroboam*, that was stretch'd forth against him, wither'd on a sudden, and was as suddenly restor'd upon the Prayer of the Prophet.

1 Kings
13. 5, &c.

Deut.
18. 22.

2. Another Mark, or confirming Evidence of the Mission of a Prophet, was the fulfilling of something which he had foretold, which could not fall under meer humane Cognizance. *Moses*, when he deliver'd the Law to the *Jews*, gave them this Rule: *When a Prophet speaketh in the Name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the Prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: Thou shalt not be afraid of him.* Which Negative, plainly imply'd and carry'd in it this positive Rule; that if his Prediction did come to pass, he was to be esteem'd and respected as a Prophet of the Lord.

3. True Doctrine was always to be joyn'd as a Proof of a prophetick Mission. *Moses* thus expresses himself upon this Head: *If there arise among you a Prophet, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or the Wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee; saying, Let us go after other Gods, and let us serve them; thou*

Deut. 13.
1, 2.

thou shalt not hearken unto the Words of that Prophet: For the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your Heart, and with all your Soul. No Prophet was to be heard, that laid a Temptation before them to Idolatry.

4. There was often also added, the Authority of an antient and known Prophet, who recommended another as a Prophet, by his Testimony. Thus *Moses* recommended *Joshua*, *Elijah* recommended *Elisha*, and *John* the Baptist, our Saviour *Christ*; and this way was the regard of the People warranted and authoriz'd.

If these Marks or Evidences were wanting, a peculiar Sanctity was something regarded among God's antient People, but not reckon'd a sufficient Preservative from Delusion. However, they did not in the *Jewish* Church immediately and rashly condemn all Pretenders, but if there was Holiness of Life, and no danger to Religion, from the things that it was pretended came from Heaven, they examin'd, made their Remarks, and waited the Event.

But as to the Penmen of the prophetick Part of Scripture, we have all the Evidence we can desire of their being true Prophets, both on the account of the many and signal Miracles they wrought; the Answerableness of Events to their Predictions; the evident Divinity of the Doctrine they deliver; and the mutual Confirmation they give to each other; and our Saviour to them all: So that without the least danger of being impos'd on, we may very safely say with the Apostle in the Text, of these *Holy Men of God*, that they *spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*.

Nor is it to be doubted but God can at any time raise up Persons to speak by Inspiration, when he has suitable Purposes to be that way serv'd, that could not be serv'd so effectually by his ordinary Ways and Methods: And yet we had need be exceeding cautious how we encourage any Pretences to a prophetick Spirit in our times. Not that we are oblig'd to assert that the Spirit of Prophecy is so withdrawn as that it can never be restor'd again, or to be positive that it never will; that were to run into another Extreme: And yet it highly becomes all that are concern'd for the credit of Religion, to be very wary how they encourage any that pretend to a Prophetick Gift in such Pretences. Religion has been oft expos'd by Blunders upon this Head, and that I doubt by some that have meant well too. It was so in the Primitive times, as to the *Sibylls*. Several of the Fathers would have it that they were inspir'd: But what did they get by it but Contempt? *Montanus* afterwards had his Prophetesses, by whom as great a Man as *Tertullian* was deluded through overmuch Credulity. And where did it issue but in a variety of Scandals? To which the Bishops of *Asia* put a stop, by meeting together, and discovering the Falseness of his, and his Followers Pretences to Prophecy. *

In the Ages that follow'd, many that were of a Monastick Genius, set up for Prophets: But trace them, and you'll find them the most ridiculous Visionaries that ever liv'd. The *Romanists* have their Modern Prophets and Prophetesses, such as St. *Francis* of *Affize*, St. *Catherine* of *Siena*, St. *Bridget*, and St. *Xavier*: And if we'll believe them, they have some
of

* Euseb.
H.E.L. 5.
c. 16. 19.

of them outdone the Antient Prophets. But let not us Protestants affect herein to be like them. Let us adhere to our *sure Word of Prophecy*, where we are safe; and conclude, that if God ever thinks fit to revive a real Spirit, or Gift of Prophecy, he will attend it with such an Evidence as shall be sufficient to convince and satisfy all candid and rational Enquirers, and secure Religion from any danger by it.

But tho' we at this Day may safely say with the Church of God heretofore, there is *no more any inspir'd Prophet, neither is there a-^{Psal. 74.9.}* mong us any that knoweth how long: Tho' there is not any among us that can by Inspiration foretel the issue of the Calamities of the Church, or prove by Miracles that they have a Commission from Heaven to regulate spreading Disorders, yet *Prophets* of another sort, that is, Interpreters and Publishers of the Reveal'd Mind and Will of God we have in abundance; and we ought to esteem it a very valuable Mercy that we have so. I may safely call them *Prophets*, since our Blessed Saviour and his Disciples have represented them as such. As there was a Set of *Prophets* under the Old Testament, that deriv'd from *Moses*; so is there a Set of *Prophets* also under the New Testament, that derive from Christ and his Apostles; and that distinct from those who preach'd by Inspiration, which was the Case of some that are mention'd in the Gospel-History. The Apostles of our Lord, by Fasting and Prayer, and Imposition of Hands, ordain'd the Ministers of the New Testament, as standing Gospel-*Prophets*, and empower'd them and their Successors to preach and unfold the Doctrine of Christ and Salvation.

The antient *Prophets* were by Office, Preachers of Righteousness; and it was one great part of their Work, to instruct Men in their Duty; and in the very same Sense we find the word *Prophet* and *Prophecy* us'd in the New Testament, in the places cited in the Margin. Gospel-Ministers are by Office *Men of God*, as well as the former Prophets. They have that Name given them by St. Paul. And I hope many of them are *Holy Men of God* too. They are not indeed inspir'd as the antient Prophets, and yet they have the Presence of their Saviour promis'd them *always, even to the end of the World*: They have Divine Assistance promis'd them in their Ministrations. We have also *Schools of the Prophets*, in which Persons are now train'd up for future Service in the Ministry, as it was in the antient Church. And the Case of many such *Prophets*, and Sons of the *Prophets* in this Kingdom at this Day, calls for the serious Consideration of such as are heartily concern'd for the Honour of God, and the spreading of serious Religion among us.

Far be it from us, who desire not to *Lord it over God's Heritage*, but own our selves *your Servants for Jesus sake*, to claim a like degree of Respect with the antient *Prophets*: And yet it can't seem strange to any that take their Measures from the Word of God, if we modestly plead for what our Blessed Lord that employs us, has made our due. And that is,

1. A Reception of us, and listning to us in all the Messages which we can prove to you we bring from God. 'Tis not an indifferent thing (as some seem to apprehend it,) whether
you

you receive or reject us, comply with, or disregard us, when we bring our Credentials with us, and act according to them. 'Tis as much as the Favour of their Saviour is worth, for any to contemn us in such a Case. *He that receiveth you,* says our Lord to his Disciples, *receiveth me.* Tho' he spake it directly to his Apostles, yet 'tis as true in the Case of all faithful Gospel-Ministers, while they act according to their Commission. Receive us, and heartily embrace the Doctrine we bring with us, and prove to you from the Scriptures, and you receive Christ: Reject us, and you'll find in the issue you rejected him.

2. We think also we may justly expect all the Encouragement you can give us, in serving the Interest of our Lord Jesus. It was a great Crime to discourage, sadden, and hinder God's antient *Prophets*, and any way obstruct their Usefulness: Neither has it a better Aspect to discourage faithful Gospel-Ministers in the Service of their Master. It was God's Saying of Old; *Touch not mine Anointed, and do my Prophets no harm.* In which Charge there was more meant than express'd. It was not barely intended that Men should not hurt them, but that they should honour them while they faithfully discharg'd their Office; and give them all possible Encouragement in their Work, and do all that they were able to promote their Success. The like our Lord expects from his Followers, with reference to all faithful Ministers, whose Cause he peculiarly espouses. He is therefore represented as *holding the seven Stars in his own Right Hand.* He hath put a great Dignity upon Gospel-Ministers, which is intimated by their being call'd

Mat. 10.

4^o.

1 Chron.

16. 22.

Rev. 2: 1.

call'd *Stars*: And he has a special Favour for them; he *holds them in his own Right Hand*. They therefore that duly respect him, will respect them for their Work sake: And any hindrance in it he'll interpret as a Disrespect to himself. Nay, Ministers are said to be *the Glory of Christ*. They are by Office peculiarly concern'd for his Honour in the World, and in the Church, and therefore he is peculiarly concern'd in their Treatment while they are doing of his Work.

2 Cor. 8.
23.

3. Another thing due to us, is a comfortable Subsistence in our Work and Service. God made ample Provision for the *Priests* under the Law. I can't indeed say he did the like for the *Prophets*, who were left to receive what they needed, from the Benevolence of those whom they apply'd to. But as to *Gospel-Prophets*, our Lord is far from leaving the matter indifferent: He hath made it the plain Duty of the People to minister Carnal things, to those from whom they reap Spiritual things: And it is his fix'd Ordination, that *they that preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel*. And Men may as well call any other Duty into Question as this.

1 Cor. 9.
14.

But I am not supposing you insensible of your Duty in this respect; for to the Honour of this my Native City, I can chearfully declare, that I question whether there is a Place on Earth, where the Ministers of Christ are more readily receiv'd, more respected and encourag'd in their Work, and more liberally maintain'd than in this City of LONDON. But tho' I perswade my self you are not herein backward in your Duty to those that labour amongst you, yet give me leave to say,
you

you are not to stop there, but would do well to take into your compassionate Consideration, the Case of many Christian Flocks in several Parts of this Land, that must remain unfed, of many faithful *Prophets* of the Lord that would be unable to go on in their Work, and of many *Sons of the Prophets* that would be incapable of a suitable Education, if not assisted from this City; and were there not from hence Year after Year, many an acceptable Offering of this kind presented. This is a Noble and Divine sort of Charity: And the Honour of God, and the Good of Souls is nearly concern'd in it.

For my part, I should heartily rejoice if those in the *Establish'd Church* were better provided for than they are in many Parts: That so none from those Meannesses to which their Poverty must in some Places expose them, might be tempted to despise the Offerings of the Lord: And it must be own'd truly Noble in our present *Gracious Sovereign* to contribute so liberally to so good a Work. But as for us who are out of the *Establishment*, if those that we labour amongst are not able to maintain us, and others that are able will not help, we must necessarily quit our Work, and turn another way. For 'tis hard to expect Men should Preach and Starve.

This Matter, I conceive, is easily brought to a short Issue, without needing many Words. Either the Labours of those Ministers that are out of the *Establishment*, are needful and useful, or they are not. As for those that think they are not, nothing can justly be expected from them: But as for those that think they are so, it may well be expected that they

they should be Liberal; and that in proportion to their Conviction that they are so. I freely appeal to you, about the Need and the Usefulness of their Labours. Are there not many more Souls in most Market Towns, and indeed in all Parts and Quarters, than the Publick Ministry is able to reach to? Is not this Notorious? For can one Minister suffice for many Thousands? And are there not many Souls from Year to Year sent to Heaven from under the Labours of those that are out of the *Establishment* as well as in it? And may it not be so still? Can you be content that such Souls should perish and be lost for want of the Help that in this way is ministered unto them? Can you imagine that Men that have but twelve, fifteen, eighteen, twenty, or five and twenty Pounds a Year, and Families to maintain, which it's well known is the Case of several, should be able to subsist if not assisted? Or can we have a succession of Ministers among us without help? The thing is impossible. Take notice then, God in this way tries you whether or no you have a real Concern for his Interest and Gospel. Is he not easily able to disappoint or cut you short in what you withhold from him, that he might expect from you, upon such an Occasion? And if by giving freely you lend to God, is he not easily able to make you an amends? Can you fear loosing by what you give to him with a sincere Heart, thro' the Hands of his poor Ministers? Did the Widow of *Sareptah* loose any thing by entertaining the Prophet *Elijah*? Was not her *Handful of Meal in the Barrel*, and her *little Oil in the Cruse* wonderfully recruited?—Did it not hold

out beyond what it would have done if the Prophet had had no Assistance from her? And was not her Son also rais'd from the Dead at v. 22. the Prayer of that Man of God? Or did the *Shunamite* loose any thing by entertaining the ^{2 Kings 4.} Prophet *Elisha*? Had she not a Son given her, and was he not afterwards restor'd to Life upon his Prayers? And can we think that they shall be Loosers, that with an upright Heart contribute to the Relief of Faithful Gospel-Prophets that need their Assistance? No, No: So far are they from being Loosers that they are Gainers, and they have our Saviour's own Word for it, who has expressly declar'd, that, *he that receiveth a Prophet, in the Name of a Pro-* ^{Mat. 10.} *phet, shall receive a Prophets Reward.* A Pro- ^{41.}phet's Reward is greater than that of another Man. By assisting the Faithful Ministers of Christ in their Service, you'll have a hand in their Service; and you shall have a Reward accordingly. You may have a considerable *present Reward* in return to their Prayers: And you shall have a considerable *future Reward* in return to your Charity. Our Lord will take it as done to himself: Which is Honour sufficient to those that know how to value the Favour of Christ.

What shall I say farther? Hear *St. Paul* speaking. He tells you, *he that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; while he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.* ^{2 Cor. 9. 6.} Sow therefore in the same proportion as you would desire to reap: And let all without Exception sow that desire and expect to reap. Let not the poorest think themselves wholly excus'd. For their Encouragement let them remember the *Poor Widow*, with her *two Mites*, which ^{Mark 12.} ^{41, &c.} were

were as well accepted as the much larger Gifts of others. And if those of you that are rich, are not *rich* in such *good Works* as these, remember that e're long you'll be sensible that your Riches were but a Snare and a Curse to you. Let such as are in Health be bountiful, in Thankfulness to God that keeps them so: And let the Sickly and Crazy be Free and Liberal, as not knowing how little time they may have to do good in. Have any of you one Foot in the Grave; don't let this Opportunity slip of shewing your Respect and Value for the *Prophets* of the Lord, for fear you never have another. If God hath blest you in the World, give him this way a Mark of your Thankfulness: Or if you desire he should do so, shew by your Freedom on this Occasion that you can depend upon him for it. In short; be open handed to the Poor Ministers of Christ, if you have any Love for the Gospel; and as you would not lay a Foundation for most uncomfortable Reflection, if the time should ever come that you should be cut short of your present Liberty: Nay, as you would not have a sorrowful Account to give another Day.

And may I not add that upon such a Day of Joy and Festivity as this, I may expect you should be the more Liberal. For this is the Day in which it pleas'd God to send into the World our Present *Gracious Queen ANNE*, whom he rais'd up as an Instrument of his Praise, and a Support of the Protestant Interest in such a time as this. I doubt not but her *Majesty* fares the better for the hearty fervent Prayers of these *Gospel-Prophets*, whom I am desiring you to relieve: They help to strengthen

then her Hands in the Great Work which God hath call'd her to. Shew then your Thankfulness to him that has rais'd up such a *Patroness* and *Defender*, by your chearful Contributing this Day to the Relief of those who upon Assistance receiv'd, may be encourag'd chearfully to persist in their devout Addresses to Heaven for Her Majesty, and may procure a Continuance of Blessings upon her Person, her Throne, her Government, her Counsels, her Arms, and all her Great Designs, wherein she is engag'd.

And may the Good Lord bear their Prayers and Ours, and bless her Majesty with a Long and Prosperous Reign, and give her Victory over all her Enemies; and when she lays down her Earthly Crown, give her a Crown of Glory in Heaven above. And let all the People say, Amen.

An APPENDIX Concerning Apostolical Inspiration.

St. **P**AUL tells us that the Church is built Eph. 2. 20. upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. The Writings of the Prophets under the Old Testament, and of the Apostles under the New, are the Foundation which the Church stands upon. Having therefore endeavour'd to strengthen one part of this Foundation, which was laid by the Prophets, it seems highly proper

per I should add something farther, for the strengthening the other Part of it which was laid by the *Apostles*. It's a Natural Observation, that the two Parts of the *Foundation* must be alike firm, or the House is in Danger. If the *Prophets* of the Old Testament were inspir'd, and not the *Apostles* under the New, One Part of our *Foundation* would be much firmer and stronger than the other, which would argue greater want of Management and Foresight than can justly be charg'd on him that has taken the Church under his own peculiar Care.

After *Malachi*, we hear no more of Prophecy or Inspiration in the Church, till the time of the Gospel. The *Babylonian Talmudists* therefore have a saying; *from the Death of the later Prophets, Haggai, Zechary and Malachi, the Holy Spirit ceas'd from Israel.* But it was foretold long before, that in the Days of the *Messiah* he should return again. I, says God, *Joel 2.28, will pour out my Spirit upon all Flesh, and your Sons and your Daughters shall prophesy, your Old Men shall dream Dreams, your Young Men shall see Visions: And also upon the Servants and upon the Handmaids will I pour out my Spirit.* And when the *Jews* upon that remarkable Day of *Pentecost* that succeeded our Lord's Ascension, were amaz'd to see so Plentiful an Effusion of the Prophetical Spirit, St. *Peter* told them freely, that it was but an Accomplishment of that Prediction. Prophecy and Inspiration was then remarkably reviv'd after it had ceas'd for about the space of four hundred Years: Which being a surprizing thing, may help us to understand the Answer that was given by the Disciples whom St. *Paul* met at *Ephesus*, who

Acts 2.
16, 17.

who when he ask'd them whether they had receiv'd the Holy Ghost, told him that *they had* Acts 19. *not so much as heard whether there was any Holy* 2. *Ghost*: i. e. they had receiv'd no certain Information of a New Effusion of him, after his Extraordinary Gifts had been so long withheld.

The Spirit of Prophecy thus restor'd is: *Rev. 19. Testimony of Jesus.* 'Twas to be a standing Testimony for him in all Ages. It was design'd to be an Assurance that he was really the *Messiah* that was promis'd, in whose Days the Spirit was to be given forth a fresh. And he being to provide for his Church from that time forward, to the end of the World, took effectual care that no needful help of his Spirit should be wanting to those whom he us'd as his Instruments, either for its first Settlement, or its Continuance, Increase, and Preservation afterwards. Different Gifts and a different sort of Assistance were needful in these two Cases. And accordingly *he set some in* 1 Cor. 12. *his Church, first Apostles, secondarily Prophets,* 18. *thirdly Teachers, after that Miracles, then Gifts of Healing, Helps, Governments, Diversities of Tongues, &c.* And tho' several of those extraordinary Gifts which were afforded at first, were in a little time withdrawn, yet he promis'd his Apostles and their Successors in the sacred Ministry, that he would be *with them* Mat. 28. *always even to the End of the World.* 20.

The Prophetick Spirit under the Gospel in some Respects agreed with that under the Old Testament, and in other Respects it differ'd from it. It agreed with it, in as much as it was communicated in divers manners as before; by *Visions, or Dreams, or a Voice from*
L Heaven,

Heaven, or in a way of *secret Suggestion*: But it differ'd from it in this, that whereas the Prophetick Spirit was often attended under the Old Testament with considerable Dread and Terror, under the New it was given out in a way of more Liberty and Glory. The Antient *Prophets* often spake and acted in a manner very different from the Ordinary Practise of other Men; they us'd strange Language, and strange Motions and Agitations of Body, and were thereupon thought to be besides themselves: But we find nothing of this nature under the New Testament. The Prophetick Spirit that was among our Saviour's Apostles and their Companions, was very like the *Gradus Mosaicus*, which was reckon'd the highest and most noble among the *Jews*. They often Prophecy'd as *Moses*, waking and standing; they us'd as he did great plainness of Speech; and whereas they observ'd of him that he had strength to understand the Words of the Prophecy, so may we also say there was strength in the New Testament *Prophets* to understand the Revelations of the Spirit. And withal, Apostolical Inspiration was rather a constant and permanent Faculty, habitually residing in their Mind, and exerting it self either as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, or as they themselves thought fit; than a transient Gift, often discontinu'd and interrupted, as it was with the Prophets of Old.

But still there are few things remarkable in the Case of the Antient *Prophets*, but we may find something of the same nature in the Days of the *Messiah*. Had they *Visions* and *Dreams*? So had the New Testament *Prophets* and *Apostles*. St. Peter had a *Vision* to satisfy him as to the

the Calling of the Gentiles (a). *Ananias* another to send him to *Saul* after his Conversion (b); *Saul* himself another, to satisfy him that such an one as *Ananias* would come to him as a Messenger from God (c). *St. Paul* had afterwards a Call in a *Vision* or a *Dream* to preach the Gospel in *Macedonia* (d); and he was hearten'd by another *Vision* or *Dream* in his Voyage to *Rome* where he was to appear before *Cæsar* (e). And indeed such *Visions* were then frequent. Had they under the Old Testament a *Voice from Heaven* upon Occasion? So had they also under the New. There was such a *Voice* at our Saviour's Baptism (f); and another at his Transfiguration (g); a third when his End drew near (h); and yet another at the Conversion of *St. Paul* (i). Did the Spirit sometimes communicate his Mind to the Ancient *Prophets* in a way of secret Suggestion? So did he also to the New. He in this way spake to *St. Peter* about going with the Messengers that were sent by *Cornelius* (k); and to the *Prophets* in the Church of *Antioch*, about a Mission of *St. Paul* and *St. Barnabas* to the Gentiles (l). Did the Spirit sometimes carry the *Prophets* to distant Places? 'Twas the same with *Philip* the Evangelist. We are told the Spirit of the Lord caught him away (m). Did they foretell things to come? So did the *Prophets* under the New Testament also. Did they sometimes predict Futurities very plainly and distinctly? So did *Agabus* the Prophet very plainly signify by the Spirit, that there should be great Dearth throughout all the World (n); i. e. through the whole Roman Empire. Did they sometimes give forth Ænigmatical Predictions, hard to be understood till the Event explain'd

them? We have a considerable Specimen of that Kind also in the Book of the *Revelations* of St. *John*. Did they sometimes describe the things that were to come to pass, by some outward Sign and Action? We have the like upon Occasion in the Prophet *Agabus*, who we are told took *Paul's Girdle*, and bound his own Hands and Feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at *Jerusalem* bind the Man that own-

(o) Acts 21. 10, 11. *cth this Girdle (o)*. Were there Women as well as Men that of Old had the Spirit of Prophecy?

It was the same also in the Days of the *Messiah*: For we read that *Philip the Evangelist* had four Daughters, *Virgins*, which did prophesy (p).

(p) Acts 21. 8, 9. When our Blessed Saviour was about to leave his Disciples, he order'd them not to set upon that mighty work of Planting his Gospel in all Parts of the World, till they were endu'd with Power from on High (q). And he at the same time intimates that they were to receive this

(q) Luk. 24. 49. Power, by his sending the Promise of his Father upon them; i. e. by his sending the Holy Ghost to them, who was promis'd by the Antient Prophets. Without an Heavenly Power to qualify and assist them, it had been a vain Attempt for them to aim at Converting the World to the Faith of a Crucify'd Saviour, and at Erecting Churches in all Quarters to his Honour: But when the Holy Ghost came down upon them on the Day of *Pentecost*, they were abundantly furnish'd for this Purpose. He inspir'd them with the Gift of Languages, that they might be able to speak to all Nations in their own Tongues. He enabled them to work Miracles, and thereby to give a Convincing Evidence of the Truth and Divinity of the Doctrines which they preach'd. He bestow'd

bestow'd on them and many of their Adherents, not only a Gift of foretelling things to come, but also a Gift of Interpreting the Divine Mysteries contain'd in the Holy Scriptures that they had then in their Hands, by Inspiration; the Sense being in an Extraordinary manner suggested to them by the Holy Spirit: And this is that *Prophefying* which the Apostle speaks so much of, in the fourteenth Chapter of the First Epistle to the *Corinthians*. And the assisting them in the Writings they were to draw up for the Use of the Church under the New Testament, to correspond with those that were drawn up for the Use of the Church under the Old Testament, was as necessary as any of the Gifts or Endowments fore-mention'd. And let all be put together, and we need not wonder it should be said that *God bore them Witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his Will.* Heb. 2. 4.

Among other things the Apostles particularly needed the Assistance of a Prophetick Spirit, in fixing the First Pastors in the Churches they erected: And they actually did it by Revelation. The *Holy Ghost* therefore is said to have *made* the first Pastors *Overseers*. He is Acts 2. 28. said to have done it, because it was done under his special Conduct. We plainly see that he particularly concern'd himself in matters of this kind, by what pass in the Church of *Antioch*, about the Mission of *Paul* and *Barnabas*. Acts 13. And we are told as to *Timothy*, that he was advanced to the sacred Ministry by *Prophefy*: i. e. 1 Tim. 4. by particular Revelation. *St. Chryostome* that 14. 1 Tim. 1 was one of the greatest Luminaries of the 18. *Greek Church*, tells us, that this was a common thing

thing in those times. And St. *Clement* in his Epistle to the *Corinthians*, which is one of the most Antient Pieces of Christianity next to the Holy Scriptures, tells us, that the Apostles preaching about in divers Countreys and Citics, settled their first Fruits, that is, some of their first Converts, as Bishops and Deacons, after they had try'd them by the Spirit: That is to say, after they had discover'd what was in them, by the Revelation of the Holy Ghost. And *Eusebius* out of *Clemens Alexandrinus*, tells us of St. *John* the Apostle, that he set such a-part for the Clergy in the Churches of Asia, as were pointed out by the Spirit. And indeed without special Assistance in that matter, 'tis hard to conceive how great Disorders could have been avoided. For the Apostles went about to Places where the Gospel was never heard of; and gaining Converts in a little time, they went their way, and past on to other Places. These New Converts were at first like Children in the Gospel, and few of them fit to be Ministers: For *Novices* were particularly excluded. The Apostles were therefore directed by the Holy Ghost, to lay their Hands on such and such particular Persons as were design'd for that Service, and so they receiv'd the Gift of Tongues and of Propheying, and became fit Ministers to teach the Congregation. Whereas when the Churches were once settled, and Persons had continu'd in the Faith so long as to give Testimony of their Sincerity and Abilities to qualify them for the Office of the Ministry, there was not that need of Revelation in this Case as before, Humane means being sufficient to direct in it. And if it was requisite that the Apostles should be under an Extraordinary Conduct in their

Clem:
Epist.
Cap. 42.
Edit. Cot-
tel.

Euseb.
Lib. 3.
Cap. 23.

1 Tim. 3.
6.

their Motions, and should act by Inspiration in what most nearly concern'd the Good of the Church in its first Settlement, I think no unprejudic'd Person can forbear readily to yield that it was much more requisite that they should have the Assistance of Inspiration in drawing up their Writings, which besides their immediate Reference to the Case of particular Churches at that time, were to be a standing Directory to the Church in General from one Age to another. Our Lord staid with them but a very little while. They need'd a *Remembrancer* to help them to recollect what dropp'd from their Master in the Course of his Ministry; and an infallible Guide to keep them from Mistakes in other things necessary to be added by way of Instruction. Their Piety and Probity was not in this Case a sufficient Security. We may conclude therefore that the Holy Ghost who enabled them to discourse in Languages they had never learnt, help'd them to discern Spirits, and assisted them in working Miracles, in order to the confirming and securing Christianity, and favour'd them with so many Revelations as Occasions requir'd, would not be backward to give them a peculiar Assistance, in the Addition they were to make to the sacred Oracles. Nay, we are not here left to a naked Guess, or a meer Rational Expectation, but are assur'd that our Lord solemnly promis'd them, that *when the Spirit of Truth was come, he should guide them into all Truth*. And the least that we can make of that Promise is this: That he should guide them into all needful Truth in the Execution of their Office: And so guide them both in Speaking and Writing,

as that others that should come after them might safely depend upon their Report, without danger of being misled.

Five Letters, p. 68.

But here we are told by one that is for making as little of the Assistance given by the Spirit to the Apostles, as possibly he can, *That the Promise of the Spirit ought to be understood by its Correspondency with the Accomplishment*; which is freely yielded: And for that Reason, St. Peter afterwards so frankly declaring, as to himself and his Fellow-Apostles, that *they preach'd the Gospel*, which they did both by Word and Writing, *with, or by the Holy Ghost come down from Heaven*; and St. Paul also averring, that *the things he wrote were the Commandments of God*; unless they grossly misrepresent matters, it evidently thence appears from the Event, that the Promise of the Spirit of Truth did really include in it Inspiration. 'Tis said, *The Apostles did not pass in their own time for Persons, every word of whose was an Oracle*: And 'tis alledg'd as an Evidence, that *the Authority of St. Paul, and St. Barnabas, was not sufficient to put to silence the Judaizing Christians, who were for adhering to the old Ceremonies. The Church of Jerusalem must be consulted*. But does it follow that St. Paul was not inspir'd by the Spirit of Truth, because the Judaizing Christians did not presently comply with him? At this rate we may argue our Blessed Saviour not to be infallible, any more than St. Paul: Since his Disciples were sometimes not well satisfy'd with what he said. If the Cavils of Persons prejudic'd, as these Judaizers plainly were, are sufficient to invalidate a Divine Authority, where shall we fix at last? 'Tis added, *The Apostles and Elders disputed a great while before they agreed*

1 Pet. 1.
12.

1 Cor. 14.
37.

Five Letters, p. 56,
57.

Id. Ibid.

agreed

agreed on this Affair: Whereas if they had been fill'd with a Spirit of Infallibility, there would have needed no more to have been done, but to charge one of them to give out the Oracle, in the Name of the whole Assembly. As if the Holy Spirit could not guide them into all Truth, unless the way of doing it was just the same as this Author would have dictated! Let it but be consider'd how much the Jews were prejudic'd in favour of their old Customs, and it will appear a wise Method for the fixing this matter, that God so order'd it, that it should be closely debated in an Assembly of those for whom the Christian Converts, both from among Jews and Gentiles, could not but have the highest Veneration, and then be solemnly determin'd: And let it be also consider'd, what an Inclination there was in the Elders at Jerusalem to favour these Judaizers, and it will appear, that there was a remarkable Interposition of the Spirit, according to Promise, to guide them into the Truth in this Particular, in that upon the Debate, there should be so unanimous a Concurrence of all that were present, in the Determination they came to. And besides, we find ^{Act. 15.} that in the issue they declare very positively, ^{28.} that it seem'd good to the Holy Ghost, and to them. They assure all concern'd, that it was the Holy Ghost, who as the Spirit of Truth that was promis'd, led them to what they determin'd in the Case. But even this won't satisfy the Objector, who says, that supposing this were the Sense of that Declaration, they should not have plac'd themselves in equal Rank with the Holy Ghost, but should have said simply, it has appear'd good to the Holy Ghost, who speaks by us. *Five Letters, p. 63*

What pity 'twas he was not on the spot

to have given this Advice to those Good Men, who knew not how to express themselves properly ! But the best of it is, the Advice was not needful. For they do but hereby signify their following that *Spirit of Truth* who was promis'd to guide them ; who, by falling down upon *Cornelius*, that was but a Profelyte of the Gate, had in effect declar'd, that a Submission to the *Jewish Rites* was not now necessary to Acceptance with God : And so they declare their falling in with that Truth which he had led them to, without pretending to place themselves in an equal Rank with him whom they own'd for their Guide.

Five Letters, p. 58. 'Tis further objected, that *St. Peter needed a Vision to convince him that he ought not to scruple to preach the Gospel unto the Gentiles ; and that therefore he was not out of danger of falling into Error.* But this proves that the Promise of a peculiar Conduct of the *Spirit of Truth* in the Sense given, was exactly answer'd by the Event, rather than that it admits a different Sense, or fail'd in the least. For, it from hence appears, that the Holy Spirit would give *St. Peter* a special Vision to direct his Conduct, rather than he should miss of Truth, and fall into Error, in a matter so Capital. He goes on, and says, that upon *St. Peter's* return to *Jerusalem*, many were so far from looking upon him as *Infallible*, that they disputed with him about the matter. And all that can be infer'd from thence, is this : That they that disputed, were not as yet led by their Guide into this Truth ; but that it pleas'd God to take this Method to lead them into it, according to his Promise. But *St. Peter* fail'd afterwards in his Conduct at *Antioch*, when *St. Paul* oppos'd him :

Id. Ibid.

Id. p. 59.

him: Nay, he was in an Error. However, we find the Promise was still made good to him: For he was set right by St. Paul; and effectually guided into Truth in that Particular, in which he met with a Temptation that shook him. When from such things as these, a Query is started, *Whether it might not so happen, that the Apostles might abandon the Truth of the Gospel, and preach a false Doctrine?* Tho' we may be justly concern'd at the Irreverence which is that way express'd towards our Blessed Saviour, and those whom he was pleas'd to use as his Instruments in spreading his Religion in the World; yet we need not labour for an Answer. For, tho' consider them as Men, they were as Fallible as others, and there was therefore no natural Impossibility in it for them to abandon the Truth for Error; yet it was really impossible that this should happen in their Case, without our Saviour's failing in his Promise. And therefore it could not be Rationally fear'd, and the Suggestion is prophane, and not to be aton'd for, by the owning that *they had many immediate Inspirations, and divers Heavenly Visions, and that he is no good Christian that doubts of it*: For, if after all their Inspirations and Visions, we may lay Stress upon their Writings, when we rightly understand them, and yet be deceiv'd, the Spirit of Truth that was promis'd to guide them, left them to themselves, and we may still be bewilder'd.

'Tis also pleaded, that *the Apostles distinguish that which they say themselves, from that which Christ had said; which they would not have done, had they believ'd their Words as infallible as the Words of Christ.* But if we view the Place

referr'd

Id. P. 70.

Id. Ibid.

referr'd to, we shall hardly find any thing in this Objection. It relates to *Marriage*, about which *St. Paul* had been consulted. His words are these ; *And unto the Married I command, yet not I but the Lord ; Let not the Wife depart from her Husband. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord ; If any Brother hath a Wife that believeth not, and she be pleas'd to dwell with him, let him not put her away.* Where it must be own'd he distinguishes between what *Christ* had personally commanded while he was on Earth, and what he commanded by him as his Officer, after his *Ascension to Heaven* : But there's nothing like a distinction between the Authority from which the two Commands proceeded. As for that which he mentions, when he says, *'Tis not I command, but the Lord,* he refers to that *Indissolubleness of the Bond of Matrimony,* which our Lord had himself settled*. Whereas when he says, *Thus speak I, not the Lord,* he does not intimate as if he were not therein duly authoriz'd, but he insinuates, that in that he determin'd a Matter which our Lord had left undecided, and said nothing about. But tho' he therein determin'd what was undetermin'd before, yet he did it as an authoriz'd Officer of our Saviour : Which is plain in that he had before declar'd in this very Epistle, that he had the *Mind of Christ* ; and afterwards, before he closes the same, gives that solemn Charge, *If any Man think himself to be a Prophet, or Spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you, are the Commandments of the Lord.*

We meet also with two other Passages which are somewhat like to that before mention'd, in the very same Chapter, at which some have stumbled.

1 Cor. 7.
10, 12.

* Mat. 5.
32
Mat. 19.
9.

1 Cor.
2. 16.

1 Cor.
14. 37.

bled. St. Paul speaking concerning Virgins, expresses himself thus: *I have no Commandment* ^{1 Cor. 7.} *of the Lord, yet I give my Judgment as one that hath obtain'd Mercy of the Lord to be faithful.* And afterwards speaking of a Woman who was left single by the Death of her Husband, he says, *She is happier if she so abide, after my Judgment; and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.* A Learned Person, who bating a few Slips, has well defended the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, here strangely forgets himself: saying, *This is not spoken* ^{Louth's} *with the Authority of a Teacher sent from God, or Vindication,* ^{P. 51.} *an Apostle, but in such a Stile as implies only an ordinary Assistance, such as any pious, skilful Pastor may expect.* But it would be strange if the Judgment of an Apostle should not have Authority, in whatsoever Form it were deliver'd. St. Paul had not indeed a particular Command here, as in many other Cases; and yet he advis'd, as one *assisted* by the Spirit of God: For less than that can't be made of that Expression, *I think also I have the Spirit of God.* If he thought so, we should do well to think so too; and to avoid thinking meanly of any thing that came from him. He gives but his Judgment, 'tis true: But it was the Spirit of God that help'd him to form that Judgment. The Peculiarity of the Stile in this Passage is easily accounted for, by considering he was now writing to such as were apt to question his Apostleship, and requir'd ^{2 Cor.} *a Proof of Christ speaking in him.* To them it ^{13. 3.} was proper enough to say, Whatsoever you may conceive of me, you must allow me, who know it, to suppose I have the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Wisdom and Knowledge.

to enable me to give this Advice. Tho' therefore any pious, skilful Pastor may use the same Words, yet does it not follow they ought to have the same Authority, or that they come with a like Assistance of the Spirit, as when they came from St. Paul.

It being farther often Query'd how far any thing of Uncertainty may be consistent with Inspiration, we may do well to observe, that Inspiration does not carry in it absolute Certainty about all things that may be touch'd upon, Exactness in many of which may perhaps be disclaim'd : And yet at the same time to allow any *slips of Memory* in what Persons that were inspir'd, pretend to relate with Exactness, is extremely to weaken the Credit of their Writings. An absolute Certainty in all things touch'd on in their Writings, is not to be expected. Humane Forms of Speech about things in themselves dubious and uncertain, are very consistent with Inspiration. It is enough for us that they relate things as they were : We need desire no more. The Apostles might doubt in some things, tho' they had the Spirit for their Guide ; inasmuch as while he guided them, he might think fit to suffer them to doubt, or to speak after the manner of Men. Thus says St. Paul to the *Corinthians*, *It may be I will abide and winter with you.* He had thoughts of it : But left himself open to be guided by the Spirit in his Motions. His very speaking there with Uncertainty, is an Evidence he was under the guidance of the Spirit, rather than any thing of an Evidence to the contrary. He says also to the *Romans*, *When I go into Spain, I will come to you : For I trust to see you in my Journey,*

1 Cor.
16. 6.

Rom. 15.
24. 25.

ney, &c. These were his Intentions, upon supposition of the Conduct of the Spirit. He tells the Corinthians also, *I will come to you when I pass thro' Macedonia.* And yet he confesses afterwards, that he did not perform that Journey: But his Apology for it deserves our Observation. *In this Confidence,* says he, *I was minded to come unto you:* Thereby intimating, that a Reality of Intention was as much as could reasonably be expected in matters of that kind. And because it might be objected, that he appear'd more changeable in this Case than became one that was under the Conduct of the Holy Ghost, he thereupon argues with them. *When I therefore was thus minded, did I use Lightness? Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the Flesh, that with me there should be Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay?* q. d. Do you think that I am Inconstant, and consult my Carnal Interest? If you do, you grossly wrong me: For I am under superior Conduct; and so at a Point in my Motions. I go wherever the Spirit leads me. The utmost then that can be infer'd from hence, is, that the Apostle was not certain before-hand whither the Spirit would conduct him: But it does not by any means follow, that he did not write under his Conduct, because he sometimes discover'd something of this Uncertainty: For the Spirit might serve sundry Purposes, even by his declaring his Intentions, tho' he thought fit actually to direct his Motions otherwise. An inspir'd Apostle might be in some Cases doubtful. He might not with an absolute Certainty be able to recollect his own Actions. This was St. Paul's Case, when he declares, *I know not whether I Baptiz'd any other.*

1 Cor. 16.

2 Cor. 1.
15, 16, 17.

1 Cor. 1.

16.

He

He could not then recollect it. 'Tis enough that he really was in doubt about the matter, as he represents himself. Without all question, the Holy Ghost could easily have refresh'd his Memory, and enabled him to speak with Assurance: But it was not necessary. In common things, he thought fit to leave him and the rest, whom he inspir'd, to common Forms of Speech, to shew us, that even while he guided them, they exercis'd the same Faculties, and had the same Affections stirring as are common and usual with us; and differ'd from other pious and holy Writers chiefly in that peculiar Superior Conduct with which they were favour'd, which kept them from any thing like an Error, or a Misrepresentation. We need not therefore wonder to meet with such Passages as these: *I will come unto you quickly if the Lord will. I hope to stay some time with you, if the Lord permit. I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy quickly to you. I trust that I my self also shall come quickly. These things I write, hoping to come to thee quickly. I hope by your Prayers to be given to you. Thus will we do if the Lord permit. I hope to come to you,* &c. For such Sayings only shew the workings of Humane Passions, while they intimate that the Holy Men concern'd, were entirely open and resign'd to the Conduct of that Spirit that was promis'd them. Now it cannot be a just Argument that the Holy Ghost did not peculiarly conduct and assist them in writing Passages that intimated their entire Dependance on his Conduct in their Motions; which was much to his Honour, and much to the Confirmation of the Churches in which they labour'd. But for Divines, from any thing of
this

1 Cor.

4. 19.

1 Cor.

16. 7.

Phil. 2.

19, 23, 24.

1 Tim. 3.

14.

Philem.

22.

Heb. 6. 3.

2 Joh. 12.

3 Joh. 14.

this kind, to yield that our inspir'd Writers had *Slips of Memory*, in what they pretend to relate with Exactness, is to set themselves adrift, not knowing whither they may be hurry'd. To say that this is only *in matters of no Consequence*, is to run a hazard of the greatest Consequence. Say they have slipp'd at all in a matter of Fact, and what Security can you have they have not done so often? The Instances that are alledg'd, are two. The first is, that *Jeremy* the Prophet is cited for *Zachary*: Mat. 27. The second, that *Abraham* is nam'd when it should have been *Jacob*. Mistakes of this kind might very easily come from the Copiers and Transcribers, on whom I should think it much more modest for us to charge them, than on the Original Writers. But besides, the Prophets *Jeremy* and *Zachary* very much agree in their Language; and Mr. *Mede*, whose Judgment was far from being despicable, thinks it highly probable that *Jeremy* wrote the 9th, 10th, and 11th Chapters of *Zachary*, as they are now in our Bibles, in which last Chapter are the words that are quoted out of *Jeremy*, by the Evangelist. And this is less harsh and dangerous by far, than to charge St. *Matthew* with a *Slip of Memory* in the Case. And as for the Sepulchre, said to be bought by *Abraham*, when it was bought by *Jacob*, supposing there to have been a real Mistake in the Words of the Proto-Martyr *Stephen*, (which yet is question'd by some,) yet that does not at all affect the Authority of St. *Luke*, provided he has exactly related what was then said by St. *Stephen*, who, tho' he was to set his Seal to Christianity with his Blood, yet was

Louth's
Vindicati-
on, p. 45.

9.
Acts 7. 16.

See Dr.
Whitby
on the
place.

See Dr.
Whitby
on the
place.

not pitch'd upon as a Penman of the Holy Scriptures.

So that upon the whole, the Church may still continue firmly *built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets*. And cursed be he that endeavours to overthrow, or undermine this Foundation.

S E R-

SERMON VI.

2 TIM. III. 16.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.

HAVING stated the Notion of Inspiration, and shewn what the Apostle means when he represents our sacred Oracles, a given by Inspiration of God, and prov'd that both the Old Testament and the New were so given, and so inspir'd; my next Work, according to the Order propos'd, is to answer the most plausible Objections that are alludg'd by such as disbelieve the Divinity of the Scriptures; such as under Pretence of questioning their Inspiration, take the Liberty to pour Contempt upon them.

I'm sensible that it has been, and is the Apprehension of some, that it is not so proper to touch upon the Cavils of Anti-Scripturists in the Pulpit. They say, that Doubts and Scruples may be this way started in the Minds of several, who otherwise might have known nothing of them, to their no small Disturbance: And that we may raise Devils we can't lay

again; and do more hurt than good. And it can't be pretended but that it is possible it may fall out so, in some particular Cases; and whenever it does so, 'tis very unhappy. But on the other side, there are many that meet with the Cavils and Objections of the Deriders of the Scriptures, who would never be likely to meet with a Solution of them, if not in our publick Auditories. And when such things are become the Subject of common Conversation, and the Poison spreads that way, (as is notorious in this Case) I think it's high time for an Antidote to come, both from Prefs and Pulpit, and for all concern'd to give their best Assistance. For my Part, I have met with so many that have been stagger'd, as to *the Divinity of the Scriptures*, by what has been suggested in the mix'd Company they have convers'd with, and they have so justly complain'd of the Inability of many pious Persons that have discover'd their Abhorrence of the Cavils that have been propos'd, to give any satisfactory Answer to them; I have of late met with so many that have been tempted under this Head, who have been backward to open their Case, for fear of exposing themselves; and have seen so much of the Tendency of such Difficulties to undermine Practical Religion, that this determin'd me to take this Method of proposing the most plausible Objections that are alledg'd, and giving a distinct Reply to them. And as I shall not offer that as an Answer to any Cavil, that is not really satisfactory to my self, and that I don't think in my Conscience may, and ought to be satisfactory to such as weigh things in a just Ballance; so I think I may expect and insist upon

upon it, that you consider Objections and Answers together, and then I'm not afraid of any hurt that will ensue.

“ The first Objection is of this Nature. How Obj. 1.
 “ (say some) can the Scriptures be Divinely
 “ inspir'd, when they have so many *Contra-*
 “ *dictions* in them? If they came from God,
 “ and were drawn up under his peculiar and
 “ infallible Conduct, there would be an en-
 “ tire Agreement. No clashing would be di-
 “ scernable in them from one end to the o-
 “ ther. Whereas, tho' an Argument is com-
 “ monly drawn from their Harmony to their
 “ Inspiration, we yet find so many things
 “ that appear directly *Contradictory* to each
 “ other, as stagger and shock us, and tempt
 “ us to believe they could not be Divinely
 “ inspir'd. In order to the Removal of this
 “ Objection, I shall,

1. Make some general Remarks upon this Head, of *Contradictions*. And,

2. Consider some of the Instances that are most commonly produc'd, of *Contradictions* that appear in the Old Testament, and the New, and reply distinctly to them.

I. Then upon occasion of this Charge of *Contradictions* on the Holy Scriptures, I shall make some general Remarks, which may be of use.

1. I freely own that real *Contradictions* are a just and sufficient Proof that a Book is not Divinely inspir'd, whatever Pretence it makes to it. We this way prove, that the *Alchoran* of *Mahomet* could not be inspir'd, as much as it is extoll'd by his admiring Followers. The

* Dr. Pri-
deaux's
Life of
Mahomet,
p. 158,
159.

whole of that Rhapsody * was fram'd by *Mahomet*, to answer some particular Purpose or other, according as Occasions requir'd. If any new thing was to be put on foot, any Objection against him or his Religion to be answer'd, any Difficulty to be solv'd, any Discontent among his People to be quieted, any Offence to be remov'd, or any thing else done for the Interest of his Designs, his constant recourse was to the Angel *Gabriel*, for a new Revelation; and out comes some addition to his *Alchoran* herein to serve his turn. So that the most of it was made on such like Occasions, to influence his Party to what he intended. And all his Commentators thus far acknowledge it, that they are on every Chapter very particular in assigning for what Causes, and for whose sake it was sent down from Heaven unto them. Hereby it came to pass that abundance of real Contradictions got into his Book. For, as the Interest and Designs of the Impostor vary'd, so was he forc'd to make his pretended Revelations vary also; which is a thing so well known to those of his Sect, that they all acknowledge it: And therefore, where the *Contradictions* are such as they cannot solve, there they will have one of the contradicting Places to be revok'd. And they reckon in the *Alchoran* above 150 Verses thus revok'd. This is a full Evidence the Author of it could not be inspir'd. But no such thing can justly be alledg'd as to our Bible. It was indeed drawn up by Parts, and inspir'd upon particular Occasions: But nothing was ever given out as a Part of it that was afterwards call'd in; nor is there any thing now there that we need to have revok'd.

revok'd. As to some *Chronological Niceties*, 'tis not indeed impossible but Transcribers may have vary'd; (and nothing less than a constant Miracle could have kept them from it:) but *Real Contradictions* there are none.

Where there is such Evidence as has been before given of a Divine Inspiration, 'tis really a very bold Charge, to accuse of *Contradictions*. Such Proof as has been given that the Old and New Testament were inspir'd of God, if it be taken together, can't possibly deceive. We can't seriously consider this Proof, and afterwards refuse to believe the Bible to be the Word of God, without being manifestly unreasonable. And if it be reasonable to believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, upon the Evidence produc'd, then is it unreasonable to suppose it in any respect unbecoming, or unworthy of God: Unreasonable in particular, to charge it with *Contradictions*. If these Records (as has been prov'd) did really come from God, then let any Man judge whether it be not more likely that they that start and pursue this Objection, should mistake, and mis-conceive things, than that the Infallible God should contradict himself. He that demurs here, must depart as much from Reason as he does from Religion. Should then a subtle Caviler produce some *seeming Contradictions* in the Scriptures, which you could not reconcile, besides that it would be a great Weakness to conclude from thence, that no one else can reconcile them, you need not be mov'd, if you are but satisfy'd upon good and sufficient Grounds, that those Scriptures were Divinely inspir'd. If you are but satisfy'd upon good Evidence, that God

has attested in the most fit and proper ways their coming from him; you may safely conclude there can be no *Contradictions* there. You may, upon solid Reasons, be more certain that your Evidence in this Case is good, and that God has attested the Scriptures to be his Word, than you can be that you are not mistaken in the Sense of such Passages as may seem Contradictory. Would it not be intolerable in a young Scholar, that is newly put to School, if, instead of humble Learning, and waiting for gradual Improvement in Understanding, he should cry out against his *Grammar*, as contradicting it self in this, and that, and the other Place? And is it not unspeakably worse for us thus to treat the Blessed God with reference to his Sacred Records? Having sufficient Reason to believe the Bible came from him, we ought in modesty to think, that he can easily reconcile such *seeming Contradictions*, as may perhaps to us appear irreconcilable. *Justin Martyr* is herein worthy our Imitation, who disputing with the *Jews* about the Scriptures, has this noble Expression: *Never* (says he) *will I be so bold as to think or say there are Contradictions in Scripture: But should any Passage be propos'd, that seems to carry a Contradiction in it to other Parts, being firmly perswaded that no one Scripture can be truly contrary to another, I will rather confess that I don't understand what is said in the place mention'd; and rather strive to bring those that suspect the Scriptures are contrary to themselves, to be of the same Mind with me.*

Justin
Martyr,
Dial.
cum Try-
phone,
p. 198. E-
dit. Par.
1636.

3. It deserves Observation, that they who are the most forward to charge the Scripture with *Contradictions*, are often very incompetent

tent Judges of the matter. Perhaps they han't Knowledge enough of the Phrases and Idioms of the Original Languages of the Scriptures, to enable them to judge of any thing without a Translation, which may give, it may be, a needless Gloss that tempts them to suspect a *Contradiction*. Or they are Strangers to the Customs referr'd to in our Sacred Volumes: Or they han't Industry enough to enquire into the Particulars, an Insight into which is necessary. When such Persons turn Accusers, (and most that are so are of this sort) they necessarily take things upon trust from Men, as backward as they are to do it from God: And they depend there, where they may be easily deceiv'd, tho' they won't be prevail'd with to have any Dependance there, where they cannot be impos'd upon: And the Scriptures bear the blame of their Ignorance; and are accus'd as *Contradictory*, because themselves are stupid and negligent.

4. As Circumstances stand, it is really unavoidable but that there should be sundry *Difficulties* in our Sacred Records, and there is not in this, any thing that is at all unfit: But to represent them as *Contradictions*, is grossly unreasonable. 'Tis not fitting that Writings that were Divinely inspir'd, should be confin'd to humane Forms and Methods. 'Tis but decent that they who speak to us immediately from God, should address themselves in a way suitable to the Majesty of Heaven, to abate our Pride, teach us Humility, convince us of the shallowness of our Understandings, check our Presumption, rebuke our Negligence, and quicken our Industry. 'Tis so far from being liable to just Exception, that 'tis highly proper

per there should be in the several parts of Scripture *some things hard to be understood*, as St. Peter says there are in St. Paul's *Epistles*; that so none may contemn, but all may meet with suitable Entertainment, and have scope for considerable Improvement. And it is at the same time unavoidable that it should be so; considering how long ago the Scriptures were drawn up; how many old Customs and Usages, and proverbial Speeches, that we can difficultly get any thing of a distinct acquaintance with, they refer to; how many Relations they contain concerning very different People; and what Strangers we are to many things that were very common, and commonly known both among the *Jews* and the *Grecians*. Let these things be consider'd, and 'twill appear impossible but that we should have our Difficulties; and we may see just Reason to wonder that we have no more, rather than that we have so many. But to turn our *Difficulties* into *Contradictions*, is grossly disingenuous. 'Tis a charging God foolishly, because we are at a loss, and imperfect in many parts of Knowledge, beyond Relief.

5. It is easy also to be observ'd, that those things often appear *Contradictions* at first View, especially to Persons that are any thing prejudic'd, which, upon a little Consideration, are clear enough. I'll give a few Instances out of many that might be produc'd. The Wise Man commands us, *not to answer a Fool according to his Folly*: And yet in the very next Verse there seems to be a quite contrary Injunction, when he says, *Answer a Fool according to his Folly*. Such as delight in setting the Scripture at Variance with it self, and think it will answer

answer their End that way to depretiate it, can easily make this pass for a *Contradiction*: While one that considers that so Wise a Man as *Solomon*, even tho' he had known nothing of Divine Inspiration, could not Rationally have been suppos'd to have contradicted himself in the same Breath, may easily distinguish between the Circumstances in which a Fool was according to his Intention either to be answer'd, or not to be answer'd. He was *not to be answer'd* at all, if it was likely to prove to no Purpose to return to him: He was *to be answer'd*, if a Reply was necessary to repress Insolence. The very Reason that is annex'd to each Precept, gives the true Sense of both, and sufficiently reconciles them together. Again; *the strength of Israel*, says the Prophet 1 Sam. 15. *Samuel*, speaking of God, *will not lie nor repent: 29.* For he is not a Man that he should repent. And yet we not only find *Moses* expressly declaring that it repented the Lord that he had made Gen. 6. 6. *Man on the Earth*, and it griev'd him at his Heart; But it is twice said of him in the very same Chapter, that he did repent. God himself tells *Samuel*, that it repented him that he 1 Sam. 15. *had set up Saul to be King*: And afterwards it is ^{11.} expressly said by the Prophet, that *the Lord re-* v: 35. *pented that he had made Saul King over Israel.* Upon this some presently cry out, here's a plain *Contradiction*! But the matter is easily reconcileable. God cannot repent; and yet he did repent. He cannot truly change his Counsel: And yet he can and often does change his Course; as Men do when they use to change their Counsel. Again; we are told that *Jesus baptized in the Land of Judea*: And Joh. 3. 22. yet we are told a little after by the very same Evangelist,

- Joh. 4. 2. Evangelist, that *Jesus himself baptized not, but his Disciples*. How can these things be, say some that are willing the Scriptures should be found to contradict themselves? How could Christ baptize, and yet not baptize? I answer: That a like Degree of Respect to our sacred Writers, as we usually have for Common Authors, would incline any Person of Modesty to suppose and allow that the latter Passage explain'd the former, and signify'd that it was meant not of Baptism perform'd by our Lord himself, but by his Disciples in his Name. Again; we read that *the Lord spake unto Moses Face to Face, as a Man speaketh to his Friend*: And yet a little after, in the very same Chapter we are told, that when *Moses had begg'd of God that he would shew him his Glory*, he answer'd him; *Thou canst not see my Face: For there shall no Man see me and live*. Here's a direct *Contradiction* say some very hastily: Whereas he that considers the matter, finds nothing like it. For the former Expression is Comparative, the latter Absolute. *Moses* had great Freedom and Familiarity in his Converse with God compar'd with other Men: Whereas absolutely speaking he really had but a Glimpse of his Glory; a full view of which would have quite absorpt him. So also we are told, that the Men who travell'd with *St. Paul* towards *Damascus*, when our Lord met him on the way, *heard a Voice, but saw no Man*: Whereas *St. Paul* himself afterwards giving a particular Account of the same matter, declares that *they that were with him saw indeed the Light, and were afraid; but they heard not the Voice of him that spake to him*: And yet this is no *Contradiction*. For they might hear the
- Voice

Voice confusedly, taking it for the noise of Thunder, without hearing it distinctly, so as to understand what was said. Once more: 'Tis said in so many Words, that *God tempted* Gen. 22. 1. *Abraham*; and yet when Men are tempted, St. *James* forbids them to say they are *tempted* Jam. 1. 13. *of God*: And that upon this Ground, because *God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any Man*. With a Caviller this without more ado passes for a flat *Contradiction*: While one that considers and weighs matters, easily distinguishes between God's tempting *Abraham* by way of Trial, and the Tempting that St. *James* speaks of, by way of Seducement. By these Instances it may be easily discern'd, that there is a great deal of Difference between the Censures that are past on the same Passages, by such as are desirous that the Scriptures should contradict themselves, and such as are willing they should agree together.

6. 'Tis no difficult matter to give an Account how there comes to be such an Appearance of *Contradictions* in our sacred Writings. I have already observ'd, that Ignorance of the sacred Tongues is one great Occasion; and I dare maintain that were we better acquainted with the Oriental Tropes and Figures, many Passages that are difficult would become easy; and we should not charge them with clashing. The Equivocal Use of Words is another Occasion. This led the *Jews* to charge our Saviour as an Enemy to their Temple and Polity, while they apply'd what he meant of the Temple of his Body, (which it's not unlikely he might signify by his Hand on his Breast, when he said *this Temple*) to their Temple at *Jerusalem*, in which they
prided

prided themselves so much. And I think we have no Reason to wonder, if we by like mistakes should sometimes be led into Confusion. Another Cause of the Appearance of *Contradictions* in the Bible, is the overlooking of what goes before and follows. Thus if a Man compares together those two Passages; *The Son shall not bear the Iniquity of the Father*; And, *I the Lord thy God am a Jealous God, visiting the Iniquities of the Father upon the Children, unto the third and fourth Generation*, he'd be apt to think they contradicted each other: Whereas considering what goes before and follows, he'll find they agree very well together. For in this last place 'tis added, *of them that hate me*; which plainly shews that Children must then expect to be punish'd with their Parents, when they tread in their Steps, and imitate their Wickedness: Whereas *Ezekiel* speaks of a Son who treads not in his Father's Steps, saying, *If a Man beget a Son, that seeth all his Father's Sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like: But hath executed my Judgments, walked in my Statutes, he shall not die for the Iniquity of his Father, he shall surely live*. Another, and the Grand Cause of all is *Pervicaciousness*. Therefore do Persons fancy so many *Contradictions* in our sacred Oracles of Truth, because they are not duly open to Divine Light; but will judge of the things of God from their own Prejudices, without narrowly observing how God has represented them. Thus the *Sadducees*, who were a wilful sort of People among the *Jews*, could not reconcile the Sayings of the Prophets about the Resurrection and Eternal Life, with the Command of *Moses*, for a Brother to marry his deceased Brother's

Wife:

Wife. Their own preconceiv'd Opinions were the Cause ; and hindred them from taking in any Notion of a Life in which there was no Marrying. The *Jews* generally thought that several Passages in the Prophets contradicted *Mosis* ; because they were so fully possess'd with an Expectation of the Perpetuity both of their Civil and Ecclesiastical Polity, that they were not to be perswaded that any thing that reflected on or derogated from either, could come from God. And in Modern times, the *Romanists*, who are so zealous for the Infallibility of their High Priest, will let the Scriptures appear contradictory over and over, rather than they'll not some how or other, reconcile it to them. And the *Socinians* rather than they'll yield that Christ is God, and made Attonement for our Sins, by Offering himself a Sacrifice upon the Cross, will represent the Bulk of the New Testament as a heap of *Contradictions*, and absurd Inconsistencies. But when Men *err, not knowing the Scriptures*, and will not take things as they are there represented, but will attempt to set them at odds, and perswade us they are contradictory, *we*, by listning to God rather than Men, shall find our way plain, and be easily extricated.

These General Remarks being premis'd, I now proceed,

II. In the Second Place, to consider and vindicate some particular remarkable Passages of Scripture, that have been charg'd to carry *Contradictions* in them : And I'll take some in the Old Testament, and some in the New.

- I. I Begin with some in the Old Testament. And the first I pitch upon, relates to the time of the Continuance of the Children of *Israel* in *Egypt*, and their return from thence.
- Gen. 15. 13. In one Place, *Abraham* is told that *his Seed* should be a *Stranger* in a *Land* that was not theirs, and should serve them; and that they should afflict them four hundred Years: And in another
- Exod. 12. 40, 41. Place 'tis said, the sojourning of the Children of *Israel*, who dwelt in *Egypt*, was four hundred and thirty Years: And it came to pass at the End of the four hundred and thirty Years, even the self same Day it came to pass, that all the Hosts of the Lord went out from the Land of *Egypt*. Whereas upon Calculation it appears that the real time of their Continuance in *Egypt*, was but two hundred fifteen Years. That it could be no more, appears plainly thus. *Joseph* was thirty nine Years old when his Father came into *Egypt*; and he liv'd one hundred and ten
- * Gen. 50. 22, 26. Years in all *. That *Joseph* was thirty nine Years of Age, when his Father *Jacob* came with his Family into *Egypt* is prov'd thus. He was thirty Years old when he stood before Pharaoh
- † Gen. 41. 46. King of *Egypt* †, and gave that Counsel upon which he was so highly advanc'd. Adding then the seven plenteous Years, which ran out before he heard any thing from his Father or Brethren; and the two Years of Famine which ran out before he sent for his Father and Brethren to him ||, we find he was just thirty nine Years Old at their Arrival. If then we take these thirty nine Years of *Joseph*, which was his Age at that time, out of the one hundred and ten Years which was the whole extent of his Life, we find that from *Jacob's* coming into *Egypt*, to the time of *Joseph's*

Joseph's Death, there past seventy one Years. To go on then : About sixty four Years ran out, between *Joseph's* Death, and the Birth of *Moses* : (And if we consider the Account that is given us of the Years of *Moses's* Father, and Grand-father †, we can't make more of them ;) And if we add, the eighty Years of *Moses's* Age when he led the People out of that Land †, we have the exact number of two hundred and fifteen Years. Now the Query is this; whether it is not a direct *Contradiction* to this Calculation which is agreeable to the Scripture-Account, for mention to be made of four hundred, or four hundred and thirty Years ? I answer; if we confine it strictly to the time of the Abode in *Egypt*, it is : But if we begin the Computation higher, from the time of *Abraham's* being call'd of God out of *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, we shall find it will answer, and there will be a most exact Agreement. For from *Abraham's* coming to *Ur* to the Birth of *Isaac*, were twenty five Years. There were sixty Years from his Birth, to the Birth of *Jacob* : And there were ninety one Years from thence to the Birth of *Joseph* ; who was thirty nine Years of Age when his Father came into *Egypt*. Put all together, and you have the exact Sum of two hundred and fifteen Years, from *Abraham's* being call'd out of *Ur* to the Descent of his Children into *Egypt*. And let them be added to the two hundred and fifteen Years that ran out between their going into *Egypt*, and the time of their return out of it, and you have the exact Sum of four hundred and thirty Years. So that this, instead of carrying in it any thing of a *Contradiction* to shake us, according to some Mens Representation, may rather be an Additional Evidence to confirm us. The

† Exod. 1
6. 18, 20.

‡ Exod. 7.
7.

four hundred Years are not confin'd to their Abode in *Egypt*, but they were to run out from the time of God's calling *Abraham*, to the time of his Seed's coming to take Possession of the Land that was promis'd them. And this answer'd so exactly, that the Agreeableness of the

Event to a Prediction given out so long beforehand, should rather increase than abate our Respect for the Holy Scriptures*.

* He that would see this Difficulty fully clear'd, may consult *Bp. Stillingfleet's Letter to a Deist*, p. 83, &c.

The next Passage I shall fasten on, is in *Moses's* History of the Plagues of *Egypt*, where we are told that God by *Moses* order'd *Aaron*, to take his Rod, and stretch out his Hand upon the Waters of *Egypt*, upon their Streams, upon their Rivers, and upon their Ponds, and upon all their Pools of Water, that they might become Blood: and that they did so; and all the Waters that were in the River were turned to Blood, &c. And yet we are told a little after, that the Magicians did so too with their Enchantments, as well as he. This appears a Contradiction. For how could the Magicians have any Water to turn into Blood, when *Moses* had turn'd all into Blood before? Some say one thing and some another to solve this Difficulty. Some think that the Magicians turn'd the Water into Blood, after that *Moses* had turn'd it again out of Blood into Water: But then it would not have answer'd their End in confirming *Pharaoh* in his Adherence to them. Others apprehend it was only the Water of the River that *Moses* turn'd into Blood: But the Text plainly speaks not only of the River, but of Ponds and Pools. Others think that all their Water was not turn'd into Blood at once, but first the River, and then the

Exod. 7.
19, 20.

v. 22.

the Ponds and Pools : and that while the *Nile*, their great River was turning into Blood, before it had reacht their Ponds and Pools, the Magicians did the like by some standing Waters : But this can't be prov'd. Others fancy that these Magicians turn'd some of the Blood into Water, and then turn'd that Water into Blood again : But it's hard to suppose God should let them have a Power of destroying his Miracles. That which is most likely, and sufficiently solves the Difficulty, is this : That tho' all the visible Water of *Egypt* was by *Moses* turn'd into Blood, yet that the *Egyptians* dug Wells about their River, and thence drew Water for the Sustainance of themselves and their Cattel, during the Continuance of this Plague ; and that it was some of this Water that was chang'd by the Magicians. And this appears probable from what is added, when we are told that *all the Egyptians digged round about the River for Water to drink ; for they could not drink of the Water of the River.* And if notwithstanding this Plague the People could find Water to drink, I think we need not make a Difficulty of it, how the Magicians could find Water to turn into Blood, in order to the hardening of *Pharaoh's* Heart. They must be mighty desirous of setting the Scripture at odds with it self, that can make this a *Contradiction*.

A third Passage I shall mention out of the Old Testament relates to *Michal* the Daughter of *Saul*, as to whom we are told that *she had no Child until the Day of her Death* ; and yet else-
 where we find mention made of 5 Sons of *Michal* the Daughter of *Saul*, born to *Adriel* the Son of *Barzillai* the *Meholathite*. Now, say some, is not this a plain *Contradiction*, for one and the

same Person to have never a Child till the Day of her Death, and yet to have 5 Sons? I answer; these might be Children of *Merab*, *Saul's* eldest Daughter, and *Michal* his next Daughter might adopt and educate them; and so they might be call'd hers. When according to our Rending it's said, *the 5 Sons of Michal the Daughter of Saul were taken*, there may be an *Elleipsis*: the Word *Sister* may safely be supply'd in the Translation, thus: *And the King took the 5 Sons of the Sister of Michal the Daughter of Saul, whom she bore unto Adriel*. Such an *Elleipsis* is not uncommon: There is a parallel Instance within the compass of a very few Verses; where no Sense can be made, but upon supposition of some such like Addition. For we

2 Sam. 21. are told that *Elhanan the Son of Jaarreoregim a*
19. *Bethlehemite slew Goliath the Gittite*; when yet we know he was slain by *David* long before. We are in that case, all agree, to understand the Brother of *Goliath*: and therefore that is added in a different Character in our Translation. Now I think we may as well supply the Word *Sister* in one Case, as the Word *Brother* in the

1 Sam. 18. other: it being as evident from one Passage
19. that *Merab Saul's Daughter* was married to *A-*
1 Sam. 17. *driel*, as it is from another that *David* kill'd
51. *Goliath*.

A fourth difficult Passage, that is charg'd as a *Contradiction*, is Chronological. We are told

1 Kings 22. 41. 42. that *Jehosaphat reign'd five and twenty Years in*
Jerusalem; *beginning his Reign in the 4th Year of Ahab King of Israel*: Whereas we are elsewhere told, that *in the fifth Year of Joram the Son of Ahab, Jehoram the Son of Jehosaphat King of Judah began to reign*. So that it was while *Jehosaphat* continu'd King of *Judah*, that *Jehoram*
2 Kings 8. 16. his

his Son began his Reign: He was King in his Father's Life-time, and reign'd jointly with him. And this way we not only solve this Chronological Difficulty, but many others of the like nature that arise, upon an exact Survey of the Reigns of the Kings of *Israel* and *Judah*, which some are willing should pass for *Contradictions*.

The last Instance of this kind I'll mention out of the Old Testament, is a Passage in the Prophet *Jeremy*, where God is brought in saying, *I spake not to your Fathers, nor commanded them in the Day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt Offerings or Sacrifices.* Jer. 7. 22 This seems a *Contradiction* to the Book of *Exodus*, where God is represented as speaking to the Children of *Israel* by *Moses*, and giving him this Sign that he would assist him in leading that People out of *Egypt*, that he should offer Sacrifice on Mount *Horeb*: and God is afterwards brought in as giving a great many particular Orders and Commandments about Services of that sort. But the Difficulty disappears, if we do but observe, that in the Prophet *Jeremy* God speaks comparatively: He did not require Sacrifices so much as Obedience to his Voice. This is a Sense which the Context leads to so directly, that 'tis needless to dilate upon it. And so I proceed,

2. To add something with reference to some Passages in the New Testament, which have been charg'd with carrying *Contradictions* in them. And here the chief thing that is often harp'd upon, is the Difference between *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke* as to our Saviour's *Genealogy*, which is so great, that several declare it irreconcilable. But let it be observ'd, they agree

in their general Scope, which is to shew that our *Jesus* is the true *Messiah*, descended both from *Abraham* and *David*: And they agree in the Persons of the first Class of Fourteens. For tho' *St. Luke* ascends as far as *Adam*, while *St. Matthew* does not, yet *St. Matthew* supposes the Persons whom *St. Luke* mentions, tho' he derives the Birth of our *Jesus* no higher than *Abraham*. But then they differ in the Form of the Pedigree: *St. Matthew* descends, and *St. Luke* ascends. And they so differ in the Names that are mention'd, that one could hardly think it was the Pedigree of the same Person. Waving the different Sentiments of the Learned about this matter, in order to a Reconciliation, I shall only desire it may be observ'd, that *St. Matthew's* Genealogy of our Saviour derives his Pedigree from the Stock of *Joseph*, who, as was suppos'd, or as the Law allows, or in the Sense of the Law, was his Father; while *St. Luke* derives it from the Stock of *Mary* his real Mother*.

* Vide Spanhemii Dubia Evangelica, Part. I. Dub. XX, XXI, XXII.

And so *St. Matthew* draws the Pedigree from *David* by his Son and Successor *Solomon*; while *St. Luke* draws the Stock of *Mary* from *David* also, by *Nathan* another of his Sons, who was born to him in *Jerusalem*, as well as *Solomon*. This sufficiently accounts for the Difficulty without any thing like a Contradiction. For there may very well be such a Variation in the Names as there is in these two Accounts, when two different Families are trac'd; and each Account may answer the End of the Evangelist; and yet both may come out of authentick Jewish Archives.

But

But if a late Author, of whom some are extremely fond, may be credited, this of our Saviour's Pedigree is far from being the only *Contradiction* in the Gospel-History. He would persuade us such things are common. He tells us in so many words, that *it is very plain that the Historians of the Scripture were not inspir'd, by the Contradictions that are found in several Circumstances of their Histories. The Evangelists agree perfectly among themselves, in what concerns the main of the History of Jesus Christ, but there are some Circumstances wherein they disagree; a clear Proof that every Particular was not inspir'd, &c.* Herein he sets himself up in direct Opposition to all the able Defenders of the Holy Scriptures, that have been in the Christian Church from Age to Age; who, notwithstanding they were aware of some *Difficulties*, yet had a mighty Veneration for the whole Composure, and the Historical Parts among the rest, as coming from God himself. A Man had need be well assur'd, that flies in the face of all of them at once, in a matter of such Consequence. He had need have very considerable Evidence to alledge, or all must necessarily declare him insupportably Arrogant. He says, *Tho' the Circumstances wherein they differ, are things of small Consequence, yet if the Holy Spirit had dictated all to them as is pretended, they would perfectly agree in every thing: These Circumstances being as well known to God, as the main of the History.* But by the way, who is it that pretends the Writers of the New Testament, had all the Circumstances of the matters which they Historically relate, dictated to them in a way of immediate Suggestion? There is no neces-

Five Letters concerning Inspiration, p. 35.

fity of this : 'Tis enough, that in drawing up their History, they were under the Spirit's infallible Conduct; under such a Conduct as kept them from Mistake and Error, and secur'd them not only from *Contradictions*, but Misrepresentations. This is what is generally held, and upon good Grounds. Tho' all Circumstances be indeed as well known to God as the main of the History, yet it does not therefore follow, that if they express themselves differently, they must either contradict themselves, or not be inspir'd. That there is a seeming Difference between the Evangelists in some Circumstances of their History, is very true: But their Accounts are easily reconcil'd. Thus St. *Matthew* tells us, that *after six Days our Saviour was transfigur'd before his Disciples*: Whereas St. *Luke* tells us, that it was *eight Days after*. But the meaning is plain; and there's no real clashing: It was a Week after what was before related; and a Week's time may be very safely express'd either way; and be said either to be six Days after, or eight Days after; and 'tis much at one. So also, one says, that our Saviour suffer'd about the *Sixth Hour*. And another, that it was about the *Ninth Hour*; without any real Disagreement: Because, according to their way of reckoning, where the sixth Hour ended, the ninth began. In these things there's nothing of a *Contradiction*. Neither have we in any thing of this kind, the least reason to believe the sacred History was not inspir'd, as far as we hold it to be inspir'd. For, tho' God most certainly knew all Circumstances as well as material Facts, yet might he keep them in drawing up their Historical Report, under

der a peculiar infallible Conduct, and still leave them to themselves in such Circumstances, so far, as that they might express themselves differently. 'Tis enough to prove them inspir'd, if they were under an infallible Conduct: And that being secur'd, such little seeming Differences are a very good Argument, that the great Agreement there is between them, was not the effect of Contrivance, and mutual Consultation, which is a thing of weight, that deserves to be consider'd.

After so bold a general Charge, tending very much to diminish the Credit of our sacred Historians, with all that regard it, the only Instance that can be brought for a Proof, is the Case of *Judas*, of whom we have so different an Account given us by *St. Matthew*, and in the *Acts*. *St. Matthew* tells us, that *Judas*, when he saw that our Lord was condemn'd, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of Silver to the chief Priests and Elders, and cast them down in the Temple, and departed, and went and hang'd himself: and that the chief Priests took the silver Pieces, and took Counsel, and bought with them the Potters Field, &c. Whereas *St. Luke* brings in *St. Peter*, saying, that this Man purchas'd a Field with the Reward of Iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his Bowels gush'd out: And that this being known unto all the Dwellers at Jerusalem, they called it *Aceldama*; that is to say, the Field of Blood. Here, he says, is a manifest Contradiction, which the Learned in vain endeavour to reconcile. But these two Accounts are easily reconcil'd by one that has not a purpose to serve by setting the Holy Scriptures at variance with themselves. For, let us but suppose that *Judas*

Matth.

27. 3, 4, 5,

&c.

Acts 1.

18, 19.

Five Letters, p. 36.

das

das hang'd himself over a steep Precipice, and afterwards fell down by the breaking of the Cord, before he was throughly dead ; and so had a final Period put to his miserable Life, by his bursting upon his Fall, and the gushing out of his Bowels, and the seeming difference as to the manner of his Death vanishes. And as for the Purchase of the Field, Judas might agree for it, and the Priests make the Payment afterwards, with the Money that he return'd to them.

* He that would see this matter fully debated, may consult Dr. Edwards's Enquiry into several remarkable Texts of the Old and New Testament. Part 2. Pag. 141, &c.

* The Criticks are often forc'd to make much stranger suppositions than these to reconcile Passages in Pagan Authors : And methinks , none

should grudge to make Suppositions that are so fair, in order to the reconciling seemingly different Passages in our Sacred Writings, that is not desirous, by making them appear *Contradictions*, to abate their Credit, and bring them into Contempt: Which yet, at long run, will be found to be one of the most dangerous Attempts in the World. He, as Monsieur Lamothe observes, must have declar'd open War against the sacred Writers, that calls this a *manifest Contradiction*. He says, *there are many other such like*. But if they are but *such like*, we need not be disturb'd at the thoughts of them: Since we find this so easily solvable, tho' he accounts it a *manifest Contradiction*. This first Objection then, taken from suppos'd *Contradictions*, being solv'd sufficiently; I'll only subjoin these three Reflections.

r. We have good Reason to be heartily thankful, that there's nothing that looks like

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a *Contradiction* in the things that most nearly relate to our Salvation. Seeming *Contradictions* indeed there are in some parts of our sacred Records; but they are about things comparatively minute, and of little moment; about some smaller Circumstances as to time, and place, and manner; about things, Exactness in which is of no Importance. The great things which we are concern'd in, and are mainly to look after, are the matters which the Scriptures tell us our Salvation depends upon; in which there is in our sacred Records a full Agreement. If this be but seriously consider'd, tho' we do find sometimes an appearance of *Contradictions* in smaller matters, we shall rather be thence led to infer, that there was no Combination, or Design among the Writers, to deceive us, than that they could not in Writing be under an infallible Divine Conduct. Let us then be thankful, that we have such satisfactory Evidence that they were under such a Conduct; in that all the Fundamental Points of our Religion are reported either in the same manner; or with such Variety as tends but the better to explain them: So that there's no clashing; no appearance of *Contradiction* in such matters. Let us be so satisfy'd with that, as to adhere to our Bibles, tho' we should meet with Difficulties we could not solve. Let us conclude, since the Book came from God, that if he had not had wise Purposes to have serv'd by the Method he has taken, he would have freed even those matters that are less essential, of the Difficulties with which they are attended in some Cases; as he could easily have done, had he thought fit.

2. We should also do well to take notice, that there is a Submissiveness of Spirit necessary in any one that really puts himself under Divine Conduct. We have very good Evidence that God has given us the Scriptures, as a Rule of Faith and Life : And if we'll apply our selves to them with sincere, and honest Intentions, we shall find them abundantly sufficient to answer their End. He that will uprightly and candidly enquire, and use the means which the Providence of God hath afforded him, by the Labours of pious Men, will certainly find Cause to acquit the Holy Scriptures of those Imputations, which bold Cavillers have cast upon it. I don't say he shall have all the Difficulties he may meet with there, clear'd up to his full Satisfaction ; but he shall have Light in as many of them as shall be needful ; and shall discern such Reasons why the rest remain unfathomable, as shall incline him not only to justify, but celebrate the Wisdom of the Author. But then, this is only to be expected by one that is willing to learn ; and ready to take Measures from God, instead of dictating to him.

3. It may be farther observ'd, that where such a submissive sort of Temper is wanting, 'tis not to be wonder'd if God leaves Men to be bewilder'd. It need not be esteem'd strange at all, that they that come to the Scripture with a Design, and Desire to find matter of *Cavil* and Accusation, should find that *Spirit of Prophaneness* that sent them thither, meeting them there as a *Spirit of Delusion*. When notwithstanding our Saviour's mighty Works, many would not believe, but revil'd him, and blasphem'd the Holy Spirit, he

he did not think himself concern'd to work more Miracles for their Satisfaction, or at their captious Demands. He plainly left them to a *Spirit of Infidelity*; and that justly. 'Tis the same in the general Government of the World. God has given sufficient Evidence of his Being, and Providence: But if Men instead of believing thereupon, delight in *Carvils*, he does not work Miracles to silence, confute, and satisfy them, but leaves them to themselves. And 'tis the same also with reference to the Holy Scriptures. He hath given good Evidence they came from him. But if, notwithstanding this, because of some places that are difficult, Men will fancy they meet with *Contradictions*, and so will flight the whole; if they will perswade themselves there can be no way of reconciling them, because they can't presently find one out; he leaves them to themselves; and then they blunder most woefully in the Dark: And this is most highly just. Such will most certainly fall e'er long, under the same Condemnation with those who deny the Being of a God, because they cannot satisfy themselves how he made, and governs the World; and with those who would not believe our Saviour's Miracles, unless he would work them when, and where, and just in what manner they pleas'd.

It is really enough to fill a serious Heart with Horror, to think of the Prophaneness of *Politian*, a Man of Learning. He did not stick to declare, that he never read the Bible but once in his Life; but that he thought it the worst time that ever he spent. What in the mean time were the fruits of his Studies? A few trifling Criticisms discover'd, that
tend-

tended not to make him, or others either wiser, or better. Far be such a Spirit from us, as we would not curse our selves for our Folly another Day. I hope we can declare the contrary to that, from our own Experience: Can safely say, that we never spent our time with more Profit or Pleasure, than when we have been conversing with our Bibles. Let us hold on, whatever such Wretches may suggest. Let us disregard their Clamours: Let us pity, and pray for them, but not be influenci'd by their *Cavils*. And when they, with all their Niceness, do but hasten, and aggravate their Condemnation; we may depend upon it, that we shall grow *wise unto Salvation*.

SERMON VII.

2 TIM. III. 16.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.

A Second Objection that is often in the Mouths of those who undervalue our sacred Writings, is this. 'Tho' the Bible should not directly *contradict* it self, it yet contains so many things that are *monstrously absurd*, and so many things that are *flatly impossible*, that we can never believe (say they) that as it is, it was given by Inspiration of God. For instance: What can be more *absurd* than the Account there given of the Conference between *Eve* and the *Serpent*? And afterwards between *Balaam* and his *Ass*? Is it a thing any way supposable, that Bruits should act like Rational Creatures, and have a power of Speech, tho' their Organs are utterly unfit for it? Is not the speaking of *Balaam's Ass* much such another Story, as that of the speaking of *Livy's Ox*? Or can any Man of Sense believe, that a Rational Creature can be transform'd into a Bruit, which the Bible represents

At Salters-Hall,
Tuesday
Lecture,
May 1,
1705.
Obj. 2.

' sents as *Nebuchadnezzar's* Case ? Nay, that a
 ' reasonable Creature should be turn'd into a
 ' meer senseless Lump, which was the Case of
 ' *Lot's* Wife, if she was turn'd into a *Pillar of*
 ' *Salt* ? Are not these things as incredible as
 ' any of the Stories in *Ovid's Metamorphoses* ?
 ' Are there not fundry things thererelated, that
 ' are absolutely *impossible* ? Is it not impossible
 ' that the *Ark* should hold all the several Crea-
 ' tures said to be contain'd in it at the time of
 ' the Deluge ? That all kinds of Creatures, not
 ' only in their own Bulks, but with a compe-
 ' tency of Food and Sustainance, should be
 ' preserv'd within the compass of 300 Cubits ?
 ' Is it not impossible the *Sun* should *stand still*,
 ' as it is said to have done, in the Days of *Jo-*
 ' *shua*, without putting the whole frame of
 ' Nature into Confusion ? And that *Jonah*
 ' should live, without any Respiration, in the
 ' *Belly of a Whale*, and not be digested within him,
 ' as his Food was ? And is it not *flatly impossible*
 ' that there should be three, that equally possess
 ' all Divine Perfections, and yet be but one
 ' God ? That God should become a Man ? And
 ' that a Virgin should conceive, and bring forth
 ' a Son, and the like ? Reason plainly tells us
 ' these things cannot be ; they are *impossible* :
 ' And therefore those Writings, in which such
 ' things are contain'd, cannot be given by the
 ' Inspiration of God.

I have given the Objection as plausible a turn,
 as those who are fondest of it can, I think, desire ;
 and in great part in their own Words, without
 taking from it any of its seeming Force. Let us
 then see whether, by considering the matter of
 this Objection more generally, and the Instan-
 ces alledg'd more particularly, we may not, in-
 stead

stead of being shaken, be the more confirm'd in the Belief of the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures.

In the General I desire the following things may here be noted.

I. Would but they that make and lay most stress on this Objection be prevail'd with seriously to consider their own Ignorance, Shal- lowness, and Incapacity to judge, the appear- ing Strength of their Plea would soon vanish. Alas! who or what are we, that we should pre- tend to call God's Revelations to the Bar and arraign them? How can it be excus'd that we should so take upon us, when we can see so little a way, even there where we have the freest Scope? and are so soon puzzled in the plainest things, and those that are most ob- vious? Is it for us to represent those things as *ridiculous*, which God has thought fittest! Don't we strangely forget our selves, when we pretend to say that such and such things cannot be, as he tells us have been, because we it may be can't tell how or which way they could be? Can any thing appear more *absurd* than this, to one that rightly takes his own measure? Shall we question the Truth of such things as are reported by Persons who gave such Proof of a Divine Commission as did our Sacred Penmen, because we cannot understand the manner of the things, or their Causes, or dive into all Circumstances about them, into which our Curiosity might tempt us to be inquisitive? We most evidently ex- pose our selves by but giving way to such a Thought. How few things do we know in their Causes? How few Modes of things can

we account for, even where we have the plainest Evidence of their Truth and Reality? What Mortal Man can give such an Account of the Formation and the Springs of Motion in an Human Soul; of Respiration, Nutrition, and Sanguification in an Human Body; of the Flux and Reflux of the Sea; of Earthquakes, Thunders, and Lightnings; nay of the meanest Plant, or the smallest Insect, as shall leave no Difficulties remaining? And if so, why should it at all seem surprizing to us, if in a Revelation duly attested to come from Heaven, there should be many things out of our Reach, and beyond our Grasp? How little do we know the Force of natural Causes; and how then can we tell what goes beyond the Verge of natural Possibilities? And supposing an Almighty Power at Helm, how can we pretend to set bounds to it? How many things occur, of which we may very freely say, that if they were not, we should be apt to think they could not be? Had we never seen this Earth that is so beautifully and plentifully furnish'd, surrounded with superior Orbs, that are adorn'd with Sun, Moon, and Stars, which have a mighty Influence on all things in this inferior Region, we should be apt to think such things could not be: and why then should we fancy other things *impossible*, because they exceed our Knowledge? Do we own the infinite Power of God, or do we not? If we don't, we had e'en as good deny his Being. If we do, our pretending to set bounds to it is *inexcusable Arrogance*. Let us but read and soberly consider the thirty eighth, thirty ninth, fortieth, and forty first Chapters of *Job*, where God so poses poor *Job* as to his Power and Know-

Knowledge, and we must needs be ashamed of our Folly. We are unable fully to understand the Nature and the Reasons of those Works of God that are daily before our Eyes: and how can we then pretend to fathom his Counsels, or censure his Revelations, or pronounce any thing *impossible*, which he tells us actually was? The giving way to such a Temper would argue strange Forgetfulness both of God, and our selves.

2. The way that they take who lay the most stress upon this Objection, would quite exclude all *Divine Faith* out of the World. What is *Faith* in the General, but a believing things upon credible Testimony? And what is *Divine Faith*, but a believing things upon a Divine Testimony? No Testimony so credible, as that which is duly attested to be Divine. But if we won't believe things that come to us confirm'd by a Divine Testimony, we quite exclude *Divine Faith*, and confine our selves to Sense and Human Testimony, and deprive our selves of that way of Satisfaction which we might have in our most important Matters, by a Divine Report, upon which when well attested, we may in any case have the firmest Reliance. To see things in their own Evidence is not proper Believing. To a true Belief it is necessary that the Credit of the Testifier be the Reason of our Assent. Thus we refuse not to credit our Fellow-Creatures when they report to us many things upon their own Knowledge, which we are not able distinctly to conceive: That hinders not our giving Credit to them, if we are satisfy'd in their Ability and Integrity. And I may say in this case as the Apostle, *If we receive the Witnesses of Men, the* 1 Joh. 5. 9.

Witness of God is greater. He is infinitely Wise, and cannot be deceiv'd ; infinitely Good, and cannot deceive. If therefore when a Revelation is in all fitting Ways attested to come from him, we'll take the Liberty to reject any part of it as *incredible*, we shut out *Divine Faith*, and represent the Blessed God as attempting to impose upon us. If we must see the Manner and the Causes, and be distinctly acquainted with all the Circumstances of such things as God has reveal'd, before we'll believe them, we in effect declare we won't believe at all.

3. It is not conceivable that there should be a Divine Revelation disclosing God's Methods of Procedure from the Beginning to the End of Time, that should not contain some things as *incredible*, as any of those which the Objectors of this sort are won't to single out. For instance, if a Revelation begins with the first Formation of all things, it must let us know how they came into Being. It must signify to us that they were made out of nothing, by him who ever was ; and who if he had not ever been, could never have been : For that, if there ever had been an Instant in which there was nothing, there never could have been any thing. If God then ever was, and that necessarily, and there be nothing else besides him, but what owes its Being to him, then must a Revelation by which he discovers himself to us, represent him as making all things out of nothing. And he that can believe all things were really made out of nothing, to him nothing can seem incredible, that he has Reason to believe is reported by his Warrant, by whom all things were so made. But besides, this God that so made, most certainly manages all things

things in the Way that he thinks fittest : and tho' he has a stated Order, yet he cannot but be at Liberty to vary from it, when his Purposes would be more effectually that way serv'd. So that tho' there are certain Laws of Nature, which God hath wisely fix'd, yet it is not conceivable but that a Divine Revelation should give an Account of some Variations from those settled Laws, in a miraculous Way, in order to the awakening the World, and the rendring the Power and Greatness and Majesty of the Maker of it the more conspicuous. And none of them can be *impossible* to one that could make such a World as this out of nothing. Again ; such a Revelation must necessarily contain Truths that we of our selves could not reach ; and Hints that we must have a great deal of time to learn the Meaning of : it must take a Compass, and not be confin'd to our little narrow Limits : it must in the Language of this World, tell us such things of the Governour, the Happiness, the Glory, of the other World above, as may be sufficient to draw forth the Admiration, and inflame the Love and Desire of such as will believe the Report. A Revelation would not be truly worthy of God, if it were otherwise. And therefore for any upon such Accounts as these to attempt to discredit such a Revelation, or represent those things that are miraculous as *impossible* ; those things that we cannot fathom as utterly *incredible* ; is in effect to declare, that we won't believe that there can be any such thing at all as a Divine Revelation of the Methods of God's Procedure from the Beginning to the End of Time. Again,

4. Such an Objection as this would appear very weak in other Matters. We should be

asham'd of such a Way of arguing as this Plea carries in it, in other Cafes. For the Argument lies thus: We can't believe the Scriptures inspir'd of God, because they give an Account of sundry things that are above our reach, that are difficult to be conceiv'd, or that we cannot comprehend: And are we free to pursue this Argument as far as it will carry us? Can we think our selves always oblig'd to doubt and hesitate about things, the explaining which may puzzle and perplex us? Do we question whether or no we move, because we can't give a full and exact Account of the Cause and Laws of Motion? Or do we refuse to eat, till we can give an account how and after what manner we are nourish'd? If such an Objection will not influence us in the common Affairs of Life, why should it in that which is vastly more important? If in the one it would expose us to Derision to lay stress upon it, why should it not in the other also? Possibly it may be said that there is a great Difference between the two Cafes: That in such common Matters no Man questions the *Possibility* of the thing, tho' he mayn't be able to give an account of the *Manner* of it; whereas there are several things in Scripture, which we not only know nothing of the *Manner* of, but cannot conceive *possible* to be. But the Difference in this respect is not so great as is pretended. For a Man may to the full as rationally question the *Possibility* of Local Motion, notwithstanding that he sees and feels it, because he can't distinctly account for the Cause of it, as he can the *Possibility* of the Creation when God assures of it, because he can't conceive it. He may as justly question the *Possibility* of Nutrition, because of some

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Difficulties that attend it, tho' he really sensibly perceives it; as question the *Possibility* of a future Resurrection, notwithstanding all its Difficulties, when God plainly declares that he'll effect it. And if it be farther urg'd, that there is a greater Degree of Certainty in the Case, that our Sense assures us of Local Motion and Nutrition, than there is that any such Declaration as to the Creation and the Resurrection truly came from God; I answer that the Evidence is of a different Kind, and not to be judg'd of the same Way: But to a Mind that is well dispos'd, such Evidence as is truly Rational, is as fully satisfactory, as that which lies openest to our Senses. And he that will not be satisfy'd in any Case with such Evidence as suits the Nature of the thing under Consideration, is grossly unreasonable: And let him make ever such Pretences to more Reason and Philosophy than his Neighbours, he does but impose upon himself.

But it will be said, 'tis unreasonable either in God or Man to require us to believe *Impossibilities*. I answer; God never requir'd any Man to believe what is properly *impossible*: But there are many things *impossible* with us, that are easily *possible* for him. There are many things that we can't conceive how they could *possibly* be effected, which he hath compass'd without any Difficulty. And if God tells us that any thing is so and so, or has been done, no Man can bring any thing near the Evidence of the *Impossibility* of it, as may be brought of the *Impossibility* of his imposing upon us. But if we will give our selves the Liberty of representing those things in our Sacred Records that appear surprizing, as very unlikely;

and fancy them *impossible* because we can't conceive them ; and then will conclude that those Records could not be inspir'd of God, in which such things are contain'd, we run into *Infidelity* without retrieve : And it will appear at last, that it was not for want of sufficient Evidence to convince us ; but because we would be *Infidels*. For if when a Revelation is credibly Attested to be from Heaven, we will cavil, instead of humbly acquiescing ; will cry with *Nicodemus* the Pharisee, *How can these things be ?* And captiously quarrel with God, because all things are not exactly suited to our Level ; we flie in God's Face, and in Effect give him the Lie ; and tell him we scorn to be guided by him.

But that I may yet more Distinctly Evidence the Futility of these Cavils, I shall now proceed to consider the Particular Instances mention'd in the Objection ; and give such Touches upon each, as may contribute to the Confirmation and Establishment, of such as are willing to receive Satisfaction.

Gen. 3. I begin with the Conference between *Eve* and the *Serpent*, as *Moses* has Reported it. This was derided of old by the Noted Enemies of Reveal'd Religion ; and has been of late expos'd by one of considerable Learning, who has fram'd a Comical Dialogue between them, which is so manag'd as to have a manifest Tendency to feed the sceptical Humour of the Age we live in. Some I know that have had no ill Design upon Religion have represented *Moses's* Account of the Discourse between *Eve* and the *Serpent*, in the Garden of *Eden*, in the first and great Temptation, to be wholly *Figurative*. After *Origen*, several of the Fathers went that

D. Bur-
netti
Arch.
Phil. Lib.
2. Cap. 7.

that way. And among the Moderns, *Amyrald**, tho' a Great Man, unhappily fell into this Snare; and rais'd many Objections against the *Literal* Sense of that History; which were fully answer'd by another Great Man of his own Nation, the Learned *Bochart* †.

Several both more Antiently and lately, that have had rich Fancies, have in this and other instances been for turning the sacred Story into an *Allegory*. But really our *Allegorick* Interpreters have done the Holy Scriptures great Disservice. For according to their usual Method, let the Scripture be ever so Express, you may deny it, and substitute your own Fancies in the room of the *Literal* Sense, and then after all the Pompous Elogiums you give the Scripture, it will at last stand for a meer Cypher. These Men serve our sacred Oracles just as your *Rosacrucians* do Metals: They rack and torture them, and promise themselves to extract Gold out of them, but at last all vanishes into nothing but a little empty, tho' costly Smoke. The Prevalence of such a Temper would effectually overthrow Religion in the World. 'Tis easy indeed to make any thing appear ridiculous, that Men affect to represent as such: But really the *Mosaical* Account of *Eve's* Temptation carries in it nothing of *Absurdity*, much less of *Impossibility*, if it be consider'd fairly, and without Prejudice.

* *Dissertationes Theologicae sex; quarum quinta de Serpente Tentatore. Salm. 1660.*

† Vide *Bocharti Opera* Tom. 1. p. 834. ubi occurrit Epistola ad *Jac. Capellum* de Serpente Tentatore, Paradiso Terrestri, &c.--Vide etiam *Joh. Paschii* Tractat. de Serpente seductore; in *Theaur. Theolog. Philolog. Par. 1. p. 62, &c.*

Is it therefore ridiculous, or therefore *impossible*, because a *Serpent* cannot speak? Alas, we don't suppose he could or did speak of himself: We have nothing like that in the Text. 'Tis suppos'd it was *preter-natural*. But is it therefore presently *impossible*? Tho' *Moses* is silent as to the Manager of the *Serpent*, when he was the Instrument in this Temptation, yet it is plain from other Places of sacred Writ that the Devil spake thro' him upon this Occa-

2 Cor. II.
3.

Devil is in the New Testament represented as Rev. 12.9. a *Serpent*, and the *Old Serpent*, from this very

Account of *Moses*, at the beginning of the Old Testament*. And why might he not appear and speak to *Eve* in that as well as in any other *Form* or *Shape*? Where lies the great *Absurdity*; and much more

* *Mr. Witty* in his *Vindication* of the *Mosaick History* of the *Fall*, p. 13, &c. very well argues for the understanding the *Mosaical Account* Literally from our being refer'd in the *New Testament*, for satisfaction as to the *Fall* of *Man*, to the *Narrative* of *Moses*.

the *Impossibility* of it? His using a *Voice* upon this Occasion, without any *Shape*, might not perhaps be allow'd him; because that was the way in which *God* himself then commun'd with our first *Parents*. His *Tempting* by *inward Suggestion* only, without any outward *Proposition*, was not so feasible in it self, nay indeed utterly inconceivable while *Man* was innocent. And if he could not take either of these ways, if he became a *Tempter*, he must appear in some *Visible Form* and *Shape* or other. Had he assum'd an *Humane Form*, the *Fraud* had immediately been discover'd. For *Eve* could not be so ignorant as not to know that there was no *Man* then in being but *Adam*.
And

And had he assum'd the *Form* of a Bird, or of any other Beast when he address'd himself to her, there would have been the same Question as now: Why that, rather than any other? But 'tis said, that *Eve* hearing a *Serpent* speak, who she could not but know was naturally incapable of it, might very well be suspicious of an Imposture: And that therefore this Method directly tended to strike her with Terror and Amazement. But let it be consider'd; the Case in this respect had been the same, had he spoken thro' any other Creature, that had the same natural Incapacity of Speech. And withal; tho' the *Serpent* was unable to speak of himself, yet if the Devil speaking through him, represented his becoming capable of Speech as the effect of his eating of that Fruit, of which he was solliciting her to take a Taste, (which some have apprehended was the real Case) it could not but have a mighty insinuating Force, and give an Edge to the Temptation. For it naturally led her to think, that if he was this way advanc'd to the Perfection of *Speech*, she by eating of the same Fruit, might hope for a proportionable Advancement to higher Perfection in *Wisdom*, suiting her own more exalted Capacity. Or if this were not the Case, 'tis not impossible but she might think it was a Good Angel that spake in the Trunk of the *Serpent*, and so thro' mistake she might unawares enter into Communication with the Devil. Besides; we can't suppose the Devil was at Liberty to use what Instrument he pleas'd, upon such an Occasion as this. He that could not afterwards, so much as *enter into the Herd of Swine* Mat. 8. without Permission, could not, we may be assur'd,

affur'd, take any Creature in Paradise at pleasure, to use as his Instrument in the intended Temptation. Moreover, it was very agreeable to the Divine Wisdom, so to limit this malignant Spirit, as that he should not be able to use any other Instrument in his Assault, than such as should be expressive of his proper Genius; in which respect none could be found fitter than the *Serpent*, which our sacred Historian seems himself to insinuate, when

Gen 3. 1. he takes notice that he was *more subtil than any Beast of the Field*: Which is also easily observ'd by those that consider the Account given of that Creature by the most sagacious Naturalists. But, supposing the Devil to speak thro' the *Serpent*, there is nothing incredible in that Relation, nothing that need shock us. For, if God would give the Devil leave to assault *Eve*, (the reconciling which to the Divine Perfections, is not a matter of present Concern) it was neither *impossible* for him to make use of a *Serpent*, nor thro' him to hold that Discourse with her which the sacred Historian relates. He that can possess humane Creatures when God gives leave, and so doing, can help them to perform such feats of Activity, as they are naturally incapable of, which have been credibly reported, both by Antients and Moderns, might easily, with Divine Allowance, speak thro' a *Serpent's* Mouth to our Grandmother *Eve*, and so doing, rob her of her Innocence, and Integrity. And they that question this, know but very little of the Power of Spirits.

Num. 22. 28, &c. As to the second Instance, *viz.* the speaking of *Balaam's* Ass to his Rider, much need not be said to it. The *Pagans* laugh'd at it,

it, and yet had many stranger Passages of Beasts that had their Mouths open'd, and that spake upon some extraordinary Occasions, in their most celebrated Histories: As any Man may see, that consults *Eusebius*, *Pliny*, *Polybius*, and *Plutarch*, and others. *Maimonides* thought that the speaking of this Ass was only in a *Vision*: And that this History was of the same nature with that of *Jacob's* wrestling with an Angel. ^{Gen. 32.} But I can't conceive what Satisfacti-^{24.} on we could well have, that a real Fact is related that we have not here. There is nothing in it that can appear *impossible* to one that believes the Divine Omnipotence. The Text tells us, that *the Lord open'd the Mouth of the Ass*. He that makes us to speak, or strikes us dumb at Pleasure; he that could have made the Beast to be a Man, made him speak with an humane Voice, to serve his Purpose. Where's the *Impossibility*? Don't we our selves teach Birds to speak Sentences which they do not understand? We may wonder, but have no reason to call in question, when we compare the Act with the Author; to whom it was as easy to create a Voice without a Body, as a Body without a Voice. Why should we question whether he, that could make a Creature out of nothing, could make it serve his Purpose in a preternatural way? If any pretend, that whatever God could do, absolutely speaking, it yet seems utterly beneath him, and altogether incredible, that he should work a Miracle, in opening the Mouth of so silly a Creature as an Ass, to make it speak; I answer: That is an Objection so far from having any force, that on the contrary, the Wisdom of this Miracle of Providence was, as

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Circumstances stood, very conspicuous. The Folly of *Baalam* was this way most effectually reprov'd : Which the Apostle takes notice of, when he says, that *the dumb Ass speaking with Man's Voice, forbid the Madness of the Prophet.*

2 Pet. 2.
16.

The third thing mention'd in the Objection, is the Case of *Nebuchadnezzar*, King of *Babylon*. Of him we are told, that *he was driven from Men, and did eat Grass, as Oxen, and his Body was wet with the Dew of Heaven, till his Hairs were grown like Eagles Feathers, and his Nails like Birds Claws.* But what is there in this that is at all *incredible*, and much more, can appear *impossible*, to one that knows any thing of the Power, and the sad Effects of *Melancholy* ? The Text does not intimate that he was turn'd into a Beast : Nor have we any reason to suppose it. His Case was plainly this, He lost the free use of his Reason, and his imaginative Faculty was let loose upon him ; he was Distracted ; he fancy'd himself turn'd into a Beast ; and his Fancy was so strong, that he acted like one, as many Persons have done in the height of *Melancholy*. He had a *Lycanthropy*. And in these Circumstances being neglected, his Hair and Nails grew exceedingly, and gave him a very horrid Aspect. And taking it thus, here was a very fit, and proper Judgment for so proud and insolent a Mortal : It was so suited to his Crimes, that it's liable to no Impeachment.

Dan. 4.
33.

Gen. 19.
25.

But tho' in this Case there was no real *Transformation*, yet, 'tis said, there was one in the Case of *Lot's Wife* ; and such a *Transformation* too as is *incredible*. We are told, *she became a Pillar of Salt.* And why should this appear

appear so *incredible*? May not God take what Methods he pleases to inflict his Judgments without our arraighing him? Why should her Punishment appear more *incredible*, than that of the Inhabitants of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*? Why might not she be struck dead with Lightning, and stiffen'd, and fix'd in the Place where she stood, and her Remains be of a salt and brackish Smell, and so be call'd a Pillar of Salt, as well as *Sodom*, and its neighbour Cities, be destroy'd by a Shower of Fire and Brimstone? Tho' for my part, I must confess, I should rather say, that we are not to understand the Pillar of common Salt which is dissolv'd by Water, but of a Metallick Salt, of which, *Pliny* * tells us, they built Houses, and which was drawn out of the Mountains like Marble. And supposing her turn'd into a Pillar of this Metallick Salt, we are to understand the *Transformation* only, as to the bodily Substance, the immortal Spirit retiring, as it would have done at Death, or Expiration in a more common way. And if Naturalists are consulted, we shall find them telling us of several *Transmutations* of one Substance into another, that have as odd an Appearance to the full, as this of humane Flesh into a Pillar of Salt. But whether we'll believe this Punishment of *Lot's Wife*, yea, or no, 'tis plain our Saviour believ'd it: And therefore he bids his Disciples *remember Lot's Wife*. He would have Luk. 17. them remember it for their Caution. And a 32. dreadful Caution it was against Distrust, Disobedience, Unbelief, and a Love for the forbidden Society of lewd and wicked Persons. When any go out of the common way of Sinning, we need not wonder if God comes with uncommon

* *Nat. Hist.* 1.31. cap. 7.

mon Judgments. But we may be assur'd, as to this History, that if it had not been undoubtedly true, our Blessed Saviour would never have confirm'd it with his Testimony, and propounded it for our Caution.

As for the Ark of *Noah*, its Capacity was greater, and there was more room in it than we commonly apprehend. They that have taken the most pains in computing exactly, find room sufficient for more Creatures than we are distinctly acquainted with, and for proper Sustenance for them, during the whole time of their continuance

* Joan. Buteonis Delphinatis de Arca Noe, cujus Formæ Capacitatisq; fuerit Libellus.

there. *Buteo*, * a Learned Man, has plainly demonstrated it : And we may safely defy any Man

Gen. 6.
15.

to prove any thing like an Impossibility on the other hand. We are told that the *Ark* was 300 Cubits long, 50 in breadth, and 30 in height, and divided into 3 Stories. So that the Compass of it would have contain'd four hundred and fifty thousand Cubits square, had there been no sloping in the Roof. And if we abate 50000 Cubits for the sloping, there was room sufficient. We may divide the *Beasts* that were to be hous'd here in the time of the Deluge, into three Kinds. The *Oxen* Kind, the *Sheepish* Kind, and the *Wolfish* Kind. They that have been at pains in calculating, and in canvassing the Writings of Naturalists for that Purpose, reckon there are under 60 Pair of the first sort ; forty Pair of the second sort ; and about as many of the third. And they have prov'd, that one of these *Stories* would have room enough to hold all those Creatures ; that the second *Story* would allow

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Stowage for sufficient Provision for their Subsistence while they continued there : And the third *Story* would be sufficient for *Noah*, and his Family, and yet leave room enough for the several sorts of *Fowls* that were to be preserv'd, with the Sustenance proper for them also.

The next thing mention'd in the Objecti-^{Josh. 10.} on, is the *Sun's* standing still in the Days of ^{12, 13.} *Joshua*, to give him time for a compleat Victory over his Enemies, which carries in it nothing like an *Impossibility*. For he that establish'd the superior Luminaries in their settled Course, can most certainly suspend that Course when he thinks fit ; and that without any thing of Difficulty. Neither does it at all follow, that upon supposition of so long a Day, as the sacred History mentions in that Case, Confusion must ensue : For the whole Frame of Nature stood still together. *Joshua*, indeed, had no Power to procure this : But God, who has all things at his Dispose, might at his Request, easily so order it, that he might have an Opportunity of compleating his Victory. To say this is *impossible*, is to exempt the Course of things from the Divine Controul, and exclude all Miracles ; and so to discard one of the strongest, and clearest Evidences that we have, or can have, in confirmation of Religion. When the *Europeans* first visited the *American* Parts, they found those poor ignorant Creatures utterly unable to conceive that it could be a *possible* thing, for any Men to foresee, and calculate the *Eclipses* of the Heavenly Bodies : And when they found that they could certainly foretell them that the Moon would

be Eclips'd at such a time, and observ'd that the Event answer'd, they thought they were little Gods, or otherwise, they apprehended it *impossible* they should have so much Sagacity and Skill. But they are yet more brutishly ignorant than these poor People were, who suppose and own that the Almighty God has the ordering, and management of the Heavenly Bodies, and yet look upon it as *impossible* for him to suspend their Motion and Influence, when his so doing would best serve his Purposes. If this be *impossible*, then is it *impossible* for God to govern the World. Blind Fate, and not Infinite Wisdom must then be at Helm, and manage all things.

And as for *Jonah's* Case, 'twas very peculiar. 'Twas a marvellous thing that he should live three Days and Nights in the *Belly of a Whale*, and not be suffocated for want of Breath, nor digested by the prodigious Heat of that monstrous Creature's Stomach: But alas, he that commonly preserves Life by the help of Nutrition, and Respiration, can as easily preserve it without either of them, when he thinks fit. And he that can restore Life when it is lost, and raise Persons again from the Dead, can easily preserve it from those things which threaten it most. He that could hold the Jaws of the Lions, and keep them, tho' ever so hungry, from touching his Beloved *Daniel*; he that could check, and restrain the devouring Flames of the fiery Furnace, and keep them from hurting, or so much as singeing the three *Israelitish* Worthies, tho' they surrounded them; could easily keep *Jonah* as safe in the Entrails of the Whale, even as in his own House, or Bed-chamber.

And

And why might not God as well secure him of a safe Subsistence there, as he does an Infant in its Mother's Womb? What should hinder him, that has all the Springs of Nature in his Hands, from screwing, or unscrewing them at Pleasure? To suppose the contrary, is not only a dismal Reflection on that Divine Revelation that gives us our main Security, but takes away a chief Foundation of our Adoration of the Deity. For, 'tis impossible God should be an infinitely perfect Being, we could not be oblig'd to adore him as such, if he was so stak'd down, that he could not relieve his Supplicants, by varying from the common Course of things, when he saw it needful so to do.

But not to confine my self wholly in this Case, to *Historical* Passages, I shall touch upon the three *Doctrinal* Points that are mention'd also in the Objection; which are, the *Trinity*, the *Incarnation* of the Son of God, and his *Conception* as Man, in the Womb of the *Virgin*. These are often in the Age we live in, represented as things *impossible*; but very unjustly.

1. It is *impossible*, say our *Unitarians*, that there should be three that equally possess all Divine Perfections, and yet but one God. But why *impossible*? Is every thing so, that we can't distinctly conceive of? Can we imagine that God should reveal much more of himself to us than natural Light could ever discover, and there be nothing beyond our Fathom? Can a small Vessel comprehend the vast Ocean? How then can we expect to comprehend the Deity? God must cease to be God, could we grasp his Nature and Perfection.

ons. We, in effect, undeify him, when we fancy our selves capable of understanding his *Essence*. The Doctrine of the *Trinity* is own'd to be *undiscoverable* by Nature's Light: It is therefore no wonder, that we can find no suitable adequate Resemblance of it, to help us either to conceive, or describe it. But that it upon this account, must be *impossible*, no more follows, than it does, that an Eclipse of the Moon can't possibly be discern'd before-hand, because some savage Creatures can conceive nothing of the matter. The Question is this: Does that Sett of Writings that are prov'd to be Divinely inspir'd, tell us of three that have all Divine Perfections? Are these three there spoken of distinctly, and have they different Offices assign'd them, yea, or no? If not; there needs no Dispute. But if this be the real Case, we may leave it to God to answer for the *Possibility* of such a *Trinity*, and the Reconcilableness of the Doctrine of it, to the *Unity* of his Godhead: And we shall be responsible for refusing to take his Word, if we disbelieve it. Does God know himself best? Or do we know him yet better? Shall he tell us there are three that equally possess all Divine Perfections, and yet but one God, and we tell him, that this cannot be? Is not this insupportable Arrogance? Shall he tell us in

Joh. 17.3. his Word, that the Father is *the only true God* ;
 Rom. 9. 5. that Christ, his Son, is also *over all, God blessed for ever* ; and that the blessed Spirit is *the*
 2 Cor. 3. 17. *Lord, the Lord Jehovab* ; that very *Jehovab*
 Exod. 34. with whom *Moses* spake, to which the Apostle alludes very plainly ; and shall we pretend to cry out, this is *impossible* , and cannot be? What is this, but to declare that we are wiser than

than he ; and know him better than he does himself ! Which makes it hard to conceive how such as take this Method, can have any real Respect for the sacred Scriptures remaining.

2. It is also *impossible*, say the same *Unitarians*, that God should become Man ; and that God and Man should make but one *Person*. But why so ? 'Tis indeed, *impossible*, that the great and blessed God should be turn'd into a Man ; for then he must cease to be God. But why may he not assume the humane Nature into Union with himself, so as to be God and Man at once ? And why is this more *impossible*, than for two Natures so distinct as the Spiritual and Corporeal are, to be so united together, as to make up the compound Creature Man ? 'Tis true, there is a vastly greater Disproportion between the humane Nature, and the Divine, that are united in the *Mediator*, than between the corporeal Nature, and the spiritual, that are united together in Man : But tho' there is, 'tis not such as either warrants, or excuses our representing one as less *possible* than the other, if God thinks fit. 'Tis, indeed, most prodigious Condescension : 'Tis much more than for a Man to become a Flea, or Fly, or any the most contemptible Creature that is : 'Tis the greatest Wonder conceivable : 'Tis what we, when we have done all we can, can never fathom : But when God has expressly said, *the Word was made Flesh*, for us to say, this is *impossible*, and cannot be, is directly to confront him ; and tell him to his Face, that if he won't take care to suit his Revelations to our antecedent Notions, we won't at all regard them, or value them a rush.

3. It has also been represented as *impossible*, that our Blessed Saviour should have been Conceiv'd in the Womb of a Virgin. This was a matter of Derision with the primitive Writers against Christianity among the *Pagans*; but very undeservedly. For why should not the Almighty be as able to serve his Purpose by a peculiar Formation, as by the natural Process? Especially when the natural Method would have been attended with that *Infection*, that is now common to all that partake of the Nature, in the usual way, with which had he been tainted, it had hinder'd him from acting the Part of a Saviour. The Great God, instead of being Almighty, would be really impotent, if this were a thing out of his reach and compass. But, if either in this Case, or any other, we, because of the strangeness of the things related in the Scriptures, will fancy them *impossible* to be true, we take a Course that leads directly to flat *Infidelity*, and make our selves incapable of any Benefit by what God design'd should be our greatest Help.

Upon the whole then, what has been suggested in answer to this Objection, naturally leads us into such Reflections as these.

1. How sad is it for Men *that profess themselves wise*, and pretend to more Wisdom than their Neighbours, to become errand *Fools*, in their chief Concern! The Apostle tells us, this was the Case of the poor *Heathens*. They were generally much in the dark, and not insensible of it neither: But there were a sort of Men amongst them, that pretended to be wiser than the rest, call'd *Philosophers*, who, by indulging to the *Vanity of their Imaginations* had their *foolish Hearts darkned*. But

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we have little reason to wonder it should be so with them, that had only the dim Light of Nature, when we find it is so even with us, who are favour'd with Divine Revelation. It hath pleas'd God so far to condescend, as this way to make Discoveries to us, that humbly receiv'd, and carefully comply'd with, might be vastly for our Advantage. Many things indeed are still conceal'd from us: But the Light that shines on us, is clear enough to guide us comfortably, as well as safely, in the way to Heaven. We in the mean time, instead of thankfully receiving, and carefully improving so great a Favour, are very apt to fall to *Cavilling*; and to be for bringing our sacred Records to the Bar of our purblind Reason, that we may sit in Judgment, and pass our Censures: And if they suit us not, we are apt, after all, to reject them; till by contending with the Almighty, and vying with him according to our foolish Wisdom, we provoke him to leave us to the *Vanity* of our own Minds, and then we are perfectly bewilder'd, and wander about in utter Uncertainty. Many an ingenious Scholar has been this way spoil'd, and ruin'd. Many hopeful Persons, that might have been very useful in the World, have this way been drawn into *Scepticism*. And this seems the growing Danger of the present Age. Is not this sad? Is it not extremely foolish? I appeal to any Man that will allow himself liberty to use his Reason; whether the serious humble Christian, that takes what he finds in his *Bible* upon Trust, after having sufficient Evidence in the general, that it came from God, and who takes thence

the stated measures of his Life and Actions, is not in a much safer, and more comfortable State, and really at the same time, much *wiser*, than he that is Witty and Polite, who carps at this part of his Bible, as *Contradictory*, and that, as *impossible*, because he meets with things that he cannot account for, and so loses that Relish of the Book of God, that is necessary to the making it the Rule of his Practice, and by degrees *carvils* himself into a compleat *Scepticism*, and wanders about in Uncertainty, till he drops into the Flames of Hell. May it not be said of such, as justly as of any in the *Pagan* World, that *professing themselves to be wise, they become Fools*?

2. Have we not all great Reason to beware of such a *Carvilling* Temper? There can be nothing more dangerous: And therefore we should watch against the first beginnings of it, as we would not give way to it, 'till we are bewilder'd. Shun that Company that would tempt you to join with them in carping at the Holy Scriptures, or charging the matters of Fact, or Miracles there reported, as either *impossible*, or *improbable*. Be contented to come to the Scriptures as humble Learners. If ever you'd come to Heaven, you must be ductile, and submissive to Divine Light, as so many little Children, and not pretend to challenge Infinite Wisdom to a Disputation. God delighteth to scatter the Proud in the Imaginations of their own Hearts; and will, in time, convince the most aspiring Sinners, that their fancy'd Wisdom was the height of Folly. Beware, therefore, of listning to such, if you would not become like them. Don't think your selves sufficiently fortify'd against
their

their Insinuations, but be afraid lest your vain Minds should be as Tinder, and soon take Fire, as the Sparks fly upon them. Shun such Conversation, as infectious.

3. Tho' you should meet with ever so many *Difficulties* in the Holy Scriptures, which you could not solve, yet keep up your Reverence for them, if you desire, or expect any Benefit by them. When the *Jewish Rabbins* met with any Passages of Scripture, which they were sensible were too hard for them, they us'd to say, *Elias* shall answer this and that Doubt when he comes. The most Learned Christians that have liv'd in any Age, have met with some Difficulties that must be still reserv'd for the coming of *Elias*. Let not this seem strange to us: But let us dread disputing it with God. Whenever we find our selves at all inclin'd that way, let us imagine that we have that Question of *St. Paul* sounding as a clap of Thunder in our Ears; *Nay but, O Man, who art thou that repliest against God?* Rom. 2. Let us ground 20. our Faith on the plain Text of Scripture. There let us adhere, and we are safe. Tho' we should have many things that carry in them matter of insuperable Difficulty, yet let us hope, that at the coming of *Elias*, we shall see things in a better Light. Let us not waver, but persevere in the practice of true Godliness, and live up to our Light, and never desert the Scriptures, as long as we have reason to believe that they were *given by the Inspiration of God*: For since they were so, tho' they have their Difficulties, we may yet safely conclude, that they are

are profitable for *Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.* Let us be thankful that we have found them so in any measure, by our own Experience: And let us make it our daily Prayer, that we may find them so more and more.

SERMON VIII.

2 TIM. III. 16.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.

I Now proceed to consider a Third Plea against the Scripture, that is drawn from the *Style* of it. The *Style* of Human Writings discovers the Imperfections of their Authors; nor is it to be any more wonder'd at, than that Effects should correspond with their Causes. But when a Set of Writings is drawn up under a peculiar Divine Influence, in order to the serving the highest and the noblest Purpose, it seems agreeable to the Apprehensions of some Men, that the *Style* should be so peculiar, as plainly to discover the chief Author; and so free from all Imperfections, as to be liable to no Objection. This they say they cannot find in the Scripture, and therefore they hesitate as to its Inspiration, if they don't banter and ridicule it, in which some take a Liberty without Remorse.

At Salters-Hall, Tuesday Lecture, July 10. 1705. Obj. 3.

To avoid Ambiguity, it's not amiss to signify, that under *Style* in this Case divers things

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are comprehended. It takes in not only the *Grammatical Ranging and Construction of Words*, but the *intire Phraseology*, with all the *Idioms*, together with *Rhetorical Tropes and Figures*, and every thing relating to the manner of Expression. This in the Apprehension of these Persons is such, as extremely weakens the Notion of Inspiration, if it does not quite overthrow it. I'll give you their Sense in a few Particulars, with a plain Reply to each.

I. How can the Scripture, say they, be inspir'd, when the *Style* is so extremely *idiotical*, mean, and vulgar? I answer; had the *Style* been Artful according to *Humanè Rules*, it would have look'd like the Work of Men: But when it is such as that tho' it may be less agreeable to nice Palates, it yet has some Peculiarities, as to Majesty, Authority, and Piercingness attending it, that conduce much to the furtherance of its great Design, it appears the more Divine. If we'll judge aright in this Case, we must consider that the Scripture was drawn up for Men of all Capacities, and design'd to be of use to the Vulgar and the Unlearned, as well as the more sagacious; and Persons of a *Philosophical Genius*. It must condescend and stoop to their Capacities, or it would not answer its End. . Vulgar Language is far from being an Argument that God had not the Conduct of the Compilers of a Set of Writings, by which the Vulgar were to be instructed. Had it shot over their Heads, it could not have been any way beneficial to them. However when we come to such Vulgar Expressions, we are not to take them literally, but accommodately to the Nature of the things

things spoken of. Thus when we find mention made of *the Ends of Heaven*, which we know properly speaking has no Ends at all, and are told that *the going forth of the Sun is* Pf. 19. 6. *from the End of the Heaven, and his Circuit unto the Ends of it*, without fixing on the Letter of the Expression, we are to conceive, that all Parts of this Terrestrial Globe, share in the Influences of the Sun in the Firmament, which is the thing that is intended to be thereby signify'd and represented. So also we are told that *God breath'd into Man the Breath of Life, and* Gen. 2. 7. *Man became a living Soul*; which is accommodated to the Vulgar: not to encourage in them a Conceit as if the Soul of Man were nothing but a sort of Vital Breath or Air; but in a familiar manner to impress them with a Sense of the Soul's Immortality, by giving them to understand, that the two Parts of Man, *viz.* his Body and his Soul, had a very different Original; the one arising out of the Dust of the Earth, and the other proceeding immediately from God. This naturally leads us to conceive, that the one may easily survive the Dissolution of the other. It must not in the General be disown'd, that there are a great many vulgar Expressions to be met with in Scripture. Thus to affect Men with a Sense of the Majesty of God, he is represented to us, as *riding upon the Wings of the Wind, and upon the Clouds*; and *sitting in Heaven*, &c. and to insinuate the Reality of God, and his Earnestness in any thing, the Scripture brings him in as ordering it a great while ago, and *before the Foundation of the World* was laid: as if he more regarded that, than the raising of the World. *Hell* also is represented as a great Vally of Fire, like that of

Hin-

Hinnom, prepar'd on purpose to torture the Devil and his Associates: and *Heaven* is set forth as a Place of continual Banqueting; a Paradise furnish'd with all manner of Delight and Pleasure. And as for Representations of this Kind, it will be own'd by all that understand Humane Nature, that they'll be much more likely to impress the Generality, than strong and close and abstracted Arguings: and therefore it is no way unbecoming God to make use of them. Had he spoken to us in the *Language of Eternity*, we could not have understood him, or interpreted his Meaning: Or had he us'd a way of Expression suited only to the Learned, the illiterate part of Mankind had been wholly to seek. When then he hath condescended so far, as so to influence the Penmen of Holy Writ, as that they suit themselves to the Meanest; for this to be made an Argument that they were not under his peculiar Influence, carries in it so much Weakness and Ingratitude at once, as makes it justly questionable which of the two there is most of. But after all, the Language of Scripture is not so mean, as some would willingly have it accounted. Take it as to the *Grammar* of it, tho' 'tis beneath its Majesty to confine it self to the Rules of Humane *Criticism*, which perhaps is one of the most precarious and captious Arts in the World, yet it is thus far unexceptionable, that 'tis apt to convey the Sense intended. If it has sundry Speeches that have not a Critical Propriety, it is observable that like Instances may be found in the most celebrated Humane Authors. And that alone might satisfy such as consider, that the Design of the *Bible*, was not to teach Men to speak properly or exactly, but

to live holily, that they might die comfortably, and live happily for ever. The *Metaphors* and *Rhetorical Schemes* and *Figures* of Speech that are to be met with in the *Bible*, are such as were usual in the Times and Places which the Writers liv'd in ; and they are proportion'd to the End design'd, which was the instructing us in Matters of Faith and Obedience. By *Similitudes* borrow'd from obvious things, the usefullest and sublimest Truths are intimated to us : and if some of the *Allusions* and *Allegories* have a mean Appearance to us, yet they might have another Aspect among the *Eastern* People, with whom Representations of that nature were more usual than in these *Western* Parts. As to things of this kind, People of different *Climates*, and a different Education, have a different Gust. So that had the Blessed God so influenc'd the Penmen of Scripture, that they in Ornaments of this Kind should suit those amongst whom they wrote, their Manner of Expression must for that very Reason be the less suitable to others, living in Times and Places remote from theirs. *Longinus*, that was reckon'd a great Master of *Oratory* in the *Pagan* World, could see a great deal of Majesty in that Expression of *Moses* * the *Jewish* Lawgiver ; *The Lord said, Let there be Light, and there was Light.* There seem'd to him a Majesty in the Expression that was inimitable. When he took such notice of that Passage in our Sacred Oracles, he was writing concerning a *sublime* and *majestick* Style, of which he gives us this Description. *That, says he, is truly sublime, and great in a Discourse, which tho' you think of it ever so long, cannot be rais'd to an higher Pitch :* And he produces that Passage our of the First of *Genesis* as an Instance.

Gen. 1. 3.

* Longinus

Hec

T. 1. 8.

Sect. viii.

I'll give you another, which at least equals, if it don't exceed it. When God first talk'd with *Moses*, and he discover'd his Disinclination to the Office he was call'd to, he ask'd of the Lord his *Name*, that he might be able to tell the Children of *Israel*, who it was that sent him. In this Case, if any Answer were given, we might very well expect something *sublime*. And indeed nothing can be greater or more majestic than the Answer return'd :

Exod. 3.
14.

And God said unto Moses, I am that I am : thus shalt thou say unto the Children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you. Read over the Passage a hundred times, and you'll but still be the more amaz'd at the *Loftiness* of the Expression.

And indeed he that accurately surveys the Holy Scriptures, and without Prejudice, will find there an *Autoritativeness* that is peculiar ; a certain *God-like* manner of speaking that is not to be parallel'd. It's not possible for any thing to be more majestic than that Saying of our Saviour's, which he oft repeated : *He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.* With what Fear and Astonishment will many Passages of Scripture strike the Hearts of those that will observe and consider them ! Take for instance, that of the

Pf. 50.21,
22.

Psalmist. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence : thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thy self : but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine Eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. I never met with any thing like it for Awfulness in an Humane Writer. And how sharp and piercing are such Sayings as these ! He that is unjust, let him be unjust still : and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still. If any Man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

Rev. 22.

11.

1 Cor. 13.

43.

Ephra-

Ephraim is join'd to Idols, let him alone. Such Hof. 4. 17. Passages, together with many others that might be mention'd, are as full of *Majesty*, and carry in them as much of *Sublimity*, as can well be conceiv'd. But as for such as object against the Inspiration of the Scriptures from the Meanness of the *Style*, they act directly as if they would oblige the infinitely Wise God to conform to their Models; than which nothing can be more arrogant. Would they but weigh things well, instead of complaining, they'd see Reason to admire. But I'll close this Head with a memorable Saying of St. *Austin*, which all that have a due Veneration for our Sacred Oracles will readily concur in. *The Scripture*, says he, *so speaketh, that with the Height of it it laughs proud and lofty spirited Men to scorn: with the Depth of it it terrifies those who with Attention look into it: with the Truth of it it feeds Men of greatest Knowledge and Understanding: and with the Affability and Sweetness of it, it nourisheth Babes and Sucklings.* But,

II. 'Tis farther query'd, How can the Scripture be Divinely inspir'd, when the *Style* is so *Obscure*? They that lay the greatest Strefs on this Plea, fancy, that if the Great God had a hand in any Set of Writings, the Expression must be so clear as to be liable in every thing to all Apprehensions; so perspicuous as to carry in it nothing of an insuperable Difficulty. But that this Objection, when urg'd ever so strenuously, will fall far short of overthrowing the Inspiration of our Sacred Records, will be evident upon the Considerations following.

I. The Scripture is *plain* in all those things that are of the Greatest Importance. There

are indeed some things to be met with that are *hard to be understood*; but it is but some things that are so, and the rest are plain and clear. The Scripture is far from being *obscure* in those things in which it concerns us most that it should be *plain*. All those things in which Our Salvation is concern'd, are deliver'd with the greatest Openness, and Plainness, and Perspicuity imaginable. Any Man may easily understand such Declarations as these following: *What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* That without Faith it is impossible to please God. That without Holiness, no Man shall see the Lord. That except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. That God sent his Son into the World to save Sinners: And that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have Eternal Life. Things of this kind are so plain and clear, that 'tis nothing but Mens shutting their Eyes against the Light, that can keep them from understanding them. On which Account, we may safely say with the Apostle, *if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this World hath blinded their Eyes, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them.* When therefore the most necessary things are clear, to argue that the Scriptures cannot be from God, because they have some things that are *obscure*, is a sign that Persons are more dispos'd to find fault, than to be guided by him, who has an indisputable Right to have them under his Conduct.

2. It is in the nature of the thing impossible but that Writings drawn up at such a Distance of time as the Holy Scriptures, and containing

ing such *Doctrines* and such *Prophecies* as are to be met with there, and having such a Reference to Antient Customs and Usages as is there observable, should in many Respects be *obscure* to us: Supposing they were divinely inspir'd, they unavoidably must be so; and therefore it cannot be a good and just Argument that they therefore were not inspir'd, because we find them so. Granting then that the Scriptures are *Obscure* in sundry things, the Knowledge of which is less necessary for us, it is no Argument against their Inspiration, while we can give a sufficient Account of their *Obscurity*, consistently with their Inspiration: Which is no hard matter, with the help of a few Remarks.

1. The *Obscurity* of several Parts of Scripture lies more in the things discours'd of, than in the manner of Expression that is us'd. 'Tis plainly thus, as to those Passages that refer to the *Decrees* of God, the *Trinity*, the *Incarnation* of our Blessed Saviour, and the *Influence* of the *Holy Spirit* upon the Souls of Men. Such *Doctrines* as these could not be deliver'd so plainly, but that there would be a remaining *Obscurity*. It could not be otherwise unless our Natures and Capacities were alter'd. To have the *Obscurity* of such things in Scripture made an Objection against its Inspiration, is just as if Men should argue against God's being the Maker of the Ocean, because they can't contract it within a little narrow despicable Vessel.

2. The *Obscurity* of the Scripture as to us often arises from our Ignorance of the *Topography*, *History*, *Rites*, *Opinions*, *Seets*, and *Customs* of the Antient *Jews* and their Neighbours. That there should often be a Reference

rence to such things as these in the several Books of the Old Testament, tho' they were given by Inspiration of God, is no more to be wondred at, than that he should put his Sacred *Oracles* into their Hands, designing them particularly for their Use. And that we for want of a distinct Acquaintance with such things, should find many Parts of these Writings *Obscure*, is no more to be wondred at, than that *Grecian* and *Roman* Authors should be *Obscure* to us, whenever we cannot distinctly understand their Allusions and References. But that because these our Sacred Writings are in some such respects *Obscure* to us, they must therefore not be drawn up under a Peculiar Divine Conduct, no more follows, than that such Antient Writings were not really penn'd by the several *Greek* and *Roman* Authors to whom they have been all along ascrib'd, because in many Passages of them, we thro' our Defects in Antient Literature are to seek for their Meaning.

3. There are some Parts of Scripture whose *Obscurity* Principally arises, from our Distance from these Events which will abundantly clear and explain them: Many Predictions concerning the *Messiah*, both Typical and Real, were extremely *Obscure* to such as liv'd under the Old Testament Dispensation, which the Event, (especially as attended with a New Divine Revelation) has made exceeding *clear* to us that live in Gospel Times. Neither do I at all question but that many things in *Daniel*, and in the *Apocalypse*, and sundry other Scripture Prophecies, that are now very dark and *Obscure* to us, will be fully clear'd up upon their Accomplishment. To make the *Obscu-*
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city of such things either, as to Matter or Expression, an Argument against the Divine Inspiration of our Sacred Writings, is in effect to tell the Almighty, that if he won't take his Measures from us, we won't believe that he can have a hand in any Composure.

4. Many Texts are *Obscure* to the Inobservant, which when they are consider'd heedfully appear *plain* enough. The not duly observing the *Particles* of the Sacred Languages, their *Peculiar Idioms*, and the *Transitions* from one Person to another in the Passages under Consideration, occasion much of that *Obscurity* that is complain'd of. To give an Instance of the latter sort; there is not perhaps an *Obscure* Passage in all the Bible, than that of the Prophet; *The Burden of Dumab.* See Isa. 21.
calletb to me out of Seir, Watchman what of the Night? Watchman what of the Night? The Watchman said, the Morning cometh and also the Night: If ye will enquire, enquire ye: Return, come. This is so *dark* a Text, that at first view scarce any Man knows what to make of it. But if we observe the *Transition*, and carefully distinguish between the Persons speaking and spoken to, we shall find it very intelligible. It expresses the Enquiries of a People in a very distracted hazardous Condition of a Prophet of the Lord, as to what was coming upon them; together with his Reply to them. They ask'd what was likely to befall them; and he told them that as certainly as the Night succeeds the Day, so certainly would Destruction and Misery shortly surprize them; and that if they should enquire ever so often, that would be his Answer. This being discover'd, the *Obscurity* presently vanishes. In such Cases to

make the *Obscurity* of our Sacred Oracles an Objection against their Divine Inspiration, is to argue against God not only from our Ignorance, but from our very Carelessness. These things being consider'd, it will evidently appear, that they that object the *Obscurity* of the Bible against its being Inspir'd, do more expose themselves, than they do this Book of God. But,

3. It is farther also observable, that an infinitely Wise God serves very valuable Purposes, by the *Obscurity* of some Part of his Sacred Revelation. He has thereby left the most Sagacious an Exercise for their Industry, and laid a Foundation for the Conviction of the most knowing, that they had need implore his Aids, and earnestly beg his Illumination, after they have carry'd their Searches to the utmost pitch. We are hereby engag'd to the more earnest Reading, and diligent consulting our Sacred Records; and doing so, find that the *Obscurity* lessens. The Fable of the dying Husband-man is generally known, but very instructive. He told his Sons of a great Mass of Wealth that was hid in a Part of his Vineyard, which he would not name to them. They expecting to find it, dug the Ground most carefully, and turn'd up the Earth so diligently about the Roots of the Vines, that they really found a Treasure, tho' not in Gold, yet in Wine, which abundantly rewarded their Pains. So have there been many that enquiring into those Parts of Scripture that are more *Obscure* and abstruse, have obtain'd that Light in other Parts of it, and gain'd that Advance in Scripture Knowledge, as has been an ample Recompence for all their Labour.

bour. Others at the same time upon diligent Application even to the *Obscure* Parts, in Dependance on Divine Assistance, have discover'd Wonders. It was no way unbecoming the Blessed God to aim at securing such Ends as these; and therefore 'tis far from being a sufficient Argument, that the Bible came not from God, that it has that *Obscurity* which serves such Purposes. St. *Chrystom* hath stated this matter very fairly when he tells us, that *all Passages in Scripture are not plain and perspicuous lest we should be lazy; nor all Obscure lest we should despond.* Again,

Homil.
36. in 1
ad Co-
rinth.

4. Lastly, were there nothing in the Scripture but what were *plain*, and obvious to every Understanding; nothing but what might be taken in at the first Essay, that alone would have been thought to furnish with a much stronger Argument, that our Bible was not given by the Inspiration of God, than the *Obscurity* that is now complain'd off can be conceiv'd to amount to. Were there nothing in our Sacred Records to exercise the Abilities of the more knowing Part of Mankind, nothing to reward their Industry, upon their taking Pains in a way of Disquisition, we should have had a mighty Argument rais'd, that for that very Reason there could be no Divine Inspiration. It would have been presently said; had God had any *Peculiar* Hand in the Composition of the Scripture, tho' the most necessary Parts of it were plain, yet there should have been at least some hard and *Obscure* Passages intermix'd, suited to those among Mankind that were the most inquisitive, and above the reach of *Vulgar* Apprehension. He that knows any thing of Humane Nature will be

apt to conclude, that this would in such a Case have been very readily suggested. When then there are some *Obscurities* and *Difficulties* left, to excite and recompence the Industry of the Inquisitive, to have an Objection rais'd from thence, as if those Writings therefore could not be Divinely Inspir'd, looks as if Men were come to a Positive Determination, that they would own no *Oracles* as Divine, and coming from Heaven, that were not exactly suited to their Gust. But,

III. As some have Objected the Meanness, and others the Obscurity of the *Style* and Language of the Scripture, against its Inspiration, so it has been and is still at this Day a mighty Plea with some, that the *Style* of the Scripture is *flat* and *unaffecting*. They'll tell you they find none of that *Strength* and *Poignancy* as in other Writings. They can observe no *Life* in the several Sacred Composures; nothing that can *strike* Intelligent Readers: But all is *flat* and *heavy* from End to End. An Objection not at all to be wonder'd at as coming from those that set up for *Wits* among us, who can relish nothing but what is written in a *Romantick Style*; nothing but what favours of the Levity of the *Stage*. 'Tis not a very likely thing to prevail with such to give way to Consideration: And yet really the following things very well deserve it.

I. The Scripture needed not any such *Ornaments*, as those are which these People esteem most *taking*. The great Design of this Book of God is to pierce the Conscience, produce an Holy Awe of God, and govern Men by the Believing Prospect of their Eternal Happiness

piness or Misery. The finest turns of Wit could have no Efficacy for this Purpose. The Impressions they make are too light to produce any such Effects. 'Tis below God to affect an Imitation of his Creatures in their Weakness. The *enticing Words of Man's Wisdom* are disclaim'd; on purpose that the Power that produces such wonderful Effects by these Writings, may appear to be wholly of God.

2. The Language of the Bible appears much less forcible, strong and affecting, to those who read it in *Translations* only, than to such as are capable of conversing with it in the *Originals*. Our *Translations* are mostly *Literal*, by which they loose the *Emphasis* of a great many Expressions. While they stick to the Letter, the Beauty is gone.

3. Many things were truly *Noble* and *Masterly* Strokes in the Esteem of the *Eastern Nations*, which have another Aspect in these *Western Parts*. Our Forwardness therefore to censure Performances, that might be incomparably excellent in their several kinds, according to the way of the Times and Places which the immediate Composers liv'd in, shews our Petulance, more than our Ingenuity. Had it been Necessary God should have suited every Part of the World, in the *Ornaments* of his Revelation of his Mind and Will, the *Canon* would scarce have been finish'd till the End of time.

4. There is no truer *Eloquence* in the World than is to be met with in the Holy Scriptures. All Parts indeed are not alike; nor is it reasonable to expect they should: Different Subjects require a different manner of treatment: But suitably to the Subjects treated on, we have

have in Scripture, inimitable Strains of the truest Eloquence; Particularly in the Antient Prophets. *Cicero* was the Admir'd Orator of the *Romans*: But what Comparifon is there between his gentle Infnuations, and often even childifh Excufes of his Ignorance, to the Lively, Weighty, Venerable and Majeftick Introductions of *Ifaiab*, with which he ufhers in his Prophefies? What are his *long winded* Periods, to the *pitby* and *moving* Sentences of the other; which fpeedily pierce even the moft Obftinate thro' and thro'? Or what Comparifon is there between the Vehemence of *Demofthenes*, or *Aefchines* his Adverfary, in any Instance that could be produc'd, to that *Exordium* of *Ifaiab*, in the Entrance upon his Prophefy? *Hear O Heavens, and give ear O Earth, for the Lord hath fpoken, I have nourifh'd and*

If. 1. 2. *brought up Children, and they have rebelled againft me.* In that and the following Verfes there are moft admirable Strains, that are not to be match'd in the Writings of the Greateft *Mafters of Eloquence* that are to be met with. *St. Jerome* who has always been esteem'd a good Critick, could fay, *as oft as I read St. Paul, it feems to me that they are not Words but Thunders that I hear.* And what God hath wifely ordered in this Refpect as to fome; he could eafily have compafs'd as to the reft that he has us'd as Compilers of our Sacred Records, if that would beft have ferv'd his Purpofes. To make therefore his not having done it an Objection againft his having had a Hand in Compiling the Scriptures, is only an Evidence of the Perverfenefs of the Objectors.

5. And Laftly; The *Style* of Scripture in the General is fufficiently *affecting*, where Perfons

sons are not possess'd with Prejudice. It is apt to touch all the Springs of Motion in Humane Nature, and enkindle all manner of Pious and Devout Affections by the serious Perusal of it. It hath turn'd many a wicked Wretch into a hearty Lover of God and Goodness, and transform'd many a Brute into a Saint. And if it hath not such Effects more commonly, 'tis only because they who consult it, are not so dispos'd to receive Impressions of that Nature from it, as they ought to be. *If a Scornor* Prov. 14. *seeks Wisdom, 'tis no wonder if he findeth it not.* 6.

If an Unbeliever reads the Scripture, 'tis not at all to be wondred at that it does not profit; because it is not *mixed with Faith*. But as for those that converse with it seriously and humbly, and dependently, looking upwards for Light and Grace, let others flout at them as much as they will, they find *the Word of God* Heb. 4. 12: *quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart.* The Reading the first Chapter of St. John's Gospel turn'd *Junius* from Atheism to serious Religion. The Reading the fifty third Chapter of *Isaiab's* Prophecy has turn'd many *Jewish Rabbies* from their *Judaism* to Christianity. The Reading that Passage of St. Paul, *The Night is far spent, the Day is at Hand; let us therefore cast off the Works of Darkness, and let us put on the Armour of Light. Let us walk honestly as in the Day; not in Rioting and Drunkenness, not in Chambering and Wantonness, not in Strife and Envyng. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ;* turn'd St. *Austin* from a loose and sinful, to an eminently Holy Life. And the Reading

Pfal. 50. 16. ing that of the Psalmist, *Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my Statutes, or that thou shouldst take my Covenant in thy Mouth?* Brought Origen to a solemn Publick Repentance, after his shameful Apostacy. Many other remarkable Effects of this kind, of the serious conversing with our Sacred Records, may be collected out of *Ecclesiastical History*: Where we are particularly inform'd, of the High Value many Persons of the Greatest Note and Eminence for Learning, and many that were distinguish'd from others by remarkable Worldly Honours and Dignities, have had for the *Bible*, in comparision of which they have reckon'd all other Writings empty, inspid, and despicable. And some few such we have had even in Modern Times, that have not been afraid of undervaluing their Judgments, by declaring their Peculiar Admiration of the Composure of the Bible. And among the rest we may justly reckon the truly Honourable Mr. *Robert Boyle*, who was the Glory of his Age; who hath left behind him a *Discourse concerning the Style of the Holy Scriptures*, that deserves the careful Perusal of all that would have their Esteem for those Venerable Writings confirm'd, and heighten'd.

Obj. 4. A Fourth Objection against the Divine Inspiration of the Scripture, is taken from their seeming *Immethodicalness*. The *Method* of the Scriptures say some that undervalue them, is such as argues them not inspir'd. They represent them as an unaccountably disjointed heap, without any Order, Coherence, or Connexion that can be discern'd: And therefore they cannot think that God had any Hand in the Composure. But alas who are these Objectors,

jectors; that pretend to confine the Great God to their Pedantick Rules of *Method*! Cannot his *Method* of Providence, and of Revealing his Mind and Will be orderly and regular, unless it exactly suits their Fancies! Is not the admitting such a Thought unaccountably arrogant! 'Tis true we have not in the Bible any such *Connected Scheme* of Truths, as we have in our *Creeds* and *Confessions* and *Systems of Divinity*. There is in that Respect abundant room left for our Pains and Industry in Collections, in that way that to us appears most Advantageous and Proper. There is hardly any thing in which Fancy has more Scope, than about the Rules of *Method*: For which Reason it cannot be suppos'd, but that had God directed the Penmen of Sacred Scripture to any particular *Method*, over and above what the Nature of the Relations they were to draw up, or the Messages they were to deliver carry'd in them, there would have been a multitude of Complaints against it, by such as would have been apt to think they could have mended it. But if we go to the strictness of the thing, I must confess I can't see, how a more proper *Method* could have been pitch'd on, than that in which the Scriptures are deliver'd to us.

They begin with the Original *Formation* of this Lower World, and the first Production of Man its chief Inhabitant. They give a brief Account of his Treatment while he continu'd Innocent and Upright; how he fell; and how God carry'd it to him afterwards. They inform us how the World was peopled; how extremely Mankind degenerated; and what Marks of the Divine Displeasure they here-

hereupon were under. They signify how God selected a People for himself out of a particular Family, and give us to understand how he gradually disclos'd his merciful Purposes towards them, from one Age to another, till after a Train of miraculous Providences, he form'd them into a *Church State*, with a sett of Ordinances that were wonderfully descriptive of the *Messiah* that was promis'd them, and the Benefits and Blessings he was to procure. They give us the History of this Church in its Settlement, in its Management, in the gradual dawns of Divine Light upon it, in its Preservations, in its Corruptions and Declensions; and in its Captivity, and Restauration. They particularly inform us, how God rais'd up, and sent to them from time to time an Order of *Prophets*, who explain'd the Law, pointed them to their Duty, admonish'd them of their Sins, warn'd them of approaching Judgments, and made still clearer and fuller Discoveries to them of the *Messiah*, and his Kingdom, as the time of his actual Appearance drew nearer and nearer. Then they proceed to give us an Account of the coming of this *Messiah*, that had been so long expected; of his Birth, his Life, his Sermons, his Sufferings, his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension; his Settlement of his Church in a new Form; and his Commissioning his Twelve Apostles, and their Successors to teach all Nations, the things that relate to the Kingdom of God. To which is added a Narrative of their Proceedings, in pursuit of this Commission; an Account of their Doctrine, their Worship, their settling of Churches, both among *Jews* and *Gentiles*; their management of
them,

them, and their Letters to them; together with a prophetic Prediction of what should happen to the Christian Church in general, from one Age to another, till the time of the Consummation of all things.

Behold here's the Sum of the whole Bible: And could any *Method* be more accurate? Could any *Method* more become the Blessed God, or be more advantageous for us? I must confess, I can't see how any one can narrowly observe it, and not applaud it. Would Men but study their Bibles more carefully, 'tis with me past Question, that the very *Method* of Divine Revelation, take it together, would teach them to admire it, rather than incline them to carp at it: They would see it so worthy of God, as that, instead of forming Difficulties, they would even hence be confirm'd in the Belief, that *the Scripture* was truly given by *the Inspiration of God*.

Let us then make a Pause, and give way to a few Reflections.

I. Let us be afraid of a *carvilling* Temper. Let us dread it as a fatal Infection; as one of the most dangerous Snares in the World. 'Tis next a-kin to a Spirit of Delusion. 'Tis the Spring and Root of Infidelity. It's an Enemy to Peace, an inexhaustible Fund of Uneasiness, a spiritual Plague-Sore, an intolerable Reflection on the Blessed God, and its own Torment. It would create a dis-relish of what has a tendency to do us the greatest good; and involve us in an inextricable Labyrinth of perplexing Difficulties, even where a well-disposed Mind may meet with agreeable Satisfaction, upon solid Grounds. Let us therefore learn to be content with such
Evi-

Evidence as suits the Nature of the things we have under Consideration : And when we have such Evidence in any Case, let's not upon every little bold Insinuation call it in question, as we would not be entirely unsettled and bewilder'd.

2. Let us take Courage in opposition to such Persons, as audaciously reflect on our sacred Records, which we have so much reason to believe were *given by the Inspiration of God*. Let us not, by our shyness to applaud what we have so much reason to admire, give them any occasion to think that their little flirts of Wit will put us out of Countenance. Let us not be ashamed to own, upon all Occasions, our Veneration for the Holy Scriptures. Let us depend upon it, that our Cause will bear us out ; and be ready to manifest to them, that we are fully satisfied it will do so. And let us be so settled in the Grounds of our Faith, as to have them at hand, ready to produce when need requires ; and we may do more Service, than we can easily be aware of.

3. I think, we that are *Ministers*, have very little reason to wonder, if People are forward slightly to *censure* our Performances, when we find even the Blessed God himself cannot escape the *Censures* of the Perverse. We ought, indeed, to take care to give People no just Occasion for Contempt, and yet should not wonder if we meet with it, in the faithful and diligent Discharge of our Duty. Can it seem a strange thing to us, that our Representations of Truth and Duty should be often carp'd at, when we find so many swell to such a degree in their own Conceit, as to pretend to reach the Blessed God himself ;
how

how he should have manag'd the Revelation of his Mind and Will to the best Advantage? Can it surprize us, to observe our Freedom, and Plainness, and Closeness, displeasing, when we find so many using such unbounded Liberty, as in effect, to tell the most High to his Face, that the Scripture cannot be of his inspiring, if it is not suited to their Gust, and according to their Model? The antient Heathens us'd to say, that *even Jupiter himself could not please all*: And we Christians may say the same as to the infinitely wise God. He cannot please those in his Management, who will take their Measures from themselves only. When then we find the Perverseness of poor Creatures such, as that they'll not stick to quarrel with the Revelation of the Blessed God himself, as well as his Providence, because it suits not their Gust, and Humour: Why should it seem strange to us, if we, that are his *Ministers*, should also meet with our *Censurers*, while we are faithfully discharging our Duty, in the ill-natur'd World we live in? However, such Persons should rather be the Objects of our Pity, than our Resentment.

Finally; let us all look upon it as our chief Concern, to order our Lives according to the Rules and Commands of the Holy Scriptures, and we shall find we shall have a growing Satisfaction as to their Divinity: Which is but agreeable to our Saviour's own Measure, who has expressly declar'd, that *if any* Joh. 7.17: *Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine; whether it be of God:*

SERMON IX.

2 TIM. III. 16.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.

*At Sal-
ters-Hall,
Tuesday
Lecture,
July 23.
1705.*

THE Great and Blessed God never was afraid of the Objections of the boldest Cavillers against his Measures, and Methods of dealing. He ever answers his Ends, and so secures his Purposes, as that they effectually take place: And therefore it has been usual with him to defy the most Insolent; giving them to understand, that their Boldness in attempting to confront, or arraign him, would issue in their own Shame and Disgrace. It was usual with the idolatrous, neighbouring Nations of old, to deride the Simplicity of the *Jews*, for their Confidence in a God whom they could not see, while they apprehended themselves much wiser, in that they had Gods whom they could behold, and directly fall down before, to whose Tutelage they committed themselves, and their All. 'Tis worth our observing, how God *II. 41, 21.* challenges them upon this Head. *Produce your Cause,*

Cause, saith the Lord: Bring forth your strong Reasons, says the God of Jacob. He defies them to prove the Deity of their dumb Idols; or to suggest any thing that could justify their Refusal, supremely to regard, and adore him the great Lord of Heaven and Earth; the Signatures of whose Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness, were so conspicuous in his Works, and in his Word. The Challenge is safely applicable to all such as cavil against those sacred Oracles which we have in our hands, and which are so well attested to have been *given by Inspiration of God.* As wise as they think themselves, in refusing to yield to the Authority of these sacred Writings, we may defy them to *produce their Cause*, and need not be afraid of their Clamours. Their *strong Reasons*, which they so much applaud, appear extremely despicable, when confronted with the Evidence that has been given by the God of *Jacob*, of the Divinity of those Records which he has put into the hands of his People, to conduct them in the way to Heaven. We have seen this in part already, and are now to take a farther View of it, in considering a fifth Objection, which some seem to think unanswerable.

Supposing, say they, there were not in the *Obj. 5.* Scripture either Contradictions, or Impossibilities, suppose the Stile and the Method of it were altogether unexceptionable, yet the *Matter* of it is in many Respects, such as seems to argue it could not be inspir'd: 'Tis so both in the Old Testament, and in the New. I'll begin with the Old Testament, and distinctly produce, and answer their Pleas.

1. How can those Writings, say they, be inspir'd, which represent such a Practice as *Polygamy* as a gross Irregularity, (as at least the great Admirers of the Scriptures commonly apprehend) and yet charge it upon those whom they most celebrate and extol, without any Animadversion. Our modern Anti-scripturists here mightily insult, and draw an Argument against us both ways. Either (say they) *Polygamy* is a lawful and a warrantable Practice, or it is not. If it was lawful in the *Patriarchs*, it is so still. If so, how can it be condemn'd in Scripture, if that be Divinely inspir'd? Or if it was not lawful in them, why were they never censur'd for it? How can the Writings of the Old Testament be given by the Inspiration of God, when they represent those to us as Patterns to be imitated, who liv'd in so foul a Practice, as this of *Polygamy* is now commonly reckon'd, without being reprov'd for it; without any signification of the Divine Displeasure, and without being ever brought to Repentance, as far as we can discern.

This being an Argument that often comes up in Conversation, in the present Age, and a thing in which I look upon Religion as much concern'd, I'll take something of a Compass, and endeavour to clear the Difficulty by advancing a few Propositions, which I'll endeavour to confirm and clear.

1. *Polygamy* is no where approv'd of in the Writings of the Old Testament. Had we indeed there met with any Justification of that Practice, any Plea in favour of it, it might have stumbled us. We must either have own'd the Practice lawful, or disown'd the Inspiration

tion of those Writings which defended it : But as matters stand, we have no reason for either. *Moses* does indeed tell us, that not only *Lamech*, but *Abraham* and *Jacob*, as good Men as they were, and as much as they were favour'd of God, had more Wives than one : But he no where tells us that this was any part of their Goodness, or that it was justifiable in them. He no more propounds them to us for our Imitation in this matter, than he does *Abraham* in his officious Lying, or *Jacob* in his Dissimulation. We are to rank this among their Blemishes and Defects.

But we are told, that in the Law of *Moses*, there were Precepts given to such as had a plurality of Wives : Which not only supposes it a common Practice, but allow'd too ; or else 'tis not to be imagin'd the Law would have taken any notice of it. Thus, for instance, it is provided that if a Man have two Wives, the first-born should not be disinherited, if he were so unhappy as to be Son of that Wife that was least belov'd. And it was order'd, that when the *Israelites* should come to have a King among them, like other Nations, he should not have too great a multiplicity of Wives ; which yet implies (they say) that he might have several. For if he might not have more than one, why should he be caution'd against too many ? We are also told, that God charg'd it upon *David* as a great additional Crime, that he gave unto him his Master's Wives into his Bosom, and yet he sinn'd against him. Now, say they, if God gave *David* his Master's Wives into his Bosom, he might certainly use them as his Wives without any Sin. These are the only Passa-

ges I have met with cited in favour of Polygamy, and therefore I'll distinctly consider them.

Deut. 21.
15, 16.

As for the first Place, it runs thus ; *If a Man have two Wives, one belov'd, and another hated, and they have born him Children, both the belov'd and the hated ; and if the first-born Son be hers that was hated ; then it shall be when he maketh his Sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the Son of the beloved first-born, before the Son of the hated, which is indeed the first-born.* Where it is observable, that it is only said, *If a Man have two Wives, and Children by both of them,* he shall then do so and so : But it is not said, *if he has two Wives at once,* or together, he shall then be oblig'd. So that for any thing that the Text expresses, or that can be collected from the Context, we may understand the place of a Man that had *two Wives successively,* one after the other's Death ; and Children by both. And as long as this Sense will hold, and the Text be clear, there is no necessity of having recourse to any other, or of fancying it was meant of a Man that had *two Wives at once.* But supposing (tho' not granting) that the place might be meant of a Man that had *two Wives at once,* it no more follows from the Provision that is made for the Children in that Case, that his having more Wives than one was lawful, than it does that Theft was lawful, because Provision was made, that *if a Thief was taken, he should restore double.* And indeed, 'tis easy to be observ'd, that the *Mosaick Law* provided for many Cases that could not happen without plain Sin.

Exod.
22. 1.

As for the second Place mention'd, in which it is order'd, that when the *Israelites* should
come

come to have a King, like other Nations, he should not multiply Wives to himself, that his Heart turn not away, it is evident that it was the great Design of that Charge, to prevent a Fault which Persons in such exalted Circumstances might be under stronger Temptations to, than other Men. And to find that because their Kings might in all probability, be more tempted than others to multiply their Wives, they were therefore warned against it, rather seems to argue, that God expected they should look upon themselves as standing on a level with other Men in this respect, than that he gave them any thing like a special License or Allowance. But from the Caution that was given them, not to multiply Wives, tho' they might be strongly tempted to it, it no more follows that they might lawfully have more than one at once, than from Samuel's Description of what they might expect would be the manner of a King, who, he foretells them, would strangely bear hard upon them, it follows that a King might warrantably, and without Sin, take such Measures as those which he particularly mentions. The Jewish Interpreters, it must be own'd, tell us that eighteen Wives, or Concubines, were allowable for a King: But I can't see what Reason any Man can have to regard them, who observes the Charge that was brought in against them by our Lord himself, that they made the Commandment of God of none effect by their Tradition.

In David's Case, God does indeed say, I gave thee thy Master's House, and thy Master's Wives into thy Bosom. But all that is meant, is, that they were at his dispose, to do what he pleas'd

v. II.

with them, there being none to controul him : But it does not therefore follow that he might live with several, as his Wives, at once, any more than it follows, that *Abfolom* might warrantably live in a Conjugal manner with his own Father's Wives, because we are told but three Verses afterwards, that they *should be given to him*. The comparing those two Passages together, plainly discovers, that by God's giving the Wives of one unto another, no more is meant than the putting them under his Power, to dispose of them at Pleasure; and the using them as Wives is not thereupon either approv'd, or allow'd. So that none of these Places do really appear to carry in them an Approbation of a plurality of Wives, if they are but duly scann'd, and consider'd.

But then 'tis said, if having more Wives than one was a real Blemish and Defect in such Men as *Abraham*, and *Jacob*, and *David*, it seems strange, if the Scripture was really given by the Inspiration of God, that it should not be more freely there declar'd to be so; that so they might be convinc'd of their Sin, and not left to live in it all their Days, and for what we know, to die in it too without Repentance. Certainly if this Book, that was so much esteem'd among the *Jews*, had been Divinely inspir'd, it must have declar'd more openly against this Practice, (if it were really so faulty as it is now commonly represented) tho' it had been only to keep others from an Imitation. If it had been a Real Evil *Abraham* could not have been represented as the Friend of God, and the Father of the Faithful; nor *David* have been expressly said to have *done that which was right in the Eyes of*

the Lord, and not to turn aside from any thing that be commanded him all the Days of his Life, save only in the matter of *Uriah the Hittite*; while yet both of them liv'd and allow'd themselves in this Practice, and that without Repentance too, as far as appears. At least, how could that Book be inspir'd of God, that declares such an Approbation of these Persons, if this Course was really Vitious, as it is now commonly held to be?

I answer; The Institution of *Marriage* at the first, in which one Woman was by God given to Man for his Companion, not several Women, to those who duly consider'd it, had a tendency to make it appear, that it was God's Design, that Man should be kept to one Woman, without a multiplicity of Wives. Our Saviour himself (as we shall see presently) asserts this, and therefore we may safely lay stress upon it. What it was that hindred such Persons as *Abraham* and *Jacob* and *David* from discerning this, is hard to say. Perhaps a desire of multiplying their Progeny, when the World was but thinly Peopled, might be a Temptation to *Abraham* and *Jacob*: And *David* and they also might be insnar'd by too eager a Desire of *Ushering* into the World the Promis'd *Messiah*, who they knew was to spring out of their Loins. Supposing that they were more sway'd by these Inducements than by inordinate Lust, their Sin might be somewhat lessen'd, tho' it does not therefore follow they were without Guilt. And that the Blessed God who in other Respects so freely commun'd with them, should here leave them comparatively to themselves, tho' it may seem strange, might yet be design'd to teach us,
that

that the best of Men after the utmost Inter-
course with God to which they can be sup-
pos'd to be admitted in this present State, have
yet considerable Blemishes remaining, for
which they may obtain Pardon thro' his ama-
zing Grace, upon a General Repentance.
However; *Abraham's* being call'd *the Friend of*
God, and *the Father of the Faithful*, no more ar-
gues that his Practice in having more Wives
than one was warrantable, than it does that
he did well when he deny'd his Wife, and so
expos'd her. And as to *David*, tho' it is in-
deed said, that *he turn'd not aside from any thing*
that God commanded him all the Days of his Life,
save only in the matter of Uriah the Hitrite; yet
that he in many Cases grievously offended
God, is too notorious to be contested by any
Man that has either read his History, or been
conversant with his *Penitential Psalms*, which
he pen'd upon Occasion of his various Falls in
the Course of his Life. All that an unpreju-
dic'd Person can suppose to be meant by that
Commendation of *David*, was only this; that
he was upright in the main; and that that
matter of *Uriah* was his foulest Fault. That
was indeed a Sin of a complicated Nature; it
was committed deliberately, against the Light
of his Mind, and the Convictions of his Consci-
ence; it was defended by a Succession of other
horrid Sins; it was in reality a *Presumptuous*
Crime; and without doubt far exceeded his ha-
ving a Multiplicity of Wives, that belong'd not
to other Men: But after all, it no more follows
from that Commendation of him, that he did
not sin in having more Wives than one, than
it does that he was guilty of no fault in num-
bering the People, at which we yet know God
was

was highly incens'd, as appears by the Punishment he inflicted on that Account. *David* tho' an upright Man might be mistaken in his Judgment, and not be fully convinc'd of the Sinfulness of *Polygamy*, and so fall under Guilt; and there might be no Comparison between his Fault in that Case, and in the Case of *Bathsheba* the Wife of *Uriah*, and yet it might be a Fault still; and as really a Fault as his *numbring the People*, for which he was so sorely punish'd. And tho' we cannot positively say that he ever particularly repented of this his Fault, yet his serious and hearty Concern that God would *cleanse him from secret Faults*, is ^{Psal. 19.} sufficient to keep it from being a Bar to his ^{12.} Acceptance with a Gracious God. Nay, I'll add, that even the Old Testament it self, before the Antient Canon was finish'd, does declare against the Practice of *Polygamy*, in order to prevent others from imitating such Instances of that Nature as it contain'd: And if this be once clear'd, I think what of Difficulty may yet seem to remain in the Objection will be sufficiently remov'd. And therefore,

2. This is my Second Proposition: That the Obliquity of this Practice of a *Plurality of Wives* is plainly declar'd against, by the Last of the Old Testament Prophets, in these Words: *And did Mal. 2.*
not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit: 15.
And wherefore one? That he might seek a Godly Seed. Therefore take heed to your Spirit; and let none deal treacherously against the Wife of his Youth. The Prophet refers to the Primitive Institution of *Marriage*, and crys, *Did not he make one? Did not God make one Woman for one Man? Had the one Man that was the Com-* ^{See Dr. Pocock on the Place.}
mon Father of all Men, any more than one
Wife

Wife provided for him? And yet *God had the residue of the Spirit*. Easily could he have created more Immortal Spirits, and produc'd more Women, so as that one Man should have had several *Wives*, had he so pleas'd. But now says the Prophet, he gave Man only one *Wife*; he made only one Couple: And that for this End, that they might in chaste Wedlock, and sincere Love, and undivided Affection, produce a *Holy Seed to God*. His Example (says he) you ought to look upon as a perpetual Law set to you; and therefore in imitation of that first Man, take heed every one to your Spirit, that you cleave only to one, and that with a sincere Affection: *And let none of you deal treacherously against the Wife of his Youth*, by despising or relinquishing her, or taking any other strange *Wife* with her. This is very plain against *Polygamy*.

The Great Objection is, that it is very strange, that so clear a Hint, so close a Rebuke as this in a matter so momentous, came no sooner. As to which we had better own our selves at a loss, than bungle in giving a Reason. However; as long as it did come before the *Antient Canon* was clos'd, it thus far answers our End, that it shews no just Argument against the Inspiration of the Old Testament can be drawn from its silence about a thing which it expressly points at, in a way of Detestation. It hence appears that very little stress is to be laid on the Sense of the *Talmudical Jews*, about which some make such a stir: Because one of the Antient Prophets so directly opposes it as unlawful for one Man to have more than one *Wife* at once, in after-times, any more than at first. And having
 advanc'd

advanc'd thus far upon the Head of *Polygamy*, tho' more is not needful for the Answering of the Objection propos'd, I yet for the farther clearing the Unwarrantableness of a Practice which some undertake to defend, think it not improper to add,

3. That the Apostle *Paul* directly declares ^{1 Cor. 7.} against it. *Let every Man, says he, have his own² Wife, and every Woman her own Husband.* And if so, if this be matter of Duty, that every Man that is that way inclin'd have his own *Wife*, and every Woman her own *Husband*, then each Man must keep to his own single *Wife*, without being divided between her and others; as well as she must keep to him, least there be a spurious Brood. And he presently adds; *the Husband hath not Power of his own^{v. 4.} Body, but the Wife.* If so; if the Man has not Power over his own Body when once he is marry'd, then can he not give the Power of it to another; and so he cannot marry another: nor could the *Wife* exclusively to him have the Power of his Body, if he could give his Body to another. This were enough to such as would be satisfy'd with Apostolical Authority in the Case, in which it is unreasonable to refuse to acquiesce. Nay farther,

4. Our Blessed Saviour himself has plainly declar'd against *Polygamy*. Speaking of the *Divorce* that was usual among the *Jews*, he ^{Mat. 19.} says, *From the beginning it was not so.* He re-8. fers them to the first Institution of *Marriage* for the Understanding the Nature and Extent of the Obligation which the *Matrimonial Compact* between Man and Wife imports. God at first join'd together one Man and one Woman, and our Lord intimates he thereby signify'd

De Jure
Belli &
paciſ, L. 2.
Cap. 5.
§. 9.

nify'd that one Woman was enough for one Man. *Grotius* objects that it did indeed thence appear what was beſt and moſt pleaſing to God: He owns that it thence follows that keeping to one *Wife* was always laudable: But he ſays it does not follow from thence that it was ſinful to do otherwiſe. And he gives this as a Reaſon; becauſe where there was no Law there was no Tranſgreſſion: And he aſſerts that for a long while there was no Law about the matter. But I can't ſee we need to be at a loſs for an Anſwer here. For God's ſignifying his Pleaſure, ought in any Caſe to be a Law to a reaſonable Creature: So that if he by giving one Woman to a Man at firſt, ſignify'd that it was really moſt pleaſing to him, that a Man ſhould be ſatisfy'd with one Woman, it follows that he ought to be ſo ſatisfy'd, and that it was ſinful in him to be diſſatisfy'd, and to deſire more.

Mat. 19. 9. Beſides; Our Saviour, in the matter of *Divorce* gives this Determination. *Whoſoever ſhall put away his Wife, except it be for Fornication, and ſhall marry another, committeth Adultery: Which plainly intimates that Plurality of Wives is a thing utterly unlawful, and the Practice of it a Great Evil. For our Lord affirms that he that marries another Wife upon an unlawful Divorce, (and the Caſe muſt to be ſure be the ſame when there is no Divorce) commits Adultery in ſo doing: Which he could not do but upon this Ground, that the having more Wives than one at a time is a thing in it ſelf altogether unlawful. Indeed that Paſſage of our Bleſſed Lord to thoſe that have a Due Veneration for him, will be found to amount to a Demonſtration of the Unwarrantableneſs of*

Polygamy.

Polygamy. For if he that puts his Wife away for any other Cause besides *Fornication*, and marries another commits *Adultery*, then is he much more an Adulterer, who marries another; when his *Wife* is not put away, and hath not committed *Fornication*.

I can't conceive how any Man that is willing to be satisfy'd, can reasonably desire farther Evidence that *Polygamy* is an Irregular and Vicious Practice, than all this amounts to. At least thus much I hope is evident from what has been suggested under this Head, that no just Argument lies against the Inspiration of the Old Testament, from any thing that there occurs upon this Subject.

2. A Second Objection against the Inspiration of the Old Testament, drawn from the matter of it, is fetch'd from the *Levitical Law*. How (say some) can those Writings be inspir'd, that contain Injunctions that are so trivial, so absurd and *ridiculous*, so unreasonable, inconsistent and unaccountable, as are some of those in the *Jewish Code*? Nay they go farther, and charge some of them as plainly *lewd*, and tending to corrupt the Fancy, and defile the Imagination. And here I might in the General very justly observe, that they who in this Case are apt to complain most loudly, have commonly the least Understanding in the matters of which they complain. And that it is not at all to be wondred at, if in things, the Use of which has so long ceas'd in the World, and where we have so little Assistance, thro' the loss of the Antient Monuments of *Jewish Literature*, we should be now at a loss about sundry Particulars, and unable distinctly to account for several Laws, which among the

Jews

Jews heretofore were easily understood and explain'd. But that it may not be thought that by such an Insinuation I seek to evade a Reply to the Difficulty, I'll touch on the particular Instances which in this Case the most stress is laid upon, and thence give a Specimen of their Weakness who are led to disesteem and slight the Scriptures by such an Objection. And,

1. I'll begin with what was mention'd last.

They say there are some of the *Levitical Laws* that are plainly *lewd*, and that tend to corrupt the Fancy; and defile the Imagination:

Deut. 22. What is mention'd by *Moses* about the Tokens of
13, &c. *Virginity*, is the most noted Instance of this

Kind. As to which, and other Laws of the same sort, I have this to say, that what they require might be needful as things then were, among a People so dispos'd as the *Jews*; and yet it not be needful, for us now to pry into them. They were a People naturally very much inclin'd to be Jealous of their Wives; and apt to defame them without any just Occasion, that they might excuse their putting them away, which tended to produce many publick Mischiefs and Disorders. In this Case it was a wonderful Mercy of God to them to provide a Remedy by such sort of Injunctions, by which the Innocent might be vindicated: Such *Signs of Trial* might never fail in that Climate, tho' they may in some others. It was so far from being unworthy of God to leave such things upon Record, that it may heighten our Admiration both of his Great Wisdom and Benignity in the Management of that People who were so extremely perverse; and particularly so addicted to the Exorbitan-

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cies of Lust and Jealousy: If however, any Persons find that the reading Passages of this kind excite bad Thoughts in them, I grant they had better wave them. But still let it be observ'd, the Fault is in them, and not in the Scripture. There it hardly any thing can be mention'd, but a corrupt Fancy may make a bad use of it. The most Divine things that are, may be in that respect strangely abus'd. Nor is it a better Argument that the Scripture was not inspir'd of God, that there are some Parts and Passages of it that may be abus'd by Persons that are lasciviously dispos'd, than it is that the Sun is not God's Workmanship, because the Light of it may be us'd by wicked Men, as assistant to them in perpetrating the Villanies upon which they are intent. Again,

2. They say that some of the *Levitical Laws* are very *Ridiculous*. And for an Instance they generally mention *Circumcision*, which has been freely ridicul'd by Men of wanton Wits: But with very little Reason. They that well consider it, will find there is much to be said for it. *Circumcision* was appointed by God as a *Sign*, and as a *Seal*. As a *Sign* it was *Distinctive*: It distinguish'd the People God had chosen for himself, from the rest of the Nations. It was a *memorative Sign*; design'd to put them in mind of the Faith and Piety of *Abraham* their Father, whom they were bound to follow; and of the Covenant which God entred into with him; the Blessings of which were secur'd, and made over to them, if they trod in his Steps. It was a *figurative Sign*: Pointing them to the necessity of having their *Hearts Circumcis'd*, that they might walk in the way of

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the Lord, and keep his Commandments: And it was accordingly improv'd by several of the Prophets. It was an *initiating Sign*, by which both Native *Jews* and *Profelytes* were initiated in their Religion, and enter'd into a state of Devotedness to the Lord *Jehovah*. And it was a *Political Sign*, by which they were admitted Members of the *Jewish Commonwealth*, and to a Share in the Privileges of it. It was also a *Seal*, and that both on God's Part, and Man's Part. It was a *Seal* on God's Part, that he would fulfill all his Promises to *Abraham*, and to his Seed: And on Man's Part also it was a *Seal*, binding and obliging to keep the Law, and adhere to the Worship and Service of the God of *Israel*. And shall we be tempted to make light of a thing so sacred and solemn, and that carried so much in it, by a poor little whistling Jest? They that are to be that way led into mean Thoughts of the sacred Scriptures, are not argued, but laugh'd out of their Religion; which cannot be the part of wise Men.

3. They say, some of the *Levitical Laws* are *mean* and trivial; and such as it was beneath God to give; and they instance in those about the *distinction of Meats*, and *Animals*. But how know they that bring this Objection; what Reasons God might have for this part of his antient Constitution? He might herein aim at the Health of his People: He might design by Regulations of this sort (as has been observ'd by many) to convey useful moral Instructions. We learn at least from the Gospel, that they may be this way improv'd. *Doth God*, says the Apostle, *take care for Oxen?* By which Query he plainly intimates it to be
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an Absurdity to suppose that the Injunctions of the Law concerning the brut Creatures, did not principally relate to Man, who was made their Lord; and were not design'd for his Instruction. And it much more becomes us to endeavour to gather Instruction from such Regulations for our own use, than to encourage our selves from thence in a *cavilling* Temper. It was not without a wise Design that God in the Law made a *Distinction* between some *Animals* and others. We may observe, that those Creatures are pronounc'd impure, which were us'd by the *Egyptians* in their *Auguries* and Soothsayings: As the *Wolf*, the *Fox*, the *Dragon*, and the *Vultur*. God design'd this way to teach his People utterly to abhor the Vanities of *Egypt*; after the same manner as he that would keep Children from the Fire, forbids them to go near the Chimney. And it does not follow but there might be various other Reasons for that Settlement, tho' we are not now able distinctly to discover them. But if God cannot be satisfactorily made appear to have inspir'd the Penmen of sacred Scripture, till we can be able distinctly to understand all Particulars contain'd in their Writings, it will be impossible for us ever to be satisfy'd about a Divine Revelation. And so, at the same time as we upon such Grounds question whether the Scriptures we have, are inspir'd, we represent it as impossible for us to have Satisfaction that any Writings are inspir'd: Which is a most monstrous Absurdity.

4. They say, some of the *Levitical Laws* are *unmerciful*. The Instance given is the Law, that says, *If a Man sell his Daughter to be a* Exod. 21.
S 2 Maid- 7, 8, &c.

Maid-Servant, she shall not go out as the Men-Servants do. If she please not her Master, who hath betroth'd her to himself, then shall he let her be redcem'd, &c. And if he hath betroth'd her unto his Son, he shall deal with her after the manner of Daughters, &c. Here a Man is suppos'd to sell his own Daughter, which, they say, 'tis incredible God should permit. But it should be observ'd that there is no express permission of a Man to sell his Daughter, in the Law; but there was Provision made by it, that if a Daughter were sold by her own Father, in a case of extreme Necessity, she should not be a meer Slave. But supposing the selling a Daughter really were permitted, where is the *Unmercifulness* of that Law, that provides she shall be betrothed to him that buys her, or his Son, and favourably dealt with by them? How can it be unjust, or *unmerciful* in a Father to part with his Daughter to a Husband, so as to get Money at the same time to supply his own necessary Wants? They that will make such a thing as this an Objection against God's having had an hand in the *Mosaical* Constitution, are much more willing to *cavil*, than to acquiesce in what may give them very rational and just Satisfaction.

Deut. 23.
19, 20.

Lastly, 'tis objected that some of the *Levitical Laws* are manifestly *unreasonable*: As particularly that against *Usury*, which, when duly moderated, most certainly is a vast Convenience, and indeed so necessary, that it is hard to conceive how some could be able to subsist without it; that is, without receiving Profit by lending out their Money to such as are in a Capacity of employing it to Advantage, which they are not. But it is observable

ble the *Jews* have little or none of that *Traffick* among them, which is common in these Parts of the World. Their Riches lay chiefly in *Husbandry* and *Pasturage*, wherein Money is not ordinarily so improvable as in our way of *Trading*. And withal, tho' they were not allow'd to take *Usury* of their own Brethren and Countrymen, yet they might take it from Strangers: Which he that considers, will hardly reckon this a valid *Objection* against the Divinity of that Set of Laws, which has so many Signatures of God upon it.

I shall mention but one more *Objection* taken from the *Old Testament*, and that is this: How can those Writings be inspir'd, which contain so many *Execrations* and *Imprecations*, as we there meet with? I'll give you the Words of the Objector. *The Author*, says *Five Lethe, of the 69th and 109th Psalms was not immediately inspir'd by the Good and Merciful Spirit of God, when he said, Let Satan stand at his Right Hand; Let his Prayer become Sin; Let his Children be fatherless and his Wife a Widow; Let his Children continually be Vagabonds, and beg; Let the Extortioner catch all that he hath; Let his Posterity be cut off; and let the Iniquity of his Fathers be remembred with the Lord; &c.* It is plain, says he, that these are the Words of a Man full of excessive *Choler*, and of an *Extream Desire to be reveng'd* *. And from Curses of this kind that dropt from our Sacred Penmen, he concludes they could not be inspir'd as we pretend they were. In answer to which, let it be observ'd, that these Passages

* Louth answers this *Objection* very fully in his *Vindication* of the Divine Authority and Inspiration of the Writings of the *Old* and *New Testament*, *Chap. 1.* p. 246.

of Holy Writ which we commonly translate by way of *Imprecation*, might for the most part be as properly render'd in a way of *Prediction*; so as rather to foretel what certainly would come to pass, than to signify a Desire of Revenge, or a real Delight in the Calamities mention'd. And why might not the Penman of the *Hundred and ninth Psalm* be inspir'd of God, when he foretold the Miseries that would befall him (whosoever he was) under whom *Judas* was represented, who we understand by the New Testament was ultimately pointed at in the Prediction. It was common with the *Jews* to denounce and fore signify the most dreadful Evils in a way of *Imprecation*: and why mayn't this be allow'd of? We find the same way us'd even by *St. Paul*, who cries out, *If any*

† *Cor. 16. Man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema*
 39. *Maranatha.* And if such a Method was not disagreeable with a Gospel-Spirit, why should it be reckon'd a thing unbecoming the Blessed God, to inspire the Penman of those *Psalms* mention'd, who in the same way denounc'd heavy Judgments against him by whom the Blessed *Jesus* would be betray'd into the hands of his merciless Enemies? It is withal observable, that many of those Expressions which we meet with in the Old Testament, that are the harshest, that fall under this Head, are us'd with reference to those Nations, upon whom after long Forbearance, God made the *Israelites* the Instruments of his Vengeance. And then there are few of them are so positive, but they leave room for an Escape, upon supposition of Repentance and Amendment. And if these things are well weigh'd, this Objection will be found to have as little real Strength against

against the Inspiration of the Penmen of Scripture, as those which were mention'd before.

I shall only add one Objection more, relating to the *New Testament*, which is this. How, say some, can the Writings of the Disciples and Apostles of Christ be divinely inspir'd, when they cite so many Passages out of the *Old Testament*, in a Sense widely different from what was intended? But here let that be recollected, which has been before observ'd as to the *Interpreting* of the Old Testament in the first Rise of Christianity, *viz.* that it was a primary *Gift of the Holy Ghost*, and is mention'd as such among the Followers of our Saviour in the Writings of the New Testament: And therefore 'tis but reasonable to believe either that the Holy Ghost suggested to the Memory of the Compilers of the New Testament those Scriptures which they used in their Writings; or else so assisted them, as not to suffer them to make any Inferences from them, which were not agreeable to their true Intent and Meaning; tho' at this Distance of Time we may not perhaps be always able to discern the Strength and Clearness of the Consequence. Besides this, there are two other things which, well observ'd, would remove and fully solve this Difficulty. The first is this; that all the *Testimonies* which are cited in the New Testament out of the Old, whatever may at first View appear, are not produc'd with a Design to prove that to be true and foretold which is affirm'd, but they are often cited to shew a Similitude, and a general Resemblance. The second is this; That many of the Passages that are cited have more Senses than one. For the Holy Spirit in one and the same Prediction or

Assertion, often designedly comprehended several things at once, sometimes with an Intention to conceal the thing mainly pointed at, till by the Event it should come to be understood that it really was foretold, and principally intended in such a Prediction: which tends very much to heighten the Admiration of the Predictor. Many Passages of the Old Testament are cited in the New, by way of Accommodation only. Thus St. Paul cites out of *Isaiab* that Passage; *Except the Lord of Sabbaoth had left us a Seed, we had been as Sodom, and made like unto Gomorrha*: Not intending by citing it to intimate as if the Prophet therein referr'd to the Rejection of the *Jews* after the Publication of the Gospel, which was the thing of which the Apostle was there distinctly speaking: But all that is intended is to signify, that in that case something of a like nature occur'd, with that which the Prophet mention'd in that Saying, in which he referr'd to the People of God in his own Time. In like manner the same Apostle elsewhere cites that Saying of the same Prophet, *I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the Day of Salvation I have succour'd thee*: not intimating thereby as if the Prophet *Isaiab* therein had his eye upon the *Corinthians*; but he cites it as a parallel Case: intimating that it might be gather'd from that Saying of the Prophet, that there was a certain *Accepted Time*, that might be call'd a *Day of Salvation*, in which God was ready to hear them, and which therefore it concern'd them not to let slip thro' their hands without carefully improving it. There are also other *Citations* out of the Old Testament to be met with in the New, which have more

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Senses than one. Thus St. *Matthew* mentioning our Lord's going into *Egypt* with *Joseph* and his Mother, and staying there some time in order to his Preservation, and then returning from thence into *Judea* again, says, *This was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, Out of Egypt have I called my Son.* The Passage is cited out of *Hosea's* Prophecy, and as it stands there, is without all question to be understood directly of the People of *Israel*, whom he brought up out of *Egypt*: And yet a second Sense might be intended by the Spirit of God in the very same Passage, with an eye to our Saviour, to whom it is therefore apply'd by the *Evangelist*. And we may safely defy the most audacious *Caviller* at Scripture that is, to discover any thing in this, that is unbecoming God. Nay really upon close Thoughts this will be found a confirming Argument of the Inspiration of the New Testament, rather than any thing of an Argument against it.

Upon the whole then,

1. Let us remember we are to read even the Scriptures themselves with *Caution*. For they contain bad Actions as well as good; nay, and sometimes relate the Words of the Devil, as well as the Words of God. We must not look upon the best Men who are there mention'd, as Patterns and Examples to be imitated in every thing; but in some things esteem them to be Warnings for our Caution. We have bad Examples there as well as good; and we cross the Design of God in inserting such things in Scripture, if we let our Minds and Manners be deprav'd by them. St. *Paul* tells us how to use things of this Kind. *These things*, says he, were

1 Cor. 10,
6, 7, 8, 9;
10, 11.

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our Examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they, that is, the Israelites in the Wilderness, lusted: Neither be ye Idolaters, as were some of them: Neither let us commit Fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one Day three and twenty thousand: Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroy'd of Serpents: Neither murmur you, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer. Now these things happen'd unto them for Ensamles, and they are written for our Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the World are come. This good Use we may make of the Blemishes of the Best that are mention'd in Scripture, we may learn from thence the Depravity of Humane Nature, the strange Depth of Corruption, the need there is of the utmost Caution, and the Richness of the Grace of God, that he affords such Marks of peculiar Favour to Persons so unworthy. But to fancy that a thing is therefore good or excusable, because a good Man did it, who is mention'd in Scripture, which was an usual thing with many of the Fathers, who upon that very ground went about to excuse the *Polygamy* of the Patriarchs, is the ready way to make Religion ridiculous, and expose the Scriptures to Contempt.

2. We may see good Reason to lament the Degeneracy of the present Age, in which such a Practice as *Polygamy*, tho' so evidently displeasing to God, shall be so strenuously pleaded for, and Persons openly desy'd to prove it unlawful. Among Heathens it were not so much to be wonder'd at, tho' even some of them have freely declar'd against it: But among Christians 'tis exceeding shameful. That among

mong us, who have so long had the Holy Scriptures in our hands, and have had the Blessed *Jesus* so plainly there giving us his Sense about this matter, there should be any to be found, that should plead for a *Multiplicity of Wives*, is really scandalous. I won't pretend 'tis an unnatural Sin. The Light of Nature suggests much against it, and yet I can't say it gives full Proof that it is utterly unlawful: But the Scripture is plain enough on the Head, to any that are not unwilling to be convinc'd. It ought therefore to grieve our very Souls, that so pernicious a Principle and Practice should at all prevail; a Principle and Practice which none can give way to, without discrediting Revelation, flying in our Blessed Saviour's Face, and opening a Sluice to the grossest Immoralities.

3. We should learn to adhere to *Truth*, whenever we find it's well attested, even tho' some Difficulties may attend it. Whensoever we are engag'd in a Search and Enquiry about any matter of Consequence, our way should be this: We should see whether what is said for it, does not outweigh what is said against it. If it does, we ought to adhere, tho' there might be several things which we could not satisfactorily solve. God this way tries us whether we are of an *ingenuous* Make. Those Principles which are truly of the greatest moment, and in which it most concerns us to be establish'd, are indeed often beset with Difficulties: so that we must take pains before we can be fully settled: But the Blessed God may very well expect thus much from us, that an overbearing Probability, a Surplus of Weight that turns the Scale, should suffice to sway us, and give

give us such Satisfaction, as to influence us in Action. It does so in common and Civil Affairs, and therefore it ought to do so in Religious. Till we come to this, if we are at all thoughtful or inquisitive, we can expect no other than to be wandering about in a perpetual Uncertainty, not only about the Inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures, but even the Immortality of the Soul, and a Future State, and other the most essential Principles of Religion.

4. Let us study the *Moral* Part of our Bibles well, and practise agreeably, and we shall find this will give us such a Relish of those Sacred Compositions, as will much help to confirm us against the malignant Influence of the *Cavils* we may meet with, tho' we may not be able distinctly to answer them to our full Satisfaction. Conversing with some that have been sorely assaulted under this Head, they have frankly told me, that when they have found themselves so beset with Difficulties, that they were even bewildred, they have yet found that peculiar Pleasure in reading the *Moral* Part of the Scriptures; they have therein observ'd something so becoming, something so worthy of God; they have had their Desire of a Conformity of their own *Morals*, and an Abhorrence of the contrary so rais'd and heighten'd, that this hath supported their Faith, and kept them from *Infidelity*. Happy are they that have such a Preservative! Let a Man once grow lewd in his *Morals*, and give way to a flagitious Temper, and 'tis no wonder if he proves an *Infidel*, and comes in time to disbelieve the Scriptures. He'll find it for his Interest so to do; and that is a fatal Charm.

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But let Men continue heartily to approve in their Judgment, and conform in their Practice to the *Morals* of the Holy Scripture, and that will help to preserve them from the fatal Influence of the *Objections* of Unbelievers, till by diligent Search and Enquiry, and a serious Application to the *Fountain of Lights* and *Father of Mercies*, they obtain that Light that is necessary to their Satisfaction and Establishment, as to the Inspiration of the Scriptures, which are really profitable for *Doctrine*, for *Reproof*, for *Correction*, for *Instruction in Righteousness*.

S E R-

SERMON X.

LUKE XVI. 31.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be perswaded, though one rose from the Dead:

*At Sal-
ters-Hall,
Tuesday
Lecture,
Sept. 4.
1705.*

THERE is one Cavil against the Scriptures that is yet untouch'd, that is perhaps as common as any that have been mention'd ; and to some it appears most plausible. God (say they) might have taken other Methods that would have been more satisfactory, and that would have contributed more effectually to our Instruction, Conviction, and Excitation in Religion, than this dull and heavy Way of a Written Volume, that is so tedious, and made up of so unaccountable a Mixture. And therefore truly they hope, that if they have less Veneration for the Bible than some others, they may the more easily be excus'd. Which Fancy is directly obviated by this Text.

Our Blessed Saviour, who frequently convey'd his Instructions in a *Paraboli- cal* way, here tells his Hearers of a *certain rich Man*, who

who when he came to be in *Hell*, was very desirous to have an Express sent from the Invisible World to *his Brethren* that remain'd on Earth, to give them warning of the Tendency of their evil Course of Life, in hope they might that way be recover'd and reclaim'd. *Abraham*, with whom he is represented as conferring, turns him off with this Reply, that *they had Moses and the Prophets*: they had in their hands those Sacred Writings that were drawn up under God's peculiar and infallible Conduct, for the Benefit of the Church in all Ages: And he in effect intimates that they were indispensibly bound to listen to these Writings; had all the Reason in the World so to do; and so doing might be safe and happy. The rich Man not satisfy'd with this, returns upon him, and says, *Nay Father Abraham, but if one went from the Dead, they will repent*, q. d. Tho' the Scriptures which they have so long had in their hands, have lost their Force with them, tho' they are too much wedded to their Sins to be reclaim'd from them by their Means, yet so unusual a Method as this could hardly be without Success. A Messenger from another World would be such a thing as could not but awaken them, and set their Thoughts on work, and strike such an Awe as would not suffer them any longer to persist in their Impenitence and Infidelity. To which *Abraham* returns this peremptory Answer: *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be perswaded, tho' one rose from the Dead*. He gives him to understand, that the Supposition he went upon was very deceitful: For that where God's ordinary Methods are fruitless, and suffice not for Conviction, any *extraordinary*

ordinary Methods that might have in them something of Surprize, would not be more effectual: The want of Satisfaction and Conviction in the Use of the Written Word, not arising from any Defect it could justly be charg'd with, but from the Malignity of those that made light of it; as to which Malignity no Peculiarity of Method in any thing meerly External (as such an *Apparition* would imply) could be a suitable and proper Remedy.

'Tis very possible some of us may with the Rich Man here mention'd have been apt upon Occasion to think, that if such or such a Method had been taken with us, we had been true Penitents, confirm'd Believers, and eminent for Holiness long ago: But alas! this is but a deceitful Artifice of the great Enemy of Souls, to impose upon us. For if when we have suitable and proper Means, they are not effectual, a Change in any thing external would not give Efficacy; and any other Means that we might think of, and magnify at a distance, if they came to be actually us'd, would but leave us as they found us. 'Tis possible some of us may at times have been apt to imagine, that tho' we have not been wrought on as some others, by the reading of the Bible, by the hearing of God's Law, and the Denunciations of the Prophets, by the Sermons of our Saviour, and the Histories and Letters of his Disciples, which thro' Use and Custom are grown familiar to us, we yet might be likely enough to be wonderfully mov'd and impress'd by the Appearance of a Messenger from the Dead, who from his own Light and Knowledge should make a Report to us concerning another World; we may fancy we might this way

way be fully convinc'd and satisfy'd, or at least be more confirm'd and establish'd: But behold we are here assur'd of the contrary. This is a gross Mistake, says Father *Abraham*, who is to be taken as herein delivering our Saviour's own Sense. 'Tis here positively asserted, that they that are not brought to true Faith and Obedience, and an Holy Life, by the Sacred Scriptures read, open'd, and inculcated, and so abundantly attested to be *given by the Inspiration of God*, would not be wrought on to any saving Purpose, by the most affecting Relation of one that should come to them from among the Dead.

The Assertion indeed in the Text goes no farther than the Writings of the Old Testament. These only were directly intended by *Moses and the Prophets* here; for these were the only inspir'd Writings that were then extant: But it still holds as true, if we take in the Writings of the New Testament also, which we have seen we have good Reason to believe to have been as really divinely inspir'd as the other; and therefore I shall equally take them in, in the present Argument of Discourse, which is this:

That He that being favour'd with those inspir'd Writings that are contain'd in our Bibles, remains unconvinc'd as to the great Essentials of Religion, and continues an impenitent Unbeliever, would not in all probability, be savingly wrought on by an express Messenger from the invisible World.

I put the matter upon an over-hearing Probability, which gives sufficient Foundation in any
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such Case for a positive Assertion, tho' we should not run it up to an absolute Impossibility, which I cannot conceive necessary. Now that there is not any real *Probability* that a Person that remains unaffected with the Scriptures, that were so evidently given by Inspiration of God, should be to any great purpose wrought upon, by a Messenger sent from the Region of Souls departed, will plainly appear from the Considerations following.

1. Having the Holy Scriptures in his hands that were inspir'd of God, he has *Means sufficient* for his Instruction, Conviction, and Excitation; and they being fully *sufficient* for that Purpose when a Man can but be content to be under Divine Conduct, it follows that the *Impenitence*, and notional or practical *Infidelity* of such a Man cannot be for want of Light and Help, but thro' *Malignity*. God hath sufficiently taught us in his Word whatever is necessary; and he has back'd it (as we have seen) with a sufficient Evidence: such as renders it highly credible; such as ought to satisfy and content us. With how many *Miracles* was the Law confirm'd? And as for the Doctrine of the Prophets who came after the Law, its *Divinity* was many ways attested. Last of all comes our Blessed Lord himself, whose whole Life was as it were one continu'd Series of Prodiges and *Miracles*, design'd for the Confirmation of his Doctrine. And he was succeeded by his Apostles and Disciples, whom he indu'd with a like Power, with the Effects of which they fill'd all Parts and Quarters of the Earth. And withal there is an Order of Men continu'd in the Church, whose standing Office it is to open and apply God's sacred Oracles,

Oracles, to the Benefit of such as will listen to them. The Holy Spirit also continues in the Church, to set in with the Word: So that that is not left to operate alone, but becomes effectual thro' his Agency and Influence, to such as being sensible of their Need of that Influence of his, do earnestly implore it, and humbly wait for it. This being the State of the Case, what more can be needful? There is nothing that it mainly concerns us to know, that is not this way discover'd to us: Nothing that is necessary to be done by us, as to which we have not this way sufficient Direction. We have as good Evidence as needs to be desir'd in any Case, that the Bible came from God: and who fitter to teach us the way to *Blessedness*, than the Blessed God himself! He has given us his Word for a Rule; and it does contain a compleat and perfect Rule. It shews us how to serve and enjoy God, how to live with Man, and how to manage and govern our selves. It presses us with the most cogent Motives that can be; Motives most likely to work both upon our Fear and upon our Hope, by displaying before us both the Happiness and the Terrors of another World, by its sweet Promises and dreadful Threatnings. It urges upon us, and that with the utmost Warmth, the Obligation of our *Creation*, *Preservation*, and *Redemption*: An Obligation from the *Incarnation* and *Death* of the Son of God, and from the perfect *Example* of his Life also, which is set before us in such a way, as at the same time to afford us abundant Direction to govern our Practice. In short, the Word of God has every thing in it that we could reasonably desire. And shall a Book be

2 Pet. 1.
18, 19.

so plainly evidenc'd to come from God, and do we need any thing farther to ingage us to regard it. Shall we listen to any one more than to the God that made us? Shall we listen to any, if not to those that speak to us in his Name, prove they have his Commission, and have his Word in their Mouths; a Word given by his Inspiration? Can we have any such Evidence to confirm and back a Report brought by a Messenger from the invisible World, as we have in this Case? If we but knew how to value things rightly, we have here the best of Evidence. 'Tis somewhat remarkable, that whereas three of our Lord's Disciples (of whom St. Peter was one) were in his Life-time favour'd with a Voice from Heaven, to confirm their Faith in him as the *Messiah*, tho' this was in it self a great Advantage, yet that Apostle plainly, when he mentions it, tells Christians that they had yet *a more sure Word of Prophecy, unto which they did well to take heed, &c.* For his part he declares, that tho' he had heard that Voice from the glorious Cloud, he reckon'd there was yet greater Security by the Written Word, to which therefore he charges all to pay the utmost Regard. And is he then, that can make light of this Word, likely to be wrought on by a single *Apparition*? Is it a thing supposable, that all the Evidence attending the Bulk of the Doctrine reveal'd from Heaven, in a Variety of well attested, punctually accomplish'd *Prophecies*, in many open and uncontrollable *Miracles*, in its *sanctifying Power* over the Hearts and Lives of such as truly give it Entertainment, and in its *providential Confirmation* by God's general and particular Distributions in the

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the World ; Is it, I say, a thing supposable, that all this should be outweigh'd by the Report of a single Messenger from the Dead ? Is it for want of Light, and Evidence, and cogent Arguments that Divine Revelation is not now regarded ? That cannot be : For if it came from God, (as I have prov'd it did) it must sufficiently evidence its Author : And if yet 'tis slighted, it plainly appears, that 'tis not for want of Light sufficient to convince the Judgment, but thro' prevalent Malignity : Which is a Distemper of the Mind, that such a Messenger from the Dead would be as little able to cure, as we Ministers are by all our Pains with any that are so dispos'd, in order to their Instruction, and Excitation.

2. Supposing any thing that were desirable, to be really wanting in Divine Revelation, as it is convey'd to us, and press'd upon us, yet can we not justly apprehend that any such special Messenger, dispatch'd on purpose from the invisible World, could be able to make any *considerable Addition*. Such a Messenger from the Dead, must either preach the *same Doctrine* to us as we have often heard already ; or he must preach *another*, and a *different Doctrine*. Should he come with *another Doctrine*, we were bound to detest him : We have a Caution already enter'd against him, that ought to keep us from regarding him. *Tho' we, says the Apostle, or an Angel Gal. i. 8, from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be Accursed.* It would be our Duty to abhor him, instead of receiving him. Suppose then he preaches to us the *same Doctrine* as we have had inculcated upon us so often already, would it have Power and Efficacy when coming from

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him, notwithstanding that it has been so often rejected, when it was deliver'd to us by Gospel-Ministers out of the Holy Scriptures? Is it not more likely that we should listen to those who are as much concern'd as our selves in the Truths they deliver, than the Report of one that was an utter Stranger to us? Is it not Rational to apprehend that we should much sooner regard Persons whose Fidelity we know, and with whom we may converse familiarly, than one whom we cannot cast an Eye upon without being scar'd and affrighted? But let us take the matter at the best, and suppose our selves got over the terror of the first Appearance, and able to use Freedom, and also to confide, what could we suppose such a Messenger from the Dead could be able to say to us, that we have not heard a thousand and a thousand times? Would he tell us that all must die? That is what we have abundant Conviction of every Day. Would he assure us that there will be a terrible Day of Judgment? That is what we believe already, if we are not Infidels. Would he then assure us of the Certainty of the great Principles of the Christian Faith? And urge us upon the Necessity of a suitable Life? Neither would this be any new thing to us: And his Pains in this respect might leave us as great Strangers to the Power of Christianity as we were before. Can you suppose that he could either express our Duty, or our Danger, in clearer or fuller Words, or give more convincing Representations of things, or urge stronger Arguments, or give more Confirmation of his Assertions, than God has done in Scripture? And if not, how then can he perswade those that are not
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to be convinc'd by the Revelation of Scripture ?

Having seriously weigh'd the matter, that which appears to me the most plausible Plea that could be us'd, is this : That one coming, and appearing to us, from among the Damn'd, (which is the Circumstance express'd in the Parable) might from his own *Experience* be able, feelingly to assure us, that the Wrath of God is really insupportable, and the Torments of the Wicked, even in their present separate Estate, are dreadful beyond conception, or expression : And that therefore we must repent, and amend our ways, or else we must expect, in a little time, to come and bear them Company, in a State of Woe, in which we shall be perpetually wishing we had never been born : And that this from one that has, to his Sorrow, *felt* what he speaks, and is still *feeling* it, would come with such an *Emphasis*, as could not but cause it to make Impression. But in this Case it would be requisite that we should distinguish between the *Report* of such an Infernal Messenger, and the *Mode* of its Delivery ; between the *Matter* of such Discourse, and the *Manner* of it. The *Manner* of it will be consider'd presently. But as for the *Matter* of Discourse mention'd, 'tis not only agreeable to the Scriptures, but what you have there inculcated over and over. 'Tis nothing but what you have sounding in your Ears every Day. Neither is it reasonably to be suppos'd, that such a Person could better illustrate the Torments of the Damn'd, than God himself has done in his Word, where he sets before us the Horrors of an everlasting Darkness ; a Pit without a bottom ; a

Worm that never dies ; and a Fire that never shall be quench'd, and the like. If you say this Messenger is suppos'd to have felt them, and that therefore he might go further in his Account : I answer, still he that prepar'd them, is better able to describe them, than he that felt them. And withal, it should not pass without a Remark, that the Happiness of the Blessed, and the Torments of the Damn'd in another Life, are both of them too big for our present lisping Language ; nor would even the most advantageous Discoveries of them that could be made us, help us to full and adequate Ideas of them at the present ; and much less to cloath them with humane Language : And therefore is it that God hath thought fit to represent both of them to us under *figurative* Resemblances, and *allusive* Images, taken from things with which we are here acquainted. When St. Paul had been wrap'd up into the third Heaven, and was let down again, he tells us, that he heard *unspeakable Words, which it is not lawful*; or rather possible for a Man to utter ; so I doubt not but such a Messenger from the infernal World appearing among us, would tell us, that the Torments there endur'd, were really unutterable, and much too big for humane Language. He must therefore, for our Instruction, and in order to the conveying any thing of a Notion to us, have recourse to a sort of sensible *Allusions* : And there, I think, 'tis hard to suppose he should go beyond the Discoveries God hath made in his Word. So that as to the *Matter* reported by such a Messenger, I don't see how we could expect from him any considerable Addition to what we have already. Again,

2 Cor. 12.
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3. Suppose such a Messenger could come with some peculiarly *affecting* Strokes, or could make Additions in the *manner* of Delivery, yet would they not make their own way, or be able of themselves to cure Malignity. No, no: They that can hear the Terrors of the Lord display'd under a lively Gospel-Ministry, and yet be unconcern'd, and so stupid as to run on freely in Sin, and venture the Issue, discover such hardness of Heart as would not be soon cur'd, even by what might for the present strike, and a little affect them. Suppose any of you, that have had the benefit of Revelation, and have sate under the Preaching of the Gospel all your Days, and are not to be mov'd either by a sense of Duty or Danger; by the future Consequences of your present Course, or the Anticipations thereof in your improving Hardness and Insensibleness; should such as you have such a Messenger come to you, I can't perceive it likely that there would be any great Effect. Could such as you see one ascending from the infernal Regions, tearing his Hair, wringing his Hands, gnashing his Teeth, howling and yelling in the most piteous manner, freely venting his Sorrow, and bewailing his Misery with all the Bitterness that can be conceiv'd or express'd: Should you have such a Person addressing himself to you in particular, and with plentiful Tears, and other Expressions of the most vehement Passion, beseeching you, before it be too late, to abandon your wicked Courses, turn to God, devote your selves to the Lord Jesus Christ, make Religion your Business, and follow after universal Holiness of Heart and Life, as you would not have your perpetual Abode with
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him in the Regions of Sorrow and Darknes. As affecting as such a Sight as this might appear likely to prove, at a distance, yet is there not the least reason to apprehend that it would of it self have any saving Effect. It might put you for that time into a Fit of Sobriety, and set Passion on work for a Moment; or it might, perhaps, put you into some such Pangs, as we ever and anon find poor careless Sinners in, when they are, as it were, held over the Flames of Hell, and are under near Apprehensions of another World: But as those Pangs soon wear off, when the Cause of them ceases, so would the Impressions made by such an *Apparition* quickly cease upon its disappearing; and you'd remain the same Persons as before. For tho' *sensible Evidence* be in it self apt to convince, yet it carries not along with it any such Power as can overcome the Corruption of a malignant Heart: Neither is it appointed of God to produce any such Effect; which are two very weighty and considerable Thoughts. An Almighty Agency is necessary to turn a Sinner into a Saint. No means that could be us'd, could effect that, without a touch of God's Hand. Under the present Gospel-Revelation, God is ready to afford his Agency; but it must be to humble Souls, that will acquiesce in his Way, and submit to his Methods. Where a boisterous, assuming, dictating Spirit prevails, 'tis not one Method or another can convince, and change. The Temper must first be alter'd. Miracles themselves, even the greatest of them, won't convince the Obstinate. Our Blessed Lord rais'd *Lazarus* from the Grave, which was a thing before unheard of. Were the *Pharisees*

rises hereupon ever the more pliable? At all the more inclin'd to listen to, and comply with him? No; far from it. They thereupon grew the more implacable in their Malice; and set themselves to contrive the Death, both of *Lazarus*, and of him that rais'd him out of his Grave. Our Lord afterwards rais'd himself, when he had been part of three Days dead; and there were many Witnesses of it; and yet it had no effect. One well observes, that tho' our Lord's Resurrection was confirm'd by the Testimony of his Predictions, of their own Prophets, of the Guards that kept his Sepulchre, of their own Senses, of the Apostles, and five hundred Witnesses, and all this back'd with the miraculous Effusion of the Holy Ghost on those that believ'd on him, and a continual throng of Miracles wrought in his Name, yet was all this insufficient to reclaim that wicked Generation from their Infidelity, and to provoke them to Repentance. They did but hereupon set themselves with the greater Malice and Inveteracy, to oppose both our Lord, and his Doctrine. Tho' we may fancy the *Impression* that might be made by such an *Apparition* would be lasting, yet if our Hearts remain'd without a Change, we should find the Dread produc'd would soon wear off. Affrighting Men, will never renew their Natures, nor kindle in them an hearty Love to God and Holiness.

4. God's co-operating Influence, with such a Message from the invisible World, could not reasonably be expected, by those on whom his Scriptural Revelations have no effect. God, who is infinite in Wisdom and Power, hath determin'd the way and means of the Conversion

sion of Sinners, which is by his Word, and Ministers, and not by *Messengers from the Dead*. If they are Sav'd, it must be by his appointed means. God is ready to bless, and succeed his own means : But when they are disregarded and slighted, vilify'd and abus'd, to suppose that God will concur with a peculiar means for our Conviction, is to imagine that he will be at our Beck, as to which he has no way given us the least Encouragement. We have sufficient Evidence of his readiness to concur with his own Appointments : But that he will to so great a Purpose co-operate with any thing out of his stated Course, is what we have no ground to look for : And therefore, tho' under *Moses and the Prophets*, whose Agency he hath ordinarily thought fit to use, he is ready to exert his Efficacy, and shew forth his Power and Grace, yet that he'll do so in the case of a *Messenger from the Dead*, is a precarious Supposition ; and therefore we may well doubt of such a Messenger's Success. Again,

5. The Report of such a Messenger from the invisible World, would be liable to more *Cavils* than God's Revelations are, with the Evidence with which he has attended them. It cannot indeed be said, that the Evidence which backs our sacred Oracles is such, as that it will satisfy such as delight in *cavilling* for *cavilling* sake ; which I take to be really a thing impossible : And yet they are so well attested, that he that will be contented with an over-bearing, out-weighting Evidence, may have full Satisfaction. But there is abundant Ground for *Cavils*, in the Case of such an *Apparition* sent to awaken, and convince us.

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We may question the Lawfulness of keeping up a Correspondence of that sort with the invisible World, which lies at present so much out of our Sphere. There is a general Prohibition under the Law, that seems of standing Force. We might also question the Credibility of such a Messenger, and be afraid of *Delusions* and *Impostures*, and want Evidence of his Mission. Withal, such a *Messenger from the Dead*, must come to us but once, or he must come frequently. If he came but once, we might be apt to question the reality of the *Apparition*, and remain in doubt whether or no all that belong'd to it might not be acted upon the Stage of the Fancy only. Or suppose we were satisfy'd in the reality of the Messenger's Appearance, we might be in doubt about the Message, when we heard it but once. We might be apt to be afraid, lest in a Fright we might mistake the true Sense of it; or that our treacherous Memories might not have kept it faithfully. And after all, such a single Appearance, would not equal the daily Solicitations of God's Ministers, in the Circumstances in which they officiate among us under the Gospel. And on the other side, were such a Messenger to appear frequently, that alone would be apt to breed Contempt: And we should have the same Objections as any of us now have against God's Method, under a Gospel-Ministry. So that upon the whole, we are safer as we are.

6. And lastly; When God's Revelations are disrelish'd, and further Demands are made, it argues such *Curiosity* as God hath never encourag'd, and such *Petulance* of Spirit, as would improve and grow with Gratification. 'Twould

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Deut. 18.
10, 11.

be in this Case much as it is with Men as to their outward Circumstances in the World. Many are apt to think, that if they were but left to carve for themselves, they could make their State better than it was before. Now indeed they are uneasy, but if this, or that, or a third thing were added, then they fancy they should be abundantly contented. But let these People reach what they aim at, and 'tis commonly observ'd, they are to the full as uneasy as they were before. For, their Unhappiness lies here, that their Desires still run before them ; and so they as eagerly crave further Additions, when they are arriv'd at the Pitch which they first propos'd, as they did but a little before, what leaves them uneasy when they have gotten it. At last, upon summing up the matter, it clearly appears to considerate Persons, that there's no possibility of any true *Contentment*, where People won't be satisfy'd in those Circumstances, in which God has fix'd them. And it is the like also here. They who disrelishing God's Methods, insist upon any such additional Evidence and Confirmation, as this of an Appearance of one from the Dead, and plead, that if this were but added, then they'd yield and comply, tho' not before, whatever towering Conceits they may have of themselves, know not in reality what Make and Spirit they are of. They are meer Strangers to their own Hearts. They'd find the disorder of their Spirits would soon encrease, should God at all yield to them. Should he gratify them in one Step, and another, and a third, their *Petulance* would grow upon them ; they'd still be for more ; there would be no end. Should the Blessed
God

God go ever so far with them in order to the gaining them, they'd break with him at last. Let us therefore remember that God is Sovereign, and to be ador'd by such dependent, such degenerate Mortals as we are. He is ready enough indeed to make us happy : But then he expects Submission to his own Way and Method, in all whom he brings to Heaven and Happiness. Which wise Constitution being broken in upon, by those who will suppose that they should be wrought upon by a Messenger from the invisible World, while the Divine Oracles which they have in their hands are slighted, and disregarded, is that which I take to be the Fundamental Ground of that great Improbability in the Case, which my Text asserts ; and which, if you put all these things together, will, I hope, be sufficiently clear and evident.

And now by way of Improvement, I shall only subjoin a few plain Reflections.

I. Stand still and see the *Vanity* of Man in his *Imaginations*. How apt are we to think that sensible Evidence of the Wrath of God would work on those that are deaf to the Sound of the Word, and make a Change in their Hearts and Lives : Whereas, if we seriously consider this Text, we shall find it a groundless Conceit. It plainly appears from hence, that as good Thoughts as such Persons may have of themselves, or as well as they may be thought of by others, they would not Believe, or Repent, even if one should rise from the Dead, and come and warn, and instruct them. How apt are we to take upon us to indent, and make Terms with God! *If he be* Mat. 27.
King of Israel, said the perverse Scribes, and 42.
 peevish

peevish Pharisees, *let him now come down from the Cross, and we'll believe him.* If he'd gratify their Humour, then they'd yield to him; but otherwise truly they had nothing to say to him. What strange *Arrogance* does this carry in it! So some must have *Miracles*, or *Visions*, or *particular Revelations*; they must be led by *special Impulse* in Matters of Moment; they must have an infallible Interpreter, or else Religion appears to them a very jejune and empty thing. But where Persons thus foolishly attempt to give Laws to Heaven, it argues them to be very little acquainted either with God, or with themselves. How apt are we also to betray our present Advantages, by Wishes of farther Additions of something that seems wanting! But this is perfect Trifling. 'Tis but a meer Shift at any time, to think of other Means than God has provided. Let us therefore look upon any Workings of such a Disposition as we may sometimes find in our selves, as affecting Instances of our *Vanity*.

2. Let us from what we have heard, take notice of the Reason why Sinners among us are so stupify'd and harden'd. 'Tis because they *bear not Moses and the Prophets.* They yield not to the Word of God. It surprizes many to hear of a Wretch so harden'd in Drunkenness, as even when he saw his Companion drop down dead before his Eyes, without any Remorse to cry, Fill up the Glass; and go on carousing. It's an affecting thing to see Multitudes of Sinners dropping continually after each other, as Sheep from a Bridge, into Eternity, nay into Hell, and their surviving Companions take no warning. In a Fight at Sea or by Land Hundreds and Thousands drop, and yet their

their Companions do not fly, but are held up by their Stomach and Passion, and their Ears are made deaf by the Noise of Guns, Drums, and Trumpets. So in the World Multitudes of Sinners drop down daily into the Pit, and are tumbled by their surviving Companions into their Graves, who yet never *consider the Work of the Lord, nor the Operation of his Hands,* till they also like Sheep be laid in the Grave, and Death comes to feed upon them, and Hell to devour them also. This is what many are surpriz'd at : But in plain truth it is no more to be wonder'd at, than that Hundreds and Thousands hear and read the Word of God, and yet are not thereby converted and chang'd, or at all suitably impress'd.

3. Let us all therefore learn to give more regard to the Word of God, and honour that which he so much honours. Let us not affect corresponding with the Dead, desire to confer with Angels, or give any scope to vagrant Desires of such Methods as are unusual : but let us chearfully follow *Moses and the Prophets,* and readily yield to God, revealing his Mind and Will to us in the Holy Scriptures. For he that refuses to credit God's Sacred Oracles, and comply with them, as he thereby shews himself to be a Stranger to the Spirit of God, so neither would he believe Christ himself, should he appear again in Humane Flesh ; and much less would he believe Angels or departed Spirits. Remember with Thankfulness, Christians, that you have far better Helps in order to your Salvation than one who rose from the Dead could bring with him : and use them accordingly. In giving us the Scripture God hath done more for us than we could ever have ima-

gin'd or expected, yea better than we could well have wish'd to our selves. — Let us therefore intently study the Scriptures, and comply with them: Let us make them our Rule, and transcribe them in our Lives; and we need not fear but they'll lead us safe to Heaven and Happiness; while all those that walk in Paths of their own, are in danger of being bewildred to their eternal Ruin.

S E R.

SERMON XI.

2 TIM. III. 16.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.

HAVING given sufficient *Proof* of the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures, and consider'd the most plausible *Objections* I have met with offer'd against it, I think I may now be allow'd to take it for granted, that our Bible was *given by Inspiration of God*. My remaining Work will be, to argue with Freedom, as to some things of common Importance, upon that Supposition; and to annex some *Advice* as to the searching these inspir'd Writings, in such a manner, as that we may make the best Improvement of them, to the Honour of Almighty God, and our own Benefit and Advantage. My *Arguments* will be by way of *Inference*; my *Advice* by way of *Exhortation*.

Many things may be hence very clearly and strongly *argu'd*.

My first *Inference* I draw, is in the latter words of this Text; and the *Argument* stands

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thus. Since the Scriptures *Divinely inspir'd*, we may safely conclude them *profitable* to all the Purposes, which it can be conceiv'd most requisite for inspir'd Writings to serve, and answer. Since they came from God, in the way that has been explain'd, they must necessarily be *profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness: That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnish'd unto all good Works.* If they were *Divinely inspir'd*, they cannot but be a full Storehouse, containing all that is needful for our Conduct and Assistance in our way to Heaven. This Argument I take to be strong and conclusive. For, if the Scriptures were not *profitable* to all the Purposes here mention'd, they would not answer the end of their Inspiration; which was not to satisfy our Curiosity, or to amuse and divert us, (which is all that the greatest part of meerly humane Writings drive at) but to enlighten and sanctify us, in order to our present, and our eternal Happiness. It is not conceivable that God should be at the pains to inspire the Penmen of Scripture, and their Writings be defective in any thing necessary to the answering this End; in any thing necessary to the regulating our Faith and Manners. To suppose this, is in the most outrageous manner to reflect on the Blessed God: Since therefore it is so evident that the Scriptures came originally from God, and were of his inspiring, we may certainly conclude, that none of the Purposes here touch'd on by the Apostle, can be left unanswer'd. And that we may be the more fully convinc'd of this, I conceive 'twill be worth our while, to

con-

should be *Men of God* in a peculiar manner, may thence be sufficiently furnish'd with what is necessary for their Conduct, necessary to the discharging their Trust and Duty, in such a manner, as that they may be able to approve themselves unto God, both at the present, and at the Great Day. And all this is easily to be inferr'd from their being *given by the Inspiration of God*. Let us take these things one after another in their Order.

1. Then, *the Scripture is profitable for Doctrine*. It cannot indeed be pretended that this inspir'd Book contains all the Truth that might be known by reasonable Creatures: There is a plain Reserve of much to be disclos'd in a future State. Nor does it discover all that an infinitely Wise God could have reveal'd, had he thought fit. Nor does it make such a Discovery of all the *Doctrines* which it contains; as to leave no Difficulties concerning them remaining. They would but expose themselves, that should pretend any thing of this Kind. But it reveals all that it is necessary for us to know, in order to our Happiness. God could not have been the Author of such a Book, and have left out any *Doctrine*, the Knowledge of which was essential to our Felicity; any *Doctrine* which it was necessary for us to believe.

We have there a distinct Account given both of God, and of our selves. We have the *Divine Nature* there display'd before us, in its most essential Perfections; some Touches as to a *Trinity* of Persons in the Deity; together with many considerable Hints as to the great Works of *Creation*, *Providence*, and *Redemption*: Of all which, if we have not an

Account

Account sufficient to satisfy our Curiosity, we have yet enough to answer our Necessity. The *Relations* which the Blessed God stands in to us, are there distinctly insisted on; together with the Claims and Demands that are bottom'd upon them. We are there told how he stands affected to us, how much he hath done for us, upon what Terms he will treat with us, and which way we may certainly reach his Favour, both in this, and a better Life. As to these things, we have there a much more clear and satisfying Account, than in any other Writings whatsoever.

We are there pointed to our first Original; certify'd of our happy State while innocent, and fully inform'd of the Rise of our Misery from our Apostacy from God. We have a distinct Account given us, both of our Malady, and the Remedy. We are shewn how we fell short of the Glory of God; what vile and degenerate Creatures we are become; and how justly obnoxious to the Divine Displeasure, which might fall upon us here, and hereafter too. We are withal shewn, how we may escape it, and recover, and certainly reach Remission of Sins, and the Grace and Favour of God: How we may obtain a comfortable and well-grounded Peace of Conscience at the present, and be assur'd of certain Bliss in another World. We are there certify'd as to God's eternal Purposes, concerning the way of His saving fallen Man by the Death of his Son: And are led to observe much of the Wisdom of God in his gradual disclosing of these his Purposes, for the supporting the Faith and Hope of his Servants from Age

to Age. Personal Revelations were made to the Patriarchs. A numerous Company of Rites and Figures represented somewhat of this Design, tho' it was but obscurely, and at a distance, under the *Mosaical Dispensation*. God

Heb. 1. 1. *spake about it at sundry times, and in divers manners to the Fathers, by the Prophets; and when the fullness of time was come, at length the*

Dan. 9. 24. *Son himself appears, to make an end of Sins, and to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in Everlasting Righteousness. In him we see all Shadows finish'd, and all Prophecies accomplish'd. We have there also an Account of his wonderful Incarnation; of his Holy Life, and excellent Instructions: of his Ministry, and his daily Conversation; of his Miracles, and the Divine Evidences of his Mission; of his atoning Death and Passion, and his glorious Resurrection and Ascension; his Session at the Right Hand of his Father; and his Mission of his Spirit from thence upon his Disciples and Apostles, with a Design he should be Agent for him in his Church, in all succeeding Times. We are there told of the Son of God in our Flesh, a walking Mirrour of Divinity; and of his Advancement to the Right Hand of the Majesty on high, as our Advocate with the Father: Of his dying for us, that we might live for ever; and of his being gone before to prepare glorious Mansions for his Followers, which he will, e'er it be long, come and take them to. We have there a most affecting Account of the Goodness of God; of his Patience towards Sinners; his Unwillingness they should perish; his Readiness to embrace them; his Forwardness to be reconcil'd unto them, thro' his*

his Son ; of the Treasures of his Love that he has laid open before them, and made over to them, by a Covenant that is inviolable, and firmer than the Pillars of Heaven or Earth : And of the Glories of the upper World, which he is free, after all, to admit them to the Possession of.

Life and Immortality is there brought to Light. ^{2 Tim. 1. 10.}
A Judgment to come is there distinctly discover'd, ^{Rom. 2. 16.}
in which the Secrets of all Hearts will be judged : ^{2 Cor. 5. 10.}
When all must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. And we have as full Assurance as we need to desire, that an everlasting State, either of Joy or Sorrow, awaits every Man living upon the Earth.

We are there told how we must worship the God we have to do with, so as to be accepted of him : Taught to honour the Son even as we honour the Father, by an hearty Love and Obedience : And to follow the Conduct of the Holy Spirit, and yield freely to his sanctifying Operations, which are there distinctly unfolded to us.

Having all this, what could we reasonably desire more ? What can there be besides what is here discover'd and insisted on, that can be suppos'd necessary to be believ'd by us ? Can a Book be inspir'd of God, with this *Scheme of Doctrine*, and there be room for any farther Additions ? Don't we thereby learn many things which we could never otherwise have known ? Don't all the Doctrines there deliver'd, come to us duly attested ? And have we not then the highest reason to acquiesce
in

Gal. 1.
8, 9.

in them? Could any Book teach us what concerns us most, with that Satisfaction, as one that stands prov'd to have been Divinely inspir'd? The more we consider matters, the more reason certainly shall we find to cry out with St. Paul, Should any Man living upon Earth, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Doctrine, let him be accursed. But,

2. The Scripture is as profitable for Re-proof, and for Conviction of any Errors in the Faith: And it must be so, because it is to determine all Controversies. It hath ever been the Subtilty of the Evil one, to seek to cast a Mist over the Truths which God has reveal'd, and obscure them in Dark-ness: And he hath never wanted designing Men to be therein his Instruments and Assistants, to serve his Purposes. Sometimes they have herein been acted by a discernable Malignity; tho' at other times they have had something of a plausible Appearance, while they have only pretended to distinguishing, and explaining, where things ought to be taken as God has thought fit to represent them. The Scripture is here to be our Standard; and it is very fit to be so. If it really was Divinely inspir'd, as has been distinctly prov'd, what more becoming, than that all have recourse to it, submit to it, and be decided by it. It was the antient Rule, to the Law, and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them. Our Saviour plainly charges the Error of the Sadducees, who deny'd a Resurrection, and a future State, upon their not knowing the Scriptures. Had they had due recourse to them,

Isai. 8.
20.Mat. 22.
29.

them, they would easily have been convinc'd of a gross Mistake, and set right. The Scripture is the properest Test of Orthodoxy. None can be in any Error as to Matters of Faith, but they may be thence refuted; and whatsoever may be thence refuted, is certainly erroneous*. And the Reason is plain; 'tis because this Book was given by the Inspiration of God.

* *The Church of England is here very express in her 6th Article, in which are these Words: Whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be prov'd thereby, is not to be requir'd of any Man that it should be believ'd as an Article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to Salvation.*

Whence did the Fathers prove the *Arrians* and *Pelagians* to be erroneous? and whence do we prove the same as to the *Papists* and *Socinians*, but from the Scriptures?

The *Arrians* asserted that the *Word* was a Creature, but are refuted by that of the Apostle, who declares that *in the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Joh. I. 1.

The *Pelagians*, among other erroneous Notions, deny'd the Doctrine of *Original Sin*, and were refuted by St. Paul, who declares that by *one Man Sin entred into the World, and Death by Sin, and so Death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned; even over them, that never sinn'd, after the Similitude of Adam's Transgression. That by the Offence of one, Judgment came upon all Men to Condemnation; and that by one Man's Disobedience, many were made Sinners.* Rom. 5. 12, 14, 18, 19.

The *Romanists*, among other very false Opinions, hold the Lawfulness of praying to Saints and Angels; and the Warrantableness of worshipping God in an unknown Tongue; but are plainly reprov'd and convinc'd of Error, upon our sober consulting the Scriptures. As

to the former, from that standing Rule publish'd by our Blessed Saviour; *thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* If so; Saints and Angels are to be excluded from Religious Worship and Service: And as to the latter, from that Declaration of St. Paul, which one would think was plain enough. If

Mat. 4. 10. *I know not the Meaning of the Voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a Barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a Barbarian unto me. How shall he that occupieth the Form of the Unlearned, say Amen, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest. In the Church, says he, I had rather speak five Words with my Understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand Words in an unknown Tongue. If the Apostle was here inspir'd of God, then is the Method of the Papists, who encourage and applaud the Latin Service, prov'd grossly erroneous.*

1 Cor. 14. 11, 16, 19.

The Socinians deny our Saviour to be the Supreme God; but if they were open to Conviction, might easily be prov'd from Scripture grossly erroneous. For does not St. Paul say expressly concerning Christ, that he is *over all, God Blessed for ever?* and does not St. John say,

Rom. 9. 5. *We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ; this is the True God and Eternal Life?* Which Passages are so very plain, that 'tis hardly possible for any thing to be express'd more clearly.

1 Joh. 5. 20.

In these and all other Cases we are to have recourse to Scripture. Whatsoever is not agreeable to the *Form of sound Words* there deliver'd, is therefore and upon that account erroneous. 'Tis true all Errors are far from being alike dangerous. Some have much more of Malignity in them than others. But whatsoever

Notion

Notion or Opinion contradicts any thing that occurs in this inspired Book, is thence *reprov'd*, and not to be adher'd to. 'Tis a great Happiness for us that we have such a Standard; such a Test whereby to distinguish Error from Truth, or else we should be in no small danger of being *tossed to and fro, and carry'd about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the slight of Men, and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*; which is the very thing which God by inspiring the Penmen of Scripture, design'd to prevent. Again,

3. *The Scripture is also profitable, for Correction*: that is, for reforming the Manners of Men, and the purging away whatsoever is vicious or impure. In order hereto, it has a Property that is peculiar to it self, of ransacking the Hearts of Men, and touching their first Springs, and rectifying those inward Motions, the Irregularities whereof are so far from being cured, that they are not so much as taken notice of in other Methods. For *the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged Sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow; and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart*. It searches Hearts to the bottom, and discovers and separates Evil from Good, even in the most secret Thoughts and Workings of the Mind. It corrects the *first Motions* towards Disorder, which the most accurate Philosophers could not discern to have any thing of Vitiosity in them. It goes to the very Bottom of the Sore, and the Root of the Disorder; and represses Sin by checking the Principles whence it proceeds. It not only forbids gross Enormities, but requires a careful *ab-*
staining

1 Theff. 5. *staining from all appearance of Evil.* It not only
 22. prohibits Ribaldry, but even *foolish Talking and*
 Eph. 5. 4. *Festing*; that is, any such Discourse as might
 Mat. 5. 28. be likely to stir up impure Lust; for that is the
 proper Meaning of the Word. It not only
 corrects Lasciviousness, but a wanton *lustful*
Eye. It not only forbids Theft, but covetous
 Desires. In short, it corrects the most secret
 Inclinations to any thing impure and vicious;
 manifests such Inclinations, tho' never so in-
 tirely conceal'd from the Knowledge of others,
 and not at all discover'd by any Overt-Acts,
 to be yet sinful in the Sight of God: and it ac-
 cordingly warns against them, out of a regard
 to one that *searcheth Hearts and trieth Reins,*
 and sees our Inside as well as our Outside. It
 corrects those Perturbations of Spirit, for which
 the Generality of Men are readily apt to find
 Excuses: and binds down a Sense of Guilt up-
 on the Conscience, even where there were
 the strongest and the most bewitching Temp-
 tations; in that it unmasks Sin and Vice, and
 strips it of its Vizors, and sets it before us in
 its native Deformity, and manifests it to be as
 opposite to our real Good, as it is to the Ho-
 nour of God. It manifests Sin to be the Mo-
 ther of Sorrow, and Shame, and Death, that
 cheats us with imaginary Pleasures, and mo-
 mentary Satisfactions, while it produces real
 and lasting Pains, and without sorrowful Re-
 pentance plunges us in Eternal Misery. It
 pursues Sin in all its Windings and Turnings,
 and makes it under all its Disguises appear to
 be the greatest of Evils, and the Parent of all
 others. And unto all this, the Inspiration of
 this Book contributes not a little. For he un-
 der whose Conduct it was drawn up, being
 infi-

infinitely Holy, and most earnestly intent upon spreading Holiness among his Creatures, it follows that in a Book drawn up under his special Conduct for their Guidance, the justest and the fittest Measures must necessarily be pursu'd, for the repressing Sin, and every thing that defiles. Farther,

4. *The Scripture is also profitable for Instruction in every way of Righteousness: that is, in every part of Duty.* It is a perfect Rule of Life. It shews us distinctly what is good and fit to be embrac'd. Since it came from God, we may be assur'd it urges nothing upon us, but what it every way becomes God to require; nothing but what it is highly fitting for us to perform.

The *Duties* which are there urg'd upon us are such as are most becoming God to require; such as tend to make us like unto himself in his imitable Perfections, in his Goodness and Holiness, in his Love and Mercy, and in his Justice and Equity. And they are at the same time most reasonable for us to perform. A sanctify'd Temper of Mind and Heart, which would dispose us for every part of our Duty, carries its own Reward along with it. Nor is there any thing requir'd but what is for our truest Interest. We have mighty *Encouragements* there given us. We are assur'd that our Faithfulness has the Divine Favour entail'd upon it, as well as that Negligence draws down God's Wrath. We are promis'd the Assistance of God's Grace, and the Aids of his Holy Spirit at the present, and an ample and abundant Reward in Heaven hereafter. And stronger Motives and more prevailing Arguments could not be us'd. We are there put into the most certain way of pleasing God, and at the same time of secur-

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ring our own Happiness. In order hereto, Purity of Heart is requir'd of us, and an undisguis'd Integrity ; Calmness of Spirit, and a watchful Guard against Temptation ; a Resignedness to Providence, and Moderation as to all present Enjoyments ; living by Faith, and *casting all our Care on him that careth for us.*

In this Book of God we are particularly directed as to the Faith and Love, the Trust and Obedience, we owe to our Maker and Preserver, our Redeemer and Saviour, and our unwearied Benefactor : as to the Temperance requisite in the Management of our selves, and the Justice and Charity that is owing to our Neighbours. We are there directed how to steer in all Circumstances, and how to behave our selves in all Conditions. The Duties peculiar to all Stations and Relations are there dilated on ; and such Measures are given us, as that if we'll but be faithful and impartial, and consult our Rule with Minds sincerely dispos'd to follow it, we need not fear mistaking, in any thing capital and of moment.

Nor can any Man have the least reason to question this, that is convinc'd the Scripture is really *given by Inspiration of God.* For if the infinitely Wise and Good God gave it as a Directory, it must be sufficient and compleat, or else it would be a Reflection upon him that gave it ; and we must suppose either that he *would not*, or that he *could not*, give one that should be justly chargeable with no Defects. To suppose he *would not* do it, most wretchedly arraigns his Benignity ; and to suppose he *could not*, impeaches his Wisdom and Sagacity. Take it either way, and it is unworthy of him,
if

if it is not a *perfect Rule of Righteousness.*

In all these respects the Scripture surpasses all other Writings. For Experience has shewn us how insufficient Philosophy and all other Methods of Humane Discipline are, to teach us *Truth* in things Divine, or to discover with Certainty contrary *Errors*; to reform our Manners, or form us into compleat Vertue. But for the complement of all we are to add,

5. That the Scripture is able to make the Man of God perfect, thoroughly furnish'd unto all Good Works. Where by the Man of God, we may understand either Ministers or private Christians; and shall upon Consideration find what is declar'd true as to both of them.

1. The Scripture is able to furnish Ministers for all the Parts of their Office. The Prophets of the Lord are in Scripture often peculiarly styl'd *Men of God*. This Title is given to *Mo-* Deut. 33. *ses* in the Decalogue, and also in the Title of 1. the Ninetieth Psalm. 'Tis given to the Pro- 2 Kings phet *Elijah*, and to *Elisha* also, and many o- 1. 9. 2 Kings thers. And by the Apostle 'tis given to the 6. 6. Prophets in general. They were all of them 2 Pet. 1. the Servants of God in a special manner, and 21. were sent peculiarly about his Business, and acted by his Order, and under his Direction. 'Tis the like with Gospel-Ministers, tho' in a lower Measure and Degree. They are sent by God to his Church, and settled among his People, to declare his Will unto them, and by the most pressing Arguments and Motives to engage them to a Compliance with it: In this Sense, as *Timothy* was a Gospel-Minister, *St. Paul* styles him also a *Man of God*: and as 1 Tim. 6. such he here tells him, he might be furnish'd 11. from the Scripture with what was necessary in

the Discharge of his Office. The Scripture which *was given by Inspiration of God*, was therefore enrich'd with all things requisite to answer the several forementioned Purposes, that the Pastors of the Church might be formed by it into a Fitness for all the Functions of their Ministry. It will furnish them for all Good Works; that is, for all the Good Works they are to be employ'd in, which are of the last moment. It will furnish them for Exhortation, and Consolation, for demonstrating and clearing the Truth, and refuting Error; for conducting of Souls, and administering of Discipline. It will furnish them wherewith to instruct the Ignorant, comfort the Afflicted, silence Gainlayers, reduce the Wandring, and form compleat Christians. We are not indeed to take it, as if the subsidiary Helps of *Humane Learning* were to be slighted or neglected; which would draw dismal Consequences after it: But the Meaning is, that the Scripture must have the Preference; and that all other Helps without that, would be insignificant and fruitless. And the ground of their expecting such Help and Assistance in their Work, by constant consulting the Scripture, is this: that it was inspir'd of God; and therefore inspir'd, that it might be a general Directory. *Ministers* therefore ought to use and depend upon it accordingly.

2. The Scripture is able to furnish *private Christians* also, unto all Good Works, so as to make them *perfect*; and this easily follows upon the former. For if it is a sufficient Directory to Pastors to shew them what they are bound to teach, it must be sufficient also for their several Flocks, and for all the respective Mem-

Members of them, to shew them what they are bound to know, believe, and do. It cannot be otherwise, because of the Proportion which these two Capacities bear to each other. Which is so plain, as to make my insisting upon it altogether needless.

Upon the whole then, my Inference appears very just and solid, that since the *Scripture was given by Inspiration of God*, it must therefore and on that account be *profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all Good Works.*

And what learn we hence but this; that we who have devoted our selves to the *Sacred Ministry* peculiarly study the Holy Scriptures, as we would be furnish'd for our Work: and that all of us, as we would approve our selves Christians of the right Stamp, set a greater Value upon the Scriptures, and make a better Use of them than is ordinary and common with us.

I. We that have devoted our selves to the *Sacred Ministry*, and take upon us to be Teachers of others, ought certainly peculiarly to study the Scripture, not only because it was *given by the Inspiration of God*, which is more than can be justly said of any other Book in the World, but also because we can take no Method by which we can be so well furnish'd for Service and Usefulness, and for doing good to Souls. Tho' therefore we value other Learning in its place, let us not fail to give this the Preference. Let us pursue other Parts of Learning subordinately to the Holy Scripture; and so as to make them Auxiliaries to us, to farther us in Scripture Knowledge. Let us be so wise as to take our Measures from thence,

as to our Notions, and as to our Ministrations, and the whole Course of our Actions. Let us not take our Opinions from Men, or from any Party of them, and bring them to the Scripture with a Resolution that we'll bend and bow it, till there appears something of an Agreeableness, which has been too often done: But let us take our Notions from the Scripture directly, and there stick and adhere, as knowing that there we are safest. Let us teach others nothing as a *Matter of Faith*, but what is proveable by plain Scripture, either directly, or by consequence. Let us not only take out of the Scripture the Texts that we preach upon, but let the Matter of our Discourses be Scriptural. Let us look upon Scripture-Proof, as the best and the most cogent: and as carrying a peculiar Majesty and Authority along with it. Strong Reason I readily grant may be very convincing to a Man of Thought; but the very Words of Scripture, when they are quoted aptly and pertinently, have a peculiar Force. Let us remember that the Word of God is more *profitable for Doctrine, Reproof, Correction, and Instruction in Righteousness*, than all the antient Philosophers, Poets, and Historians, all the Fathers and Schoolmen and modern Systems put together; and let us act as becomes those who believe it so to be. Let us study it diligently and with raised Expectations, digging deep for the rich Treasures which it contains. Let us imbibe and publish all its Doctrines without exception; and carefully follow its Instructions; and we shall manifest our selves to be well furnish'd for our Work, and shall take the most ready way to save our selves and them that hear us.

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2. This is the Concern of all the Sheep of Christ, as well as of their Under-Shepherds. If Preachers may this way be best accomplish'd, Hearers also may this way be best edify'd, and most assuredly satisfy'd of the Truth of what they hear. 'Tis a noble Character that is given of the *Bereans*, that they *sought the Scriptures daily, to see whether the things they heard* Acts 17. *were so*, as the Apostles reported them to be. So doing, they took the most effectual way to be confirm'd and establish'd. This Heavenly *Manna* is to be the Food of all the *Israel* of God. We may all be nourish'd, refresh'd, comforted, and strengthened by it, whatever our Case or Circumstances may be. Let us all set our selves to make a due Improvement of so great an Advantage. Let us heartily bless God that we have in our hands this inspired Book, that is so useful to all the most desirable Christian Purposes. Let us bless him from the very bottom of our Souls, that we have the Great Truths which this Book reveals, open'd to us and inculcated upon us from the Pulpit, instead of those trifling Stories, and fulsome *Legends*, with which the People were generally entertain'd, before the time of our *Reformation* from Popery. Let us all embrace the Doctrines which we find deliver'd to us in this Book, without Hesitation: and let us adhere firmly to them tho' we cannot fathom them; tho' we are not able distinctly to explain them, or account for the manner of them. Let us reject every thing as erroneous, that is opposite and contrary. And let us depend upon it, that the Inspiration of this Book well clear'd, will abundantly justify us in so doing. Let us make use of this Sacred Book, not only in hope

that our Understandings may be enlighten'd, but also that our Vices may be corrected, and that we may be form'd into the utmost height of Vertue, in imitation of him, of whom we profess our selves to be the Followers. Let us live in the careful Practice of all manner of Good Works, as we are there directed, and persist in so doing unto the End of our Days; and we shall find, that he who gave us this Book on purpose to guide us in the Way that leads to the Celestial Happiness, will not fail according to his gracious Promise, of bringing us safe thither; and will then afford us yet higher, and greater, and nobler Helps, suitable to the exquisitely happy State which he will advance us to.

S E R-

SERMON XII.

2 TIM. III. 16.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.

THE second *Inference* which I draw from the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, is this; that the Religion of the Church of *Rome* deserves the Contempt and Abhorrence of serious Christians: And therefore does so, because 'tis entirely opposite to that *Scripture which was given by Inspiration of God*. 'Twould be no sign of Wisdom for any in this Case, to cry out, what have we to do with the Church of *Rome*? I pray God we never may have any thing to do with her more, or she with us: But if we'll open our Eyes, I think we may discern a plain Necessity of our being confirm'd against her Errors. Without looking abroad, our own Circumstances may easily convince us that this is very necessary. For we have a *Popish Pretender* to the Succession in the Throne of these Lands; who but waits for an Opportunity to bring us back again to *Rome*,

At Sal-
ters-Hall,
Tuesday
Lecture,
Dec. 11.
1705.

by the help of the Power of *France*: And perhaps we never had more *Romish* Priests among us than at this time; and some think they never were more industrious to pervert People than now. 'Tis true, the Aversion to *Popery* is very strong, and general among us; and one good Reason why it is so, is, because we can have no other Prospect than that it should have *Slavery* annex'd to it: But, I must confess, I can see no great likelihood that this Aversion should prevail so far as to carry us out to suffer for our Holy Religion, should God in his Providence ever call us to it, unless we are upon just Grounds possess'd with a deep sense of the Erroneousness of the *Roman Church*. Nor can it be expected that we should maintain our Ground, if we should happen to be subtilly assaulted, unless we have well consider'd, and study'd the main Heads of the Controversy between them and us. The *French Protestants*, when they flourish'd in their own Country, were exceeding careful in this respect: And I wish that we, for our part, may never find that we pay dear for our great Negligence, and Unconcernedness about these Matters.

Now we need not desire better Advantage for arguing with the Church of *Rome*, than we are furnish'd with by the *Inspiration* of the Holy Scriptures, when once that is well establish'd. We can no where more properly take our rise in dealing with them. For this one Principle overthrows the whole *Popish Religion* at once. And that I may clear this, I shall endeavour to make good these two things. That if the Scriptures are Divinely inspir'd, then 1. The whole Foundation of
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the *Popish Religion* is rotten : And, 2. The *Doctrine* and *Worship* of the *Romanists*, which is bottom'd on such a Foundation, is to be rejected, because opposite to the sacred Writings. And if both the *Foundation* and *Superstructure* of their Religion are prov'd unscriptural; we must certainly be grossly impos'd upon if we don't reject it with Contempt and Abhorrence.

I. If the Scriptures are Divinely inspir'd, the whole *Foundation* of the *Popish Religion* is rotten. While it is the distinguishing Mark and Character of our Religion, that it is wholly bottom'd upon the Authority of God, theirs is ultimately resolv'd into the Authority of Man, which is a Foundation altogether unable to support so great a Weight. The Protestant Religion is built upon the Foundation of ^{Eph.} the Apostles and Prophets, *Jesus Christ himself* being the chief Corner Stone. ^{2. 20.} 'Tis bottom'd upon that Doctrine which the Prophets and Apostles receiv'd and deliver'd by Inspiration in the Holy Scriptures; whereas the *Popish Religion* is bottom'd upon the Authority of the *Romish Church*: That is with them *the Pillar and Ground of Truth*; the Foundation of their Faith; the ultimate Reason into which it is resolv'd; and the firm and immovable Support of Christianity. Ask the *Romanists* why they embrace such and such Notions as true, and reject others as erroneous; and why they lay Stress on such Actions as Religious, while others are neglected; they'll tell you 'tis because the *Church of Rome*, in whose Communion they live, and whom they are bound to follow, gives them such Direction. This is their Fundamental Principle, that where-ever she leads,

leads, they must follow ; and that they are oblig'd to shun whatsoever she rejects, and always to keep in view the Light of her Instruction, as the directing Pole Star. So that if she falls into Error, they must accompany her ; and if she will lead them down to Hell, they have nothing to do but contentedly, and blindly to follow her, concluding that she'll bear all the Blame. And is this a *Foundation* to be compar'd with that that we *Protestants* go upon ? Our Religion is bottom'd upon the Scriptures, which having been given by *Inspiration of God*, cannot deceive us : While, in the mean time, the Religion which they receive from their Church, is liable to as many Deceits as there are ways, in which their Guides may either be themselves impos'd upon, or attempt to impose upon their obsequious Followers. Our Religion is certainly of God, and from Heaven, because bottom'd on those sacred Writings which were inspir'd from thence : Their Religion is from Men, because bottom'd upon the Authority of their Church, the Guides of which consider'd, either collectively, or distributively, are but Fallible and Mortal, and have often been designing Men, that have had secular Purposes of their own to serve. We need not desire a better *Foundation* than that is which we go upon in the whole of our Religion, and by which we are principally distinguish'd from the *Romanists*. The Scriptures, which came from God, and were drawn up under his Conduct and Influence, as a Directory to his Church and People in all Ages, are with us a thousand times more Venerable, and unspeakably more Sacred, and of greater Authority, than the Doctrines,

Doctrines, or Sentiments of any Creatures whatsoever. One little Sentence of those Divine Books; that Sentence in particular which declares, that *God so loved the World, that* Joh. 3. 16. *he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have Everlasting Life,* with us deserves incomparably more respect and regard, than all the Definitions or Determinations, Resolutions or Decrees, of Princes or Doctors, Popes or Councils, Men or Angels. We keep so close to those Scriptures, being satisfy'd of their Heavenly Original, that our Pastors and Teachers can safely join in with the great Apostle, and say, *Tho' we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any* Gal. 1. 8. *other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.* And this is our Glory. Herein lies the peculiar Firmness of our Religion, and that which distinguishes it from all others, that it came entirely from those Scriptures that were Divinely inspir'd. But as for the *Romanists*, they run round in a sort of an *enchanted Circle*, that is made up of *Church and Scriptures*. Tho' when they are call'd to prove the Authority of their *Church*, on which they lay their main Strefs, they fetch their Proof from the *Scriptures*, yet they will have it that the Credibility of those *Scriptures* depends upon the Authority of their *Church*. And if they barely take the Scriptures to be Divine, upon the Authority of their *Church*, it must be upon this Principle, that they can have no Warrant to gainsay what their Church authorizes. And then they must also receive the *Interpretation* of Scripture from their *Church*, as well as the Scripture it self. For, it were the grossest Folly

Folly to receive the Scripture upon Credit of the Authority of the *Church*, and not to

* It is observable, that the Bull of Pope Pius the 4th requires an Oath of all in Holy Orders, which has this Clause in it. Item sacram Scripturam juxta eum sensum quem tenuit & tenet sancta mater Ecclesia, cujus est judicare de vero sensu & interpretatione sacrarum Scripturarum admitto, &c.

receive the *Interpretation* of it upon her Authority also *. And so pursuing this Principle, they can have no Security but that their Religion may be chiefly made up of humane Figments; and may lead them down to the Shades of Darknes,

instead of bringing them to the Region of Light, and Happiness. 'Tis worth our while to observe the gradual Process in this Case, which will help the more plainly to discern the Rottenness of the *Foundation* which the *Romanists* build upon.

I. They will have it, that the Credibility of the *Scriptures* depends upon the Authority of their *Church*; and 'tis only upon her Judgment and Testimony that they believe them to have any thing of Divinity in them. Without the Testimony of the Church, says *Hermannus*, the Scripture is no more worth than *Esop's Fables*. A most horrid Saying! And tho' all Popish Writers have not run to that height of Extravagance, yet they very commonly represent it as Heretical to assert the Authority of the Scripture to be beyond that of the *Church*: And there is a general Agreement among their most celebrated Writers, to disallow of any Proof of the former, but from the latter. But how absurd is this? That the *Church* should give the *Scriptures* their Authority? 'Tis as if the Publisher should be said to give Authority to the Queen's Proclamation,

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or an Act of Parliament. All Mankind agree, that the Authority of such a Proclamation or Act, results directly from its issuing forth from the Queen, or Parliament; and if that be once evidenc'd, the Authority necessarily follows: So as to the Scriptures, their Authority results from their Divine Inspiration. When that is once clear'd, one would think that nothing farther should be needful to clear their Authority, to any that are not prophane and impious. Great use is in this Case made of that Saying of St.

Austin, I would not have believ'd the Gospel, if the Authority of the Church had not compell'd me: August. cont. Epist. Fundam. cap. 5.

But herein he is abus'd. For he speaks of what he did while he was a *Manichee*, and not of what he did after he became an hearty Convert to Christianity*. And yet the *Romanists* will stand to what he said while an Heretick. However, this being their Principle, that the *Scripture* has its Authority from the *Church*, let us go on; it thence follows,

2. That they can have no right in any Case to gainsay what their *Church* authorizes. For, if even the *Scripture* is not the Word of God till they proclaim it such, nor any farther the Word of God than they own it for such, then, to be sure, in any other Case, be it what it will, all their Adherents are bound to acquiesce in their Decisions, and Determinations. If the *Scripture* it self is not exempted from their Authority, to be sure nothing else can be exempted. If the *Roman Church* can authorize that *Scripture*, which without them had no Authority, then they may not only autho-
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rize for *Scripture* what will best suit their Purpose, whether it came from God or no; but they may by their Authority declare those things agreeable to *Scripture*, that to all others appear most directly opposite to it. That Authority that can do that which is greater, can certainly do that which is less. Now 'tis a greater thing to give Authority to what really came from God, than to reconcile such things as to others appear contradictory with what came from him. I'll illustrate the matter by a plain Instance; and because the Authority of the *Roman Church* is by some plac'd in a *Council*, and by others in the *Pope*, I'll give you an Instance as to each.

The first shall be in a *Council*, and it shall be that of *Constance*, which was summon'd at the beginning of the 15th Century, at the earnest Desire of most of the Princes in *Europe*, to reform the Church. In the 13th Session of the Council, it was decreed, that *tho' Christ gave the Sacrament to his Disciples in both Kinds, and tho' in the Primitive Church the Sacrament was receiv'd in both Kinds, yet that that Custom should be abrogated, and the Priest excommunicated, that should offer to give the consecrated Wine or Cup to the common People.* **From** hence I thus argue. If such a Council as this was able to authorize the *Scripture*, then it was also able to authorize such a Decree as this, tho' opposite to *Scripture*, and own'd to be so: And they that receive the *Scripture* as Divine, meerly upon the Testimony of such a Representative of the Church, as such a Council, (without any regard to the **Evidence** of Inspiration) would be also bound upon

upon the Authority of the same to receive such a Decree as that, even tho' opposite to *Scripture*. For if their meer Authority sways and carries it, it ought to do it in one Case as well as another.

And as for the *Pope*, they that hold the Authority of the *Roman Church* to be plac'd in him, and upon that account only receive the Scriptures, because he authorizes them, they must be inconsistent with themselves, if they don't own his Authority in all the Instances in which he shall think fit to exert it; or if they pretend to set any bounds to it. Now the *Glossary of the Decretals* * (I give you the very * Decretal. Greg. lib. 1. tit. 7. Can. Quanto in Glossa. Words) observes that every one said of the Pope that he had all Divine Power: That by reason of that he could change the Nature of things, applying the essential Properties of one thing to another: That he could make something of nothing: That a Proposition which was nothing he could make to be something: That in all things he should please to do, his Will might serve for a Reason: That he could dispense with whatsoever was right, and make Injustice to become Justice, by changing and altering of that which was right. And their great Champion *Bellarmino* † says, That if the Pope should err in forbidding Vertues which God hath commanded, and commanding Vices which God hath forbidden, the Church would be bound to believe Vices good and Vertues bad. * De Pontif. 1. 4. c. 5.

There are some indeed among the modern *Papists* who stick not to declare, that they are not for carrying the *Papal Power* so high: But in reality if they once give way to it, and lay stress upon it, in such a Case as that is where the Divinity of the Scriptures is the thing depending, I can't see upon what Pre-
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tence they can afterwards withdraw or retreat. For if they upon the Papal Authority meerly, without enquiring, are oblig'd to receive the Scriptures as Divine, altho' they own either that the Scriptures would not have been so, or that they should not have been oblig'd to have esteem'd them so, if he did not authorize them as such, I can't see why they should not be equally oblig'd to yield to it in every thing which it can be extended to. So that if the Pope should interpose with his Authority to condemn certain Propositions in such or such a Book as Heretical, as Pope *Innocent* the 10th did in the Case of *Jansenius*, all his dutiful Slaves must not only be oblig'd to take those Propositions for Heretical, but also to believe them to be in that Book, as being in which they are condemn'd, even tho' they are not able to find them there. The poor *Jansenists* therefore were condemn'd for making this a Matter of Complaint, or reckoning it an Hardship. And really I must confess I cannot see but that if they once give way, they must be inconsistent with themselves, if they don't swallow every thing that comes back'd with the same Authority. For what cannot he do, that can authorize the Scriptures, and by his Authority give them a Reception as Divine, to which of themselves they had no Right. Give him way in that, and it's vain and ridiculous afterwards to pretend to limit his Power. There's no room for limiting such a Power afterwards, whether you lodge it in *Pope* or *Council*: And consequently,

3. They that are under such a Power and Authority as this, can have no Security, but their Religion may be chiefly made up of Hu-

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Humane Figments. For if it be once yielded that any thing is sufficiently authoriz'd in which this *Church Power* is exerted, by a Pope or a Council, or both in concert, then supposing ever so many Humane Fancies are by this Power introduc'd, they must be comply'd with, tho' Religion by this means becomes ever so unlike to that which is contain'd in the Holy Scriptures: And consequently,

4. In process of time their Religion may lead them to Hell, instead of leading them towards Heaven. And this it must most certainly do, if the grossest and most fatal Errors pass for Truths; and the most extravagant Superstition, and palpable Idolatry, for right Christian Worship: Against which there is no Guard left, if we once suppose there is such a Power and Authority to be exercis'd in such Matters, as none have any Right to withstand.

And this Authority becomes yet the more despicable, when it is requir'd that it should be yielded to, barely upon Evidence fetch'd from those very *Scriptures*, whose Divinity depends upon that Authority. For if the Power of the Church to authorize the *Scriptures* as Divine, be fetch'd from those *Scriptures*, whose Divine Authority depends upon the Power of the *Church* authorizing them, we are got into a Labyrinth that is like to involve us in everlasting Confusion. Let us then behold and wonder at the rotten and deceitful Bottom of the *Popish* Religion. It unites all to the See or Church of *Rome*, take which you will. That Church authorizing the Holy *Scriptures* as Divine, they admit them as such; that is, they do so as far as that Church allows them so to do; at the same time declaring, that

without her authorizing them they'd have no Right at all to any such Regard or Veneration. Their Faith therefore is resolv'd into a meer Humane Authority, which they are forc'd to follow with a blind Obedience, whithersoever it should lead them, even tho' into the worst of Errors and Idolatries; from which they have not the least Security, saving a Promise pretended to be made to that *Church* in Scripture; which Promise could have no Force neither, if not authoriz'd by that *Church*, which yet receives all its Authority from the *Scripture*: which authorizing Church has no other ground to act upon, but a pretended Right which it cannot prove, and therefore won't allow to be disputed: and this Authority once yielded to, will admit of no Bounds; it must be adher'd to, even tho' it should lead Men to certain Destruction. If the Scriptures are Divinely inspir'd, this most certainly is a rotten *Foundation*, and hazards the Salvation of all that build upon it. But,

2. If the Scriptures are Divinely inspir'd, then the *Faith* and *Worship* of the *Romanists* is to be rejected, because opposite to those Sacred Writings. And it is no very difficult matter to give good Proof of it as to both of them. I begin,

1. With the *Doctrines* of that Church. They have indeed the same Christian *Doctrine* that we have, tho' sadly corrupted: But I here mean those *Doctrines* which they have added to Christianity, and by which their Church is distinguish'd. These *Doctrines* of theirs are opposite to the Scriptures. I'll instance in a few of them: As their *Doctrine* of *Infallibility*, of *Traditions*, of the *Obscurity* and *Uncertainty* of Scrip-

Scripture, of the *Apocryphal Writings*, and of the Necessity of keeping the Scripture out of the hands of the *Common People*; and the like.

I. I begin with the *Doctrine of Infallibility*. If the Scriptures be Divinely inspir'd, then this Doctrine is a *Fiction*, and a *needless Fiction*. 'Tis a *Fiction*, because 'tis not to be found in Scripture: 'Tis a *needless Fiction*, because there is no real Necessity of an *Infallibility* constantly residing in the Church, by reason that all things necessary to the regulating of Faith or Manners, are contain'd in Scripture, and to be judg'd and determin'd from thence.

I. This *Doctrine of Infallibility* is a *Fiction*. 'Tis evident that it is so, because they who are most zealous for it, know not how to dispose of it, and where to lodge it; whether in the whole Church, or in the Pope alone, or a Council alone, or a Pope and Council agreeing together. Had our inspir'd Writings refer'd us to an *infallible Judge* of Controversies, they'd certainly have given us Direction where we might find him, which they no where do. Nothing can well be weaker than the Pleas that are alledg'd for it from Scripture. 'Tis true 'tis promis'd *that the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Church*: But there's no reference there to the Church of Rome. Peter is indeed mention'd, but there's not a Word of his Successors; any more than there is of any that should succeed the rest of the Apostles, who for any thing that appears, had all an equal Concern in the Promise. And besides, that Promise in the Nature of it, no more secures the Church of a Freedom from Fallibility, than it does of a Freedom from all moral Impurities: *The Church is also stil'd the Pillar and*

Mat. 16.

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1 Tim. 3.

Ground of Truth: But it does not follow that the *Roman Church* is so, unless it can be made appear that she maintains and teaches all needful Truths, and preserves, and owns, and keeps up the due Credit of those Oracles, in which the saving Truths of Christ are fully laid down. But a Pillar may uphold the Building which it is design'd to support, without being immovable: and any eminent Christian Guides or Churches may be *Pillars*, and discharge their Office faithfully in exhibiting Divine Truth, and offering it to Consideration, without being infallible. And do these amount to any thing like a Proof of such a Doctrine as that of *Infallibility* in the *Roman Church*, which is a Fundamental in their Fabrick? Since no better Proof can be given of it, we may well call it a *Fiction*. If the Scripture was by Inspiration of God, we should certainly have had a clearer Account of it given us there, had there been any thing in it. But,

2. This *Doctrine of Infallibility* is not only a *Fiction*, but a *needless Fiction*. The Use of it that is pretended is to end and decide all Controversies, without which it is argu'd we should be at a miserable Loss. Whereas if our Sacred Scriptures were really Divinely inspir'd, we may very well conclude that a standing *Infallibility* in the Church could not be needful. Were the pretended *Infallibility* really needful, it must be in order to the preventing Heresies or Sects: Whereas on the contrary, consulting the Scriptures, we are so far from finding a continu'd *Infallibility* represented as needful by way of Prevention, that we are told that *there*

1 COR. II.

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must be Heresies among us: that is, God has thought it fit to permit *Heresies*, or Sects, and

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Divisions to arise in his Church by way of Trial, rather than absolutely to prevent them. He had wise Purposes to serve by this Permission; and who are we that we should pretend to dictate and prescribe to him? Besides, the Scriptures themselves sufficiently determine all capital Controversies. They are *profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness*; and therefore to end Controversies too, as far as it is necessary they should be ended. They are sufficient to satisfy all that are diligent, and humble, and teachable. And withal, this *Infallibility* that is pretended, rather multiplies Controversies, than puts an End to them. And therefore since we have Scriptures that were Divinely inspir'd, we have all the Reason in the World to be satisfy'd with them; concluding that he that gave us so great a Help as this, would not have deny'd us any farther Assistance, had he seen it to be needful and fitting for us.

2. As the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, may justly set us against the Popish Doctrine of *Infallibility*, so may it also safely guard us from their *humane devised Traditions*; for it makes them appear to be wholly needless. Truly *Apostolical Traditions* indeed claim a Regard from us; because by having them evidenc'd to be such indeed, we may be satisfy'd that they came from God. If it be but prov'd to us that any Doctrine really came from the Apostles, 'tis enough to oblige us to believe it, and receive it as true: But *Apostolical* and *Papal Traditions* are vastly different. We therefore regard the New Testament with so much Veneration, because 'tis a Collection of *Apostolical Traditions*: and it being a Col-

lection of them that was given by *Inspiration of God*, and as compleat a Collection of them as God thought fit and necessary for us, we dare not admit any *Humane Traditions* into an Equality with them. Had God intended to commit Religion in Trust to the *Tradition* of the Church, the Scriptures had not been needful. God would not have inspir'd the Penmen of it to draw up those Sacred Oracles. But his having taken this Method, is a plain Evidence that he expects his Church should adhere to the *Written Word* as their Rule; which he would not have requir'd, if he had not made it a sufficiently compleat Rule.

The *Council of Trent*, in their fourth Session, commands *Traditions to be receiv'd with the same reverend Affection and Piety, with which we embrace the Scripture*. And because one Bishop in that Council refus'd herein to fall in with them, he was excluded. By this means they, thro' the boundless Authority of their Church, seem to aim at imposing upon us what they please under the Name of *Traditions*. And *Lindan*, who is a Person well known among the *Romanists*, plainly declares that *it had been better for the Church that there had been no Scripture at all, but only Traditions*. For, says he, *we might do well enough with Traditions, tho' we had no Scripture; but we could not do with Scripture, if we had no Traditions*. This it must be confess'd is roundly spoken. But let us consider the Matter a little freely; for it is of importance.

If the Scriptures were given by *Inspiration of God*, then certainly there can be no Doctrine necessary to Salvation that is not there contain'd. If there was, God would have given us a Book for such a valuable Purpose, that would
not

not reach its End. If the *Jews* might not add their *Traditions* to the Written Word of God, much less may we do it. The Apostle indeed speaks to the *Thessalonians*, of *Traditions which* ^{2 Theff. 2. 15.} they had been taught by Word or Epistle; but not of any deliver'd by Word of Mouth, that were not committed to Writing. Had he committed any thing of great importance, any thing that was necessary to be known to the Church in all Ages, to any of the People of *Thessalonica* by Word of Mouth, he must have inserted it in some or other of his Epistles, or else he had not been true to his Commission. And this is not at all there gain-said.

'Tis worth our while to observe what those *Traditions* are about, which the *Romanists* contend for. They are about the Doctrine of *Purgatory*, the *Pope's Supremacy*, the *Sacrifice of the Mass*, the *single Life of Priests*, the *Fasts of the Church*, and such other things, which are not only not contain'd in our Sacred Writings, but contrary to several Passages that are to be met with there: So that if the Scriptures were Divinely inspir'd, we are therefore, and upon that account bound to reject them. And that the rather, because we have fair Warning there given us, and are strictly requir'd, to *beware lest* ^{Col. 2. 8.} any Man spoil us; through *Philosophy and vain Deceit, after the Traditions of Men, after the Rudiments of the World, and not after Christ*. I think we have little reason to wonder that they who cannot be contented with Writings that are evidenc'd to be Divinely inspir'd, but must join with them. *Humane Traditions*, of which they neither certainly know whence they came, nor where they will end, should be over-run with Errors and Superstitions. Again,

3. The Belief of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures may also preserve us from being influenc'd by the Insinuations of the *Romanists* as to the *Obscurity* and *Uncertainty* of those Sacred Volumes. This is what they upon all Occasions make a mighty Noise about; and many of them have strange Flights upon this Subject. *Costerus* says, God would not have his Church now depend upon Paper and Parchment, as *Moses* made the carnal *Israelites* do. His Meaning is, he therefore would not take this Method, because what is committed to Paper and Parchment, is unavoidably obscure in many Cases. And **Pamelius* says, that the Scripture is a Nose of Wax, which may be turn'd which way we please; and that it is far more easy to wrest it to profane and impious things, than it is to make use of half the Verses of *Virgil*, to compose Epithalamiums. And †*Pighius* says, that the Scripture is a dumb Rule, a dumb Witness, a dead and lifeless thing; a Sword that cuts with both Edges. And ††*Turrianus* calls it a *Delphick* Sword, that is useful for Purposes contrary to one another; a Dumb and Dead Letter, which having of it self neither Life nor Soul, receives the Spirit that you put into it: An ambiguous and uncertain Word, which at different times admits now one Sense, and then another. These things were not said by obscure Persons, but by some of their most celebrated Authors. I therefore mention these Passages out of them, which serious Christians can neither read nor hear, without Indignation and Horror, that you may plainly see what the Spirit of *Poperie* tends to; even to the highest Contempt of the Holy Scriptures. But as much as they despise them, *St. Paul*

* Pamel.
ex Quin-
tino An-
notat. 237.
in Præ-
script.
Tertul.
† Pighius
contr. 3.
Franchisi
Cordub.
de Eccles.
cap. 82.
‡ Turrian
contra Sa-
deed. p.
99.

in the Verse immediately before my Text refers *Timothy* his Disciple to them, assuring him that they were *able to make him wise unto Salvation*. St. *Paul* must needs be very wise and kind, if to strengthen the Faith of his Disciple *Timothy*, for whom he pretends so tender a Concern, he should refer him to a *Nose of Wax*; and if to defend him, and keep him right, and firm, and inflexible, he should arm him with a *Delphick Sword*; and if to preserve him from the Sophisms of Error, he should set before him a *dead and dumb Letter*; and if to enable him to decide the Disputes that Heresy would occasion, he should send him to an *Oracle of Bells*, which any Man makes speak just what he will. They that entertain such an Opinion as that of the great Apostle St. *Paul*, who was one of the chief Instruments of spreading Christianity in the World, must needs have a very low Opinion of Christianity it self. His recommending the Scriptures as Divinely inspir'd, and therefore universally profitable, may satisfy us, that the great Reason why the Papists talk so much, and so freely against the sacred Scriptures, is, because they find those Holy Writings suggesting so much against them, and their beloved Darling Notions. Which brings to my Mind a Passage I have somewhere read, of a Popish Clergy-Man, who happening to light upon a Bible, and look into it, (which with some of them is no very common thing) presently cry'd out, he knew not who was the Author of it, but sure he was, it was some *pestilent Heretick*; for (says he) he every where condemns the Doctrines of our Church. But let them say what they will, the Scriptures being evidenc'd to come from God,

we may be satisfy'd that they are plain in all things necessary; that they are every way consistent with themselves; steadily carry on one and the same Design in all parts; and are as equal as need to be desir'd.

The Thoughts and Opinions of Mankind very often change, different times and occasions give them a different turn, either to the Right or Left: There is no Law, no Philosophy, no Art or Science that ever was, that has constantly kept in the same Estate: But the Holy Scriptures remain always the same. So that it is not possible to find out a better means to preserve us from the Variations which Error is apt to bring into Christianity, than to keep our selves to those admirable Writings, which were given by the Inspiration of God. Let us therefore abhor the Blasphemy of those that pour out their Reproaches against the Word of God, which is firmer than the Pillars either of Heaven or Earth.

4. Another considerable Popish Error, is the equalling the *Apocrypha* with the Holy Bible, from which the firm Belief of the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures would preserve us. If it was peculiar to the Books of the Old and New Testament, to be *given by the Inspiration of God*, then can it not be a small Error of theirs, to equal the *Apocryphal Writings* with them, which it is well known were not inspir'd. And yet this was done by the *Council of Trent*, which made the Apocryphal Books Canonical, and Anathematiz'd all that did not receive them with the same Veneration as the truly inspir'd Writings. In the mean time those Writings contain manifest

fest Untruths. They commend many false things as true; and applaud evil things as right. Thus the killing the *Sichemites* is commended; which according to the Account given by *Moses*, was disapprov'd of God. And *Razis* is in the History of the *Maccabees*, commended for killing himself, tho' he in so doing plainly violated the 6th Commandment: A great many fabulous Relations also are to be met with in those Books, concerning *Tobit* and *Judith*, and *Bell and the Dragon*; and some that are perfectly ridiculous: As that the Heart and Liver of a Fish broil'd upon Coals, drives away the Devil from Man or Woman, so as that he would trouble them no more. The equalling such Writings as these with the Books of the Old and New Testament, is a certain depreciating them; a plain pouring Contempt upon Divine Inspiration.

Tho' the Church of England retains the Use of these *Apocryphal Books*, against which I cannot see any thing of a just Objection, yet she has expung'd them out of the *Canon*. But still even among us, I think too great an Honour by far is put upon them, by their being bound up with our Bibles, and read in our publick Churches; which is what some that have earnestly desir'd it, have not hitherto been able to get rectify'd. And,

5. Since the Scriptures were Divinely inspir'd, we may plainly see the Wickedness of the *Roman Church*, in keeping the People from reading them. *Give not Holy things to Dogs; cast not Pearls before Swine*, says *Hosius*, referring to the reading of the Scripture by the common People. And it is the Gloss even of a *Pope*, that as a *Beast* of old was not to touch the

the Mount, so a Layman was not to meddle with the Scripture. But is not this strange and unaccountable? That God should give us a Book by Divine Inspiration, to guide us in the way to Heaven, and that People should be debarr'd from the free use of it? Oh, say they, it is a *dangerous Book!* It makes Men *Hereticks!* And it cannot be deny'd but the best things that are may be abus'd: But how can the Bible of it self tend any such way, if it was truly given by Inspiration of God? St. Paul was most certainly of another Mind, when he tells *Timothy*, it would make him *wise unto Salvation*, and recommends it to him as what would preserve him from Error and Heresy. He commends *Timothy* for his having *from a Child known the Scriptures*, thereby in effect, approving of Persons reading them from their Childhood, whereas the Church of *Rome* won't give even the oldest Persons, and such as are most advanc'd in Years, liberty to do it. They'll allow none to read the Scripture, without a particular License from the Bishop, or Inquisitor; for you must know, the Bible in the Language of their Country, is put into the *Index of prohibited Books*, both in *Spain*, and *Italy*: And among the Rules added to the *Index*, this is one, that none must read it without a License from his spiritual Superior: And it presently follows in one of the next Rules, that it is not thereby meant that spiritual Superiors should give any such Permission. And indeed, in the Countries I but now mention'd, it is enough to make a *Layman* (as they call him) suspected of *Heresy*, to read the Scripture in his Mother Tongue, or to have it by him, or to ask leave to have

it,

it, and read it. But since the Scripture was inspir'd of God to be a Rule for all, it must be his Intention, that it should be perus'd by all. 'Twas the Duty of all, without exception, to converse with the Law. *Ye shall lay up these* Deut. 11.
my Words in your Heart, (says Moses) and in 18, 19.
your Soul, and bind them for a Sign upon your Hand, that they may be as Frontlets between your Eyes. And ye shall teach them your Children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine House, and when thou walkest by the Way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. This argues a great Familiarity with the written Word was very becoming. Our Lord also charges it upon all without exception, to *search the Scriptures.* Joh. 5. 39. And the *Bereans* are commended for so doing. Acts 17. This is the way to be instructed in the Know-¹¹.
 ledge of God, fortified in the Faith, and further'd in the way of our Salvation: Comforted in our Afflictions, and furnish'd against the Temptations of Satan, the World, and the Flesh. If the Scriptures were inspir'd of God, we may well conclude with St. Paul, that *what* Rom. 15.
soever things were written afore-time, were written 4.
for our Learning, that we thro' Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. So that the Church of Rome in denying the common People the Liberty of reading them *, in effect, attempts to keep them blind, that she may lead them the more securely down into the Pit. But I would not omit the adding something,

* I must confess therefore, it to me appears very strange, to have a Protestant Primate, Archbishop Bramhal declaring in his Vindication of himself and the Episcopal Clergy, p. 117. that the promiscuous License which they (that is, the Protestants) give to all sorts to read and interpret Scripture, is more prejudicial, nay pernicious, than the over-rigorous Restraint of the Romanists.

2. In the second Place, as to the *Worship* of the *Roman Church*; the gross Faultiness of which is very evident from the Scriptures. The *Invocation of Saints*, the *Mass*, and the *Worship of Images and Relicks*, are all very contrary to the Scriptures; and the firm Belief of their being inspir'd of God, may preserve us from being drawn into any of them.

I. Would the *Romanists* persuade us to pray to *Saints and Angels*, those Writings that we have in our hands, that were given by *Inspiration of God*, may effectually preserve us. For we not only have no Command or Example there to this Purpose, as we certainly should have had, if it really were the Will and Pleasure of God, that they should have had a Share in our *Worship*: But we are charg'd to confine it to God only. For the

Mat. 4. 10. Order is most exprefs; *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* The *Roman Church* has indeed coin'd a nice Distinction between *Latria* and *Dulia*; but if the sacred Scriptures were inspir'd of God, it will not hold. For we there find the *Pagans* condemn'd on this very Account, that they gave

Gal. 4. 8. the Service of *Dulia*, to those which by Nature were not Gods. And when St. *John*, out of extraordinary Reverence, was going to bow

Rev. 22. 9. down before an Angel, he was immediately

& 19. 10. rebuked: See, says he, *thou do it not: I am thy Fellow-Servant; worship God.* And St. *Paul*

Col. 2. 18. charges us to see to it that no Man beguile us in a voluntary Humility, and worshipping of Angels. And as to the *Saints*, it is very true, that while they are living with us, we knowing their free Access to the Throne of Grace, may warrantably desire them to pray for us, which the

the Apostle requests of the *Colossians*, and of serious Christians also in other Parts: But as he did not invoke them in desiring their Prayers for him, so neither may we invoke the Saints that are departed. Besides, our inspir'd Writings tell us, that Christ is *the only* ^{1 Tim.} *Mediator between God and Man*: 'Tis there-^{2. 5.} fore unwarrantable to join the Saints as Mediators with him. If the Old and New Testament was *given by Inspiration of God*, then this Practice can never be justify'd.

2. Would the *Papists* persuade us to join with them in their *Mafs*, in which they pretend to offer up a true and proper Sacrifice to God, for the Living, and for the Dead, our Divinely inspir'd Writings may there also preserve us, and help us to withstand them: Inasmuch as we are there assur'd, that *Christ offered himself but once*; ^{Heb. 8. 27.} and that all that is requir'd of Communicants, is *Eating and Drinking in remembrance of Christ*, ^{Heb. 9. 25.} in order to the *shewing forth*, not the repeating of *his Death*. Christ's *one Sacrifice* was per-^{I Cor. II. 26.} fect, and *needed not to be repeated*: And *where remission of Sin is, there is no more Offering for Sin*. ^{Heb. 10. 14. v. 18.} Either therefore Remission was not obtain'd by Christ's *one Offering*, or there is, and can be no more. Either his *Offering* on the Cross was not sufficient, or that in the *Mafs* is not necessary. And withal, there is no propitiatory Sacrifice without shedding of Blood. For *without shedding of Blood, is no Remission*. ^{Heb. 9. 22.} Such an unbloody Sacrifice therefore, as is pretended to be offer'd every Day in the *Mafs*, is utterly unscriptural. If our sacred Oracles were Divinely inspir'd, this part also of the *Popish* Worship is to be rejected with Disdain.

3. Would the *Papists* persuade us to join with them in worshipping *Images* and *Relicks*, we, if we upon good Grounds believe the Holy Scriptures to be Divinely inspir'd, ha'n't the least reason to listen to them: Because this is expressly forbidden in the second Commandment; and represented there as the horrid Sin of *Idolatry*. And as for *Relicks*, we have reason to remember that it is told us at
 Deut. 34.
 6. the close of the *Pentateuch*, that when *Moses* died, *God* buried him; and no Man knew of his Sepulchre. Which looks as if *God* hid his Body, lest the People of *Israel* should have committed *Idolatry* with it.

Upon the whole; since both the Doctrine and Worship of the *Romanists* is so contrary to our sacred Records, if they are Divinely inspir'd, we are bound to reject them both. And since both the *Foundation* and *Superstructure* of their Religion is so absurd, it rather deserves our Contempt and Abhorrence, than our Regard. And the more we are confirm'd in our Belief of the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures, the more reason shall we find to conclude so: Nothing being more evident, than that if the Old and New Testament were from *God*, *Popery* could not be so.

Let us then heartily bless *God* that we are deliver'd from *Popery*, which is so opposite to the *Scriptures*; and let us study the *Scriptures*, that how sorely soever we are assaulted, we may never return again to *Popery*. Let us therefore the more heartily bless *God* that we are deliver'd from *Popery*, because it is so opposite to the *Scriptures*. Upon a particular Search, 'tis easy to observe, that all the Additions *Popery* hath made to Christianity, lie
 in

in Notions, and Practices, and Usages, that are wholly unscriptural. If then it is in it self a Mercy to have Writings that were Divinely inspir'd, put into our hands for a Directory in our way to Heaven, we cannot, upon Consideration, but own it to be a peculiar Mercy, still to have that Directory, when a Religion that was originally from Heaven, is so wretchedly deprav'd and perverted, as Christianity is by *Popery*. And let us study the *Scriptures* the more carefully, that how sorely soever we may be assaulted, we may not return again to *Popery*. 'Twas by the Restauration of the *Scriptures* that the *Reformation* was effected; and nothing has so much impair'd it, as a neglect of the *Scriptures*. As the *Scriptures* gain'd Credit, *Popery* lost Ground; and if it gains Ground again, and where-ever it does so, the *Scriptures* must lose their Credit. An Anti-scripturist may easily become a Papist; but let a Papist once come to have a due Veneration for the Holy *Scriptures*, and he'll soon become a Protestant. Let us converse much with our Bibles, and value our Privilege in enjoying them, and endeavour to imbibe the Notions of them, and to copy out the Rules and Directions of them, in our Tempers, and in our Lives; and then, tho' we should be call'd by Providence at any time, as our Neighbours have been, to suffer for our Holy Religion, we should never desert it: And tho' the time should come, that *Popery* might pinch and straighten us, it would never be able to profelyte, and make Converts of us: Whatsoever Damage it might bring upon our Bodies, its Infection would not reach our Souls.

We have not, I readily grant, any Ground for an immediate Fear of *Popery*. Blessed be God, Religion, Liberty, and Property, (the three most valuable things in the World) were never in a more comfortable and hopeful State than now: And there seems also something of an hearty Concern stirring among us for the continuance of these Blessings to those that are to come after us; which calls for our heartiest Thanks to Almighty God: But yet, as our Government was hardly ever more watchful; so our Popish Enemies were never more busy. Let us not therefore be too secure. If they reach their Designs, to be in the Establish'd Church, or out of it, will be much at one to them; they'll make no difference between *Church-Men* and *Dissenters*, whatever others may do: And therefore all have equal reason to be arm'd against them. Let us carefully prepare our selves for all the Assaults we may meet with from them, as Christians, and take unto us *the whole Armour of God*; and then, tho' we should live to see the Days ever so evil, we may still hope to *stand*: and Living or Dying, we shall be safe and happy.

SERMON XIII.

2 TIM. III. 16.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.

A Third Inference from the Premises is this. Since the Scripture was *given by Inspiration of God*, we may justly conclude, that every part of it must be *useful and instructive*. Respect to the Author of it should lead us into that general Conclusion, even tho' there should be some particular Parts or Parcels, the *Use* of which is not so general, or not so obvious. It cannot indeed be pretended that every Book, and yet much less every Chapter and Verse in Scripture, is alike *useful* and instructive: That is impossible, where the subject Matter is so very different: But when the whole was *given by the Inspiration of God*, we may very well infer, that there is not any part of it, but what in its Place may be of *Use*; or else it would be unworthy of its Author; and it would be an intolerable Reflection on the Blessed God, to suppose him to have had any hand in it.

At Sal-
ters-Hall,
Tuesd.ay
Lecture,
March 5.
1705.
Inf. 3.

The Case is otherwise in humane Compo-
sures. Let one part of them be ever so exact
and elaborate, ever so *useful* and instructive,
there may be other parts that may be insigni-
ficant and trifling. The Authors may forget
themselves; or their Spirits may flagg, and
their Faculties may fail them: But there can
be nothing of this kind, in the case of our
sacred Records. For he that inspir'd them,
is always the same, and changes not. He
cannot forget himself. Nothing could come
from him but what must be instructive, and
useful, if taken in its Place, and rightly under-
stood.

Nay, I'll go yet further: The Scriptures be-
ing inspir'd of God for the Use of his Church
in all Ages, tho' one part of them may be
peculiarly suitable to one Age, and another to
another Age, yet there is no part of them
but what may be instructive to the People
of God, in any Age whatsoever. The Apo-
Rom. 15.4
 stle observes, that *whatsoever things were writ-
ten before-time, were written for our Learning, that
we, thro' Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures,
might have Hope.* A Text that one would ima-
gine had been entirely over-look'd by those,
who out of a peculiar Fondness for the *New
Testament*, have been for laying aside the *Old
Testament*, as of no farther Use or Significance:
The Apostle, instead of concurring with
those of this Sentiment, declares that the
whole, and every part of the *Old Testa-
ment*, which they give themselves leave to
undervalue, was *written for our Learning*; that
is, for our Instruction and Edification. The
Historical as well as Doctrinal Part, the Pro-
missory as well as the Preceptive Part, was
writ-

written for our Instruction, that we thro' Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope. And what he there asserts as to the Writings of the *Old Testament*, must to be sure be as true, as to those of the *New Testament*; which are peculiarly drawn up for our Use, upon whom *the ends of the World* are come: And from their Divine Inspiration it may be equally inferr'd.

Many honest People are too apt to think themselves unconcern'd in several parts of their Bible. The Structure of the antient Tabernacle, the *Levitical Law* and Service, many parts of the ancient Prophets, and the Book of the Revelations of St. *John*, they think are nothing at all to them. The Apostle in the Text I have cited, seems to set himself directly to obviate such a Thought. He tells them, all was *written for our Learning*. This is a certain Truth, that might be evidenc'd by a distinct Consideration of those parts of Scripture that seem in this respect most liable to Objection:

As dry and barren as that part of the *Pentateuch* appears, where Direction is given about the Structure of the Tabernacle, which was a sort of a walking Temple among the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, and about the *Levitical Law* and Service, which has been often skipp'd over by some good Christians in their Course of reading the Scriptures; if we cast our Eyes upon the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, we shall find the inspir'd Author from thence clearing several Evangelical Truths, and enforcing useful moral Instructions. He has indeed only fasten'd upon some few Particulars:

ven us a Directory how to proceed, in order to our Learning that from this part of Scripture, which it was design'd to teach us. He has put us into a Method of improving considerably by it. And so for the ancient *Prophets*; those parts of them that are the darkest, may yet teach us something, either with reference to the Faults and Disorders to which such as are in a Church-State, are most liable, or as to the Method which God takes in animadverting upon them; or as to the State of things under the *New Testament*, to which they have all along a marvellous Reference. And as for the Book of the *Revelations* of St. *John*, tho' the particular Parts are dark, yet we may conclude it to be instructive, from the *Blessing*

Rev. i. 3. which is pronounc'd on *those that hear and read it*. Tho' the whole of it be not intelligible, yet a general Faith, as to the great things which God will accomplish in, and for his Church before the end of Time, may be thereby supported; Prayer also may be excited, Hope encourag'd even when things are lowest; and Patience confirm'd under the forest Pressures, which are to have so blessed an Issue as is there signify'd. And all that read and consider that Book, as dark and mysterious as it is, may be naturally led to admire, and adore that God, who *declareth the End from the Beginning*; for which there will, to be sure, be more and more Reason, as the time of the full unsealing of that Book, and final Accomplishment of the Prophecies which it contains, draws nearer and nearer. No Writing, of any sort, can be inspir'd of God, but it must be very *useful* and instructive. However, by observing the Connexion of the fore-cited

Passage

Passage out of the Epistle to the *Romans*, we may be led to take notice, that the Fancy that such and such parts of Scripture, as don't so directly strike us, and are not immediately address'd to us, do not concern us, and are of little or no *Use*, is not of a modern Date, but of a considerable standing, and was working even in the Days of the Apostle. For he brings in that Admonition as to the general *Usefulness* of those Writings that were given by the Inspiration of God, upon occasion of a Passage that he cited out of one of the *Psalms of David*, and apply'd to Christ. For his Argument stands thus. We ought, says he, to bear the *Infirmities of the Weak*, and to please our Neighbour for his Good to Edification, therefore because Christ did so. He pleased not himself; and to prove that, he cites a Passage of the Psalmist, where he says, *The Reproaches of them* Psal. 69. *that reproached thee, fell on me.* Now there were some that were ready to say, what is all this to us? What does it signify to any of us, what was said so long ago by *David*, concerning some that liv'd in his Days? How does this concern us? To such the Apostle replies, It is to you, and does really concern us all; and so does every thing else that we meet with in those sacred Volumes, be it of one sort or another. For *whatsoever things were written afore-time, were written for our Learning, that we thro' Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope.* Take we the most particular Passages that we can meet with in all the Scripture, they are even now as applicable, as in the special Cases which they immediately refer'd to, if there be but a correspondence of Circumstances. We are concern'd in the most particular Promises

Promises and Threatnings, Rewards and Punishments, that occur in Scripture. And this I'll prove to you from the Scripture it self, briefly.

We can hardly any where meet with a more particular *Promise* than that which was made to *Joshua*, when, to encourage him to lead the Children of *Israel* into the actual Possession of the Promis'd Land, God declar'd to
 Josh. 1. 5. him in so many Words, *I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee.* And yet we find that very
 Heb. 13. 5. *Promise* represented by the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, as applicable to all the Faithful, without exception, that are but sensible of their need of God's special Presence. So what *Threatning* could be more particular, than that of the Prophet *Habakkuk* against the professing People of God in his Day; with reference to the *Chaldeans*, whom he declares he would make the Instruments of his Vengeance upon them? Saying, *Behold and regard, and wonder marvelously, for I will work a Work in your Days, which you will not believe tho' it be told you?* And yet we find the *Jews* fairly
 Hab. 1. 5. caution'd, lest the same *Threatning* should be
 Acts 13. 45, 46. verify'd in their Case; upon their refusal of the *Messiah*. And what *Punishments* could be more special, and seemingly more confin'd to the particular Cases of the Persons who were immediately concern'd in them, than the Judgments inflicted on the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, who were severely punish'd for their Idolatry, their Fornication, and their Murmuring, by God's sending the Plague upon them at one time, Fire from Heaven at another time, and fiery Serpents yet at another time? As we have a particular Account given us
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by *Moses* in the Book of *Numbers*? These things may at first View seem to regard those only that were immediately concern'd in them: But *behold*, says the Apostle, *all these things happen'd unto them for Ensamples; and they are written for our Admonition, upon whom the ends of the World are come.* And the same also may be said as to the whole Scripture in every part of it. 'Twas all written for our Admonition. Its being given by the Inspiration of God, is an Evidence that it was so. Since this was its Rise, we may be assur'd there can be nothing in it vain or useles. It would be an abominable Reproach upon the Spirit of God, to suppose him to inspire any thing, that it would be vain and useles for us to know; any thing but what may conduce to our Advantage, and be of Use. Farther,

Since the Scriptures were given by the Inspi-Inf. 4.
 ration of God, to slight and disregard them, under a pretence of following the *Light within*, must necessarily be very weak, and dangerous. 'Tis weak, because it is a depriving our selves of the Advantage of a safe and certain Guide. 'Tis dangerous, because 'tis an exposing our selves to innumerable Delusions. If God inspir'd the Scriptures, they are most certainly fitted to guide us in the way to Heaven. To neglect them, under a Pretence of following the *Light within*, is to refuse to make use of the Light of the Sun, and to prefer before it the shine of a poor Glow-worm. 'Tis a turning our Backs to a bright Torch in a dark Night, to follow a bewildring *Ignis fatuus*. I should advise any that were this way assaulted, to be strict in enquiring what is meant
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by the *Light within*. If Reason only be thereby meant, it must be own'd that it came from God, and it is to be valu'd as it is *the Candle of the Lord*: But yet you know, that tho' a Candle is very useful in giving Light by Night, yet it still remains Night, let the Candle burn ever so bright: 'Tis only the Sun can make Day. For any then, because they have the *Light* of Reason to undervalue the *Light* of Scripture, is just as if a Man should say, as long as I have the Light of a Candle, I value not that of the Sun; which would hardly recommend any Man to us, for his Sense and Sagacity. I know they commonly say they mean more. They'll tell you they mean Christ that is within them, who is *the true Light that lighteth every Man that cometh into the World*. But what is this Christ within them? That Christ is the true Light is certain. 'Tis also agreed that whatsoever Light any Man receiveth, he hath it from Christ; and that every Man and Woman that is born into this World, is enlighten'd by Christ some way or other; for the very Light of Reason is from him. But is Christ and this Light of Reason all one? Christ is the Fountain of Light undoubtedly: from him is the Light of Nature, and from him also is the Light of Grace. But to pretend to follow him as a *Light within*, while we disregard his Revelations, which were given forth on purpose to enlighten us in our Way to Heaven, is in reality to shut our selves up in a dark Room, and keep the Light from entring. For any to think of following Christ, while they undervalue his Word, is just like their pretending to obey their Civil Rulers, while they take no notice of their Laws,

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but freely transgress them. Perhaps at length they'll say (and it has been said by some) they mean the Spirit by the *Light within*. But if it be the Spirit of God that they mean, that cannot lead them from the Word of God; God's Word and his Spirit cannot disagree. It was the Spirit of God that inspir'd the Scriptures. He must then be utterly inconsistent with himself, should he lead Men from the Scriptures. St. *John* hath fairly warn'd us *not to believe every Spirit*; and charged us to *try the Spirits whether they are of God*. They that pretend to follow the Spirit while they neglect the Word, can have no Security that they don't follow a Spirit of Delusion. The Scripture is the chief Rule by which Spirits are to be try'd. Reason may help, but it must be under the Direction of Scripture. And if that be Divinely inspir'd, there can to be sure be no fitter Rule. Now what saith the Scripture in the Case? Read and Judge. *To the Law and to the Testimony*; II. 8. 20. *if they speak not according to this Rule, it is because there is no Light in them*. They may fancy they have a peculiar Light, but the Prophet declares they have no Light in them; that is, no Light of Truth. For *the Word is Truth*: Joh. 17. and whatsoever is dissonant from it is therefore erroneous. So that they that follow the *Light within*, in opposition to the Word of Truth, run headlong into all manner of Error. And it is no wonder at all to find such gape after New Revelations, till they are perfectly bewilder'd. But if it were the Spirit of Christ that such Persons were acted by, it could not be so different from the Spirit which our Lord communicated to his own Disciples, and others his faithful Servants in the Primitive Church.

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The Spirit that was in them, taught none of them to contemn the Word of God, nay made them reverence it the more, as is easy to be perceiv'd by their Writings. 'Tis a groundless Suggestion for it to be said, that by trying the Spirit by the Scriptures we set the Scripture above the Spirit: for tho' the Spirit must be own'd to be infinitely more excellent than the Scriptures, yet we have good Proof that the Scriptures are from the Spirit; but can have no certain Proof that the Spirit, which any of us are acted by, is from God, unless it agrees with the Scriptures. By taking this way therefore for Trial, we don't really prefer the Scriptures above the Spirit, but we make the Spirit, as speaking by Inspiration in the Penmen of Holy Writ, the Standard whereby to judge of any Spirits by which Persons may pretend to be acted in Modern Times. And in this we may rest abundantly satisfy'd, that if the Scriptures, as has been prov'd, were *given by Inspiration of God*, then whatever Spirit would draw us from them, and lead us to slight and disregard them, must be an ill Spirit, and tend to Confusion, and every evil Work. Farther,

Infer.

Since the Scriptures were *given by the Inspiration of God*, I think it a very natural Inference, that the *bantering* any Part or Portion of them, or *ridiculing* any Scriptural Expressions, cannot be a small Crime. The Reason is plainly this; because the reflecting in this way on the Holy Scriptures, reaches to their Author that inspir'd them. Great is the Guilt of the present Age in this respect. Nothing is more common than for those who set up for Wits, to pervert the Words of Scripture to an irreligious Sense, and cloath even their ob-
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scene Thoughts with the Phrases of our Sacred Penmen ; which is a Piece of Audaciousness to which it is really hard to give a proper Name. But if there be no Injury more provoking than Contempt, and that Contempt be most provoking that is direct and immediate, because it is an open Proclamation that the Persons concern'd in giving the Affront, are neither afraid nor ashamed of angering, then to be sure their Crime who make the Blessed God the Object of their Derision, and who put an intolerable Abuse upon those inspired Writings by which he hath been pleas'd solemnly to declare his Mind to Mankind about their most important Concernments, must be extremely provoking. And he that is in this way so insolently affronted, has it in his Power at any time to take Vengeance. Tho' he should in this Life forbear (which by some Instances even in our own Days we find he does not always do) yet the After-reckoning will be most dreadful. No Man that understands himself, and considers the Consequences, would be found in the Case of such a profane Wit at the Great Day for a Thousand Worlds. Such Persons now proclaim themselves Fools and Mad-men ; and their future Punishment we may conclude will be proportionable to their present Guilt. Where any Persons are this way addicted, it deserves their serious Consideration, whether after all the bold Jestings they have pass'd on the Holy Scriptures, they are fully assur'd they are not the Word of God. If they are not assur'd of the Negative, how great a Hazard do they run ? And whatever their Apprehension may be about it, suppose they should at last prove mistaken, how dearly must they pay for that flashy frothy Wit, which

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at the present is the Sport and Laughter of Creatures as vain as themselves? It well deserves their considering, what a Case they must be in, if that Book which they have so freely made the Subject of their Satyr and Drollery, should be the Rule of their Judgment at the last Day. They cast *Firebrands, Arrows, and Death, and cry, Am I not in Sport?* But the Voice of God to such is very terrible. *Thou*

Ezek. 35. *shalt know that I am the Lord, and that I have*
 12, 13, 14. *heard all thy Blasphemies. Thus with your Mouth*
ye have boasted against me, and have multiplied
your Words against me: I have heard them. I
will make thee desolate. 'Tis true the Wickedness

of these Creatures is very great, and yet we have no reason to wonder that there should be such Persons to be found, since we have Warning given us of them in our Sacred Records.

2 Pet. 3. 3. We are told that *there shall come in the last Days*
Scoffers walking after their own Lusts. But let us take heed of any share in the Infection. Let us remember the Admonition given by the

Jude
 v. 17, 18. *Apostle. Beloved, remember ye the Words which*
were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus
Christ, how that they told you there should be Mock-
ers in the last time, who should walk after their own
ungodly Lusts. Let us remember that the Scrip-

tures were given by the Inspiration of God, and be confirm'd in that Belief, and we need not be mov'd by their Scoffs, unless it be to pity and pray for them. Let us take heed of any thing that borders upon an Imitation. This I the rather mention, because it is now grown modish, not only among profane Persons, but even among some that pretend to Religion too, (the more's the pity) to bring in Scripture Expressions in their common Discourse about tri-
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vial Matters, without any thing of a serious Air, with a Design to produce a Smile, by an Allusion that may perhaps have something of Wit in it, and sometimes but the Appearance of it neither. This is a Custom that is very spreading among us, I pray God avert the Omen that it seems to carry in it. I am so charitable as to believe that many have often fallen into Discourse of this kind, without any thing of an ill Design, or without being at all aware of the pernicious Tendency of such a Practice. But I beg it may be consider'd, whether it does not discover too much Levity at least, for Persons to bring in the Expressions of Scripture in their common Conversation, without any thing of Seriousness, and only to create a Smile in the Company. Has not this a Tendency to diminish the Awe of those Sacred Writings both in our selves and others? Would it be well taken for us so to use the Expressions of our Superiors among our Fellow-Creatures? and does it not tend to encourage *Mockers*, that pretend to no Religion, to carry the Jest much farther, when they find even those that pretend to a great Veneration for the Scriptures, shall often use the Phrases of it in their free Conversation, in such a Way as borders upon Profaneness? and will not the frequent Repetition of such things produce a Habit? I pray God it may be laid to Heart. I'm abundantly satisfy'd, that the more we are confirm'd in the Belief of the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and the more we consider what that implies, the more fearful shall we be of desecrating the Phraseology of it, by the trivial Use of it, where no just Occasion for it can be so much as pleaded. Again,

Infer. 6.

If the Scriptures were really divinely inspir'd, then have we the highest Reason to acquiesce in all the Discoveries and Representations therein made us, tho' the things discover'd should be to us *incomprehensible*. 'Tis highly fitting that this be well consider'd by us, in opposition to the Insinuations of a sort of Men, who setting up for great Masters of Reason, can swallow nothing of which they are not admitted to see the Mode, and the intrin-sick Grounds. I'll freely grant that we have the highest Reason to see to it, that the Grounds we build upon in Religion be firm. If we are impos'd upon there, the Error may be fatal. It cannot therefore but be highly desirable that we might have a Divine Revelation to settle us: and we had need have good Evidence of the Divinity of a Revelation, that we own for such. But that being well attested, the Proof that is alledg'd for the Divinity of the Scriptures upon Comparison fairly outweighing any Objections alledg'd to the contrary, (which is as good Evidence as a Man need desire) to be demurring at every turn as to the Particulars plainly contain'd in that Revelation, because we are not able to fathom them, is grossly unreasonable. Persons guilty of this don't use that Reason fairly which they pretend to be so great Masters of. For the very same Reason as forbids us to believe things evidently *contradictory*, requires us to believe things altho' they are *incomprehensible*, when God hath declar'd to us that so they are. And they that will believe nothing in Religion but what they can fathom, nothing but what they can demonstrate by natural Reasons, nothing but what they can explain the manner of, whatsoever they

they may pretend, don't really believe the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures. If they did, they could not apprehend there was any real Reason for such a Demur. If the Scriptures were really Divinely inspir'd, then if they tell us that there is but One God, and yet Three that equally partake of all Divine Perfections; that there is one Person that at one and the same time had all the Perfections of the Deity, and the sinless Imperfections of Humanity; and that one and the same Body which after Death is resolv'd into Dust and Rottenness, shall hereafter be rais'd again to Immortality, I am evidently bound to believe, tho' I cannot comprehend. The Proof of the Divinity of those Writings wherein these things are contain'd will abundantly justify me. The Scriptures being *given by Inspiration of God*, we may safely make use of an implicit Faith as to all things we meet with in them. The Truths indeed which God hath reveal'd are able to bear the strictest Trial: But methinks 'tis hard that we who in many things can easily resign our Understandings to fallible Men, should stand so upon our Guard with the infinitely Blessed God, as to make him dispute with us, for every Inch he gains upon us; and that we can't afford him what we scruple not to grant to a credible Man, which is to receive an Affirmative upon Trust of his Veracity. In short, having prov'd the Scriptures divinely inspir'd, I think I may justly infer that we are to consult them; not in order to a Resolution whether what is there declar'd and asserted, be to be believ'd and entertain'd, but in order to the distinctly knowing what is there contain'd and reveal'd; to all which we are readily to

give our Assent, whatsoever the attending Difficulties may be: And they who pretend to believe the Inspiration of the Scriptures, and yet act otherwise, are guilty of the grossest Absurdity that could well be imagin'd.

Inscr. 7. Since the Scripture was given by Inspiration of God, we have great reason to be heartily thankful that it has been preserv'd in the World all along down to this Day, and that we of this Nation have so long had it in our own Tongue. Many are the Confusions that have happen'd in the World since this Body of Sacred Writings that we call the Bible has been compil'd, and put together; many Fires have been kindled, many Towns and Countries have been made desolate, many cruel Massacres have been committed, and many bloody Battels fought, against that Religion which the Holy Scriptures aim at settling and establishing; and yet the Oracles of God are continu'd to this Day, and have been preserv'd in spite of Men and Devils. The Hand of a kind Providence that has effected this, calls for our Observation and thankful Remembrance. Many other antient Writings that were valuable in their several Kinds, are perish'd and lost. Many Volumes against which the Great ones of the Earth had no Spite or Ill-will, nor Reason for any other Desire or Concern than that they should be transmitted to Posterity, are utterly buried in Oblivion, and past Recovery. Many Treatises of *History*, *Politicks*, and *Antiquities*, and divers *Arts* and *Sciences*, that would now be purchas'd at any Rate, have in great part disappear'd, and of some we have only poor tatter'd Fragments left, that are highly valu'd. How comes it then about that the Holy Scrip-
tures,

tures, some Books of which are of greater *Antiquity* than any other Writings, and against all of which there has been so great a Spite in the World, should be preserv'd, but thro' the special Providence of God! The Philosophical Writings of King *Solomon*, against which the World had no Spleen, are long since lost and gone, whereas his Canonical Writings are still extant, and in our hands. Many other Tracts, which it was for the Civil Interest of Mankind to have had perpetuated, are perish'd with Time, while these Sacred Records, that have all along had the most Enemies of any Writings under Heaven, are yet preserv'd. If we consider this well, it will appear surprizing: How often hath Persecution open'd her Mouth from Age to Age, and swallow'd up Millions of Men and Books, while the Bible by the over-ruling Hand of Heaven has been still continu'd. *Antiochus* gave strict Orders that all the Bibles that could be met with should be burnt, as we have an Account in the History of the *Maccabees*. We are told, that *when they* 1 Macc. 1: 56, 57. *had rent in pieces the Books of the Law which they found, they burnt them with Fire. And wheresoever was found with any the Book of the Testament, or if any consented to the Law, the King's Commandment was that they should put him to Death. And the Roman Emperors Dioclesian and Julian afterwards did the like with respect to the New Testament also. Eusebius the Ecclesiastical Historian tells us, that he saw the Sacred Scriptures* Lib. 8. cap. 2. *burning in the Market-place with his own Eyes, according to the Imperial Edict, which order'd all the Christians to deliver their Bibles to the publick Officers; that they might be consum'd to Ashes. Could they have had their Will, there would not have*

been so much as a Bible left. And had all been of the Mind that some then were, who call'd themselves Christians, who deliver'd their Bibles up to be burnt, who are by the Antients call'd *Traditores*, they had reach'd their Design. But God would not suffer it. The Bible outliv'd their Malice, and they had the Vexation to live to see themselves disappointed. Nay'tis observable, that an infinitely Wise God hath in this respect so befool'd the Devil, as to preserve some Parts of Scripture even by the Means of those who prov'd Enemies to him and that. Thus the *Jews* preserv'd the Old Testament, for the Benefit of us Christians, tho' they were bitterly against that Perfection of it, which we have under the New Testament. And as to one Book of the New Testament, which is *the Revelation of St. John*, it deserves a special Remark, that when it was heretofore question'd whether or no it was a genuine Apostolical Remain, the Church of *Rome* by her Testimony help'd to keep it in the Sacred Canon, and so contributed to the preserving and perpetuating of a Testimony against her self in the Days of her Apostacy.

It hath been a mighty Controversy with some, whether or no any Writings that were truly Divinely inspir'd, have been ever lost; and it hath been warmly debated: But the best of it is, it is a Controversy that is not very material: For what tho' some inspir'd Writings may have been lost, yet as long as we have all those remaining, that God design'd for the Use of his Church in all succeeding Ages, that is enough for us, and ought to satisfy us. As much is preserv'd as God thought sufficient. And that our Bible is preserv'd so entire, is one
of

of the most amazing Providences, all things consider'd, that we can well pitch upon. The more valuable these Sacred Writings are, (and what can make Writings valuable, if their having been given by the Inspiration of God will not do it?) the greater is the Mercy that they are preserv'd. 'Twere better a thousand times that we had lost all the Books there are in the World besides, than that those Sacred Volumes should be missing, which were given of God to make us wise unto Salvation, and to guide us in the Way to Heaven. We ought to bless God for this, as one of the greatest Mercies imaginable.

It becomes us also of this Nation to be very thankful to God that we have had the Bible so long in our Mother Tongue. When the *Roman* Legions were in this Island, we in common with other Parts of this Western Empire, had the Scriptures in the prevailing Language. About the Year of Christ 700 the Bible was translated into the *Saxon* Tongue, which was then most us'd in this Land, by *Adelm* Bishop of *Sherborn*, Venerable *Bede*, and others. Afterwards, in the Reign of King *Richard* the 2d, the famous *Wickliffe* translated it into the *English* Tongue. And from that Day to this, we have never been without the Bible in our Mother Tongue, tho' blessed be God, Bibles were never more plentiful than at this Day. The Lord grant that they may always continue so; and that our Unthankfulness for so great a Mercy, and our Carelessness to improve it, may never prove a Forfeiture of it.

Lastly; since the Scripture was given by the *Infer. 8.* Inspiration of God, I think we have the highest Reason, not only to study it carefully our

selves, but also to instruct our *Children* in it.
 'Tis intimated in the Verse next before my
 Text, that thro' the Care of his pious Parents,
Timothy had *known the Scriptures even from a*
Child. And if we really believe the Scriptures
 to have been inspir'd of God, I can't see how
 we can be satisfy'd without endeavouring to
 possess our Little Ones, who we hope are to
 rise up after us, with a just Veneration for
 those Sacred Writings; and without carefully
 training them up in the Knowledge of them,
 that they may be thereby made *wise unto Sal-*
vation. Of this we ought to be the more care-
 ful, as knowing how great an Advantage it is
 for Persons from their Childhood to be accu-
 stom'd to those things that they must know and
 practise all their Days. Nothing makes deeper
 Impressions upon our Minds than that which
 enters first. We may therefore observe, that
 from the Beginning God earnestly recommend-
 ed it to the Care of his People, diligently to
 instruct their Children in his Word. *I know*
 Gen. 18. *Abraham*, says God, *that he will command his*
 19. *Children, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord*.
 And 'tis *David's* Direction to *Young Men*, to
 Pl. 119. 9. *cleanse their Ways by taking heed thereto, according*
to the Word. This was one common Way a-
 mong the *Jews*, in which elder Persons shew'd
 their Veneration for their Sacred Oracles.
 They us'd before all things, as *Josephus* tells us,
 to teach their Children the Laws of God: and
 to this Day, they put the Bible into their hands
 from five Years of Age. Nor were the Primi-
 tive Christians less careful in this matter. A-
 mong the Writings of *St. Jerome* we have an
 Epist. ad *Epistle* in which he gives his Thoughts, about
 Lætam. the Education of a young Lady, of a noble
 Chri-

Christian Family, from her Infancy and Childhood. As soon as she began to speak, he would have her learn the *Psalms*, and *Proverbs*, and *Ecclesiastes*; be taught to read the four *Gospels*, and have them always in her hands; and get the *Acts* and *Epistles* by heart; and afterwards pass to the *Prophets*; and so have her Mind sometimes enrich'd with these inestimable Heavenly Treasures. And in reality, we shall shew that we have but little Value for the Sacred Scriptures our selves, in proportion to what they deserve, if we don't take care that our Children be sometimes acquainted with them. Nor can we take any such Method as this, to have Comfort in the Fruit of our own Bowels. We are indeed as they grow up, to teach them other things that may help to make them useful in the World; but all other Knowledge we can give them without this, will in the issue prove fruitless and insignificant: Whereas this Knowledge may help to make them *wise unto Salvation*; which is that that we ought to be most intent upon for them, as well as with respect unto our selves; and our being so is that that will yield us the most Peace and Comfort here and hereafter.

SERMON XIV.

2 TIM. III. 16.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.

At Salters-Hall,
Tuesday
Lecture,
Mar. 19.
1706.
Joh. 5. 39.

I Shall now proceed to give some *Practical Advice*, grounded upon the important Principle which I have been endeavouring to clear. Says our Blessed Saviour to the Jews, *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life.* Had they been mistaken in thinking so, he'd certainly have set them right. And having reason to think so, their Neglect of the Scriptures would have imply'd a plain Contempt of that *Eternal Life*, to assist them in the pursuit of which they were given them. Agreeably hereunto, my general Admonition to all is this; *Search the Scriptures*; for ye know they were given by the Inspiration of God. Being satisfy'd in this, it ought to be a strong Motive and Inducement to you to search and study them. Respect to their Author ought to engage you to consult and peruse them. If a Man of any Fame writes a Book, be the Subject what it will, they that have any thing

thing of Curiosity are presently desirous to see it; and if the Subject be of common Concern, all are willing to read it. How earnestly desirous then should we be of conversing with a Book that sets before us the whole Counsel of God? Could I give you assurance, that beyond the Seas, were it even at the remotest *Indies*, there was a Book to be met with, drawn up by God's own Order, and under his special Conduct, I believe several of you would stick at no Charge to get it. Now behold you have such a Book by you, in your Houses and Closets: I beseech you don't despise it, because it is at hand, but be perswaded to study it. Therefore do so, because it came from God. If that Argument won't prevail, I can't see it would be likely to signify any thing to use any other Motives. Nay that one single Argument carries several of the strongest Motives that could be thought of in it. This Book coming from God, we may be assur'd it bears the Signatures of his Perfections, especially of his Wisdom and Holiness, Benignity and Truth. And coming from God for our Direction, we may very well conclude that it runs upon things of the greatest Consequence and Use; and contains an Account of the things that are most needful, most comfortable, and most advantageous for us. 'Twould be strange if such a Book should not charm us. Should the Commonness of it, make us at all disrelish it, it must argue our Minds to be most wretchedly indispos'd. In former Ages, not one of many were able to converse with it. If we run back but Five Hundred Years, we shall find things at that pass, that scarce one in a Hundred was able to read at all. We have a good

Evidence of this, in that bare Reading was then thought to merit a Malefactor's Pardon ; and he was allow'd his Life and sav'd, if he could but read. Or if Reading had been as common then as it is now, many could not have the Privilege of free Access to *Libraries*, where the Bible lay in *Manuscript*, that they might have the Advantage of an Opportunity to peruse it. But if the kind Providence of Almighty God, which has so mercifully alter'd our Circumstances from those of our Progenitors in former Times, affects us so little, that we undervalue the Treasure which we in this respect have in our Hands, we shall shew our selves most monstrously ungrateful. And withal we may take notice, that what is declar'd of the Book of the *Revelation* in particular, is as true of the whole Scripture in general ; *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the Words of this Book.*

Rev. 1. 3.

Let us then converse freely and familiarly with our *Sacred Oracles* ; and that you may do it profitably and to the best Advantage, I shall lay down some *Directions*, which I can venture to recommend.

Direct. 1.

1. Be not contented with a bare reading the Scriptures, but endeavour to *understand* them, and reach their true Sense and Meaning. We ought not indeed to be satisfy'd with the bare Notion even of what is to be met with in the Bible, tho' it is the best of Books ; and yet if we han't a right Notion of what it contains, we must remain in the Dark in the midst of the clearest Light. It was therefore a very proper Question that *Philip* ask'd the *Ethiopian Eunuch* ; *Understandest thou what thou readest ?* For they that read without Understanding are like

Acts. 8.

300

like to read without Benefit. Our Saviour also press'd his own Disciples as to this. *Jesus* Mat. 13: *said unto them, Have ye understood all these things?* 51. Unless we so read as to understand, tho' we take abundance of Pains, and task our selves to a great many Chapters within such a compass of time, and spend a great many Hours every Week in the Employment, it will be all but meer trifling. We should be the more careful about this, because the Scriptures have many Difficulties. What St. Peter says of the Epistles of St. Paul, that *there are* 2 Pet. 3. *in them some things hard to be understood,* is as 16. true of the Scriptures consider'd in general. Many things are difficult as to the matter of them, and many as to the manner of Delivery. We must therefore take Pains in diving into the true Sense and Meaning of what we read in the Word of God.

The right way of *interpreting* Scripture, is a very fit Subject of serious Enquiry. My Design will allow me only to give Hints. In the general it is plain, that if we would read the Scripture with Understanding, we must take the very same Ways and Methods, as we do in order to the understanding any other Writings that we deal fairly by; and as for those Methods that would be intolerable, and unfair in the case of common Writings, they are by no means to be practis'd upon the Holy Scriptures. We are to consider carefully the Signification of the *Words* that are us'd, and whether they are to be understood properly or improperly. We should consider the *Occasion*, *Scope*, and *Drift* of the several Passages of Scripture before us, and compare one place with another, and expound darker Places

Places by the help of the more plain ; and the Expressions that are less frequent, by those that are more common and usual. And if after all, we are to seek, I can't see that we are in danger of erring, if we take things in the *largest* Sense. We must, to be sure, always adhere to the *Literal Sense*, unless it be contrary to our Senses, Reason, universal Experience, or the Stream of our sacred Writings. We are to take Words in the ordinary Sense wherein God useth them in Scripture, except there be a palpable, unavoidable Necessity of understanding them otherwise. We should allow the words of Scripture a full *Latitude*, and yet take heed of straining them. In the Historical Relations we meet with in our Bibles, we should look upon the things related, as acted in the very order that is mention'd, unless some Circumstances oblige us to allow of an Anticipation. We should remember that no place of Scripture can have more than one *proper Sense* ; tho' besides the proper Sense, there may be also a *Mystical* and an *Allegorical Sense*, which we need not fear admitting, when, and as far as the Scripture warrants it. And as for *Parables*, they are to be extended no farther than the Holy Ghost intends them, which may be easily discover'd by the Occasion, and Scope of the Text. And because the Use of *Figures* is very frequent in our sacred Writings, and without understanding something of them, frequent Mistakes will be unavoidable, I should recommend to the Perusal of such as therein desire Assistance, worthy Mr. *Lukin's Introduction to the Holy Scripture*. Blessed be God, we have many helps of that Kind at hand, in
Books

Books of Annotations, and Expositions, as well as Persons to whom we may at any time repair, that are able to explain the Scriptures to us: So that if we read without *Understanding*, the Fault will be our own. And if we do but understand what we read, we shall find new Mines will be continually opening to us, and we shall, by diligent Application, be enrich'd and improv'd to a Degree beyond what we at a distance could have been able to have imagin'd; so that, as our Saviour has express'd it, we shall be able as *Scribes instruct-* Mat. 13.
ed unto the Kingdom of Heaven, upon all Occa- 52.
sions to bring out of our Treasure things new and old.

2. We should do well to read and study the *Dir. 2.*
Scriptures *methodically*; that is, according to the Historical Order of time. This is a way of reading our Bible, that would at once help both the Memory, and the Judgment. It would discover to us those *Connections* and *Dependencies*, that are otherwise altogether undiscernible. Many Chapters, and Books of Scripture are out of the Place that is proper for them, according to the Order of time, which being put into their proper Place in the Course of our Reading, would reflect not a little Light upon each other. And this being a matter of some Consequence, I shall add a few Hints that may help to make it plain.

In the Book of *Genesis*, with which our Bibles begin, we have a continued History from the Creation of the World, down to the Death of *Joseph* the Patriarch. Next to that, in Order of time, lies the Story, and the Book of *Job*, in which we meet with several plain References

ferences to many Historical Passages in *Genesis*, as to the Creation, and the Fall, and the Flood, and the building of *Babel*, &c. But not to any of the succeeding Parts of the sacred Story. Then comes the Book of *Exodus*, which gives an Account of the Deliverance out of *Egypt*, and the erecting the *Tabernacle* for the Service of God; out of which *Tabernacle* newly erected, God gave those *Ordinances* for his own Service that are contain'd in the Book of *Leviticus*. After which *Ordinances* receiv'd, they made the several *Motions*, of which we have an Account, together with the Particulars that besel them in each, in the Book of *Numbers*. And when they were drawing to the close of their Wandring, *Moses*, that was then about to leave them, rehearſes and explains precedent Laws and Stories to them, as we have an Account in the Book of *Deuteronomy*. Upon the Death of *Moses*, *Joshua* ſucceeded, and brought the People of *Israel* into the actual Poſſeſſion of the Promiſed Land, as we have a particular Account in that Book that goes by his Name. Of their ſucceeding *History*, we have an Account in the Book of *Judges*: But as for the Story of the two Books of *Samuel*, of the *Kings*, and of the *Chronicles*, it is ſo interwoven, that it needs not a little Pains to unravel it, and without minding carefully the ſeveral *Synchroniſms*, there's no poſſibility of diſtinctly underſtanding it. But if we would take it rightly, we muſt in the Courſe of the Story bring in the ſeveral *Pſalms*, with the time of whoſe Compoſure we are acquainted, and the ſeveral *Propheſies* that were given forth in the Reigns of their ſeveral Princes ſucceſſively, till the time of their re-

turn from their Captivity in *Babylon*; when we have their Story continu'd by *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah*; and Prophecy also continu'd by *Haggai*, *Zachary*, and *Malachi*, by whom the *Old Testament Canon* was clos'd.

In the New Testament, the four *Evangelists* give us an Historical Relation of our Blessed Saviour, that is the same in Substance, but different in many Particulars: And if we would be at the Pains to cast their Story into the proper Order of time, we should find that Light reflected thence, as would abundantly reward our Pains. The Book of the *Acts* also gives us a short Specimen of *Church History*, from the time of our Saviour's Ascension to Heaven; and relates the way and manner of the spreading of the Gospel, and the plantation of Christian Churches in several Countries; together with the Labours and Sufferings of the Apostles, particularly *St. Peter*, and *St. Paul*. And if we in the Course of our reading that History, brought in the several *Apostolical Epistles*, at the several Times and Seasons in which they were written, as far as we can be able to collect them from attending Circumstances, it would be of great Use, the better to help us to understand them. And the Book of the *Revelation of St. John*, which closes the *Canon*, gives a Prophetical Account of the History of the Church, to the end of the World.

Any of you that would be effectually assisted to pursue this Method, and reduce this Advice to Practice, need but lay before you a Treatise, call'd *Dr. Lightfoot's Remains*, where you have the proper Order of the Books of Scripture drawn up to your hands, with suitable

ble Remarks. And if you would but be prevail'd with to take a Course of this Kind in reading the Holy Scriptures, you'd find it much promote your understanding them, help to fix them the better in your Memory, carry you thro' a great many Difficulties in them, and every way promote your profiting by them.

Dir. 3.

3. We should study and search the Scriptures with *free Minds*, no way *prepossess'd*. If we are forestall'd with any Opinions; that we have either form'd in our own Fancy, or receiv'd from others, and come thus dispos'd to converse with the Oracles of God, we shall be more likely to force them in to serve our Purpose, than to receive Light from them, which is what we ought to be desirous of. Colour'd Glass gives a Tincture to the Light that it transmits to the Eye; and a Mind prepossess'd, is apt to judge of all things that offer, according to the Opinion which it hath entertain'd of them: But to deal thus in the case of Writings own'd to be Divinely inspir'd, is the highest Contempt of them imaginable. Let us then apply to this Duty of searching the Scriptures, *with good and honest Hearts*; free from Passion and Prejudice; and without any pre-conceiv'd Opinions of our own. When Men are vehemently desirous to have a particular thing true, or good, or lawful, and would fain have the Scripture speak according to their Minds, it is very common for God to suffer them to be seduc'd by their own Lusts. They are often left to *wrest the Scriptures to their own Destruction*. Whatever be imagin'd, 'tis in reality a most dreadful thing to *wrest the Scriptures*; and to pretend to fasten our

Luk. 8.

15.

2 Pet. 3.

16.

our Conceits upon God. It tends to *Destruction*, and there it issues. The very Scripture which God appointed to be the means of Salvation, is to such many times the Instrument of their Perdition. As we would not have it so in our Case, and if we would really desire that Light, and obtain that Improvement from the Holy Scriptures which they were design'd to afford us, we should apply to them with a preparation of Mind to embrace whatever God there reveals, without Exception. And we should bring our own Opinions, not as a Clue to lead us into the meaning of the Scripture, but to be try'd and regulated by it. We should not ransack for Texts to agree with the Opinions we have imbib'd, and rack and screw them, to make them agreeable, not minding contrary Texts any otherwise than to guard and fence against them: But we should freely give up our selves without reserve to the Guidance of God's Word; and as readily credit it when it thwarts, as when it agrees with our Notions. Without this, we really make our own Fancies the Standard; and not those Writings, that were *given by Inspiration of God*: And then it will be no wonder at all if it be said of us as of the *Jews*, M:t. 13. that *seeing, we see not, neither do we understand.* 14.

4. We should read the Scriptures, not as *Carpers*, but as *Learners*, and be afraid of bringing with us an *evil Heart of Unbelief*. When any are so base, disingenuous, and ungrateful; as to read the Scripture with a Design to find matter of Objection and Cavil; when they take pleasure in observing Incoherencies and Defects in the *Stile*, and busily compare Texts together, in hope to find *Contradictions*, with-

out taking any suitable Pains to get the Difficulties clear'd, or fairly weighing the Solutions that are offer'd, it is not at all to be wonder'd at that they stumble, and are bewilder'd. The *Parables* that our Saviour so much us'd in the Course of his Ministry, were a way of Teaching that was plain and easy enough to such as would humbly enquire into their Sense and Meaning; and yet they were an occasion of Stumbling to such as were proud and self-conceited. If we will be continually crying out, how can these and these things be? If we will not believe that they can be so, till we know how they can be so; and will arraign God in his Ways and Speeches, because we are not able to comprehend his Infinite Power, and the several Paths of his unsearchable Counsels, 'twill be but just in him to leave us to grope in the Dark, even at Noon-Day. The Scripture is like *the Pillar of Fire, and Cloud* that *Moses* speaks of. It enlightens the *Israelites*; that is, such as sincerely resign themselves to its Guidance; but it darkens and confounds the *Egyptians*; that is, such as labour under a Spirit of Perverseness. Many that have a mighty Opinion of their own Abilities, turning over the Scriptures under the influence of a prying Curiosity, fastning on the more abstruse and mysterious Parts, are often entangled in inextricable Mazes. Instead of getting Satisfaction in those matters which they are most intent upon, they very often miss those things that are plain and obvious to any honest, well-meaning Reader. And their Infatuation is very just; and no other

Job. 5. 12. than God has warn'd us of; who often *takes the Wise in their own Craftiness*; but appropriates his

his *Secrets to them that fear him*, and has promis'd to *teach the Meek his Way*. Let us therefore continually read the Scriptures with meek, and humble, and teachable Spirits, if we ever desire to be thereby made wise unto Salvation.

5. We should also read the Scriptures with the highest *Reverence*. We should not take the Bible into our Hands in the same manner that we do other Books and Writings, but with a peculiar Awe and Veneration. For we should remember 'twas reveal'd from Heaven, 'twas given by *Inspiration of God*; 'twas given to be the Instrument of our Salvation; and 'twill hereafter be the Rule of our Judgment. When *Jacob* had a Vision, he cry'd out, *Surely the Lord is in this place*. He was struck with an holy Awe. And we also considering the hand that God had in composing our sacred Oracles, ought to have a like Awe upon our Spirits, when we set about the perusing them: That Thought should keep us from trifling, compose our Minds, and put them into a serious Frame, becoming those that are going to converse with God in his Word. We should represent God to our selves as therein speaking to us, and set our selves to hear what he will say to us. We should remember that God's *Word is pure*; and that our Hearts must be purify'd, in order to the receiving of it. We should remember that his *Law is Spiritual, and Heavenly*; and that we must have Spiritual and Heavenly Minds duly to entertain it. We should remember that 'tis a Word of Power and Authority, the Voice of God, who is the mighty Creator of Heaven and Earth, that our Hearts may be subdu'd to

Jam. 1. receive it with Meekness, and with the Trembling
 21. that is requir'd. We should consider that it is
 2 Pct. 1. a sure Word; a faithful Word; a Vision that will
 19. not lie; as proceeding from him that cannot
 Tit. 1. 9 lie; that we may be prepar'd to embrace it
 Hab. 2. 3. with faithful and believing Hearts, without
 Tit. 1. 12. which, we are fairly told, that *the Word cannot*
 Heb. 4. 2. *profit us.* Whensoever we read the Word, we
 should stir up our selves to those solemn Ap-
 prehensions of its Dignity and Authority, as
 may render us pliable and yielding, and apt
 to receive suitable Impressions from it. Re-
 2 Chron. 27. 21. membering that it was the tenderness of *Josiah's*
 34. 19, 21, Heart which caus'd the deep Impression up-
 27. on his Spirit, by reading of the Law, that is
 taken notice of by the sacred Historian.

Dir. 6. 6. We should also read the Holy Scriptures
 with *Attention.* And what can command or
 draw forth our *Attention,* if this Consideration
 will not do it, that they were inspir'd of God,
 on purpose to guide us in the way to Heaven?
 In reading them, we read our only Security
 from everlasting Destruction; the Charter
 of all our spiritual Privileges, and the Rule
 to direct us in our Marches thro' the Wilder-
 ness of this World, to the Heavenly *Canaan:*
 And does it not then become us to attend to
 what we are about? How common is *Attention*
 with us in Cases that are not by far so mo-
 mentous? How great will be the *Attention* of
 a condemn'd Criminal at the reading of his
 Pardon? Or how earnest will he be when
 he is reading his Neck-Verse? How diligent-
 ly will one that is Sick, and in Pain, listen
 to an Account that is given of the way to
 Health and Ease? Nay, how common is it
 for us to be attentive when we are hearing
 any

any pleasant, entertaining Stories? And would it not be unaccountable Stupidity for us then to be heedless, when God is speaking to us in, and by his Word, about those things that are of everlasting Concernment? We are not to read the Bible for reading sake; or to run it over as a Charm, as if the bare muttering over the Words were of it self likely to prove at all to our Advantage: But we should read it that our Minds may be instructed, and our Hearts suitably impress'd: And this cannot be, without *Attention*. If we take any common Writing, tho' we run it over ever so often, yet if we don't attend to what we read, it signifies nothing; we are but where we were. And if it be foolish to deal so by humane Authors, how much more foolish is it to deal so by the Oracles of God? If we at any time are in the Company of one that is much our Superior, 'tis reckon'd highly Contemptuous not to listen while he is speaking to us, and not to mind what he says: Such Carriage is commonly resent'd as highly affronting. And is it not then a vile Affront to the Blessed God, for us, while we pretend to be perusing those Writings which he inspir'd on purpose for our Direction, both as to Truth and Duty, and for our guidance to Heaven and Happiness, to let our Thoughts wander and rove we know not whither, and give no *Attention*? There's really no room for any Good, where Persons read heedlessly. For, tho' God is the Speaker himself, yet it is not possible that the Mind should be instructed, or the Judgment convinc'd, or the Conscience stirr'd, or the Affections perswaded and mov'd, where what is read, is not at-

2 Kings
20. 33.

tended to. When therefore we at any time pretend to peruse our sacred Records, we should endeavour to unite our Thoughts together, and bend, and fix them upon what we read. The Authority and Wisdom of him that is there the Speaker, calls for, and claims *Attention*. Should not Children attend unto their Father? And Subjects to their Prince? And Creatures to their God? Can any thing possibly concern us more, than what we have there related and enjoyn'd, and suggested? We are told that the Servants of King *Benhadad* most heedfully listen'd to the Word of King *Ahab*; they diligently observ'd what came from him, that they might make their Use of it. And have not we reason much more diligently to attend to every thing we meet with in that Book of God, which was written for our Instruction? Does not what is there offer'd, more nearly concern us, than our Estates, our Liberty, or Peace, or even our very Lives? And can we believe this, and not read with *Attention*? And besides, the Language of Scripture is so particular, that it is not likely we should understand it, unless we carefully observe it. The Scriptures are generally copious in Matter, but brief in their Expressions, on which Account they cannot but be of large Signification; and so if they be not heedfully observ'd, much of that that is intended in them will be lost. And withal, all things in Scripture are not alike important, or useful. Some things are more weighty in themselves, and more necessary and proper for us, in our particular Case and Circumstances, than other things can be suppos'd to be. These things we ought in our reading to select. We ought

ought particularly to remark those things which most suit our Occasions, and this cannot be done without *Attention*, which therefore we should make as much Conscience of in reading, as we do of the Reading it self.

7. We should read the Holy Scriptures with *Dir. 7.*
Delight: And that we may do so, we should set Holy *David* before us, as our Pattern. It was but little, comparatively, even of the Old Testament, that was drawn up in his Day, and put into his Hands to peruse: And yet does he various ways signify to us the peculiar and most exquisite *Delight* that he took in conversing with what of the Word of God was then extant. It is worth our while to observe how variously he hath express'd this. Speaking of the *Judgments of God*, he cries *Pf. 19.*
out, More to be desir'd are they than Gold, yea, *10.*
than much fine Gold: Sweeter also than Honey,
and the Honey-Comb. And in another place,
The Law of thy Mouth is better unto me than *Pf. 119.*
Thousands of Gold and Silver. And I love thy *72, 127,*
Commandments above Gold, yea, above fine Gold: *103. v. 24.*
And how sweet are thy Words unto my Taste, *8 & 92.*
yea, sweeter than Honey to my Mouth: And he
calls God's Testimonies his Delight. The utmost Delectation could not have been more significantly express'd, than it is in such Strains as these. And if the Word of God was so precious in his Esteem; if it was so exceeding sweet and delightful to him, who had so little of it in his hands, in comparison of what we are favour'd with: Then how delightful should it be to us, who by the Parts of it that have since been added, have so much more clear Discoveries, and considerable Helps, than were at least, common in his Day. Tho' *David*

had many ways exprefs'd his transcendent Love of the Word of God, yet at last he found himself quite at a loss; Words fail'd him, and could not help him to exprefs the height of his Value for it, and *Delight* in it, at the rate he would willingly have done: And therefore he cries out, *O how love I thy Law!* Which is as if he had said, I love it to a Degree beyond what I am able to signify in Words: And had we but a like Love to the Word of God, it would very much promote our profiting by it. It was St. *Austin's* common Petition; *Sint castæ Deliciæ meæ Scripturæ Sanctæ.* Lord, *let thy Holy Scriptures be my chaste Delight.* There's no Danger here of our exceeding, or over-doing. The Word of God contains the Charter of Pardon and Life. You should therefore value it beyond the Writings by which you hold your Estates. Here is the Food and Nourishment of your Souls in the way to Life Eternal: And therefore it ought to be vastly more delectable to you than the greatest Dainties that would entertain your Bodies only. Then will your Converse with the Oracles of God be most profitable, when it is most delightful. If *Plays* and *Romances* best suit your Palates, and give you the most agreeable Entertainment, I can't apprehend why it should seem at all strange to you, that a glance now and then at a *Bible*, should be of no great Advantage to you. But let your Hearts fall in with that, which it is the greatest Design of the *Bible* to promote; become but once enamour'd of that universal Holiness and Purity, spreading which in the World was God's great Aim, in inspiring the Holy Scriptures: Do but *encline thine Ear unto Wisdom*;

Ps. 119.
97.

Prov. 2.
2, 5.

dom; and apply thine Heart unto Understanding: Then shalt thou understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of God. Then shall you find that Benefit by Converse with the sacred Scriptures, that the most careful perusal of all the other Books there are in the World, put together, could never help you to.

8. We should accompany our reading the Holy Scriptures with Prayer to him that inspir'd them. We should remember, that the Scripture owes its sanctifying and saving Influence to that Spirit that had the main Hand in composing it. We should therefore be often employ'd in imploring his Help; not reckoning it enough to get acquainted with the *Literal and Grammatical Sense* of the Word of God, or to have the Notions of it in our Heads, unless we experience its *Vital Energy* in our Hearts. Whensoever therefore, we take the Bible into our Hands to read, we should at least, lifting up our Hearts to God in a way of Ejaculation, say as *David* did; *Open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things of thy Law: And Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy Statutes.* We shall see things in Scripture, according to that Light in which it shall please God to represent them to us. Tho' the Scripture be perspicuous enough in its Kind, yet our *Understandings* must be *open'd*, before we can rightly understand it. There is indeed a common spiritual Illumination, by means of which, Men may know much of the Mind of God in Scripture, in a Notional way, and be able to discourse of it pertinently, and profitably too, for the Benefit of others, without any saving Effect: But we ought to aim at something higher. We should pray

Div. 8.

Psal. 119.

12, 13.

Luk. 24.

45.

pray with *St. Paul*, that God would give us a
 Ephes. 1. Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge
 17. of Christ, and so impress the Word we read up-
 on our Hearts, that it may have saving Effects
 upon us. Would you read the Scripture to the
 best Purpose, beg earnestly of God that he
 would preserve you from Unbelief and Error;
 that he would lead you into all Truth; and
 keep you from holding the Truth in Unright-
 eousness; that he would illuminate your Minds,
 incline your Hearts to a full and well-grounded
 Perswasion of the Truth and Divine Authority
 of his Word, and bring over your Wills to a
 sincere Obedience to and Compliance with his
 Will there manifested and reveal'd. Beg of
 him that he would enable you to make all those
 Uses of his Written Word, that he design'd it
 should be capable of to your Advantage. Such
 Requests humbly, and seriously, and fervently
 offer'd up to the God of all Grace, and oft
 repeated, cannot be fruitless, and without a
 good Effect.

Dir. 9. 9. Let your reading the Scriptures be still
 accompanied with serious and devout *Medita-*
tion, when you have Time and Opportunity
 for it. Under the Law, those Beasts only
 were reputed clean, and fit for Sacrifice, that

Lev. 11. 4. *chewed the Cud.* So are they most likely to pro-
 fit by the Scriptures, who most carefully recol-
 lect what they read there. This is a Duty;
 for it is commanded. God order'd *Joshua* not
 to let the Law depart out of his Mouth, but to

Josh. 1. 8. *meditate therein Day and Night, that he might ob-*
serve to do according to all that was written therein.
 And indeed they are the most likely to observe
 the Word and keep it, who are most diligent
 in *meditating* upon it. We should therefore in

our

our common Course of reading the Scripture select something to *meditate* upon ; something that may be of use for the strengthening of our Faith, or the Directing of our Practice. And we should endeavour to impress it on our Hearts, that it may have a due Influence upon us. We have *David* herein setting us an Example. He tells us that the Law of God was his *Meditation all the Day* : and that a good Man *meditates upon it Day and Night*. And it will most certainly be a wise and an advantageous Course for us, to entertain our selves with the Word of God in the Morning, and pitch on something that we read then, for our Thoughts to turn to, and run out upon, in the succeeding Day, to fill up the Vacancies of it, when the Works of our general or particular Calling give us not any present or immediate different Employment : And in like manner to take our Bibles again in the Evening, and fasten upon something that we read then, to be the Subject of our Musings upon our Beds, when we are going to rest, or when we are not sleeping in the Watches of the Night. This is a Course which might prevent much Vanity, Sin, and Folly ; and has prov'd highly profitable and advantageous unto many. We should never read any Portion of Scripture without something of a Self-Application, either at that time or afterwards : Tho' I must own this needs more Skill in order to the managing of it to the best Advantage, than all are Masters of. And we should do thus as to each part of Scripture, tho' with a difference in the way of Management, according to the Difference of the several Parts.

Pf. 119.

97.
Pf. 1. 2.

As to the *Doctrinal Part* of Scripture, a greater Regard is to be sure to be had to, and more stress is to be laid upon what relates to the Foundation, than what regards only the Superstructure of our Religion. We should therefore principally select for our *Meditation*, those Texts that contain the necessary Points of Faith; and on them we should meditate most intently and closely, that so we may be ready to

1 Pet. 3.
15. *give to every Man that asks us, a Reason of the Hope that is in us.* Being well settled in such things, we may gradually advance to higher Points. And yet it should still be the matter of our Choice and Care to select those for the Subjects of our *Meditation*, that having the directest Reference to Practice, are the most unctuous and nutritious. In the *Preceptive Part* of Scripture, we must distinguish between *Temporary Precepts*, and those of *perpetual Obligation*. For want of distinguishing here, we may bring our selves into Bondage to the *Levitical Law*, or fancy our selves bound to make away all we have for the Relief of the Poor, as was requir'd of the Rich Man in the Gospel.

Mat. 19.
21. In the *Historical Part*, we must look upon all as written for our Instruction; and apprehend our selves concern'd in every thing that occurs, as far as Circumstances agree. We should look upon our selves as the Persons spoke to in the Promises and Threatnings, the Reproofs and Comforts of the Word. Thus when we read

Luke 13.
5. our Saviour's Declaration to the Jews, *Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish*, we should apply it home, and seriously weigh the absolute Necessity of true Repentance in our own Case, in order to the avoiding Destruction, and obtaining Salvation. And when we read that *God so loved*

loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, Joh. 3. 16.
that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish,
but have everlasting Life, we should meditate
 on the Necessity of saving Faith, and the Secu-
 rity of those who accept of Christ as their
 Lord and Saviour ; and enforce upon our
 selves the Necessity of our so doing, in order
 to our having any special Benefit, by that in-
 estimable Gift of the Love of God. And when
 we read Black Lists and Catalogues of Sinners ^{I Cor. 6.}
 that are positively and peremptorily excluded ^{10.}
 the Kingdom of Heaven, we are to consider ^{Gal. 5. 19,}
 and conclude, that the same Crimes will as ^{20, 21.}
 certainly exclude us, as they would the parti-
 cular Persons to whom those Epistles were im-
 mediately directed. And when we read of
adding one Grace unto another, and are told that
if we do these things we shall never fall, we should
 look upon our selves to be as much concern'd
 as any, by our Growth in Grace to secure our
 standing. And so when we read of the Meek-
 ness of *Moses,* and the Patience of *Job,* and
 the Faith of *Abraham,* and other eminent En-
 dowments and Attainments of the Saints of
 God in Scripture, we should consider the Ex-
 cellence of those respective Graces, and stir up
 our selves to an Imitation of their good Exam-
 ples, in hope of a like Approbation of God,
 and the same comfortable Issues and Effects as
 we find in their particular respective Cases.
 This is the way to have things impress'd. This
 is the way to have the Truths, the Precepts,
 the Promises, the Threatnings, the Examples
 of the Scriptures at hand to use upon occasion.
 This is the true way *not to be unskilful in the* Heb. 5. 13.
Word of Righteousness ; and the way to have
the Word of Christ dwell richly in us in all Wisdom. Col. 3. 16.
 10. And

Dir. 10. 10. And lastly ; we should apply our selves to the Holy Scriptures with a Desire to know the Will of God in order to the putting it in Practice ; and we should carefully and conscientiously regulate our daily Practice by the Scriptures we read. He that seeks to know God's Will with any other Aim than faithfully to practise it, is studious to entitle himself to

Luke 12. *many Stripes.* The Word is design'd to be a
 47. *Light* not only to our Eyes to mend our Sight,
 Pſal. 119. but also to *our Feet* to mend our Walk. If it
 105. helps us to see better, but not to live better, instead of making our Condition better, it will in the issue make it worse. Let us so read the Bible as to get it first impress'd upon our Hearts, and then let us transcribe it in our Lives, and it will effectually secure us of Happiness, both in this Life and the next. The Bible was inspir'd of God to be a Rule of Life : Let us use it as such, and we shall shew that we read it to purpose. That we may not be herein hindred, let us take care that we have no secret Reserves in our Hearts that should cause us to baulk any of the Precepts of the Word ; no *Dalilabs* that should lead us aside in crooked Paths. Let us shun every thing as sinful, which the Holy Scriptures disswade us from ; and mind every thing as Duty, which we find to be there recommended. Let us with *David* have respect

Pſ. 119. 6. *unto all God's Commandments* ; especially those in which the Credit of Religion is most concern'd ; those of which in reading the Word

Pſ. 119. we are minded most. Let us *hide the Word in*
 11. *our Hearts.* Let us therefore consult the Scriptures daily, that our Tempers and Lives may be amended : And we shall find that our Knowledge and Holiness will increase jointly.

This,

This, as the Apostle expresses it, will make us ^{2 Pet. 1. 8.} that we shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

I conclude with that pathetic Recommendation of St. Paul: *And now Brethren, I com-^{Acts 20.} mend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace,^{32.} which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them which are sanctify'd.*

S E R.

SERMON XV.

EPHES. IV. 10, 11.

And he gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors, and Teachers: For the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ.

At Sal-
ters-Hall,
Tuesday
Lecture,
June 11.
1706.

TWO things have a threatenng Aspect upon Religion in our Times: And they are the *Sceptical Spirit* that so much prevails, and the general *Dissoluteness* of our Manners. 'Tis hard to say which of these two threatens us most, or which is likely to have the most fatal Influence. They have a plain Dependence upon each other. For *Scepticism* naturally leads to Immorality; and a vicious Life naturally tends to confirm Men in their *Scepticism*. Our firmest Principles are very commonly call'd in question, and undermin'd, that Men may have the more Scope to gratify their Lusts: And reigning Lust is a very unfit Companion for such as pretend to search for Truth; nor is it at all likely that Men should ever find it, and be firmly settled, unless they are free to be entirely under the Government

vernment of it. 'Tis happy for us that there is a Wise over-ruling Providence that can bring Good out of Evil.

'Tis no easy matter to foresee where things that are most surprizingly involv'd at present, will issue at last: But if a *Moral Prognostication* may be allow'd of, I don't see but that we may have some hope, that when the Professors of Religion of all Denominations, and they also that officiate as Ministers among them, are sufficiently rebuk'd of God, for their so commonly taking things upon Trust, without examining the Grounds they go upon; and are brought to view things in their proper Evidence, and proportion their Positiveness and Warmth to the Degree of Evidence and Weight that is discover'd, God may then cause his assaulted Truths to shine forth again in their native Lustre, to the effectual discountenancing of pernicious Errors, and attend them more remarkably with his own Power and Energy, so as to cause them to have a greater and a more general Influence upon the Hearts and Lives of Men.

Of all the Efforts of *Scepticism*, I cannot perceive that any have a more fatal Tendency than these two: The weakning the Authority of the *Holy Scriptures*, and the impairing the Credit of the *Ministry* as an Office of *Divine Appointment* in the Church. Let the *Scriptures* once lose their Authority, and the *Ministry* its Credit, and Religion will soon become one of the most wild and loose, most uncertain and precarious things in the World. It therefore becomes us to be peculiarly careful to be well establish'd in these two Truths; That the *Scripture* is of God's inspiring, and the Office of

the *Ministry* of his appointing. Having endeavour'd to clear the former in the foregoing Sermons, I thought it might be of use to add a single Discourse concerning the latter, hoping that the giving you a comprehensive View of it, may with some Advantage contribute to your Conviction and Establishment.

I take my rise from this Passage of the Apostle, in which he gives us Assurance that our Saviour did not quite leave his Church, when he withdrew his bodily Presence from it; but was no sooner out of sight, and receiv'd into his Glory, than he *gave Gifts unto Men*; distributed such *Gifts* as were design'd to be standing Marks of his Love, and Evidences that his Church was not abandon'd his Care. The *Gifts* which he gave were Ministers of several sorts, who were given to serve very great and excellent Purposes. So that the *Ministry* in the Church was no Humane Invention at the first: it did not start up of it self; but was a *Gift* or Present of Christ unto it, highly to be valu'd, and of considerable Use: Otherwise it had never been represented by the Apostle as the Fruit of our Lord's Ascension to Glory. But then it is to be observ'd, that he did not give one Rank of Ministers only to his Church, but several; and none of them without need.

He gave some Apostles. They were to have the Care of all the Churches upon them; to preach the Gospel every where; to attest our Saviour's Resurrection; to confirm their Doctrine by Miracles; and to fix particular Churches, where they gain'd a sufficient Number of Converts, and settle them in that Order, that was appointed by him from whom they receiv'd

ceiv'd their Commission. *And some Prophets* : They had a special Gift of interpreting the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and explaining their Reference to the Dispensation of the New ; and also of foretelling things to come : and in these respects, we find there is frequent mention made of them in our Sacred Records. *And some Evangelists* : who were to be Companions of the Apostles, in their Travels and Labours, and to supply their place upon their absence, and to plant and settle Churches according to the Directions receiv'd from them ; of which we have a Specimen in the Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, who were *Evangelists* by Office. *And some Pastors and Teachers* ; who were to manage, instruct, and inspect particular Societies of Christians, according to the Rule of the Gospel. Some have taken pains to assign a difference between *Pastors* and *Teachers*, but I shan't enquire into the Grounds of it. It suffices to my Purpose to observe, that over and above *Apostles*, *Prophets*, and *Evangelists*, who were general and unfix'd Church-Officers, our Lord also appointed some to take care of particular Flocks that were committed to them ; and made it their Duty to feed them with the Word, and keep up a Gospel-Order among them ; to tend them with Diligence, and take pains to reduce them when wandring, comfort them when drooping, preserve them from Seducers, instruct them in the whole Compass of their Duty and the Grounds of it, and lead them in Paths of Righteousness ; and in a word, manage themselves amongst them in such a manner, as that they might both *save themselves and those that heard them*.

All these several sorts of Ministers were given by our Lord for the Good of his Church. The Church and they can have no opposite Interests to interfere, if the Scripture-Rule be but conform'd to. As any of these Ministers Col. 4. 17. were to blame, if they did not *take heed to the Ministry which they receiv'd of the Lord, that they fulfill'd it*; so was the Christian Church also much to blame, if in the Discharge of their several Duties, they did not regard them and submit to them. The Body of Christian People were to have the Benefit of the Ministrations of these several Officers which our Lord fix'd in his Church, and yet they were properly to be his Officers still, and to *receive their Ministry, either immediately or mediately of the Lord*. They were all in common appointed, *for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ*; for the settling of the Church, the bringing in of Converts, and the training up of Souls for Heaven.

It deserves a Remark, that tho' our Apostle is here reckoning up the several Officers fix'd by our Lord in his Church, he yet makes not the least mention either of the Pope of *Rome* or his Hierarchy. This is the rather to be noted, because in the very Verse next after my Text, *Unity* is mention'd as one Great Design of the appointing of the several Officers enumerated. Were the Pope, as he is represented by his Admirers, the Centre of Unity, 'twould be altogether unaccountable, and such an Omission as would be inexcusable, that no notice at all should be taken of him here, where it was so proper and so necessary for the Church to have been directed to pay him the due Respect. But not

not dilating upon that, I leave those whose whole Hierarchy sadly shakes, as to its Divine Institution, because there is not the least notice here taken of it, to account for the Omission at their leisure.

Nor shall I stay to manage a Debate with those who zealously contend that the *Apostles* and *Evangelists*, who were superior Officers, were, as such, to have Successors in the Church, and so be perpetual. I shall only say, that I cannot apprehend that the Warmth of some upon that Head, has done any great Service to the Office of the Ministry in the general. For when the Proof which they alledge for the Perpetuity of those superior Officers, has upon search been found defective, (or at least apprehended so to be) I doubt it has prov'd no small Temptation to some to think that the whole *Ministry* might as well be spar'd; and that *Pastors* and *Teachers* were no more design'd for Continuance, than those Officers who in a little time ceas'd.

But it is the last Order of Ministers that my Text mentions that I shall confine my self to. I shall consider *Pastors* and *Teachers* as given by Christ to his Church, to serve the Great and Good Purposes here particularly mentioned. He gave their Office to his Church for its standing Benefit. He gave those whom he put into that Office the Gifts and Graces that were necessary for the discharging it. For tho' Men may give Persons to officiate in the Church, who are unqualify'd for Work, yet Christ never gives, never calls any whom he has not qualify'd. He gave the Pastoral Office to his Church as a Benefit, which he intended not to withdraw, till the Consummation of

Ages. This is a Grant was not design'd to be revok'd. That my Discourse on this matter may be the more clear and Methodical, I shall,

- I. Premise a few things to prevent Mistakes.
- II. Give you such Proof of the Divine Institution of the Ministerial Office, as may and I think ought to satisfy a sober Enquirer.
- III. I shall suggest something by way of Answer, to the most common, and most plausible Cavils and Objections. And,
- IV. Conclude with a suitable Application.

I. I begin with premising a few things, which I therefore lay down, that I may prevent Mistakes, as to the Point asserted, and usher in the Proof to be propos'd with some Advantage. They fall under these six Heads.

1. I take it for granted, that the Notification of the Will of Christ, who is the Great Lawgiver of his Church, is sufficient Evidence in such a Case as this; and if that be but produc'd, the Point is gain'd. Should it be question'd whether or no the Office of Constable be legally requisite in the several Parts of this Kingdom, in order to the keeping of the publick Peace and Quiet, it sufficiently determines the Matter, if an Act of Parliament be produc'd, in which there either is an Appointment of that Office, or such Regulations fix'd, as plainly imply and suppose it. The Reason why this must be allow'd to be a sufficient Proof in such a Case, is because such an Act of Parliament discovers the Will of our Lawgivers, who have the sole Right to order such Matters. And there is as much Reason

to the full, that the producing a Signification of the Will of Christ, should be allow'd a Proof as to an Office in his Church: For I think it cannot be deny'd by any, that he hath as great a Power in the *Church*, as Civil Rulers have in the *State*.

2. I also take it for granted, that if I produce Passages out of the New Testament, which either directly assert that the *Ministerial Office* is of Divine Appointment, or lay down that from whence it follows by necessary Consequence, I prove a sufficient Signification of the Will of Christ, who is the Great Lawgiver of his Church. As it is not necessary in every such Case as that foremention'd, where an Act of Parliament is the proper Proof, that a Man should take pains to prove that the Body of our Statutes out of which an Act is produc'd, is genuine and not forg'd; so neither is it in this Case necessary to run back to prove that the Scriptures are really the Word of God, and the Signification of the Mind of Christ. I here take that for granted, and argue from it, as supposing it prov'd. And were that but allow'd and heartily believ'd, I can't tell how to suppose that Men of good Sense in other things, could lay stress on such Arguments against the Divine Institution of the *Ministerial* or *Pastoral Office*, as are often alledg'd, and sometimes too with no small boasting.

3. Tho' I confine my self in this Case to *Scriptural Proof*, and that out of the *New Testament* too, as thinking it the properest for a Point of this Nature to be that way decided, yet is there considerable *Rational Proof* in the Case that would bear some stress; and such Proof may be drawn from the *Old Testament*

also, as is far from being contemptible. There is, I say, considerable *Rational Proof* in the Case that would bear some stress. For there's as good *Rational Evidence* to prove the Necessity of a *Ministry* in the Church, as of a *Magistracy* in the State. One great Proof of the Necessity of a *Magistracy* in the State, is fetch'd from the Damage and Mischiefs, the Disorders and Confusions which the want of it would produce. This is generally reckon'd a very strong and cogent Argument, that a *Magistracy* was intended and design'd amongst Mankind by the Great Arbitrer of Providence, whose Kingdom ruleth over all. And if this Argument, which is commonly (and with good Reason) urg'd by Political Writers, will hold, it will be of as much force for a *Ministry* in the Church, as for a *Magistracy* in the State. For it may I think very easily be made appear, that there would not be greater Damage and Mischiefs, or more Disorders and Confusions, for want of a *Magistracy* in the State, than (ordinarily speaking) would arise from the want of a Scriptural *Ministry* in the Church. Besides; tho' I confine my self to the *New Testament* for proof of the Point propos'd, yet might there be such Proof drawn from the *Old Testament* too, as would be far from being contemptible. And that appears thus. The Apostle in his Epistle to the

Hebr. 3. *Hebrews* argues from the Care of *Moses*, to prove the Care of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. *Moses* was but a Servant in the House of God, where our Lord *Jesus Christ* acted as a Son. If he then was faithful to him that appointed him, in all his House, we may conclude it of our Lord *Jesus Christ* much more. If *Moses* made provision for the chief Necessities of the Church

Church in that State which he introduc'd, and fix'd suitable Under-Officers to minister in holy things, we may much more conclude it of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, that he neither would be unfaithful to him that appointed him, nor wanting to his Church in any thing of that kind. 'Tis far from being a thing supposable, that he should fall so far short of *Moses*, as not to provide an Order of Persons to manage Sacred Offices, but leave them to every Man; and so in effect leave it at uncertainty whether they should be perform'd or no. Such sort of Arguments have their weight; and I am far from excluding them as uselefs, when I confine my self to *Scripture-Proof*, and that out of the *New Testament* too: But I must confess I take the Proof that is fetch'd from thence to be most fully decisive; because the New Testament Revelation was most particularly design'd for the Conduct of the Church in that Period of Time, which commenc'd upon our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension. Farther,

4. When I plead for the Divine Institution of the Office of the *Ministry* in the Church of Christ, I would not be understood to plead for any *Legislative* or *Coercive* Power belonging to that Office. I know very well that many have been zealous for the Office of the *Ministry*, who have been as zealous for a Power of *Legislation* and *Jurisdiction* attending it: But the Proof of that I leave to those that assert it. For my part, I know of no Divine Right of Ministers to make Ecclesiastical Laws, nor am I sensible that our Lord's Apostles convey'd any such Right to them, or were authoriz'd and empower'd so to do. It is indeed but fitting that what they propose should be consider'd, jointly
with

with the Reasons they urge. But unless the *ir* Reasons are found to preponderate, I know of no Submission that is due to them, consider'd either separately, or jointly; or any scriptural Warrant they have to enforce Obedience to their *Ecclesiastical Decrees*, by their *Censures*. I should be loath the Office should stand or fall with the Proof of such an Appendage or Attendant as that. All that I assert, and pretend to prove, is this; that there ought to be an Order of Men, separated to Office in the Christian Church, to whom it peculiarly belongs ordinarily to administer the several Ordinances which God hath appointed in it, as they have Call and Opportunity. And yet, tho' I have nothing to say for a *Coercive Power* belonging to Ministers, nor can at any time reckon it a good Sign to find them affect it; yet a *Discretionary Power* as to the management of their own Actions, does and must belong to them; and cannot, I conceive, with any shadow of Reason be deny'd to them as Ministers, any more than to any of the People under their Care, in their more private Capacities. And should the management of this *Discretionary Power* of theirs at any time seem to bear hard on the People, by depriving them of any thing they had a Right to, which is what some object, I think it would be much easier to find prudential means of Relief, than it would be to secure Ministers of any rational Satisfaction in their Service, if such a *Discretionary Power* should not be allow'd them.

5. When I plead for the Office of the *Ministry*, as of Divine Institution, I suppose the *Rights* of the People to *choose* and determine, who

who shall officiate as Ministers amongst them. This is a *Right* of the *Christian Church* I am very desirous to have kept inviolable ; being fully perswaded that *impos'd Ministers* cannot be able in a multitude of Cases, to answer the Ends of the sacred *Ministry*. I am not insensible that there are some Pleas that are specious and plausible, with which the Encroachment of those who have intrench'd upon this *Right*, has been defended : And yet I cannot, upon Consideration, but apprehend that the Disorders and Inconveniencies which are that way introduc'd, are to the full as great and pernicious, as it can be pretended those are that are design'd to be this way obviated. But tho' People should universally choose their *Ministers*, yet still the Office would be Divine ; as the *Magistracy* also really would be, even tho' *Magistrates* were universally chosen by the People whom they afterwards govern.

6. And lastly, I shall add, that when I plead for the Office of the *Ministry* in the Church, as of *Divine Appointment*, I am far from supposing the *Being* of the Church to depend upon the *Ministry*, or the Divine Acceptance to depend upon the having *Ministers* of such a particular Form. Where *Ministers* can't be had, I don't imagine but God will accept People, if they do their best, without them ; nor can I suppose that Acceptance with God can depend upon a Formality. All I aim at is, that the keeping up the *Ministry* as an Office, was a Divine Appointment, in order to the well-being of the Church. As for the high flights of some about a *Regular Succession* in the *Ministry*, and the absolute Necessity

cessity of it, or even of any *Ministry* at all, to a foederal Acceptance with God, where the want of it was not from Choice, but Necessity, I desire to keep clear of them. For me 'tis enough, and I think may satisfy any reasonable Persons, that the *Ministry* was a Gift of Christ to his Church, design'd for Continuance, highly to be valued, and of lasting Use. An *Office* that is not to be contemn'd or slighted in any Age, by such as would not be chargeable with despising the Bounty of our Lord Jesus Christ, and breaking in upon his Authority, and bringing Disorders into his Church. These things being premis'd, this is what I am now in the

II. Second place to prove to you from Scripture : Where I shall briefly shew, that the *Ends* of the Ministerial Office are in Scripture distinctly specify'd, the *Extent* of the Office is there bounded, the *Qualifications* requisite for the Office describ'd, *Duties* from the People towards such as are in the Office enjoyn'd, the Persons that should ordinarily *separate* others to that Office, are there pointed out ; the *Subsistence* of Persons in that Office is provided for, and the *Duration* of the Office secur'd : And if all this be but clear'd from the New Testament Records, I cannot conceive that any farther Proof can be needful, that the Office of the *Ministry* was, and is a *Divine Institution*. These things therefore I'll run over in the Order mention'd.

I. The *Ends* of the *Ministry* are distinctly specify'd by our New Testament Revelation. And to clear this, I have no occasion to look any farther than my Text, where we have a three-

threefold End of this Office distinctly mention'd : It being declar'd, that God gave such Officers in his Church, *for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, and for the edifying of the Body of Christ.*

1. *For the perfecting of the Saints* ; that is, the compleating of their Knowledge, which is often the Sense of the word *perfect*, and *perfecting*, in the New Testament. *We*, says the Apostle, *speake Wisdom among them which are perfect* : That is, among such as are fully instructed in the Christian Faith. And in another place, *Leaving*, says he, *the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, let us go on to Perfection* : That is, let us advance to a more compleat Instruction in the Faith, and the Knowledge of Christ. And elsewhere, *Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded* : That is, let it be so with as many of us as are fully instructed. And again, *Teaching every Man in all Wisdom, that we may present every Man perfect in Christ Jesus* : That is, that every Man may at the Great Day be found fully instructed. This then is one End of a Gospel Ministry, that a suitable Superstructure may be rais'd when a good Foundation is once laid, and that the Knowledge of such as make a Christian Profession, may gradually be compleated : And this is an End that will make that Office always necessary.

2. Another End of the Office, is *for the work of the Ministry* : That is, for the ministring in all Holy Offices, and for the administring of all the Ordinances that Christ has appointed, and the making suitable Application to Christians of all Ranks, according to the variety of their Circumstances. And this is what calls for Solitude, Industry, and Application;

and

1 Tim. 4. 15. and requires that Persons should *give themselves wholly to it*. The Ministry is not a Diversion, or an Amusement, but it calls to a great deal of Work, and some of it difficult enough too. 'Tis not an exercising of Dominion, but a Service, and a painful Service; and they that are faithful in it, will find it so. St. Paul

Acts 20. 31. tells us, that he *ceased not to warn every one Night and Day*, as there was occasion. And that is the Work of all Gospel-Ministers. They are to give Warning to all People, as they have Calls and Opportunity; and to deal with them in their own Houses, as well as

v. 28. in the House of God. They are to *take heed to the Flock*. They are to *preach the Word; and be instant in season, and out of season; and reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all Long-suffering*

2 Tim. 4. 2. *and Doctrine*. And they are in *meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves*. And this will be found Work enough for any Man that duly discharges his Duty. He won't need to seek for any other Employment.

3. Another *End* of the Office is, *for the edifying of the Body of Christ*. For the making an Addition to the Church of such as shall be saved; and for the strengthening and improving of such as are already brought in, in Faith and Holiness. For the bringing Persons *in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the Stature of the fullness of Christ: That they may not be Children tossed to and fro with every wind of Doctrine; but may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ; as it is particularly express'd in the Verses that follow the Text*. These *Ends* of the Office are the Reasons why our Lord at all made use of it in his Church:

And

And where the Reason holds, the Institution must hold. If these *Ends* are to be answer'd now as well as heretofore, then the *Office* must continue. Was it not enough for them in the early Days of the Church, to have such extraordinary Officers as *Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists*, with their extraordinary Gifts, but must they also have some *Pastors* by Office, to look to the several Flocks committed to their Charge, as they *that must give an Account*; Heb. 13. and is there not rather a greater Necessity of ^{17.} such *Pastors* now, when those extraordinary Gifts are gone? Very safely, I think, we may conclude, that as long as these *Ends* remain to be answer'd; as long as there are Sinners to be awaken'd and converted, and Saints to be further instructed and perfected; as long as there are Souls to be watch'd over, Sins to be reprov'd, Graces to be compleated, Ordinances of Divine Appointment to be administer'd in worshipping Assemblies, and Truths to be apply'd to Persons privately from House to House; false Doctrines to be confuted, and a Body of Christ to be edify'd, so long it is the Will of Christ that the *Ministry* should be kept up as an *Office* in his Church.

2. As the *Ends* of the *Office* are specify'd, so also the *Extent* of the *Office* is bounded. It is positively declar'd how far it shall go; and to what it shall reach. The New Testament is not confus'd, but clear enough in this respect. You have the *Bounds* of the *Office* plainly fix'd in our Saviour's Commission. Go, says he, and teach, or Disciple all Nations, ^{Mat. 28.} baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the ^{19.} Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. There

Their Work has three Parts. First; they are to *Disciple the Nations*; to make Profelytes of them to the Faith of a Crucify'd Jesus, and thro' him to bring them home to God. They

2 Cor. 5. 19, 20. are to make it known to all, that *God was in Christ reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their Trespasses to them: The word of Reconciliation therefore is committed to them*; and they are to *beseech People in Christ's stead, to be reconcil'd to God*. The second Branch of their Work, is to administer the Sacraments, which our Lord has appointed in his Church. To initiate Persons by Baptism; and afterwards confirm and strengthen them by the Lord's Supper. And the third Branch, is to *teach all things that Christ has commanded*. To inculcate his Commandments, and not add to them, by imposing new Burdens, in making indifferent things necessary. To keep up all his *Ordinances*; and that of *Discipline* among the rest. To take care of a *Succession*; and to manage the Souls committed to their Charge, as those that *must give an Account*. It was for this Work that Christ instituted *Officers* in his Church at first; if therefore the Work continues to be done, 'tis but reasonable to suppose it was intended there should be *Officers* to do it; And those *Officers* are not to cut out Work for themselves, but to take it as it is order'd them, by him that appointed them. If there was reason for *Pastors* to serve such Purposes as these in particular Flocks, even while the *Apostles*, who were general, and unfix'd Church-Officers, were living, there was rather more reason than less for them after their Decease, and from that time to this. The same Law that appoints *Justices of Peace*

Peace in this Kingdom for such and such Work as is assign'd them, in effect appoints that while there is such Work to be done, there should be *Justices* to do it, and at the same time helps to discover whether or no they keep within the proper Bounds of their Office. So that we must either hold, that our Lord needlessly appointed *Ministers* at first for the Work mention'd; or that while it continues needful that this Work should be done, it should be his Intention that there should be *Ministers* to do it; and that while they keep within the Bounds that he has fix'd, they act by his *Authority*. But farther,

3. The *Qualifications* requisite for the *Ministerial Office*, are particularly describ'd to us. Did our Law-givers in this Land intend no more than that every Man should keep the Peace as he could, without obliging any Persons peculiarly to apply themselves to it as their proper Business, our Law would never have particularly limited the *Qualifications* of *Justices*, but would have left it to every Man to have set up for a *Justice* at pleasure, that would or could do it? And had our Blessed Lord intended that every Man should set up for a Dispenser of his Ordinances to his Church at pleasure, he never would have limited it to Persons so qualify'd; never would have requir'd any thing peculiar in those that should have the management of them. Whereas it is easy to observe, that over and above what is requir'd of all Persons, as they are Christians, there are peculiar *Qualifications* requir'd in those that are Dispensers of Gospel-Mysterics. They must be *apt to teach*. They must

be not only *faithful Men*, but *able to teach others*

¹ Tim.

^{3.} 2.

² Tim.

D d

also. 2. 2.

Tit. 1. 9. *also.* They must be able by sound Doctrine both to exhort, and to convince the gain-sayers. They must be able rightly to divide the Word of Truth. 2 Tim. 2. 15. Our Lord's thus appropriating the Work of the Ministry to some, is a plain Evidence that he did not design that it should be common to all at pleasure.

4. Our Lord has also enjoin'd the People certain Duties towards those that act as *Ministers* among them; and this is a plain Argument, that he design'd the Office should be an Inclosure, and not lie open to all in common.

1 Theff. 5. 12, 13. 1 Tim. 5. 17. Heb. 13. 17. The People are to know their Ministers, and esteem them very highly in Love for their Work sake. They are to give them double Honour: That is, an Honour over and above what is due to other Christians. They are to obey them, and submit to them: That is, 'tis their Duty to do so, as far as they urge upon them the Commands of Christ. Should any object, and say, that as far as that goes, Persons are oblig'd to obey and submit to any Fellow-Christians whatsoever; for that they can have no shadow of a Reason to refuse to comply, where the Commands of Christ are urg'd, be it by who it will: I reply, that tho' that is not to be deny'd, yet is there a Reason added by the Apostle, that is peculiar to *Ministers*. People must obey and submit to them when they urge the Commands of Christ, because they watch for their Souls, as they that must give an Account. People must submit to them, as to Officers that Christ has fix'd in his House; and they must therefore obey and submit to them, that they may give up their Account with Joy, and not with Grief; which would be unprofitable for any People: And this is a Consideration that has not the same

same Force in the case of all Fellow-Christians, as it has with respect to Ministers : And being taught in the Word, they must also communicate to him that teacheth them in all good things. Now, as that Law of the Land that requires People to submit to Justices of the Peace, and directs them in their Carriage towards them, is a Proof of their Office, so is the Respect and Regard that is requir'd to Ministers in the New Testament, a Proof that the Ministry is an Office. Again,

5. The Persons that should ordinarily separate others to Ministerial Service, are also pointed out in Scripture. St. Paul charges Timothy, that as to the things that he had heard of him among many Witnesses, he should commit the same to faithful Men : Which naturally leads to this Thought ; that the Gospel-Doctrine ought to be committed as a Trust from Ministers to Ministers successively. And if we consult our sacred Records, we shall find that none separated others to Ministerial Service, but such as were themselves engag'd in the same Service : Which seems to be a Signification of the Mind of Christ, that such as they (who may be reasonably conceiv'd to be the most competent Judges of the Qualifications requisite) should ordinarily be the Persons that should set others apart to the same Work and Service *. Which is as good an Argument of an Office in the Church, as a solemn Investiture is of an Office in the State.

6. The Subsistence of Persons in this Service is provided for. Many Hints are interspers'd in the New Testament about this ; and in one place there is almost a whole Chapter spent upon this Head. Don't you know, says the Apostle, 1 Cor. 9. from v. 7. to 12.

Apostle, that they which minister about Holy things, live of the Temple? And they which wait at the Altar, are Partakers with the Altar? He could not tell how to suppose them ignorant of this. And then he adds, *Even so hath the Lord ordain'd, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.* And this is as good an Argument that the *Ministry* is intended for a standing Office in the Church, as a fix'd Salary is, with reference to any civil Place in the State.

1 Tim.
6. 14.

7. The Duration of this Work and Service in the Church is secur'd. The Apostle charges Timothy the Evangelist, to keep the Commandment given in that Epistle, *without Rebuke, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The Commandment given had several Parts and Branches. Among the rest, it takes in the setting others apart to the *Ministry*, who were qualify'd as had been before directed. For him personally to keep this Commandment until the time of our Lord's appearing, was impossible. But he and his Successors together might do it. And whether it was to be done by him or others, if it must be done till then, 'tis plain that till then the Office must last in the Church. And there is a Promise that it should do so in the very last words of the Gospel by St. Matthew. Our Lord makes this Declaration: *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the World.* That is, with you Teaching and Baptizing; with you acting in pursuit of my Commission: with you attending the Work and Service unto which I have call'd you: and if so, to the end of the World; it must be with you and your Successors in that Office.

Many Endeavours have been us'd to turn the
Sense

Sense of that Promise another way. Some are mighty zealous for this Sense ; that Christ would be with them to the end of that Age : And so they confine it to the Apostles in Person. But the Learned *Stillington* in his *Irenicum*, has fully shewn the Weakness and Absurdity of that Gloss. *To the end of the World*, in that very Evangelist, signifies to the time of the general Judgment. 'Tis to be taken in that Sense no less than three several times in one Chapter. And so taken, it ^{Mat. 13.} was a very comfortable Promise both to them, ^{39, 40, 49.} and such as came after them. But, if he would be with them only to the end of that Age, that is, till the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the *Jewish* State, it would have been but a sorry Comfort to the Apostles : They'd have lost his Presence then, when they might rationally have expected most of it. Nay, it was not true in Fact ; for he was with them after *Jerusalem* was destroy'd, as much, and as really as he was before.

And should any say, that that Promise is made to the *Church* in general, without any regard to *Ministers*, 'tis desir'd it should be remembred, that they were Persons that were in the sacred *Ministry* to whom the Promise was directly made ; and therefore tho' the whole *Church* be taken in in the Promise, yet *Ministers* can't be excluded. However, let us suppose the Promise to be made to the whole *Christian Church*, and that our Lord promis'd them, that he would be *with them always to the end of the World*, it must be while they kept close to him in his *Ordinances*, and took care of his *Appointments* : And so it takes in *Ministers* as well as *People* ; because they by that very *Commission* were

to keep those *Ordinances* of Christ on foot, in which his *Presence* with his Church is promis'd. Let but all this be put together, and I can't conceive further Evidence of the *Ministerial Office*, as fix'd in the Christian Church, needful to any that are willing to be satisfy'd ; any that have not a Turn to serve by opposing it. I now go on,

III. In the third place, to speak something in Answer to the *Cavils* and *Objections* of the Enemies of the *ministerial Office*, or that have a mean Opinion of it, which in our Days takes in no small number of Persons. Little flirts of Wit in this Case usually pass for Arguments, or Answers to Arguments, which is far from being reasonable. However, I'll take what has been offer'd, that appears most specious and plausible, and endeavour not to deprive the *Objections* started, either of the Beauty, or the Strength that is boasted of. And,

I. 'Tis said, 'tis but to little purpose to talk of the Divine Institution of the *Office* of *Ministers*, and of their having their Commission from God, since 'tis plain, not only that without the Consent of the People they can have nothing to do with them, but also, that they have no other Power, than what they who choose them to minister among them in Holy things, are pleas'd to intrust them with; and that all their Power depends entirely on the Consent of the Parties concern'd. In return to which Suggestion, I freely grant, that the Concern of *Ministers* is properly with Volunteers; nor can I see with what Heart or Prospect they can in any Case pretend to officiate among a People

ple without their Consent: And yet, as it is not deny'd but that where *Magistrates* are chosen by the People, and make an Agreement with them as to the Measures they'll pursue, their *Office* is still Divine; so neither can the same thing hinder the *Office* of the *Ministry* from being Divine, and from God. If the one may be so, the other may be so too, notwithstanding any Agreement that may be made either in one Case, or in the other, as to any particular Circumstances or Methods of Procedure. And besides; both in the Case of *Magistrates* and *Ministers*, there is a Power essentially belonging to the *Office* that is from God, of which no Agreements can justly deprive Men. When People choose any one to be their *Minister*, he must have the Power that God has annex'd to his *Office* in Scripture. The People must not pretend to drop that, if they'd keep to their Rule. As they cannot give him more Power than God gives, so he must not take less.

2. 'Tis objected, They that have pretended to act in the *Ministry* as Officers of Christ, from Age to Age, have been a parcel of intriguing, designing Men. They have divided the Church into Parties. They have been for encroaching on the Power of Princes, and invading the Civil Rights of Mankind. They have naturally been in Love with Power, and had their holy Artifices to acquire and enlarge it beyond all Bounds. They have been spiritual Make-baits, Barters, *Beautifews*, and Incendiaries. They have been vain, giddy, and insolent; perpetually quarrelling one with another; and doing more Mischief than Good in the Church: And that therefore it is now

fit to give things another turn, and see whether making Ministers the *Officers of the People* won't mend the matter. To which 'tis answer'd, that if by *Officers of the People*, be meant
 2 Cor. 4. their *Servants for Jesus sake*, that we have been
 5. from our first Institution; and the Apostle very plainly declares as much; But if it be thereby intended, that the *Commission* from Christ should be quitted and given up, that so the Fancies of the People may become the Standard of sacred Ministrations, there we must beg Pardon: We are afraid of complying, lest under pretence of pleasing the People, we highly affront their Lord and ours; and lest under pretence of securing the *Rights of the Christian Church*, we betray its Purity, and introduce Confusion. That some that have been Ministers have been very fond of Power, and us'd unbecoming Artifices to acquire and enlarge it, is not to be deny'd: But still 'tis plain that they that have justly born this Character, have forgotten the strict Charge of their Master; who upon occasion of a Motion made by two of his Disciples for some peculiar Advancement above the rest, address'd himself to them all in these Words: *Ye*
 Mat. 20. know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Do-
 25, 26, 27. minion over them, and they that are great exercise Authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister: And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant. And where any that have officiated as Ministers in the Church have been *Incendiaries*, they have acted directly contrary to our Lord's Order, who told them that by this should all Men know that they were his Disciples, if they had Love one to another

ther. This is what they must answer for. In such things let them be restrain'd. I have not the least Word to say in vindication of any such Instances of Mismanagement. If a thing be in it self really faulty, and if it agrees not with the Gospel-Rule, I for my part must freely own, that instead of conceiving it to be at all less, I look upon it as rather more faulty in *Ministers* than in other Persons. And yet I can't see how their pretending to act in the Ministry as Officers of *Christ*, has tended to make them ever the more guilty of such Faults as those mention'd, than they would have been otherwise; when without going directly contrary to his express Orders in whose Name they profess to act, they could not have run into those Faults; and could never have been guilty of any such Excesses as those mention'd, had they but consider'd as they ought that they had no Authority but from *Christ*; and that they were limited by him, and accountable to him. But this is certain, that tho' some, and too many, have been guilty of such Faults as the Objection dilates on, yet it has not been so with all. There have been some engag'd in the very same Service, that have been bright Examples of the contrary Virtues: I should have been glad that it had been so with the Generality from one Age to another. But suppose it otherwise, I can't see how a just Argument can be drawn from thence to answer the Purpose intended. I'm sure such Arguing would not be allow'd to have any thing in it in other Cases. 'Tis too evident to be deny'd, that the Body of Christians has not, generally speaking, answer'd the Demands of their Holy Profession: But is that an Argument that Christianity

stianity was not from God? We were in a wretched Case if it were. It must indeed be own'd, that the bad Lives of Ministers has very much prejudiced many against Religion. When Men have observ'd that they that have been positive in affirming the Truth of the Doctrines they taught, have by their unsuitable Lives shewn that they did not themselves believe them, it hath prov'd a strong Temptation to Infidelity. And yet the Faults of Ministers, let them be ever so great, is not a just Proof that their Office is not Divine. If personal Faults would prove that an Office was not from God, *Magistracy* (which to be true is equally liable to the same Objection) must have been long ago discarded. And therefore they that argue at this rate had need take heed lest they run too far, and thrust a *Magistracy* out of the World, as well as a *Ministry* out of the Church. 'Tis farther pleaded,

3. That there's no need in the World of an *Order of Ministers*, or a Set of Men in Office in the Church: For that, wheresoever two or three are met together in the Name of Christ, they have a Promise of his being with them, whether with or without a *Minister*. To which 'tis answer'd, that there's no Reason indeed to doubt but that serious Christians may hope for the Presence of their Saviour, whenssoever they address themselves to him with true Seriousness and Devotion, whatsoever be the Time, or Place, or Company: But that they would have like reason to expect his Presence, if they met for publick Ordinances in contempt of his *Ministers*, when they might easily have them, as they might have, if they were under their Conduct, won't be easily prov'd.

But

But they that have the Art of turning any Washing of the Face into a Sacred Baptism, or any civil Entertainment into an Holy Banquet ; nay that can make a Bit of Bread and a Glass of Wine in a Club at a Tavern, that Commemoration of the Body and Blood of Christ that the Gospel enjoins, shew but very little Sense of the Importance of the Presence of their Saviour with them ; nor are very likely, till their Temper is alter'd, to reach it, either with a *Minister* or without one.

4. 'Tis also said, that any one that has common Sense may be able to teach others the plain Truths and Duties of Religion, which are soon and easily learnt, and don't need that such a Pother and Stir should be made about them : and that the keeping up an *Office* for this purpose, only tempts Men to shew their Skill in making easy things hard, and plain things mysterious, on purpose to heighten Veneration. But they that are of this Mind, widely differ from *St. Paul*, who speaking of the Work that lies upon Ministers, cries out, *Who is sufficient for these things?* Their Cry in 2 Cor. 16. the mean time is directly opposite, when they say, *Who is not sufficient?* So that if he was in the right in making so much, of that of which they make so little, they expose themselves, while they seek to expose us. And if they so widely differ from him, we need not wonder they differ from us, who desire to take our Notions from him, who was one that had a considerable hand in settling Christianity in the World. As for the making easy things hard, and plain things mysterious, tho' I won't say all are innocent, yet 'tis enough if the Guilty are put to answer. However *St. Peter* hints

hints an End and Design of the Office, for which there will always be occasion. I, says
 2 Pet. 1. he, *will not be negligent to put you always in re-*
 12. *membrance of these things, tho' ye know them, and*
be established in the present Truth. And if People
 need Remembrancers, need to be excited and
 warn'd ; then the Easiness of the Work of *Min-*
isters in teaching, is no just Argument that
 the Office is not from God. Again,

5. 'Tis farther urg'd, that all the Lord's
 People are now *Priests* : and that the only
 Christian Sacrifices are Prayers, Praises, and
 Thanksgivings, which any one in the Con-
 gregation may offer as well as a *Minister*. I
 answer ; This is a Repetition of the Plea of
Korah, who many Ages ago, in opposition to
Moses and *Aaron*, who acted as Officers of God's
 Appointment, cry'd out to them, *Ye take too*
 Numb. *much upon you, seeing all the Congregation are holy,*
 16. 3. *every one of them, and the Lord is among them :*
wherefore then lift you up your selves above the
Congregation of the Lord ? But the Issue of such
 Carriage in their Case, might very well dis-
 courage such as consider'd it, from an Imita-
 tion. 'Tis true the dismal Punishment of *Korah*
 and his Accomplices has been often urg'd to
 strike a Terror where there was not the least
 Occasion for it ; but it does not therefore fol-
 low that it does not deserve serious Considera-
 tion in this Case, which is truly parallel. It
 cannot be deny'd but that the whole Body of
 Believers are now under the New Testament
 1 Pet. 2. 9. *made a Royal Priesthood ;* and we have it ex-
 pressly declar'd that Christ has made all his real
 Rev. 1. 15. *Servants, Kings and Priests unto God :* But it
 does not therefore follow that all are call'd to
 publick Ministrations in the Church, for which
 all

all are far from being qualify'd. But if this way of arguing is good, and pursu'd, it will take away *Magistracy* as well as a *Ministry* from among us. For if our Lord's having made all his People *Priests* is a sufficient Argument there should be no *Ministers*, then is his having made them all *Kings*, a good Argument also, that there should be no *Magistrates*.

6. 'Tis also objected, that if the Ministering in Holy things belongs only to an Order of Men, then it is an Invasion of the Office, for others at any time to pretend to meddle in it, tho' the Case were ever so pressing. Then it would be no less than Sacrilege in others to preach the Gospel to Heathens, or to form them into a Church: nay it would be a Sin in Infidels to encourage such sacrilegious Attempts by being converted by them. Then *Fruventius*, and other private Christians did ill to pretend to preach in Pagan Countries, where they travel'd, before they were ordain'd to the Office, while yet (such is the Force of Truth) they have generally been commended. I answer, That *Fruventius* and others of the same Stamp undoubtedly did exceeding well, in communicating the Knowledge of Heavenly Truth, to such as had otherwise continu'd in Ignorance; they deserve to be commended, and their doing otherwise had been blameable: But that's no more an Argument that God has not appointed *Ministers*, than the representing every one that is among a People that as yet have no Civil Government, as oblig'd to the utmost of his Power to defend the Innocent, right the Injur'd, and relieve the Oppress'd, is an Argument that God hath not appointed *Magistrates*. God will have *Mercy and not Sacrifice*.

crifice. And extraordinary Cases are no just Objection against a stated Order, under the New Testament any more than under the Old.

Finally 'tis objected, that 'tis declar'd by the Prophet, that in Gospel-times, they should *no*
 Jer. 31. 34. *more teach every Man his Neighbour, and every*
Man his Brother : and by the Apostle, that *Be-*
 1 Joh. 2. *lievers had an Unction from the Holy one, and knew*
 20; 27. *all things, and needed not that any Man should*
teach them ; which it's said seems to argue Ministerial Teaching to be now wholly needless. I answer ; such Passages of Scripture as these are to be understood comparatively ; just in the same manner as we are to understand that Declaration of God just now mention'd, that he would have *Mercy and not Sacrifice.* Absolutely speaking, it could not be said that God was so in love with *Mercy,* that he would not have *Sacrifice ;* for he at that time positively insisted upon *Sacrifices,* and the Neglect of them had been a great Sin, and punishable as such : but he was rather for *Mercy* than *Sacrifice,* and did not reckon Acts of *Sacrificing* fit to be compar'd with sincere Works of *Mercy.* So also when it is intimated that in the time of the Gospel, the Saints should be *all taught of God,* and not need others to teach them, we cannot understand it absolutely, without a gross Misrepresentation. And that admits of easy Proof ; because when the Saints were *taught of God* in the most remarkable manner, they yet had an external Ministry, and it was by that that they were taught. And when their *Unction from the Holy One* was most fragrant, they yet had *Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers ;* and to be sure they could not be needless or useless. Besides, if we take such Passages

ges as those mention'd absolutely, and understand them rigorously according to the Letter, we shall not only discard all Ministerial Instruction, but all brotherly Admonitions too; because it is said, that *they should teach no more every Man his Neighbour, and every Man his Brother, saying, Know the Lord*: and this I suppose will be own'd to be a carrying the matter too far. That therefore that is hereby meant is this, that Knowledge should so abound under the Gospel-Dispensation, that there should be near upon as great a Difference between the Body of Believers under the Old Testament, and under the New, as between those that needed Teachers, and those that needed them not: And that they should not need such Teaching as those did, that had not such a confirming Evidence and Witness of the *Holy Spirit* as they were favour'd with.

It only remains then, that I add something of a suitable Application. And,

1. This gives an Occasion to deal freely with such as reckon themselves advanc'd above a standing *Ministry*, and Stated *Ordinances*. Our Lord Jesus Christ has out of pure Tenderness and Love bestow'd a very valuable *Gift* on his Church, but they make light of it. They need not the help of *Ministers*. They can teach them nothing. And therefore to what purpose (say they) is it that we should attend upon them? I'm afraid, upon a narrow search, such People would be found Ignorant both of the intent of the *Ministry*, and of the State of their own Case. I'll suppose for once, that you are so well instructed in the whole Compass both of Truth and Duty, as that *Ministers* could not be capable of making any
Addi-

Addition to you, or helping you to any farther Light; I'll suppose this, for Argument sake, tho' I'm afraid it is not the Case of very many; yet may not your Affections be excited and quickned, your Corruptions weaken'd, and your good Inclinations strengthen'd and confirm'd? May it not be an Advantage to you to be put in mind of such things as you are already acquainted with, but too apt to forget, when you should be most influenc'd by them? May not this be particularly advantageous to you, in an Hour of Temptation, or under Spiritual Trouble, when the Evil one will labour most industriously to prevent your Remembrance, or your Application of those things that might be of the greatest Use? And may you not by a variety of suitable Motives, according to Seasons and Circumstances, be stir'd up to the diligent Discharge of those Duties that are better known than they are practis'd by you? Can your Souls thrive and prosper in Grace if you have not the Presence of God with you? And is that as much to be expected while you slight and neglect his Institutions, as while you are Serious and Diligent, and Conscientious in your Attendance upon them? Be wise therefore; and conclude that God knew you better than you knew your selves, when out of meer Compassion and Kindness to you, he fix'd a *Ministry* in his Church.

2. Since our Blessed Lord Jesus took *Pastors* and *Teachers* into a part of the same Ministry with the Apostles, I think we may very justly conclude, that as far as their Ministry is the same with theirs, and as far as they keep close to the Rule given them for their Management, they

they may upon Good Grounds apply to themselves the Promises and Declarations, that were immediately address'd to the Apostles themselves. Such as that, *He that receiveth* Mat. 10.
you, receiveth me; and that, *He that despiseth* 4^o.
you, despiseth me: And that, *He that despiseth*, Luke 10.
despiseth not Man but God. As far as the Office 1^o.
is the same, and the Rule adher'd to, such an 4. 8.
Application is Justifiable: Which is what I reckon very well deserves the Consideration of those who often take so much Liberty in this Case of running out in a way of Banter and Contempt. We have some that can by no means bear that *Ministers* in our Times should pretend to pass for the *Embassadors of Christ*. That they say belong'd to the Apostles only, and can't be apply'd to Ordinary Ministers. They are at the best only Commentators, Note-makers, or Sermon-makers. They will have it to be arrogant Assuming, for them to apply those Texts to themselves, which belong only to the *Embassadors of God*. And in this Case taking the New Testament for our Standard, I'm free that any unprejudic'd Person should judge between them and us. When *St. Paul* says of himself and his Fellow Labourers, *we are Embassadors for Christ*, he does not speak with a reference to any thing that was peculiarly Apostolical, or any thing of which ordinary Ministers were incapable: The contrary is very plain from the Text it self. *He*, says the Apostle, *hath given to us the Ministry of* 2 Cor. 5.
Reconciliation: He hath committed unto us the 18, 19, 20.
Word of Reconciliation. Now then we are *Embassadors for Christ*, as tho' God did beseech you by us, we pray you in *Christ's* stead, be ye reconcil'd to God. And if *St. Paul* therefore was the *Em-*

bassador of Christ, because he had the *Word of Reconciliation* given or committed to him, then all true *Ministers* of the Gospel are *Embassadors of Christ*, for the same Reason, because they have the *Word of Reconciliation* given to them as really and truly as he, tho' not in the same extraordinary manner: They bring the same Message as he did, and they bring it by Deputation too, as well as he; and therefore they are still his *Embassadors* by whom they are deputed. The Liberty that some take to despise their Pulpit-Speeches, as they call them, need not disturb them, as long as God is pleas'd often to make use of them as the Means of Salvation. The Contempt that is poured upon them, when they are represented as falsely pretending a Commission from Heaven to be the *Embassadors of God to Mankind*, redounds to him that sends them, to *pray Sinners in Christ's stead to be reconcil'd to God*. Again,

3. Since a *Ministry* was appointed by Christ in his Church, to carry on his Work among them, I think we cannot well wonder that the Devil should oppose and traduce such as faithfully officiate in it, and stir Men up to slight them, and do what they can to obstruct their Usefulness. We have the less reason to wonder at any thing of this nature, when we observe and remember the Treatment which was met with by those who were call'd of God to officiate under the Old Testament. Tho' the Ministry that then was, was generally acknowledg'd to be of Divine Institution, yet even then the carnal part of the World oppos'd it as a superfluous humane Invention; and such as were employ'd in it were in their several Generations vilify'd, and aspers'd as a Society of Men

Men that rather sought some worldly personal carnal Interest, than the building up the Kingdom of God. And afterwards the Holy Apostles of our Blessed Lord, of whom the World was not thought worthy, were despis'd and rejected of Men, and accounted the *Scum and Offscouring of all things*. We need not wonder at like Treatment in our Times. Whosoever the Instruments of it be, we need not doubt but it is originally of the Evil one, who knows very well, that if the Office of the Ministry keeps its Credit, his Kingdom must fall before it. We that are *Ministers* upon this account deserve the Pity of those amongst whom we officiate. For a Man to take pains in a severe Course of Study for several Year, in order to the qualifying himself for Service in the Church, and to be at the Expence of some Hundreds of Pounds, which would have been a tolerable Foundation to have begun the World upon in a Secular way, and after all to be slighted and fleer'd at, and represented as unworthy of any Regard, and unfit for Conversation, is very heartless. If humane Nature be consider'd, this will appear to be a very great Discouragement. And they that duly consider it, will exercise Tenderness toward their *Ministers*, instead of insulting them.

4. From the Premises it plainly appears that the *Ministry* ought to be esteem'd a very great Blessing. What would the Church ordinarily have done without it? How could Divine Institutions have been so well kept up? How could the various Circumstances of particular Christians have been suited? How could Error have been guarded against, and Designs of the Evil one against Peace and Truth in the

Church have been obviated, if there had been no *Ministry*? How could the Saints have been perfected, Ministerial Work have been discharg'd, and the Body of Christ edify'd without it? If you once come to have mean thoughts of the *Ministry*, you are never like to profit by it. Watch therefore carefully against that, as a dangerous Snare of the Devil.

5. Pity those that have not the Blessing of Gospel-*Ministers* among them. And out of Pity, be mov'd for them. This is the Case of many poor Creatures in the Kingdom of *France*. They once had learned, and able, and faithful *Ministers* among them, and flourishing Churches too: But now 'tis otherwise. This is also the Case of the poor Remains of the Protestants in *Hungary* and *Bobemia*, and some other Parts. All such are not to be condemn'd as incapable of reaching the Mercy of God, for want of *Ministers* to assist them, when they gladly would have them, did they know but how. But instead of censuring, you should pity them, that their solemn Assemblies mourn; and that when a few of them can at any time get together, they can only read and pray, without the help of *Ministers* to go before them, and direct them, and impress Divine Truths upon them, and apply the Seals of the Covenant to them. It would become us to beg of God, that he will make up all their Disadvantages to them, with the special, powerful, and peculiar Presence of his Grace, and open a way for the sending faithful Labourers again into such parts of his Harvest, that so serious Religion may come to flourish among them as much, or more than ever.

6. We ought all in our Places, to be concern'd for the Credit of a truly Gospel-Ministry. Plead for it Christians, when you find it run down, which in our Days is very common among Men of all Ranks. Do what you can to support this Office, as knowing that it comes from Christ, and that the *Credit of Religion* will stand or fall with it. The poorest Mechanick that is ordinarily to be met with, can in our times very freely tell you, that it never was well with the World since Ministers were so much regarded; and that things will never be right till they are discarded. And shall any that have a value for Religion, sit by and hear such things as these contentedly, and without Concern? 'Tis but a bad Symptom if it should be so. Can any of you fall in with Discourse of this sort? 'Twere certainly better, and more consistent, to quit all Pretence to Religion at once. He could have little Respect for her Majesty, that could hear her Faithful Ministry traduc'd, and discover no Resentment. And he can have but little Love to Christ in his Heart, that can hear his *Ministers* as such, and on the account of their Character, contemn'd and vilify'd, banter'd and abus'd. Beware of this, as you would not shew that you have little or nothing of Christians but the Name.

7. Take heed of being prejudic'd against the Office of the Ministry by the personal Failings of any that are in it. 'Tis the way of some, that if they know a Man in Black, as they often call a *Minister*, in a way of Contempt, guilty of any Misdemeanors, they presently cry, they are all alike; and they'll run them down without Mercy. But is this

rea-

reasonable? 'Tis plain that some Gentlemen are meer Rakes; and some Tradesmen are errand Knaves; but does it therefore follow that they are all so? And some *Magistrates* set themselves against the publick Good, which they ought to study to promote: But does it therefore follow that 'tis so with all? Why then should the *Office* of the *Ministry* suffer for the Faults of particular Persons?

8. Beware of despising any that are qualify'd for *Ministerial* Service, and faithful in it. Tho' you may have a particular Value for any that you have profited by, yet you should take heed of discouraging, and despising any that are qualify'd and faithful. Don't grieve and dishearten them; but value them for the sake of their *Office*.

9. When you attend upon Gospel-Ordinances, don't attend upon Men, but God; and look to Christ, who gave his Ministers to his Church. Be assur'd, that tho' a *Paul* should plant, or an *Apollos* water, yet God alone can give the Increase. Expect therefore more from him, and less from Men. Make Conscience of praying heartily to God for his special Blessing on those Ministerial Labours which you ordinarily attend upon; and take heed of provoking him to blast them to you, either by your Contempt, or by your Negligence and Carelessness.

And after all, I know not how to conclude better than with those words of the Apostle,

Heb. 13. Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit
 17. your selves; for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give Account: That they do it with Joy, and not with Grief, for that is unprofitable for you.

F I N I S.

This Author hath already Publish'd,

A Funeral Sermon preach'd at the Interment of Mr. *Samuel Stephens*, for some time employ'd in the Work of the Ministry in this City. *Quarto*. 1694.

A practical Discourse concerning Vows, with a special Reference to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. *Octavo*. 1694. Which has been since Reprinted in a smaller Volume.

A Funeral Sermon preach'd upon Occasion of the Decease of the eminently Pious Mrs. *Elizabeth Williams*, late Wife of the Reverend Mr. *Daniel Williams*, with some Account of her exemplary Character. *Oct*. 1698.

A Sermon to the Societies for Reformation of Manners in London and Middlesex. *Twelves*. 1699.

An Abridgement of Mr. *Baxter's* Life, with a Continuation; and an Historical Account of the Ministers that were ejected for *Non-conformity*, in 1662.

A Defence of *Moderate Non-conformity*, in three Parts. *Octavo*.

Divine Mercy exalted, or Free Grace in its Glory. A Sermon on *Rom. 9. 16*. Preach'd at the Merchants Lecture at *Salters-Hall*, *Octob.* 20. 1702.

A Caveat against New Prophets: In two Sermons at the Merchants Lecture at *Salters-Hall*, on *Jan.* the 6th, and *Jan.* the 20th. 170⁷/₈.

With a single Sheet in Answer to Sir *Richard Bulkeley's* Remarks on the same.

A Funeral Sermon, occasion'd by the sudden Death of the Reverend Mr. *Matthew Sylvester*, preach'd at his Meeting-House in *Black-Fryars*, on *Feb.* the 1st, 1707.

A Funèral Sermon, occasion'd by the much lamented Death of Mrs. *Frances Lewis*, Wife of *Thomas Lewis*, Esq; who departed this Life on *February* the 9th, 1707. Preach'd at *Westminster* on the Lord's Day following.

A Funeral Sermon, occasion'd by the Decease of Mr. *Michael Watts*, Citizen and Haberdasher of *London*; who departed this Life on *February* the 3d, 1707. Ann. *Ætat.* 72. Preach'd at the Meeting-House in *Silverstreet* the next Lord's Day after his Interment.

A Sermon at the Merchants Lecture in *Salters Hall*, on *Decemb.* the 7th, 1708. upon Occasion of the many late Bankrupts.

The Inspiration of the Holy Writings of the Old and New Testament, consider'd and improv'd. In fourteen Sermons preach'd at *Salters Hall*. To which is added a single Sermon in Vindication of the Divine Institution of the Office of the Ministry, preach'd at the same Lecture.

