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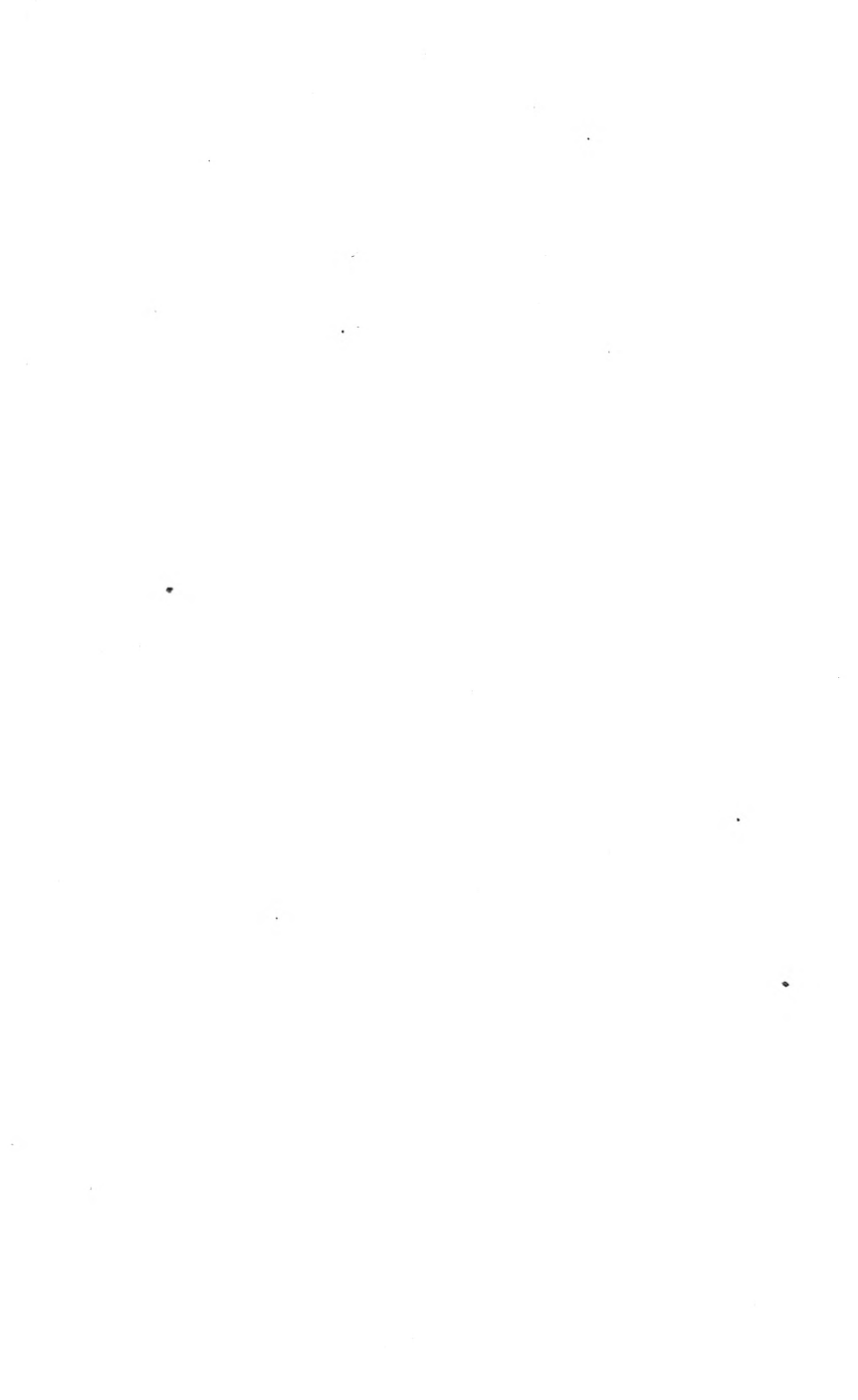














# LETTERS

ON THE

## MINISTRY, RITUAL, AND DOCTRINES

OF THE

### PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

ADDRESSED TO THE

**REV. WM. E. WYATT, D. D.**

Associate Minister of St. Paul's Parish, Baltimore, and Professor of Theology in  
the University of Maryland,

### In reply to a Sermon

EXHIBITING SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL DOCTRINES OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES.

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## LETTER I.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

WHEN your late discourse on the ministry and doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church first appeared, I engaged with much interest in its perusal. The design you proposed of explaining at large the principal doctrines, and distinguishing characteristics of this church, led me to anticipate much pleasure and improvement from the execution. If I have been disappointed in some of my expectations, I could not fail to be gratified with the spirit of candour and good intention which pervades your discourse; and I hope I have not read it without profit, if I have without conviction.

In the remarks I am about to make, I have no design to point out intentional misrepresentations, or to question your motives. Nor is it so much your own private opinions with which I am concerned, as the doctrines and principles you have attempted to explain and defend, and which you represent as forming the most striking features of the church to which you belong. Among these I cannot but think there are many errors; and not a few, which can have no other than an injurious tendency on the cause of truth

and a pure religion. As you have thought it your duty to undertake a public explanation and defence of these doctrines, you cannot be surprised, that I should think it mine, to adopt a similar mode of expressing my opinions, and of stating my objections.

I propose first to consider what you have said on the MINISTRY of the Episcopal church; and afterwards to examine its RITUAL and DOCTRINES.

I confess I was not entirely prepared to find, at this advanced period of moral and intellectual improvement, any member of a protestant religious society, and especially in this country, who would seriously engage in the attempt to establish the *divine origin* of any particular form of church government, and claim its *lineal descent from the apostles*. I had thought the long agitated controversy, about the *divine right of episcopacy*, was generally allowed to be at rest, even in those countries where the civil, as well as ecclesiastical interests are intimately concerned in the result. In more scholastic times, when the world was busied in visions and dreams as unprofitable as they were imaginary, this was a theme sufficiently obscure to interest the lovers of speculation, and sufficiently pretending to engage the ambitious. Few at this day, I supposed, could be found, who would not at least consider it a doubtful cause; and still fewer, who would think it of sufficient importance publicly to engage in its defence. The termination of the controversy, which was carried on a few years ago in New-York on this subject, was not such, one would think, as to warrant in the friends of episcopacy a desire for its renewal.

In my estimation the subject in itself is of very little importance, because I am convinced, that the grounds which you and some others take are unscriptural, and consequently untenable. Yet in its consequences it is by no means unimportant. If any order of men can prove to the satisfaction of the people, that, as an order, they are lineal descendants from the apostles, and inherit a right to their office by virtue of this descent, they will almost necessarily possess an influence over the minds and opinions of the weak and credulous, which, unless their pretensions are well founded, they ought not to possess. In religion, if in any thing, the mind should be left unshackled. The right of private judgment should be held sacred, and no improper means should be used to restrain inquiry, or enlist credulity.

As we are all accountable beings, and accountable only for ourselves, it is our duty to judge for ourselves. But when we are made to believe, that any man is endowed with a portion of the inspired intelligence of the apostles, and is, from the nature of the office he sustains, more holy than other men, shall we not be in danger of forgetting our obligations to ourselves, and be likely in our religious concerns to yield up the highest prerogatives of our nature—those of thinking, and reasoning, and judging? What merit can we claim for thinking and acting right, if we do not think and act from our own understanding and freedom? To believe articles, because others have believed them, can scarcely be called a religious faith. That faith can be worth very little, and have little efficacy on the life, which is not built on personal knowledge and conviction.

Another evil consequence of believing in a divinely protected succession of officers in the church, is the perpetuity of error. Among protestants I believe there are no advocates for infallibility. In the christian church, as in every thing else, error has always been mingled with truth, and it does not appear, that the edicts of emperors, the decrees of councils, or the mandates of popes have been able to preserve a pure, a uniform, or consistent system of faith. If such a system had been transmitted without change from the primitive ages, and it were certain, that it is the one now adopted by your church; then I should say, your scheme of episcopacy is a good one, and the notion of its divine origin would add to its value. It would be the best means, that could be devised, for perpetuating such a form of faith, and fixing it in the minds of the people.

But is it not obvious, that such a system would have a tendency equally strong to perpetuate any form of belief, whether false or true? And are not all articles of faith, which are not expressed in the language of scripture, subject to be more or less clouded with error? If episcopacy be of divine origin, why has it not preserved a pure and consistent faith. The Greek church is episcopal, and so is the Roman, and still they differ in many essential points from each other, as well as from the English church. And does not the episcopal church of the United States reject some parts of the old book of Common Prayer, which are thought so important in the English church, as to be commanded by the laws to be publicly read at stated times? Why are the Athanasian creed, and some other parts of the liturgy left out, unless it be,

that they are thought unscriptural? The creeds of episcopal churches have changed essentially from time to time, and at present they differ essentially among themselves. It is evident, then, that these churches have many errors in their articles of belief, and my position is, that the scheme of episcopacy is peculiarly calculated to perpetuate these errors.

There is another consideration of some importance to me, and to all, who do not agree with episcopals on the subject of church government. If you are right, we are all wrong. If, as you say, "to the *order of bishops alone* belongs the power of ordaining ministers," then no ministers out of the pale of episcopacy have ever been ordained. They have usurped an office, which did not belong to them; they have undertaken the discharge of duties, for which they were not qualified; they have been guilty of a rashness, which nothing but their obstinacy could account for, or their ignorance excuse. The positive ordinances of the church, administered by them, have been invalid, and unaccompanied by any of those good effects for which they were designed. Baptism performed by them has had no efficacy; and the celebration of the Lord's supper, although done in compliance with the express commands of our Saviour, has been rather a dishonor to his name, than a means of procuring spiritual comfort, and the rewards of obedience for his followers. These, you will allow, are serious considerations, not only to ministers, but to the people of their charge, who, if your statement be correct, are ignorantly entrusting their spiritual concerns to an unauthorized and unprofitable ministry.

It certainly cannot be thought strange, that any clergyman, who is implicated in this charge, should feel it his duty to assert and maintain what he conceives to be his just claims, and show the fallacy of such pretensions, as arrogate to any class of men the conclusive character of being descendants from the apostles.

The first part of your discourse is taken up in proving, that the episcopal church is the only true church, that its ministry originated with the apostles, and has descended down to the present time, “*through an unbroken and divinely protected succession,*” and that ordinations, performed by any other persons than bishops, are “*devoid of every degree of validity and efficacy in conferring spiritual office and power.*” This shall be the subject of my first letter.

I agree with you, that “when the gospel enjoins us ‘to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us,’ and ‘to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;’ it equally obliges us to ascertain and *thoroughly understand* what the characteristics of that faith may be,” p. 10. It is true, if we do not ascertain, we believe without knowledge; and if we do not *understand*, we believe without evidence. Faith without knowledge, or evidence, can scarcely be called a rational faith; and to believe what we do not understand, if it be possible, is useless. A religious faith is meant to be the guide to a religious life, and if its objects are unintelligible, it must indeed be a blind guide. The same may be said of the faith of prejudice, or of ignorance. I unite with you cordially in

the opinion, therefore, that its characteristics should be thoroughly understood.

In the scriptures are contained the only grounds of this faith. No mode of church government can be considered of *divine origin*, which is not enjoined in the most absolute terms in the scriptures, and no articles of faith can be considered of divine authority, which are not there explicitly stated. Possible designs, and probable inferences are not here to be taken. We must have plain arguments, positive proofs, direct conclusions, before we can venture to pronounce any scheme of government, or any summary of articles, to be built on divine authority. The decrees of councils, and the traditions of the church can be of no weight, and ought not to be quoted on these points, while we have the scriptures in our hands. In discussing this subject, therefore, I shall not think it important to resort to any other authorities, than such as are contained in the word of God. The plain truths of scripture will always remain the same, whatever may have been, or may still be, the opinions of men.

Your first proposition, in regard to the ministry of the episcopal church, is as follows. "This ministry consists of three distinct orders, *bishops, priests, and deacons*. From the promulgation of the gospel by Jesus Christ, these three orders were apparent, designated by different names, and possessing and exercising different powers," p. 11.

These orders you represent to have consisted of our Saviour, the apostles, and the seventy, who were sent forth to preach. Now, is it not a little remarkable, if Jesus intended the ministry of his church to

consist of three orders, and to be transmitted in this form through all succeeding ages, that he should not have given some directions on so important a subject? Is it credible, that, if he intended a particular class of persons only should be qualified for administering the ordinances of his religion, he would not have given some positive instructions in regard to the nature of their qualifications? But what is the truth? Not a hint is found in the whole four gospels, that he designed either to establish or perpetuate any such form of church government, as the one you have mentioned. His last commission to his disciples is given in the following words: "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. He never mentioned three orders, or any number of orders of priesthood. He never spoke of bishops or deacons. He pointed out no particular modes of ordination, nor designated any description of persons by whom this ceremony should be performed.

What is the natural conclusion, except that he did not think it important what *mode* his followers should adopt to preserve the outward forms of his religion, provided they were careful to embrace its doctrines, imbibe its spirit, and live by its precepts? Whatever conclusion we may draw, we must rest in this certainty, that our Saviour left *no instructions* respecting any particular form of church government. We have no other scripture authority on this subject, than what we derive from the writings and example of the



apostles after the resurrection of Christ. I will next examine your statements as drawn from that source.

You go on to observe, "when our Lord had ascended up on high, the apostles ordained the seven *deacons* to discharge the inferior offices of the ministry, and to *preserve the system inviolate.*" What system had been broken? Our Lord had not mentioned any system. And even, if he had commanded his disciples to preserve the three orders, which you suppose he established, would they not have chosen some one to supply the place, which had become vacant? Would it not be most rational to believe, if it were intended they should keep the "system inviolate," that they would have appointed some person to constitute the order, which had ceased, when Christ ascended to heaven; and to take charge of the general concerns of the church, as he had done while on earth? How else could the orders have been regularly preserved? But what is the fact respecting the seven officers, whom you call *deacons*? For what purpose were they chosen? Instead of being appointed to superintend the concerns of the church, or indeed to supply any *order* of the ministry, their office does not seem to have been designed even for an ecclesiastical purpose.

The reason for this appointment is seen in the following text. "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." Acts vi. 1. Here the Gentile, or more properly the Hellenistic converts complain, that they were neglected by the Hebrew officers, whose duty it was

to provide for the poor.\* The apostles immediately advised them to choose a certain number of persons, to whom this duty might be entrusted, intimating that it was not an office, with which, in the exercise of their more important calling, they ought to be troubled. The people accordingly chose seven from among themselves, who were approved and appointed to the office by the apostles.

But this office did not constitute a new order. They were chosen to aid others, who had neglected to do their duty. Their appointment was merely a matter of expediency, or convenience, to afford more extensive relief to the poor, and to prevent the jealousy and complaints, which had begun to spring up among the Hellenistic and Hebrew converts. It was in no respect an office for spiritual purposes, and certainly cannot be considered as forming a part of the christian ministry. One of them, Stephen, is represented as “a man full of faith, and of the Holy Spirit;” and Philip, in another place, is called an evangelist, but in no connexion with this office. Why you call them *deacons*, I cannot tell, as no such name is given

\* The “Grecians,” or Hellenists, mentioned in the text, were probably proselytes to the Jewish religion from among the Greeks, or the descendants of such persons, who had embraced christianity. See Kenrick’s Exposition, vol, iii. p. 109. and Newcome, in loc. It is well known, that these proselytes did not enjoy the same civil privileges in Judea, as the native Israelites. This caused prejudices to be kindled among them, which were not entirely removed after their conversion to christianity. We may hence see the reason of the complaint in the text. The Hebrews attended to their own poor, and neglected those of the proselyte converts. This is the more probable, as Nicolas of Antioch, one of the seven officers, was a proselyte.

them. Neither is the word used in the whole book of Acts.

Let us proceed to your next statement of the orders of the ministry. After the appointment of the seven officers just mentioned, you say, "there were then the apostles and those associated with them, as Titus, Timothy, &c. being the *first order*; the seventy, bishops, elders, or presbyters, as they were promiscuously called, being the *second order*; and the deacons, the *third order*;" p. 12. Do you mean to consider Timothy and Titus on an equality with the apostles? If a line of distinction existed any where, between the different officers of the ministry, could any be more strongly marked, than that which separated those persons, who had been the companions of our Lord, and had been the special messengers of his gospel, from all who were afterwards chosen or appointed by them? Were Timothy and Titus ever called apostles? Why then should you assign them the same rank? If being "associated" with the apostles entitled them to a place in the *first order*, why were not all bishops, or elders, equally entitled to this place? They were all associated with the apostles in the great work of preaching, and teaching, and extending the kingdom of Christ. In this respect they all composed but *one order*.

As you allow the words bishop, elder, and presbyter to be used promiscuously for the same thing, I should not stop to prove so obvious a fact, were it not denied in the book of "Festivals and Fasts," which is a manual in the church, and which you recommend very highly to your readers. In remarking on the testimony of Ignatius, the author, or editor,

observes, "from this unequivocal testimony it fully appears, that in the *apostolic age*, there were three orders in the ministry, bishops, presbyters, and deacons, *distinct and subordinate*, deriving their commission from God, and claiming the *reverence and obedience of the people*," p. 33. And the American editor also states, in a note, that this "testimony is express and decided in support of the *superiority* of the bishops to the presbyters." If you adopt this statement, in connexion with your own, you must allow at least *four orders*, instead of three, namely, apostles, bishops, presbyters, and deacons.

That elders, presbyters, and bishops were the same, is evident from the twentieth chapter of Acts. In this chapter, Paul is said to have "sent from Miletus to Ephesus, and called the *elders* of the church;" and among his directions, after they were collected, he told them, "to take heed unto themselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit had made them *overseers*," or, as the word is every where else rendered, *bishops*. In the first chapter of Titus the words bishop, and elder, are used in different places for the same person. According to Macknight, the name *elder* ( $\piρεσβυτερος$ ) was applied in the primitive age, as a general term, to all who exercised any sacred office in the church.\* They seem to have been called elders, because they were chosen from among the first converts, or perhaps from among those, who were more advanced in age, and whose experience and gravity of manners gave weight to their character.

\* Macknight on the Epistles, vol. iv. p. 245.

We do not read in the scriptures of any distinction of rank among these officers; but we are often told of their acting in concert with the brethren, with each other. and with the apostles. In the discussion about circumcision, “the apostles and elders came together to consider of this matter.” And when “chosen men” were sent with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, they received their commission from the “apostles, and elders, with the whole church.” The letter, which they took, commenced as follows: “the apostles, and elders, and brethren, send greeting to the brethren, which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia.”\* Nothing is more clear, than that the government of the church at this time rested in a mutual council, composed, not only of the apostles and elders, but also of the brethren at large. We hear nothing of any particular grades among the officers. The apostles themselves assumed no authority above the elders, or even the brethren. They acted only with their advice, and in concert with them. Letters were written, and ministers sent out, in the name of the whole body of the church. This was the mode of government in the first church at Jerusalem, and it appears to have been the same, as far as circumstances would permit, in all the primitive churches. Where you find any grounds, in the transactions of this first church at Jerusalem, for the “three distinct orders of bishops, priests, and deacons,” I cannot tell.

The *deacons*, who compose your third order, are not mentioned in the proceedings of this church. But

\* Acts xv. 6, 22, 23.

is it probable, if such an order of the ministry then existed, that it would have been overlooked in proceedings so important as these, in which even the brethren at large were allowed to take an active part? I confess I can discover nothing in the account of the church at Jerusalem, nor in any part of the New Testament, which would lead me to suppose the deacons, in the time of the apostles, sustained any office, which should entitle them to be considered a distinct order of the ministry. The word, in its English dress, is used only three times, and in no instance with reference to any definite office, or duties. In the original use of this word in the New Testament, it has a variety of meanings. Its radical signification is *servant*, and it is thus used for the most part in the gospels. In the epistles it generally means what we understand by *minister*, and sometimes *magistrate*. Rom. xiii. 4. Paul speaks of himself and brethren being made "able ministers (deacons) of the new covenant." "Wherefore I was made a minister (deacon) according to the gifts of the grace of God." "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but able ministers (deacons) by whom ye believed?"\* Quotations of a similar kind might be multiplied; but these are sufficient to show, that the term *deacon*, instead of designating a particular order of men, was frequently applied to the apostles themselves. The apostles were servants, deacons, or ministers of Jesus Christ.

\* The word *διακονος* is used in *thirty* places in the New Testament. In eight of these places, it is rendered, in our common version, *servant*, and seems to have precisely the same meaning as *δουλος*. In *nineteen* places it is rendered *minister*; and in *three* only it is translated *deacon*.

St. Paul writes to the “bishops and deacons” at Phillippi, as it is expressed in our common version. But the Syriac translator renders it “*elders and ministers*,”\* and this translation is in accordance with the general use of these words, as is seen by the above quotations. In his first letter to Timothy, the apostle describes the qualifications of deacons, but nothing is said in regard to the nature of their office. These qualifications are almost precisely the same, as those of a bishop, which are mentioned in the same place. In the letter to Titus, instead of deacons, he calls them “aged men;” and I can find no passage in scripture, from which it would appear, that these men were distinguished, in respect to their office, from the elders, or presbyters. And whatever the office of a deacon may have been, it is evident, that it was not appropriated to a particular order of men; for Paul, Apollos, Epaphras, and the magistrates, are called deacons.

The opinion, which was adopted in some of the earlier churches, and which is still retained in yours, respecting the office of deacons, seems to have originated in a fancied resemblance between the deacons mentioned in the first epistle to Timothy, and the seven officers appointed by the apostles, soon after the ascension of our Lord. But we have already seen what were the duties of those men. We have seen, that they were never called *deacons*, and that their office was wholly of a temporal nature.

Among the duties, which you enumerate as belonging to the office of a deacon, are the following. “In

\* Senioribus et ministris.

addition to their care of the poor, the deacons officiated in distributing the sacramental emblems; they were employed to preach and baptize; they were set apart to their office by prayer and imposition of hands; and they were forbidden to follow any secular employments," p. 12 In what part of the scriptures you find any of these characteristics of the office of a deacon, I cannot conceive. After a careful examination, I do not find a *single text*, which would imply either directly or remotely, that the deacons mentioned in the epistles to the Philippians and to Timothy, were especially designed for any of these duties. The truth is, nothing is said in scripture about the *nature* of the *office*, or about the *duties* of any class of men designated by the title of deacons. As this name was often applied to the apostles, bishops, and presbyters, it is not unlikely, that it was at first used as a general title to denote a teacher of the gospel.

In writing to the Ephesians, St. Paul says of Jesus, that he "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Eph. iv. 11. What reason can be given, why each of these should not be considered a distinct order, as well as either of the three you propose? Schleusner, in conformity with Eusebius, represents the evangelists as sustaining an office wholly of a spiritual nature.\* Their name implies a *teacher of the gospel*. They were employed to aid the apostles in establishing churches. It was their custom to travel from place to place. In this respect, they differed essentially from presbyters, who were usually con-

\* Schleus. Lex. in verb. Ευαγγελ.



finned to the same church. There is just as much reason for considering them a distinct order, and also the prophets, pastors, and teachers, as either of the three in your catalogue. Instead of three orders, you would then have six, besides deacons, namely, apostles, prophets, bishops, or presbyters, evangelists, pastors, teachers. And I am convinced, as strong arguments may be advanced for adopting this number, as the one you have chosen.

Another point, which you state with great confidence, is, that "it has been the faith of the *universal church, without exception, until the period of the reformation*, that to the order of bishops alone belongs the power of ordaining ministers." In the "universal church," I suppose you will embrace the first church of the apostolic age. Not only so, I suppose you will allow this to be the only authentic source, to which you can go for information on this subject. What our Saviour taught, and the apostles are said to have practised, will be good authority. This is the only authority on which we can with safety rely, notwithstanding what may have been the "faith of the universal church, without exception," since that time.

As Christ left no instructions about any particular kind of ministry in the church, so there are no words of his recorded on the subject of ordination. This alone is enough to prove, that the *manner*, in which it is performed, cannot be a thing of so much importance as you would imply, when you say, that ordinations performed by any other, than a bishop, "would be devoid of *every degree of validity and efficacy, in conferring spiritual office and power.*" What was the practice in the time of the apostles?

Barnabas and Saul were ordained by "certain prophets and teachers at Antioch." Acts xiii. 1. Here, it seems, even the apostle to the Gentiles was ordained by officers of the church, who are not embraced in either of your orders of the ministry. Timothy was ordained by "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." 1 Tim. iv. 14. What can this mean, except, that the ceremony was performed by the elders, or presbyters, in a body?

On this subject, the examples of Timothy and Titus are usually quoted by the abettors of episcopacy with much apparent triumph. It is said, that they were commissioned by St. Paul, the one to be bishop of Ephesus, and the other to be bishop of Crete, and that to them was entrusted the sole power of ordination. It may first be remarked, that neither Timothy, nor Titus, is called a bishop in the scriptures. The postscripts, in which this title is given to them, were added to the epistles nearly four hundred years after they were written. No instructions were given to Timothy about ordinations, and he seems to have remained but a little more than a year at Ephesus. So far from being a bishop, St. Paul expressly charges him "to do the work of an *evangelist*."

Paul writes to Titus, "for this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things, that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." Tit. i. 5. In remarking on this text, you speak of the "*acknowledged fact*, that there were already many elders in those churches." Where is this fact acknowledged? Certainly not in the scriptures. On the contrary, before Titus went to Crete, as far as we know, there were neither elders,

nor churches in the island. We learn no particulars of this country from the New Testament, till the voyage of St. Paul to Rome, when the vessel, in which he sailed, is said to have put into a port in Crete. Inhabitants of Crete are mentioned among those, who, on the day of pentecost, received the gift of the Holy Spirit. These were Jews, who, after they returned, probably instructed the people in what they had learnt, but, as was customary with the Jewish converts, mingled many errors, in regard to the Mosaic institutions, with the christian doctrines. When St. Paul was there, finding what errors and evil practices they had fallen into, and that they had no authorized or well informed teachers among them, and being a prisoner, could not himself travel and preach, he left Titus, as he says, "to set in order the things, that were wanting, and to ordain elders." I am aware it is not particularly mentioned, that Titus accompanied St. Paul on this voyage; but neither have we any account, that the apostle ever again visited Crete. Dr. Paley thinks Titus was left in Crete by St. Paul, two years afterwards, on his return from Rome; but as there is no account of any such voyage, he acknowledges his opinion to be hypothetical.\* Even if this were correct, it would not affect the argument. The object for which Titus was left would be the same.

From all that is known, therefore, there is *no evidence* of there being either elders or churches in Crete, before Titus visited the island; and a very strong probability that there were none. The office

\* Horae Paulinae, chap. xiii.

of Titus seems to have been, in every respect, that of an *evangelist*. He was commissioned to travel from city to city, to form churches, and appoint suitable officers. Nor does it follow from any thing in his commission, that after he had organized churches, and ordained elders, these elders could not ordain others, in the same way as Paul and Barnabas had been ordained by “prophets and teachers,” and Timothy by the presbytery. In short, it appears to me, if any thing can be proved by direct scriptural testimony, it is, that the ceremony of ordination was performed indiscriminately by apostles, prophets, presbyters, evangelists, teachers,—and for any thing that is known to the contrary, by all officers regularly appointed in the churches.

In examining the subject of the first part of your discourse, I have thus far confined myself to the sacred writings, because I think these constitute the only authority, on which we ought to rely, for the proof of the *divine right* of any institution. From this examination, I am convinced that the scriptures teach a doctrine on this subject, completely at variance with the one you have attempted to defend. By way of recapitulation, I will endeavour to express the grounds of this conviction, in as few words as possible.

*First*, our Saviour left no instructions in regard to the nature or form of the ministry; he never spoke of three orders, or any number of orders; he gave no directions about the ceremony of ordination, nor did he assign the duty of performing it to any particular class of men. *Secondly*, the apostles said nothing

of any number of orders in the ministry, nor have they left any rules or instructions on the subject of ordination. *Thirdly*, the first church at Jerusalem was governed by the apostles, elders, and brethren in concert. The apostles assumed no authority above the elders, nor the elders above the people. *Fourthly*, it is no where said in the whole New Testament, that the duty of conferring ordination was confined to any particular order of the ministry; but on the contrary, several examples are on record, which go to prove, that this ceremony was performed by any officer or officers of regular standing in the church. *Fifthly*, Timothy and Titus are never called bishops. Timothy is expressly called an *evangelist*; and the duties of Titus were such, as are usually assigned to an evangelist. *Sixthly*, the persons who were appointed by the apostles to assist in providing for the poor, and whom you call the “seven deacons,” are never designated by this name in the scriptures. Their office was wholly of a temporal nature, and therefore could make no part of the ministry. *Seventhly*, the word *deacon* seems to have been applied at first as a general term, for a servant in the cause of the gospel, a minister, or teacher; and if it was afterwards appropriated to any particular office, no mention is made in the writings of the apostles respecting the nature or design of such an office. No instance is recorded, in which deacons, as officers of an exclusive character, are said to have taken a part in the government or concerns of any church. *Lastly*, the same reasons, by which you establish three orders in the ministry, would prove the ex-

istence of at least six or seven, as apostles, bishops, prophets, evangelists, elders, teachers, deacons.\*

I should not deem it necessary to dwell on this topic any longer, had you not mentioned other testimony, besides that of the scriptures, in support of your views of episcopacy. I do not consider this testimony of any value in deciding the main question of *divine right*; but as you have introduced it at some length I will not pass it over. The testimony

\* The celebrated commentator and critic, Kuinoel, in his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, published about two years ago at Leipsic, has entered at some length into the discussion of this subject. After proving, that "Iidem, qui in libris N. T. vocantur *ΕΠΙΣΧΟΠΟΙ* et *ΠΟΙΜΕΝΕΣ*, appellantur etiam *πρεσβυτεροι*," which he says some have rashly denied, (quod temere nonnulli negarunt, atque de discrimine episcoporum et presbyterorum in primitiva ecclesia hallucinati sunt,) he goes on to observe, that the christians, in the time of the apostles, established in the church a form of government and discipline similar to what prevailed in the Jewish synagogues. It was the duty of the rulers of the synagogue to preserve discipline, superintend the external concerns of the respective societies over which they were placed, and also to teach and explain the law. In the same manner, it was the duty of the bishops, or presbyters, to superintend the government of the church, and teach the doctrines of the christian religion. They were both governors and teachers. The rulers of the synagogues were confined to particular societies; and so were the first bishops, or presbyters. No one had any control, except in the single society over which he had been appointed. "Episcopi singulis christianorum coetibus praeffecti erant."

To show this resemblance still more strongly, Kuinoel further remarks, that the rulers of the synagogues were called *זקנים*, *πρεσβυτεροι*, and quotes Philo and Vitringa to prove, that their office must have been the same as that of the first christian bishops. Vid. Kuinoel Comment. in Act. Apos. Leip. 1818, p. 681.

of all succeeding ages can never prove that to be a divine, positive institution in religion, which is not sanctioned, nay, commanded in the records of divine truth.

It is remarked of almost all the writers in favour of episcopacy, that they show a singular fondness for the ancient Fathers. They appeal to them with scarcely less confidence, than to the sacred writers themselves, and seem to think that whatever is doubtful in scripture, is fully settled by a quotation from

Rosenmuller advances a similar opinion; and adds, that presbyters and bishops, in the time of the apostles, were the same; but afterwards it became customary to call any person, who was eminent among them, *bishop*, by way of distinction. "Qui in ordine presbyterorum primas tenebat, κατ' ἐξοχὴν dicebatur ὁ ἐπισκοπος." Vid. Rosenmul. Scholia in Act. Apōs. c. xx. 28; et in Epist. ad Philipp. c. i. 1.

Hammond supports the episcopal hypothesis in its fullest extent. He puts all the Fathers in requisition, and quotes profusely from the beginning of Ignatius to the end of Theophylact. He maintains, that Timothy and Titus were metropolitans, and proves it by the testimony of Theodoret and Theophylact. He also proves from Eusebius, that the hundred cities of Crete were converted to the christian faith by Paul himself, although Eusebius declares, that, for his history of those times, he depends solely on the scriptures.

Le Clerc, in his reply to Hammond, says that Grotius, and others, who found no authority in scripture for these distinctions between metropolitans, bishops, and presbyters, have much more correct notions. "Nor," he adds, "can we receive as proof the authority of ancient Fathers, who wrote more after the manner of their age, than from any certain knowledge; nor would I say, that bishops, or presbyters, are always to be trusted, when they give evidence in their own cause." Nec potest probari auctoritate scriptorum sequentium saeculorum, &c. Vid. Nov. Test. Hammond. et Cleri. Adnotationes in Act. c. xx. 28, et Philippi. i. 1.

some writer, who lived as long ago as the third or fourth century. But let it be asked, since we have the *original book* in our possession, to which they all referred, what occasion have we to consult any other authority? These Fathers lived in a rude age, and wrote on subjects quite different from any, which are introduced into modern controversy; their writings have been corrupted, and many forgeries have been sent out under their names; they have often written with reference to opinions unknown to us, and frequently contradicted one another. Can we believe the testimony of such writers to be of the least value, when the *divine origin*, and *divinely protected succession* of a religious institution is in question? Daillé, in his celebrated work on the right use of the Fathers, has stated *seventeen reasons*, why these writers are not to be implicitly relied on, each of which is enough to invalidate their authority, in a question of so much importance.

We find a similar opinion in authors of much more celebrity, than Daillé. The following is from Milton. “Whatever time, or the heedless hand of blind chance, hath drawn from old to this present, in her huge drag-net, whether fish or seaweed, shells or shrubs, unpicked, unchosen—those are the Fathers.”\* Jeremy Taylor, in his admirable treatise on the Liberty of Prophecy, says, “there are some, that think they can determine all questions in the world, by two or three sayings of the Fathers, or by the consent of so many as they will please to call a concurrent testimony; but this consideration will soon be at

\* Prose Works, vol. i. p. 67.



an end; for if the Fathers, when they are witnesses of tradition, do not always speak truth, as it happened in the case of Papias, and his numerous followers, for almost three ages together, then is their testimony more improbable, when they dispute or write commentaries.”\* Such were the opinions of men, who knew as much on this subject, perhaps, as any other; and of such men as Milton and Jeremy Taylor.

Your testimony from this source, you take from the book of Festivals and Fasts, and begin by remarking, that “those denominations, which controvert the divine institution of episcopacy, and consider it the invention of an age subsequent to that of the apostles, have never been able to agree upon any one period, in which it could, even in their opinion, have probably originated.” p. 39. Admitting this to be true, what weight has it in the argument? It is not of the least consequence, when, or how, or where, episcopacy commenced, since it is proved not to have been instituted by our Saviour, nor adopted by the apostles.

Your first extracts to prove the divine right of episcopacy, by the evidence of the Fathers, are quoted from Ignatius, who lived at the close of the first century. Was it not very well known to you, that the epistles attributed to him, and from which this testimony is taken, have been considered by very learned men, as spurious? No one has attempted lately to defend the genuineness of all the epistles, which were formerly ascribed to Ignatius. Five, at least, have been given up; and the seven, which re-

\* Chap. viii. on the Inconsistencies of the Fathers.

main, are universally allowed, even by those who are most zealous in proving them genuine, to be disfigured by interpolations. Le Clerc, who is fully persuaded, that some of the epistles attributed to Ignatius were actually written by him, acknowledges, that some are entirely spurious, and others interpolated.\* Of those, which are considered as having some claims to authenticity, we have two copies. One is called the larger, and the other the smaller. Each of these copies has its advocates; but whether the larger copy was made by adding to the smaller, or the smaller by abridging the larger, has not been ascertained. Each party in the controversy adopts the one, which is most agreeable to his favorite tenets.† It is no place here to go into the controversy; nor do I wish to do any thing more, than simply to state the fact of such a controversy having existed, and of these epistles being, at best, of too doubtful a character to be quoted as authority on any point of doctrine. As your discourse was intended for persons, who could not be supposed to be very familiarly acquainted with disputed points of criticism, if you thought proper to bring testimony from this source, it would certainly not have been amiss, to let them know its doubtful character, and the degree of credit, which it ought to receive.

The American editor of the work, which you quote, has given a very partial view of this subject. After mentioning “that some persons have attempted to disprove the genuineness of these epistles,” he adds, “it has been fully vindicated by archbishop Wake,

\* *Ars Crit.* vol. ii. p. 331. Ed. Lugd. Bat. 1778.

† See *General Repos. and Review*, vol. i. p. 50:

and bishop Pearson." What is the fact? These writers both *reject* some of the epistles, which have been attributed to Ignatius, and allow the others to have been mutilated. They maintain the genuineness of the less copy, but they do not pretend that it has not been interpolated. Archbishop Wake supposes the text, from which he translated, to be the purest that had been published, but does not attempt to defend it as immaculate. He receives none but the seven epistles; and the evidence of the genuineness of these, he draws principally from the reputed epistle of Polycarp, which is scarcely better authenticated, than the epistles of Ignatius. He also relies implicitly on the authority of Eusebius, who lived in the fourth century, and who speaks on this subject more from tradition, than actual knowledge.\*

Many instances of interpolation in the received epistles, were long ago discovered by archbishop Usher. These had reference principally to disputed points of doctrine and church government, and were no doubt inserted by designing transcribers into early copies. I shall have occasion to speak of some of these in another place. If interpolations have been found, even in what are called the genuine epistles of Ignatius, we want no stronger proof, that others might still be found, if we had access to earlier and more correct manuscripts. This consideration, together with the doubts hanging over the whole subject, is sufficient to destroy the authority of these epistles, especially in every thing relating to the controversies of the church.

\* See archbishop Wake's Preface and Introduction to his translation of the Apostolic Fathers.

Herbert Marsh, now bishop of Landaff, in his notes to Michaelis, after stating that there is good reason for suspecting the authenticity of all the writings ascribed to the Apostolic Fathers, among which are the epistles of Ignatius, observes, "This at least is certain, that passages are found in these writings, which from the nature of the subjects could not have existed in the first century, and if they prove not the whole to be spurious, they prove at least, that these writings have been so interpolated, as to make it difficult to distinguish what is genuine from what is false."\* The celebrated scholar, Semler, who, according to Dr. Marsh, "has made a more particular study of ecclesiastical history perhaps, than any man that ever lived," rejects these writings entirely as fabrications of a later age, than that in which they are pretended to have been written.†

In regard to the testimony of the *later Fathers*, it should be remembered, when they speak of bishops, they do not mean the same kind of officers, as in modern times constitute the first order of episcopacy. There is no doubt, that soon after the age of the apostles, when churches became very large, it was found convenient to have presiding officers. When public business was transacted, such as the ordination of presbyters, or the chusing of officers, it was natural, that some person should be appointed to preside. In cities, where several churches had sprung up, it

\* Michaelis, Note to vol. i. c. ii. § 6.

† See Gen. Rep. vol. i. p. 55; where the opinion of Semler on this subject, may be found translated from his *Novae Observationes*.

was convenient to have a standing president to preserve the harmony, and superintend the concerns of the whole. This president would be likely to be selected from among the more distinguished bishops, or presbyters. In length of time, the name *bishop* was confined exclusively to this officer. But it is to be observed, that a bishop had no more than a parochial authority. The president of a single church was called a bishop, as well as the president of a larger number. These presidents, or bishops, were first chosen by the congregations at large, and ordained, or inducted into their offices, by the presbyters.

Irenaeus, whose testimony you bring in favour of episcopacy, was ordained, according to Basnage, by presbyters only, even after the distinctions between bishops and presbyters began to exist; and this is allowed to have been the custom of the church of Alexandria, during the three first centuries. At length it became customary to invite neighboring bishops to aid in this ceremony; and thus, by degrees, arose the three orders in the ministry, which was afterwards called an episcopacy.

To make any use of the testimony of the Fathers, we must know to what stage this government had advanced, at the time when any one of them lived. We must know the country in which they lived, and the extent of the church of which they speak. The bishop of a single church was much the same, as the minister of a single parish at the present day. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, had charge of only one congregation, and in his epistles he speaks of the people joining with him in the discipline of his church, and intimates, that the choice of pastors

rested with the people.\* Jerome, who wrote at the beginning of the fifth century, says, in his remarks on the epistle to Titus, “among the ancients, *priests and bishops were the same, but by degrees, the care of a church was given to one person, in order to prevent dissention. And again, “let the bishops know, that they are above the priests, more by custom, than by the appointment of Christ;”* and further, “at the beginning, churches were governed by the *common council of presbyters*, like an aristocracy; but afterwards, the superintendency was given to one of the presbyters, who was then called the bishop, and who governed the church, but still with the council of the presbyters.”†

Archbishop King, who examined this subject thoroughly, in his inquiry into the constitution of the primitive church, says, “a bishop preached, baptized, and confirmed, so did a presbyter; a bishop excommunicated, absolved, and ordained, so did a presbyter; whatever a bishop did, the same did a presbyter; the particular acts of their office were the same.”‡ Origen mentions bishops, but does not allow, that their authority extended beyond the congregation over which they were placed; and all, that Tertullian says on this subject, is as applicable to parochial, as to diocesan, bishops.§

From this view of the testimony of the Fathers, it is evident, that it affords no proof of the institution

\* Doddridge's Lectures, Part IX. prop. 150.

† Opera, vol. vi p. 198. Anecdotes, p. 24. 54. See Corruptions of Christianity, vol. ii. p. 240.

‡ Chap. vi.

§ Doddridge, ubi supra.

of episcopacy in the primitive ages. If we are to judge from the above quotations, it has decidedly a contrary bearing. If you can prove from the same Fathers, or from others, that the present form of episcopacy actually existed in the first ages of christianity, it will be, to say the most, a very weak argument in favor of the cause. It will show them to contradict one another, and themselves, and what can more entirely invalidate their authority?

In many places where there was but one church, bishops were parochial ministers, and nothing more; in other places, where several churches were united, bishops had a sort of presiding charge over the whole; with presbyters to aid them; but they discharged no duties, in the immediate service of the church, which did not equally belong to the presbyters. In their ecclesiastical functions, they were the same as presbyters. Deacons, for a long time, seem to have taken no part in the ministry, but to have been appointed to manage the temporal concerns of religious societies. The churches were not all uniform in their mode of government. Some churches gave more authority to their bishops than others; and some retained their primitive usages longer than others. Doddridge observes, that “the power of the *bishops* seems to have prevailed early in Rome; that of the *presbytery* at Alexandria; and at Carthage, such a discipline as comes nearest to what is now called *congregationalists*.”\* The churches at Alexandria and Carthage gradually declined, and the Roman increased. The church of England, and the episco-

\* Lectures, vol. ii. p. 354.

pal church of this country, it seems, are a branch of this Roman church.

Since this is the state of the evidence afforded by the Fathers, how do you prove your position, "that when the church of England undertook to throw off particular doctrines and ceremonies of the church of Rome, which she considered as neither taught in scripture, nor consistent with purity, she retained, unaltered, the three orders of the ministry, as *manifestly belonging to the days of the apostles*; and the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, received since the independence of this country, the order of hishops, *through an unbroken and divinely protected succession?*" p. 17.

How will you prove, in the first place, that the Roman church itself was established on a regular succession? You will hardly rely on the unauthenticated account, that the apostle Peter lived some time at Rome, and at length was crucified there, which even by Origen is considered only a tradition. How do you know, that the bishop, in whom the Roman church originated, was not ordained by presbyters, as it is certain such ordinations were common? To me this appears quite as probable as any other supposition. How is it ascertained, that even the first bishop of Rome was ordained by a bishop, and not by presbyters? Eusebius himself, who is considered the highest authority on this subject, acknowledges, that it is no easy thing to give any further account of the successors to the apostles in the government of the churches, than what is found in the writings of St. Paul.\* And is it not still an unsettled question in

\* Euseb. Eccles. Hist. l. ii. c. xxxv. l. iii. c. iv. as quoted by Doddridge, Lec. vol. ii. p. 345, 355.



history, who were the first seven bishops of Rome? Such then is the dark and uncertain evidence of the divine succession of the stock from which the English church sprang.

In the next place, is it certain, that the English bishops can be traced up to the church of Rome? In the opinion of Dr. Doddridge, it has been very satisfactorily proved by Mr. Jones, that, in the year 668, the regular succession of bishops had become nearly extinct. Many persons about this time were ordained by Aidan and Finan, who were monks of the Scottish monastery of Columbanus, and only presbyters. They were afterwards made bishops by the northern princes, whom they converted, but not by a regular episcopal ordination. Many others were made bishops from among their converts, but with nothing more than presbyterian ordination. Is it not more than possible, that the English succession is derived from this source?

Again, the validity of archbishop Parker's consecration, in the time of queen Elizabeth, is well known to be, at least, very questionable; yet this is the origin of the present English succession. Edward the sixth abolished the Romish form of ordination, and substituted a new one in its place, which is still retained in the church. The old form was restored by queen Mary, but rejected again by Elizabeth, and that of Edward adopted. When Parker was nominated to be archbishop of Canterbury, in 1559, she issued a commission to certain bishops to perform the ceremony of consecration, according to the prescribed form. Some of them refused to comply, alleging that such a consecration would not be valid. She issued

another commission to such persons, as she knew would not refuse, but whose episcopal authority was much to be doubted. The catholics immediately disputed this consecration, and have almost universally denied its validity. They profess to have proved, that Barlow, the consecrating bishop, was never himself consecrated. They say, that no record of this transaction was found or cited, till more than fifty years afterwards, when the Lambeth Register was first quoted. And even this register entirely destroys the validity of the consecration, by showing it to have been performed according to king Edward's ordinal, which was not consistent with any former usage of the church.

I shall not pretend to decide on these objections of the catholics; but if well founded, they must prove the invalidity of Parker's consecration, and the weakness of all pretensions in the church of England to a divine succession.

To my mind, these objections, and others, briefly and clearly stated in the memoir of the Abbé Renaudot, are convincing. Some of them are partially removed in Courayer's elaborate answer, but he has by no means cleared the subject of difficulties; and when it is known that he was an "apostate monk," as the catholics call him, who wrote to gain the favour of an English prince; we can have little respect for his candour, or regard for his authority.

Episcopacy was abolished by an act of parliament, in Cromwell's time. All ordinations were then presbyterian, and how is it ascertained, that the succession of episcopal ordinations was not then broken, or at least, that some persons were not afterwards con-

secrated bishops, who, during this period, had received only presbyterian ordination?

Moreover, it has been the opinion of many of the most eminent divines and learned men of the church of England, that the superiority of bishops to presbyters was nothing more than a human institution, and consequently, that ordinations by either was valid.

To the middle of the seventeenth century, it was the prevailing sentiment of many distinguished divines, that bishops had no power of ordination or jurisdiction, except in conjunction with the presbyters. In an article of the treaty of Uxbridge, (1644) it was declared, "that the bishops shall exercise no act of jurisdiction or ordination, *without the consent and counsel of the presbyters.*"\* Bishop Leighton disclaimed all pretences to the sole *power* of bishops. One of the articles which he proposed to the dissenting brethren, in the conference at Paisley, runs thus; "all church affairs shall be managed *in presbyteries and synods, by the free vote of the presbyters, or the major part of them.*"† Dr. Burnet, in speaking of the power of a bishop, says, "ordinations ought not to be so performed by him, as to exclude the *assistance and concurrence of presbyters*, both in the previous trial, and in the ordination itself."‡ And even Hooker admits, that "bishops, in the church of Christ, have such authority, as both to direct other ministers, and to see that every one of them should observe that, which

\* Bibliotheca Regia, London, 1659, part i. § 4.

† Case of Accommodation, 1671, p. 2.

‡ Gilbert Burnet's Conferences, Glasgow, 1673, p. 103.

their *common consent hath agreed on.*"\* These quotations may be seen at large, with their references, in the fourth chapter of Sage's Vindication. In the same place may be seen references to a great many other authors, of the highest authority, who express the same sentiments. Among others are Andrews, Whitgift, Chillingworth, Usher, Hall, Barrow, Stillingfleet, Sherlock, Parker, Taylor, Hammond.

Archbishop Bancroft believed in the validity of ordinations by presbyters. The following is from Hickman.

"Some that had been ordained by mere presbyters, offered themselves in king James's time, to be consecrated bishops in the church of Scotland. Dr. Andrews, bishop of Ely, moved this question; whether they should not first be episcopally ordained presbyters, that they might be capable of being admitted to the order of bishops? But archbishop Bancroft, a most rigid asserter of episcopacy, answered; there was no need of it *since ordination by presbyters was valid.*"†

From these facts, it must certainly be admitted, that in some periods of the English church, *ordination by presbyters has been considered valid*; and how is it known, that the succession of office may not be traced back from the bishops of the present day, to those who had been thus ordained? And how can

\* Ecclesiastical Polity, b. vii. § 6.

† Peirce's Vindication, p. 167. How does the whole mass of testimony, which has here been given, agree with the singular assertion in the book of Festivals and Fasts, that "throughout the universal church for fifteen hundred years, *no instance occurs of ordination by presbyters, that was considered valid.*" p. 45.

you possibly reconcile the citations, which have been made from some of the principal Fathers, with your declaration, “that it has been the faith of the universal church, *without exception*, until the period of the reformation, that to the *order of bishops alone* belongs the power of ordaining ministers?”

To many it is thought not a little strange, that the English church should set up so high claims to a *divinely protected succession*, and at the same time exhibit such unequivocal manifestations of abhorrence and contempt, of the venerable mother church, from which it is descended. Nothing can exceed the abuse, which it has poured out on the church of Rome, ever since the separation. Scarcely a theological work appeared in the English language, for the two first centuries after this period, which did not contain more or less about the horrors and pollutions of popery. The Homilies themselves, which were appointed, and are still required by the articles, to be read at stated times in the churches, are very full and direct on this subject.\* The whole three sermons against the peril of idolatry, are aimed at the depravity of the Romish church. How can they, who have such an opinion of the church of Rome, suppose it to be the true church of the Lord Jesus? What do they find in the ministry of this church, which, according to their own account, can convince them, that it has been from its

\* According to one of the homilies, “She (the idolatrous church of Rome) is not only a harlot, as the scripture calleth her, but a foul, filthy, old, withered harlot—the foulest and filthiest harlot, that ever was seen—the great strumpet of all strumpets.” There is a full page of this kind of language. Homilies, Fol. 1713, p. 162, Sermon against the Peril of Idolatry, Third Part.

origin under a divine influence? Most persons would think it to be a mark of wisdom, to say as little as possible about a succession which they acknowledge has come through such a channel, as they describe in the church of Rome.

Another thing is somewhat puzzling. How can the English clergy claim their authority from the apostles, when it is one of the fundamental doctrines of the church, that it is derived from the king? By an act of parliament at the very commencement of the English reformation, it was decreed, that “the king’s majesty justly and rightfully is, and ought to be, the *supreme head of the church of England;*”\* and according to the thirty-sixth canon, every person, before he enters the ministry, must acknowledge the “king’s majesty, under God, to be the only supreme governor of the realm—as well in all *spiritual or ecclesiastical* things or causes, as temporal.” Has not the king power to suspend bishops, and prohibit them from exercising the functions of their office?

Bossuet, bishop of Meaux, and one of the most learned of the catholics, has written largely on the English reformation, and made it appear, in the most conclusive manner, that this church can make no claims to any *ecclesiastical authority*, derived from the catholic church. He has taken his historical facts entirely from Burnet, whom no one can accuse of partiality for the catholic religion, and whom no one will deny to have been an able advocate of the reformation, “a distinct narrative of which,” he says, “makes its apology, as well as its history.” Yet from the

\* See Records and Instruments, No. 2. attached to Courayer’s Defence.

faithful history of Burnet, nothing is more clear, than that the English church, instead of being a stately pillar in the Romish episcopacy, was raised out of its ruins.

In the very outset of the reformation, in the time of Henry VIII. it was laid down as a maxim, "that the king was pope in England." Edward VI. retained the same authority, and the bishops took out *new commissions* from him, which were to be "revoked at the king's pleasure." The bishops held only a precarious power, which was to be resigned at the will of the king. They had power to ordain and dismiss ministers, but they were required to do it "in his name and under his authority." In short, it was decreed in parliament, that "no one could have any jurisdiction, either temporal, or spiritual, which was not derived from the king, *as its source.*"\*

Had the reformers believed in the divine right of episcopal jurisdiction is it possible, that they would thus have taken every vestige of power from the bishops, and given it into the hands of kings? But whatever may have been their opinions on this subject, it is certain they *did not derive*, nor *profess to derive*, their authority from any ecclesiastical source.

\* Oeuvres de Bossuet, Tom. xix. et xx. Histoire des Variations des Eglises Protestantes, liv. vii. Burnet's History of the Reformation, Part ii.

In his concluding remarks on the control of the king, and of the civil authority, over the power of the bishops, Bossuet observes, "Nul acte ecclésiastique, pas même ceux qui regardent la prédication, les censures, la liturgie, les sacremens, et la foi même, n'a de force en Angleterre qu'autant qu'il est approuvé et validé par les rois; ce qui au fond donne aux rois plus que la parole, et plus que l'administration des sacremens, puisqu'il les rend souverains arbitres de l'un et de l'autre." Hist. des Var. Liv. 10.

If the bishops were descended from the apostles, then it must have been by virtue of this descent, and *this alone*, that they possessed spiritual authority. It was not an authority of which kings or parliaments could deprive them, and it showed a deplorable defection of principle, or a pitiable weakness, to bow at the shrine of human greatness, if they were conscious of being bound by the laws of a divine authority. These men either did not believe in the divine succession, or their conduct is inexcusable. If their authority was divine, it was permanent; and yet they suffered their commissions to be revoked at the pleasure of the king, were ordained by rules prescribed by him, and ventured to publish no articles of religion, which had not received his sanction. All spiritual authority was effectually subordinate to the temporal; and how it can be argued, that these bishops were acting as the descendants of the apostles, while the existence of their authority, and the extent of their power, depended solely on the will of the king, is a question, which I must leave unanswered.

Let us go back still farther. Has not the pope power to excommunicate whom he pleases, and annul their ordinations? If so, what security is there under his authority for episcopal succession, or what is its value? If the power, which it communicates, may be destroyed by human authority, why may it not be granted by the same authority? A power, which the pope can destroy, is in the fullest sense derived from him. There is a memorable example of this in the catholic see of Utrecht. All the bishops of this see have been regularly consecrated; but because Dominick Varlet, who a hundred years ago consecrated the first bishop,



was at that time under the censure of the pope, the whole see has ever since been declared schismatical, and each successive prelate has regularly received a renewed condemnation from the sovereign Pontiff.\* A similar example is recorded by Calvin, in the case of Eugenius and Amadeus. When by the decree of the council of Basil, Eugenius was deposed, degraded, and pronounced guilty of schism, together with all the bishops and cardinals, who had united with him in opposing the council, Calvin says, the succession of the ministry was at this time virtually broken, for, "from the bosom of these heretics and rebels, have proceeded all the popes, cardinals, bishops, abbots, and priests ever since."† Be this as it may, how can that ministry be said to have a divine origin, and be kept up in a divine succession, which can be suspended or annulled at the pleasure of a king, pope, or council?

I have thus gone through with a patient examination of the evidence, on which the episcopal church advances its singular pretensions to a divine origin and succession. In the scriptures I have found nothing, either in the commands of our Saviour, or of the apostles, which can justify any class of men in assuming to themselves the claim of being the only true church.

A similar result has followed from the testimony of the Fathers, and the history of the English reformation. *First*, it can be indisputably proved from the

\* See the Pastoral Letter of archbishop Marechal, to the Congregation of Norfolk, Virginia, 1819, second edition, Appendix, p. 84.

† Institutes; Dedication to the King, p. 25.

Fathers, that the churches in the primitive ages were not uniformly governed by three orders of ministry; but frequently by two, and sometimes by one. *Secondly*, bishops were parochial clergymen, in many places at least, and nothing more. *Thirdly*, ordinations were performed by presbyters, especially in the case of Irenæus, and for a long time in the church at Alexandria. *Fourthly*, no particular account can be given of the origin of the church of Rome, or of its first seven bishops. *Fifthly*, the power of the English clergy is confessedly derived from the king, and not from any church. *Sixthly*, the informality of ordination in the English church was such, in the opinion of the Catholics, who are supposed to constitute the true church, as to destroy all power, that might be transmitted by the episcopal succession. *Seventhly*, English bishops were at an early period consecrated by presbyters, and at a much later period, ordination by presbyters was considered valid. *Finally*, the consecration of archbishop Parker, who was the beginning of the succession since his time, both to English and American bishops, was declared, and is still considered by the Catholics, invalid, and was at best of a very suspicious and doubtful character.

These are difficulties in the way of your positions, which it can be no easy matter for the most sanguine friends of episcopacy to remove. Taking the whole train of evidence into consideration, the arguments in favour of the *jure divino* pretensions to episcopacy, when arrayed in all their strength, cannot place it on a firmer basis, than conjecture and possibility. Many contradictions must be reconciled, much positive tes-

timony destroyed, and much light brought out of darkness, even before this can be done. Is any one willing to accede to the extraordinary pretensions, which the episcopal church makes, to a divine origin and succession, on grounds so slender and feeble as these?

To support such claims, nothing should be considered sufficient, but clear, positive, continued, unanswerable evidence. This evidence is not found in the Bible, or the practice of the primitive ages; it is not found in history, or the common sense of mankind; nor do I believe it can be found any where.

It has not been my object to show, that the episcopal mode of church government is not a good one, when allowed to stand on its proper foundation. Whether it is well calculated to promote the great objects of the christian religion, and to make effectual the means of salvation in the hearts and lives of men, is not a question with which I am at present concerned. If it is a government with which the people are pleased, that is enough. They are the only proper judges. It may perhaps be doubted, whether it is so well adapted to the genius and spirit of our civil government and institutions, as some other form; yet while it does not interfere with these, and while it is allowed to be derived from the people, I can discover no reason why any one should complain.

It is not the *form* to which I object, but the *pretensions*, and the improper influence, which the heads of a church, professing to be vested by their official character with apostolical sanctity, will be likely to have on the weaker and more credulous part of society. It has been my aim to make it appear, that

no such pretensions are authorized in the scriptures, or sanctioned by the practice of the apostolic age.

Archdeacon Paley, one of the brightest ornaments of the episcopal church, long ago placed this subject in its true light, in his sermon on *the distinction of orders in the church*. He proves very clearly, that the apostolic usages and directions do not warrant any exclusive form of ecclesiastical government. He observes, “whilst the precepts of christian morality, and the fundamental articles of its faith, are for the most part precise and absolute, of perpetual, universal, and unalterable obligation; the laws which respect the discipline, instruction and government of the community, are delivered in terms so general and indefinite, as to admit of an application adapted to the mutable condition, and varying exigencies of the christian church.”

The reason for this is very obvious. The christian religion was intended for all countries, and all times; and it was necessary that its external institutions should be of so general a nature, as to be adapted to the local circumstances, peculiar situation, and established laws of different communities. It was the *end*, and not the *means*, which our Saviour and his apostles had in view. Principles of faith, rules of action, the spirit of the gospel, the temper of love, piety and holiness, were to be established in the minds and hearts of men. How this object could best be effected under different circumstances, was left to the judgment and prudence of good men.\* The

\* It is not a little amusing to see with what raptures the editor of Nelson's work on Festivals and Fasts, speaks of Law's three let-

bishop of Lincoln advances similar sentiments.\* Although he labours to prove episcopacy to be an apostolic institution, he does not consider it of divine origin. As God has prescribed no particular mode of civil government, so he acknowledges, that the commands and precepts of the New Testament do not enjoin any particular form of ecclesiastical polity.

Locke, who was also an episcopalian, uses still stronger language. "A church," says he, "I take to be a society, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the public worship of God, in such a manner as they shall judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls." After having stated the objection offered by some, that no society can be regarded a true church, unless it have in it a presbyter or bishop, deriving his authority from the apostles, he goes on to remark; "to those who make this objection, I answer, let them show me the edict by which Christ has imposed that law on his church, and let not any man think me impertinent, if in a thing of this consequence,

ters to bishop Hoadly. He says they form a conclusive answer to archdeacon Paley, "expose his dangerous errors, detect the fallacy of his arguments, and drive him humbled from the strong holds in which he fancied himself secure!" And in what way is this wonderful achievement attained? By taking for granted the very thing to be proved, namely, that the "christian ministry is a divine, *positive* institution," and that the form of this institution was *originally episcopal*. Starting with these premises, it requires not much skill in logic to infer, that episcopacy is of divine origin, and therefore unchangeable. And this is the amount of Law's argument.

\* Elements of Christian Theology, vol. ii. p. 376, et seqq. as quoted by Dr. Rees, Cycl. Art. Bish.

I require that the terms of the edict be very express and positive.”\* It will be well for all persons, who believe in the divine institution of any particular order of ministry, and that this order still remains, to search carefully and find such an edict before they are very positive, or begin to seek for arguments from foreign and unauthenticated sources.

As no rules are prescribed in the scriptures on this subject, we have reason to think, that all denominations of christians are fully authorised to form such regulations for the government of their churches, as they may think best calculated to promote the great interests of religion. While every thing is done “decently and in order,” while they endeavor to imbibe the spirit of the gospel, and acquire the temper, as well as copy the example of the apostles, they will be conforming to the will of God, and the precepts of our Saviour.

All the duties requisite for personal holiness, and acceptance with God, are clearly enjoined in the scriptures; but nothing is said about the manner in which ministers of the gospel shall be chosen, or the form in which they shall be initiated into their office. We know the apostles, and their immediate successors, were not guided by any uniform rules in this respect, and we have no reasons for supposing, that any such rules were intended to be applied to christians of after ages. There is not a single positive direction in the whole word of God on the subject. Every well ordered christian community has a right to establish such religious institutions, as may be best suited to

\* Letters on Toleration.

its condition. The people of such a community have a right to institute such a form of ecclesiastical government, and appoint such officers, as they shall deem expedient.

The government of the primitive church at Jerusalem, was essentially a *government of the people*. If we are to follow example, we certainly can have none of higher authority than this. It was a church to which the apostles themselves belonged. If such was the example of the apostles, we cannot be in an error, if we make such our practice. As the church was governed by the people then, why should it not be governed in the same way now? Let the people adopt such a form of government *as they choose*; but still, let it be understood as resting with them, and not be considered as imposed by any pretensions to divine authority. If they are pleased with the episcopal form, let them quietly enjoy it. If they prefer to be governed by associations, assemblies, synods, councils, or consociations, let them have the liberty of making this choice. If they think it more consonant to the usages of the first christians, and more consistent with the principles of religious freedom, to unite in separate societies, and form such regulations as are suited to their circumstances, let them not be disturbed, or called schismatics, because they think this a preferable mode.

Civil governments, and the conditions of society, will no doubt, in some degree, affect ecclesiastical institutions. The form of church government, which is best in one country, may not always be the best in another; yet in no country, and under no circumstances, can any number of christians justly be prohibited

from uniting to worship God after such a form as they think best, provided they do not disturb the peace of society, or encroach on the civil power.

All ministers appointed by the consent and approbation of the people, whom they are to teach, are regularly appointed; all ministers ordained according to such forms, as the people shall think consistent with the general instructions and tenor of the scriptures, and best calculated to give interest and solemnity to the occasion, are regularly ordained. And such persons have as high a commission to administer the ordinances of the christian religion, and to discharge all the duties of the ministerial office, as they could receive from any authority residing in the archbishop of Canterbury, or the incumbent of the Holy See at Rome.



## LETTER II.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

THE present letter I shall devote to a consideration of some of the ceremonies and forms contained in the RITUAL of the episcopal church. You profess it to be the principal object of your discourse, to let your hearers know, “why they are Protestant Episcopalians,” in distinction from other denominations of christians. In discharging this duty, however well you may have succeeded in convincing your hearers of the true grounds of their faith, and of the propriety of the forms which they adopt in religious services, you have passed over many things, which, I am inclined to think, the public in general, to whom you have submitted your discourse, will not readily understand, or receive, without a further explanation.

You have omitted entirely the *ritual* of the church, which, by many, is thought to contain things not altogether conformable to scripture, or calculated to ensure a holy practice. Good men, and pious christians, have seen in some of the ceremonies of the church a strange leaning to the practices of darker times, when infallibility, papal supremacy, and the

decrees of councils, were among the first articles of the believer's creed. They have seen an unaccountable departure from the simplicity of the gospel, and the usages of the first christians.

Two positive ordinances only are enjoined in the scriptures, namely, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. It is to be observed, that in neither of these, are any particular forms prescribed, in which it is required they shall be administered. We are to baptize with water; to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Christ. We have no other directions. Nothing is said about time, place, or manner. As these ordinances were to be perpetual, and were intended for all the followers of Christ, it was necessary they should be such, as could be complied with in every age and country, and in every condition of civil society. But had any specific forms been pointed out, there might be circumstances under which they could not be followed. Whenever baptism is administered with water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and whenever the communion of the Lord's Supper is partaken with sincerity, in remembrance of Christ, the command of our Saviour will be obeyed, and these ordinances will be valid, whatever external forms it may be found expedient to adopt in their administration.

One of the mysteries in the ritual of the episcopal church, which needs explaining to my understanding, and probably to that of most of your readers, is *the form of baptism*. In this ceremony, by what authority, except the superstition of the dark ages, is the minister required to make, on the forehead of the person baptized, "the sign of the cross?" This relic of

ancient superstition is not sanctioned by a single text of scripture, and why should it still be preserved? Bishop Burnet says, in speaking of the origin of this practice, "with the use of it, the devil was adjured to go out of the person baptized;" and Lactantius, "nor can the devils approach to them, on whom they see this heavenly mark; nor can they hurt those, whom this heavenly sign, as an impregnable fortress, defends."\* Whether such is the present belief of the church I cannot say, but it is certain, there is nothing in the Bible, which can warrant this singular appendage to the ceremony of baptism, and the only effect, which so unscriptural a practice can produce, is to perpetuate error and superstition.

Another singular part of this ceremony in the baptism of infants, is, that persons, who are not the parents of the child, are allowed, and indeed, by a canon of the English church, such are required to become sureties or sponsors for the child.† The American convention improved upon this canon, and agreed that "parents shall be admitted as sponsors, if it be desired." But when there are parents, let it be seriously asked, why should any other persons *be allowed* to take upon themselves this important charge?

\* Lact. Instit. lib. iv. c. xxvii. and Peirce's Vindication, p. 157. It was formerly the custom for the priest to exorcise the persons to be baptized, "by laying his hands on their heads, and breathing in their faces, to expel the devil, and inspire them with the Holy Spirit." See Edinb. Encyc. Art. Baptism.

† Canon xxix. "No parent shall be admitted to answer as god-father for his own child."

The minister says to the sponsors, “this infant must faithfully for his part, promise by you that are his sureties, (until he come of age to take it upon himself) that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God’s holy word, and obediently keep his commandments.” This is a very serious and solemn engagement on the part of the sponsors; and when circumstances prevent their having any influence over the child, as must often happen, how are they to keep it? They are required, also, “to provide that the child may learn the creed, the Lord’s prayer, and the ten commandments.” As there is no authority in scripture for this practice, why should the church expose any to the danger of violating engagements so solemn as these, or of promising what they cannot perform?\*

But the part of the ceremony which is the most exceptionable, and which, indeed, cannot but be productive of dangerous consequences, is that in which are declared the nature and objects of the institution. The minister prays, that the child, “*being delivered from*

\* In the time of the apostles, all persons were baptized as soon as they were converted to the christian religion. In the second century, some particular qualifications began to be thought necessary, as a preparation for this ceremony. Persons were then first appointed to give such preparatory instructions as were required; and these persons were called *sponsors*. This practice does not appear to have extended to infants till the *fourth century*. About the same time, as nearly as can be ascertained, the *sign of the cross* began first to be employed. See New Edinb. Encyclopæd. vol. iii. p. 236.

It appears, therefore, that for a long time, it was the duty of sponsors to prepare persons for *baptism*, and not for *confirmation*.

*the wrath of God*, may be received into the ark of Christ's church," and that he "*may receive remission of sin by spiritual regeneration.*" From these expressions it seems, that before baptism, the church considers all infants under the *wrath of God*, and guilty of sin, although they have never done a single action with the consciousness of an evil intention. It is furthermore implied, that the mere ceremony of baptism takes away the guilt of sin, and appeases the wrath of God.

After the ceremony is performed with water and the sign of the cross, the minister says, "*this child is regenerate*, and grafted into the body of Christ's church." The same expressions are used in baptizing persons advanced to maturer age.

The above quotations are from the Book of Common Prayer, authorized by the American convention. The following is contained in the English prayer book, but was omitted by the convention. In the service of private baptism, after the baptismal words are pronounced, the minister is made to say, "*this child being born in original sin, and in the wrath of God*, is now by the laver of regeneration in baptism, received into the number of the children of God, and heirs of eternal life." Why this was left out of the American prayer book we are not told. The language is a little stronger, than is used in either parts of the baptismal service, but the sentiments are precisely the same.

It is the doctrine of the episcopal church, therefore, that the simple act of baptism washes away all former sins, restores the persons baptized to the favour of God, and makes them heirs of salvation.

This is clearly stated in the twenty-seventh article, which says, "Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby christian men are discerned from others that be not christened; but it is also *a sign of regeneration, or new birth*, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God, *are visibly signed and sealed*" In the catechism, which is to be repeated by every child before confirmation, baptism is said to be "*a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness*; for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are *hereby* made the children of grace." The bishop of Lincoln has written a chapter to prove, that "the words regeneration, and born again, are in scripture applied *to the one immediate effect of baptism once administered*, and are never used as synonymous to *repentance or reformation* of a christian."\* He says further, that such is the doctrine of the "Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies."

It is scarcely necessary to remark on this doctrine. Every one must see its dangerous tendency. Nothing is said about the sincerity, the moral character, or religious intentions of the person baptized. He may be a hypocrite, he may be wicked and abandoned, without any actual change of heart, or any desire to change, and yet the ceremony will be equally effectual in taking away the guilt of sin, and making him heir to the promises of eternal life. Hence, a man, who has lived to an old age, in every excess of wick-

\* Refutation of Calvinism, seventh edition, p. 87.

edness, and has never been baptized, may obtain a pardon of all his past sins, and secure the reward of salvation, by having the ceremony of baptism performed in his dying moments. What other tendency can such a doctrine have, than to encourage men in wickedness, and to deceive them with false hopes?\*

It was no doubt this doctrine of the church, which led Mr. Dodwell to the very strange positions, that he has advanced in his *Epistolary Discourses*. He maintained that the soul is naturally mortal, but is immortalized by its union with the *divine baptismal spirit*; and that “none, since the apostles, have the power of conferring this immortalizing spirit, excepting only the bishops.”

\* The case of Constantine the Great is a memorable one. Although he made pretensions to much warmth of zeal in the cause of christianity, he delayed baptism till a short time before his death. After a life stained with wickedness and murder, and during the time of an alarming sickness, he resorted to the ceremony of baptism, as an expiation of all his sins, and a full preparation for heaven. This example was often followed. Many persons thought it prudent not to hasten a ceremony, which had the power of washing out the stains of former guilt, but which could not be repeated.

It was the opinion of Chrysostom, that baptism took away the guilt of all passed transgressions, but did not secure the person against future sin.

“Car bien que ce sacrement emporte les crimes passés, la source de ces crimes n'est point tarie.”

“Le baptême lave le péché; mais étouffez, s'il se peut, dans votre ame l'inclination au mal.” Les Homel. des Chrysost. Trad. par Maucroix, Paris, 1671, p: 333, 334.

This agrees very nearly with the opinion of the church, as expressed in the Book of Common Prayer.

It must be acknowledged, that the entire form of baptism, as practised in the episcopal church, is a wide departure from the simplicity of the gospel. No particular form is there prescribed. Nothing is said about sponsors, or the sign of the cross; “renouncing the devil and all his works,” or learning a creed. Why then should we darken and encumber this ceremony with these unscriptural additions? And above all, nothing is said, from which it is safe for us to infer, that the mere ceremony of baptism will wash away our sins, and purify our natures. We are there told, that the conditions of salvation are faith, repentance, and a good life.

Some persons, aware of the consequence of this doctrine as received by the church, have endeavoured to modify it, and have reminded us, that the contemplated effects will follow only on condition of the baptism being “rightly received.” But no such conditions are mentioned in the baptismal service. The persons to whom baptism is administered are never told, that it will be ineffectual if they do not receive it rightly. They are made to understand by positive declarations, that they are “regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ’s church.” Infants, in particular, have no volition in this ceremony. Whenever they receive baptism, they cannot but receive it rightly; and if the effects above mentioned are not always supposed to follow, the words in which they are expressed are unmeaning, and should not be used.

But the truth is, it is evident from the article in which this condition is found, that it does not refer to the disposition, or spiritual state of the person baptized, but to the *manner* in which the ceremony is per-



formed. To receive baptism rightly, is to receive it at the hands of a proper person, and according to the established forms of the church. The consequences of this ordinance, as it is required to be practised in the baptismal service, will not therefore, in any sense be done away by this clause in the twenty-seventh article.\*

Another ceremony in the episcopal church, and one which has no direct scriptural authority, is *confirmation*. All persons, who have been baptized when infants, are required, after they have learnt the creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments, to be brought before the bishop, and to be *confirmed*, before they can partake of the communion of the Lord's Supper. Did our Saviour make any such conditions, when he instituted this rite? Where does he say, it is necessary for any to be confirmed by a bishop be-

\* The doctrine and form of baptism are taken almost literally from the Romish church. The idea, that this ceremony washed away original sin, was early conceived, and has long been an established doctrine in the church of Rome.

In a catechism published by the bishop of Meaux for his diocess, the following are said to be the effects of baptism. "It frees the person baptized from *original sin*, and from the other sins, which he may have committed after his birth;—it takes away the sin, which we brought with us into the world, and gives us a new life." The person to be baptized is made to "renounce the devil, and all his pomps, and all his works." (*Ne renoncez-vous pas au diable, et à toutes ses pompes, et à toutes ses oeuvres? On répond; j'y renonce.*) *Oeuvres de Bossuet, Versailles, 1815, Tom. vi. p. 39.*

From these quotations it will be seen, that there is no essential difference, in regard to the nature and form of this ceremony, between the Protestant Episcopal Church, and the church of Rome.

fore they can become his disciples, and be made partakers of this privilege.

Moreover, this ceremony of confirmation is exceedingly exceptionable in itself. In a prayer on this occasion, the bishop says, "we make our humble supplications unto thee for these thy servants, upon whom, after the example of the holy apostles, we have now laid our hands, *to certify them, by this sign*, of thy favour and gracious goodness towards them." From this it would appear, that bishops are to be considered as communicating the same powers, and conferring the same blessings, as did the apostles. In fact, it is making them in this respect, equal to the apostles. We have already seen, that by the ceremony of baptism, they are supposed to have the power of procuring a remission of sins; and here we are told, that by laying their hands on the heads of certain persons, they give a sure sign of these same persons receiving the special grace of God.

Do bishops, indeed, imagine themselves to be not only spiritual descendants of the apostles, but endowed with the same powers? Let them give some of the evidences, which the apostles gave, of these wonderful endowments. Let them heal the sick, perform miracles, speak in various tongues, and confer these gifts on others. When they have done this, I have no doubt, all will acknowledge the reality of their high and extraordinary pretensions, and yield to their authority. Until they give some such evidence, they cannot be surprised, that many should reject the validity of their claims, and choose to consult and obey the scriptures, rather than be guided by human forms,

which have no other sanction, than the authority of men.

Whenever *laying on of hands* is mentioned in the New Testament, it always implies either a communication of extraordinary gifts, or an initiation into some office. When Peter and John “laid their hands on the Samaritan converts, they received the Holy Spirit.” Acts viii. 17. When the apostles laid their hands on the seven persons, who were appointed to aid in taking care of the poor, (Acts vi. 6.) there is no reason to suppose it was any thing more, than a form of induction into office. Nothing is said of their receiving *spiritual gifts*; nor did the duties of their office require any.

Paul writes to Timothy thus, “neglect not the gift, that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the *laying on of the hands* of the presbytery.” 1 Tim. iv. 14. In this case, the laying on of hands seems to have been a form, by which Timothy was introduced into the ministry, as well as a means of conferring some spiritual gift. As those, who are intended for confirmation, are not designed to be introduced into any office, if this ceremony means any thing, it must imply a communication of extraordinary gifts from the bishop. But no bishop has ever yet made it appear, that he possessed any such gifts himself. How then can he communicate them to others?\*

\* The ceremony of confirmation is taken, without much alteration, from the church of Rome. It is there required to be performed by a *bishop*, and is said to *confer the gift of the holy spirit*, and strengthen the grace, which was received at baptism. The bishop “places his hands on the persons, whom he is about to

Similar remarks may be made on the *ordination service* of the episcopal church. It implies a power in the bishop of conferring the holy spirit. In one part of the service the bishop says, “come Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,” and when he has laid his hands on the head of the person to be ordained a priest, he says, “*receive the Holy Ghost* for the office, and work of a priest in the church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands;— whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained”

This is going many steps farther, than in the ceremony of confirmation. The bishop not only pretends to *communicate the holy spirit*, but also the *power of forgiving sins*. “Whose sins thou dost forgive they

confirm, and invokes the holy spirit to descend upon them with its gifts.” The Protestant Episcopal Church has omitted the “holy chrism,” which the catholics think a very important part of the ceremony. This is a mixture of oil and balm, with which the bishop makes a cross on the forehead of the person confirmed, and is intended “to show, that no one ought to be ashamed of Christ.” *Catéchisme de Bossuet, Oeuv. Tom. vi. p. 40; et Exposition de la Doctrine de L’Eglise Catholique, Oeuv. Tom. xviii. p. 104.*

The *sign of the cross* was at first adopted by the English church, according to Burnet, in the “ceremony of confirmation, and in the consecration of the sacramental elements,” but it was afterwards suppressed; “Nor can I devise,” says Bossuet, “why it was retained only in baptism.” *Hist. des Var. liv. vii. § 90.*

In speaking of this ceremony, Cave observes, it was “usually performed with *unction*, the person confirmed being anointed by the bishop, or in his absence *by an inferior minister*.” *Cave’s Primit. Christianity, chap. x. p. 208, seventh edition, London, 1714.*

From this account it appears, that confirmation was sometimes performed in ancient times by the inferior clergy, and with unction, neither of which is at present allowed in the Protestant Episcopal Church.

are forgiven." Can there be a higher stretch of human presumption? It is assuming the character and authority of our Saviour. He empowered his apostles to forgive sins. Do bishops, indeed, think themselves, in their official capacity, not only equal to the apostles, but to the Saviour of the world? Where will this end? Every minister of the episcopal church, who believes there is any meaning in the forms of ordination, must think he possesses the power of forgiving sins. No matter what his character may be, he possesses this power by virtue of his office. This is expressly acknowledged by Nelson, in his Chapter on the Festival of Whitsunday. "Though all men," says he, "that are in holy offices ought to lead holy lives, yet a *failure in duty is not a forfeiture of authority.*"\* What doctrine could more effectually promote a spirit of pride and presumption in the minister, and immorality in the people? The wicked man has only to resort to his minister to soothe the achings of a guilty conscience, and receive the assurance of divine forgiveness. It is well, that people of the present day have too much good sense, and too little credulity, to be deceived into so dangerous an error; but it would be better if such forms as are calculated to deceive, and have an immoral tendency, were abolished.

In the English Book of Common Prayer, the minister is required, when he visits sick persons, to absolve them from their sins, "if they humbly and heartily desire it." After imploring the Lord Jesus to forgive the offences of the sick person, the minister

\* Companion for the Festivals and Fasts, New York, 1817, p. 213.

is directed to say, "by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This form of absolution was omitted by the American convention. But it is not easy to tell the reason; for if a bishop can empower a minister to forgive sins, the same minister can certainly exercise this power for the benefit of sick persons, as well as others.

All that part of the Book of Common Prayer, which relates to baptism, confirmation, ordination, consecration, and visiting the sick, carries with it the supposition, that bishops have the power of communicating the holy spirit, and ministers of forgiving sins, which few persons of the present day, who read the scriptures, consult their understandings, or respect the principles of common sense, will be ready to allow.

I have dwelt the longer on these topics, as they have an intimate connexion with the subject of the preceding letter. The unscriptural parts of these ceremonies have evidently grown out of the notion of the apostolical character of the ministry. They afford a comment on that doctrine, which is well worthy of notice. As the ministers descended from the apostles, it is taken for granted, that they possess the same qualifications; and the rules of their office seem to have been formed on this supposition. When it is recollected by what a precarious tenure the episcopal clergy hold their claims to the apostolical dignity, it will be seen how singularly inappropriate and presuming are many parts of the ceremonies, which have just been considered. That such errors should have crept into the church in the days of ignorance and

darkness is not so wonderful; but that men should still be found in an enlightened and free community, who defend and cling to them, is not less unaccountable than surprising.

Your remarks on the *expediency* and *utility* of forms of prayer are not without weight. If we ever give utterance to our feelings in chaste, appropriate, and solemn language, it should be in our addresses to the Deity. If we ever suppress the vain ambition of using lofty phrases, high sounding epithets, and an unnecessary abundance of words, it should be then. We cannot study too much to make our language simple, plain, forcible, and direct. In those religious exercises, in which large numbers unite, and where the prayers are intended to express the wants, and petitions of the whole, there can certainly be no impropriety in using a preconceived form, composed in such general terms, as to be adapted to a promiscuous assembly. No prayer in a public assembly is appropriate, unless every individual present can unite in every part. It may sometimes happen, that the feelings of the speaker, and his want of aptness in arranging and combining his thoughts, may lead him into irrelevant expressions, and such as are not adapted to the occasion. This is the only inconvenience, that can arise from extemporaneous prayers; and, to prevent this, it may be *expedient* sometimes to have studied forms.

It should be remembered, however, that forms in religion are useful, as far as they promote a virtuous conduct, and vital godliness; but beyond this they are injurious. It is rightful and good to have order and system in our religious institutions and services. But

we must take care not to neglect the reality for the form, the substance for the shadow. There is danger, that by treading in the same steps from day to day, we shall at length persuade ourselves, that we walk in the only true path. We must be careful not to let the feeling grow upon us, that when we perform a ceremony, we necessarily do a religious act.

Reading a prayer is not always praying, any more than the simple act of spending two hours in a church is religious worship. If the soul be not drawn out to God, and impressed with a consciousness of his presence; if the heart and affections be not warm with a lively sense of his goodness; if all the faculties be not humbled with a feeling of reverence and submission, there is no devotion, however much ceremony there may be in standing and sitting, repeating forms, reading, or chanting. And the sincere, humble, penitent soul, can offer up praise and thanksgiving to God, acknowledge his dominion, implore his mercy, and render him an acceptable service at all times, and in all places, in such terms, as the overflowings of a devotional spirit may dictate. The scriptures have not informed us what precise acts shall be considered worship. They have assured us, that sincere worship must spring from the heart, but they have prescribed no particular mode in which we shall express our emotions of gratitude, thanksgivings, praise, dependence, and submission. This is left to the discretion of every christian. It is only demanded of us, that we be sincere.

Is it not a principal object of prayer to express devotional feelings? And what is devotion without fervour, earnestness, and an impressive sense of the pre-



sence and inspection of God? Is it not much better, that we should have the life, the spirit of prayer, than the form? God looks into the heart, and regards the sentiments we cherish there, and not the modes we use in disclosing them. These modes should be such, as to enable us to retain the most lively emotions of a pious and holy temper, at the same time we use our best endeavours to offer up our devotions in appropriate and expressive language. To speak words without feeling their full force, or being warmed by the sentiments they convey, is not devotion. Prayers repeated every sabbath from year to year in the same church, must, in the nature of things, lose much of their interest. Habit will diminish the irksomeness of repetition, but it is to be feared, the words will too often pass through the mind, while the thoughts are wandering.

There is another objection, which lies heavily against most forms of prayer, and from which the Liturgy of the church, with all its acknowledged excellencies in many respects, is by no means free. No address should ever be publicly made to the Deity, in which every christian, of every denomination, cannot cordially and devoutly join. It is not an occasion which should be employed to introduce dogmatical theology, or abstruse metaphysical distinctions. All the worshippers of God should assemble before him, "in the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace." Names should be done away, and the distinguishing tenets of sects should be forgotten. Is this true of all the prayers of the episcopal church, and especially of the Litany? Are there not many conscientious and devout christians, whose minds revolt at the kind of worship

there rendered, when they recollect the command of our Saviour, "thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and *him only* shalt thou serve?" This objection, which arises from the habit of conforming prayers to the views of a sect, bears equally strong against extemporaneous prayers, which partake of this character. An important difference is, that when forms become established, and are often repeated in churches, they are likely to produce more extensive injury to the cause of truth and piety.

When you say, that "with respect to social worship of every description, the doctrine and practice of the *church universal* are decidedly in favour of pre-conceived forms," and speak of the "lawfulness of forms being established by *divine appointment*," I hardly know how to understand you. If, by the "church universal," you mean all the churches of Christ, your statement is of course incorrect, because a great portion of them do not use set forms. If you mean those churches only, which hold to three orders in the ministry, I know not why you call them the "church universal." Or is it to be understood, that you consider all those denominations of christians, who do not adopt this mode of government, as being without the pale of the church?

To prove forms of prayer to have been "established by divine appointment," you quote the general practice of singing psalms and hymns in churches, and say, "the Book of Psalms, was inspired by the Holy Ghost for the use of the congregation." This may be true, but it affords no proof in regard to forms of prayers. Did our Saviour use a form in the garden of Gethsemané, or the apostles in their public or

private devotions? There is no evidence of such a fact; and if forms of prayer are to be defended on any ground, it must be that of *utility* and *expediency*, and not of divine authority. While we pray from the heart, and lift up our souls to God in spirit and truth, our prayers will be heard, in whatever words they be expressed, or in whatever forms they may be offered.

I cannot forbear saying a word on another topic, which you connect with the part of your discourse, which I am now considering. I mean the privilege of women to associate for religious exercises. In speaking of this subject, you were certainly betrayed into a warmth, which is not quite in accordance with the mild and equable spirit discoverable in almost every other part of your sermon.

These are your words. “My brethren, when I consider that our God and Saviour has appointed a ministry especially to serve in religious assemblies; that this ministry exists in every church in this city;—when I mark the retiring, the humble, the docile traits of character, which the sacred writings attribute to christian women; when I read the words of St. Paul to a church he had himself planted, ‘let your women keep silence in churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak, for it is a shame for women to speak in the church;’—when I consider these, and other express declarations to the same effect, I cannot hesitate about the inexpediency of those meetings, in which females meet together, *not to use the authorized prayers of the church*, but publicly to utter their own extemporé effusions. The spirit of the church institutions, prescribing and providing a preconceived

form, *frowns upon them*. The language of St. Paul seems explicitly to discountenance them." p. 34.

This language you must allow is very warm. Supposing there were reasons why the apostle should write as he did, respecting the Corinthian women; does it follow that the same reasons exist at the present day, and in a totally different state of society? Besides, if women were never to speak in religious assemblies, even in those times, why did St. Paul, in the same epistle from which you have quoted the above text, intimate that "they should not *pray or prophecy* with their heads uncovered." This text is a proof, that women were not excluded from speaking.

Mr. Locke explains this subject much more favourably and consistently, than the learned authors whom you have quoted.\* He considers the directions of the apostle to have reference to order in public assemblies. To prevent disturbance and confusion, the women were required to yield precedence to the men, and not to speak while they were speaking. Some disorders, it would seem, had arisen by not having this point settled. This construction is rendered in the highest degree probable, by the manner in which the apostle speaks in the context. He first says, "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace," and after giving the directions about women's speaking, he concludes, "let all things be done decently and in order." 1 Cor. xiv. 40. It is evident, therefore, that the apostle did not intend to prohibit women from taking an active part in religious exercises on proper occasions. And even if the contrary were proved, it

\* See Locke's Notes on 1 Cor. c. xi. v. 5.

would not follow from any just principles of reasoning, that the same prohibition was to be extended to women of all ages of the world.

Where there are stated periods of public worship, and a regular ministry, I allow it would be more likely to promote the good order of society, and the happiness of individuals, if all christians could think they have done their duty, when they have punctually and conscientiously conformed to established usages, than it would to neglect the necessary and important avocations of life to assemble at irregular times for religious worship. Yet our religion is a religion of freedom. All persons have a right to worship God in such a way, and at such times as their feelings and consciences dictate. If we have a natural right, this is one. It does not depend on any compact, civil obligations, or the sanction of laws. Women have their peculiar sphere, as well as men, in which custom and the rules of society have placed them; but these do not interfere with their religious privileges. These have no power, and ought to have none, to control the conscience, or restrain devotion. I would not have women officiate publicly in churches, because it would be violating custom and introducing confusion, and not because it would be contrary to any laws of nature or religion. In this respect the sexes are on an equality. Whatever is a natural or religious right to one, is so to the other. It is hard indeed, if women cannot be allowed the privilege of exercising this right, and assembling together when they choose in a becoming, orderly, and peaceable manner, to offer up their devotions, and encourage one another in their christian course, by a rational interchange of pious sentiments,

and sincere endeavours to serve God. Why should they be deprived of the advantages and delights of social worship? No one will deny, that they are capable of feeling and estimating these advantages, and even in a much higher degree, than the other sex.

You censure them for not using “the authorized prayers of the church” on such occasions. But is this reasonable? How many are there who think it their duty not to use forms of prayer? How many, to whose spiritual condition none of the church prayers are applicable? Would you have such persons violate what they consider their duty, because the “spirit of the church institutions *frowns upon them,*” and forego the propriety, as well as comfort, of addressing their Maker in the genuine language of the heart? And is not a woman as capable of expressing this language, as a man?

In making these remarks, I am very far from wishing to defend any irregularities or improprieties in the mode of religious worship. I only wish to state, that “where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;” that it is the sincere, and not the formal worshipper, with whom God is pleased; and that no individual of either sex, can justly be restrained from a free and rational exercise of every privilege, which is derived from the laws of nature and of religion.

I hope you will pardon me for introducing here a short extract from a sermon of one of the most eloquent preachers, enlightened men, and pious christians, whom this or any other age has known. The subject of the discourse is, “The influence of the gospel on the character and condition of the female sex.” The passage, which I am about to select, has refer-

ence to the tendency of the female mind to religious sensibility, and its proneness to receive religious impressions. After speaking of the tenderness with which our Saviour always treated women, and of their devotedness to him, even after he had been forsaken by his disciples and all his friends—of their following him to the cross and watching at his sepulchre—the preacher addresses the female part of his audience in the following words.

“It is infinitely honourable to your character, that you ever feel a secret sympathy with a religion, which unlocks all the sources of benevolent affection, which smiles on every exercise of compassion, and every act of kindness. We may say too, perhaps, that your hearts, not hardened by the possession of power, the pains of avarice, or the emulations of public life, are more alive to the accents of pardon by Jesus Christ, more awake to the glories of the invisible world. The gospel came to throw a charm over domestic life; and, in retirement, the first objects which it found, were mothers and their children. It came to bind up the broken hearted; and for that office woman was always best prepared. It came to heal the sick; and woman was already waiting at their couches. It came to open the gates of life on the languid eye of the dying penitent, and woman was every where to be seen, softly tending at the pillow, and closing the eyes of the departing.

“With this superior susceptibility of religious impression, and aptitude to the practical duties of the gospel, I know, there are evils associated, against which it is sometimes difficult to guard. Sensibility degenerates into weakness; and religious awe into su-

perstition, in your sex, oftener, perhaps, than in ours; yet, with all these dangers and inconveniences, I believe, that if christianity should be compelled to flee from the mansions of the great, the academies of the philosophers, the halls of the legislators, or the throng of busy men, we should find her last and purest retreat with woman at the fireside; her last altar would be the female heart; her last audience would be the children gathered round the knees of a mother; her sacrifice, the secret prayer escaping in silence from her lips, and heard, perhaps, only at the throne of God.”\*

I will conclude this letter with one or two observations on the Festivals and Fasts of the episcopal church. In Nelson’s book on this subject, it is said, “these are of *ecclesiastical institution*, and consonant to the practice of the primitive church.”† In the same book are enumerated, besides the sabbath, *forty-seven* days of public worship, to which are attached the names of saints, angels, and other titles of no very obvious import.

Let me ask what authority there is in the Bible for commemorating saints and angels, and especially for incorporating forms of such a commemoration into a church service, and connecting them with the worship of God? You can find neither precept nor example in the word of God, in which the vestige of such a practice appears. What is meant by its being an “ecclesiastical institution?” It originated in the strong inclination of the Gentile converts to adopt the

\* Buckminster’s Sermons, first edition, p. 388.

† Festivals and Fasts, p. 63.



forms of christian worship to the rites and ceremonies, to which they had been accustomed when heathens. Saints and martyrs were substituted for heathen gods. This has been fully shown by Causobon, Whiston, and especially Mr. Mede, in his "Apostacy of the Latter Times." He cites a striking passage from Theodoret. "Our Lord God hath brought his dead (martyrs) into the room and place of your gods, whom he hath sent off, and given their honour to his martyrs. For instead of the feasts of Jupiter and Bacchus, are now celebrated the festivals of Peter and Paul, and Thomas, and Sergius, and other holy martyrs."\*

Since this is the origin of these festivals, it would seem the duty of the church rather to abolish, than perpetuate them. There is no evidence in history of any saints' days being observed, till after the second century; and yet we are told "this institution is consonant to the practice of the *primitive church*." Such broad assertions without proof will satisfy those, and those only, who think credulity a christian virtue; free inquiry, a crime; and submission to the authority of the church, a compliance with a divine command.†

I have thus pointed out some of the particulars in the forms of the episcopal church, which distinguish

\* See Peirce's Vindication, Part Third, c. xi.

† The celebration of saints' days is taken entirely from the church of Rome. In speaking of Burnet's account of the views of the church of England on this subject, Bossuet observes, "he every where, and in all things, justifies us; and they, who object to us that we follow the commandments of men, may bring the same objection against the English church. This church will vindicate us." Hist. des Var. liv. vii. § 91.

it from most other Protestant churches, and some of which I do not find warranted in scripture. It would have been gratifying to see these explained and vindicated in your discourse. It will be a difficult thing for any of your readers to tell why they are "Protestant Episcopal Churchmen," till they can see removed the formidable objections, which rest against these parts of the church service, and be convinced from clear evidence, that the whole is built on the simple truths of the gospel.

## LETTER III.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

I PROPOSE next to consider that part of the twentieth article, which asserts, that "*the church hath authority in controversies of faith.*" This you pass over entirely; yet, if I am not mistaken, there is no one thing in which the episcopal church differs more essentially from Protestant churches in general. Few churches, I believe, assume, as a fundamental doctrine, the right and authority of deciding in matters of faith.

Some of your readers, I am sure, would have thanked you, if you had have told them, whence the church derives this authority. To the present episcopal church it must have been communicated by the "archbishops and bishops of both provinces, and the whole clergy," assembled in convocation in the reign of king Edward the Sixth. But from whom did they receive this unusual power? From the king and parliament on the one hand, and the church of Rome on the other. What authority had the king and parliament over the faith, and conscience, and spiritual concerns of men? None at all. What au-

thority had the church of Rome? One of the articles framed by this same "convocation" declares, "the church of Rome hath erred, not only in her living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith." You would not be willing to allow, that any authority to decide in controversies of faith could be derived from a church, which had already departed from the faith, and which you say, in your discourse, had adopted "ceremonies and doctrines neither taught in scripture, nor consistent with its purity." Although you have attempted to prove, that the true order of the ministry descended through this church, which had so far receded from the scriptures, you will scarcely speak with equal confidence concerning rules of faith. The episcopal church has derived no authority, then, either from kings, parliaments, or any civil institutions, or from any other church.

Let us go to the scriptures. Where has our Saviour, or his apostles, given authority to any man, or any number of men, to prescribe articles of belief, and judge men for their opinions? Why should it have been a command of our Lord to "search the scriptures," to "hear and understand," if others are to search and understand for us? If he intended the task of examining, thinking, deciding, and judging, should be confined to a few favoured persons, who should fix on themselves the name of *the church*, why has he given no intimations of such an intention? This would have secured much peace and comfort to many anxious inquirers, who have thought it their duty to search with prayerful earnestness for the true meaning of the scriptures, and to adopt from knowledge and conviction the principles of their faith.

All doubts and anxieties on this subject might thus be easily removed; for as soon as it were believed, that the church has authority to fix the true meaning of scripture, nothing would remain but to "believe as the church believes." Instead of searching the scriptures, it would only be necessary to search the articles and creeds. The Bible might be laid aside; for why should it be read, if all its important truths can be found in a much smaller compass?

But our Saviour has given no authority to any man, or to any church, to decide on the meaning of scripture, and impose their decisions on the conscience and understanding of others. Wherever such an authority is set up, it is assumed; and wherever it attempts to enforce its decrees, or influence, either directly or indirectly, the opinions of others, it makes an unwarrantable encroachment on the freedom of christians. For what reason did our Saviour, with great earnestness, ask the question, "why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right," if we are to resign the exercise of our judgment, and rely on the authority of the church?

I know it has been maintained by many episcopals, who are unwilling to admit the construction, which this article naturally bears, that it is not to be understood as it is written. They would not have it mean any thing, except when compared with another part of the same article, which says, "it is not lawful for the church to ordain any thing, that is contrary to God's word written."

From this it is argued, that although the church has authority in controversies of faith, yet it cannot impose any thing, which is not contained in the

scriptures. But it is important to inquire, who is to be the judge in this case? The church has been careful to settle this point. What is it to “*have authority in controversies of faith,*” but to have authority to determine what is the true faith? The amount of the whole, then, is this;—the church is not to impose any articles of faith, which are contrary to the word of God; but the church is to determine what is, and what is not, contrary to the word of God. On any occasion of controversy, there can be only two parties, of which the church is one. They both appeal to the scriptures, and the church assumes the authority of deciding what the scriptures mean; and thus becomes a judge in its own cause.

If this were not obvious from the nature of the thing, it is abundantly proved by direct evidence contained in the articles and canons of the church. In the eighth article the church affirms, that “*the Nicene creed, and that which is commonly called the apostles’ creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed; for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy scripture.*” Now there are some things in one of these creeds especially, which, so far from being proved by “*certain warrants of scripture,*” many christians think are directly contrary to scripture, and subversive of its simplest and purest doctrines. Yet the church has passed its judgment, and by this all its members must abide.

If you will examine the decisions of the church in all controversies of faith, both with the Catholics and Puritans, I believe you will find it has always enforced the doctrines of its articles and creeds, notwithstanding the saving clause in the twentieth arti-

cle, that "it is not lawful to ordain any thing contrary to God's word written."

The spirit of this doctrine, respecting authority in matters of faith, is clearly illustrated in the canons of the English church. The candidate for ordination, among other things, is required to subscribe to the following words, namely, "that the Book of Common Prayer, and of ordering of bishops, priests, and deacons, containeth in it nothing contrary to the word of God; and that he acknowledgeth all and every the articles therein contained, *to be agreeable to the word of God.*" After this acknowledgment, it is hardly necessary to inquire what will be his decisions respecting the import of the word of God in any controversies of faith.

The American form differs a little from this in words, but not in substance. By the tenth article of the Ecclesiastical Constitution, the candidate makes the following engagement; "I do *solemnly engage to conform to the doctrines and worship* of the Protestant Episcopal Church in these United States."

From these terms of subscription, it appears, that ministers at the time of ordination, not only profess a present belief in the doctrines of the church, but "*solemnly engage to conform*" to these doctrines. In case of any controversy on these subjects, therefore, they must either violate their solemn engagement, or decide in favour of the standing doctrines of the church, whatever may be the actual sense of scripture. It is in effect making the articles the criterion, by which the scriptures are to be explained.

If a doubt can longer remain, as to what is meant by the church, when it professes to have authority

in controversies of faith, it will be removed by recurring to those canons of the English church, which relate to excommunication. According to the fifth canon, “Whosoever shall hereafter affirm, that any of the nine and thirty articles agreed upon—for avoiding diversities of opinions, and for the establishing of consent, touching true religion, are in any sort superstitious or erroneous, or such as he may not with a good conscience subscribe unto; let him be excommunicated ipso facto.”

I do not say, that the American church is so severe in its denunciations of those, who, after they have joined the church, may be so unfortunate as to change their opinions in regard to some of the articles; yet so far as relates to the point in question, there is no difference. This is evident from the eighth article, and the form of subscription above quoted; and also from what is stated in another place, namely, that in the judgment of the church, “there be not any thing in the Liturgy contrary to the word of God, or to sound doctrine, or which a godly man may not with a good conscience subscribe unto.” It is not necessary to seek any further to know, in what sense the church considers itself to have authority in controversies of faith.\*

\* The following extracts from Daubney’s Guide to the Church, will serve further to illustrate this subject. Daubney’s work is written with much good temper and apparent candour, and I believe is of high authority in the church. It is among those books, which were recommended by the “house of bishops in the convention of 1804,” to students in theology.

The author says, “Ever since the era of the reformation, the church of England has been considered to be *the firmest bulwark*



If we must have some creed, or fixed formulary of belief, distinct from the plain letter of scripture, before we can have a regular church, it is worth while to inquire from what source it is to be obtained. If we are to rely on authority, how are we to determine what shall be that authority? Shall it be some particular person in whose intelligence, honesty, and judgment we place unlimited confidence? But this person depended on a third, and this third on a fourth. Where shall we stop? Shall we go back to ecclesiastical assemblies, synods, and councils? But

*of Protestantism.* So far as the dissenter agrees with her in protesting against the errors of the Romish church, so far he may be said to be at unity with her; but when that right, which justifies the dissension, in common with the church of England, in separating from a corrupt branch of the christian church, is extended to justify his separation from a branch of the church confessedly not in the same state of corruption, and of whose members, no unlawful terms of communion are required; and to authorize his setting up a church of his own, independent of episcopal government,—the dissenter quits the ground of Protestantism, and places himself upon that of *schism*; and in such case he becomes a *schismatic*, grafted upon a Protestant." p. 134.

We see from this account, in what estimation the Protestant Episcopal Church holds itself, and what judgment it passes on those, who dissent. What are those unfortunate christians to do, who find many *corruptions* even in this "branch of the church," and many "unlawful terms of communion," with which they cannot conscientiously comply? Are they to put conscience, the sense of duty, and religious principle, out of the question? Or shall they retain these, and run the fearful hazard of being branded by the church with the charitable name of *schismatics*.

But this advocate for the church has not the most profound respect for the freedom of conscience, or the right of private judgment. He tells us, that "the idea, which has for some time prevailed, that christian liberty gives every man a *right to worship*

these all differed one from the other. One revoked, altered, or annulled what another had decreed. What articles of faith, among the multitude of contradictory ones, which have been sent out under the authority of great names, shall we adopt.\* Shall we take a creed of the third, tenth, or eighteenth century?

Until this point shall be settled by some fair course of reasoning, had we not best be contented to receive our faith from the Bible? Why should we have a greater fondness for wandering away after the doctrines and speculations of men, than for consulting and confiding in the words of Jesus Christ and his apostles? What more do we want? Can we go to a purer source? If the systems of faith, which men have drawn up, contain any thing more or less than the scriptures, they will deceive and mislead us; if they contain precisely what the scriptures contain, we do not need them.

*God in his own way, appears to have been admitted without sufficient examination."* p. 116. And again; "we do not scruple to affirm, that every man *is not qualified to form a judgment for himself in religious matters."* p. 138.

From these extracts it is perceived, that the ground, which this writer takes, is in perfect accordance with the views given above of the doctrine of the church, in regard to its authority in matters of faith. If he is to be considered a faithful interpreter, all men who separate are accounted schismatics in the estimation of the church; they are incapable of judging for themselves; and have no right to worship God "in their own way," whatever may be the dictates of their understanding, or conscience.

\* In the second part of King's Constitutions of the Primitive Church, may be seen no less than *twelve* different creeds, which were in use before the end of the third century.

On this subject, Chillingworth has some excellent remarks in his controversy with the Catholics. "The Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants. I see plainly and with my own eyes, that there are popes against popes, councils against councils, some Fathers against others, the same Fathers against themselves, a consent of Fathers of one age against a consent of Fathers of another age, the church of one age against the church of another age. In a word, there is no sufficient certainty, but only of scripture, for any considering man to build upon."\* Such were the sentiments of one of the ablest men of the age in which he lived, who, although he did not believe in the divine right of episcopacy, was a powerful defender of the Protestant cause, and a firm supporter of the English church.

Why we should choose to go to the ancient Fathers for our religious opinions; why we should adopt the decrees of factious councils, or the dogmas of the dark ages, while we have the treasures of divine truth in our possession, are questions not easy to be answered.

The episcopal church in the United States thought it necessary to have only two creeds, the Apostles' and the Nicene. Why the convention left out the Athanasian creed we are not told. In regard to doctrine it differs in nothing from the Nicene. It has, also, generally been thought to contain a more explicit statement of the doctrine of the trinity, as held by the church, than is any where else to be found. The three uncharitable, or as they have been called,

\* Chillingworth's Religion of Protestants, &c. chap. vi. § 56.

“damnatory” clauses, might have been omitted, without injuring it as a summary of faith. And if the doctrines set forth in these two last mentioned creeds, be actually the vital truths of scripture, the more clearly they are stated, and the more strongly they are enforced, the better.\*

If we may judge from the journals of the different American conventions, no little difficulty was experienced in settling this affair of the creeds, as well as in altering some other parts of the Book of Common

\* As the Athanasian creed is a curiosity not often to be met with, since it has been left out of the Book of Common Prayer, I doubt not that some persons, into whose hands these letters may fall, will be gratified to see it at full length. I insert it the more readily, because it has been considered a masterly exposition of the views of the church, in regard to one of its most important doctrines. Archbishop Secker observes, in speaking of this creed, (Works, vol. iii. p. 434) “the doctrines are undeniably the same with those, that are contained in the articles of the church, only *here they are somewhat more distinctly set forth to prevent equivocation.*”

#### ATHANASIAN CREED.

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith.

Which faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the Catholic faith is this, That we worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity.

Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.

For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.

**Prayer.** It was laid down as a fundamental principle, that the apostolic succession could be kept up only through the English bishops; and, therefore, whatever alterations might be made in the church service, they must be such as would be sanctioned in England. In this way, the members of the conventions were trammelled and constrained, and actually deterred from making such alterations as their good sense induced them to think necessary.

The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal;

And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal.

As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated; but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.

So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty;

And yet they are not three Almightyies, but one Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God;

And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.

So likewise, the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord;

And yet not three Lords, but one Lord.

For like as we are compelled by the christian verity, to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord;

So are we forbidden by the Catholic religion to say, there be three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten.

The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten.

The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

The first convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church was held at Philadelphia in September, 1785. It consisted of clerical and lay delegates from the states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina. By this convention, the *thirty-nine articles* were reduced to *twenty*; the Athanasian and Nicene creeds were rejected; the clause in the Apostles' creed, "he descended into hell," was omitted; and various other omissions and changes were made in different parts of

So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.

And in this trinity none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another;

But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal.

So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.

He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation, that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the right faith is, that we believe and confess, That our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man;

God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the substance of his mother, born in the world;

Perfect God, and perfect man, of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting;

Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood.

Who although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ;

One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God;

One altogether; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.

For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ;

the Liturgy. A committee was appointed to publish the Prayer Book with these alterations.\*

The convention also agreed to an Ecclesiastical Constitution for the government of the church. The following was the eighth article. "Every clergyman, whether bishop, or presbyter, or deacon, shall be amenable to the authority of the convention in the state to which he belongs, so far as relates to suspension or removal from office; and the convention in each state shall institute rules for their conduct, and an equitable mode of trial." It was also resolved by the convention "to address the archbishops and bi-

Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead;

He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty; from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works.

And they that have done good, shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved.

\* This book was printed, and has usually been called the "Prayer Book of 1785." As it was left discretionary with the churches to use it or not, it seems not to have been generally adopted. The English Prayer Book was for the most part used, with such alterations only, in the public forms, as the revolution had rendered necessary. No uniformity existed till the year 1790, when the present Book of Common Prayer was received into all the churches, by order of the convention.

The twenty articles of the book of 1785 differ very little from the thirty-nine, in points of doctrine and faith. The doctrine of the trinity is expressed in somewhat such language, as it is in the Nicene creed; two of the old articles are sometimes incorporated

shops of the church of England, requesting them to *confer the episcopal character* on such persons as shall be chosen and recommended to them for that purpose, from the conventions of their church in their respective states."

At a second convention held at Philadelphia, in June of the next year, a letter from the archbishop and bishops of the church of England was read. In this letter they approve of the application made to them *to confer the episcopal character*, but express some hesitation on account of the changes, which had been made in the Liturgy. "While we are anxious," say they, "to give every proof, not only of our brotherly affections, but of our facility in forwarding your wishes, we cannot but be extremely cautious, lest we should be the instruments of establishing an ecclesiastical system, which will be called a branch of the church of England, but afterwards may appear to have departed from it essentially, either in doctrine or discipline."

By this convention it was "resolved unanimously, that it be recommended to this church in the states here represented, not to receive to the pastoral charge within their respective limits, clergymen professing canonical subjection to any bishop, in any state or country, other than those bishops who may be duly

into one; and some of the references to the ancient heresies are omitted.

In regard to the judgment of the church in controversies of faith, they are not so positive as the old articles. The following is from the thirteenth article. "General councils and churches are liable to err, and have erred, both in matters of faith and doctrine, as well as in their ceremonies."



settled in the states represented in this convention." An addition was also made to the eighth article of the constitution, above quoted, relative to the trial of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. It was found, that in its original construction, too much authority was given to the conventions. The episcopal dignity was not sufficiently respected. To remove this difficulty, the following clause was added, "And at every trial of a bishop, there shall be one or more of the episcopal order present; and none but a bishop shall pronounce sentence of deposition or degradation from the ministry on any clergyman, whether bishop, presbyter, or deacon."\* It was not enough, that the conventions should "institute rules for an *equitable mode of trial*," unless the application of these rules were sanctioned by the voice of a bishop.

The convention dissolved, after having agreed on an answer to the archbishops and bishops of the English church, in which they repeat their request to receive from them the *episcopal character*, and to "remove the present hesitation, send the proposed Ecclesiastical Constitution, and Book of Common Prayer."

A third convention was held at Wilmington in Delaware, October, 1786. The principal object of this convention was to take into consideration letters, which had lately been received from the archbishops of England, in reply to the answer above mentioned. In one of these letters the archbishops state, "that it

\* The article still remains in this form, and makes the sixth article of the constitution of the church.

See Constitution, Canons, &c. Philadelphia, 1813, p. 45.

was impossible not to observe with concern, that, if the essential doctrines of our common faith were retained, less respect however was paid to our Liturgy than its own excellence, and your declared attachment to it, had led us to expect; not to mention a variety of verbal alterations, of the necessity or propriety of which we are by no means satisfied; we saw with grief, that two of the confessions of our christian faith, respectable for their antiquity, have been entirely laid aside; and that even in that which is called the Apostles' creed, an article is omitted, which was thought necessary to be inserted, with a view to a particular heresy, in a very early age of the church, and has ever since had the sanction of universal reception."

After expressing a wish to continue in spiritual communion with the American church, and a "sincere desire to complete the orders of their ministry," they add, "we therefore most earnestly exhort you, that you restore to its integrity the Apostles' creed, in which you have omitted an article merely, as it seems, from misapprehension of the sense in which it is understood by our church; nor can we help adding, that we hope you will think it but a decent proof of the attachment you possess to the services of our Liturgy, to give to the other two creeds a place in your Book of Common Prayer, even though the use of them should be left discretionary."

The archbishops also complain of the eighth article of the Ecclesiastical Constitution, "and strongly represent, that it appears to them to be a degradation of the clerical, and still more of the episcopal character;" and this, notwithstanding all trials were to be

conducted by the *rules of equity*. But happily this article had already been altered, before their letter arrived.

In a letter from the archbishop of Canterbury, received at the same time, it is said, "but whether we can consecrate any (bishop) or not, must yet depend on the answers we may receive to what we have written."

These letters produced the effect, which the English bishops desired. The convention immediately reconsidered their former doings. They admitted *unanimously* the Nicene creed; they received the clause into the Apostles' creed, which they had for the best of reasons rejected; and even there were some advocates for the restoration of the Athanasian creed, with all its uncharitable denunciations.\*

I have been thus particular in this historical sketch of the proceedings of the first conventions, that it may be seen by what motives they were influenced in making the alterations, which they finally adopted. Their first decisions were no doubt such as their understanding, their unbiassed reflections, and their knowledge of the scriptures prompted them to make. What could induce them to abandon opinions, which they had deliberately formed on a subject of the most important and solemn nature? The only reason, which can be discovered, was the good will and pleasure of the archbishops of the English church. The members of the conventions left every thing else behind, in pursuit of the phantom of episcopacy. Instead of ap-

\* See "Proceedings of the general conventions of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America;" and Lindsey's *Vindiciæ Priestleianæ*, § 2, p. 20, et seqq.

pealing to the gospel of Christ, and acting solely upon the principles of reason and scripture, they squared their proceedings by a letter from the archbishop of Canterbury. In their view, episcopacy seems to have been the great bulwark of religion, without which, the whole fabric must fall. To secure this bulwark, no sacrifices were to be thought too great.

As to the Apostles' creed, so called, it has very little in it objectionable, except the name, and the clause mentioned above. Calling it by the name of the apostles may lead some into the mistaken notion, that it was made by them. This notion was advanced and defended by some of the later Fathers, who even went so far as to say, that each apostle contributed a part. Although the substance of this creed, expressed in different forms, is confessedly very ancient, yet nothing was said of its apostolical origin, till nearly four hundred years after the time of the apostles, when it was first mentioned by Ambrose. It might, therefore, with much more propriety, be called the creed of the Fathers, than of the apostles. Bishop Burnet, bishop Pearson, and others agree, that the clause of Christ's *descent into hell*, was not added till the fifth century.\*

As the scriptures are a sufficient rule of faith, and all creeds are formed by human invention, and enforced by human authority, have we not good reason to suspect their utility? Any other fixed formulary of belief, than the word of God itself, must have *on the clergy* an extremely injurious, and sometimes an immoral tendency. At the best, it must keep up an exclusive spirit, and a bigoted attachment to the faith

\* Pearson on the Creed, vol. i. p. 341. ii. p. 287.

and ordinances of the particular church to which they happen to belong.

Archdeacon Paley says of creeds, “they check inquiry; they violate liberty; they ensnare the consciences of the clergy by holding out temptations to prevarication.” Nothing can be more obvious, than these consequences. A clergyman, who has been ordained *only on condition* of expressing a belief, that the articles of his church are agreeable to the word of God, and of “solemnly engaging to conform to the doctrines” contained in these articles, cannot afterwards change his mind, and retain his situation, without being guilty of prevarication, dishonesty, or fraud.

The only way for him to keep a quiet conscience, is, to shut up his Bible, and fix his eyes on the articles of the church. If he be ignorant, he must remain ignorant; if in the dark, he must take care to avoid the light. If he read the Bible, it must never be with a view to inquire for truth, but only to strengthen his former opinions.

The amiable and excellent Dr. Lindsey retained his place for sometime in the church, after he was convinced, that the doctrine of the trinity was unscriptural. He still adhered to the articles, and satisfied his conscience by explaining the trinity according to the Sabellian theory, or the modal scheme of Dr. Wallis. Upon more serious reflection, however, he rejected this mode of explanation as a subterfuge, to which he could not persuade himself that he ought to resort, and retired from the church. It is well known, that many clergymen in the English church, from the time of Dr. Wallis to the present day, have entertain-

ed similar sentiments in regard to the trinity, and satisfied themselves with the same kind of explanations. By concealment, prevarication, and a forced construction of the articles, they have contrived to keep up a show of compliance with the creeds and articles of the church.

These consequences are not so much chargeable on individuals, as on the church, which imposes such restrictions on its ministers. Why should these temptations be thrown in their way? If you deprive men of their liberty, you cannot suppose they will be very choice in the means they use to throw off their shackles, and escape from thralldom;—and of all the various kinds of servitude, the slavery of conscience and of opinion is the most degrading, and to a mind which has a single spark of its native energy left, the most difficult to be endured.

Many persons of the highest eminence for talents, attainments, and excellence, both among the clergy and laity, who have been much attached to the forms of the English church, but who could not reconcile themselves to its creeds, and especially to the doctrine of the trinity, have thought it their duty to secede, and unite themselves to such societies, as allow a freedom of opinion, and require no other form of faith, than that, which is contained in the sacred writings. Memorable examples are presented in Mr. Emlyn, Dr. Lindsey, Dr. Jebb, the late duke of Grafton, sir George Savile, and others.

Some others, not less conscientious or enlightened, although of decided Unitarian principles, have considered it their duty, for various reasons, to remain in the church. Newton and Locke, although Unitarian

rians, adhered to the established worship. Dr. Samuel Clarke, one of the most distinguished scholars and divines, whom the church has ever possessed, did not forsake the established forms, although he publicly avowed himself to be a Unitarian, and proposed such alterations in the Liturgy, as would enable christians of all denominations to join conscientiously in the church service.\* Archdeacon Blackburn, Shipley, bishop of St. Asaph, and Law, bishop of Carlisle, who are known not to have been of the orthodox faith in regard to the trinity, always remained in the established church.†

There was nothing unjustifiable, perhaps, in the course which these men pursued, when their sentiments were publicly known. Their sense of duty, their wish to be extensively useful, their early attachments, and desire for peace in the church, were probably such motives as enabled them to forego the additional comfort and satisfaction, which they might derive from a more congenial mode of worship, and to use their best diligence in employing the means of doing good, which providence had put in their power. But all the examples here introduced afford a practical comment on the inexpediency, and injurious tendency, of human forms of belief, to which

\* When Dr. Clarke took the degree of doctor in divinity at Cambridge, he delivered and defended a thesis on the following proposition. "No article of the christian faith, delivered in the sacred scriptures, is contrary to right reason." Nullum Fidei Christianæ Dogma in S. Scripturis traditum est rectæ rationi dissentaneum.

† See Belsham's Letters to the bishop of London, second edition, p. 23.

humble, pious, and enlightened christians of every denomination cannot subscribe.

The evils of creeds are not felt with less force by *the people*, than the clergy. The injury is greater, as it applies to them, because more extensive. If the people can be persuaded, that all the important doctrines of religion are comprised in the formularies of the church, and that these formularies have been drawn up, and are still taught and explained by men, who have descended in a regular succession from the apostles, they will not only think it unnecessary, but even dangerous to inquire further. To look into the opinions of other christians, to examine their arguments, and study the scriptures to know on what grounds they build their opinions, would be an implied acknowledgment, that the church may not have the whole truth on its side. The consequence must be, that the Bible will be little read. It will become a book of secondary importance. I believe, indeed, the instances are not rare, in which the Prayer Book is quoted by zealous churchmen, in common conversation, on points of controversy, with scarcely less reverence, than the Bible itself.

The times have gone by, when an archbishop of Canterbury said, “a christian *must not inquire about the truth* of any thing, which the church believes, but is simply to believe whatever the Romish church professeth to believe,” yet it is the same thing in reality, if not in words, for a bishop or minister of the present day to tell his people, that the articles of the church have been established by men, possessing apostolical authority, and contain every thing essential to salvation. When he advises his people not to become ac-



quainted with the sentiments of christians of other denominations, and represents to them the danger of reading their books; when he takes pains to confine their religious knowledge to the Book of Common Prayer, and to such interpretations of the scripture only, as are consistent with this book; when he tells them, that no persons can be considered as christian ministers, who have not been ordained according to the canons of the church, and that the ordinances of our holy religion, performed by such persons, are unscriptural and invalid,—when he assumes the right gravely to impress these things on the minds of the people, what else does he, but urge the implicit authority of the church, and virtually take away from every one belonging to it the right of private judgment?

I would not be understood to intimate, that such is the practice of all bishops and ministers; but I think it will not be denied, that it is the practice of some. Perhaps they are not to be censured on this account. It is to be presumed they act conscientiously; and what more can be required of a man, than to do what he sincerely believes his duty? He may think such means necessary to preserve the dignity and purity of the church. But does it not argue some defect in the principles of a church, which requires, or even allows its ministers to resort to such means of supporting its cause?

The people are the sufferers. They are made to rest satisfied with slender religious attainments, and to contract unworthy prejudices against their fellow christians of other denominations. It is, also, to be feared, that they too often lose much of the spirit of religion, in their zeal for the peculiar tenets

of the church; as they are taught, by what they are made to believe the highest authority, to receive these tenets as the necessary truths of scripture. Ministers of the gospel should not be accessory to such consequences as these; and it is much to be lamented, that the principles of any church should have a tendency to diminish the value of religious knowledge in the estimation of its members, to weaken the ties of brotherly kindness, or to narrow the bounds of christian charity.

That is a false argument, which would prove it to be a recommendation to the episcopal church, that it possesses “a standard, which can *neither be removed nor shaken—an unalterable test* of the soundness of its doctrines.”\* This is one of the strongest arguments, which can possibly be used against the system of the church. That it forces on its members an “unshaken standard” of faith, is the very thing, which all christians, who value the scriptures, and the freedom of conscience, must deprecate. It implies, that the persons who formed this standard in the reign of Edward VI. were empowered by a divine commission for this purpose, and received an illumination from above, to enable them to discover the true interpretation of the scriptures. No one can rely on this standard, till he believes these facts.

The church of Rome is much more consistent in its views of ecclesiastical authority, than the English church. The Catholics lay it down as a necessary principle, that the church is infallible. This at once

\* Sermon on “Reasons for preferring the Church of England.” Maturin’s Sermons, London, 1819, p. 405.

gives authority to tradition, and affords a plausible reason for all their ceremonies. They believe, that “as Jesus Christ established his church by preaching,—the *unwritten* word was the first rule of christianity, and retained the same authority after the writings of the New Testament were joined with it. For this reason they receive with equal veneration all that was taught by the apostles, either in writing or by word of mouth.”\* The church was the sacred depository of this unwritten word, and through this channel it has been transmitted unimpaired to the present day.

They suppose the “church to have been established by the Almighty, to be the guardian of the scriptures, and of tradition; wherefore the church professes to say nothing of herself, to invent no new doctrine, and only to follow and declare the divine revelation by the interior direction of the holy spirit, which is given to her as a teacher. It is for this cause, that the children of God acquiesce in the judgment of the church, believing they have received from her mouth the oracles of the holy spirit; and it is on account of this belief, that after having said in the creed, *I believe in the holy spirit*, they immediately add, *the holy catholic church*; by which they bind themselves to acknowledge the infallible and perpetual truth of the universal church, because this church herself, which they have always professed to believe, would cease to be a church, if it should cease to teach the revealed truth of God. To apprehend, therefore, that she has abused her power to establish a false-

\* Exposition de la Doctrine de l’Eglise Catholique, par Bossuet, Oeuv. Tom. xviii. p. 140.

hood, is to have no faith in him, by whom she is governed.”\*

Here is consistency. If the church have authority in one case, it has in another. If any particular doctrine, rite, or ceremony, is to be received from tradition, every doctrine, rite, or ceremony, which cannot be traced back to a certain origin, is to be received on the same authority. Tradition is worth nothing, unless it have been transmitted by an *infallible* guide. Such a guide the church of Rome professes to follow, and is, therefore, entirely consistent in believing in the divine origin of its institutions.

But the English church has destroyed this consistency, by rejecting infallibility, and still retaining the authority of tradition. One argument, which you bring in favour of the divine origin of episcopacy, as we have already seen, is, that the opponents of this doctrine, “have never been able to agree upon any one period, in which it could, even in their opinion, have probably originated.” The same argument is used by Bossuet to prove the divine origin of all the peculiarities of the Catholic church;† and it will certainly apply as well in one case as the other. As far as this argument goes, it is certain the church of Eng-

\* Ib. p. 141, 142, 143. See also on this subject, *The Unerring Authority of the Catholic Church in matters of Faith*, Philadelphia, 1789, Preliminary Propositions, and p. 75. Bossuet's *Exposition*, translated by Coppinger, New York, 1808, third edition, p. 122—129.

† “La marque certaine qu’une doctrine vient des apôtres, est lorsqu’elle est embrassée par toutes les Eglises chrétiennes, sans qu’on en puisse marquer le commencement.” *Expos. de la Doct. de L’Eglise Cath.* § 18.

land had no more reason for retaining episcopacy, the ceremony of confirmation, the sign of the cross in baptism, and saints' days, as divine institutions, than it had for retaining the doctrine of the real presence, use of the chrism in confirmation, extreme unction, sacramental confession, and many other ceremonies of the Catholic church, which it rejected as corruptions. The former are as much founded on tradition, as the latter; and neither of them can be of any validity, except on the Catholic principle of infallibility. Every dissenting church, at the present day, may with as much justice give the name of "corruptions" to these traditional ceremonies of the English church, as this church did to many of the Romish ceremonies which it rejected.

With equal propriety might the bounds of philosophical, physical, and political science have been fixed in the time of king Edward, as a standard of religious knowledge. The king and parliament assembled had the same authority to establish certain sciences, and to decree, that no innovations or improvements should be made, as they had to settle the rules of faith in religion. They might have decreed, that the earth was immoveable, and the sun, moon, and all the stars were whirled around it once in twenty-four hours, that the new system of Copernicus was a dangerous heresy, which all the king's well meaning subjects should carefully avoid. They might have enjoined it as a part of the philosophy of the realm, that alchymy and astrology were founded on the true principles of nature, as might be proved "by most certain warrants" of physical phenomena; and we should now be edified with treatises on the philosopher's stone, trans-

mutations, and a universal medicine. We should have books to tell us what planets ruled at our birth, interspersed with appropriate figures of horoscopes, schemes of nativity, and positions of the stars. They might have decreed, that the schoolmen were the only rational metaphysicians, and that every college in the kingdom should make the categories, analytics, topics, and sophistics of Aristotle an essential branch of education.

There would have been just as much propriety in fixing rules of belief on these subjects, as there was in drawing up the thirty-nine articles, and the formularies of the church, and setting them forth as a standard of religious faith. Newton, and Bacon, and Locke, would have been considered meddling dissenters from the established philosophy; but still, the force of truth would have been resistless, and would finally have prevailed. So it must be in religion. Error may be concealed and protected for a long time under the guise of forms, and in the mists of ignorance; but the light of truth will at length penetrate so flimsy a covering, and dissolve the cloud.

It is said, that creeds have a tendency to keep schism out of the church, by causing all its members to think alike. This would be good reasoning, if the church were infallible; but on no other supposition. Unless it were infallible, there could be no certainty of its having the only true faith; and no church should claim authority to keep its members in ignorance and error to prevent schism. Milton, speaking on this subject with particular reference to the doctrines of the church, and the scheme of prelacy, observes, "If to bring a numb and chill stupidity of soul, an un-

active blindness of mind upon the people by their leaden doctrine, or no doctrine at all; if to persecute all knowing and zealous christians by the violence of their courts, be to keep away schism, they keep schism away indeed; and by this kind of discipline, all Italy and Spain is as purely and politically kept from schism, as England hath been by them. With as good plea might the dead palsy boast to a man, 'it is I that free you from stitches and pains, and the troublesome feeling of cold and heat, of wounds and strokes; if I were gone, all these would molest you.' The winter might as well vaunt itself against the spring, 'I destroy all noisome and rank weeds, I keep down all pestilent vapours;' yes, and all wholesome herbs, and all fresh dews, by your violent and hidebound frost; but when the gentle west winds shall open the fruitful bosom of the earth, thus overgirded by your imprisonment, then the flowers put forth and spring, and then the sun shall scatter the mists, and the manuring hand of the tiller shall root up all that burdens the soil, without thanks to your bondage."\*

These remarks are but too applicable to fixed formularies of faith of every description. They are made and imposed without authority; and any attempt to force them on the minds of men is an encroachment on the liberty, and an insult to the understanding of christians. The apostles took upon them no such power. St. Paul enjoins the Galatians to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not to be entangled again with

\* The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty: Prose Works, vol. i. p. 63.

the yoke of bondage.” And to the Corinthians he writes, “We have not dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith ye stand.” 2 Cor. i. 24.—Not by faith in creeds, for this would be giving up our liberty, taking upon us a yoke of bondage, and submitting to the dominion of others; but by faith in the word of God, which all persons are free to consult,—and this freedom all must be allowed to enjoy, before they can be required to believe or obey.



## LETTER IV.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

THE second part of your discourse is taken up in showing, that you are not a Calvinist, and in attempting to show, that the articles of the church are not calvinistic. I have no wish to go into a controversy, which has been so long agitated by different parties in the episcopal church itself, and which has been already more than exhausted; yet I cannot but think, that your conclusions on this subject are feebly supported by facts, and at the same time so broad and positive, as to lead some of your readers into mistake. I propose to do little more, than to quote certain passages from the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies, and see whether they are not strikingly inconsistent with the sentiments you advance.

After making various selections from the Confession of Faith, to exhibit what you consider the most offensive doctrines of Calvinism, and assuring your readers, that such are not the doctrines of the church, you make the following remarks.

“Explicit as is the language of the articles and services of our church on this head; and strong as is

the claim, which they make to consistency, nothing is more frequent, notwithstanding, on the part of the advocates of doctrines peculiarly styled 'calvinistic,' than the assertion, that such doctrines are maintained in our ninth and seventeenth articles. Never was there a more groundless charge. Those articles do not in the remotest degree, allude to the fundamental and essential tenets of Calvinism." p. 27.

Let us inquire, in the first place, what are the "fundamental and essential doctrines of Calvinism." I believe Calvinism is usually summed up in what are called the *five points*, namely, total depravity, election, particular redemption, effectual calling, and perseverance of the saints. Whatever language may be used in the Confession of Faith, the Institutes of Calvin, or any where else, to express and illustrate these doctrines, and however unscriptural such language may be, I suppose the substance of the whole is contained in these five points. The minor doctrines of Calvinism, such as salvation by grace, justification by faith, special influence of the spirit, are to be referred to these as their original stock.

If we examine these points of Calvinism, we shall find the two first only to be fundamental doctrines, of which the three last are necessary consequences. If all men have originally a corrupt nature, which renders them worthy of divine wrath and condemnation, and if God in his mercy have decreed, according to "his everlasting purpose," that a certain number of his creatures shall be rescued from this deplorable condition and finally be saved; it is a natural and necessary consequence, that all such persons are redeemed by a particular redemption, are effectually called, and

will persevere to the end. The decree of election extends only to particular persons, and therefore the redemption it procures is a particular redemption; it is an absolute decree, and therefore all whom it calls, are effectually called; it is an immutable decree, and therefore all whom it restores to the condition of saints, must retain this condition.

The fundamental doctrines of Calvinism, then, are total depravity, and election; and if these are found to be contained in the articles and homilies, I suppose it may be rightly inferred, that such are the doctrines of the church. When an established church is built on a code of laws, articles, and formularies, which have been fixed by convocations and conventions, where shall we look for the tenets of this church but in this code itself? Interpretations and commentaries, to make articles understood, are very suspicious. Erudite researches, to find out what the framers of the articles meant, are useless. It is to be presumed they meant what they have expressed. If the church fancy it has grown wiser and improved since the days of Cranmer, and find doctrines contained in some of the articles, which it cannot receive, let it reject such articles, and not resort to conceits and paraphrases to explain away the meaning, which they irresistibly force upon every unbiassed mind.

Let us see what the church teaches in regard to these two principal points of Calvinism. A single reading of the articles, I am persuaded, would convince most persons, that these doctrines are in substance taught there, with as much emphasis as in any calvinistic formulary. I will bring forward a few

passages, which, if they do not imply the total depravity of our nature, and the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, it will be no easy task to tell what they do imply. The ninth article has generally been thought to be of itself decisive on this point, although you are resolved it shall countenance no such doctrine. The following are the words of the article, as it stands in the Book of Common Prayer.

“Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk,) but it is *the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.* And this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated.”

Where will you find the calvinistic tenet of original sin, and the total depravity of human nature, expressed in stronger terms than these? The “vain talk” of Pelagius consisted in maintaining, that the sin of Adam was not imputed to his posterity, and that we are born as free from guilt, as if Adam had never transgressed. This was called a heresy, and to guard against it, the article takes care to tell us in terms, which it is presumed no one can mistake, what the church understands by original sin. And as it respects depravity, what is “that corruption of the nature of every man, which deserveth God's wrath and damnation,” if it be not what the Calvinists call total depravity? It will be difficult to form a defini-

tion of such a quality, if it be not contained in these words.\*

Compare this article with the following extracts. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, *that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God.*" Art. x. "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his spirit, *are not pleasant to God*, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace:—yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, *we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.*" Art. xiii. "*All men are conceived and born in sin, and they who are in the flesh cannot please God.*"†

It is scarcely necessary to remark on these passages. Their confirmation of what has been above shown to be the sense of the ninth article must be obvious. What else but a corrupt and depraved state

\*The bishop of Lincoln has reminded us, that the article does not say we are totally depraved, but only "very far gone from original righteousness." This is a quibble, which few, probably, would have discovered without aid. Whoever resorts to it, needs give no other indication of the impressions he receives from the general import of the article. That a bishop, and a scholar, should descend to this kind of trifling, we cannot but wonder; especially when it is considered that the articles were first drawn up in Latin, and that this is a very faulty translation. In the Latin it stands, "*Ab originali justitia quam longissime distet;*" Gone as far as possible from original righteousness. Bishop of Lincoln's Refutation of Calvinism, chap. i. p. 50. Scott's reply to Tomline, vol. i. p. 80. The Fathers, Reformers, &c. in Harmony with Calvin, p. 43.

† "Baptism of such as are of riper years."

of our nature, in as strong a sense as Calvin himself could have expressed it, can render us incapable of having faith, and calling upon God? He must be a depraved being, indeed, who is not fit to call on his Maker. Can the good works of any being, who is not *totally depraved*, be “of the nature of sin, and not pleasant to God?” Thus we see this doctrine is most unequivocally taught in several articles of the church.

Let us turn to the Homilies. In the thirty-fifth article, these books are enjoined “to be read in churches by the ministers diligently and distinctly,” as containing “a godly and wholesome doctrine, and necessary for these times.” The Homilies, therefore, I suppose to be of equal authority with the articles, or any part of the church service.\* In the second Homily concerning the death and passion of our Saviour, it is stated, “When our great grand father Adam had broken God’s commandment, in eating the apple forbidden him in Paradise, at the motion and suggestion of his wife, *he purchased*

\* By an order of the convention in 1801, the reading of the Homilies in churches was suspended, till a revision of them could be “conveniently made for the clearing of them, as well from obsolete words and phrases, as from local references.” Nothing more seems to have been done till 1814, when the convention “proposed to the house of clerical and lay deputies, to make a standing order to every bishop, and to the ecclesiastical authority in every state destitute of a bishop, to be furnished, as soon as may be, with a copy or copies, of said work, and to require it to be studied by all candidates for the ministry within their respective bounds.”

In consequence of this resolve of the convention, an edition of the Homilies was speedily published in New-York, but *without alteration*. It was printed literally from the last Oxford edition.

thereby not only to himself, but also to his posterity forever, the just wrath and indignation of God, who, according to his former sentence pronounced at the giving of the commandment, condemned both him and all his to everlasting death, both of body and soul;— he was cast out of Paradise, he was no longer a citizen of heaven, but a firebrand of hell, and a bond slave of the devil.” “Man of his own nature is fleshly and carnal, corrupt and naught, sinful and disobedient to God, *without any spark of goodness in him, without any virtuous or godly motion, only given to evil thoughts and wicked deeds.*”\*

Again, in the second part of the Homily of the Misery of Man, we read; “Of ourselves we be crab-trees, that can bring forth no apples. We be of ourselves of such earth as can bring forth but weeds, nettles, briers, cockle, and darnel.—Hitherto have we heard what we are of ourselves; very sinful, wretched, and damnable; *we are not able to think a good thought or work a good deed*, so that we can find in ourselves no hope of salvation, but rather whatsoever maketh unto our destruction.”

And again, after describing the deplorable condition into which Adam was brought by the fall, the Homily continues; “This so great and miserable a plague, if it had only rested on Adam, who first offended, it had been so much the easier, and might the better have been borne. But it fell not only on him, *but also on his posterity and children for ever*, so that the whole brood of Adam’s flesh should sustain the self same fall and punishment, which their

\* Homily for Whitsunday, Part. 1.

forefather by his offence most justly had deserved.—As in Adam all men universally sinned, so in Adam all men universally received the reward of sin; that is to say, became mortal, and subject unto death, having in themselves nothing but everlasting damnation both of body and soul;—they were nothing else but children of perdition, partakers of hell fire.”\*

Quotations to the same effect from the Homilies might be multiplied. These are enough. Where is this fundamental doctrine of Calvinism expressed in stronger language? You will search the Institutes in vain to find a parallel. What is the total depravity of man, if it be not to be “of his own nature *without any spark of goodness in him, without any virtuous or godly motion?*” Are we not totally depraved in the most absolute sense, if “we are of ourselves very sinful, wretched and damnable,—not able either to think a good thought, or work a good deed?” How will you express the imputation of Adam’s guilt to his posterity, if it be not contained in the following words; namely, “he purchased not only to himself, *but also to his posterity for ever*, the just wrath and indignation of God?” And again; “this great and miserable plague fell not only on him, but also on *his posterity and children for ever.*”

When you consider these express declarations of the Articles and Homilies, how can you imply, as you have done, that “the imputation of the guilt of Adam’s sin to his posterity, as the cause of their condemnation to eternal punishment,” (p. 27.) is not a doctrine of the church? On what grounds could Dr.

\* Homily of the Nativity.



How, who has attempted so elaborately to vindicate the church against the charge of Calvinism, make the very broad assertion, that "there is not a trace of this doctrine in our Articles, our Homilies, or our Prayers?"\* Such assertions will be received by those only, who never read the Articles, or look into the Homilies. It is a little remarkable, that any writer should venture to hazard them; for if the Homilies should ever be read constantly in churches, as the Articles enjoin, the people must soon discover them to be groundless. In a word, if the total depravity of man, and the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, be not doctrines of the church, it will be impossible to ascertain from its Articles, Service, and Homilies, any one doctrine, which can be called such.

On the other fundamental doctrine of Calvinism, the seventeenth article of the church is full and decisive. It is comprised in the following words.

"Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed, by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation, those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore they, which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose, by his spirit working in due season; they through grace obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of his only begotten son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in

\* How's Vindication, p. 259.

good works; and at length by God's mercy they attain to everlasting felicity.

“As the godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well, because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God; so, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchlessness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.

“Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth in holy scripture; and in our doings, that will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God.”

He must look with very partial eyes, who will discover this article to be less explicit, less unequivocal, or less positive, on the doctrine of election, than the language, which is usually found in calvinistic books. Let this article be read by any one, who has no knowledge of the explanations, which it has received from anti-calvinistic interpreters, and do you believe he will suspect for a moment, that it is not intended to teach the doctrine of absolute decrees?

Compare the first part of the article with the following words taken from the calvinistic Confession of Faith. "Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory."\* Do you not perceive a striking similarity here, not only in ideas, but in words? The Calvinists have enlarged more fully, and manfully carried out and defended this doctrine, but the root, the substance of the whole, is as clearly contained in the seventeenth article, as it is in the Institutes, the Calvinistic Confession, or the decisions of the Synod at Dort.

You have remarked, with others of the Arminian school, that nothing is said in the article about reprobation. Why should any thing be said? This makes no part of the doctrine itself; but is only a consequence. If it has been decreed by "the everlasting purpose of God," that a certain number shall be delivered "from curse and damnation," nothing is more evident, than that the remainder must be *reprobate*.

You have said, also, that the article "has reference to the general election of the church, as the recipient of the covenant of grace, and not an allusion to the future state of individuals." p. 27. From what part of the article can such an inference be drawn? This may be the doctrine of scripture, but what do you find in the *article*, which will give any sanction to such a construction? All, who are elected, are to be "*delivered from curse and damnation;*" and is it your opinion,

\* Confession of Faith, chap. iii. § 5.

that every individual of the church is to be of this description? And what is this "curse and damnation," but the future punishment of individuals? Would these terms be used in reference to a whole church receiving the covenant of grace? Can they be used in reference to any thing, but the future state of individuals? The article goes upon the supposition, that all by nature are under a curse, and declares, that a certain number, by the decrees of God, are delivered from this curse; and it is difficult to tell what calvinistic election is, more or less than this. It is an absolute and arbitrary election; for it is expressly stated to be according to "*the everlasting purpose of God.*" Nor is any thing said of its being made in consequence of a foreknowledge of conduct.

No one can deny, that bishop Burnet has examined this article with the greatest fairness and candour. He has pointed out with precision and acuteness the different sentiments, which have been held on the doctrine of election, and although his own opinions were not calvinistic, he says of this article, "It is not to be denied but that the doctrine seems to be framed according to St. Austin's doctrine. It supposes men to be under a curse and damnation, antecedently to predestination." After exhibiting some of the difficulties with which they had to contend, who would explain the article in a different way, he goes on to remark; "on the other hand, the Calvinists have less occasion to scruple, *since the article does seem more plainly to favour them.*"\* This is the testimony of a man, who has written more judiciously, and with more

\* Burnet's Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles, Art. xvii.

talent probably on the articles, than any other, and whose opinion in regard to the doctrine of election, was actually contrary to the decision of his candour and judgment on the doctrine of the article.

In the Collect for All-Saints' Day it is said; "who has knit together thine *elect* in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy son." The following passages are contained in the English Prayer Book, but left out of the American, for reasons best known to the members of the convention, as they contain nothing more on the doctrine of election, than what is clearly expressed in the seventeenth article. Thus, in the Catechism, the child is made to say, "I believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the *elect* people of God." In the burial service is the following petition,—"beseeching thee, shortly to accomplish the number of thine *elect*, and to hasten thy kingdom." If I mistake not, these phrases are very similar to those often used by Calvinists, and why should we not take them in the same sense.

In the Homily on Alms Deeds we are told of those, "whom God hath *appointed to everlasting salvation;*" who are "the undoubted children of God, *appointed to everlasting life;*" and who "are sons of God, and *elect of him unto salvation.*"\*

Such are the evidences drawn from the Articles, Homilies and Service of the Church. If any one can read these extracts and not be convinced, that the fundamental doctrines of Calvinism, namely, *total depravity*, with the imputation of Adam's sin, and *election*,

\* Homilies, New-York, 1815, p. 329,

are clearly taught in them, it may be doubted whether it were possible for language to be so constructed as to produce conviction. Every man does not examine with so much freedom from prejudice, perhaps, as bishop Burnet, nor with so determined a resolution to make his own opinions consistent with the scriptures, and to let the articles speak in their natural language, without endeavouring to press them into his service by force. If a man has settled it in his mind that an article, partly ambiguous, and partly metaphysical, shall have a particular meaning, it is no difficult task to give it a plausible turn into any direction he pleases. When he deserts the plain construction, and goes into explanations merely possible, he at once leaves the suspicion, that he is not so much concerned to ascertain the meaning of the article, as to determine in what way it can be best explained to support the opinions, which he has already formed from other sources.

You suppose, that the closing part of the article does away the possibility of proving from the first part the calvinistic doctrine of election. It is there said, "that will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared to us in the word of God." This you think is not consistent with Calvinism; and therefore, no part of the article can be considered calvinistic. But let me ask, if every sincere Calvinist does not believe his sentiments to be according to what is "expressly declared in the word of God?" The Calvinist, as well as the Arminian, will acknowledge the truth and force of this clause of the article, whatever construction he may give to any other part. The person who receives the article in its literal sense, and sees in it the doctrine of election in its

most decided form, will receive the last clause as one of the first rules, which is to guide him in the search of religious truth.

You also intimate, that the doctrine of election cannot belong to the church, because it is taught in the articles, that “the offering of Christ was made for all the sins of the whole world.” Would you infer from this, that Calvinists do not hold to the same belief? Do not all christians of every denomination believe, that “the free gift came upon *all men* unto justification of life.” Rom. v. 1.—that Christ “is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the *whole world.*” 1 John, ii. 2.—and that God “would have *all men* to be saved?” 1 Tim. ii. 4. Calvinists will not reject these texts of scripture. They will not deny, that the death of Christ was sufficient to take away the sins of the whole world. It is not the sufficiency of the sacrifice for the salvation of all, which they deny, but the fact, that all will receive the benefit of this sacrifice. All you have said, therefore, respecting the doctrines of the Articles and Church Service, is perfectly consistent with Calvinism. The church believes, as you say, that Christ by his death “made a satisfaction for the sins of the whole world;” Calvinists believe the same.

I do not pretend to reconcile inconsistencies in the articles. Upon the calvinistic scheme they are sufficiently consistent. If you make some of them directly opposed to Calvinism, while others maintain the great doctrines of this faith, you put them at an irreconcilable variance. This perplexity will be avoided by taking them in their natural sense.

There needs no stronger argument, in favour of the articles and formularies of the church being entirely calvinistic, than the fact that every Calvinist will receive all of them, which have any bearing on doctrines, without limitation or paraphrase.

Bishop White and Dr. How have been at much pains to show, that the original reformers were not Calvinists. But are not their labours somewhat gratuitous? It is not the opinions of Cranmer, or Ridley, or Hooper, or Latimer, which the humble christian now searches after, when he consults his Prayer Book, but the sentiments conveyed in the articles themselves. He is not called on by the church to believe what Cranmer believed, but what the articles contain. It will only perplex and confound him to accumulate a mass of evidence to prove, that such were the opinions of one reformer, and such of another. If the Prayer Book will not explain itself, it were better to lay it aside, and adopt one that will, than to go back three hundred years to the troublous times of the reformation, to know what religious tenets were then agitating the world.

But after the elaborate efforts of these writers to prove, that the sentiments of the reformers were not calvinistic, few, probably, who are not influenced by some previous bias, will be conducted from their premises to the same conclusions. The subject is examined by bishop White in particular, with no common degree of ability, and with that temper of christian moderation and candour, which is consistent with his character. To my mind, however, his success has not been equal to the talents and learning he has displayed. The following passage, which he quotes



from Mosheim, and endeavours to answer, is strongly against him. "When it was proposed under the reign of Edward VI. to give a fixed and stable form to the doctrine and discipline of the church, Geneva was acknowledged as a sister church; and the theological system there established by Calvin was adopted, and rendered the public rule of faith in England."\* The bishop replies to this, by questioning the authority of Mosheim, and says he probably quoted from Neal, who is not always to be trusted. But it is hardly fair to elude, in this way, the testimony of one of the most impartial and candid writers, who has ever written on ecclesiastical history. Whether he took it from Neal or not, we can scarcely be allowed to suppose, that a writer so remarkable for accuracy should speak in so unqualified a manner of the theological tenets of a national church, without being fully convinced, that he was speaking from the best authority; especially when it is considered, that it was a case in which no prejudice or feelings of his own could interfere.

Bishop Burnet, in his exposition of the seventeenth article, seems to countenance the representation of Mosheim. "In England," says he, "the first reformers were generally in the Sublapsarian hypothesis." This hypothesis embraced all the essential doctrines of Calvinism; and although the name of Sublapsarians was not given to any sect of christians till after the reformation, yet if the bishop means any thing, he must be supposed to mean, that the leading tenets of

\* Bishop White's Comparative Views of the Controversy between Calvinists and Arminians, Vol. ii. p. 4.

the reformers were similar to those of the Sublapsarians; that is, they were calvinistic.

Furthermore, it is well known, that archbishop Cranmer, the chief of the English reformers, and who drew up the articles of the Church of England, wrote to Calvin requesting his aid, and that a correspondence was kept up between them. It is well known also, that Calvin wrote to king Edward VI. while Cranmer was engaged in forming the articles. Is it probable, that such an intimacy would have existed at this time, and that a familiar correspondence on *these subjects* would have been carried on, unless the religious sentiments of the parties were similar?

Another argument to prove the sentiments of the leading reformers to have been calvinistic, is drawn from their own writings, and from writings which they approved. King Edward's Catechism, or as it was afterwards called, Dr. Nowel's Catechism, was approved by Cranmer and Ridley, if not in part made by them.\* This catechism contains the following words, "As many as were in this faith steadfast, *were fore-chosen, predestinated, and appointed to everlasting life before the world was made.*"†

In Latimer's Sermons it is said, "We must needs grant ourselves to be in like displeasure unto God, as our father Adam was. By reason hereof we be of

\* This Catechism "was subscribed by those martyrs for the protestant faith, archbishop Cranmer and bishop Ridley, and ordered to be taught in schools throughout the kingdom."—Sir Richard Hill's Apology, page 25.

† See a work entitled, "Calvin in Harmony with the Fathers and Reformers; by a Layman." p. 186.

ourselves, *the very children of the indignation and vengeance of God.*"\* These sentiments are expressed still more decidedly in the marginal notes of the "Great Bible," published under the direction of Cranmer, in 1549. "Our election is by grace, and not by works. *Few are elect or chosen.* We are elect of God the father, through his good will before the construction of the world, that by the grace and merit of Christ, we should have health, serving all men by charity. The elect cannot be accused, forasmuch as God justifieth them. The predestinate are saints or holy people, made like to the image of the Son of God, and called, justified and glorified by him."† In the "Bishop's Bible," published in 1568, the same doctrine is found. In a note on Rom. xi. 35, it is said, "By this the apostle declareth, that God by his free will and election, doth give salvation unto men, *without any deserts of their own.*"‡ In the "Quarto Bible," printed 1576, is contained the following note on Matth. xxv. 34. "Hereby God declareth the certainty of our predestination; whereby we are saved, because we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world;" and on Mark xiii. 22. "The elect may waiver and be troubled, but they cannot utterly be deceived or overcome."§

In the work here referred to, many other extracts of a similar nature may be seen. The Bibles above-mentioned were published under the express direction of the first reformers, and the clergy of those times. After reading these extracts, it is no longer possible to

\* Calvin in Harmony with the Fathers, &c. p. 139.

† Ib. 145.

‡ p. 146.

§ p. 146.

doubt of the tenets of the reformers, who framed and adopted the Articles of the Church. We can have no better authority, than their own writings, or books which came out under their sanction. Dr. Heylin, who was an anti-calvinist, and whom the bishop of Lincoln quotes with approbation, gives his testimony, in his *Life of Laud*, to the prevalence of the calvinistic tenets in the time of queen Elizabeth. "Predestination," says he, "and the points depending thereupon, were received *as the established doctrines of the Church of England.*" And speaking of the seventeenth article, he says, that the predestination there defined, "doth presuppose a curse and state of damnation, in which all mankind was presented to the sight of God;—that it was of *some special ones alone, elect, called forth, and reserved in Christ*, and not generally extended to all mankind."\*

The same sentiments prevailed at the universities in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. which appears by the *Theses*, that were maintained at them by candidates for the degree of doctor in divinity. The following are selected from those, which were maintained at Oxford.

"The salvation of the elect is perfect, so that they cannot perish."

"The whole salvation of the elect is purely gratuitous."

"Whether election be from works foreseen? Denied."†

\* See Calvin in Harmony with the Fathers, &c. p. 113, 164.

† *Electorum certa est salus, perire non possunt.*

*Tota salus electorum est mere gratuita.*

*An electio sit ex prævisis operibus? Neg.*—Ib. p. 166, 168.

In the time of queen Mary, certain persons, who were imprisoned on account of their religious sentiments, were accused of denying the doctrines of predestination and original sin. Bradford, prebendary of St. Paul's, visited them in prison, and endeavoured to convince them of their errors, but without avail. Being "apprehensive that they would do a great deal of mischief in the church, he, in concert with bishop Ferrar, Taylor, and Philpot, wrote to Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, at Oxford, to take some cognizance of the matter, and consult together about remedying it. Upon this occasion Ridley wrote back a letter *Of God's Election and Predestination*, and Bradford wrote another upon the same subject."\* Is it probable that Bradford would have written such a letter to Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, had it not been well known, that they believed in predestination?

The Lambeth Articles are usually quoted as another proof of the Calvinism of the English church, and not without reason. Some difficulties, it seems, had arisen among the officers and professors of the University at Cambridge on certain points of doctrine, which were referred to the archbishop of Canterbury. He, in conjunction with the archbishop of York, the bishop of London, the dean of Ely, and other dignitaries of the church, assembled at the archiepiscopal palace in Lambeth, November tenth, 1595, drew up a number of articles, which were sent to the University, as "the avowed sense of the church of England." Among these articles were the following.

\* Neal's History of the Puritans, Lond. 1732, Vol. 1. p. 103.

“God from eternity hath predestinated certain men unto life; certain men he hath reprobated.”

“There is predetermined a certain number of the predestinate, which can neither be augmented, nor diminished.”

“Those who are not predestinated unto salvation shall necessarily be damned for their sins.”

Heylin says, the queen was much offended at these articles, and caused the archbishop to recal them. But from his own account it is obvious, that her offence arose not so much from her disapprobation of the articles, as from the presumption of the archbishop in framing them without consulting her, and in promulgating them without her authority.\* Nor was her being offended any evidence, that they did not express the prevailing sentiments of the church. Where shall we look for the *sense of the church*, if not to the opinions of its highest dignitaries?†

\* This offence of queen Elizabeth, was consistent with her imperious temper in regard to all theological concerns. The ecclesiastical court, which she established under the charge of this same archbishop of Canterbury, was little inferior, in its severities and injustice, to the *inquisition* itself. And after the Commons, in a petition to the prelates, had made some complaints of their grievances, the queen reproved them severely for their presumption. In a speech from the throne, “she told them, that whoever found fault with the church threw a slander upon her, since she was appointed *by God* supreme ruler over it; and no heresies or schisms could prevail in the kingdom but by her permission and negligence.”—Hume’s History of England, vol. v. p. 269. See also Camden’s History of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, Lond. 1675, p. 454.

† See the Lambeth Articles at large in the bishop of Lincoln’s Refutation of Calvinism, p. 560, quoted from Heylin’s Quinquarticular History. Also, Hill’s Apology for the Doctrines of the

Neal says, in alluding to the controversy, which commenced in the University of Cambridge, "All the Protestant divines in the church, whether puritans, or others, seemed of one mind hitherto about the *doctrines of faith*, but now there arose a party, which were first for softening, and then for overthrowing the *received opinions* about predestination, perseverance, free will, effectual grace, and the extent of our Saviour's redemption. The articles of the church of England, were thought *by all men* hitherto, to favour the explication of Calvin; but these divines would make them stand neuter, and leave a latitude for the subscriber to take either side of the question." And again; "The divines of Oxford, and indeed *all the first reformers*, were in the same sentiments with those of Cambridge about the disputed points; Calvin's Institutions being read publicly in the schools *by appointment of the convocation.*"\*

Another evidence of the Calvinism of the English church at an early period, is the part it took in the famous Synod of Dort. The express purpose of this Synod was to establish, by the greatest weight of authority, the peculiar tenets of Calvinism, and to adopt

church of England, in Letters to the Rev. Charles Daubney, p. 88.

In the letter written on this occasion by the vice-chancellor, and heads of the University, to the chancellor, they say, "we are right sorry to have such occasion to trouble your lordship, as the peace of this University being brought into peril by the late *reviving of new opinions.*" &c.—Strype's Annals, vol. iv. fol. p. 229. These *new opinions* were the anti-calvinistic tenets, which were then *beginning to spring up in the University.*

\* History of the Puritans, vol. i. p. 579, 584.

effectual measures for suppressing the rising heresy of Arminius, which was found to be increasing to an alarming degree. The Synod was composed of numerous delegates from different parts of Holland, Germany, from Geneva, and Great Britain. The five points of Calvinism were each separately considered, and judged without a dissenting voice “to be agreeable to God’s word.”\* They next proceeded religiously to excommunicate all *remonstrants*, or followers of Arminius, as persons, who “must of necessity be punished with a very severe censure, such as hath in all ages been inflicted by the church in such cases.”† The last act of their synodical deliberations, was to excommunicate Conrad Vorstius, a professor of Leyden, and teacher of Arminianism; and to procure a decree of banishment against him from the states-general of Holland.‡

Is it not absurd to suppose, that this delegation would have been sent from the English church, if the church itself were not calvinistic? The object of the

\* In the Title to these articles, they are said to contain a doctrine, “*quam synodus Dordrechtana verbo Dei consentaneam, atque in Ecclesiis Reformatis hactenus receptam esse, judicat.*” Vide *Sylloge Confessionum sub tempus Reformandæ Ecclesiæ editarum, et cæt.* Oxon. 1804, p. 369.

† See “The Judgment of the Synod holden at Dort, concerning the Five Articles; as also their sentence touching Conradus Vorstius,” Lond. 1619, p. 90.

‡ Among other heinous offences charged against Vorstius, he was accused of “making bold” with such doctrines “as concerne the trinitie of persons in the godhead—the hypostaticall union—and partly avouching expressly many things contrary to the trueth of God—either wholly consorting, or very neere bordering upon the blasphemies of the balefull heretique Socinus.” p. 102, 103,



synod was well known beforehand; and none of the English delegates dissented from a single resolution that passed on points of doctrine. Nor were they ever afterwards charged with not having properly represented their church in this respect. As they were the only delegates present from an *episcopal church*, some complaint was made after their return, because they did not protest against certain proceedings relating to church government; but they vindicated themselves on the plea, that they took no share in these proceedings, and felt it their duty to act only on subjects of doctrine. They published what they called a "Joint Attestation," in which they explained their motives, and vindicated themselves in a very honourable and dignified manner. Their closing words are worthy of notice in connexion with the present subject.

"As in that synod our special care and perpetual endeavour was to guide our judgments by *that sound doctrine, which we had received from the Church of England*, so we were far, and ever shall be from usurping our mother's authority, or attempting to obtrude upon her children any of our synodical conclusions, as obligatory to them; yet remaining ourselves nevertheless resolved, that whatsoever was assented unto, or subscribed by us concerning the five articles, is not only warrantable by the holy scriptures, *but also conformable to the received doctrine of our said venerable mother.*"\*

This was signed by the bishop of Landaff, and the four other delegates, who were sent with him to the

\* "A Joint Attestation, avowing that the Discipline of the Church of England was not impeached at the Synod of Dort." Lond. 1626. p. 25, 26.

Synod of Dort. We thus have not only the presumptive evidence, that the church was calvinistic, from the circumstance of its sending delegates to this synod, but the positive testimony of the delegates themselves, that the doctrines of Calvinism, which they had given their voice to establish in the synod, were such as they had "*received from the Church of England.*"

It is a question, which may with propriety be asked, why predestination was introduced in any shape into the Articles of the Church, if the framers of these articles did not believe in this doctrine? It is found neither in the Augsburg nor the Saxon confession, both of which are said to have been principally from the pen of Melancthon.\* It is evident from these confessions, that the doctrine of election formed no part of Melancthon's creed. Now the Arminian interpreters would have us understand, that Cranmer and his associates were much more intimate with Melancthon than with Calvin, and that the Augsburg Confession was their principal model. This Confession is silent on the subject of predestination, although it is full on all the other important points of Calvinism. It maintains the doctrines of original sin, the depravity of human nature, the entire inability of man, justification by faith, salvation by grace, and the vicarious

\* Luther could not appear at the Diet of Augsburg, because he had been proscribed by the edict of Worms; yet he remained during the session of the Diet, in the neighbouring town of Coburg where "his advice was constantly sought." Hence the Augsburg Confession contained the sentiments of Luther, as well as Melancthon, and the German princes by whom it was subscribed. *Cox's Life of Melancthon*, p. 304.

sacrifice of Christ.\* If this confession were the model of the English reformers, why should they insert an article expressly on election, unless they thought this doctrine an essential addition? The kind of predestination which you describe as being intended by the seventh article of the church, was probably never thought of as an article of faith. You say "it has reference to the general election of the church, as the recipient of the covenant of grace, and not an allusion to the future state of individuals."† Something like this, perhaps, was the opinion of Melancthon respecting the scripture account of election, and for this reason he passed it over, as having no place in a confession of faith. But do you believe a single instance can be found, in any formularies of faith, in which the doctrine of election is introduced without alluding to the "future state of individuals?" That the seventeenth article should have been added at all, is only to be explained on the supposition, that it was to be understood in the usual acceptance of this doctrine, as it was already expressed in the well known confessions of Basil, Bohemia, and others.

I have been led into this historical detail with a view to trace the analogy between the sentiments of the English reformers, and the plain sense of the articles of the church. The Arminian interpreters, aware that the articles as they stand are cordially received by the Calvinists, and considered as strong supports of their doctrines, are fond of going back to the reformers, and modifying the articles by what they

\* Sylloge Confessionum, p. 127.

† Sermon, &c. p. 27.

conceive to have been the opinions of their original framers. They have never informed us, however, what reasons they have for supposing that these persons took pains to write ambiguous articles, or to clothe them in a language expressing opinions, which they did not entertain.\* The view, which has just been taken, must certainly free them from any such charge, and leave them at least the merit of consistency, fairness and honesty, of which they would be entitled to a very small share, if they did not write as they believed, and if their opinions were not calvinistic. We have not only their own declarations, but the ample testimony of cotemporary, and numerous succeeding writers.

I cannot close these remarks on the articles without noticing one, which is so uncharitable and unscriptural, that it is truly astonishing it should ever have been admitted into a system of christian faith. I refer to the eighteenth article, in which it is said, "They also are *to be had accursed*, that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame

\* Gilpin thinks it probable, that Cranmer in constructing the articles was "intentionally ambiguous," and that "he thought it prudent on this occasion to use such *well timed ambiguity*, as might give as little offence as possible!" Gilpin's Life of Cranmer, p. 155, 156. This was a singular motive, indeed, to guide a man in forming articles of religion, which were to be the rule of a nation's faith, and to which the whole body of the clergy were required by law to subscribe. Would it not have redounded quite as much to the edification of the church, to let the people follow the perspicuous rules of scripture, as to confound them in the dark mazes and ambiguous phraseology of mystical divinity?

his life according to that law, and the light of nature." Is it, then, the doctrine of the church, that all persons who lived before Christ, and all who shall live after him, without receiving a revelation, and hearing the glad tidings of his religion, are to have no part in the promise of salvation? Is this just? If they act according to the law and light they possess, what more will a righteous and merciful God require? Had the framers of this article forgotten the parable of the talents, and the express language of the apostle? To the Romans St. Paul writes, "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves." ii. 14. This is the law of conscience and reason, and when the man, who has no other law, acts in strict conformity to this, what authority have we to say, that he will not secure the favour of God? The christian will be judged by the law of the gospel; the heathen, who never heard of the gospel, by the law of conscience. "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." Acts x. 35. The article not only implies, that no individuals of any nation, which has not been visited with the light of gospel truth, can be saved; but declares that *they* are to be had accursed, who even *presume to say*, that they can be saved. It is much to be lamented, that such an article as this should be admitted into any formulary of christian faith. Nothing can be more contrary to the spirit and temper every where manifested by the blessed Jesus, and every where inculcated in the writings of the apostles.

After the examination, which has been made, how can the conclusion be resisted, that the sentiments advanced in your discourse, respecting the doctrinal character of the articles of the English church, are strikingly inconsistent with the church service, the homilies, and the plain, natural sense of the articles themselves? If the tenets of the reformers were not calvinistic, it will be difficult to prove any thing from written testimony; and it is not manifesting much respect for their memory, to charge them with writing articles, and teaching doctrines, which did not accord with their sentiments.

It has not been my aim, to attempt a confutation of your religious opinions. In many of these I agree with you. It is your manner of adapting the articles of the church to your opinions with which I am at variance. The system, which you pursue, I am persuaded is calculated to deceive the understanding, to obscure the truth, and to divert the mind from the only proper channel of religious knowledge. If report is to be credited, a very large portion of the American episcopal church is Arminian. All the members of the church, who range themselves in this class, pursue the same course of interpretation as yourself. I have had occasion to examine the construction, which several writers on this side of the question have put on the articles. The conviction has been perpetually forced on my mind, that the writer was not so much inquiring into the actual meaning and force of the articles, as devising ingenious ways of turning ambiguous phrases to his own account, and in making all general expressions have a particular bearing on the doctrine he is engaged to

support. One cannot but feel, that the writer, instead of making the articles his guide, takes his own course and compels them to follow. Even in the learned and popular work of the bishop of Lincoln, this feeling too often obtrudes itself, and in a great measure destroys the force of his arguments. If Scott's answer discovers less learning and good sense, it is, nevertheless, as far as the doctrines of the church are concerned, full and satisfactory.

Whoever examines this controversy, particularly as it has been carried on by the Arminian party, must perceive how forcibly it illustrates what has already been said in regard to the inexpediency of all *fixed* formularies of faith. Why should articles, expressed in language not found in scripture, be retained, when their inevitable tendency is to cause dissensions and controversies in the church? Not one Calvinist, we are told, was present at the general convention of the American episcopal church, when the articles were adopted.\* Why did not this convention reject the articles, which are so clearly calvinistic as to require volumes of explanations and paraphrases, even to show that they are not *contradictory* to the Arminian scheme. This point is the most that is pretended to be gained. To prove them *favourable* to this scheme, would require many more volumes. The American church, at least, could have no motives for resorting to "a well timed ambiguity" in teaching the doctrines of scripture, however such motives might have comported with the "prudence" of Cranmer.

\* How's Vindication, p. 278. Festivals and Fasts, p. 142, Note.

But instead of thinking it possible, that any new light could have been attained in two hundred years, and instead of acting on the broad principles of gospel liberty, the American episcopal convention, in a free country, where no man, or body of men, dares encroach on the civil rights and privileges of a single individual, determined authoritatively, that no person, who does not believe in the supremacy of bishops, and who is not ordained by a bishop, can be an authorized religious teacher. And, as if to prevent the possibility of inquiry, the exercise of private judgment, or a free examination of the scriptures among its members, it fixed a criterion of christian faith, and a code of spiritual laws, to which all persons must conform, who would have any part in this true church. These things were done, let it be remembered, in a country, which had lately triumphed in the cause of political liberty, and thrown off the yoke of civil bondage, which it had too much spirit, and too much virtuous independence to bear.

If the members of the convention had actually settled it in their minds, that there could be no true church without some established formulary in addition to the Bible, they might have greatly improved upon the old articles, and spared themselves much trouble, by passing a resolution somewhat like the following;—That whereas, we believe the Bible to be the word of God, and to contain a revelation of his will in every thing essential to salvation; and whereas, we believe all men to have a natural right to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience,—we agree to make this book the only rule of our faith and practice, and



to allow every one individually the privilege of studying, and receiving it in that sense, which he sincerely thinks it conveys. Had the convention substituted such a resolution in the place of the articles, it would be no longer necessary for a large number of the church to be wasting their time in proving their opinions not to be contrary to the articles; but it might be much more profitably employed in searching the scriptures to know what opinions they ought to receive.

If there happened to be any in the convention, who had been so long attached to old customs, as to think forms of faith an essential part of religion, something like the following, for the sake of accommodation, might have been adopted. "I believe there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things." "I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God." I believe "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." I believe, that "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."\* If it were thought important, there could be no very serious objection to adding something more to this creed, taking care always to use the precise language of scripture. But if it be absolutely necessary to have a formulary of faith, which is not expressed in scripture language, perhaps none can be more comprehensive and unexceptionable than this,—*I believe in all the scriptures teach.*

\* 1 Cor. viii. 6.—Acts viii. 37.—1 Cor. xv. 3.—Rom. x. 9.

## LETTER V.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

THE doctrine contained in the two first articles of the church, or what is commonly called *the doctrine of the trinity*, you pass over very slightly; and yet it may be doubted, whether any doctrine of the church stands in more need of explanation to make it intelligible or edifying to its members. So far as it relates to the divinity of Christ, you acknowledge it to be of "vital importance," and at the same time, declining to consider "the number or force of the objections against it," you content yourself with selecting in its support a few passages of scripture, as they are contained in Jones' work on the Trinity. Should your readers not be satisfied with these, you refer them for further information to the same source.

The remainder of what I have to say shall be devoted to this subject. I propose first to inquire into the *scriptural grounds* of the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is stated in the articles of the church, and in other parts of the Book of Common Prayer; and afterwards to examine the import of the texts you have

quoted, as well as some others, which are usually adduced in proof of this doctrine.

Before I take into consideration the articles above mentioned, I have some remarks to make on those parts of the Litany, which are intimately connected with this subject. The Litany commences with the following petitions, which make a part of every morning service, and are rendered with an audible voice, both by the minister and people.

“O God, the father of Heaven; have mercy upon us miserable sinners.”

“O God, the Son, Redeemer of the world; have mercy upon us miserable sinners.”

“Oh God, the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son; have mercy upon us miserable sinners.”

“Oh holy glorious and blessed Trinity, three persons and one God; have mercy upon us miserable sinners.”

In these petitions prayer is made *separately and distinctly* to God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, and to the holy Trinity. Here are four distinct objects of worship, addressed as different beings, and designated by different characters. How contrary is this to the commands and example of our Saviour. His command was, “thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and *him only* shalt thou serve.” He prayed to the FATHER, and taught his disciples to pray to the FATHER. “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O FATHER, Lord of heaven and earth.” To his disciples he said, “After this manner pray ye; “Our FATHER, which art in heaven.” “In that day ye shall ask ME nothing—whatsoever

ye shall ask the FATHER in my name, HE will give it you." "The hour cometh and now is, when the *true worshippers*, shall worship the FATHER in spirit and in truth."\* We thus perceive, that our blessed Lord considered the Father the only object of worship. We never hear of his worshipping himself, the Holy Ghost, or a Trinity. He never informed his disciples of any such objects of worship.

But what is still more surprising in the worship of the church, is, that it is not only addressed to *four* distinct objects, but these objects are respectively called Gods. A petition is first addressed separately and distinctly to *God* the Father; next, to *God* the Son; then, to *God* the Holy Ghost; and last of all, to the Trinity. Let it be observed, that these are not taken collectively, but separately and exclusively. The Trinity differs only from the three first in being called a *God* consisting of three persons, whereas the others are spoken of as uncompounded beings. I do not say that Episcopalians profess to worship four Gods, or that in reading the Litany, they have in their minds four distinct objects of worship; but if they do not, it is quite certain their sentiments do not accord with the language they use. At the best, this kind of language must destroy all just conceptions of the one true God, introduce confusion into the mind, and call it off from that pure and spiritual worship, which the scriptures enjoin.

When the minister solemnly makes the following petition, "Oh God, the Holy Ghost, have mercy upon us miserable sinners," and the people respond to it,

\* Matth. iv. 10.—xi. 25.—vi. 9.—John xvi. 23.—John. iv. 23.

what ideas can they have of this being, whom they address as God, but that he is a being, who possesses power of himself, independently of any other being, to grant their petition. The prayer would be unmeaning, if it were not accompanied with such ideas. The same may be said of each of the petitions, which are presented to the other three beings. Hence they, who worship according to the Litany, actually worship *four beings*, each of whom is there called *God*.\*

But this is not all. Petition is also made to another being, who, although he is not, as each of the four above mentioned, distinguished by the title of God, is nevertheless addressed as a distinct being. The petition runs as follows, "By the mystery of thy holy incarnation; by thy holy nativity and circumcision; by thy baptism, fasting, and temptation; by thine agony, and bloody sweat; by thy cross and passion; by thy precious death and burial, by thy glorious resurrection and ascension; good Lord deliver us." Now, to whatever being this prayer may be addressed, it cannot be to either of those mentioned above, for they are called Gods. But God is essentially a spirit, and no such properties can be applied to him, as incarnation nativity, circumcision, baptism, fasting, sweat, death and burial. The being here addressed, therefore, must be distinct from either of the others, and cannot be God. I suppose you will say it is Christ in his *human*

\* Mr. Jones of Nayland, to whose work you refer your readers for instruction on the trinity, says, "That in the three former petitions the unity *in trinity*; in the fourth the trinity *in unity* is worshipped."—Cath. Doc. of the Trin. New-York, 1813, p. 178. Whether this be a clear and satisfactory explanation of the subject, I will leave for others to decide.

*nature.* But what is he in his human nature more or less than a man. It follows, that if you pray to him in his human nature, you pray to him as man. The conclusion of the whole is, that in the Litany worship is offered to *five beings*, four of whom are called *Gods*; and the fifth is addressed under such properties as belong only to a man.

Such is the result to which it appears to me every one will come, who examines the Litany without partiality, and who suffers himself to be governed, in judging of its meaning, by the principles which usually guide him in ascertaining the sense of language. If the words are to be taken in their ordinary acceptation, they certainly cannot be received under any other construction. If you have secret ideas, and hidden correspondences attached to them, it will be easy enough to make them mean any thing. But that interpretation is of a very suspicious character, to say the least, which requires such aids to make it consistent or intelligible; and if we are any where to look for perspicuity, and a plain, natural use of words, one would suppose it ought to be in a settled form of prayer, which makes a part of the divine service of every sabbath. If it be said, that my conclusions are not just, because no episcopalian imagines himself to worship four Gods; I would reply, that I have not drawn these conclusions from any one's opinions, but from the *language of the Litany itself*. It is but reasonable to suppose, however, that they, who worship in the language of this Litany, have corresponding opinions. To intimate the contrary would be an implied charge of insincerity, which I should be very unwilling to make against any exemplary christian.

I will next proceed to a general consideration of the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is unfolded in the first, second, and fifth articles of the church.

ARTICLE I. "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this godhead, *there be three persons, of one substance*, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

ART. II. "The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, *the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father*, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed virgin, of her substance; so that *two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the godhead and the manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ. very God, and very man*; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

ART. V. "The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, *is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.*"

To these articles it may be proper to add what is said on the same subject in the Nicene creed, as this is a received form in the church service.

"I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds; *God of God, light of light, very God of very*

*God*, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

“I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and Son; who, with the Father and Son together, is worshipped and glorified.”

The first thing which strikes one on reading these passages is the strangeness of their phraseology. In articles purporting to set forth some of the highest and most essential doctrines of christian faith, most persons would expect to recognize something, which they had seen in the scriptures. It is a remarkable feature in all the explanations, which the church has given of this doctrine, that in scarcely a single instance can you find three words together used in the same connexion as in the Bible. Take the following example. “And in unity of this godhead, there be three persons of one substance, power and eternity.” This passage is not in the scriptures. Separate it into parts, and you will be equally unsuccessful in finding them in the word of God. Nothing is said there of the unity of the godhead, or of any substance, which is composed of three persons. Nor can you any where find it expressed in the Bible, that Christ “is the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father;” or that “he took upon him man’s nature;” or that in him “were two whole and perfect natures joined together in one person.” And above all, you cannot find in the holy scriptures any language, which bears the remotest resemblance to the unintelligible phraseology, “very God and very man,” “God of God, light of light, very God of very God.” There are no such phrases in the Bible, as “God the Son,” and



“God the Holy Ghost;” and instead of any such language as, “holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God,” the word *trinity* is not found in the scriptures. It is a name for which the apostles had no occasion.\* In short, so far as language is concerned, it would hardly be possible to conceive of a wider departure from the records of revealed truth, than is found in the phraseology, which the church has thought proper to employ in defining this doctrine of the trinity.

Before we proceed any further, it may be well to take a short view of the different modes in which English writers, and principally those of the church, have explained this doctrine. *First*, the Athanasians, among whom were Dr. Waterland, Dr. Taylor, and probably archbishop Secker, from the encomium he passes on the Athanasian creed, maintain, that the trinity consists of three distinct, independent, and equal persons, constituting one and the same God; or in other words, that “the Father is Almighty, the Son is Almighty, the Holy Ghost is Almighty, and yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty.”†

\* The word *trinity* was not used till near the close of the second century, when it first occurs in the works of Theophilus, bishop of Antioch. The terms *person* and *substance* were not introduced till the third century, when they were first used in the Sabellian and Noetian controversies.

† In his thirteenth Lecture on the church Catechism, archbishop Secker speaks as follows. “Since, then, there is not a plurality of Gods; and yet the Son and Spirit are *each of them God*, no less than the Father; it plainly follows, that they are, in a manner by us inconceivable, so united to him, that these *three are one*; but still, in a manner equally inconceivable; so distinguished from

*Secondly*, according to Mr. How's theory, there are three distinct, intelligent hypostases, each having a distinct, intelligent nature, united in some inexplicable manner so as to make one God, in somewhat the same way as the corporeal, sensitive, and intellectual faculties are united to form one man. *Thirdly*, Dr. Wallis was an advocate for the Sabellian hypothesis, and held, that the three persons in the trinity were only three *modes* or *relations*, which the Deity bears to his creatures. This, also, was probably the opinion of archbishop Tillotson. *Fourthly*, bishop Pearson supposes the Father to be an underived and essential essence, and the Son to have received every thing by communication from God the Father. "There can be but one person," says he, "originally of himself subsisting in that infinite Being, because a plurality of more persons so subsisting would necessarily infer a multiplicity of Gods." The Son possessed the whole divine nature by *communication*, not by *participation*, and in *such a way*, that he was as really God as the Father. Bishop Bull and Dr. Owen adopted a similar theory.\* *Fifthly*, in the system of

him, that no one of them is the other." Works, vol. vi. p. 126. This is indeed inconceivable, that these three beings should be "each of them God," and at the same time so united as to be "one," and yet "no one of them to be the other."

\* Bishop Pearson's Exposition of the Creed, Oxford, 1792, vol. i. p. 175, 217. The bishop speaks in further illustration of this doctrine somewhat in the language of the Nicene creed and of Augustin. "The Father is God, but not of God; light, but not of light; Christ is God, but of God; light, but of light. There is no difference or inequality in the nature or essence, because the same in both; but the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath

Dr. Thomas Burnet, the Father is a self-existent Being, the Son and Spirit are *dependent*; but so united, that divine perfections and worship may be ascribed to each. *Sixthly*, Mr. Baxter defines the three divine persons to be *wisdom, power, and love*; and illustrates his meaning by the *vital power, intellect, and will* in the soul of man, and by *motion, light, and heat* in the sun. For this explanation he was indebted to the sharpened wits of the schoolmen. *Seventhly*, bishop Burgess supposes the three *persons* of the Deity to make one God, but does not allow, that these persons are three *beings*. He makes out his position by the following syllogism. "The scriptures declare that there is only one God. The same scriptures declare, that there are three omnipresent PERSONS; but there cannot be two omnipresent BEINGS; therefore the three omnipresent persons can be only one God." According to this hypothesis the trinity is made up of three nonentities. *Eighthly*, bishop Gastrell says, "the three names of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, must denote a three-fold difference or distinction belonging to God, but such as is consistent with the unity and simplicity of the divine nature; for each of these includes the *whole* idea of God, and *something more*. So far as they express the nature of God, they all adequately and

that essence of himself, from none; Christ hath the same not of himself, but from him." p. 218. Augustin has it, "Filius est de Patre, et quicquid est filius, de illo est cujus est filius; ideo Dominum Jesum dicimus Deum de Deo; Patrem non dicimus Deum de Deo, sed tantum Deum; et dicimus Dominum Jesum lumen de lumine; Patrem non dicimus lumen de lumine, sed tantum lumen."

exactly signify the same. It is the additional signification, which makes all the distinction between them." According to bishop Gastrell, then. "the Father includes the whole idea of God, and something more; the Son includes the whole idea of God, and something more; the Holy Ghost includes the whole idea of God and something more; while altogether, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost make one entire God, and no more."\* *Ninthly*, a scheme, which certainly will vie with any other for novelty, is that lately advanced by Mr. Heber, in his Bampton Lectures. He has made the marvellous discovery, that the second and third persons in the trinity are no other than the angels Michael and Gabriel † It was the second person, who conversed with Moses from Mount Sinai; and the third person, who constituted the Jewish Schekinah. *Lastly*, I will mention only one scheme more, which is that of Dr. Sherlock. I have reserved it till the last, because it seems to be in more exact accordance with the articles of the church, than either of the others, unless it be the Athanasian. He says, "The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are as really distinct persons, as Peter, James, and John; each of which is God. We must allow each person to be a God. These three infinite minds are distinguished, just as three created minds are, by self consciousness. And by mutual consciousness each

\* Belsham's Reply to Dr. Moysey, Lond. 1819, p. 32.

† Heber's Bampton Lectures, preached before the University of Oxford, 1815, Lec. iv. p. 211, 228. To clear up this point the lecturer levies most heavily upon the Jewish Rabbis, the Targums, the Mahometan doctors, and the ancient Fathers. Appendix to Lec. iv. p. 240—250.

person of these has the *whole* wisdom, power, and goodness of the other two.”\*

Such have been the various and contradictory opinions of men, who have subscribed to the articles of the church. May it not be thought a little remarkable, that articles, which were made for the express purpose of “avoiding diversities of opinion,” should have been so unsuccessful in this particular? If it were thought necessary to deviate so widely from scripture language, in expressing what was considered a most essential doctrine of christian faith, should it not have been deemed an object of the very first importance to use terms so perspicuous and direct, as to prevent the possibility of misapprehending their meaning? What benefit can the church derive from articles, which are so vague and unintelligible, as to lead its most distinguished members into endless controversies, and which may be appealed to, with equal confidence, by those who support opinions as opposite as light to darkness?

But when we examine the account of the trinity, which the church has placed at the head of its articles, we can hardly be surprised, that its most learned doctors should not be able to agree in any particu-

\* This was the ground, which Dr. Sherlock took in the celebrated controversy between him and Dr. South. The latter maintained, that there was only one infinite eternal mind, and three *somethings*, which were not distinct minds, but called by different names, as modes, faculties, subsistences. Lind. Apol, p. 63. For a more full account of the above statements, see Doddridge’s Lectures, p vii. prop. 152. Adams’s Dictionary of Religions, fourth ed. Bost. p. 291. Worcester’s Trinitarian Review, No. 1. Reply to Dr. Moysey, p. 32, 123. Rees’ Cycl. Art. Trin.

lar mode of interpretation. How can learning or genius reconcile essential and necessary contradictions? How can they draw rational or intelligible conclusions from premises, which are at variance with the immutable truths of nature? Had trinitarians always been required, at the very outset of their theories, to lay down axioms from which they never should depart, and to give clear definitions of all the technical terms they were to employ, the whole scheme would long ago have disappeared with the primalities, the essences, and occult qualities of the schoolmen. Had they all agreed in attaching some clear and distinct ideas to the terms, person, substance, essence, properties, nature, mode, relation, hypostasis, and many others, which have been transplanted from the technical theology and absurd metaphysics of the dark ages, this controversy about the trinity would have been reduced to an exceedingly narrow compass. When men use words without any settled meaning, or when different defenders of the same theory use the same words in contrary meanings, it would be marvellous indeed if they should come to any terms of agreement, elicit much light in their researches, or do much towards advancing the cause of truth. Is it not some objection against a doctrine, that it cannot be expressed in scripture language, nor defined in *any language* so as to be understood; and that its ablest defenders give contrary explanations of its most important points?\*

\* The following example will show how unintelligibly, not to say contradictorily, a very learned, and a very great man could talk on the trinity. "That there is one diviae nature, or essence,

One of the most remarkable particulars in the doctrine of the trinity as received by the church, is the glaring and inevitable contradiction which it contains: In the first place, it is said, "There is but one living and true God." This is an intelligible proposition. But immediately after, it is added, "there be three persons" in this God. This, in connexion with the other, is an unintelligible proposition, unless it can be proved by some new kind of logic, that *one* is *three*. Lest any doubt should remain about the meaning of this word *person*, it is immediately after added, that the second person is "very God," and the third, "very and eternal God." Here then is a being composed of three persons, one of whom is called "the living and true God," the other "very God," and the last "very and eternal God," and yet these three beings make

common unto three persons incomprehensibly united and *ineffably distinguished*; united in essential attributes, distinguished by particular idioms and relations; all equally infinite in every divine perfection, each different from the other in order and manner of subsistence, that there is a mutual inexistence in all, and all in one; a communication without any deprivation or diminution in the communicant; an eternal generation, and an eternal procession, without precedence or succession, without proper causality or dependence; a Father imparting his own, and the Son receiving his Father's life, and a spirit issuing from both, without any division or multiplication of essence,—these are notions, which may well puzzle our reason in conceiving how they agree, but should not stagger our faith in asserting that they are true." Barrow's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 423.

When it is possible for us to believe propositions to which we can affix no ideas, and which contain as many *contradictions* as distinct parts, then perhaps we may assent to "these notions" without "staggering our faith," but not before.

but *one God!* Of such a doctrine as this, it is no wonder that Dr. South should say, "Were it not to be adored as a *mystery*, it would be exploded as a *contradiction*."\* By the same course of reasoning it might be made out, that a mile is a league, because a league consists of three miles; or you might prove, with certain of the ancient fathers, that three men are one man, having only a "numerical difference," and agreeing in "essential essence."†

There is also a very strange contradiction between the apostles' creed, and the fifth article of the church. In the creed it is said, the "Son was conceived of the Holy Ghost;" but in the article we are told, that the "Holy Ghost *proceedeth* from the Father and the Son" How these propositions are to be reconciled may well occupy the attention of churchmen, or of any

\* "That any one should be both father and son to the same person, produce himself, be cause and effect too, and so the copy give being to its original, seems at first sight so very strange and unaccountable, that were it not to be adored as a *mystery*, it would be exploded as a *contradiction*." South's Sermons, vol. iii. p. 140. Lond. 1718. And yet this "strange and unaccountable mystery," is what Dr. South labours through a whole sermon to *explain*.

† In speaking of the ancient doctrine of Gregory Nyssen, Cyril, Maximus the martyr, and others, Cudworth observes, "These theologians supposed the three persons of their trinity to have really no other, than a *specific unity, or identity*; and because it seems plainly to follow from hence, that therefore they must needs be as much three Gods, as three men are three men; these learned fathers endeavoured with their logic to prove, that three men are but abusively and improperly so called three, they being really and truly but one, because there is but *one and the same specific essence or substance of human nature* in them all." Cudworth's Intellectual System, p. 604, Lond. 1678.



persons, who believe them both to be true. The Greek church has been more circumspect, for although it admits the Athanasian and Nicene creeds, it affirms that the Holy Spirit ‘is from the Father only, and not from the Father and Son,’ and it has altered the creeds accordingly.\*

In pursuing this examination, I shall endeavour to keep as nearly as possible to that kind of trinity, which is to be understood from the plain language of the articles, and which is defined in fewer words by bishop Sherlock. According to this theory, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are as essentially three distinct beings, as three men are distinct beings; each is as essentially God, as the others; each has the same “substance, power and eternity,” as the others; and, consequently, each has independently all the attributes of the others. The attributes of the Father are infinite; therefore, the attributes of the Son and Holy Spirit are infinite. All the properties and perfections, which belong to one, belong in an equal degree to each of the others. What you can say of one, you can say of either of the others.

The kind of trinity, therefore, which the church adopts, and to which I shall direct my remarks, may be summed up in the following words.

**I.** There is one God.

**II.** This God consists of three persons, or beings, each of whom, separately considered, is as essentially God, as all three are when united.

**III.** Jesus Christ is one of these beings, and “perfect God,” at the same time he is “perfect man.”

\* New Edinb. Ency. vol. v. p. 749.

I. The first proposition is one to which all christians, at least in words, assent. All sects profess to make the unity of God a fundamental doctrine. The testimony of nature and of scripture is too strong to be resisted. But this doctrine, which is so simple and obvious in itself, has been so much disfigured and obscured as scarcely to be recognized amidst the rubbish, which has been collected around it by the fancy and prejudices of men. While the Maker of heaven and earth continued to be adored, as the one Supreme God, men had a definite and glorious object of worship, in whom all their pious affections centred, and to whom alone they attributed honour, glory, and dominion. But now we are made acquainted with a threefold being. The Supreme God is one, yet he is three. He is now a "triune God," and is to be worshipped as "God in trinity, and trinity in unity." Let us see what grounds there are, either in the nature of the Supreme Being, or in his revealed word, for applying to him such unscriptural names, and attributing to him such strange and inconsistent properties.

1. The unity of God is a simple, indivisible, and perfect unity. His essence, substance, or nature, is essentially one. It cannot be divided in parts. The essence or substance of God, is God himself. His absolute perfection consists in his being one, independently of all things else. The moment you conceive him to be divided into parts, you destroy his character as God. But unless he be supposed to be separated into parts, how can he be said to exist in three persons? Or how can the word *three* be applied to him in any sense? What idea could be form-

ed of such a being? Not that he is *one*, but *three*. His unity would be destroyed.\*

2. Again, the attributes of the Deity are infinite. He has infinite power, knowledge, and wisdom. If there were more than one such being, neither of them could be the Supreme Being. God could not be the only omniscient being, if any other knew as much as he; nor could he be the only omnipotent being, if any other had as much power. If the Son and Holy Spirit be each "very God," they must have the perfect attributes of God, and be in all respects equal. This is not impossible. There may be three infinitely perfect beings. But in such case, no one would be above or below the other; no one, more than another, could be called God on account of any pre-eminence of character. There would indeed be *three Gods*, but not *one Supreme God*.

3. The great doctrine of the unity of God is, also, one of the most prominent in the scriptures. The first truth, which Moses delivered to the Israelites, on giving them the law, was, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is ONE LORD." This was repeated by our Saviour to the scribe, who replied, "there is ONE GOD, and there is none other but he." Mark xii. 29, 32. "The Lord he is God, and there is *none else* be-

\* Deus cum summum magnum sit recte veritas nostra pronuntiavit, Deus si non unus est, non est. Non quasi dubitemus esse Deum, dicendo, si non unus, non est Deus; sed quia, quem confidimus esse, idem definiamus esse, quod si non est, Deus non est, summum scilicet magnum. Porro, summum magnum unicum sit necesse est, ergo et Deus unicus erit, non aliter Deus, nisi summum magnum, nec aliter summum magnum, nisi parem non habens, nec aliter parem non habens, nisi unicus fuerit. Tertul. adv. Marcion. lib. i. c. 3. Vid. Pearson on the Creed, vol. ii. p. 21.

sides him." Deut. iv. 35. "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me." Isai. xlvi. 9. "Unto us there is but ONE GOD, the Father, of whom are all things." 1 Cor. viii. 6. It is unnecessary to select other passages. No truth is more constantly urged, than the *unity* and *supremacy* of God.

II. My next inquiry shall be, whether Christ were this Supreme God. If so wonderful a fact as this be contained in the scriptures, we must expect to find it expressed in the most unequivocal and positive terms. To render it possible, that a being who was born, who had the feelings, affections, and passions of a man, who felt the pains of hunger and thirst, who was affected with joy and grief, was subject to bodily and mental sufferings, and at length died,—to render it possible, that such a being could be the eternal God, requires a weight of evidence, in comparison with which, the united testimony of every human being since the world began would be nothing, without a full, express, and positive revelation from God himself. It is not a doctrine, which any one should venture to collect from hints and allusions, or to build up from a few doubtful passages of scripture. If it be a truth, it must be written in characters which cannot be mistaken, and shine forth as the most conspicuous object in every part of the word of God.

In discussing this question we can appeal to no higher authority, than that of our Saviour himself. Let us see if we can infer from his own language, that he was the Supreme God.

1. To those who were disposed to kill him for healing the sick man on the sabbath day, he said, "As the

Father hath life in himself, so hath he *given* to the Son to have life in himself; and hath *given* him authority to execute judgment, also, because he is the Son of man." John v. 26, 27. Do you understand from this, that the same being, who gave life and authority, was the being himself, who received them? Were the *giver*, and *receiver* the same?

2. Again, "My meat is to do the will of him, that *sent me*, and to finish his work." John iv. 34. "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father, which hath *sent me*." v. 30. "My doctrine is not mine, but his that *sent me*." vii. 16. "I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which *sent me*, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak." xii. 49. "I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but *he sent me*." viii. 42. Here Christ explicitly declares in several places, that he *was sent* by the Father. Would this language be intelligible if Christ were God? He came not to do *his own will*, but the *will of the Father*. In what terms can you more clearly define two distinct beings, than by attributing to them two wills? When he says "my doctrine is not mine," are we to understand directly the contrary, that it was his? When he says "he came from God," does he mean that he came from himself? If the notion had prevailed in the days of our Saviour, that he was God, and it had been his special purpose to confute such an error, it were difficult to conceive how he could use stronger language than what is contained in these passages. He says, again, "my Father is *greater than I*," John xiv. 28, from which it certainly

does not follow, that he and the Father are the same. When our Lord told his disciples, that “he came forth from the Father,” and they replied, “we believe, that thou camest forth from God,”\* did they mean, that they believed him to be God, and that he came forth from himself? And what would be the meaning of the passage, “he shall know my doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself,”† if God and himself were the same being?‡

3. As the Lord Jesus was not God, so he did not in himself possess the attributes of God. He uniformly ascribed all power, knowledge, goodness, and wisdom to the Father, and repeatedly affirmed, that he derived every thing from the Father.

God is omnipotent, and needs no aid from any other being. But Jesus declares, “I can of mine own self do nothing.” John v. 30. “The Father, that dwelleth in me, he doth the works.” xiv. 10. “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do.” v. 19. In the discourses from which these texts are taken, it seems to be his whole design to convince the people, that the miracles and wonderful works, which they had seen him perform, were not done by any power of his own, but entirely by the power, which he had received from God. There is no reason why he should wish the people to be deceived on this point. If he had done these works by his own power, why should he refer them to another? This would be detracting from the weight of his own character, and would tend rather to defeat, than strengthen his purpose of establishing his divine

\* John xvi. 30.

† John vii. 17.

authority. If, as he says, he could not do these things without aid from God, it is evident he did not possess the same power as God.

4. Again, God is omniscient. Every thing is known to him from the beginning to the end. But the Lord Jesus expressly declares, that he has not a knowledge of all future events. "As my *Father hath taught me*, I speak these things" John viii. 28. If he had known all things from the beginning, he could not be *taught*. Whatever is learnt from a teacher is something, which was not before known. After having described many of the signs and wonders, which should precede the destruction of Jerusalem, or as it is thought by many, the day of judgment, he concludes, "But of that day, and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels, which are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the *Father only*." Mark xiii. 32. Here is a positive declaration on the part of our Saviour, that *he did not know* what the *Father* knew. His knowledge was limited; finite and not infinite; not the knowledge of God, but of a subordinate being.

5. At another time, when one called him "Good Master," he replied, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God." Matt. xix. 17. Two things are evident in this reply; first, that he represented himself as a distinct being from God; and secondly, that he did not possess the same degree of goodness. It is not important to inquire in how high a degree this attribute existed in him. It is enough, that he acknowledges it to be imperfect, and inferior to the goodness of God. The one is infinite, the other limited.

6. St. Luke bears testimony, that “Jesus *increased* in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” ii. 52. How could he *increase* in wisdom, if he were God, and had originally all wisdom? How could he *increase* in favour with God, if he had from the beginning all the divine perfections? The wisdom of God is perfect. According to the scriptures, the wisdom of Christ was imperfect.\*

We have thus seen from the scriptures, and mostly from our Saviour’s own words, that he was not the one true God, and that the attributes, which constitute the perfection of the divine nature, were possessed by him in a limited and inferior degree.

He was a *derived* being, because he came forth from the Father, and received all knowledge and power from him.

He was a *subordinate* being, because he did nothing of himself, but obeyed the will of the Father.

It is, nevertheless, the doctrine of the church, that he is “God of God, very God of very God.”

III. I am aware that the church has a way of getting over all these difficulties, and still maintaining that the Lord Jesus is God. They, who believe in

\* Theodore of Mopsuetia maintained, that Christ had two souls, one distinct from the Word. This he said was necessary to account for many of his actions. According to him, it was not the divine Word, which increased in wisdom, and suffered; but the other soul of Christ. Butler’s *Horæ Biblicæ*, p. 210.

Theodore, bishop of Pharan, and Sergius held, that although Christ had *two natures*, he had but *one will*. This opinion was called a heresy, and condemned in the council at Rome, A. D. 649. *Ibid.* p. 211.



the doctrine of the trinity, have a never failing expedient, to which they resort with equal success in every emergency,—a sort of magical key, which unlocks with equal ease all the entrances to the difficult parts of scripture. It has been decreed by councils, and settled by convocations of bishops, and other divines, “that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man.” As this scheme of two natures is the chain which holds the trinity together, I hope it will not be thought amiss, if I stop to examine it with some care.

1. It cannot be deemed an impertinent question for me first to ask, what proof is found in the scripture of such a doctrine? This is the only test by which we ought to abide. I have never been able to find a single passage in which our Saviour, or his apostles, or any other persons speak of these two natures. In all the discourses of Jesus to his disciples and to the people, he never once intimated that he was two beings, and spoke sometimes in the character of one, and sometimes in the character of the other. If he actually possessed two natures, why should he not make it known? How could the people tell when he spoke as God, and when as man; and what could prevent their being perpetually deceived? To have made his instructions intelligible, or productive of any profit to his hearers, it would have been necessary on every occasion to tell them in what character he was speaking. But so far from this, he always spake of himself as one person, and never

once intimated, that he had more than one character or nature.

2. By this scheme of two natures, trinitarians explain without difficulty all the words of Christ. They take upon themselves to judge, when he speaks as God, and when he speaks as man. For instance, when he says, "not my will, but thine be done," they say he speaks as man. That is, the part of him which is man, addresses the part of him, which is God. They do not recollect, that this is making two wills in him, and one opposed to the other. What idea can you form of a being, who has two opposite wills? What more clearly designates a distinct being, than a distinct will? If Christ had not such a will, how can he in any sense, be called one being, or "one Christ?" If he had such a will, how can he be called two?

3. Let those, who believe in this double character of Christ, answer the questions, "to which of these beings St. Paul alludes in the phrase, 'Our Lord Jesus Christ?' Are we to understand here the 'very God,' or 'very man?' Does it require two distinct beings for the 'one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things?' Have we two distinct beings for the 'one mediator between God and men?' Have we two distinct beings for the one 'head over all things to the church?' Do these two distinct beings constitute the one person, who is seated at the right hand of God?"\* Every one should be able to give rational answers to these questions, and find some direct testimony in the scripture for this singular doctrine, before he gives it his assent.

\* See Worcester's Trinitarian Review, No. 3. p. 95.

4. As this scheme of a double nature is not supported by any positive scriptural evidence, and is extremely repugnant to every dictate of the understanding, it may be well to trace out some of the consequences of admitting such an expedient, as a guide in the interpretation of the revealed word of God. In the first place, it makes the language of Christ in many instances inconsistent with veracity. It causes him to say, that he could not do, what he could do. If he were the supreme God, and had infinite power, he could do all things. To say that he "could do nothing of himself," would not be true, in whatever nature he might say it. For if he were God, he could of himself do every thing; otherwise the human nature might control the divine, which I suppose no one will allow. He could never have a deficiency of power in any one nature, if he were God in any other.

5. Similar remarks may be made in regard to the passage in which he tells his disciples, that he did not know the time when those dreadful calamities, which he had been describing, would happen. They must have been eager to know at what period these direful predictions were to be accomplished. Yet he told them *he did not know*. But if he were the supreme God, he knew all things, and must have known "the day and the hour" perfectly well. Nor could he know a thing as God, and not know it as man. He could not know a thing, and be ignorant of it at the same time. How then, if he were God, could it be true for him to tell his disciples, that he did not know the time when his predictions would come to pass?

6. These two beings, or natures, although they make *one person*, have properties totally inconsistent with each other. This compound person has all the perfections of God, and all the imperfections of man. It is infinite and finite; possessing all power, and yet dependant; knowing all things, yet limited in knowledge; immutable, yet subject to perpetual change; incapable of suffering, and yet feeling the pains and calamities incident to human life; mortal, and yet immortal. All this, to be sure, is absurd and impossible; but it is a necessary inference from this doctrine of two natures in one person.

7. To interpret the scriptures by this scheme, would also introduce the greatest confusion and uncertainty. You may assign any meaning you choose to almost every word, which Jesus spoke concerning himself, or which the apostles wrote about him, and another may give, with equal authority, a directly contrary meaning. One may say he speaks as God, and another he speaks as man in the same place. Each may quote the same words to prove opposite positions, and they will apply equally as well to a false as a true argument. No combination of words, which Jesus could have used, would prove him not to be God. Suppose he had said in plain terms in every discourse he uttered, *I am not God*; and suppose the same had been often repeated by his apostles, it would prove nothing. We should be told, that he spoke it as man. Is it not obvious, that such a system of interpretation as this would make the most important parts of scripture, not only unintelligible, but contradictory? In what respect does it differ from the cabalism of the Jews, or the esoteric doctrines of mystical

philosophy? The Jews pretended, that they had a written and an oral law, a visible and an invisible. The words of Moses were mere symbols of a recondite meaning. The hidden sense was always considered the true one, although it often happened, that this was contrary to the visible sense. So it is with this mystical doctrine of two natures. The common use of words is laid aside. The visible is made to give way to the invisible; the plain sense of language is sacrificed to a hidden sense. Such a principle must destroy all certainty in the scriptures, and involve the inquirer in endless perplexities and confusion. Yet such is the principle, by which the fabric of the trinity is held together.

8. Moreover, this doctrine of two natures, when carried to its full extent, will tend just as strongly to prove the Son inferior, as equal to the Father. You can prove, that he *is not* God, and does *not* possess the divine attributes, by the same course of reasoning, which you employ to prove, that he *is* God. Since his two natures are essentially united in one, to make the "one Lord Jesus Christ," you may deny of him absolutely what does not belong to him in both natures. When he says, indefinitely, that he does not possess all power, all knowledge, all goodness, without intimating that he speaks of himself in any other character than the "one person," or "one Christ;" what else can he mean, except that in this character he is limited in these attributes? Now in this character he is essentially *one*, and "never to be divided;" and in this character, if in any, he is God, or as bishop Sherlock expresses it, "*a God.*" But God is

perfect. The “one Christ,” in his most absolute character, is imperfect, and therefore cannot be God.

9. In every attempt to prove this doctrine, Christ must be considered as always having spoken with a mental reservation,—saying one thing and meaning another. You are not to interpret his words from what he said, but from what he retained behind, and did not think proper to express. Suppose this were to be made a principle in writing and conversation; where would be truth, knowledge, or any thing else, which could promote the virtue, order, and happiness of society? There could be no language, which might not be perverted. Suppose any one were to say the Apostles’ creed in the manner of speaking, which is attributed to our Saviour. He might deny every article, which relates to Christ, and still insist that he recites it correctly. He might say, “Jesus Christ was *not* born of the Virgin Mary; did *not* suffer under Pontius Pilate; was *not* crucified, dead, and buried; did *not* rise from the dead on the third day; did *not* ascend up into heaven.” If he were to repeat the creed with these negatives, his language would be strictly correct, although he might firmly believe every word of the creed, as it stands in the Book of Common Prayer. He has only taken the liberty of mental reservation. If you were to tell him, that he had denied some of the positive declarations, and most important doctrines of scripture, he would reply, this is a mistake; I had in mind the *divine* nature of Christ, which could neither be born, suffer, nor die.\*

\* For some forcible remarks on this subject of two natures, see Emlyn’s Works, v. i. p. 98—105.

10. I will not pursue these consequences any farther. Every one must see to what contradictions and confusion they lead. That a principle of interpretation, which will admit of such consequences, should ever have been resorted to, can only be accounted for by its being a necessary support of the trinity. A doctrine, which does so much violence to the understanding, as this scheme of two natures, and which is not even countenanced by a single direct allusion in the scriptures,—such a doctrine could not have been invented, except as a necessary expedient. When the notion began to prevail, that there were three beings, each possessing equal perfections, or in other words, each equally God, so many passages started forth, in every page of the New Testament, to prove the subordinate and dependant character of Christ, that this scheme readily suggested itself as the only possible one, which could give the least semblance of consistency to a doctrine apparently so irrational and so unscriptural as the trinity. To preserve consistency in this doctrine, another was devised no less inconsistent, irrational, and unscriptural.

IV. We have thus seen, that Jesus Christ was not the *one true God*, but a subordinate being. We are next to inquire whether the Holy Spirit be the one true God. According to the fifth article of the church, “The Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.” In most cases, one being proceeding from another would denote a difference in those two beings. Here the Holy Spirit is said not only to be of *one substance* with the Father and the Son, but to be it-

self the “very God,” *from whom it proceeds*. Such a mystery as this, it must be allowed, is not to be understood. I shall neither attempt to conceive, nor explain the doctrine of procession, but shall confine myself to the inquiry, whether the Holy Spirit be a distinct being, and be at the same time, seperately considered, the “eternal God,” and the “one Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. If the Holy Spirit be God, it must be self-existent, and independent. The fifth article, and the Nicene creed say, it “*proceeds* from the Father and Son.” It cannot, therefore, have had existence originally in itself; and if it be a distinct being, it must, according to the article and creed, be derived and dependant, and consequently not God.

2. There can be little doubt, that the phrase Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit, is often used in the sacred writings synonymously with God. In such cases it is simply a *name* of the Supreme Being. This use of the phrase is very rational. What is the Holy Spirit, but the spirit of God, and what is the Spirit of God, but God himself? It is not a “substance,” which has proceeded from the Father. It is in reality God. When Elihu, one of Job’s friends said, “*The Spirit of God* made me,”\* what could he mean, but that *God* made him? When the Psalmist exclaims, “Whither shall I go from *thy Spirit*,”† what else is it but to say, “whither shall I go from thee?” When Peter reprimanded Ananias and Sapphira for concealing a part of their goods, he asked them, “How is it that ye have agreed together

\* Job xxxiii. 4.

† Psalm cxxxix. 7.



to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" Acts v. 9. On another occasion the same apostle said to those, who wished to make the Mosaic institutions binding on the christian converts, "Now, therefore, why tempt ye God? Acts xv. 10. In both these passages it is evident the object tempted was the same. It is a common phraseology with the prophets, "Thus saith the Lord," "Thus saith the God of Israel," "Jehovah saith." The same phraseology is used in different parts of the scriptures in relation to the Holy Spirit. When Agabus predicted the disasters, which would happen to St. Paul at Jerusalem, he commenced as follows; "Thus saith the Holy Spirit," Acts xxi. 2. In writing to the Hebrews the apostle uses nearly the same expression, "Wherefore, as the Holy Spirit saith, to day, if ye will hear my voice." iii 10. From these examples it appears, that the names Holy Spirit, God, Lord, Jehovah, were used promiscuously to denote the Supreme Being. When actions, or words, or thoughts, are attributed to the Holy Spirit, it is the same thing as attributing them to God. Any arguments drawn from these to prove, that the Holy Spirit is a distinct being from God, would be equally strong to prove, that Jehovah and God are two distinct beings.

3. Another use of the term, Holy Spirit, and this much the most extensive one, is when it denotes certain powers, gifts, or influences communicated to any person in a supernatural degree. These are derived wholly from God. The Being, who could originally form the mind, and endow it with such high and varied powers as it naturally possesses, can modify these powers, add to their strength, or influence their action,

When this has been done in such a way as to produce visible effects, it has been called the operation of his spirit, or of the Holy Spirit. These powers were abundantly granted to the prophets of old, and in them they were called the gift of prophecy. By these supernatural powers, which were given to him without measure, our Saviour was enabled to perform miracles, to foretell future events, and to do all the wonderful works which marked the acts of his life, and which confirmed the truth of his doctrines. Jesus is often represented as being influenced, or guided by this spirit. The spirit of God “descended upon him at his baptism.” “Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit returned from Jordan.” Luke iv. 1. “And Jesus returned in the power of the spirit into Gallilee.” v. 14. He spoke of performing miracles “by the spirit of God.” Matth. xii. 28. What else are we to understand by these passages, but that God bestowed on him extraordinary powers, by which he was enabled to exhibit proofs of his divine commission? This fact is also an argument against the notion of two natures; for if he were himself God, why should it be constantly repeated, that he received aid from any other source? By the same miraculous powers, enjoyed in a less degree, the apostles were qualified for promulgating the true religion, by convincing the world that Jesus was Christ, and that his religion was from God.

4. In no instance, where the phrase Holy Spirit is used to signify these powers, can it be made to be a title of the Supreme Being. It can never be called “very and eternal God.” I have room for very few examples, but will endeavour to select some of the

more prominent. The apostle writes thus to the Corinthians; "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that *the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*" 1 Cor. iii. 16. "That good thing, which was committed unto thee, keep by the *Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us.*" 2 Tim. i. 14. In neither of these passages can we suppose the word spirit stands for a person, or being. The most it can imply, is an affection of the mind. St. Paul speaks "of the Holy Spirit, which God *shed on us abundantly.*" Tit. iii. 6. Again, "on the Gentiles, also, was *poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" Acts x. 45. Now these are characteristics of the Holy Spirit, which it could never have, if it were a person, or a distinct being. How can God pour out, or shed on us this Spirit in any other way, than by influencing our minds and leading us to good purposes?

5. John the baptist, in speaking of the Lord Jesus, said, "God *giveth not the Spirit* by measure unto him." John iii. 34. "Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he *hath given us of his Spirit.*" 1 John iv. 13. "Ye shall *receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" Acts ii. 38. "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit." viii. 17. Instances are frequent in which the Holy Spirit is said to have been *given* and *received*. But what sense will these passages make, if you use them with reference to a *person*, or *being*, or to the "eternal God?" Men may receive divine powers, they may have the powers, which they already possess, enlarged to an indefinite degree, they may receive such qualities as will strengthen the virtuous principles, and improve the disposition and temper:

and this is the only way in which they can be said to receive the Holy Spirit. Barnabas is described as a “good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and faith.” Acts xi. 24. It is often said of different persons, that they were filled with the Holy Spirit. This use of the phrase surely denotes qualities of the mind, and not a “person of the godhead.” How can you say that any one is filled with a person?

6. There is a remarkable passage in Isaiah, which corresponds with the above significations of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots; and *the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord.*” xi. 1, 2. This was spoken with a direct allusion to the Messiah, and represents the spirit of the Lord in him to be wisdom, power, and knowledge;—the same kind of spirit, which was miraculously communicated in different measures to the apostles, and many of the primitive christians.

7. Another use of the phrase Holy Spirit is when it is *personified*, or denotes *personal qualities*. There are many instances in the sacred writings, in which the qualities of a person are attributed to abstract terms. The *law* is represented as *speaking*, and the scriptures as *foreseeing* and *preaching*; sin is spoken of as *deceiving* and *killing*, and of charity it is said that it “suffereth long, and is kind; it envieth not, vaunteth not itself, &c.\*” In these several passages

\* Rom. iii. 19.—Gal. iiii. 8.—Rom. vii. 11.—1 Cor. xiii. 4.

the *law*, *sin*, *scripture*, and *charity* are personified. In the same way the Holy Spirit, or the supernatural influence which it designates, is sometimes personified. The following are examples. "For it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." Matt. x. 20. "It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit." Mark xiii. 11. "The Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." Luke xii. 12. Here the Spirit, or the divine influence, is said to speak, and teach, in the same manner as the law and the scripture, in the places above mentioned, are said to speak and preach.

8. The Holy Spirit is sometimes personified under the name of the *comforter*. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the spirit of truth." John xiv. 16. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things." v. 25. It is to be observed in the first of these passages, that this comforter was to be *given* by the Father; and in the other, that it was to be *sent* by him. It is hence evident, that if it were actually a person, it could not be the same God, being, or person, by whom it was given, or sent. It must be a derived, and inferior person, and therefore not the "eternal God," mentioned in the fifth article of the church. The Lord Jesus, in speaking to his disciples of his separation from them, says, "It is expedient for you, that I go away, for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, *I will send him* unto you.—Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth is come, he will guide

you into all truth; for *he shall not speak of himself*; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak." John. xvi 7, 13. From these texts it appears, that this comforter was inferior to Christ, for it was to be *sent* by him; and that it was not to speak *of itself*, but only as it was *instructed*. Now this could not be true of God, nor of a person, which was equal with God. All those passages, in which personal qualities are attributed to the Holy Spirit, will be perfectly unintelligible, if you consider the Spirit to be the "eternal God," or to have a substance, person, or being, the same as God. But if you explain them as you do other passages, which contain personifications of different attributes or qualities, the sense will be clear, and consistent with all the various uses of the phrase *Holy Spirit* in other parts of the scriptures.

9. In the eighth chapter of Proverbs is a remarkable personification of *wisdom*. It may be doubted whether the whole scripture affords so strong evidence of the personality of the Holy Spirit, as this chapter gives of the personality of wisdom. "I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence—I love them that love me—I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, before the mountains were settled, before the hills, was I brought forth." viii. 12, 17, 23, 24, 25. The whole chapter is spoken in the person of Wisdom, who is represented to have been with God from eternity, and to have aided him in the work of creation. Yet no one, I suppose, will argue that wisdom has a distinct personality, and has existed in this character from eternity. Why then should any one draw this

conclusion, from weaker evidence, in regard to the Holy Spirit?

10. The reasons why the Holy Spirit cannot be considered as God, or a distinct being, person, or substance, may be expressed in few words, as follows. It is no where in the scriptures called God, nor is it ever made an object of worship. Many things are attributed to it, which cannot be applied to a divine person, or to any person. It was given by measure, or in degrees; it was shed forth, poured out, and given in double portions; persons were said to drink into it; it was quenched, and taken away; it could not speak of itself, except what it should hear; it did not know the Son or the Father, for Christ says, “*no one knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any one the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him.*” Matt. xi. 27. But if the Holy Spirit had been of “*one substance with the Father and Son,*” it would of itself have known them both.

11. It may further be added, if Christ and the Holy Spirit be each of them “*very and eternal God,*” then each must have the same properties, and be capable of exercising them in the same way. What you can affirm of one, you can affirm of the other, as also of the Father. You might with as much propriety say, “*the Holy Spirit shall send the Father or Son,*” as that the Father or Son “*shall send the Holy Spirit.*” As they are equal “*in power and majesty,*” so their authority one over the other must be equal.

12. It is the doctrine of the articles, also, that these three persons are actually one being, though I know

not how such a thing can be conceived. Let it be taken for granted, that such is the fact, and what will be the consequence? It will be, that all the actions, which are attributed to any one of them, may be attributed to either of the others. If the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be synonymous terms for the same being, these terms may in any place be substituted one for the other, in the same way as Lord, God, and Jehovah may be used promiscuously to signify the Supreme Being; and Jesus, Saviour, Redeemer, to signify the Son. By applying this rule in a few instances, we shall see to what results the doctrine of the trinity, as embraced by the church, will bring us.

Rom. v. 10. "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the *death of his Son.*" Now if God and the Holy Spirit be each the same being as the Son, it will be strictly correct to substitute either of these names in the above passage. It will then read, "we were reconciled to God by the *death of God;*" or, "we were reconciled to God by the *death of the Holy Spirit.*"

1 John iv. 13. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent *his Son* to be the propitiation for our sins." By substituting the synonymous terms, this will read, "he sent the *Holy Spirit*, or he sent *himself*, or he sent *God*, to be a propitiation for our sins.

Rom. viii. 34. "It is *Christ* that died." "It is *God* that died." "It is the *Holy Spirit* that died."

These examples are sufficient. If we may believe the church, when it says, that Christ was "one person, never to be divided," the same application may be made to all the events of his life. When he says,



*I, myself, me*, you may substitute either of the names God, or Holy Spirit. But if we believe what the church asserts in the same place, that this person, instead of never being divided, is actually separated into two parts, or “natures,” then we must ascertain which nature it is that speaks, or acts, before we can make the substitution.

13. It is proper here to observe, that the Holy Spirit was not called God till more than three hundred years after the time of the apostles. “It was first decreed in the council of Constantinople, A. D. 381, that the Holy Spirit was Lord,—neither did the ancients address prayers to the Holy Spirit; and they assigned this as their reason; viz. That a gift was not to be asked of a gift, but of the giver of the gift.”\* The following are the words of Erasmus, in his Annotations on the first epistle to the Corinthians. “No one of the ancients ventured plainly to assert, that the Holy Spirit was of the same substance with the Father and the Son, not even when the question concerning the Son was every where discussed with so much warmth. But now we scruple not to declare, that the Holy Spirit is of one substance with the Father and the Son, very God, of the Father very God, and of the Son very God.” In his Preface to Hilary he states the same thing, and in the whole twelve books, which this latter author wrote on the trinity, he never mentions the Holy Spirit as God.† He wrote about the middle of the

\* Racovian Catechism, translated by Thomas Rees, p. 293, note by B. Wissowatius.

† Hilary always speaks of the Holy Spirit as the gift of God, (donum Dei.) In one place he writes thus; “He commands us to

fourth century. Ought we not to be a little surprised at finding a doctrine now insisted upon, as a fundamental article of religion, which was not known in any church till nearly four hundred years after the time of our Saviour?

V. Before I dismiss this part of the subject, I will add, in as few words as possible, two or three general arguments, which go to prove, that the prevailing sentiments during the time of our Saviour, and also the opinions of the early christians, were in accordance with what we have seen to be the plain sense of Scripture.

baptise in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; that is, in the confession of the author, of the only begotten, and of the *gift*," &c. Baptizare jussit in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti; id est, in confessione et auctoris, et unigeniti, et *doni*, &c. Ibid. p. 292.

According to Gregory Nazianzen, when this subject first began to be agitated, three distinct opinions were prevalent. *First*, that the Holy Spirit was an operation; *secondly*, that it was a created substance; *thirdly*, that it was God. *Των δε καθ' ημας σοφων, οι μεν ενεργειαν τουτο (το Πνευμα) υπελαβον, οι δε κτισμα, οι δε θεον.* Orat. 37. Vid. Pearson's Notes, p. 387.

The Jews held to the first of these opinions. They believed the Holy Spirit to be the energy or influence of God, and they supposed it was by this divine energy that the prophets were inspired. Maimonides, in giving the various significations of the Hebrew word *spirit*, says it sometimes means a "divine intellectual influence;" and at others, "a purpose, or volition;" and when it is applied to the Deity, it partakes of both these significations. He thus describes its fifth and sixth significations. Quinto significat (רוח) influentiam illam intellectualem divinam a Deo prophetis instillatam, cujus virtute prophetant. Sexto significat propositum, et voluntatem.—Vox hæc רוח quando Deo attribuitur, ubique sumitur partim in quinta, partim in sexta significatione, quatenus voluntatem significat. Mor. Nevoch. c. 40, Ibid p. 391.

1. The Jews had no conceptions of any three-fold distinction in the Deity. They had for many centuries been under the peculiar guidance of God, and received an express revelation from him in regard to the coming of the Messiah, but they seem never to have had the remotest suspicion, that this Messiah was to be God himself. All the predictions relating to the Messiah, both in the writings of Moses and the prophets, were such as could never lead them to suppose that they referred to the God of Israel. Take for example the words of God, which were spoken by Moses. "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, *like unto thee*, and *will put my words* in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them *all that I shall command him.*" Deut. xviii. 18. Is there any thing here about this prophet being the second person in the trinity; or about his being God, or equal to God? On the contrary, is not the declaration express, that he was to be a *prophet like Moses*; that he was to be raised up, not by his own power, but by the power of God, and was to speak what God commanded him?

The prophets allude to his sufferings and death in such a way as to render it impossible, that they should at the same time be speaking of God. The divine unity was a fundamental doctrine of the religion of the Jews, and nothing probably has contributed so much to keep them from embracing the christian faith, as the idea, that the doctrine of the trinity makes an essential part of it. They cannot be persuaded to believe in any account of the Messiah, which involves a doctrine so inconsistent with their views of the whole tenor of the Old Testament.

Their aversion to this doctrine is so great, that, according to Buxtorf, they make the following article of belief a part of their daily devotions. "I believe with an entire faith, that God, the Creator, is one person, and that the unity, or oneness, which is in him, is not in any other." It is certainly remarkable, if such a doctrine as the trinity were contained in the Old Testament, that the Jews, for whom the whole book was especially designed, should never have found it out.

2. It does not appear, that the companions of Jesus while he was upon earth, or the persons who saw, and conversed with him, believed him to be God. On one occasion, after he had healed a sick man in a miraculous manner, "The multitude marvelled, and glorified God, WHICH HAD GIVEN SUCH POWER UNTO MEN." Matt. ix. 8. It would seem from this passage, that the people considered Christ as a man, and that he performed his miracles by a power, which he derived from God; as indeed he had already told them.

The way in which Philip described Jesus to Nathanael was as follows; "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." John i. 45. From this language would it ever be suspected, that Philip thought him to be God? When Mary saw him, after the death of her brother Lazarus, she said to him, "if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." Would she have spoken thus, if she had believed him to be the omnipresent God? The people are said in many places to have considered him *a prophet*. After he had miracu-

lously fed the five thousand, those present exclaimed, "This is of a truth *that prophet* that should come into the world." The woman of Samaria said to him, after his conversation with her, "I perceive thou art *a prophet*." When he asked his disciples, "Whom do men say, that I, the son of man, am," they replied, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or *one of the prophets*." Matt. xvi. 14. Here we have the prevailing opinions of the people respecting Jesus, and there is not the remotest hint, that any one considered him to be the most high God. So far from it, that they speak of him in no higher character, than that of one of the old prophets.

3. It is further remarkable, if our Saviour had preached such a doctrine as that of the trinity, that the evangelists should not have stated it explicitly, and taken some pains to explain and enforce it. No doctrine could be more novel, none more important, and none more opposed to the rooted prejudices of the Jews. But when we come to examine, we find nothing said, in the three first gospels, which can have any direct bearing on the subject, and the introduction to the gospel of John admits quite as good an interpretation according to the unitarian, as any trinitarian hypothesis. The strong evidence, which the four gospels contain, that no one in the time of our Saviour thought him to be God, and the entire silence of the evangelists on the subject of a trinity in any form, are objections to this scheme not easily to be answered.

4. Another argument to the same effect is contained in the preaching of the apostles, after the ascension

of Christ. We have a minute account of their preaching in the Acts of the Apostles. It is to be supposed, that in promulgating the christian religion among the heathen nations, the apostles preached all its important doctrines. Yet he will read in vain, who shall expect to find any thing relating to a trinity in a single discourse of theirs, which has been recorded. They preached, that Jesus was the Christ, the son of God, and that God had raised him from the dead; but they never spoke of his being the "very and eternal God." They never intimated, that God exists in a threefold nature, or in any other nature than that of the one true God.

I will give two or three examples, which will show their manner of preaching in respect to the character of Christ. In Peter's sermon immediately after the descent of the Holy Spirit, on the day of pentecost, he thus addresses the audience; "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, *a man approved of God* among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." Acts ii. 22. Would any one infer from these words, that the apostle meant the people to consider Jesus the same as God, or equal to him? He not only makes him a distinct being, but declares that he performed miracles by the aid of God. The whole discourse of Peter is of the same import. He concludes by saying, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that *God hath made* that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." v. 36. According to the trinitarian scheme, Jesus, who was *made* Lord and Christ, was himself the same being by whom he was

made Lord and Christ. If Christ were actually the Supreme Being, it is very strange, that in this discourse, the whole object of which was to explain his character, Peter should constantly represent him not only as *distinct from the Father*, but as *subordinate to him*. All he says of the Holy Spirit in this discourse is, that it had been *shed forth*, and those who should be baptized “in the name of Christ,” should “*receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” I presume no language could be more unlike the articles of the church, than that which is used in this place by the apostle. He does not call the Holy Spirit God, but a *gift*; and Jesus he calls a “man approved of God.”

Another striking example is found in Paul’s discourse to the Athenians. “As I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, *to the unknown God*. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” Acts xvii. 23. The first thing to be observed here, is, that the apostle was about to teach the Athenians the character of the true God. If he had supposed God to exist in *three persons*, he could not but make so remarkable a trait a very prominent part of his explanation. But how does he proceed? “God, that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that HE is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” v. 24. He goes on in the same kind of language through the whole discourse, uniformly speaking of God as one being, and never intimating that he exists in more than one person. After thus explaining to the Athenians the nature of the true God, he speaks of Christ at the conclusion,

as follows. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent; because HE hath appointed a day in the which HE will judge the world in righteousness *by that man*, whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." v. 31. Could it enter the minds of the Athenians, that the God, whom the apostle had just mentioned as having made the world, was actually the "man" by whom *he would judge* the world, and whom *he had raised* from the dead? They must have believed this, if they supposed from the apostle's account, that Jesus was one of three persons, which constituted the Deity. We may observe in addition, that in giving this character of the true God, the apostle says nothing of the Holy Spirit. But if the Deity consists of three distinct persons, of which the Spirit is one, is it credible, that he would have passed over this remarkable fact in silence?

I need not insist on this argument, drawn from the preaching of the apostles. Any one has only to read the book of Acts, with a particular view to the topics on which they dwelt, to be convinced, that they adhered most strictly to the precept of St. Paul in his first epistle to Timothy, "*There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*" They never speak of a God in "three persons," nor use any language, which conveys ideas approaching to such a character of the Deity; and yet St. Paul does not hesitate to say to the Ephesians, "I have not shunned to declare unto you *all the counsel of God.*" Acts xx. 27. If the apostles could declare the *whole counsel* of God without once alluding



to a trinity, why should we think it important at this time to ingraft this doctrine into our faith, and make it a part of the christian religion?

5. It is well ascertained from the best testimony, which can be derived from history, that the great mass of christians for the two first centuries were unitarian. This fact is generally admitted by all parties, so far as it regards the Nazarenes, or Jewish christians, and a portion also of the Gentile christians. Although there is no direct authority in the written word of God for the doctrine of the trinity, especially in the form in which it is received by the episcopal church, yet if this doctrine could not be distinctly traced to some later source, your argument of tradition might perhaps be thought to apply here, and we should be required to believe in the trinity, for the same reason that we are required to believe in the divine origin of episcopacy, and the traditional ceremonies of the Protestant Episcopal and Catholic churches, because we cannot go back to "any one period in which it could probably have originated." But fortunately we have not this difficulty to encounter in the present instance. Few things in history are better settled, than the origin of the trinity. The close analogy between this doctrine and the philosophical speculations of Plato, leaves no room for mistake. Many of the first converts to christianity were Platonists, and they spared no pains in tracing out resemblances between the new religion, which they had embraced, and the philosophy to which they had become so strongly wedded while heathens.

Plato had some obscure notions of three distinct principles in nature. These principles were, first,

a Supreme Being, or *chief Cause*; secondly, *a divine mind*; thirdly, *the soul of the universe*. When the Platonists became christians, finding some general analogy between this part of their philosophy, and the accounts given in the New Testament of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they gradually interwove with these many of the peculiar properties of the three Platonic principles, and by this unnatural combination, the doctrine of the trinity assumed by degrees the shape in which it has appeared in later times. It does not come within my purpose to enter into the particulars of this history. It has often been done by able hands; and the result has been such as to convince any one, who will examine their inquiries with patience and impartiality, that the origin of the trinity can be traced to the Platonic philosophy, with as much precision, as any fact of those times, either political, civil, or ecclesiastical, can be established by the authority of history.\*

The principal points of controversy at first, had regard to the nature of Christ. It has already been seen, that the Holy Spirit was not elevated to the rank of a person in the trinity, till near the close of

\* The account which Le Clerc gives of the three Platonic principles is as follows.

Plato autem dixit primum esse το εν, αιτιον παντων, *Ens, Causam omnium rerum*; secundum vero λογον, *Rationem et Rectorem presentium et futurorum*; tertium denique ψυχην κοσμου, *Animam, sive Spiritum mundi*. Secundum quidem Principium a primo *genitum*, seu factum; tertium vero a secundo *adfirmat*. *Ars Critica*, P. ii. § 1. c. 15.

He observes further, that Parmenides was the first, who started the notion of three principles. *Primus omnium tria principia constituit Parmenides*. *Ibid.*

the fourth century. Several sects early sprung up in the first ages, who entertained various sentiments respecting the nature and character of Christ; but during the three first centuries, there is no trace of any doctrine, like that adopted by the episcopal church, in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are considered to be three *distinct persons of equal power and dignity*.

The *Apostles' creed* is a remarkable proof of this fact. Although it cannot be ascertained when this creed was first made, yet it is undoubtedly very ancient. At whatever period it was formed, it must be supposed to have been intended to contain what were then considered *all* the important doctrines of the christian religion. It, nevertheless, gives no countenance to a trinity, and contains very little, if any thing, on this subject, to which every unitarian will not assent.\*

I have reserved this opportunity to make some further remarks on your quotations from the epistles of Ignatius. Enough has already been said on the suspicious character of these epistles to make it appear, that they are not entitled to the least degree of credit

\* Those, who wish to see the doctrine of the trinity traced by historical deductions to its true source, may find it done in a very concise and perspicuous manner in professor Norton's "Statement of Reasons for not believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians respecting the nature of God, and the Person of Christ," written in reply to professor Stuart's Letters to Mr. Channing, p. 31.

A more full account is also contained in the *General Repository*, vol. iii. p. 13. Cudworth's *Intellectual System*, Book i. chap. 4. Priestley's *Hist. of Early Opinions*. And some remarks may be found to the purpose in Le Clerc's *Ars Critica*, Pars Secunda, § 15.

as authority in points of controversy. Many epistles, which have gone out under the name of Ignatius, are universally acknowledged to be fictitious; and those, which are admitted by some to be genuine, are as universally allowed to be mangled and interpolated. And it is a well known fact, that many of the interpolations, which have been detected, *relate particularly to the trinity.*

I will quote two or three of those, which were detected by archbishop Usher.

“Our Lord and God Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.”

“One only begotten Son, the Word, God and Man.”

“God the Word dwelt in a human body.”\*

Now whatever Ignatius may have written, it is certain he did not write these passages; although, if they had not been discovered to be spurious, they would now be defended with as much zeal as any other parts of his reputed writings. Whatever he wrote, these passages were added by some later hand. From these insertions two things are evident; first, that when they were made, these writings were not thought sufficiently strong in favour of the trinity; and secondly, that no confidence can be placed in any other passages of a similar character. If the original writings taught explicitly the doctrine of the trinity, why should these additions have been deemed necessary?†

\* Usher's edition of Ignatius' Epistles, Oxford, 1644, p. 42, 96, 202; as quoted in Lind. Sequel, p. 446.

† Speaking of the seven epistles, Less, who believes them to be genuine, observes, “These are tolerably well purified from modern

Among the extracts, which you make from Ignatius, are the following.

“Continue inseparable from Jesus Christ our God.”  
p. 40.

“Follow your bishop, as Jesus Christ the Father.” Ibid.

It will be seen, by a single glance of the eye, how striking a resemblance there is between these quotations, and those above, which were proved by archbishop Usher to have been inserted by design; and there is the strongest presumptive evidence, that they all have a similar origin. You must allow me again to express my surprise, that you should quote passages of this character, which are so very important in their consequences, without at least intimating to your readers, that they are of doubtful authority, and should be received with very great caution.

interpolations. I say *tolerably well*, for even the smaller edition appears in certain places to be suspicious.” Less on the New Testament, p. 71.

Notwithstanding the suspicious character of these epistles, and the very great probability that they were written by some designing person to impose on the world, they are thought to be of so much account to the episcopal church, that they have lately been published in England *as a tract for general circulation*, by a “Society for the Distribution of Tracts,” &c. and in this form they help to make up the book called “The Churchman Armed.” See vol. i. p. 145.

In this same book is inserted the learned treatise of bishop Burgess to prove, that “St. Paul was the founder of the church in Britain.” Vol. ii. p. 316. “The church of Britain was established *before* the church of Rome.” p. 389.

But the church has hitherto been contending, that it has descended through the church of Rome. How is this point to be settled? Or how is it to be explained, that the church has been so long in an error?

I have thus finished the general view, which I proposed to take of the doctrine of the trinity, as contained in the articles of the church. I have attempted to compare it with reason, with scripture, and with itself; and on my mind the conviction is irresistible, that, as it is there stated, it is irrational, unscriptural, and contradictory in its parts. Not only so, its origin may be traced to a period much later, than that of our Saviour, or his apostles. These things considered, I cannot persuade myself, that such a doctrine is to be received as in any manner connected with the pure, the consistent, and holy religion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## LETTER VI.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

IT only remains in this letter to explain the texts of scripture, which you have adduced in proof of the "divinity of the Saviour," and some others usually brought forward in support of the doctrine of the trinity.

After reading the extracts from scripture, which are contained in the preceding letter, no one probably will deny, that the unitarian doctrine of the superiority of the Father, and the inferiority of the Son and Holy Spirit is in *some sense* true. Trinitarians argue, that these texts are to be modified and explained in accordance with others, which they think teach the deity of the Saviour and of the Holy Spirit, and their equality with the Father. On the contrary, unitarians hold, that the plain and obvious sense of the whole scriptures, both of the Old Testament and New, forcibly inculcates the unity and supremacy of God, and the inferiority of Christ; and also, that *every text*, which is thought to be favourable to the trinitarian hypothesis, may, by fair and rational

principles of interpretation, he explained in conformity with this clear and prevailing sense of scripture. They do not deny, that many passages are consistent with trinitarian views, but they maintain, that these are equally consistent, when properly understood, with the sentiments of unitarians; and they complain, that these passages have been forced into a meaning, in support of the trinity, contrary to the general tenor of scripture, the strongest dictates of the understanding, the express and repeated declarations of our Saviour, the preaching of the apostles, the sentiments of the whole Jewish nation, and of the primitive christians. They think there ought to be consistency in these things, and that no persons should attempt to support doctrines by scripture authority, which, from a full examination of the subject, it is well ascertained, were not known till more than *two hundred years* after the last book of the Bible was written.

After humble, patient, and persevering inquiries into the scriptures, unitarians find nothing taught there, which is contrary to the numerous positive declarations of our Saviour; that he was inferior to the Father, sent by him, and derived all things from him; nothing inconsistent with the universal sentiments of the Jews and primitive christians respecting the unity and supremacy of God; nothing in one part contradictory to the necessary sense of another; nothing, which violates reason, or opposes the decisions of the understanding. To them the whole appears, as they think every revelation from God must appear, rational, consistent, intelligible. They find many texts, which they believe it impossible to explain on



the trinitarian hypothesis, without violating every just principle of language; but *none*, which will not admit a fair interpretation in favour of the doctrine of the absolute unity. They do not profess to meet with no difficulties. In a book like the Bible, which has been transmitted through so many ages, it is impossible, that these should not abound. But they find *none*, which, according to the unitarian hypothesis, may not be solved on rational principles; but *many*, which, according to the trinitarian scheme, are inexplicable.

It is a charge often brought against unitarians, that they think it their duty to consult their understanding in forming their religious opinions. They think no one can be excused from exercising his reason, on a subject of the utmost moment and interest. They believe God did not make a revelation, which was not to be understood by his creatures, because no purpose could be answered by such a revelation. Reason is the ruling principle of decision and action in the common affairs of life; it gives laws to the will; the other faculties of the mind are all subordinate to this, and designed only as secondaries and aids; and shall we forsake this guiding principle, when we come to study the scriptures, and search out the treasures of divine truth? If we abandon this guide, we shall be left to the mercy of prejudice, and the unlicensed control of our imagination, and shall act, in the momentous cause of religion, as we could never be induced to act in the most trivial concerns of life.

When unitarians are charged with putting the decisions of reason in competition with the truths of re-

velation, it is a false charge. Whatever they find revealed in the word of God, they receive most cordially and implicitly; but they regard it an impetuous duty to use their best faculties in ascertaining what is, and what is not revealed. They place no reliance on the interpretations of fallible men, any farther than from their own inquiry they find them sanctioned in the scriptures. By what faculty of the mind are we to judge, if not by the understanding; or by what proofs are we to be convinced, if not by the results of our own deliberate investigations.

Chillingworth speaks with great force and truth in repelling the same charge, as it was formerly made by the Catholics against the protestant churches. "Propose me any thing out of the Bible, and require whether I believe it or no, and seem it never so incomprehensible to human reason, I will subscribe it with hand and heart, as knowing no demonstration can be stronger than this; God hath said so, therefore it is true. In other things I will take no man's liberty of judgment from him; neither shall any man take mine from me. I will think no man the worse man, nor the worse Christian, I will love no man the less for differing in opinion from me. And what measure I mete to others, I expect from them again. I am fully assured, that God does not, and therefore that men ought not to require any more of man, than this; to believe the scripture to be God's word, to endeavour to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it."\* Every unitarian, it is believed, would subscribe to these sentiments "with hand and

\* Chillingworth's Religion of Protestants, a safe way to Salvation, chap. vi. Protestants not Heretics, sec. 56.

heart." Every one believes what the Bible contains, and for the same reason as Chillingworth, "because God hath said it." But since christians differ so widely respecting what is actually contained in the Bible, how can we give peace to our conscience, or be satisfied that we have the whole truth, unless we use our best faculties in conducting our inquiries, and forming our judgment? There has probably never been a unitarian, who rejected any doctrine or opinion, which others have thought to be in the scriptures, solely because this doctrine or opinion was not consonant to reason.

If you tell me you believe a doctrine, which you acknowledge to be unintelligible and irrational, you must suppose such an acknowledgment will at least excite a suspicion, that you may be in a mistake. If you go on to tell me, that this doctrine is contained in scripture, I still shall not be able to believe it, till I have examined seriously and patiently for myself; because I cannot believe a proposition, till I am convinced by some course of reasoning, that it is true. If the scriptures are to be believed at all, it must be on the authority of reason; and, indeed, by what other authority can you determine the truth of any doctrine or opinion? And admitting you could believe a thing for which you could give no reason, what would be the value of such a faith?

"When faith is virtue, reason makes it so."

The truth is, all our religious opinions, which can be called such, are founded on reason, and to deny its use would be to reject our religion altogether. Why do we believe in the life, sufferings, and death of our

Saviour, or why do we believe, that the apostles have given us a faithful account of his instructions, except from the conviction, which is produced by a rational investigation of the subject? I have heard preachers, in the commencement of a discourse, declaim vehemently against the use of reason in deciding on the articles of religious faith, and yet make the chief burden of what followed a series of arguments, to prove some of the principal tenets of their belief.

Some effect is produced on the minds of the uninformed by telling them, that unitarians “exalt reason above revelation.” To any one, who is in the least degree acquainted with their writings, such a charge needs no refutation. If to search with patient and unwearied labour, with a pious and humble desire of knowing the truth, as it was revealed by Jesus Christ, and preached by the apostles; if to value the commands of God more than the commands of men, and to think it necessary to be convinced of a fact before it is believed; if to acknowledge the divine will as the only proper rule of conduct, to rest the hope of future safety wholly on the mercy of God, and to expect salvation on no other terms, than repentance, obedience, and a holy life;—if these be to exalt reason above revelation, few unitarians probably will care to free themselves from the imputation; if they be not, the charge is unfounded.

We are told, that they have a habit of rejecting such doctrines, as they do not comprehend. This also is a mistake. They reject no doctrine for this reason only, because they do not comprehend it. No man, it is presumed, pretends to comprehend the attributes of God, or any of his works in their full ex-

tent. I cannot comprehend his existence, nor my own, nor the existence of any thing. I cannot comprehend the structure of my own frame, nor of any organized substance in nature. Yet I believe these things, because they harmonize perfectly with my understanding, my conscience, and every principle of my mind. I discover nothing in them contradictory or impossible. I should believe in a miracle upon the same principle; not because I can comprehend it, but because my reason convinces me that God is a Being of infinite power, and may, if he choose, manifest his power in the working of a miracle. If I did not first use my reason, I could never be convinced, that it was not a deception.

But it is one thing for a proposition or doctrine to be incomprehensible, and quite a different thing for it to be contradictory, or inconsistent with the plainest principles of the understanding, or with any known, positive truth. I do not believe, that one man will be punished for the sins which another has committed, nor that God has elected a certain number to everlasting life, and left the remainder of mankind to perish without remedy,—not because these doctrines are incomprehensible, but because they are inconsistent with the goodness and justice of God, which I consider established truths. I do not believe, that the earth is a plane surface, and stands still, and that the sun revolves around it every day,—not because these things are incomprehensible, but because my reason has convinced me, that they are inconsistent with the experience of wise men, and the laws of nature. That a proposition is incomprehensible, therefore, is no ground for rejecting it, and he must be very

much in the dark, and have no common share of credulity, who fancied, that any unitarian has on this ground disbelieved a single article of faith, which has been received by other christians.

The doctrine of the trinity, perhaps, is as incomprehensible as any thing; and yet I do not disbelieve this doctrine because I cannot comprehend it. I disbelieve it, first, because I can find no authority for it in scripture; secondly, because it is contradictory in itself; thirdly, because it is inconsistent with the moral attributes of God; and fourthly, because it violates all the rules of right reasoning by which in other cases, I am enabled to come at a knowledge of truth.

Furthermore, unitarians are charged with not believing in mysteries. From this charge very few among them it is presumed would desire to escape. Is not the christian religion a revelation from God, designed to enlighten, improve, and encourage his creatures, and is it credible, that such a revelation should contain mysteries, or dark and unintelligible doctrines? Did God commission his only Son to publish his will to men by miracles and wonders, and at the same time make his communications in such terms as they could not possibly understand, or even conceive? The very idea implies an impeachment against the goodness of God, at which the mind revolts. The design of a revelation was to draw aside the veil of obscurity, and bring down a knowledge of the divine nature, the principles of duty, and the prospects of futurity to the capacities of men. But how is this design affected, if we are still involved in mystery? And what conception, let me ask, can you form of a *revealed mystery*? What is a revelation, but something *made known*,

which was before unknown. Whatever continues to be unknown, and cannot possibly be understood, has certainly never been *revealed*. If we hold, that our religion is mysterious and unintelligible, we make a very wrong use of language, when we call it a revelation; and if we believe it to be a revelation, we speak very inconsistently, when we say it is not to be understood.

If we look into the sacred writings we shall not find, that our Saviour, or his apostles, ever spoke of any mysteries in their instructions, which their followers were not to understand. The word *mystery* is often used in the Bible, but never to signify a thing, which is unintelligible, or contradictory to reason. Some doctrines are said to have been mysterious before they were revealed; but there is no instance in which a *revealed truth* is called a *mystery*.\*

\* The writers on the trinitarian side of the controversy, have dwelt with much apparent fondness on the propensity of unitarians to use their understanding in judging of religious subjects; and none, perhaps, has employed more words in discussing this topic, than Mr. William Burgh. A large portion of his long Reply to Mr. Lindsey's Apology, is occupied in proving, that there are many things incomprehensible. After having fully established this point, he lays it down as an axiom, that "About matters which we do not comprehend, it is obvious, *that we cannot with certainty say any thing.*" p. 23. Does he mean, that we cannot *say with certainty* that grass grows, the sun shines, or that a man moves when he walks, because we cannot *comprehend* these operations? Such are the premises from which he draws the conclusion, that we cannot reason about the attributes and dispensations of the Deity.

His words are, "The infinite and incomprehensible majesty of God is an object beyond the limits of reason; *we are incapable of forming any idea of him.*" p. 23. Can we *form no idea*, then, of

These introductory remarks have extended to a rather greater length, than I have been aware. We will now attend to the principal object of this letter, which is a consideration of certain texts of scripture, and especially those, which you have selected in proof of the divinity of Christ. As you profess to take these texts from Jones's work on the trinity, and as you call this "an inestimable work," and recommend it very highly to your readers, it will not be thought foreign to the purpose to say a few words on its character.

It could not but excite a little astonishment to see a book quoted, as of the highest authority on this most important point of controversy, which scarcely a scholar or critic has before quoted with approbation, since the day it was written. That it should be a popular book among the uninformed, who take the author's results as truths, without being able to follow him through his show of criticism, is not wonderful; but that a scholar and biblical critic, who can detect his fallacies in every page, and perceive the cloud of pre-

the power, the wisdom, and goodness of God? How can we worship a being of whom we can form no idea? Or how can we talk of the benevolence, the mercy, the love of God, or indeed of any of his attributes, if they are totally beyond our conception? Do we not *reason* perpetually about the attributes of God? Do we not say, that one event indicates his *wisdom*, another his *power*, another his *goodness*; and do we not say, that the *justice* of God will award an adequate punishment to the guilt of a sinner? We do not comprehend these attributes fully; yet still, as far as we do comprehend them, we can reason about them, as well as about the innumerable operations of nature, which we do not comprehend. The character of this book may be very easily imagined, when it is known, that the specimens here quoted are some of the author's *first principles*.



judice darkening and confounding every just principle of criticism and interpretation, should publicly sanction and recommend a work of this character, is hardly to be accounted for by the usual mode of judging of motives from actions.

It is the way of this writer to bring together short passages selected at random from different parts of the scriptures, each of which contains some of the same, or similar words to the other, and to infer immediately that they mean the same thing. No regard is had to the context, nor does he seem ever to have dreamed, that the same word may mean very different things, when used in different connexions. In this way you may prove the trinity from the Koran, and show the Vedas of the Hindoos, the Talmuds and Targums of the Jews, to be treatises written in support of orthodoxy. In short, you may prove any thing from any book.

A few examples from the work in question will exhibit the grounds of these remarks.

John iii. 29. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom."

Isaiah liv. 5. "Thy maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name."

From these two texts thus brought together, the author infers, that Christ is the Supreme God.

John iii. 6. "That which is *born of the Spirit.*"

1 John v. 4. "Whatsoever is *born of God.*"

This is his first proof of the "divinity of the Holy Ghost." To prove "the trinity in unity" he quotes the following text.

Psalms xxxiii. 6. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the

breath of his mouth." On this text he remarks, "the *whole trinity*, therefore, created the world." Another argument for the trinity in unity is drawn from the following collocation of texts.

Rom. vii. 25. "*I myself serve the law of God.*"

Gal. vi. 2. "*Fulfil the law of Christ.*"

Rom. viii. 2. "*The law of the spirit of life.*"

By the same kind of reasoning might St. Paul be proved to be a person in the trinity, because he says,

Rom. vii. 23. "*The law of my mind.*"

I will add only one example more.

John vi. 45. "*They shall be all taught of God.*"

Gal. i. 12. "*Neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*"

John xiv. 26. "*The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, will teach you all things.*"

Because *teaching* is here predicated of God, of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, it is supposed to follow, that these three are one and the same God. Upon this principle, why should not every person, who is said in the scriptures *to teach*, be considered as sustaining the same character? Paul and Barnabas "*taught much people.*" Acts xi. 26. Therefore, Paul and Barnabas constitute a part of the "*trinity in unity.*"\*

\* This paralogistic mode of reasoning appears to have been a very favourite one, with a certain class of writers. Mr. Burgh has adopted it throughout his book in very close imitation of Jones.

In one part of the scriptures, mention is made of "*the grace of God,*" and in another, of "*the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,*" from which Mr. Burgh thinks it a logical inference, that "*the godhead of the Father and the Son is the same.*" chap. iii. § 23.

These extracts give a fair specimen of the general character of Jones's work, so far as it regards his manner of reasoning. To say nothing of his unaccountable perversion, and numerous errors of criticism, what respect can we have for the candour or fairness of a writer, who descends on serious subjects to such a childish play upon words, as these specimens exhibit? Is it possible, that the cause of the trinity requires such a support? And above all, is this to be

Again, Paul at one time calls himself "a *servant* of God," and at another, "the *servant* of Jesus Christ;" therefore, Christ is the most high God. Sec. 35.

The apostle speaks on a certain occasion of "ministering the *gospel of God*," and soon after adds, that he had "preached the *gospel of Christ*." It follows, according to this new species of biblical logic, that "Jesus Christ is one with the Father, God." Sec. 51.

After these examples, and the extracts before made from this writer, it is scarcely necessary to add, that he acknowledged himself to be "*altogether unread in theological disputations*." p. 221. It was most unfortunate, that his evil stars should lead him to write a book of two hundred and fifty pages, in defence of the trinity, if he was conscious of being thus ignorant of the subject.

In reading such books as these of Jones and Burgh, one cannot but be forcibly reminded of bishop Newton's remarks in his Dissertation on the Difficulties of Scripture. He speaks of men, "who interpret scripture according to their opinions, and frame not their opinions according to scripture. They quote the scripture, and one would think they understood at least what they quote; but alas, in their quotations they manifestly regard the *bare words* more than the meaning, and so there is but something apposite *in the sound*, no matter how remote it is in the signification." See Nisbett's Messiah, p. 11.

Another writer, who is fond of interpreting the scriptures after the manner of Jones, is Dr. Nares of Biddenden. See his Remarks on the Improved Version of the New Testament, p. 221.

adopted as a true mode of interpreting the scriptures?

But the doctrinal part of this book is not its worst part. The spirit and temper with which it is written, are as distant from the spirit and temper of Christ, as the doctrines it defends are contrary to the truths he taught. Let any one read the introduction, and the letter at the end of the book, and see how much he will find of the mild and gentle spirit inculcated in the gospel. Let him especially observe in what manner the writer constantly speaks of Dr. Samuel Clarke, the friend of Newton, and one of the most able, learned, and pious men of the age in which he lived. In one place he charges him with professing to "believe in two different Gods;" and in another, after censuring him, with a sneer, for changing some of his religious opinions, he says, "and to put the best face he could upon his unbelief, he spent much of the remainder of his life in writing ambiguous comments, and finding various readings, that is, in *picking holes* in the Bible."\* Such is the work, which you seriously recommend to your readers, and to which you refer them for religious knowledge.†

The passages of scripture usually adduced in support of the trinity I shall consider in the following order.

I. Those in which Christ is called, or supposed to be called, God.

\* Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity, New York, 1813, p. 169.

† This is the work, which the editor of the American edition of Festivals and Fasts says, in his usual summary way, "has put the question, whether the doctrine of the trinity be revealed in scripture, beyond all further controversy!" p. 224.

II. Those in which such properties are ascribed to him, as it is thought could be ascribed only to God, or to a being equal to God: and some of those, which are believed to contain general proofs of the doctrine of the trinity.

I. As Jesus is sometimes called God in the scriptures, it has been inferred, that he must be the Supreme Being. This might be an argument of some force, if it were not true, that the sacred writers often apply the same title to other persons. On examining the scriptures we shall discover, that it was not uncommon for those, who were eminent for their virtues, or dignity of station, to be called Gods. “And the Lord said unto Moses, see, I have made thee a God unto Pharaoh.” Exod. vii. 1. “Thou shalt not revile the Gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.” xxii. 28. “For the Lord your God, is God of Gods.” Deut. x. 17. “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the Gods.” Ps. lxxxii. 1. “I have said ye are Gods, v. 6. “Among the Gods, there is none like unto thee, O Lord.” Ps. lxxxvi. 8. “Worship him, all ye Gods.” xcvi. 7. The word GOD in all these passages means the *prophets*, the *judges*, or *magistrates* of Israel. The same word is sometimes rendered *judges*; as in Exodus xxi. 6. “Then his master shall bring him unto the JUDGES,” literally, “unto the Gods.” In another place the same word is translated *angels*. Psal. viii. 5. “For thou hast made him a little lower than the ANGELS,” or “Gods.”\* From these texts, and from

\* The original word is אֱלֹהִים. The passage is rendered by Jerom, *paulo minus a Deo*; by Aquilla and Symmachus, βασιχς τῆ παραθεου; and by the Seventy, βασιχς τῆ παρασγγελου. Vél. Le Clerc, et Sept. Edit. Breit. in Loc.

many others, which might be added, it appears, that the title which is supposed to prove Jesus to have been the Supreme Being, was given to *Moses*, the *judges* and *magistrates* of Israel, and to *angels*, as well as to *Christ*.

This use of the term exactly coincides with the words of our Saviour himself, when he says, "Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are **GODS**? *If he called them GODS, unto whom the word of God came,* and the scripture cannot be broken," &c. John x. 34, 35. This is a key to all the passages above cited, and to all others in which the word God is applied to any other person, than the Supreme Being. *The word of God came* to Moses, the prophets, the rulers of Israel, and in a greater or less degree to every good man. For being thus eminently favoured, they were sometimes called **GODS**. With what remarkable propriety may this application be made to the Lord Jesus? What being has ever appeared among men, who was so highly endowed with every divine gift? To no one has the word of God come with so much power. Surely, if the prophets and wise men of old were called **GODS** by way of distinction, this title may be applied with vastly greater force and propriety to Christ, who was so highly exalted above them all. And yet, this is very far from proving him to be the Supreme Being, any more than the other persons, who were called gods for similar reasons.

It is also to be observed, that none of the names of the Deity, except this one of God, are ever applied to Christ, or to any other person. He is never called the Supreme Being, the Most High, Jehovah, the Eternal God, the only True God, the living God, the

God of Gods, Holy God. If he were actually the Supreme God, is it not strange, that he should never have been called by any of these titles? But the truth is, whenever he is spoken of as God, it is in a sense, which he himself defined, when he said, "those are called **Gods** unto whom the word of **God** came."

A prominent text, which you bring forward in proof of the supreme divinity of Christ, is the noted one in Isaiah ix. 6. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the **Mighty God**, the **Everlasting Father**, the **Prince of Peace**." Such are the words as you have quoted them, and as they stand in the common version of the Bible. But it was hardly to be expected, that this text would be quoted at the present day, without a word of comment or explanation, to let it be known, that its most important parts are at least a very doubtful, and probably a false rendering of the original.

The prophecy in this passage undoubtedly alludes to the **Messiah**, and consequently, the titles which it contains are to be applied to him. The only question is, whether the titles, or names, which were adopted by king James's translators, have the same meaning, as those, which were originally written by the prophet? This can be ascertained only by a critical examination into the meaning of the original words, aided by a profound knowledge of the language in which they were written, and of the ancient translations. Such an examination has been repeatedly made by the most learned men of different religious sentiments, who have almost unanimously con-

curred in a result, which proves the rendering of our common version to be more or less defective. Is it dealing fairly, therefore, with those, who have not the means of information, to represent this text, as of undoubted authority in its present literal reading? Should they not, at least, be told what they are to receive with implicit confidence, and what with caution? Is it justifiable thus to confound truth with error, and to give countenance to popular prejudice, by making the scriptures speak what their writers never intended?

It is not denied, that commentators have found much difficulty in this text, on account of the ambiguity of some of the Hebrew words; yet they almost universally agree in giving it a meaning different from the one retained in our English version.

The application of the two first titles is sufficiently obvious; and there seems to have been very little difference of opinion about them, except that in the judgment of some critics they ought so to be united, and of others, to be taken separately. But whether they should be read *Wonderful* and *Counsellor*, or *Wonderful Counsellor*, is of little consequence in regard to the general meaning and application of the terms. Our Saviour might justly be called *wonderful*, in the astonishing works he performed; and a *counsellor*, or a *wonderful counsellor*, in the admirable system of religion he has published to the world; in its doctrines, precepts, admonitions, directions, and promises; giving evidence; that he was aided, instructed, and empowered from above.

The next title, **THE MIGHTY GOD**, is allowed to be a false translation, although there have been various



opinions in regard to the exact import of the original. Le Clerc, who was a trinitarian, and as profound a scholar in biblical learning, perhaps, as any other person, renders the passage thus; “*Wonderful, Divine Counsellor, Mighty.*” Christ was a *divine counsellor* in having derived all his counsels and precepts from God; he was *mighty* in the miracles he performed, and the divine powers he possessed.\*

The fourth title, **EVERLASTING FATHER**, is translated by bishop Lowth, “the Father of the everlast-

\* The principal difficulty in this passage seems to have arisen from the doubtful meaning of the word אֱל, which is sometimes rendered *God*, sometimes *ruler*, or *magistrate*, and is sometimes used in the sense of an adjective to denote excellence or distinction. Adhibetur de *rebus magnis* in suo genere *eximiis*, quæ Hebraeis divinæ dici solent, quasi earum vel præstantia et magnitudo vel natura ad Deum solum auctorem referri posset, velut אֱל אֱרִי אֱרִי *cedri divinæ*, אֱל הָרֵי אֱל *montes divini*. Vid. Simon. in verb.

This latter sense is preferred by Le Clerc. He unites the word אֱל with יוֹעֵץ *consiliarius*, vel *consultor*, and renders them *consultor divinus*, and gives as his reason, ut intelligatur Messias futurus *consultor divinus*, vel cujus divina essent consilia; hoc est præcepta, ut revera sunt. This also agrees with what is said of him in Isaiah xi. 2. “The *spirit of counsel and might* shall rest upon him.”

There is much suspicion, that the word אֱל was not written in the original Hebrew, as there are no corresponding words in either of the ancient Greek versions of the Seventy, Aquila, Symmachus, or Theodotian. Aquila renders the clause θρυμασος, συμβουλος, ισχυρος, which Le Clerc approves, although he seems to think ισχυρος was put for אֱל. It is perhaps more probable, that it was intended to be the rendering of גִּבּוֹר. Vid. Clerici Comment. in Loc.

ing age," and by Grotius, "Father of the future age," or "of the age to come." This was strictly appropriate to Christ. He was the founder of a new dispensation, and of a pure and holy religion. He was the head of the church, and came to bestow the means of salvation on mankind, and to confer inestimable benefits, which should continue through all ages.\*

The application of the last title no one can mistake. He was eminently the *prince of peace* in giving a religion to the world, whose direct tendency is to promote peace among men.

Such are the renderings, which the most able critics have given of this text. They are such as the original easily receives, and such as are peculiarly applicable to the character of Christ, as it was exhibited in his life and religion. The text, thus explained, gives no support to the doctrine of the su-

Grotius takes the words in a different combination, and translates them *Consulter of the Mighty God*, (*Consultator Dei Fortis*), or, as he explains it, one who in all things asked counsel of God. Although the words may bear this construction, it does not seem to be so natural as the other.

\* The original words **אבִּי עֵלְיָ**, literally translated mean, *Father of the Age*. They are rendered by Le Clerc, *Pater perpetuus*, because, as he says, Christ is the perpetual or everlasting father of all, who shall believe in his religion.

Grotius translates them, *Pater futuri seculi*, and adds, *Pater seculi est qui multos post se relicturus sit posteros, et in longum tempus*. This *future age* is the christian dispensation. Christ was the father of this dispensation, in as much as it was established through his instrumentality, by the exercise of such powers as were communicated to him by Jehovah, and also to his apostles in such a degree as to convince men of its truth and authority. - Vid. Grot. Annotat. in Vet. Test. Tom. ii. p. 18.

preme divinity of Christ, and contains nothing more than several titles and epithets prophetically applied to him, and expressive of the character, which he actually sustained. The translation may be expressed in the following terms. "And his name shall be called Wonderful, Divine Counsellor, Mighty, Father of the age to come, Prince of Peace." These results are drawn, it must be remembered, from the critical expositions of trinitarians.

Even admitting the received translation to be correct, it does not prove Christ to be the Supreme God. We have already seen, that the title **God** was often applied to other persons by way of distinction besides Christ, even to all to "whom the word of God came." It may certainly be given, therefore, with great propriety to him, who was appointed a special messenger of the counsels and will of Jehovah, and who is "exalted above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion." Hence, if the name be translated *God*, it cannot be accounted a proof of the supreme divinity of Christ. But I do not wish to vindicate this rendering, as the voice of criticism is decidedly against it.\*

\* In this text the learned Dr. Owen found an argument for the **HYPOSTATICAL UNION**. "That the same person," says he, "should be the mighty God, and a child born, is neither *conceivable*, nor *possible*, nor *can be true*, but by the union of the divine and human natures in the same person." Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ, God and Man, p. 290, 298.

This is the way men reason and build up doctrines, when, as bishop Newton says, "they regard the *bare words* more than the meaning." They attach meanings to words, which are inconceivable and impossible, and then invent a scheme to make them *conceivable*, *possible*, and *true*.

Another text, which you cite, is John i. 1. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Before we can have any just conceptions of the meaning of this text, or of the introduction to St. John’s gospel, we must know in what sense he used the term *Logos*, or *Word*. This term has more than thirty distinct significations in the New Testament, and it is obvious, that we cannot interpret any passage in which it is contained, without first fixing its meaning as it is used in that place. We cannot understand language, if we do not know the meaning of the words of which it is composed.

The best mode, perhaps, of ascertaining in what sense the evangelist used the word, is to inquire for what purpose he wrote his gospel. He tells us, that one of his principal designs in writing was to prove, that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.” From this declaration, the opinion would seem to have prevailed in those times, that Jesus was not the Christ; and from many passages in St. John’s gospel we are led to believe, that it was a special purpose with him to correct this and other errors, respecting the nature and person of Christ. If we can ascertain what these errors were, and also what connexion they had with the prevalent doctrine of the *Logos*, we shall have some clue to the true interpretation of this passage.

The Platonic philosophy was at this time very prevalent in those countries, where the christian religion was preached. It was the doctrine of this philosophy, that the Supreme Being did not create the world, but assigned this work to a subordinate be-

ing, whom the Platonists called *Logos*. Philo, and the Alexandrian Jews, who embraced this philosophy, perceiving some analogy between this use of the term, and those passages of the Old Testament, in which the *Word*, or *Logos*, is personified, fell easily into the belief, that the term there used denoted some *being*. Personal properties are often attributed in the Old Testament to the *word* of God. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.” The Word of the Lord is said to come, to speak, to go. “His Word *runneth* very swiftly.” It was hence inferred, that the *Word* of God, so often mentioned in the Old Testament, was a *being* distinct from God, and the same as the *Logos* of Plato.\*

\* Before St. John wrote his gospel, Philo had written largely on the Platonic philosophy. As he was a Jew, and well versed in the philosophy of the east, he seems to have combined some of the peculiarities of these two systems. He has a great deal to say about the *Logos*, and what is particularly worthy of observation, he personifies it under different characters, and applies it sometimes to men, sometimes to angels, and at others to God himself.

Eum (λογον) αρχαγγελον Philo nominat. Vid. Kuinoel. Prolegomera ad Evang. Iohan, § 7; De λογω Iohannis. Philo omnes Dei oratores, et legatos vocare solet λογους. Rosenmull. Schol. in Johan. chap. i. v. 1.

As it was common in the time of St. John to personify the *Logos*, and apply it as a name to persons or beings sustaining different characters, he did not depart from the customary use of language in employing the word after a similar manner.

There are many instances of this personification in the gospels and epistles. “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word (*Logos*) which I have spoken, the same *shall judge* him in the last day.” John xii. 48. Here the *Logos* is made a judge. “The *Logos* of God is quick and

Another opinion somewhat analogous to this, in many respects, had its origin in the Oriental philosophy. Those who embraced this system were called Gnostics. They maintained, that there was but one Supreme Mind, but from this was derived, by a sort of emanation, a vast number of subordinate intelligences, or *Æons*, of various orders. To one of these beings they gave the name of *Logos*.\*

Out of these notions sprung up many errors in regard to the nature and character of Christ. The Gentile converts, who were generally Platonists, delighted in discovering resemblances between their philosophy and the christian religion, and among others they fancied Christ to be an intermediate being, and the same as their *Logos*.

powerful," or more properly, "alive and active." Heb. iv. 12. "The word (*Logos*) which God sent unto the children of Israel, *preaching* peace by Jesus Christ; he (this *Logos*) is lord over all." Acts x. 36. Here the *Logos* is said to *preach*, and to be *lord* over all. In all these places *Logos* evidently means the gospel, or the christian doctrine; but still, it is represented as a person. For other examples, and a comparison between the use of the word by Philo, and the writers of the New Testament, see Jones's Ecclesiastical Researches, chap. vi.

\* There are also strong evidences, in many parts of St. John's gospel, drawn from other circumstances besides what he says of the *Logos*, that he often had in view the Gnostics. He uses many of the terms, which had become technical in their philosophy, and probably to correct the errors, to which they had given currency by an improper use of them. Among these terms are *μονογενης*, *χαρις*, *ζωη*, *φως*, *αληθεια*, *πληρωμα*. Kuinoel. Prolegom. § 5. De Consilio Johanni in scribendis Comment. proposito. There can be little doubt, that in some places at least, he used the words *Light* and *Life* with this application. Jones's Ecclesiastical Researches, chap. xviii.

For a similar reason the Gnostics believed Christ to be one of the highest orders of *Æons*; and, as it was a doctrine of this sect, that matter was the source of evil, they rejected the humanity of Christ, alleging that no pure intelligence, like him, could possibly be confined in so unworthy and contaminating a habitation as a corporeal body. They maintained, that his visible body was a phantom, and that he died and arose from the dead only in appearance.

The errors of the Cerinthians, a sect of considerable note in the first century, seem to have taken their rise in these false notions of the *Logos*, and of intermediate beings. They taught, that *Christ*, and *Jesus*, were two distinct beings, or persons. They supposed Christ to be an *Æon*, or emanation from the Supreme Being, who descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove at the time of his baptism. Before this union, they supposed Jesus to have been nothing more than a common man. When he was taken to be crucified, the divine being, called Christ, left him, and the man Jesus only died, and rose from the dead.\*

Such were the opinions concerning the *Logos*, and such the errors which were growing out of them at the time when St. John wrote. To one or other of these philosophical sects, it must be remembered, almost all the early christian converts belonged before their conversion. The apostle must, therefore, have considered it a matter of the utmost importance to purify a fountain, which threatened to contaminate

\* Vid. Irenæi. adv. Hæres. lib. iii. c. 12. ut cit. in Kuinoel. Prolegom. § 5.

and poison the whole scheme of christian doctrine. If this system were pursued, christianity was likely to become ingrafted into the wildest systems of heathenism. The root of the difficulty lay in the ideal and false notions, which prevailed respecting the personal existence of the *Logos*, acting in the character of an intermediate being, distinct from God and from men. There can be little doubt, that the principal purpose of St. John, in what he has said of the *Logos*, was to remove this difficulty, and to clear up a subject, which the unnatural mixture of heathen philosophy with christianity had tended to perplex and obscure.

If we keep these things in mind, it will not be difficult to perceive what he designed to teach in his doctrine of the *Logos*. We may not be able to give an exact definition of the term, as it was understood by him, because it may have been used to express ideas of the Deity, some of which have since passed away with the controversies of those times; yet we can hardly mistake its general application, or the object of the writer. He would show, that the *Logos* is not a *person*, or *being*, and yet it is something, which is with God, and which may be called God. It follows, that it must designate some quality, or qualities of the Deity, which have always resided in him, by which he has created all things, and by which he still manifests himself in his works,—such qualities, in short, as make him the Supreme God. It is not of so much importance what name we give to these qualities, if we only retain a correct idea of their nature. Perhaps we shall not deviate far from the true signification of the word *Logos*, as used by the evangelist,



if we suppose it to denote the *power* of the Deity acting under the guidance of his *wisdom*.

With this signification of the term, the interpretation of the first part of John's gospel is natural and easy. *In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God; that is, the power of God, aided in its operations by divine wisdom, has been with God from the beginning, or always. It is not a being, which emanated from the Deity, and which exists in a state separate from him. And the Logos was God; the qualities of the Deity denoted by the Logos are essential to his character as God, and not to be considered as constituting any other being. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. By the power and wisdom of God was every thing created, and without the exercise of this power, and the guidance of this wisdom, was not any thing originally made. This was probably said in allusion to the doctrine of the Platonists, who believed the creation to have been the work of a subordinate agent.*

It thus appears, that this passage, instead of proving Christ to be the same as God, or a person equal to God, was actually intended to show, that there was no such intermediate being, as was designated by the different sects of that period under the name *Logos*. The work of creation, which they assigned to this imaginary being, had no other origin than the power and wisdom of God. When this position was established, the errors of the Platonists and Gnostics, in regard to the character of Christ, would fall of course, because they were built on the supposition of

the personal existence of the *Logos*. When the evangelist says, near the close of his gospel, that he has written to prove, "that Jesus is the Christ," he obviously alludes to the sect of Cerinthians, by whom this was denied.

It is to be observed, also, that if in this passage he intended to declare Christ to be God, it is very strange that he should say one object of his writing was to prove him to be the *Son* of God. Moreover, if by the *Logos* here we are to understand the person of Christ, how could it be said to be from the beginning with God, and to be God, unless there were from the beginning two distinct Deities, and that these two were one? No mode of explanation, which makes the *Logos* a person existing from eternity, can be free from this inconsistency and contradiction.\*

Luke i. 16, 17. "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God; and he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias."

It is said, that by "the Lord their God" in this place is meant Christ; but there is nothing in the passage itself, nor in any part of the message of the angel to Zacharias, from which such an inference can with any propriety be made. *To go before God*

\* For a lucid and comprehensive view of this subject, see professor Norton's Statement of Reasons, &c. p. 55. Kuinoel, in his Prolegomena to the gospel of St. John, brings together the various opinions, which have been entertained concerning the *Logos*, and the design of the evangelist in writing his gospel. Priestley's Hist. of Early Opinions, vol. i. and ii. Book. 2, chap. i. Lindsey's Sequel, p. 129. Clerici Adnotationes in Johan. cap. i.

means to walk in *his presence*, or *his sight*, and is a common phraseology in the New Testament \*

John xx. 28. "And Thomas answered and said unto him, my Lord, and my God." There have been different opinions on this text. Some have supposed that Thomas meant to address Christ as the Supreme God; others, that his language was only an exclamation expressing his surprise on finding that Christ had in reality risen from the dead, which, a short time before, he had declared he could not believe. It is thought by others, that the address was made directly to Christ, but not in the character of the Supreme Being. In the midst of his surprise at the wonderful event, which had happened, and of the reality of which he was convinced by the sudden appearance of Christ, Thomas addressed him in the exclamation contained in the text. He was his Lord and his God, in the same sense as the Jewish magistrates were

\* The phrase *ἐνώπιον Θεοῦ* often occurs, and it almost universally means *in the presence of God*, or *in the sight of God*. "For he shall be great (*ἐνώπιον Θεοῦ*) in the sight of the Lord." Luke i. 15. The most prominent signification of *προερχομαι* is to *advance*, to *proceed*, (vid. Heder. in voc.) and it is used in this sense, Matth. xxvi. 39. Mark xiv. 35. Acts xii. 10. Wakefield renders the passage, "And he will lead the way in the sight of God."

It was not the office of John to turn men to Christ, but to God, whose counsels and laws they had forsaken; and to prepare them for receiving the religion, which he was about to communicate through his Son. "They greatly err," says Wolzogen, "who suppose John was to turn the people to Christ, and hence infer, that he is the Supreme God. They could not be turned to Christ, because they had not forsaken or receded from him; but it was important that they should be turned to God, that they might be the better prepared to have faith in Christ." Vid. Wolzog. Comment. in Loc. Opera, Tom. i. p. 525.

Lords and Gods over those, whom they instructed and governed; and in the same sense which Peter would convey, when he said to the Jews, "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both *Lord and Christ*.\*

Slichtingius has well observed, that the great surprise manifested by Thomas on this occasion, instead of affording any proof of the general belief of the apostles in the proper deity of Christ, is a strong argument to the contrary. Had Thomas believed Christ to be God, it could give him no surprise to know, that he had risen from the dead. He must have supposed that all things were possible with him, and when he was convinced of the remarkable fact of his resurrection, he could feel no astonishment.

It has been remarked by Grotius, bishop Pearce, and others, that this is the only instance in which Christ is addressed by any of his disciples under the

\* This last mode of interpretation is adopted by Slichtingius, Crellius, Kuinoel, and Rosenmuller. See their Commentaries on this text. Dr. Carpenter gives a similar explanation, and considers Thomas as expressing his conviction of the *divine authority* of Jesus, which he had before doubted. Carpenter's View, &c. p. 149.

Dr. Kenrick thinks the words of Thomas were only an exclamation, "the effect of sudden surprise and astonishment, to find the person, whom he felt and handled, to be raised from the dead." Exposition, vol. ii. p. 610. This was the opinion of Wolzogen, Dr. Lardner, Dr. Whitby, Mr. Lindsey, and also of archbishop Newcome, if we may judge from his note on the passage in his Translation of the New Testament.

Bishop Pearce paraphrases it, "I own thee now to be Jesus the Christ, and *as such* my Lord and my God." Comment. in loc.

title of God. In this fact, every one should see a strong presumptive argument, that Thomas in this place did not intend to address him as the eternal God; especially, since the words will receive, without force to the language, an interpretation perfectly consistent with every other part of the scriptures. If the disciples believed Christ to be God, why had they never called him so before, when they saw his miracles and astonishing works, which could only be done by a divine agency?

Acts xx. 28. "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

This text was formerly considered very strong in favour of the deity of Christ, but it seems now to be very generally given up by all learned trinitarians. No question remains, that the present rendering, *church of God*, is incorrect. Kuinoel says, "the true reading, beyond all doubt, is *church of the Lord*, and this has been adopted by Grotius, Wetsten, Le Clerc, Griesbach, and all the most skilful critics of the present age."\* Some manuscripts read *Christ*, but there is much the highest authority for *Lord*. The idea of the blood of God is so shocking, that every one must feel gratified, that the received translation of this text, the only one in scripture in which such an idea is advanced, should be found to be so entirely without foundation.†

\* Comment. in Act. Apostol. p. 679.

† After the most laborious researches, Griesbach says, the reading of *θεου* is not supported by a single ancient or valuable manu-

Rom. ix. 5. "Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever."

These words admit of different interpretations by varying the punctuation. They may be pointed as follows; "of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all. God be blessed for ever." Christ is over all things by the appointment of the Father, as it is expressed in 1 Cor. xv. 27. "He hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that HE is excepted, which did put all things under him." This text is a decisive proof, that whatever dignity Christ possessed by the appointment of

script; and concludes, *Quæ omnia cum ita sint, non possumus cæteris lectionibus non præferre κυριον*. See the note to this text in his second edition.—Also Le Clerc's *Ars Crit.* vol. ii. p. 93, et *Adnot. in loc.*—*Vera lectio videtur esse του κυριου*. Rosenmüller in *loc.*—Morus, after a comparison of various authorities, comes to the same conclusion, although he loses no opportunity in other places to support the deity of Christ. *Vid. Mori Versionem et Explicationem Act. Apost. p. 515.*—Even Dr. Nares admits the same, although with no apparent good will. *Remarks on the Improved Version of the New Testament, second edit. p. 220.*

Bishop Pearce adopts the same reading in his commentary on this passage, and archbishop Newcome has received it into his text.

It is remarkable enough, that modern trinitarians have defended, as part of scripture, a form of language, which Athanasius himself condemned as an invention of the Arians. "Our scriptures," says he, "no where mention the blood of God. Such daring expressions belong only to Arians." *Ουδαμον δε αιμα Θεου καθ' ημας παραδεδωκασιν αι γραφαι, Αρειανων τα τοιαυτα τολμηματα*. Athanas. cont. Apollin. apud Wetsten. in *loc.* Belsham's *Calm Inquiry, second edit. p. 141.*

the Father, it is very far from making him equal to God.

Others prefer a different punctuation, and translate the passage as follows; "He, who is over all, God, be blessed for ever," or "God, who is over all, be blessed for ever." This is the translation of Mr. Locke.\* Either of these renderings is admissible, and when it is understood, that the original was written without any punctuation, it will be seen, that no improper liberty is taken in making this conform to what is conceived to be the general sense of the passage. This is the only rule, in fact, which can be followed.

If Christ were intended to be called God in this place, there is one reason in the passage itself, why the title cannot denote the Supreme God. He is spoken of as having descended from the Jews *according to the flesh*, and in this character, even according to the trinitarian hypothesis, he certainly could not be considered God the Father.

The apostle is here enumerating the privileges of the Jews, one of which was, that they were descended from the patriarchs, and another, that the Messiah had arisen in their nation. For these privileges, by which, through divine favour, they had been so remarkably distinguished, God, the author of all, was to be blessed for ever.†

\* See Locke's Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul, p. 372. Wetsten inclines to the same interpretation. Vid. in loc.

† Dr. Taylor supposes the whole to relate to the privileges of the Jews, and as it was one of their greatest privileges, that God was

1 Tim. iii. 16. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Instead of *God* in this text, a great number of manuscripts of the highest authority read *he who*, and several others of less value read *which*. According to this last reading the sense will be, *great is the mystery of godliness, which was manifest in the flesh*. This is preferred by many trinitarian writers, as well as others.

But since the learned and laborious researches of Griesbach, the second reading has been the most generally adopted by critics. After patiently examining and comparing all the manuscripts and authorities, which are considered of any value, he says, that those laws of criticism, which have been established by the common consent of the most learned critics, require the reading in this place to be *who*, or *he who*.\* In conformity with this result he has inserted it into his text; and although archbishop Newcome does not in-

peculiarly *their God*, he prefers the following translation; "*Whose* are the fathers, and of *whom* as concerning the flesh is Christ, *whose* is the God over all blessed for ever." Note in loc. The connexion and sense here are extremely natural, and although this translation is founded on the conjectural emendation of Slichtingius, ( $\acute{\omega}\nu$   $\delta$  for  $\delta$   $\acute{\omega}\nu$ ) it is by no means impossible, that it may be the true one. Vid. Slicht. Comment. in loc. Mr. Jones agrees with Dr. Taylor. See Analysis of the Epistles to the Romans, p. 114.

\* Postulabant enim hoc leges criticæ—quas doctissimi critici suo assensu comprobant. Vid. Not. in loc, edit. secund.



roduce it into his translation, he has placed it in the margin.\*

Thus corrected, the passage may be explained as follows; *Great is the mystery of godliness He, who was manifest in the flesh; that is, who dwelt among men, humbled himself, and submitted to the sufferings incident to human life;—was justified by the spirit;† was vindicated in declaring himself to be the Messiah sent from God, by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which he possessed in so high a degree, and which were conferred so abundantly on many of his followers;—was seen of angels, or messengers;‡*

\* “All the old versions,” says Dr. Clarke, (Doct. of Trin. No. 88, 89,) “have *who* or *which*. And all the ancient fathers, though the copies of many of them have it now in the text itself Θεος, *God*; yet from the tenor of their comments upon it, and from their never citing it in the Arian controversy, it appears that they always read it ες, *who*, or ε, *which*.” See Improv. Vers. fourth edition, note.

† Rosenmuller has remarked, that *spirit* here may signify the *christian doctrine*, as in other places. In this case it would mean, that the nature of this doctrine, and its success among men, justify Christ in professing himself to be the Son of God. Rosenmul. in loc. et Schleusn. in verb. πνευμ. 17.

The proper rendering is *by*, and not *in* the spirit, as the context plainly indicates. By a Hebraism, εν is put for δια per. Vorstius de Hebrais. cap. xiv. § 4.

‡ The same word, which is here rendered *angels*, is often translated *messengers*, which is evidently its meaning in this place. John the Baptist is called an *angel* or *messenger*. Luke vii. 27. “Behold, I send my messenger (αγγελον μου, *my angel*,) before thy face.” ix. 52. Jesus “sent messengers (αγγελους, *angels*) before his face; and they went and entered into a city of Samaria to make ready for him.” On this part of the text, Macknight remarks as follows,—“*Was seen of angels*, that is, of the apostles.

of those persons, who were to be the messengers of his gospel, and to bear witness to the truth of his resurrection:—*was preached to the Gentiles*; his religion was promulgated among all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews;—*was believed on in the world*; his doctrine was embraced, and he was believed to be the Messiah;—*was received up in glory*; his ascension was marked with circumstances of glory.\*

The sense of the text will be the same, if the present reading be retained, provided the word *God* be considered a title of Christ in a sense, in which we have already seen it is frequently used. But if you suppose this title to denote the Supreme Being, it will be impossible to give any consistent or rational explanation of the passage. How can the eternal God, who is every where present, be said to reside in a human body? The being, who is here mentioned, had been raised from the dead; but how can such language be applied to the living God, “who only hath immortality?” How could the Almighty Father, “who dwelleth in light inaccessible,” be “received up in glory?” Such are the inconsistencies of this text, if you attempt to interpret it on the supposition, that the being of whom it speaks is the Supreme God. And since those authorities, by which we determine the true reading of any part of scripture, do not warrant

and of the other witnesses, who were appointed to publish and testify his resurrection to the world” *Aliis ἀγγελοι hoc loco sunt apostoli; illis enim Christus in vitam redux sæpius apparuit, ut essent testes resurrectionis.* Rosenmul.

\* The original is *ἐν δόξῃ*, *in*, or *with glory*. *Receptus est in gloria*, id est *cum gloria*, seu *glorioso*, per Hebraismum *in pro cum* posito. Crellii Comment. Tom. ii. p. 19.

such a supposition, and the sense of the text is decidedly against it, why should it be admitted?

Heb. i. 8. "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne O God; is for ever and ever."

This is a quotation from the Psalms, (Ps. xlv. 6.) in which place it is supposed by many to have been applied by the Psalmist to Solomon. Such was the opinion of archbishop Newcome. But of whatever person it may have been spoken in the Psalms, it is evidently quoted here in reference to Christ, and we are told by Wetsten, that it was generally understood by the Jews to relate to the Messiah. Yet the Jews never expected their Messiah to be the Supreme God, and it is evident, that the apostle does not intend to signify, by this quotation, the *nature* of Christ, but the *dignity of his office*. For in the very next verse he speaks of God, as a distinct being from Christ. "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even THY God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." If we apply the first part of the quotation to Christ, we must apply this likewise. But here he is said to have been anointed by his God; and he could not himself be the same God by whom he was anointed. If he is intended, therefore, in this text to be called God, it must be in an inferior sense; unless there are two Gods, and these two are one.

It has been further observed by Grotius, Erasmus, Clarke, and others, that both the Hebrew and Greek of this passage will admit a different translation. The grammatical construction of both these languages would seem to require it to be rendered as follows; "But concerning the Son he saith, *God is thy throne*

for ever and ever;" that is, God is the support of thy kingdom. This explanation, perhaps, is preferable to the other, but it cannot with any consistency be argued from either of them, that Christ is the eternal God.\*

2 Peter, i. 4. "Through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

You do not quote this text from the Bible, but from Jones on the trinity, and according to the following arrangement, namely, "Through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Je-sus Christ." You have not told your readers, why you choose to deviate thus from the English translation. Although in the original there is an ambiguity in a few texts similar to this, and some room for doubt respecting the position and force of the Greek article; yet in the present instance there seems to be no possibility of being misled. The words which follow are so explicit, as not to admit of any uncertainty in the interpretation. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." v. 2. Are not God and the Saviour spoken of here as *two distinct* beings? And why should we desire to force the words of the first verse into a meaning, which is in direct contradiction to the plain sense of the second?

It is no part of my design to enter into the tangled controversy about the Greek article. If the doctrine

\* "But concerning the Son," (*προς τον υιον.*) Lindsey's Seq. p. 207. "But of the Son." Wakefield. See also Viger De Græc. Dict. Idiotismis, c. ix. § 8, De Præp. *προς.*

Ὁ θεος σου ὁ Θεος εἰς τον αιωνα του αιωνος. Septuag.

of the trinity, or of the unity, be suspended by so slender a thread as this, we may as well let it break at once, as attempt to strengthen it. To write books about the construction of one or two Greek letters, in half a dozen texts of the New Testament, and to marshal out arguments from this construction in support of the proper deity of Christ, must show a lamentable want of evidence from more certain and more valuable sources. Such a course could never have been taken, except as a last resort. When we recollect, especially, how innumerable have been the blunders and omissions of transcribers, both accidental and designed, and how likely these would be to occur in the use of the article, we cannot but wonder, that men should waste their time, and torture their invention, in building up *arguments* of materials so shadowy and fragile. The inquiry, as a branch of criticism, is not without value. Its results may serve to illustrate points of minor consideration, and aid in settling correct principles of criticism; but when an important doctrine of christian faith is propped up by them, it may indeed be said to have a feeble support.

It is furthermore undeniable, that every passage, in which the construction of the article is supposed to be an argument in favour of the trinity, is in the original ambiguous. Without deviating from grammatical strictness, it will admit of a different interpretation. Take for example Tit. ii. 13. "The glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." It stands thus in our common version, but it is not denied, that the grammatical construction will allow it to be rendered in the following manner; "the

glorious appearing of our great God, and Saviour Jesus Christ.” In several texts there is a similar ambiguity. But after all, there is no danger of mistaking the sense. It may justly be doubted, whether in a single passage of this description, grammatically rendered, any person, who had not been biassed by previous impressions, could be led for a moment to suspect from them, that Jesus and God are one and the same being. It would never occur to him, that the two names were not intended to represent two beings. Every just rule of interpretation would require us to explain such ambiguous passages, according to the plain sense of other parts of scripture; and since we are told in terms, which do not admit of but one meaning, that there is *one Lord*, and *one God and Father of all*, and that this God is the *God of our Lord Jesus Christ*, we do great violence to the scriptures when we make ambiguous phrases speak a contrary language, and attempt to show, that our Lord Jesus Christ is himself the *same being*, whom he expressly calls *his God*.\*

1 John v. 20. “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him, that is true; and we are in him, that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”

It has been said, that the last clause of this text refers to Jesus Christ, and that he is here called the

\* For an able reply to Mr. Granville Sharp's Remarks on the Greek Article, see the Rev. Calvin Winstanley's Vindication of certain Passages in the common English Version of the New Testament; first American edition, printed at Cambridge, 1819, with an Appendix containing Remarks on Dr. Middleton's Treatise.

true God. But such a conclusion must be drawn from an extremely superficial view of the text itself. Christ is here characterized as the son of the true God, and until it can be made out, that the Father and the Son are the same individual being, no words can more clearly express a distinction between them than these. Compare this text with another, in which is contained a similar construction. "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." 2. John, ver. 7. The same rule of interpretation, which, in the former text, will make Jesus to be the true God, will here make him to be "a deceiver and an antichrist." But if you allow the last clause in each to refer to the remote, and not the immediate antecedent, the meaning will be obvious. The *true God* is he "that is true," that is, God the Father, and not "his Son Jesus Christ;" in the same way as the *deceiver* is he, who does "not confess, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." Instead of containing any thing favourable to the opinion, that Christ is the Supreme God, this text is actually an argument to the contrary, as it speaks of them as two distinct beings, calling one "the true God," and the other "the Son of God."\*

\* In the criticism of Slichtingius on this text, he says, "It is wonderful, that christians should acknowledge the *true God*, mentioned in this place, to be God the Father, and at the same time be so inconsistent as to insist, that the pronoun *this* refers to Jesus Christ, the Son of the true God. More especially, since we know, that John has again and again distinguished Jesus Christ from the true God, as emphatically as he could distinguish a son from his father. These christians say, that this true God is at the

I have thus considered all the texts, in which it is generally supposed Christ is called God. I have said nothing of Matt. i. 23, because the name *Emanuel* in this text is now usually allowed to be nothing more, than a prophetic title, expressive of the character, and not of the nature of Christ. This name was given by the prophet in conformity with the Hebrew custom of giving names. *Adonijah* means, my Lord is Jehovah; *Elihu*, my God himself; *Elijah*, God the Lord. There is no more reason for inferring, that Christ was the eternal God, because *Emanuel*, the name by which the prophet said he should be called, means God with Us, than there is for believing Elijah to have been the eternal God, because his name means God the Lord. This title was expressive of the character of Christ, as in him God was manifest on earth in a remarkable manner by his wisdom and power.

same time both Father and Son. But since God can be only *one*, it follows, if he is both Father and Son, that he is Father of himself, and Son of himself. They deny this consequence, and say, that although the true God can be only *one*, yet he consists of a plurality of persons, one of which is the Father, and the other the Son. They, who say these things, manifestly contradict themselves, and it would be in vain to dispute with persons, who have so little regard for the first principles of the understanding. I would sooner pray God to give them a sound mind, than attempt to dispute with them." Slichting. Comment. Tom. ii. p. 417.

A part of the text might be more correctly rendered in the following words, "We are in him, that is true, *through* his Son Jesus Christ." Particula *in* ponitur pro *per*. Slicht.—Ev pro  $\delta\iota\alpha$ . Viger. De Idiotismis, p. 610. For a similar use of this preposition, see Rom. x. 8, 9. Eph. iii. 21. Coll. i. 16.

For other examples in which the relative is not referred to the nearest antecedent, see Act. vii. 19. x. 6. 2 Thess. ii. 8, 9.



I have not mentioned 1 John iii. 16, because the words, *of God*, are added by the translators. I would only remark on this text, that it shows with what prepossessions king James's translators engaged in their important undertaking, and the necessity of receiving their translation with great caution in any case of doubt or difficulty. They have here added a word, which gives a totally different meaning to the text, and have acknowledged, by putting it in italics, that it is not authorized by the original. If they were so much warped by system and previous opinions, as to deviate so glaringly from the original in one instance, we cannot be surprised to find a similar tendency in many others.\*

In examining these texts we find there is not one, in which it is absolutely certain, that the title *God* is applied to Christ. And it may be said, without fear of contradiction, that in whatever sense this title is used, it is never so connected with Christ, as to warrant the inference, by any just principles of interpretation, that he is the Supreme God. And it is worthy of remark, that several of the most learned and eminent trinitarians have given such explanations to the texts here considered, as are conformable to the unitarian interpretation.

Is it not a little singular, that almost every text, in which it is supposed Christ is directly called *God*, should be of so doubtful a character? Does it not give

\* The word Θεου, *of God*, is not admitted into the text either by Mill, Wetsten, Bengel, or Griesbach. It is found in one manuscript only, in the Complut. edit. and Vulgate. Vid. Wetsten and Griesbach.

room for suspicion, that these texts, in their present form, are by no means the purest in the scriptures? How should it happen, that those passages, which are thought to be the strongest in favour of the trinity, have actually the least certainty in regard to their original construction, and are the least definite in their meaning of any others in the whole Bible? There is one mode, and only one, of explaining this fact. The texts themselves have been mutilated and deformed by being pressed, from time to time, into a service for which they were not originally qualified. But there is enough of their primitive simplicity still left, to enable us to detect their factitious and unnatural parts, and to discover a meaning in them honourable to God, and to the Saviour, and conformable to the plain sense of scripture.

II. I am next to consider some of the leading passages, in which such properties or powers are ascribed to Christ, as it is thought could be ascribed only to God, or to a being equal to God; and also some others, which are believed to contain general proofs of the doctrine of the trinity.

John x. 30. "I and my Father are one."

In another place our Lord explains in what sense he is to be understood, as being one with the Father. In a prayer for his disciples, he says, "Holy Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that *they may be ONE*, as we are. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word; that they **ALL MAY BE ONE**, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be *ONE in us*; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory, which

thou gavest me, I have given them, that *they may be ONE*, even as *we are ONE*," John xvii. 11, 20. After reading these texts, it is not possible to mistake his meaning when he said, "I and my Father are one." They were one, as he and his disciples were one, and as all christians are one. They were united in counsel, and purpose, and acted in concert. Christ did "what he saw the Father do." If this text prove Christ to be God, the others prove the same of his disciples.\*

Philip. ii. 6. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."

Before we seek for an explanation of this text, it is necessary to know the object of the apostle, in writing the passage from which it is taken. If we examine the preceding and following verses, we shall learn, that he is enjoining on the Philippians the virtue of *humility*, and to make his injunctions the more effectual, he reminds them of the example of Christ. It is obvious, therefore, that the text must have a sense, which is in conformity with this object, and which is indicative of the humility, and not of the exaltation of Christ.

This text most trinitarians think a decided proof of the deity of Christ. But if this opinion were correct, what force or meaning would there be in the apostle's language? Christ is mentioned here as an example of

\* It has been observed, that the original is not *εἷς, one person*, but *εἷν, one thing*. Hence Calvin says, "The ancients abused this text in attempting to prove from it, that Christ is of the same essence (*ὁμοουσίον*) with the Father, for Christ is not speaking of a unity of substance, but of a union, by virtue of which, whatsoever he did would be confirmed by the Father." *Abusi sunt hoc loco veteres, &c.* Vid. Wolzogen. Oper. Tom. i. p. 922.

humility, and apparently for no other purpose. But was it any evidence of humility in him to “think it not robbery to be equal with God?” The entire inconsistency of these words with the context, should point out at once the necessity of some better translation. As they stand, they destroy the propriety of the apostle’s reference to the example of Christ, and render the whole passage inapplicable to the purpose for which it was evidently intended.

What are we to understand, in the first place, by *the form of God*? Most trinitarians suppose it to be the divine nature, and as it is applied to Christ, they consider it a declaration, that he is possessed of this nature, and is essentially God. But it is well known, that the word which is translated *form*, very seldom means, in the original, the nature or essence of a thing, but only its external appearance, figure, or properties. Besides, if being in *the form of God* is a proof that Christ was actually God, then his being in the form of a servant, or slave, is a proof, that he was actually a servant, or slave, which we know is not true. Any evidence contained in the phrase, *form of God*, is as strong in favour of one of these positions, as the other.\*

Hence this must apply not to the nature, but to the condition and qualifications of Christ. The form of God, in which he appeared, was the manifestation of

\* Hammond says *μορφη* is used by good authors *pro interna ipsa rerum essentia vel forma*; but Le Clerc prefers the interpretation of Grotius, and quotes Hesychius, Suidas, Phavorinus and others to prove, that it relates to the external figure or appearance, and is synonymous with *εικων, ειδος, προσοψις*. Hammond. Adnot.—*Μορφη* denotat aliquid quod in oculos incurrit, adoque de Deo proprie dici non potest. Wetsten.

divine power and wisdom in the miracles he wrought, the instructions he communicated, and in all the evidences he gave of the divinity of his mission.

*Thought it not robbery to be equal with God.* It is agreed by almost all critics, trinitarian as well as unitarian, that the words, *equal with God*, may be translated with the strictest conformity to grammatical construction, *as*, or *like God*. The phrase is thus translated by archbishop Newcome, and Dr. Macknight. Allowing the common version to be admissible, this is thought preferable; because, if Christ be *equal with God*, there must be two Gods equal in power and majesty, which is contrary to scripture and reason.\*

*Thought it not robbery;* that is, he did not consider this resemblance to God as *plunder*, or a thing which he had *taken by force*. He looked upon it as a free gift, conferred by the good pleasure of God. In this consisted his humility. He did not exalt himself, or boast of those possessions and high endowments, which raised him to a likeness with God, as if he had obtained them by his own exertions, but was humble in his station, unassuming in his deportment, and submitted patiently to many indignities, without any ostentatious display of those powers, by which he might have secured the admiration, the respect and obedience of the world.†

\* Wetsten renders  $\iota\sigma\alpha$   $\Theta\epsilon\omega$ , *ut Deus, like God*; and in this he is followed by Macknight, who observes, that Whitby "has proved in the clearest manner, that  $\iota\sigma\alpha$  is used adverbially by the LXX, to express *likeness*, but not *equality*." See Macknight on this place. *Instar Dei*. Rosenmul. et Slicht.

† There is some difficulty in ascertaining the precise meaning of  $\alpha\rho\pi\alpha\gamma\mu\omicron\varsigma$ , because it is not used in any other place in the New Testament, and probably is not to be found in more than one or

With this meaning, which is strictly conformable to the original, the text fills up the place in which it stands, and preserves harmony in the whole passage.

Collos. ii. 9. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

The word *Godhead* means the same as Deity, or God. What is meant by the *fulness of God* we can ascertain, by comparing this passage with others. In the preceding chapter the apostle says, "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." This fulness, then, was something, which he had received from the Father, and consequently was not any-

two instances any where else. It may mean the *act of seizing* upon any thing for *plunder, or booty*; or it may mean the *thing seized, the plunder, or booty* itself. That is, it may be used in an active or passive sense. The latter is generally thought preferable. It may signify, *vel rem raptam, vel rem avide diripiendam, et vindicandam*. Schleusn. in voc.—Wetsten takes it in this sense, and gives as one reason, *Christus nunquam harpagare curavit, nunquam aliquid ab aliquo violenter rapuit*. See also Wakefield's *Silva Critica*, Sect. cxlii. For a more full explanation of this text, see Belsham's *Calm Inquiry*, second edit. p. 82. Cappe's *Critical Remarks*, vol. i. p. 228.

Professor Stuart translates this text as follows; "Who being in the condition of God, did not regard his equality with God as an object of solicitous desire." He gives as a reason why he renders *μορφῆν, condition*, that this word is sometimes used by metonymy, according to Schleusner, for *φύσις, or οὐσία, nature, or essence*. But to be in the *nature* of God, is the same thing as to be *God himself*. That this cannot be the meaning of the word in the text, is evident, because it is immediately after said, "he made himself of no reputation," literally, "emptied himself," *ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν*, or divested himself of whatever it was, that made him in the form of God, which he could not do, if he were God, or in the nature of God. The idea advanced by professor Stuart, that God might so "veil the brightness of his glories," or so yield up a part of his perfections, as to be said to "empty himself" of them, and

thing, which he possessed as an independent and self-existent being. In writing to the Ephesians the apostle expressed a desire, "that they might be filled with *all the fulness of God*," Eph. iii. 19. If we consider it an evidence, that Christ was God, because the fulness of God dwelt in him, why should not the same inference be drawn in regard to the Ephesians?

The *fulness of God* means the abundance of the divine wisdom, gifts, and blessings, conferred by him. The apostle prayed, that these might be multiplied to the Ephesians. In Christ they dwelt *bodily*, that is, *really, truly, substantially*, inasmuch as he was endowed with them in a most eminent degree.\*

still retain his omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience unimpaired, is one, which few persons, probably, will find sufficiently intelligible to be understood. Nor does he inform us why he chooses, contrary to the opinion of the ablest critics, to render *ἰσα Θεω*, by the phrase, *equality with God*; nor has he attempted to explain how one being could be said to have *equality* with another, if one were in the *same condition*, or *nature* as the other; or, which is the same thing, if both beings constituted the same being.

But there is something further, connected with professor Stuart's explanation of this text, which will probably appear not a little strange to most unitarians. He speaks of a version as being *common* among them, which he cites in the following words, namely, "He did not think of the robbery of being equal with God." Letters, p. 95. Where he found this translation is not easy to say, but it is certain, if he had taken pains to consult many unitarian expositors, he would never have fallen into so great a mistake, as to think it *common* among them. After a tolerable acquaintance with most of the unitarian critical expositors, I have never seen this translation in any other place, than professor Stuart's Letters. There are very few unitarians, it is presumed, who will not agree in the results of his laboured criticism to show, that it does not accord with the original.

\* Macknight thinks this text has some allusion to the philoso-

Trinitarians argue, that certain texts of scripture assign to Christ the *attributes* of the Deity, and hence they infer, that he is God. It has been seen in the preceding letter, that he asserted, in as positive language as could be used, that he possessed these attributes in a *limited degree*. Did he speak contradictions? Shall we not rather say, that texts of less obvious import are to be interpreted by those, whose meaning it is impossible not to perceive? Shall we say his *knowledge* was infinite, when he expressly asserts, that he did “not know the day,” in which his prophecy would come to pass? Shall we say his *power* was infinite, when he declares repeatedly, that “he could do nothing of himself,” and that he received all power from the Father? Yet, notwithstanding these assertions, trinitarians insist, that he was omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent.

To prove his *omniscience* they quote Matt. xi. 27. “All things are delivered unto me of my father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” It is unaccountable, that this text should be cited to prove that Christ has infinite knowledge *in himself*, when it is said in so

phical notions of the time in which it was written. The phrase *πληρωμα Θεου*, *fulness of God*, was common among the different sects of philosophers. The Gnostics supposed this fulness to be made up of *Æons*; the Jews, of angels; and the heathens, of inferior deities. By saying that this fulness dwells in Christ bodily, the apostle would imply, “that the philosophy, which represents angels as greater in power and knowledge than Christ, is false.” Macknight on the Epistles, vol. iii. p. 517.

*Εωματικως*, *bodily, really, truly*. Schleus. in voc. *Potest hac voce signari non corpus, sed essentia*. Hammond. Adnot.



many words, that "*all things are delivered* unto him of the Father." Whoever attends to the context will find *all things* here to relate to the gospel dispensation; but to whatever this phrase may relate, it is used in reference to a knowledge, which Christ did not possess of himself, but which he had received from the Father.

John ii. 24. "He knew all men; and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man."

The same divine wisdom, by which he was aided in teaching so perfect a religion to mankind, enabled him also, as a necessary prerequisite, to have a most intimate knowledge of human nature. Whence he derived this knowledge, he tells us in another place; for he says, "My Father hath taught me," and also, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." He consequently received this knowledge of men from the Father. Let such, as do not believe this knowledge to have been *derived*, answer the question, how a being, who already possessed infinite knowledge, could be *taught*?

John xxi. 17. "Lord, thou knowest all things."—So also it is said in another place of christians in general. 1 John ii. 20. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and *ye know all things*." It is evident, therefore, if from this text you infer the omniscience of the Lord Jesus, you must from others infer the same of all christians.

The *omnipotence* of Christ is supposed to be proved from Phil. iii. 21. "Who shall change our vile body, that it shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Does this

text imply any power which could not be derived? We are told in another part of scripture, 2 Cor. iv. 14. "That *he* which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also *by* Jesus."

Hence, whatever change shall be produced in us by the Lord Jesus, he can only act by the same power by which he was raised. And in regard to his "subduing all things unto himself," "it is manifest that *he is excepted*, which did put all things under him." 1 Cor. xv. 27.

One short declaration of Christ, it should seem, ought to be enough to stop any further inquiry into the origin of his power. He has said, "*I can of mine own self do nothing.*" Why then should we go about to prove a directly contrary position, that he *can of himself* do many things? Suppose he had power to create worlds; how small a portion of omnipotence would be such a power. "He hath authority to execute judgment;" but does he possess this authority in himself? No; "*the father hath given it to him.*" John v. 27. He is "to be the judge of the quick and the dead." By his own authority? No; he has been *ordained of God* to this office. Acts x. 42. In almost every instance, where uncommon power is ascribed to Christ, it is mentioned as coming from the Father. And it may be stated with confidence, that in all the texts of scripture, in which Christ is represented as possessing a high degree of power or knowledge, these possessions are either referred immediately to God, as a distinct being from Christ, or may be considered as proceeding from him, without any violation of the natural construction, and obvious meaning of the language.

Jesus is supposed to be *omnipresent*, because he

told his disciples, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. xviii. 20. "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." xxviii. 20. The presence of Christ mentioned here, cannot be his *personal* presence, because we know he ascended up into heaven. He promises that wherever his followers, shall be gathered together in his name, or for religious purposes. their prayers and services shall be accompanied with all the good effects, which could flow from them, if he were present, or which his religion is calculated to produce. He was with his disciples in the miraculous powers which they possessed, "till the end of the world," that is, till the *end of the age*, or of the Jewish polity. During this period he aided them by the comforter, which he had promised. This was the apostolic age, after which, miracles and supernatural powers ceased. But if you take these texts in their most extended literal sense, a sense in which they are received by very few critics, the most you can infer from them is, that Christ has the power of knowing, of aiding by his influences, and of conferring blessings on his followers. This is very far from proving him to be present throughout the universe.\*

\**The end of the world* means, for the most part, in the gospels, *the end of the Jewish dispensation*. Bishop Pearce explains the present passage thus; "*I am with you always*, that is, to assist you in *teaching all nations all things*, and by enabling you to work miracles in confirmation of your doctrine;—*even unto the end of the world*, that is, to the end of the age, or the end of the Jewish age." He further says, in his commentaries on Matt. xxiv. 3, "*The end of the age*, that is, of the age in which the Jewish church and state were to last" This is also the rendering of archbishop Newcome. The vulgate has it, *usque ad consummationem sæculi*— See also Kentick's Exposition.

*Eternal existence* is also said to belong to Christ. John viii. 58. "Before Abraham was I am." This text is quoted by trinitarians, but for what reason it is not easy to perceive, for Christ might have existed before Abraham, and still not have existed from eternity. So far as eternal existence is concerned, therefore, or equality of the son with the Father, it proves nothing.

Col. i. 17. "He is before all things." This undoubtedly means, that he is exalted above all other beings; he is superior in dignity and excellence to all things. If you suppose the text to have reference to *time*, it will afford no proof that he existed from eternity; but only that he was the first created being. He is called the "*first-born* of every creature," which is an evidence, that he was a *created* being, and must have derived his *existence* from God.

Heb. xiii. 8. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever." That is, the *doctrine* of Jesus Christ will always remain unchanged. This is the interpretation of Dr. Clarke, and Whitby, as well as of Le Clerc, Calvin, archbishop Newcome, and other trinitarians.\* It is not uncommon in the scriptures for the name *Christ* to be put for the doctrine, or religion, of Christ. Acts v. 42. "They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ," that is, the doctrine of Christ. Eph. iv. 20. "Ye have not so learned Christ," that is, his doctrine.

Rev. i. 17. "I am the first and the last." Whoever it was, that spoke these words, it certainly could not be the ever living God, for in the very next verse

\* "The evangelical doctrine, as delivered by Christ and his apostles." See Newcome's note in the Improved Vers. *Eadem illa doctrina*, &c. Hammond Adnot. edit. Clerici.

he continues to say, "I am he that liveth, and was *dead*." For any being to be called *the first and the last*, therefore, does not necessarily imply, that he is God. Rev. xxii. 13. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." It is inferred from this text, that the person speaking could be no other than God. But look back in the same chapter to the ninth verse, and you will find the messenger, who spoke these words, rebuking John for "falling down to worship before his feet," and saying to him, "see that thou do it not; for I am thy *fellow servant*, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book; *worship God*." Could this be the eternal God, who told John, that he was his fellow servant, and who refused to receive worship from him? We hence see, that these epithets, or titles, if they are to be applied to Christ, so far from proving him to be God, were actually given to a person, or being, who had *died*, who declared himself to be a fellow servant with John, and who would not suffer himself to be worshipped. What precise meaning is to be taken from the phrases *Alpha and Omega*, *the first and the last*, it is not necessary for our present purpose to inquire, since the context proves, that they cannot afford even a shadow of evidence in favour of the supreme divinity of Christ. As it is impossible they should denote the one true God, since God cannot die, it seems most rational to consider them as relating to the christian dispensation. Of this dispensation, Christ was the first and the last; it was begun and finished by him; it was entirely his work.

Another argument for the supreme divinity of Christ, trinitarians find in certain texts of scripture, in which

they say he is made the *the object of worship*. The strength of this argument rests on the scriptural meaning of the word *worship*, and of those terms and phrases in which worship is supposed to be implied. If this same word, and these same terms are applied to other persons besides Christ, then the application of them to him can be no proof of his being God. A little examination will show this to be the fact. And it is believed, that in every text in which it is thought worship or honour is rendered to Christ, a proper understanding of the context will convince any fair mind, that the person writing, or speaking, did not consider himself addressing Christ as God.

When we remember, also, how explicit our Lord was in his directions about worshipping the Father, and HIM ONLY, we ought to be very cautious how we allow ourselves to violate his express command, and ascribe to any other being that reverence, and those honours, which belong to the Father alone. He was positive in his commands to his followers, that they should worship the Father; he always worshipped the Father, nor has he in a single instance intimated, that divine worship is to be rendered to himself, or to the Holy Spirit. And if we allow him to be the angel, mentioned in Revelations, conversing with John, he there not only renews his command to “worship God,” but implies in strong language, that *he himself is not to be worshipped*. Now since every text of scripture will admit of a natural and fair explanation, on the principle of rendering divine worship to the Father only, is it not much more consistent with just rules of interpretation, thus to explain them, than to press them into the support of a doctrine totally at variance with

one of the plainest and most positive injunctions of our Saviour? If we worship Christ, we do not worship the Father *only*; and if we do not worship the Father *only*, we violate a command of the gospel.

The word *worship* does not always signify religious reverence, but sometimes civil homage or respect. "The king Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, and worshipped Daniel." Dan. ii. 46. And all the congregation bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord *and the king*." 1 Chron. xxix. 20. "And so it was, when he came to David, that he fell on the earth, and did obeisance," (worshipped him.) 2 Samuel i. 2. "And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed and revered (worshipped) Haman; but Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence," (nor worshipped him.) Esther iii. 2. The servant, in the parable of the talents, is represented as having *worshipped* his master. Matt. xviii. 26. "As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet, and *worshipped* him." Acts x. 25. Examples of a similar kind are exceedingly numerous in the old Testament. From these it appears, that kings, and other men in eminent stations, were worshipped. It follows, that the same kind of reverence shown to Christ, is not a proof of his having been God.\*

\*The word rendered *worship* is προσκυνεω. It occurs nearly two hundred times in the septuagint version of the Old Testament, and is sometimes translated *worship*, at others *reverence*, and *obeisance*, but most commonly to *bow down*. When the sons of the prophets came out to meet Elisha, "they bowed themselves to the ground before him," literally, *they worshipped him on the ground*. 2 Kings ii. 16. The word derives its signification from the eastern custom of prostration in token of submission to a sove-

It is said of Christ, Matt. viii. 2, "There came a leper and worshipped him," literally, *bowed down before him*, or, according to the custom of the country, showed him a peculiar mark of reverence and respect, as Cornelius afterwards showed to Peter. The same may be said "of a certain ruler who came and worshipped him. ix. 18. After he had walked on the sea and stilled the winds, "they that were in the ship came and worshipped him," but not as God, for they immediately after say, "Of a truth thou art the *Son of God*," xiv. 33. They manifested towards him that reverence and submission, which, as the messenger of God, he ought to receive.

Certain passages of scripture are supposed by some to afford an evidence, that *prayers* were offered to Christ, because mention is made in them of *calling on his name*. But this is an erroneous interpretation of the phrase. Calling on the name of the Lord Jesus does not signify the act of addressing him with prayers or supplications. Acts ii. 21. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Now whether this text refers to God, or to the Lord Jesus, it is evident that it cannot allude to the simple exercise of prayer or worship, because no one can suppose, that by this alone salvation can be procured. *Calling on the name of the Lord* must mean, in this place, a sincere discharge of every religious duty, for such only is the condition of salvation. Any person who

reign or prince. It came at length to denote a mode of salutation, or of showing respect to a superior, and in this sense is very commonly used in the New Testament. We can determine when it means religious adoration, only from the connexion in which it is used.



embraces and obeys the religion of Christ, is one, who, in the scripture sense of the phrase, calls on his name. Acts ix. 14. "And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name;" that is, all that have embraced thy religion, and become thy followers. xxii. 16. "And now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord;" that is, receiving the truths, and obeying the commands of the christian religion. Paul writes to the Corinthians, and to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Cor. i. 2. This address was made to all, who had become christian converts.\*

Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. "Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at (in) the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The meaning of this passage is very clear. It is expressive of the exaltation of Jesus, and of the extent and authority of his religion. *Every knee is to bow, or God is to be worshipped, in his name; that is, in conformity with the spirit and rules of his religion. All intelligent beings are finally to become the true*

\* Wakefield observes, that "this is in very many instances a Hebrew phrase for a religious man—one, who acknowledges the being and providence of God—one dedicated to his service." See Wakefield on Acts ii. 21. Hinc factum est, ut formula επισκελεσθησθαι ονομα τινος significaret in universum, profiteri religionem alicujus. Schleus. in voc. επισκελε.

worshippers of God through the religion of Jesus Christ. This religion, also, is to have a universal prevalence, and all nations will ultimately confess, that Jesus was a divine messenger, and glorify God for his goodness in sending him into the world empowered with so high a commission. No text is more explicit than this, in expressing the superiority of God the Father to Christ. However highly Christ is exalted, we are told it is *God*, who has *exalted him*.

John v. 22, 23. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father, who hath sent him."

That this text should be brought forward to prove, that we are to worship Christ as God, or to honour one in an equal degree with the other, is certainly somewhat surprising. In the first place it is said, the "Father hath *committed* all judgment to the Son;" and next, that "he hath *sent* him," both of which declarations show, as clearly as can be shown, that they are distinct beings, and that one derives his power and authority from the other. The text itself, therefore, points out the impropriety of honouring one in an equal degree with the other. We should honour God, as the **Supreme Being**, and the author of our religious privileges; and we should honour Christ, as the messenger, whom he has dignified with the high commission of revealing the divine will to man, and of becoming, by his doctrines and example, the Saviour of the world. Any disrespect to the authority of Christ, is a disrespect to God, from whom he received his commission and power. Instead of affording any argument for the

supreme worship of Christ, this text contains an implied injunction to the contrary.\*

There are some passages in which *glory*, *thanks*, and *gratitude* are rendered to Christ. 2 Peter iii. 18. "To him be glory both now and for ever." 1 Tim. i. 12. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." All christians, unitarians as well as trinitarians, will undoubtedly unite in the sentiments contained in these and other similar texts. All will be ready to render glory, and honour, and thanksgiving, and gratitude to him, who has been so highly exalted of God, who was empowered from heaven to work miracles, and publish a new and divine religion to the world, who lived a life of privation and suffering, and at length submitted to an ignominious death, for the present happiness and eternal salvation of men,—all christians will revere the dignity of his character, acknowledge the perfection of his doctrines and example, yield a willing and cheerful obedience to his authority, and feel the warmest gratitude for his benevolent exertions, and affectionate solicitude in behalf of the whole human race. But every one should be cautious, how he renders to Christ those honours, and those ascriptions of praise and thanksgiving, which belong to the Father only. There can be but one supreme object of spiritual worship, or of religious ho-

\* The meaning of the text is much impaired by a wrong translation of a single word. Instead of rendering *καθως*, *even as*, it should be *since*, or *seeing*. Vid. Schleus. Also Macknight's Prelim. Essays. Es. 4. No. 203. There is a similar example in Eph. i. 3. "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, (*καθως*) *since, seeing*, he hath chosen us," &c.

mage, and that is God. He is the Being, whom our Saviour worshipped, and commanded his followers to worship. To him all honour, and glory, and praise are due, and when we ascribe these to any other being, except in a limited degree, how can it be said, that we are the *true worshippers*, who worship the Father? Or how can it be said, that we “worship the Lord our God, and him only?”\*

1 John v. 7. “For there are three that bear record *in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.*”

This text has been so often, and so thoroughly examined, and the words in italics so universally rejected, that I should not think it a proper use of time to say a word on the subject, did I not know it still to be quoted, as a portion of the true scriptures, both by preachers of the episcopal and other churches. I can give only a short sketch of the reasons, which prove it not to have been written by the apostle.

In the first place, it merits our attention, that the sense of the passage is not injured by leaving this verse out. On the contrary, it is rather improved. The connexion is closer without it. The witnesses mentioned in this verse had not been introduced before, but the water, blood, and spirit, mentioned in the sixth verse, are brought forward in such a manner in the eighth, as plainly to indicate, that the seventh has been inserted between them.

\* For a comprehensive view of the nature and object of religious worship, see a sermon by the Rev. Robert Aspland, entitled, *A Vindication of Unitarian Worship*, London, 1810.

The text in question has never been found in any Greek manuscript, which was written earlier than *fourteen hundred* years after Christ. It is contained in no Latin manuscript, which was written before the *ninth century*. It is not contained in any of the ancient manuscripts of the eastern languages.

It was never quoted by the Greek fathers in their controversies on the trinity. A stronger proof than this cannot possibly be advanced, that they had no knowledge of such a text. They often cited the verse preceding, and the verse following, to prove the divinity of the Son; but this verse, which is much more to the point, they never adduced. Neither was it quoted by the early Latin fathers. In many editions of the Bible, after the reformation, it was either omitted, or inclosed in brackets, to show that it was doubtful. It was omitted in Luther's German version, and marked as doubtful in the early editions of the English Bible.\*

Many of the ablest trinitarian critics of the last and present age, have rejected this text as spurious. Bishop Lowth, in a letter to Michaelis, says, "We have some wranglers in theology, sworn to follow their master, who are prepared to defend any thing, however absurd, should there be occasion. But I believe there is no one among us, in the least degree conversant with sacred criticism, and having the use of his un-

\* In the old English Bibles of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. the words of this text were either printed in smaller letters, or enclosed in a parenthesis. The same was observed in queen Elizabeth's Bible of 1566; but shortly after, the words began to be printed without any mark to distinguish them from other parts of the Bible. See Commentaries and Essays, published by the Society for promoting the Knowledge of the Scriptures, vol i. p. 144.

derstanding, who would be willing to contend for the genuineness of this verse.\*

Archbishop Newcome has left it out of his translation.

The bishop of Lincoln says, "that after an attentive consideration of the controversy relative to this passage, I am convinced that it is spurious."†

Dr. Jortin expresses himself as follows; "This text of the three heavenly witnesses keeps its place in our Bibles, in bold defiance to the fullest and clearest evidence against it."

Dr. Doddridge enclosed the passage in brackets; and expressed his doubts as to its being genuine.

A trinitarian writer in the *Eclectic Review*, in an article written professedly against unitarians, says, after some remarks on this text, "Under these circumstances, we are unspeakably ashamed, that any modern divine should have fought, *pedibus et unguibus*, for the retention of a passage so indisputably spurious. We could adduce half a dozen, or half a score passages of ample length, supported by *better* authority than this, but which are rejected in every printed edition and translation."‡

After a most critical examination of the whole subject, Griesbach rejected the text as totally indefensible.§

\* See a part of the original letter in the *Christian Disciple*, vol. i. p. 109. quoted from Michaelis's *Literary Correspondence*, part 2. p. 428.

† *Elements of Christian Theology*, vol. ii. p. 90. Note.

‡ See *Christian Disciple*, vol. i. p. 109. *Eclectic Review* for March, 1809.

§ *Ego quidem, si tanti esset, sexcentas lectiones ab omnibus*

Bishop Middleton and Mr. Wardlaw consider it spurious.

Such are the opinions of a number of the most learned trinitarians. Many more might be quoted. Travis wrote largely in defence of the text, but was answered in such a manner by Porson, and bishop Marsh, that no one, especially since the investigations of Griesbach, will probably be inclined to revive the controversy.\*

Sir Isaac Newton, also, wrote a treatise against the genuineness of this verse, in two letters to Le Clerc, which are said to be "written with force, can-

rejectas atque futilissimas defendere possem, testimoniis et rationibus æque multis atque validis, imo pluribus plerumque atque validioribus, quam sunt ea quibus utuntur hujus dicti patroni. Diatrib. in loc. 1 Iohan. v. 7. p. 25.

\* It is not to be denied, that bishop Seabury, in his charge delivered in Derby, Connecticut, September 1786, declared the genuineness of this text to be "incontestably established by the Rev. Mr. Travis." p. 10. But it would seem, by the proceedings of the first American convention, that the bishop's authority, in the affairs of church government at least, was not treated with the most profound respect.

In the critical notes to the Greek and English Testament, published by Roberts, 1729, after examining the evidence in relation to this text, the editor observes, "If this evidence is not sufficient to prove, that the controverted text in St. John is *spurious*; by what evidence can it be proved, that any text in St. John is genuine?"

Dr. Wall, in his Critical Notes on the Greek Testament, published 1730, has the following remark on John v. 7. "This verse is in no Greek manuscript, nor was in the Bibles of ancient christians, nor ever made use of by them in their disputes with the Arians. Mill has so defended it, that he, who thought it genuine before, will now conclude it to have been interpolated by some Latin scribe first." Comment. and Essays, p. 145.

dour, and perspicuity." They were published after his death in Horsley's edition of his works.\*

Even Beza and Calvin did not allow, that this text affords any argument for the trinity. According to these writers, it is not a *unity of number*, which is here spoken of, but a *unity of testimony*. Calvin says, it is a unity of agreement, and not of essence; that is, these three witnesses are one, in the same sense, as the water, blood, and spirit are one. They all agree in one testimony.†

All the persons, whom I have mentioned as rejecting this text, except Sir Isaac Newton, were trinitarians; and since such is the overwhelming evidence of its being spurious, it seems truly incredible, that any preacher should be found at the present day, so regardless of his reputation for scholarship, for candour, and for honesty, as publicly to quote and urge this text to an uninformed audience, as of equal authority with the rest of the scriptures. The only plea, which such a person can make, that ought to have any claims on our charity, is ignorance. But this is a plea to which few, who make any pretensions to theological attainments, can resort. It must, indeed, be a cause of serious regret to every friend of pure religion, that any one can make it with sincerity. But it is still more to be lamented by all such, as wish for the success of religious truth, that any teachers of the gospel should

\* Butler's *Horæ Biblicæ*, p. 378. Newton's Works, vol. v.—These Letters were printed separately in London, 1754. A copy of this edition is in the library of Harvard University.

† Ita prorsus consentiunt ac si unus testis essent. Beza.—Quod dicit, tres esse unum, ad *essentiam* non refertur, sed ad *consensum* potius. Calvin. See Macknight, vol. vi. p. 109.



knowingly and wilfully be the means of disseminating error, and of imposing on the ignorance and credulity of the multitude, by repeating to them as the record of divine truth, what has been most undeniably proved to be an unwarrantable fabrication of men.

Matt. xxviii. 19. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in (into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The word *name*, by a Hebrew idiom, is often redundant. The phrases *name of God*, *name of the Lord*, frequently express nothing more than God, and Lord. The Psalmist says, "I will praise the name of God with a song;" that is, "I will praise God with a song." Ps. lxxix. 30. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower." Prov. xviii. 10. "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever." Dan. ii. 20. "I will cut off the name of the Chemarims." Zeph. i. 4. In all these examples, the word *name* is redundant, and might be omitted without affecting the sense.

In other cases the *name* of any person signifies the *authority*, or *doctrine* of that person. "I am come in my father's name," John v. 43; that is, by the *authority* of my Father. "In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk," Acts iii. 6; that is, by the *authority* of Jesus Christ. "By what power or name have ye done this?" iv. 7, or, "by what power or *authority* have ye done this?" St. Paul says, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," xxvi. 9; that is, contrary to the *authority* or *doctrine* of Jesus of Nazareth. "In his name (authority, or doctrine) shall the Gentiles trust." Matt. xii. 21.

It hence follows, that being “baptized into the name” of any *person*, is the same as being baptized into the doctrine of that person, or into the person himself; and to be baptized into the name of a *thing*, is the same as being baptized into the thing itself. ‘This is consistent with what is stated in other places. “For as many of you as have *been baptized into Christ*, have put on Christ.” Gal. iii. 27. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were *baptized into Jesus Christ*, were baptized into his death?” Rom. vi. 3. “They were all *baptized unto (into) Moses* in the cloud.” 1 Cor. x. 2.

From these passages we must be convinced, that no argument can be derived from the text under consideration, in support of the doctrine of a trinity of persons in the godhead. To be baptized into the name of the Holy Spirit, does not imply, that this spirit is a person, any more than that *death* is a person, for the same reason. And if to be baptized into Christ be a proof, that he is equal with God, you may infer the same of Moses.

“To be baptized into the name of any person,” says Schleusner, “signifies to profess, by the rite of baptism, a determination to be devoted to his doctrines, his authority and his institutions.” They, who “were baptized into Moses in the cloud, and in the sea,” were such as professed to be his followers and yield to his authority. To be baptized into Christ, is to express an acknowledgment of his authority, and a resolution to obey his commands, and copy his example. When Paul expressed his fears, “lest any should say, that he had baptized in his own name,” his meaning was, that none whom he baptized should consider them-

selves *his* disciples, but practical believers of the religion of Christ.

In other words, to be baptized into any person, or thing, is to make a public profession of faith in that person, or thing. Faith is the first requisite of a religious life. We cannot obey, till we believe; and if our faith be rational and sincere, we shall scarcely be wanting in obedience. One implies the other; so that to acknowledge a sincere faith in the christian religion, by the ceremony of baptism, is the same, as resolving to give heed to its injunctions, and confide in its promises.

Baptism was designed as a rite of initiation into the christian church. To be baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, was to express a belief that God was the original author of the christian religion; that Christ was empowered by divine aid to publish it to the world; and that the influence of the Holy Spirit, or a divine agency, was manifest in the miraculous powers and gifts, which were exercised, both by our saviour and his disciples.\* It is easy to perceive for what reason this form of baptism was instituted. It comprises the three principal subjects of christian faith. Whoever professes a sincere and rational belief in these, can give no firmer indication, as far as faith goes, that he is a christian. There was a special, as well as a general reason, why the Holy Spirit should be connected with the other two. The enemies of Jesus, and of his religion, imputed the miracles, which he wrought, to a diabolical agency, and said, "he casteth out demons by the prince of

\* *Baptismus datur in nomen του αποσειλαντος Πατρος, του ελθοντος Χριστου, του μαρτυρησαντος παρακλητου.* Clement. Vid. Resonmul. Vol. I. p. 575.

demons." It was important, that such impressions should be done away as speedily and effectually as possible, and that his works should be referred to their true source, the power and influence of God. This end could easily be accomplished, by making it a part of the baptismal ceremony to acknowledge the operation of the Holy Spirit, or the immediate agency of God, in confirming the truths of the gospel.\* This is rendered the more probable, from the circumstance of there being no instance on record in which the whole form was used. Those persons, who had seen such wonderful effects of the Spirit, as to render it impossible for them to doubt of their true cause, were for this reason, perhaps, not baptized in the name of the Spirit. Whether this conjecture be correct or not, it is certain the apostles did not consider this form as absolutely essential, since it was not always, if ever, employed by them.

There is nothing, therefore, in the form itself, nor in the practice of the apostles, which can induce us to think, that because the Son and Spirit are mentioned in this connexion, we are to take them to be equal to the Father. If so important a doctrine were to be inculcated in this form of baptism, it certainly would not have been so uniformly omitted by the apostles. It is, also, to be noticed, that in the verse immediately preceding, Christ says, "All power is GIVEN unto me in heaven, and in earth." If he were God, it could never be said, that all his power was *given* to him; and this acknowledgment of his dependence, in immediate connexion with the form of bap-

\* Marson's Sermon on the Impersonality of the Holy Ghost, third edition, London, 1812, p. 38.

tism, is another and an unanswerable proof, that no such doctrine can be deduced from it, as his equality with the Father.

2 Cor. xiii. 14. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."

Many of the epistles of St. Paul are begun and ended with devout wishes, similar to those here expressed. Some have, in these, discovered traces of religious worship offered to three beings, and have hence inferred the doctrine of the trinity. But such inferences will hardly stand the test of examination.

The *grace*, or which is the same thing, the *favour* of Christ, means the gospel of Christ, or all the blessings, privileges, consolations, and hopes, which are enjoyed through this gospel. We are especially indebted for these to the grace, or favour of Christ, because it was from the purest motives of benevolence and good will, that he suffered so much for the benefit and happiness of men. The apostle expresses a desire that these blessings, of which, we have been made partakers through Christ, may abound to the Corinthians to whom he is writing; and, also, that they may be favoured with the love, or approbation of God.

By "the communion of the Holy Spirit," is meant a participation of the gifts, powers, or influences, which go under its name. In writing to the Philippians, St. Paul speaks of "their fellowship (communion, or participation) in the gospel," and of their "fellowship of the Spirit."\* What can be meant here, but a joint

\* The word *κοινωνία* is translated promiscuously *fellowship*, *communion*, *participation*; but the last seems to be preferable.—Schleusner in voc. Yates's Vindication, p. 171.

participation of the blessings of the gospel, and of spiritual gifts? If you make the Holy Spirit a person, what idea can you attach to the apostle's language? How could the Corinthians join in the participation of a person? We may commune or participate *with*, but not *of* a person, and it is to be kept in mind, that there is no such expression in scripture, as communion *with* the Holy Spirit. The language of the text itself, therefore, renders it certain, that by the Holy Spirit in this place, cannot be understood a person, or being, much less the supreme God. The words of the apostle imply nothing more, than a benevolent wish, that to the Corinthians might abound the blessings conferred by the gospel of Christ, the love or favour of God, and the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit.—All other texts of this description will be found to require a similar explanation.

I have thus examined some of the principal passages of scripture, which are usually quoted in support of the trinity. Others may have been omitted, which are thought important, but my limits have allowed me to select only the most prominent. I cannot refrain from repeating a fact, at which I have before hinted, that every text, which I have examined, has been interpreted, by some one or more of the ablest trinitarian critics, in a manner perfectly consistent with the unitarian exposition. This fact should teach some persons to urge with more gentleness the charge, which is often brought against unitarians, of attempting to put a forced construction on such texts of scripture, as do not seem at first to harmonize with their sentiments. The meaning of some of the most difficult passages is to be settled by fair and patient criticism, in which learning,

judgment, and candour, are the only guides that can be trusted. These may be exercised by persons of one religious denomination, as well as of another; and we show but little regard for the cause of truth, when we suffer our prejudices, and zeal for a party, to blind our eyes to the light, which the judicious inquiries of learned men, whatever may have been their private opinions, have thrown upon the scriptures. By neglecting to be informed, and refusing to inquire, we not only manifest a love of ignorance, but a fear, that our faith is of too flimsy a texture to bear a close examination.

If we place any value in religious attainments, in a knowledge of God and of our duty, we shall eagerly seize upon every means in our power, to come at the revealed truths of scripture. Truth in religion, as in every thing else, is known by its simplicity; error involves in us perplexities, fills us with doubt, and leaves us in despair. Truth is luminous; it sends forth a steady light. Error is dark, and spreads darkness around it. Truth is the guide to virtue; it is attended with harmony and peace. Error opens a broad way to vice, and draws the heedless and unsuspecting into its snares. We should remember, nevertheless, that opinions are important, as far as they influence the conduct, and no farther. A correct faith will make no amends for a bad life. Faith is not religion, any more than opinions are actions. To be religious we must have faith; to act rightly, we must think rightly; and yet, we may have faith and no religion, as we may think and never act.

This truth is of great practical importance. It will cause us to exercise forbearance and a good temper to

wards those with whom we do not agree in religious opinions. While there is such a variety of characteristic features in the minds, constitutional temperaments, dispositions, associated impressions, and early habits of men; while there are such various degrees of knowledge, mental light, and strength of understanding, it is not possible, that all men should think alike. Nor is it necessary they should. It is not required of us, that we never be in error, but that we use our best endeavours to avoid it. Our duty is discharged when we have done this, and it is our misfortune, and not our fault, if we still remain in the dark. All this may be granted, without affording any possible excuse for not keeping up the temper, the dispositions, the feelings, and practice of christians. There is no occasion for difference here, but our own perverseness, cherished ill nature, and evil passions. If we have any regard for the example of our Saviour, and the noble virtue of charity, which he enjoined, we shall soon learn to subdue these, to lay aside our narrow prejudices, to disdain the invidious distinctions of names and sects, to brush away the films through which we can see the errors and faults, but not the virtues of our fellowmen; we shall learn, that all men are in the hands of God, that in the concerns of religion, all have equal privileges and freedom, and are entitled to equal claims on our candour, affection, tenderness, and christian love.



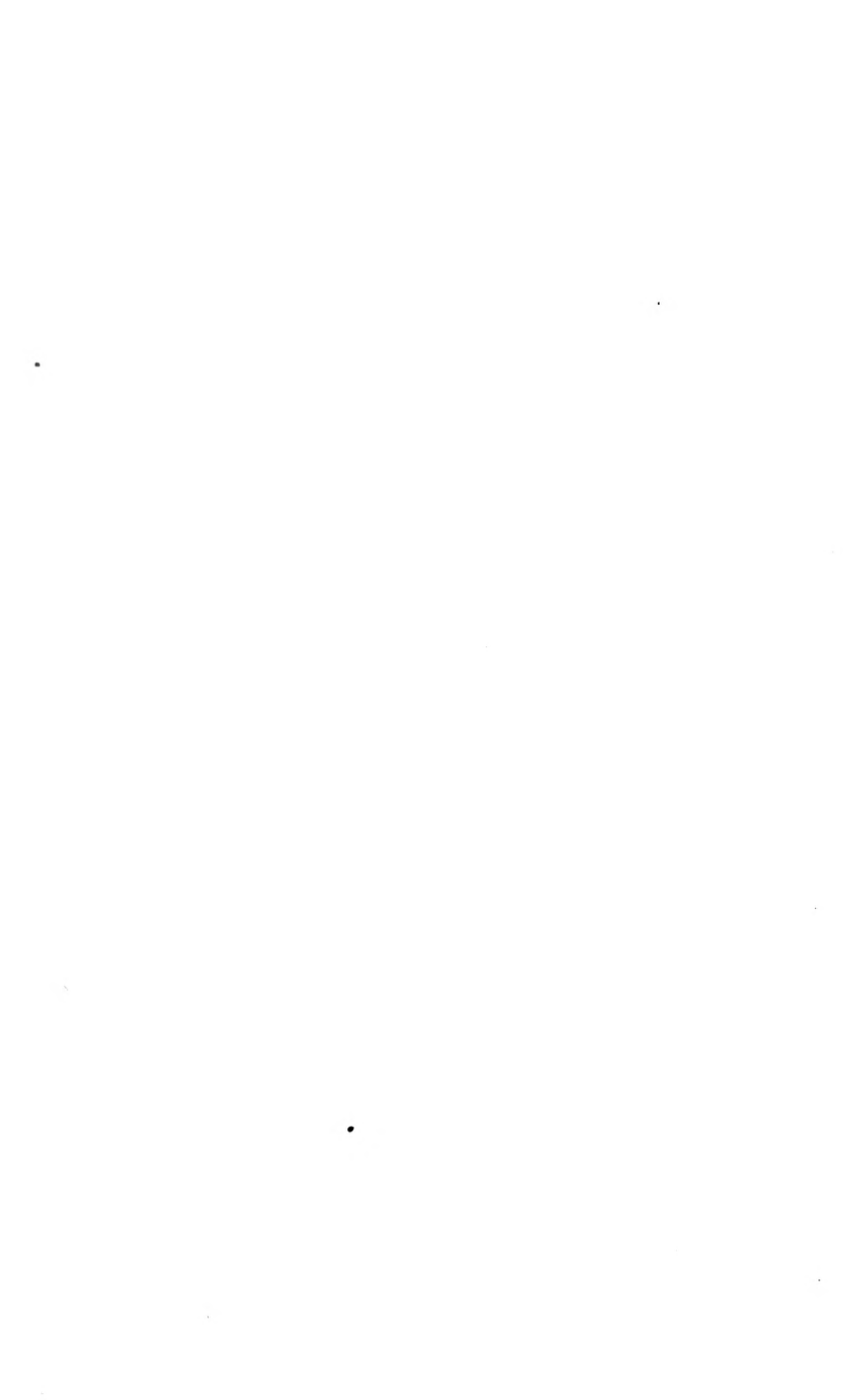
## ERRATA.

For "conclusive," page 10, line 6, read "exclusive"—for "either," p. 57, l. 27, read "other"—p. 76, l. 10, before "sacrifice" insert "last"—line at bottom, for "adopt," read "adapt"—for "possess," p. 95, l. 25, read "profess"—for "seventh," p. 135, l. 6, read "seventeenth"—p. 150, l. 12, omit, "and essential"—for "in," p. 158, l. 25, read "into"—for "sæculi," p. 247, line at bottom, read "seculi."











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