



1. Essay on the several Dispensations of God to Mankind in the Order in which they lie in the Bible - 1728
- 2 Remarks on the several Answers to a Pamphlet intitled Christianity not founded on Argument.
- 3 A Review of the genuine Doctrines of Christianity comprehending Remarks on several principal Calvinistical Doctrines - By Joseph Towers 1763
4. The Nature & necessity of Catechising - 1746.
5. Observations on the Conduct & Character of Judas Iscariot 1751.




SCC

8232





St. James



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2011 with funding from  
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

*Thames*

# OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

## CONDUCT and CHARACTER

OF

JUDAS ISCARIOT,

IN

A LETTER to the Rev. Mr. J. P.

*John Bonar*

THE SECOND EDITION.

*Out of the eater came forth meat. Judg. xiv. 14.*

EDINBURGH:

Printed for W. MILLER: MDCCLI.

Sold by A. MILLAR, opposite to *Catharine-street*, and D. WILSON, at *Plato's Head*, in the Strand, *London*.

[Price Six Pence.]





## ADVERTISEMENT.

*When these Observations first appeared, the author had no expectation that a second edition would have been called for ;—but since a second edition has become necessary, he begs leave to acquaint the publick, that though he has reviewed the argument, yet he has not found it needful to make any considerable addition or alteration : only, that he has left out the whole of the paragraph which stood at the foot of the 19th page ;—as being unwilling to build upon any thing, which even the most rigid Deist may pretend to call in question :—a correction for which he owns himself indebted to one, who though eminent in civil life, and busied in the affairs of the nation, is neither ashamed to conform his life to the precepts, nor employ his pen in defence of the Christian religion.*



A

L E T T E R

To the REVEREND

Mr. F—— P——

S I R,

**C**OULD I have forced you from that retirement, in which you studiously labour to conceal the fruits of an excellent genius and unwearied application, the following argument, of which you suggested the first hint, had appeared with superior strength and advantage. But since all my endeavours to that purpose have been ineffectual, I have ventured to send abroad the result of my own reflexions on that head, rather than that any thing which tends to support Christianity, should remain unobserved in an age of so much scepticism and infidelity.

WHEN you first mentioned the conduct of *Judas* as a proof of the Christian religion, the  
A newness

newness of the fancy struck me ; for new it was to me. Nor can I yet find any one writer who has sufficiently attended to it ; though I must own, that the more I reflect upon it, the more am I convinced of its strength and solidity.

NOTHING perhaps contributed more to the uncommon applause and success of Mr. *Lyttelton's* late ingenious performance, than the compendiousness of his proof, and its depending entirely upon one chain of facts. But however favourable its reception, no man was surprised to find the Apostle *Paul* adduced as an evidence for Christianity. But to find *Judas Iscariot* forced into the same service, will doubtless seem whimsical to some, and absurd to others : Yet as people generally allow the testimony of an enemy to be less suspicious than that of a friend, so possibly the setting this matter in a just light, may help to remove the prejudices of those who will credit nothing that comes from the friends of JESUS.

IF ever there was an enemy to CHRIST in the world, *Judas* was that enemy ;—if ever there was an apostate from the faith, *Judas* was that apostate ;—and if ever there was a traitor, he too was the man : and yet to find this malicious, this traitorous, this apostate *Judas*, instead of disproving Christianity in any point, proving it in every one,—sealing a testimony to the truth of it even with his blood,—and giving solemn evidence against himself ; this, sure, is

a phænomenon pretty surprizing, and what even the warmest friends of Christianity could scarce have expected.—If the infidel suspects the integrity of *Paul*, let him now hear the testimony of *Judas*;—if the one has no weight with him, surely the other will.

THE following observations therefore claim a fair and a dispassionate hearing.—This is all the favour that they ask; and, it is hoped, it is all that they need.

As it is from the writings of the Evangelists that we have any knowledge of the character and conduct of *Judas Iscariot*, we must beg leave to quote these as genuine records of the events they pretend to relate: An honour which I hope our adversaries will not deny them;—or if they should, they must be sensible, that as strong a proof can be brought in favour of *Luke* and the other New Testament writers, as of any who wrote at an equal distance of time \*.

TAKING this therefore for granted, I beg leave to transcribe what we find concerning *Judas* in these ancient records.

THE first time *Judas* is mentioned in the New Testament, is when CHRIST chuses

\* See Conybeare's defence of revealed religion, chap. 9. and Doddridge's sermon on 2 Peter i. 16.

twelve from the multitudes that attended his ministry, and appoints them to be Apostles, or particular messengers for propagating his religion.—We have the catalogue of these Apostles given us by three Evangelists ; who all conclude it with the name of *Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.* Matth. x. Mark iii. Luke vi.

SOME short time after, we find him, together with the other eleven, receiving from his great Master power over all unclean spirits,—diseases,—nay death itself ;—and commissioned to go and preach the gospel to the lost sheep of the house of *Israel.* See *Luke ix.*

AFTER this we hear nothing of him till a little before the third passover of CHRIST's publick ministry, when many of his disciples left him, upon his declaring, in the synagogue of *Capernaum*, that he was the *bread of life, which came down from heaven.*—On this occasion CHRIST puts the question to the Apostles, *Will ye also go away?* Whereupon they all reply, by the mouth of *Simon*, *Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe, and are sure, that thou art that CHRIST the Son of the living God.* In answer to which, CHRIST assures them, that although he had chosen them twelve, yet one of them was a *devil*, or, *should prove his accuser;* as the Greek word *Διαβλος* literally signifies. Which the Evangelist assures us he spoke of *Judas.* John vi. 70.



THE next time we find him spoke of, is on the *Sabbath* immediately preceeding the passion-week ; when CHRIST, being arrived at *Bethany*, is invited, with his disciples, to an entertainment in the house of *Simon* the leper.—During which entertainment a box of very precious ointment is poured out upon CHRIST's head. Upon which the historian remarks, that some present had indignation ; and that *Judas Iscariot*, *Simon's* son, expressly said, *Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor ? and this he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.* John xii. 4. Matth. xxvi. and Mark xiv.

ON the third day of the passion-week, he entered into that infamous contract with the High Priest and Rulers of the *Jews*, to deliver his Master into their hands. Of which the Evangelists give us this account.

“ THEN assembled together the chief priests,  
 “ and the scribes, and the elders of the people,  
 “ into the palace of the high priest, who is also  
 “ so called *Caiaphas* ; and consulted how they  
 “ might take JESUS by subtlety, and put him  
 “ to death. But they said, *Not on the feast-day,*  
 “ *lest there be an uproar among the people.* Then  
 “ entered Satan into *Judas*, surnamed *Iscariot*,  
 “ one of the twelve ; and he went his way,  
 “ and communed with the chief priests and  
 “ captains,

“ captains, how he might betray him unto  
 “ them; and said unto them, *What will ye*  
 “ *give me, and I will deliver him unto you?*  
 “ And when they heard it, they were glad,  
 “ and promised to give him money; and they  
 “ covenanted with him for thirty pieces of sil-  
 “ ver. And he promised; and from that time  
 “ sought opportunity to betray him unto them,  
 “ in the absence of the multitude.” Compare  
*Matth. xxvi. Mark xiv. and Luke xxi.*

“ TOWARDS the evening of the fourth day  
 “ of the passion-week, JESUS comes with his  
 “ disciples from *Bethany* to *Jerusalem*; and ha-  
 “ ving ordered the passover to be prepared, at  
 “ the appointed time sits down to eat it with the  
 “ twelve. During which solemnity, he takes  
 “ occasion to let them know that he was tho-  
 “ roughly acquainted both with the treachery  
 “ and the traitor. For, being troubled in spi-  
 “ rit, he said, *Verily verily I say unto you, that*  
 “ *one of you shall betray me; for the hand that*  
 “ *betrayeth me, is with me on the table.*—Then  
 “ the disciples were exceeding sorrowful, and  
 “ looked one on another, doubting of whom  
 “ he spake; and began every one by turns to  
 “ say, *Lord, is it I?*—Now, there was lean-  
 “ ing on JESUS bosom, one of the disciples  
 “ whom JESUS loved. *Simon Peter*, who pro-  
 “ bably sat on the other side of the table, there-  
 “ fore beckoned unto him, that he should ask  
 “ who it was of whom he spoke.—He then  
 “ leaning himself down on JESUS breast, saith  
 “ unto



“ unto him, *Lord, who is it?* JESUS answered, with a low voice, so that none of the rest heard, *He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it.* And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas ; who, just as he was reaching out his hand to take it, says, *Lord, is it I?* To which JESUS replied, *Thou hast said.* And immediately after the sop, Satan entered into him ; and, fired with indignation, he rose from the table. Upon which CHRIST says, *What thou dost, do quickly.* But none of the disciples, except John, seem to have known with what intent he said so.” *John xiii.*

“ AFTER the paschal supper, and the institution of the eucharist, JESUS goes out with his disciples to a garden at the foot of the *Mount of Olives* ; a place Judas was well acquainted with, and where he knew his Master was to spend part of that night.—Having therefore received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, he came thither with lanterns, torches, and weapons ;—and having given them this as a sign whereby they should know the person who they were to apprehend, he goes up to CHRIST, and, kissing him, saith, *Hail, Master.* Whereupon JESUS saith, *Man, wherefore art thou come? Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?*—Upon which it appears that he shrunk back again amongst the croud : for immediately, when CHRIST  
 “ by

“ by a word strikes them all to the ground, it  
 “ is observed that *Judas* also stood with them.”  
*John* xviii.

“ *JESUS* being thus taken, and next day  
 “ condemned by *Pilate* to be crucified ; *Judas*  
 “ repented of what he had done, and brought  
 “ again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief  
 “ priests and elders, saying, *I have sinned, in*  
 “ *that I have betrayed innocent blood* ; and, cast-  
 “ ing down the pieces of silver in the temple,  
 “ he went and hanged himself.” *Matth.* xxvii.

“ *LUKE*, in his history of the acts of the  
 “ Apostles, has added one circumstance more,  
 “ that falling headlong, *Judas* burst asunder in  
 “ the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.”  
*Acts* i. 15 \*.

THIS is all the account that the Evangelists  
 give of *Judas* : and the argument thence arising  
 in favour of Christianity, seems to be this.—  
 Here is a man of sense and ability, thoroughly  
 acquainted with the most secret conduct and  
 views of *JESUS*, and therefore capable to detect

\* It may be proper to observe, that amongst other instances  
 from which Mr. *Tindal* endeavours to overthrow the credit of the  
 gospel-history, this of the conduct of *Judas* is one.—*Christianity*  
*as old as the creation*, p. 245.

And it seems a little odd, that the learned Dr. *Conybeare*, in  
 his elaborate reply, should leave his adversary in full possession of  
 this objection ; saying nothing in answer to it, but that it will be  
 time enough to alledge the miscarriages of *Judas*, when we build  
 any thing on his evidence.—*Defence of revealed religion*, p. 446.

any

any fraud or imposture that might be carrying on by him ;—a man, not only able to inform against JESUS, but highly willing ;—engaged from principles of honour, interest, and self-preservation ;—tempted by reward,—by avarice,—by ambition,—by resentment, to make the discovery :—yet this man, after having delivered up CHRIST through the strength of these temptations, no sooner reflects on what he had done, than his conscience, taking the alarm, makes him in the strongest manner retract, and attest his Master's innocence, before those very rulers to whom he had sold him but a few hours ago ; and finding all had no effect, in an excess of grief and remorse he expires almost in their very presence.—*I have sinned*, (cried he), *in that I have betrayed innocent blood* :—An attestation of the innocence of CHRIST, so circumstantiated, that it is scarce possible to suppose a stronger, and which nothing but the most thorough conviction could have extorted.

IF by *innocent blood*, *Judas* meant no more than that Christ was a person who had done nothing worthy of death, sure this is the very lowest sense in which the words can be taken.—However, taking them no higher, they plainly seem to intimate,

I. THAT *Judas* believed that JESUS was the true Messiah, and Son of God, as he all along affirmed himself to be: for, otherwise, CHRIST could not have been a man of truth

B

and

and veracity, if he laid claim to a character which in no ways belonged to him.—In that case too he would have been guilty of blasphemy, and consequently worthy of death by the *Jewish* law \*.

2. As he hereby declares his belief, that JESUS was the true Messiah, so he in effect declares, that, in as far as he could discern, his miracles were all true, his doctrine divine, and his life pure and holy: for it was from these things that he must have been convinced that JESUS was the Messiah.

3. JUDAS hereby declares, that, for his part, he was privy to no design formed by CHRIST of erecting a temporal kingdom; otherwise he must have reckoned, that he ought to have suffered death, if not by the *Jewish*, at least by the *Roman* law.

4. By this expression *Judas* strongly declares his opinion, that CHRIST was innocent of the crimes laid to his charge by the sanhedrim; particularly, of deceiving the people by pretended miracles;—stirring them up to sedition against

\* That *Judas* knew CHRIST to be the true Messiah, seems also evident from *Matth.* xxvi. 49. and *Luke* xxii. 48. where CHRIST says to him, upon receiving the treacherous kiss, *Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man?* i.e. “the person whom thou knowest to be “the Son of man, or Messiah.” Which interpretation gives the words a force and spirit, which I have not seen attended to by any but the devout and learned Dr. Doddridge, *Family-expositor*, vol. 2. p. 507.

*Cæsar*, saying, *that he himself was a king* ;—and casting out devils by magick, or *Beelzebub* the prince of the devils:—and consequently, he hereby declares, in the strongest manner, his total and profound ignorance of those frauds and collusions of which some quick-sighted modern Deists have made surprising discoveries.

BUT one is apt to think, that the words *innocent blood* imply somewhat more than all this. —They seem to point out, that *Judas* was convinced, not only that JESUS was an innocent man, but a beneficent one ;—one constantly employed in doing good ;—and particularly, that he was a man remarkable for meekness of temper ;—of a merciful, compassionate, and harmless disposition ;—void of ambition, innocent, and quiet.

NOW, if it can be made appear, that the person giving such a strong attestation to the innocence of CHRIST, was one well acquainted with his most secret views ;—was one able to form a just judgment of them ;—was one who would have been fond to find out and expose any fraud ;—and was one who could have no worldly interest to serve by adhering to CHRIST, but, on the contrary, had every inducement to detect his design: if, I say, these things can be made appear, will it not strongly conclude, that JESUS was what he professed himself to be, the



true Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world?

THIS is an argument founded on the few simple facts above set down; which it requires no depth of thought to comprehend, and no abstract reasoning to discover. The consequence, I apprehend, is undeniable, provided the premisses are able to support such a fabrick. It must therefore be the business of the following pages, to examine these with becoming accuracy.

AND here the leading inquiry will be, Whether the person giving such a strong attestation to the innocence of JESUS, in these peculiar circumstances, was one of sense and ability; able to form a just opinion of CHRIST and his designs?—For unless we can be assured of his capacity, his testimony will have very little weight; since it is impossible to draw any argument from the freakish inconsistencies of conduct into which a man of a weak mind may run: — whereas when a man of sense changes his conduct, we are naturally led to inquire into the grounds upon which he proceeds.

WE are not indeed able to trace out the birth and education of *Judas*, which lies in equal obscurity with that of the other Apostles.—He is called *the son of Simon*, and *Judas Iscariot*; but neither of these epithets give much light into the matter. They are probably added, to distinguish

tinguish him from the other *Judas*, who was faithful to the death.—Some have supposed him the son of *Simon* the leper, in whose house *JESUS* was so elegantly entertained a few days before he suffered.—The ingenious Mr. *Fleming* concludes him the son of *Simon* the *Canaanite*. But both opinions are merely conjectural ; tho' either of them seems more probable than the fancy of those who will have him a native of *Corcyra*, where his house and posterity, say they, may yet be seen \* ; or the notion of the *Cainites*, who make him the head of a considerable family in the tribe of *Issachar* †.

I should not have mentioned these uncertain conjectures, did they not seem to intimate a general notion that prevailed very early in the church, that *Judas* was some considerable person ; which I scarce know how to account for, but by supposing, that, by birth or education, he was some how conspicuous in the college of the Apostles.—For why should the earliest writers, by a sort of general consent, in this manner aggrandize the traitor, while they speak of the other Apostles in a different style?

As to his name *Iscaiot*, some refer it to the office of purser, which he bore in *CHRIST*'s family, from a *Hebrew* word of much the same sound, and correspondent meaning.—But the

\* Petrus a Valle, in itineribus suis, pars I. Turcicæ, epist. I.

† Calmet's dictionary, art. *Judas*.

opinion of those seems better founded, who, deriving it from the place of his birth, read *Judas Iſh-Carioth*, i. e. *Judas* a man of *Carioth*, a small town beyond *Jordan* \*.

BUT it is much more to the present purpose to observe, that this person was made choice of by JESUS to be one of his Apostles and constant attendants; which will sufficiently warrant our concluding him a man of good natural sense and ability †. For although CHRIST made choice of men in low life to be his Apostles; yet I can see no reason why we must conclude them fools too, unless we will say that good sense is only to be found among the sons of learning and fortune.—So that *Judas* being of the number of the Apostles, gives a strong presumption in his favour; since there is the very best reason to conclude them all men of sound minds and good understandings, though not brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*.

To this we must add, that *Judas* was raised by CHRIST to a sort of superior station in the family.—He was appointed treasurer; a place which would doubtless be given to the man of greatest activity, and acquaintance with the

\* The different conjectures as to the meaning and derivation of the name may be seen in *Bartolocci Bib. Rab. tom. 3. p. 24.*

† That the Apostles were men of superior sense to the bulk of people in their station, will scarce be denied by the Deists; who upon that very supposition build all the phenomena of Christianity, which, according to them, was contrived by JESUS CHRIST, and these twelve cunning impostors.



world.—In this office he not only had the custody of what presents were made to JESUS and his disciples, which required a person of reputed honesty ; but also he had the laying out of that money, for their daily maintenance and support, which called for a man of activity and discretion.—Nay, it appears that to him JESUS had been in practice of leaving the distributions for the poor ; which supposes a high opinion of his judgment and prudence ; qualifications essentially necessary to the prudent conferring of charity.

AND if we may build any thing upon the opinion of those who had best access to know him, his fellow disciples and apostles, he seems to have been in no small repute among them : for when the plainest intimations were given by CHRIST, as we have seen above, that one of them should betray him, nay that *Judas* was the person, yet no man suspected him ; which doubtless would have been the case, had they judged him either a deceitful or a weak man, capable of acting such a base and dishonourable part.

THE manner too in which he conducted the treachery from first to last, gives no bad specimen of his abilities.

THAT he commenced a disciple of JESUS from worldly views and prospects, will scarce be denied.—With the rest of the *Jews* of that time,

time, he had long expected the promised Messiah, hoping to find in him a temporal monarch, who should rescue their nation from the oppression of the *Romans*, and raise it to the highest pitch of grandeur.—The fame of JESUS had reached his ears; and possibly the miracle wrought on the lame man at the pool of *Bethesda*, made him conclude that certainly he must be the person; for it is soon after this miracle that he is numbered with the Apostles \*.

As these views made him commence a disciple, the same views soon made him resolve to abandon that way. Covetousness was the reigning passion of his soul. He found in CHRIST's family nothing to gratify it, nor any prospect of the matter mending in that respect; and therefore he resolved to abandon his new profession; but in such a way as he might make something by the bargain. Knowing the hatred of the *Jewish* rulers to his Master, he resolved to deliver him into their hands, hoping they would generously reward such a service. But that he might make the most possible of his treachery, he resolved to delay the execution of it, until there should be something considerable in the bag; which he shrewdly enough conjectured might be the case when his Master should go up

\* It appears from the history, that CHRIST did not make choice of the twelve till some weeks after the second passover: for tho' there is mention made of his calling *Philip*, *Nathanael*, *Peter*, *James*, *John*, and *Andrew*, long before; yet it was only at the above period that they were appointed to be Apostles, or messengers.

to *Jerusalem* to the passover; where the very sacrifices they were to offer, and the other necessary expence, would require a larger stock than was necessary in their country-retirement \*. And this I think will naturally account for delaying the execution of his design so long after he had formed it: for it is beyond all question, from the plain intimations that our Lord gives long before of the intended treachery, that there was such a design in head †.

BUT however *Judas* had formed such a design, he so artfully concealed it, that none but the all-searching eye could penetrate the disguise. Often do the other disciples betray their expectations of a worldly kingdom; but we never hear a syllable to this purpose drop from the lips of *Judas*. Two forward disciples may pray down fire from heaven, to consume the *Samaritans*, who would not receive and honour their Lord; but *Judas* discovers no such imprudent zeal.—The sons of *Zebedee* may solicit to sit, one on the right hand and the other on the left, in his kingdom; but *Judas* betrays no such ambitious weakness. And when we find him reproving *Mary* for anointing JESUS, it is

\* For it is pretty evident, that the Apostles never attended CHRIST to *Jerusalem* till the last passover. They were not appointed till after the second passover; our Lord went not up to the third: so that this fourth was the first they attended in company with him. And it is probable, that our Lord did not chuse to appear with such a retinue until his time should be fully come; that so he might not too much alarm the *Jewish* rulers.

† See *Apostolick Constitutions*, book 5. chap. 14.; where we find these words, Εκ πολλῶν μὲν δ' ἰωστραφείας.

under the specious pretence of giving to the poor.—As to the perpetrating the treachery, how artfully is it managed? His agreement with the Priests is privately made; and the most private opportunity taken to put it in execution. Nay, when he gave the treacherous kiss, he seems to have hoped to pass undiscovered. He came in the dark, went at some distance before the multitude, and afterwards mingled with the croud. In short, a design could not have been better laid, more artfully carried on, or cautiously executed, than this of *Judas* betraying CHRIST; which shews him master of no small address and cunning.

I might conclude this head, with observing, that to his natural sagacity there was added superior powers by JESUS, when he sent him out with the other Apostles, and gave him power over all unclean spirits \*, diseases, and death itself; from which moment he must be considered as a person endued in a very extraordinary manner.

So that, upon the whole, the first observation made, *viz.* That *Judas* was a man of sense and ability, and sufficiently able to judge if CHRIST

\* It seems to me an excessive refinement, to distinguish unclean spirits from other evil spirits which might possess men, supposing the word only to signify such kind of spirits as drove men to dwell among tombs, by which they became ceremonially unclean: for it is evident, that unclean and evil spirits are generally used as synonymous, referring to the moral impurity and malignity of their natures. Compare *Matth.* xii. 13. *Luke* xi. 24. and *Rev.* xvi. 13. 14.

was carrying on any fraud, is abundantly evident.

BUT as this is the basis upon which all the subsequent argument rests, I must not dismiss it till I have obviated one objection, that seems to lie against this part of *Judas's* character, as a man of sense and sagacity; and that is, his selling his Master for such a trifle as thirty pieces of silver, little more than 3*l.* 15*s.* or, according to Dean *Prideaux*, 4*l.* 10*s.* of our money: which seems rather to represent him as a greedy fool, who knew not how to make use of the opportunities which offered of gratifying his covetousness; as none can doubt but that the *Jewish* rulers would have given a much greater sum rather than allowed JESUS to have escaped them.

I frankly own, that there has been no part of his conduct for which I have found it so difficult to account, as this. Once I was in hopes of finding, that a piece of money might be applied to other coins as well as to the shekel, so that the sum might be greater than what interpreters generally fix it. And in this I thought myself not a little supported, by what the Evangelist assures us, that with that money they were able to purchase a field in *Jerusalem* for a burying-place to strangers. But I am now convinced, that it is not to be accounted for in this way. For,



1. I cannot find, that a piece of silver, or a silverling, is ever applied to any *Jewish* coin but to the shekel; whereas to that it is very often applied in the Old Testament.

2. NOR would increasing the value of the pieces of silver at all agree with what we find in the Prophet *Zechariah* concerning this very transaction, of the price given by the *Jews* for *JESUS*; where the thirty pieces of silver given to the Prophet as his hire, is spoken of as a sign of the contempt in which they held him and his services \*. *A goodly price* (says he) *at which they have valued me*. It was the very price which a slave was to give for his liberty, and at which slaves were bought among them.

3. AND as to the purchasing a field with these thirty pieces of silver, which seems to intimate a much greater sum; it may not be difficult to account for that, especially if we grant the place which is at present shewn to travellers, to be the very spot; for it is not above thirty yards long, and fifteen broad †. And when the Evangelist calls it *the potter's field*, he gives us a reason why it might be such a cheap purchase, as having been employed formerly in making and burning earthen ware, it must have been marred for any valuable use.

\* *Zech. xi. 12.* Ignatii epist. ad Philip. Ον ετιμισαντο απο υιον Ισραηλ. This whole prophecy is set in a very clear light, in *Dr. Doddridge's Family-expositor*, vol. 2. p. 590.

† Maundrel's travels, p. 101.

FOR these reasons I apprehend we cannot reasonably increase the value of the thirty pieces of silver ; but must endeavour to account for *Judas's* conduct in selling his Master for such a trifle, in some other way. And to this the history itself seems to give us a key. For, however covetousness might have been the reigning passion of his soul ; yet it is very evident, that resentment pushed him on to the immediate execution of his design. He judged himself affronted by JESUS, when at the last supper he pointed him out as the ungrateful person who was to betray him. The discovery seems to have exasperated him to the last degree : for he instantly sprung from the table ; and, leaving the room, went directly to the Chief Priests, to conclude the infamous bargain about which he had formerly treated with them. And if we attend to the then temper of his mind, we shall find the part which he acted, a natural consequence of covetousness and resentment. His covetousness would not allow him to give up JESUS for nought ; whereas, on the other hand, his resentments were so keen and pungent, that he had not coolness enough to make the most advantageous bargain, but, impatient for revenge, accepted what they offered. For which this further reason may be assigned, That, as his design was now known, he must either immediately accept of the offer that had been made him, otherwise the opportunity was for ever lost.—And as for the *Jewish* Rulers offering no higher a bait, it may naturally enough

nough be accounted for, from that contempt in which they professed to hold CHRIST and his adherents; whereas had they offered a much greater sum, it would have convinced others, that these very Rulers judged him more formidable than they were willing to own.—Wherefore I cannot see, that from this part of his history any objection can be brought against what was formerly alledged in favour of his sense and sagacity \*.

BUT it will not be sufficient to our present purpose, that *Judas* was a man of good understanding, perfectly capable of penetrating into the most secret designs of JESUS and his disciples, unless we can also shew, that he had sufficient opportunities of informing himself as to these. This therefore, in the second place, must be canvassed and examined.

VARIOUS reasons have been assigned by those who comment upon CHRIST's life and history, for his making choice of *Judas* to be an Apostle, while yet he was thoroughly acquainted with the badness and insincerity of his heart; as if he thereby intended to teach us

\* Though many fanciful solutions of this difficulty have been given, yet none of them seem equal to that of *Martin Kempius*, who affirms, that *Judas* got the tenth of whatever was put into the bag. When therefore *Mary* had poured out the precious box of ointment which might have been sold for 300 pence, or pieces of silver, of which his tenth would just have been thirty, he goes to the *Jews*, and promises, if they will make up that sum, to deliver his Master into their hands. *Mart. Kempius de oscula Judæ.*

only



only to judge by the external conduct ;— that ordinances derive not their virtue and efficacy from the administrator ;—and that even in the purest societies upon earth we must expect a mixture of good and bad men.

THESE indeed are pious instructions ; but they seem far from containing the whole of the case. The scheme now under consideration, suggests, in my apprehension, a still more important reason, namely, That by chusing *Judas* into his family, who should afterwards prove a traitor, CHRIST would shew the world, that he was not afraid to have his most secret conduct witnessed by his enemies ; and lest they should suspect that there was some fraud privately carrying on, he would venture to initiate one of their own party into all the mysteries of his religion : A conduct which, I dare say, every man must be convinced stands clear of the least suspicion of imposture \*.

I apprehend it will readily be granted, that, upon the supposition that JESUS was carrying on a fraud, this could not have been done without accomplices. It was an imposture of that

\* Amongst other valuable hints on this argument which occur in *Kæcheri notis in Grotium de ver. relig. Christ.* there is the following, taken from the *Oblationes spontaneæ, obl. 31. N. 4. p. 78.* *Haud dubie propterea in Apostolorum numerum adscitus a Jesu olim Judas fuit, ut intime omnia pernosceret quæ Christus agebat, atque deinde testimonium præbere posset. Quod si igitur in doctrinis aut moribus Christi quid animadvertisset, quod cui turpe ac nefarium culpari jure potuisset, id sane haud tacuisset.*

nature, as could not have been managed by one man alone. *JESUS* aspired to nothing lower than being thought the Messiah; in consequence whereof he not only pretended to work miracles himself, but to give the power of doing so to others.

Now, if accomplices were necessary, none, I dare say, will be thought so proper for this purpose as the twelve Apostles; nay, our adversaries will not scruple to grant that these were the very persons. They were pitched upon from the whole multitude of his disciples, to be stated and constant attendants upon him; they were present at his publick teachings; they were the companions of his most private hours: so that if he held any esoterick or secret opinion, if he carried on any private design which he artfully disguised from the world, it must certainly have been known to them.

*JUDAS* was one of this number; and, by the whole of the history, appears to have been admitted into as great confidence and familiarity as the other Apostles. And, however it may be pretended that the eleven, deeply tinctured with enthusiasm, might easily be imposed upon; yet this cannot be alledged of *Judas*, who afterwards made it evident, that he had never so fully entered into their designs. Free then from this bias, with all his senses alert, nay, as will appear, with the design of quitting their party full in his eye, and therefore

fore watching every occasion against them ; was he not able to discover in their most free and private conversation the bottom of the plot ? Must he not have known whether JESUS lived as he taught ; or if, while he recommended the strictest morality to others, he indulged himself in any private crimes ? which would certainly have been the case had he been an impostor.

To which I must add one very strong consideration on this head, of Judas's opportunities of knowing if any fraud was carrying on by CHRIST and his disciples ; and that is, that CHRIST not only pretended to work miracles himself, but also pretended to give the same power to his disciples : *Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases : and they departed, and went through the towns preaching the gospel, and healing every where.* And lest we should suspect that Judas was not so highly endued, the Evangelist Matthew takes care, immediately after this commission, to subjoin a compleat catalogue of the Apostles who received these powers, in which Judas is particularly mentioned \*.

## JUDAS

\* Kæcherus, in his forecited book, p. 172. among other proofs that Christ did not work his miracles by magick, or acquaintance with the secret powers of nature, says,—*Judas Iscariot, cum ipse quoque opera miraculosa perfecit, Matth. x. 1. haud dubie artes illas calluit. Id vero si scire habuisset, aut Judas usus fuisset isto arcano,*

JUDAS heard his Master pretend to give him such powers; and, in consequence thereof, he goes and makes the experiment on the first diseased person he meets. Must he not then immediately have known whether the effect followed, and whether the lame and the blind received their sight and strength? If he saw this undeniably the case, what a strong conviction must it have wrought in his mind that his Master was the Messiah? And how naturally does it account for that anguish he afterwards endured, upon his basely betraying him? Whereas, on the other hand, had Judas discovered all to be trick, had he discovered that the pretended cures were only the effect of a collusion betwixt the persons who feigned the disease and CHRIST, would he have failed to lay open the cheat? Especially if we add, That in case there was any fraud carrying on by JESUS and his disciples, Judas had every supposable inducement to make the discovery:—which, joined to what has already been said of his knowledge and opportunities, will, in my apprehension, go a great way to make the argument conclusive.

THIS will hold true whatever the personal character of Judas is supposed to be. Was he a man of conscience and honesty, who waited

*ad avaritiam suam explendam, aut cum Dominum suum proderet, miracula ejus meras esse imposturas, nitique occultis naturæ viribus, revelasset. Neutrum vero cum fecit Judas, illud manifesto est argumentum, miracula Jesu præstigias haud fuisse.*

for



for the consolation of *Israel*, and had commenced a disciple of JESUS, in hopes of finding in him the long-wished for Messiah; we may easily be convinced what part he would have acted, upon finding his hope disappointed, and that, instead of a prophet, he was following an impostor.—Regard to truth, and the glory of God, would not have allowed him to hesitate one moment. He must not only have abandoned the party, himself, but have fairly laid open their frauds and secret practices to others. Regardless of whatever reflexion the dishonest or unthinking part of mankind might throw upon him, as having once been of the party, he would labour to undeceive the multitude, and wish to confront the impostor himself.

REGARD to the religion of his country would greatly have strengthened such a resolution. It is well known how zealous the bulk of the *Jews* were on this head; which alarmed them the more at the pretensions of JESUS to be the Messiah, while his doctrine tended so evidently to set aside their numerous rites and ceremonies: so that, as a good son of the church, *Judas* would have been led to use the utmost care to prevent the dangerous infection.

ALL the principles of benevolence and love to mankind would have awaked in his breast, in order to induce him to a speedy discovery, that so others might be prevented from falling into the snare in which he was well nigh caught.

And this too would he have judged the best return of gratitude to that God who had saved him from being entirely led aside by the error of the wicked.

IN fine, to such a speedy discovery he would have been strongly excited by the powerful motive of love to his country.—It was one reason why the more politick *Jews* gave so little regard to the various circumstances that concurred to prove JESUS the Messiah, lest, by seeming to acknowledge any other King than *Cæsar*, they should give a handle to the *Romans*, under whose yoke they lay, to take away their city and nation. The force of which argument was the greater, as they could not yet have forgot the many inconveniencies which two pretenders to that character had brought upon them a few years before: instances, which, as they happened in *Judas's* own time, must have been more than enough to overbalance any argument that might be brought to the contrary by the false shame of commencing informer.

BY such views and motives must *Judas* have been actuated, had JESUS been an impostor, and he a man of integrity and conscience.

BUT supposing, what indeed is the fact, that this *Judas* was a man of a very opposite character, was an abandoned wretch, destitute of honour, conscience, and love to his country;  
yet,

yet, even in that case, interest, powerful private interest, must soon have determined him to make a discovery of the fraud, if any such was carrying on.

A man of such a character must certainly have commenced disciple from worldly views, concluding that CHRIST was to erect a temporal kingdom. He hoped, by joining him so early, to merit the highest preferments in that future monarchy. But finding himself disappointed, and that there was neither honour, riches, nor fame, to be got in his service; nay, that the very Master himself seemed, by some unaccountable conduct, always to decline any advantages that were thrown in his way, and whimsically talked of a spiritual kingdom: observing this to be the case, would not rage at his disappointment naturally lead him to divulge the secret? which too would have been a sufficient apology for abandoning a sect which he had once espoused.

IF covetousness was the chief bent of his mind, this was most likely to be gratified by a discovery. He knew how inveterate the Chief Priests and Rulers were against JESUS, and with what malice and keenness they sought his ruin: so that he might reasonably expect to be well paid for what discovery he should make to them.

NOR can it be alledged that such a discovery  
would

would either have subjected him to odium or danger.

To odium or reproach it could never have exposed him with any man of sense and reflection : for his discovering such a fraud, stood justified by every motive and consideration which can have weight in such a case. So that instead of reproach, his uncommon honesty would have merited universal applause. Nay, we may go one step farther, and affirm, that the applauses which he merited would have been liberally conferred upon him ; immediately he must have become the darling of all the rulers. And this fully obviates the other part of the objection, That possibly he might have been deterred through fear from making the discovery. But of whom, pray, was he to be afraid ? Of JESUS and his followers ? A very inconsiderable party indeed, without either number, power, or influence ; who, so far from being able to injure others, could not even defend themselves.

ERE I dismiss this head, it will be proper to add, that the manner in which JESUS all along treated his followers, and the Apostles themselves, makes it evident, that he was never afraid of what discoveries they could make.

IT is the interest of every impostor, not only to gain partisans, but also to manage those whom he may have gained with the utmost delicacy and address ; lest, forsaking his party, they should



should work his ruin: An observation which stands confirmed by the practice of all impostors that have yet appeared in the world.—But instead of this address and management, we find JESUS always treating his disciples with the greatest plainness and freedom.—When two of them, incensed at the conduct of the *Samaritans*, would have prayed down fire from heaven upon those despisers of their Master; instead of applauding their zeal, JESUS tells them, that they knew not what spirits they were of.—How oft, in presence of the multitude, does he blame the twelve for their dulness and incredulity?—And when, from the tenderest affection, *Peter* had declared himself unwilling to hear of his sufferings and death, he receives the sharp rebuke, *Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savourest not the things which be of God.*

BUT not to insist on these, and many instances of the same kind which occur in the gospel with regard to the other disciples; let us observe the behaviour of JESUS towards this very *Judas*; and we shall find it such as naturally tended to irritate and provoke him to a discovery, if he had any discovery to make.

IF *Judas* had conceived a design of betraying his Master some considerable time before he put it in execution, we find JESUS speaking of it even then as a thing he was well acquainted with: *Behold, I have chosen you twelve, and one of*

*of you shall prove my accuser.* This he repeats at sundry times. And though, as afterwards appears, he was as well acquainted with the person of the traitor as the treachery in general; yet he by no means observes any particular delicacy of conduct towards him. When he was to be transfigured, he keeps him back from the honour of that glorious transaction.——When this *Judas* animadvert upon *Mary's* anointing his Master's feet, we find *JESUS* soon silencing him, by openly vindicating the woman, and condemning the reflexion thrown out against her.—But as if all this had not been sufficient, at the last paschal supper we find him pointed out by *JESUS*, as the ungrateful monster, who, though he dipped with him in the dish, should in a few hours betray him. Then too does he hear the most dreadful judgments denounced against himself; which immediately filled his mind with the keenest desires of revenge; so that in fury he springs from the table. But *JESUS*, instead of being alarmed at this, as he must certainly have been had not all his conduct been fair and honest, puts him, as it were, to the defiance; bids him go do what he intended; and that, instead of flying from him, he would even so far countenance his design as to retire to the private garden of *Gethsemane*; a place with which the traitor was well acquainted, and where he might apprehend him without disturbance.

To all which I may add, that, knowing the  
covetous

covetous temper of *Judas*, he had before committed the bag to him, that he might always have it in his power to run off with advantage.

Now, let any man say if he discerns ought in such a conduct that can give the least suspicion of imposture?—Nay, does not the fair and open part which *JESUS* acts, strongly argue the contrary?

THUS I have endeavoured to shew, that *Judas* was thoroughly acquainted with the most secret designs of *JESUS*;—that he had sufficient capacity to discover any fraud that might be carrying on;—and that he had all possible inducements to lead him to make such a discovery:—so that it only remains that we inquire in fact what part this *Judas* acted.

DOES he, in consequence of having got to the bottom of the plot, go to the Rulers of the *Jews*, and make the discovery?—Sure, nothing could have so much ingratiated him into their favour.—Such a discovery would have been of far greater importance to them than the death of the impostor. Hereby should they have been enabled effectually to oppose his designs, and ruin his credit with the people.—Hereby should they have been furnished with a just ground of accusation against him; an accusation not founded on matters of doubtful disputation, or questions of their law, but on the

E  
reason

reason of things,—on common justice and equity.

THIS too would have most successfully gratified *Judas's* revenge against CHRIST, and fully exonerated him in forsaking a party he had once espoused.

How wide of this was the part he acted? From covetousness and revenge he resolves to deliver his Master into the hands of the *Jewish* Priests.—This resolution he executes in the manner above mentioned:—yet he has not the effrontery to alledge any one crime of which he was guilty; although I think it pretty evident from the history, that the *Jewish* sanhedrim had examined *Judas* very particularly about JESUS,—about his miracles,—his doctrine,—and his predictions;—and that he had told them every thing he knew about these \*.

HAD *Judas* made any discoveries to the prejudice of CHRIST, which no doubt he would have done had he been able, it would not long have remained a secret.—Our Lord had been twitted with it at his trial;—it had been thrown up to *Judas*, when he came, saying, *I have betrayed innocent blood*;—and it would have been

\* It seems probable, that it was *Judas* who informed the sanhedrim of what CHRIST had said about his resurrection on the third day; otherwise, I cannot see how they came to be so distinctly informed about it as they tell *Pilate* they were: for, so far as I can recollect, CHRIST never spoke of his resurrection plainly to any but the Apostles.



objected to his Apostles afterwards, when brought to a trial for propagating the same religion.—But in none of these cases was there the least insinuation to this purpose; but, on the contrary, after all they could expiscate, we find them entirely at a loss how to lay their accusation against CHRIST; or how to prove it even after it was laid.

AND as for *Judas*, no sooner does he see what the consequences of his treachery would be, and that the *Jews* were actually proceeding to put CHRIST to death, than his conscience takes the alarm, and drives him in despair to be his own executioner. For it is the same thing as to the present argument, whether, according to our translation, we make *Judas* to have hanged himself; or, as the *Greek* words might be rendered, that, falling down on his face, he was suffocated through the excess of his grief, and burst asunder in the middle.—Only, if we take this last to be the fact, it is worth observing, that the *Talmudists* make such a suffocation the punishment which God was wont to inflict on such persons as bore false witness against their neighbour\*.

\* What it was that drove *Judas* to despair, rather than to ask forgiveness of this meek and merciful Lamb of God, I shall not determine. But it seems to me evident, that two things contributed greatly to it: 1<sup>st</sup>, A conviction that he had betrayed the true Messiah; and, 2<sup>dly</sup>, A remembrance of those awful warnings that JESUS had formerly given him: *The Son of man* (said CHRIST) *goeth, as it is written of him; but wo unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed: good were it for that man that he had never been born.*

Now, let any man attempt to account rationally for this excess of grief and remorse, upon the supposition that JESUS was an impostor, and that *Judas* knew him to be such.—In which case his discovery would have stood justified by the most rational arguments, and no foundation could have been laid for such anguish of mind.—But allowing the fact as it stands, and this to have been the end of *Judas*, does it not strongly conclude, that after *Judas*, a man of sense and ability, had been thoroughly acquainted with CHRIST's life and doctrine, and for a considerable time had watched every occasion against him, and at last, from covetousness and revenge, had delivered him into the hands of his enemies; yet he was firmly persuaded, that JESUS was an innocent person, and the true Messiah; whose religion we are bound to receive as a revelation sent from God?

HAVING thus observed the consequences of *Judas's* treachery with regard to himself, it may not be improper, before I shut up the argument, to shew what influence it had on JESUS and his Apostles.

As to JESUS himself, I am persuaded, every man who reads the gospels, must be charmed with his behaviour in this last period of his life.—Whether JESUS was the Messiah or not, this will be allowed, that he was one betrayed by a pretended friend; than which, no circumstance can tend more to sowre the mind, and  
ruffle



ruffle the temper ; and every one must know what bitter reproaches such traitors receive, and ought to receive.—But JESUS, superior to all trials, meets this horrid treachery with a heroick fortitude ; and reproaches the traitor in no harsher terms than these, *Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss ?*

As to the disciples of JESUS, especially the eleven, notwithstanding this horrid treachery of one of their number, and the crucifixion of their Master which happened thereupon ; yet they continue firmly united in carrying on the design of CHRIST, and establishing his religion in the world ; which it was impossible for them to do had they been carrying on a fraud, or aggrandizing an impostor. For the case is the same here as in common life. If any twelve persons were engaged in a conspiracy, and one of them should go and discover the plot, this would at once put an end to the designs of the other eleven, and render it impossible for them any longer to carry them into execution.—That union and harmony which is the very soul of combination, would henceforward be broke ; and to that would succeed a mutual jealousy and distrust, every one suspecting that his neighbour might also become a traitor.—The same must have been the case with the disciples of JESUS, had they not been entirely honest in their views. But as they were only adhering to truth, neither the treachery of *Judas*, nor the denial of *Peter*, in  
the

the least influenced them to abandon the cause in which they were engaged.

THUS I have endeavoured to state an argument in favour of Christianity from the conduct and character of *Judas* the traitor. I have examined it with all the attention I am capable of, and have endeavoured to shew that it is conclusive: though I am far from laying the stress of the whole cause upon it. No; blessed be God, we have a cloud of witnesses attesting the innocence of JESUS, and the truth of our holy religion, upon which all our hopes for time and eternity are founded;—witnesses whose characters have been canvassed, and their evidence illustrated, not only by those of former times, but also by the most masterly writers of this and the preceeding age, laymen as well as clergy \*. Against whom I may safely say, the advocates for infidelity have maintained a very unequal conflict; since, notwithstanding their keenest efforts, for these hundred years, they have not been able to weaken the smallest pillar by which the noble fabrick stands supported.

WOULD to God I could say, that they had

\* Besides the observations on the conversion of *St Paul*, already referred to, I have in mine eye *Mr West's* elegant and striking remarks on the evidences of CHRIST's resurrection; and the present Bishop of *London's* trial of the witnesses; a book which I am persuaded will stand the test of ages, notwithstanding the ungentle insinuation which *Dr Middleton* has lately thrown out against it.

succeeded

succeeded no better against the life and practice of religion. As a heart-love to wickedness is at the bottom of their opposition to the gospel, their impiety has still kept pace with their infidelity; and, as the most effectual way to debauch our principles, they have laboured hard to debauch our practice: and what melancholy success they have had in this respect, every one who hath eyes or ears can tell.—While, on the other hand, many of the friends of Christianity have been more careful to preserve our principles, than to reform our lives.—But, sure, it is now high time to awake, and to stand in the gap against impiety, as well as infidelity. Nor can we hope with success to discourage the latter, unless we shall be able to suppress the former. For so long as men are vicious, they will have a strong propensity to throw off those restraints which Christianity would lay upon their passions, and free themselves from that dread which it naturally inspires into the wicked.

*I am,*

*S I R,*

*Your's, &c.*

12

2002













