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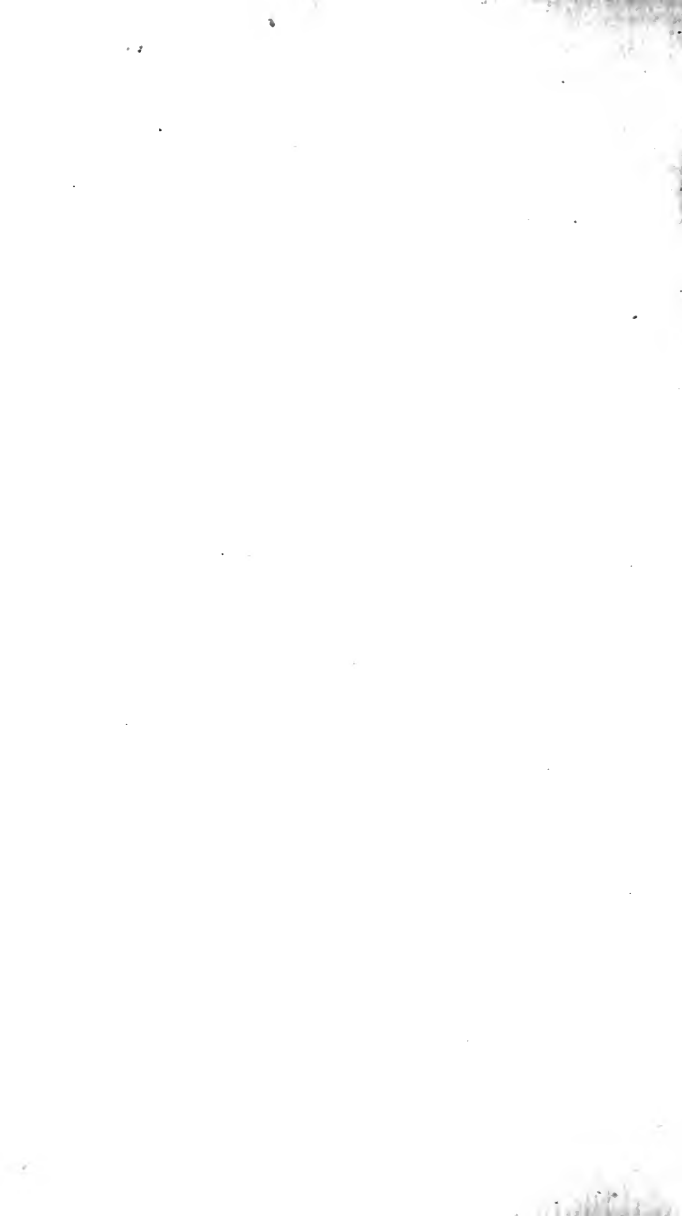
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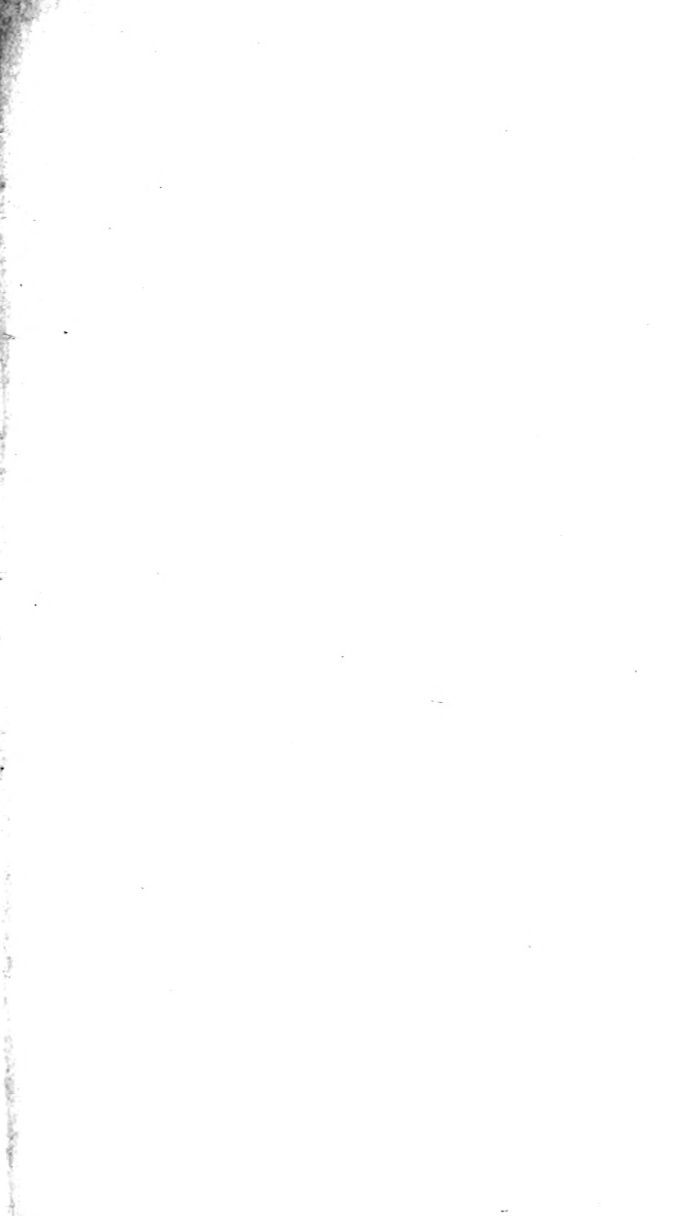
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# S E R M O N S

A N D

## RELIGIOUS TRACTS

Of the late Reverend

PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D. D.

Now first collected together,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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VOLUME THE SECOND,

CONTAINING,

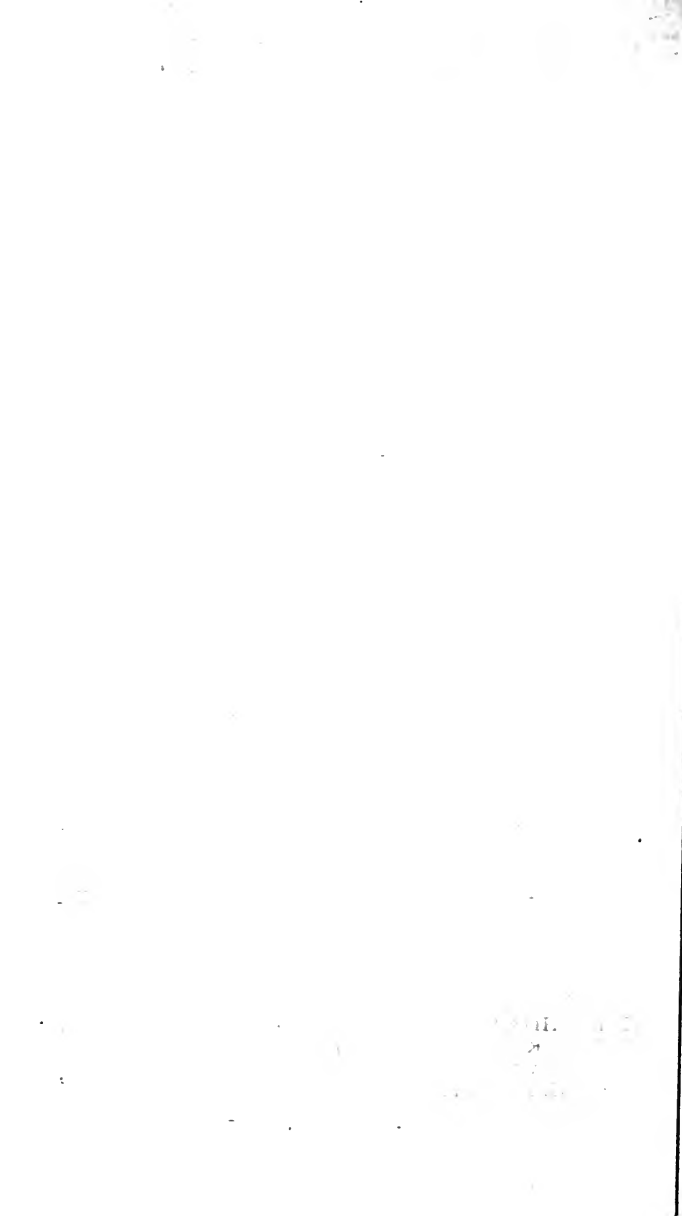
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|--|--|---|--|
| I. A Charge delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. <i>John Jennings</i> . | II. An Answer to the Author of a Pamphlet, entitled, <i>Christianity not founded on Argument</i> , in Three Letters to the Author. | III. The Principles of the Christian Religion, expressed in plain and easy Verse. | IV. Compassion to the Sick recommended and urged, in a                                       |
|  |  |   | Sermon preached at <i>Norhampton</i> , in Favour of a Design for erecting a County Hospital. |
|  |  |   | V. A Charge delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. <i>Abraham Tozer</i> .               |
|  |  |   | VI. Free Thoughts on the most probable Means of reviving the Dissenting Interest.            |
|  |  |   | VII. A Dissertation on the Inspiration of the New Testament.                                 |
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L O N D O N :

Printed by Assignment from the Author's Widow,

For C. HITCH and L. HAWES, J. BUCKLAND, J. RIVINGTON, R. BALDWIN, W. JOHNSTON, J. RICHARDSON, S. CROWDER and Co. T. LONGMAN, B. LAW, T. FIELD, and H. PAYNE and W. CROPLEY.

M DCC LXI,





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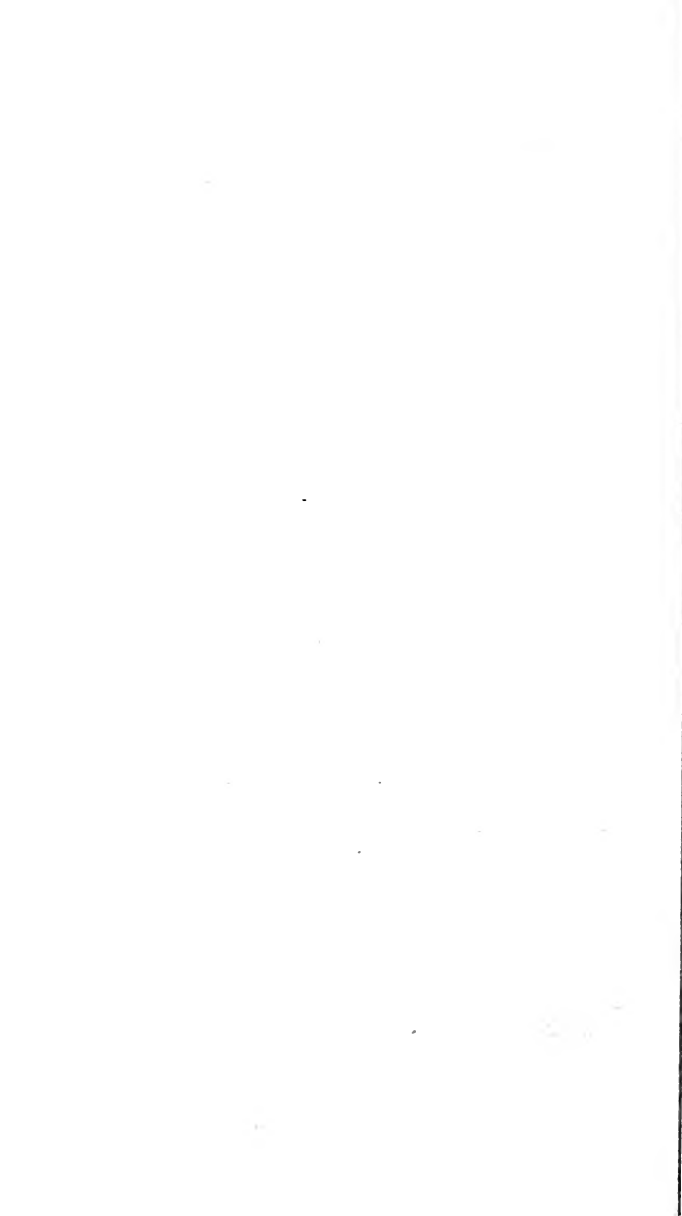
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A C H A R G E



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C H A R G E

Delivered in St. Ives, *Huntingdonshire*,

A T T H E

ORDINATION

Of the REVEREND

Mr. JOHN JENNINGS;

On *August 12, 1742.*







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## C H A R G E, &amp;c.

*My Dear Friend and Brother,*



DOUBT not but your own Sagacity has prevented me in observing, that the Discourse we have been just now hearing is in Effect *a Charge*, though with great Dexterity couched under the Form of a popular Address. Your general Work has been well represented to you, and you have been instructed as to the Authority by which you are to act in it, the Subject on which you are chiefly to insist, and the End which you are to pursue. The particular Offices in which you are to endeavour to serve Christ, in serving the Souls of Men, have also been happily touched upon; and the grand Arguments which should engage you to attend this Service, with Diligence, Resolution and Delight, have been powerfully suggested. It would therefore be easy for me to go over all the most natural Branches of it, in an Application of it to you, by which I might well answer the whole Purpose of the Province particularly assigned to me, in the Work of this Day. But lest by such a Repetition I should seem unseasonably sparing of my own Labour, as well as a Sense of my Inability to express these things in a more agreeable Manner, than that in which they have already been handled, I shall now attempt a Method something different; only observing, that the Hints I am now to address to you will appear with some peculiar Advantage, when considered in their Connection with the preceding Discourse.

I am willing to believe, Sir, that in Consequence of what my reverend Brother has been laying before you,

your Heart is now glowing with a vigorous, yet humble Resolution, that, in the Divine Strength, you will emulate the Character and Conduct of the great Apostle, and will *preach not yourself, but Christ Jesus the Lord*; and that you will be ready to approve yourself *the Servant*, the lowly affectionate Servant, of the meanest of your Brethren *for his Sake*. I will suppose your Enquiry to be, How may I serve this great Master in the most acceptable and successful Manner? How may I conduct myself, so as another Day to hear him saying to me, *Well done thou good and faithful Servant, enter into the Joy of thy Lord* \*? I know not how to answer such an Enquiry better, in a few Words, than to remind you of another lively and proper Expression of the same Apostle St. Paul, when speaking of the blessed God he says, *I serve him WITH MY SPIRIT in the Gospel of his Son* †. You serve God in the same Gospel.—I hope it will indeed be the same.—God forbid we should any of us introduce any other. Labour therefore to do it *with your Spirit*, with all the united Powers of your Soul, and labour at all times to keep your Spirit in a proper Situation for it.

For your Assistance in this Respect, I shall make it my present Business to shew you, as well as I can, what must be the Situation and Temper of that Spirit, which would, in the happiest Manner, serve Christ in the great Work you have this Day undertaken. This will give me an Opportunity of suggesting Hints which will have their Use, not in this or that particular Respect alone, but in every Circumstance through which you pass, and in every Service to which you are called out, *that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished and prepared to every good Work* †. Nor can I think of any thing which appears to me a more proper Supplement to the many particular Advices I have given you, with respect to your Business as a Preacher and a Pastor, in those Academical Lectures on that Subject which you have heard from me, and the Hints of which are still in your Hand. Permit me now to remind you that they come recommended to you by a very material Circumstance, as several important

\* Matt. xxv. 21.

† Rom. i. 9.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 17.

tant Passages in them were taken from the Lectures of my honoured Tutor your reverend and worthy Father; whose Name will long be precious in the Churches, and my Relation to whom I must always esteem as, under God, one of the greatest Blessings of my Life. You will no doubt frequently review them, and pardon me if I say, you will in Effect hear *two Fathers* speaking in them, with a united Voice: if the most endearing Affection, and the most intimate Converse, even from your infant Years; can give *me* a Title to that tender Name.

If you desire to serve Christ with your Spirit in his Gospel, I confess you undertake a difficult Task. So difficult, that were there not a much better Spirit than our own, in the Strength of which we attempt it, even *the Supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ* \* himself, I know not how any of us could encourage our younger Brethren, or how we could find any Encouragement ourselves, in the midst of so many Infirmities, Temptations, and Oppositions. But at once exhorting you, my dear Son, *to be strong in the Grace which is in Christ Jesus* †, and praying, as the Apostle expresses it, that *the Lord Jesus Christ may be with your Spirit* ‡, I proceed to give you some Hints, as to that Frame and Temper in which it must be your Business, and mine, to preserve our Spirits, if we desire they may be fit for so great a Service. And my younger Brethren who hear me this Day, of which there is so large an Appearance, will I hope consider a great deal of what is now to be said, as their own Concern as well as ours, and lay it up in their Memories, as against their own Ordination-Day. Not to say how much every Preacher, and every private Christian is obliged, on the common Principles of Religion, to cultivate the main Branches of the Temper I am to recommend. Now, with respect to this, I may indeed say as *Solomon* does, *Keep thine Heart with all Keeping* ||; bestow the utmost Attention upon it, and let every thing be done that can be imagined, with any Appearance of Propriety, in Subserviency to so great an End. May it

\* Phil. i. 19.  
 || Prov. iv. 23.

† 2 Tim. ii. 1.

‡ 2 Tim. iv. 22.

be your constant Care, and the grand, noble Point of your Ambition, to have a *Mind as well ordered as possible*. So that no one irregular Affection may be admitted or encouraged, no one good Affection wanting or languid. But the general Exhortation may farther be illustrated in such Particulars as these which I shall touch upon, not as exhausting the Subject, but as containing some of the most material Instances of Watchfulness and Duty, to which it may lead.

Be solicitous, my dear Friend, if you would *serve God with your Spirit in the Gospel of his Son*, that your Spirit be habitually devout—and humble—that it be elevated and free—that it be attentive, and active—that it be courageous and resolute—that it be tender and gentle.

1, 2. Let it be your Care that your Spirit be *evangelically devout*; that it be set upon God, upon God in Christ. He is your Master, and you are always in his Sight; labour to act as continually in it. converse much with him and you will love him the more, and, by a very natural Consequence, you will serve him the better. Labour after the Knowledge of the divine Being, so far as feeble Mortals can attain it: and see to it that it be a practical Knowledge, affecting your Heart with those powerful Emotions of Reverence and Love, due to the great Father of the World, and to your God and Father in Christ. Know and honour him under the various Views in which he appears by the Light of Nature and Revelation, realizing to your own Mind continually, his Existence and his Presence—"O my  
" Soul, there is a God, and such a God as I discourse  
" of to others—and he is this Day, this Moment, pre-  
" sent with me, and observing what Regard I will shew  
" him, and what Effect all the Discoveries he has made  
" of his Greatness and Goodness will have upon my  
" Mind and my Life!"

Let this engage you to make *Devotion* a considerable Part of your Business, and to attend to it as such. You will often be speaking to God, in the Name and Presence of others; and a Regard to your own Reputation will engage you then to address him, in a solemn, reverend, composed and affectionate Manner. It will engage you to awaken and regulate your Thoughts, while  
employed

employed in social Prayer, which indeed seems to me by far the most difficult Part of our publick Work, as performed in such Assemblies as ours. But surely that Minister has great Reason to suspect the Integrity of his own Heart that can pray with some Copiousness, Affection and Pleasure with others, and in Secret can only find in his Heart to run over a few hasty, inattentive and customary Words, in such a Manner as he would be ashamed to do, if any one of his Fellow-Creatures was present. Guard against this, my dear Brother; and especially guard against it in the Evening, when the Fatigues arising from the Labour of the Day, may expose you to the peculiar Danger of it. And for that Purpose take time to retire, if possible, before the Fatigue becomes too great and sensible, that there may be Flame for the Evening-sacrifice. Be assured, that as Prayer is the Food and Breath of all practical Religion, if I may be allowed the Expression, so secret Prayer in particular is of vast Importance; insomuch that I verily believe that if a Man were to keep a particular and accurate Journal of his own Heart but for one Month, he would find as real and exact a Correspondency between the Temper of his Soul at Seasons of secret Devotion, and in other Parts of his Life, as we find between the Changes of the Barometer, and of the Weather.

To furnish out Matter for Prayer, let Meditation be called in to your Assistance; and let the Word of God, above all, be the Subject of your Meditation. You know it is placed among the most distinguishing Characters of a good Man, that *his Delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law doth he meditate Day and Night\**. Various Matter of Prayer may by this Means be suggested, and the Soul brought into a proper Frame for pouring out itself before God. Observe in what Channel the Devotion of *David* and *Ajaph* ran in the Old Testament, and that of *Paul*, *John*, and the other Apostles under the New, and, above all, that of our great Lord; and labour, with Allowances for the Difference of Circumstances, to have your Heart affected with Divine Things, as theirs seem to have been.

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Labour

\* Psal. i. 2.

Labour not only to breathe out this Temper before God in the Seasons of solemn devout Retirement, for which you will do well to have your Hours and your Plan, to be, if possible, strictly and resolutely observed, but also endeavour to carry it along with you into the World: and be lifting up your Heart to God, in many of those little Vacancies of Time, which often hang on the Hands even of the busiest of Mankind, but might this way be profitably employed. Why should you, for several Hours together, be in the Presence of such a Master, and such a Friend, without speaking one Word to him? Or why should any of his most affectionate Servants, in former Ages, have addressed him with a Devotion warmer and more constant than yours! If this Advice be observed, you will also be glad to have an occasional Errand to the Throne of Grace, will be heartily glad to sweeten the Hours of friendly Conversation, by making them subservient to Communion with God. It will glad you often to conclude your Visits with Prayer, and chearfully to come into any Scheme of seeking God in a more solemn and express Manner, on any particular Emergencies that may arise relating to yourself and Friends; as also to encourage, what we commonly call, private Meetings for social Prayer at stated Times, which, so far as I can judge, greatly promote a Minister's Usefulness, and which are generally kept up with the greater Spirit, and the best Order, when he accustoms himself to be often present at them.

But permit me, Sir, before I dismiss this Head, to remind you, that it is *evangelical Devotion* I am recommending: a Devotion in which a due Regard is habitually maintained, to the Love and Grace of Christ, and to the Influence of his good Spirit. Indeed one would think, if a Man believed the Gospel, his Devotions should naturally and unavoidably take this Turn. Would to God we find it so; nevertheless this I may confidently say, so far as Reason and Experience can justify a Confidence in saying any thing, that very much will depend upon turning our Thoughts into the Channel to which the Gospel has directed them, and viewing things in the Light in which that has placed them.

No Devotion so sweet, and none so lasting as that which is thus guided and animated. Remember it is the GOSPEL in which you are serving him; and you can never serve him so effectually, as by a close and constant Attendance to it. Keep your Heart therefore full of those Impressions, which it will naturally introduce into an attentive Mind. Think what a Friend the blessed *Jesus* has been to you, and how much you are, and must for ever be indebted to his Life and Death, his Resurrection and Ascension, his Guardianship and Intercession. And when this View grows daily familiar to your own Soul, *your Heart will teach your Mouth, and add this best kind of Knowledge to your Lips* \*. So that you will be in no Danger of starving or destroying the Souls of your Hearers, as I fear many who should be Ministers of the Gospel do, by a criminal and fatal Silence upon these Heads: and this will happily influence you to all *Humility of Spirit* in the Service of Christ; for nothing has so great a Tendency to humble the Soul, as the Sight and Converse of the blessed and glorious *Jehovah*, in whose Presence we are *less than nothing, and Vanity*: especially when we consider ourselves as introduced to him by the Blood of Christ; and formed and animated by his own Spirit, in every thing which is pleasing, in every thing which is not offensive to him. Pride, my dear Brother, is one of the most subtle, and one of the most dangerous Enemies that you will encounter with, in the whole Course of your Christian and Ministerial Warfare. It is at once astonishing and grievous, to think under how many specious Forms it insinuates itself into the very Sanctuary of God, and hides itself, if I may be allowed the Expression, even under the Vestments of those who serve at his Altar; indeed frustrating its own most darling End, and exposing them at once to the Displeasure of God, and, to what they seem yet more to fear, the Contempt of Men. You must therefore continually and constantly guard against it; and make it one of the chief Cares of your Life, not only to suppress its Growth, but to root it out of your Soul.

If you would be honourable in the Sight of the Lord whom you serve, you must be humble; and that Humility must be seated, not merely in the external Behaviour, but in the Heart. A small Degree of common Sense may be sufficient to preserve a Man from the ridiculous Folly of making Encomiums upon himself, and his own Performances; or from the Madness of putting on imperious Airs in common Life, which is indeed no other than bespeaking the Scorn and Aversion of all about us. I had almost said, a manly Pride will set a Minister above these Things, and teach him to curb every Appearance of them. But our Humility should dwell in our very Souls: and I am well persuaded the greatest and the best of Men, may find enough in themselves to nourish it from Day to Day. When I think, for Instance, what the Man and the Minister, in the most perfect View of his Character, ought to be, in Comparison with what I myself am: when I look about on all the Negligencies and Irregularities of my Life; when I look in especially on all the Folly and Corruption of my Heart; and farther recollect, that all these things are open to the Eyes of God, who sees what I am, and what I have done, in Comparison with what I should have been, and should have done; in Comparison to what I might have been, and might have done, for his Glory, and the Good of Mankind, if all my Capacities, and all my Opportunities had been improved to the highest possible Degree! what Reason do I find for the deepest Abasement in the Divine Presence? What Reason to abhor, rather than applaud myself; to hide my Head with conscious Blushes, rather than to lift it up in a haughty and supercilious Manner, as if I *had whereof to glory* before God or Man? It is not a Freedom from gross Matter of Reproach among Men, nor some distinguishing Share of Genius, of Learning, of Eloquence, of Reputation and Popularity, that will raise a Man's Esteem for himself, when such Views as these are made familiar to the Mind. He will apprehend it to be, at least a supposable, and indeed a very probable Case, that many, who, in these things, and in the Eye of the World, are his Inferiors, may, on account of their better Temper and Conduct, be, in  
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the Eyes of God, far superior to him; and may be fitted for much more distinguished Honours in that World which is to fix our Rank for ever: and we shall certainly find it very much for our own Ease and Comfort in Life, thus to *esteem others better than ourselves, in Honour preferring one another* \*. When we do not look upon any distinguishing Regards as our Due, if we miss them we shall not be much disappointed, and if they meet us, we shall think ourselves obliged to the World for its kind Partiality in our Favour; and behave so much the more humbly, while we endeavour indeed to be, what they are so kind as to think we are: and thus, in more Senses than one, it will be prudent for him, *who would be the greatest, to be the least and Servant of all* †. Our blessed Redeemer is such an Example of this amiable Temper, that nothing in the World illustrates the natural Pride and Corruption of the human Heart more, than that this Lesson is so little learnt and practised, by those who call themselves his Disciples, and even his Ministers.

3. Let it be your Concern to preserve a due *Freedom and Elevation of Spirit*. I join these together, as being nearly of a kin, and the latter only a superior Degree of the former. And therefore when I mention Liberty of Mind, you will apprehend I intend not only, or chiefly what the World calls Freedom of Settlement. You have long since been taught to indulge that, and have I hope taken your Religion from the Word of God, and not from any human System or Composition whatever. Go on to act upon this Maxim. I dare not say, like St. Paul, *Continue in the Things thou hast learnt, and been assured of by me, knowing of whom thou hast learned them*. It rather becomes me to say, *Examine all I have taught you, and search the Scriptures daily whether these Things are so or no* †. You will not, I am persuaded, run the Matter to Extremes, and imagine, like some Half-thinkers, that Liberty consists in boldly daring to decide against received Opinions, as soon as some new Difficulties are discerned; and confidently venting raw and undigested Notions, however noxious, without fearing

\* Phil. ii. 3. Rom. xii. 10. † Mark x. 44. ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 14.

any of the Consequences. And while you guard against this, I am not so conscious of the Weakness of any Cause in which I am embarked, as to fear it should be brought to the Test of strict Enquiry. But this Enquiry, how well soever guarded and regulated, is not the Whole that I mean by Freedom. I intend something much nobler and greater; something which many who boast loudly of their Liberty are entirely ignorant of. I mean a Freedom from all undue Attachments to every thing that would debase and enslave the Mind, and render a Man the ignominious *Servant of Corruption*.

If *Paul* thought it proper to say to *Timothy*, *Keep thyself pure, and flee youthful Lusts* \*, the Admonition cannot be unseasonable to any who are early in Life entering on the Ministry. And indeed, if, after so many Years spent in the Apostolic Office, he represented it as a daily Labour of his Life, *to keep under his Body, and bring it under Subjection* †; we may reasonably conclude, that the most advanced Servants of Christ had need to be cautious on this Head; had need, while they dwell in an animal Body, *to watch and pray, that they enter not into Temptation* ‡. Especially considering that some of the Excesses to which unguarded Appetite may betray a Man, are of such a Nature, as to fix a lasting Stain upon his Character. A Minister especially may, in one single Hour, incur a Reproach, which past and future Years of the strictest Temperance shall not be able to avert, remove, or efface. Yet I cannot but say, that to a Person in whom the Habits of a temperate and regular Life are formed, I apprehend the *Passions* to be much more dangerous Enemies than the Appetites; and especially those Excesses of the Passions which are generally, among virtuous and worthy Men, reckoned weak rather than infamous. By these has many a wise and good Man been miserably enslaved, and fallen far beneath the Dignity of his Character and Office; not to mention the unhappy Consequences they have often drawn after them, with respect to the Ease, and Comfort of future Life.

Wisdom

\* 1 Tim. v. 21. 2 Tim. ii. 22. † 1 Cor. iii. 27. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 41.

Wisdom is not indeed intended to root out the Passions, but she seldom dwells in the Heart in which they are suffered to grow wild. They turn the Soul into a Desert, and render it a disagreeable Abode to so divine a Guest; or rather, to speak in Language more becoming a Christian Divine, the blessed Spirit of God is by this Means driven away, and it is impossible to say how much the evil Spirit may sometimes do, in his Absence, to irritate our Minds and drive them into the most fatal Extremes. It must therefore be of great Importance to keep a resolute Guard on these turbulent Subjects, and to check the first rising of Sedition among them; lest they gather Strength by insensible Degrees, and break out into such open Rebellion, as to depose Reason and Religion from the Throne, reducing the Soul into a State of Anarchy; or rather making its noble rational Powers the Slaves of those, whom they were formed to command.

To be secure from all the Danger, and all the Appearances of so great an Evil, let it be your Care, Sir, to maintain a becoming Elevation of Spirit, and to fill your Mind with sublime Ideas, Principles and Views. This the Christian Religion naturally suggests to all its Votaries, and above all to its Ministers. Think, what a Master you serve, and in what a Work you are engaged! Think how little all the Titles which the Princes of this World can give must appear, when compared with that of the Minister of Jesus, and a Servant of God in the Salvation of Souls. Think how low the Employments of secular Life are, even those in which the Nobles and Kings of the Earth are engaged, in Comparison with yours. In this Respect, it is good to *magnify our Office* \*; not as if it gave us any the least Power to tyrannize over our Brethren, to invade their Liberty of thinking, or of acting, or to command their Properties in any Degree. Secular Power seems too inconsiderable a Thing for our Master to give to Servants, whom he has set so high in his Family, and intends for a Charge so much greater and more important, in which the Exercise of that would necessarily interrupt them.

\* Rom. xi. 13.

them. We are appointed to be, in Subordination to Christ, the Friends, the Guardians, the Deliverers of Souls; and if our Labour succeeds, the Effect is EVERLASTING. All the Productions of human Art and Industry shall perish; the Palaces and Citadels which it raises shall moulder back to Dust, and be levelled with the Earth; the mightiest Nations, whose Interests divide the Globe, shall soon be blended together, and distinguished no more. But every Soul whom we recover to Christ and to Holiness, will be an everlasting Monument of the Power of Divine Grace, and of our Fidelity to our Master's Service; will be an Honour and Delight to us, ten thousand thousand Years after the Earth itself has been removed out of its Place. Think and act like one that has such grand Schemes in View; like one who is continually realizing to himself the Presence of God, and the Prospect of Immortality, and has learnt by them not an affected and counterfeited, but a real Contempt for the Pleasures and Interests of this perishing State; like one who has learnt heartily to pity those whom mistaken Mortals imagine the Objects of Congratulation, or of Envy.

4. Let it be your constant Care to keep your Spirit *attentive and active*.

The great Employments and Views in which you are engaged, should, methinks, effectually engage you to this. Since the Work is so grand, and to be carried on in the Midst of so much Opposition, as you well know is to be expected from the Indispositions and Corruptions of our own Hearts, and the Influence of so subtle and so powerful an Enemy as the Prince of Darkness is, you will naturally apprehend that many Difficulties and Obstructions will arise; so that you had need exercise an habitual Prudence, both to guard against Temptations, and to seize Opportunities; precious but transient Opportunities, which perhaps if they are once suffered to slip by, may never return. "Bright as the heavenly World appears to my View and my Hopes," says an eminent Christian in one of his Letters, "I am sometimes afraid of going thither, till I have done something considerable for the Service of Christ upon Earth." Methinks such a Thought as this, while  
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the Uncertainty of human Life is remembered, should engage us to a Watchfulness of Soul, should lead us every Hour to recollect, "What can I do for my great and glorious Master? What can I do for him immediately? Supposing this should be the very last Day I have to spend in his Service, how may he find me employed in a Manner that will be most acceptable to him?"

Labour, in this View, to do Good every Day, and every Day to do as much Good as possible; and if any thing can conveniently be done To-day, defer it not, by any Means, till To-morrow. To-morrow is God's, and not yours; and if it come, and find you here in a Capacity of Service, it will so far *take Thought for the Things of itself*\*, that whatever you can do To-day, there will be Business enough remain, for that, and for the next Day too, and for all the Days and Hours God shall assign you. Therefore, Sir, guard not only against a slothful and inactive Temper, but against unnecessary Delay. Here are certain Duties so apparently great and important, that Satan himself has not the Assurance so much as to propose it to us, that we should come to a Resolution, that we will always omit them. All he will demand is, that you would this Day wait for a more convenient Opportunity, and continue waiting To-morrow, and so on for one Day more, till he can find you no more Excuse for further Procrastination. And it is by this Artifice, palpable as it is, that he enervates the Usefulness of the greater Part of Christians; that he makes their Life but a Shadow of what it might be, and sinks them into so insignificant a kind of Being, that one would imagine a rational Soul should be continually upbraiding itself with its own Importance, while its noble Furniture and Capacity is employed to such low Purposes; and instead of acting, is only dreaming first of one Vanity, and then of another; always intending to be wise and useful hereafter, but not allowing itself so much as to say when. I have always observed that those Tradesmen who are most solicitous to execute their Orders immediately, give the greatest Satisfaction to others, and generally improve their own Stock best. But alas, *the Children of this*

\* Matt. vii, ult.

*this World* \* are, in this Respect, and almost every other, *wiser than the Children of Light*. I would only add, that as growing Years will naturally impair the Activity of the Spirits, it will be your Wisdom, while you are young, to accustom yourself to Vigour and Dispatch, that so the Force of Habit in riper Years may be some Equivalent for the Want of the Vivacity which will then, in the Course of Nature, be diminished. And I really think Activity and Cheerfulness to be so nearly allied, that one can hardly take a more effectual Method to secure the latter, than to cultivate the former. Especially when, as in the present Instance, it is employed to sow the Seed of an immortal Harvest, which will be rich and glorious, in Proportion to our present Diligence and Zeal.

5. In order to this Activity, it will be necessary to see to it, that your Spirit is maintained in a *courageous and a resolute Temper*.

The Difficulty and Obstructions which I hinted under the former Head will render this necessary, and necessary in Proportion to your Diligence: just as the Resistance of any dense Fluid, through which a Body is moved, acts more forcibly, in Proportion to the Velocity with which the Body is impelled. You must therefore lay your Account thus; the Ministry is not an easy Employment; it will not always go on smoothly; many Entanglements will arise, even from the Pleasantness of our Circumstances, from the Kindness of our Friends, many of whose Importunities we must break through, if we desire to improve our Time well, and to pursue the Business in which we are engaged; and in the Execution of some Part of it, other and greater Difficulties must be expected. It is possible you may not be able faithfully to discharge your Duty, without greatly disobligeing some whom you respect and love; some on whom your temporal Circumstances may very much depend. Perhaps you may be obliged, in Conscience, to bear a publick Testimony against their Errors, or against their Irregularities, and it may be against both, as they are frequent Companions: or at least you may be obliged plainly to admonish them in private, and ex-  
postulate

\* Luke xvi. 8.

postulate with them in a Manner that they may not be disposed to bear; even after all the most prudent Address on your Side, to make it as inoffensive as is consistent with Fidelity. Nor is it impossible that in consequence of some distant and unforeseen Change in publick Affairs, you may be called forth even to Martyrdom, and obliged either to resist to Blood, or to make Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience. An heroic Resolution must therefore be put on, that in the Strength of Christ you will *be faithful to the Death* \*; that your Master may be pleased, whoever is displeased, and that your Crown of Glory may be secure, whatever else is lost. And it will be the Part of Christian Prudence sometimes to exercise a voluntary Self-denial, in smaller Matters, that it may become easier to you in Circumstances of considerable Difficulty, Importance and Necessity. But while you are setting your Face like a Flint in the Midst of all the most violent and forcible Opposition,

6. Let this Courage and Resolution be tempered with a becoming Degree of *Tenderness and Gentleness*.

Labour to preserve your Mind continually under the Influences of Benevolence and Love. Remember you serve the most benevolent of Masters, in the most benevolent of Works. The whole Business of your Life is *to do Good*, and therefore, to make that Business easy, cultivate Love; for the Labours of Love are easy Labours, and are indeed no other than their own Reward.

Indulge to a continued Sensibility of Heart. Be willing to look upon the Sorrows of others, and to feel them, and live continually mindful of the common Tie of Brotherhood and of Kind. Look upon the human Family as one, and then do all you can to make it an orderly and happy Family. Especially cultivate Love and Compassion *to the Souls of Men*. Seriously think what an immortal Soul is, and to what extreme Danger the Souls of Multitudes are exposed. Think also in how languid a State Religion is, so far as Actions can discover it, in the Souls of many, concerning whom, Charity would hope that they are not quite estranged from all the Principles of the Divine Life; and long earnestly

nessly to bring them into a more heathful State, and to see them lively and active.

Under this Head let me recommend to you a tender Love for *the rising Generation*, and particularly for little Children, dear amiable Creatures, who, one would think, should need no Advocate to plead their Cause, with a Person of a humane and generous Disposition. Christ was an Example of condescending Regard to them, and he certainly meant to teach it to us. Learn this Meekness and Lowliness from him. Converse with them, instruct them, and as you are often praying for them, be sometimes praying with them too; and for that Purpose appoint a Number of them at proper Seasons to attend you, and then, when you have talked with them in a free and affectionate Manner about the Things of Religion, pray over them, in such easy natural Language as they are most likely to understand, and recommend them to God with that Tenderness of Heart which their Presence will naturally inspire.

I have often observed Numbers of them melt into Tears upon this Occasion; and when that is the Case, it is a secret Encouragement to hope, that even while we are praying, God hears. And would Parents sometimes try the same Method with their Children, and appoint but a few Minutes every Week to pray with them alone, they might find, as to my certain Knowledge some pious Parents have done, not only that it had a good Tendency to compose and soften the Temper of those little Creatures, but possibly, in some Instances, to give such a Turn to the Mind of those grown up to some Maturity, as might be carried through the Remainder of Life; and fixed upon, as the probable Season from whence their Conversion God might take its first Rise.

While I am on this Head, I must exhort you also, to condescend to the least and weakest, as well as the youngest. Remember you can never stoop so low to others, as Christ has stooped to you; and that, when you have done all, your great Master will exceed you in Condescension, as much as he does in Glory.

Let this Tenderness also engage you to enter into the Sorrows of others; *who, says St. Paul, is weak, and I am*



not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? i. e. feel Fire, as it were, kindled in my Bosom, which makes me restless till I have done all I conveniently can to make him easy. You, Sir, must accustom yourself to bear the Burdens of others, that you may fulfil the Law of Christ, and with greater Advantage teach others to fulfil it. You must not shun the Cottages of the Poor, or the Chambers of the Languishing; nor must your Ear be so intent on the more pleasing Sounds, as to turn away from the Sighs and Groans of the Distressed. You must often be visiting your Brethren, that you may see how they do; and their personal or domestick Afflictions must be tenderly weighed, in their various Circumstances, that your Heart may feel its Part, and so prompt you to do all you can, if possible to remove them; or if that be impracticable, as it often will be, at least to alleviate them; and sometimes the Sight and Conversation of a Christian Friend does so much to alleviate them, that one would imagine so cheap a Charity should not be denied. Let not our Master say, in Reference to any of his Servants, *I was sick and ye visited me not* \*; I was confined and ye did not come unto me. You will, I hope, be ready according to your Ability, to relieve the Necessitous: you will also, I hope, improve your Interest among your Christian Friends, to procure that Relief which you cannot immediately give; and be assured that, while thus employed, you are performing a kind Action toward the Rich and the Prosperous, many of whom are so ready to forget the Indigent and Afflicted, that when one thinks upon the great Day of Account, one is ready, as the World generally appears, to congratulate the Poor, and to tremble for the Rich. Let Benevolence to both, therefore, remind you of St. Paul's Words to Timothy, *Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal Life* †.

And

\* Matt. xxv. 43.

† 1 Tim. xvi. 17—19.

And before I close this Head, I must also beseech you, *by the Meekness and Gentleness of Christ*, that you endeavour to exercise a meek and gentle Temper under Contradiction and Opposition. I hope and believe you will meet with very little of this Sort, from so kind, so generous, and so obliging a People, as that to which you have the Happiness of being related: yet there is no Soil so good, but some Root of Bitterness may spring up in it, and if not among your own People, and among your nearest Brethren in the Ministry, yet among others Injuries may arise; but if you are *reviled, revile not again*; if you are injured, let Forgiveness be all your Revenge; for it is all Christianity allows, and all that it is good for us to take. And if you should, which is always too supposable a Case, be called out to combat with Error and Immorality, venture to do it in the Spirit of Meekness. It is the Method which the God of Truth and Holiness has taught us. *The Servant of the Lord, says the Apostle, must not strive, but must be gentle towards all Men, in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them Repentance* \*. We must be cautious lest the old Serpent find out a Way of brooding over our Hearts, and diffuse his Venom there, while we mistake the Fermentation it occasions to be only a Warmth of Zeal for Christ, and so do the Work of his Enemy in his Name. I cannot, for my Part, apprehend Satire to be an Ordinance of Christ; at least I believe, he will be more ready to excuse those who have erred on the tender, than on the severe Extreme. The Knowledge I have had of your natural Disposition, prevents my enlarging on this Head, which, with regard to you alone, it might not here have been material to mention: nevertheless it is a Sin that easily besets young Divines, who, as I suppose, with their Wits and Passions warm about them, have had the chief Hand in bringing *Theological Fury* into a Proverb. As for you, Sir, whatever personal ill Usage you may meet with in Life, *be not overcome with Evil, but overcome Evil with Good* †, and trust in him who has given you the Command, to bear you harmless while you are careful to observe it. Goodness will, on the whole,

not

\* 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.

† Rom. xii. ult.

not only be safe, but victorious; and the Wisdom of this and all the other Rules of our great Master, will be demonstrated, not so much by Debate, as by Experience. Go on, therefore, my dear Friend and Brother, not only in this Respect, but in all others, to conduct your Spirits by these, and you will find them your Ornament and Defence. The Satisfaction of a well-governed, and of an acceptable and successful Ministry, will infinitely over-balance all the Pains you can take with your Spirit, to keep it in such a Temper. God will approve the Effect of his Holy Spirit's Agency on your Heart; and when I have said you will be the Object of his Approbation and Delight, it is little to say the happy Fruits of this Care, which will appear in the Sight of your Fellow-Creatures, will entitle you to their Veneration and Affection, and gain a Degree of both, which neither the exalted Stations, the most flourishing Circumstances, or the most extensive Genius and Learning, could possibly secure in the Neglect of these Things. And as there is no room to doubt but Divine Grace will bless your Labours, while conducted on such Principles, you will be continually laying up in Store new Treasures, to be possessed in the celestial World, among Multitudes whom God will make you an Instrument of bringing on into the Way to it, or of conducting in those peaceful and blissful Paths.

I conclude with exhorting you, my Friends of this Congregation, to continue your affectionate Regards to my dear Brother, who has now commenced a more intimate Relation to you than before, and is become your Pastor. Never give him Reason to repent that he is so, and that he has preferred you to other Congregations, you would gladly have engaged his Settlement among them. Encourage his valuable Labours by your constant Attendance, and by your friendly Care for his Support: above all, endeavour to improve in Religion by his Means. I am well satisfied that he *seeks not yours but you* \*, and will think he *lives* indeed, *if you stand fast in the Lord* †. You will not, I persuade myself, grieve him by any personal Unkindness; God grant that none of you may distress his Soul, by undoing your own! God grant

\* Cor. xii. 14.

† 1 Thess. iii. 8.

grant that none of you may send him back to his great Master with Lamentation, on Account of your refusing to accept of that Message of Pardon and Life he brings! I do indeed *hope better Things of you, and Things that accompany Salvation* \* ; and conclude with my hearty Prayer, that he may rejoice in every Soul of you in the Day of the Lord, *that he has not run in vain, nor laboured in vain* †. Amen.

\* Heb. vi. 9.

† Phil. ii. 16.



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T O T H E


A U T H O R of a late Pamphlet,

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C H R I S T I A N I T Y not founded on  
A R G U M E N T, &c.

L E T T E R I.

S I R,

HEN I consider the Strain and Purport of your late Discourse, I am heartily sorry that I was so long a Stranger to it. A Month has hardly passed, since it first fell into my Hands. They who know my Circumstances in Life, and the Variety of Business in which I am continually engaged, will not wonder that I missed it so long. Nor should I have read it now, had it not been mentioned to me by some Friends, for whose Judgment I have a very high Regard, as a Performance which had a very ill Aspect on *Christianity*, and which was executed with much more Spirit and Address, than is to be found in most of the Attacks which have been lately made upon it.

I have now, Sir, perused it with Attention; and various as my Cares and Labours are, I think it of such Importance, that I ought to lay before you, and the World, the Result of my Reflections upon it.

The Character you have assumed of most zealous *Advocate for Christianity*, seems so ill to agree with the Purport of your Reasonings, that I apprehend most of

our Readers will esteem it a bad Compliment paid to your Understanding, if I were to think of that Character otherwise than as a *Mask* worn for Pleasantry, rather than the Design, of your Pamphlet, with which I am concerned. Were you indeed the warm *Christian* you personate, I could not behold *the Wounds* of Religion with Indifference, merely because they were *received in the House of a Friend*: nor would I consent to demolish the Walls of a Fortrefs, on the Strength of which my Life, and even the Safety of my Country, depended, tho' the worthiest Man upon Earth should, in a Fit of Lunacy, undertake to persuade me, that it was the most effectual Method to engage the Miraculous Protection of an Almighty Arm. That those Efforts, which, *in the Name of the Lord*, you have thought fit to make, with such solemn Preparation, and such glowing Ardor of Spirit, do indeed tend to subvert the *Faith of Christians*, and to expose the *Gospel* to the last Degree of Contempt, is so exceeding plain, that I verily believe, it would appear to every intelligent Reader a solemn Kind of Trifling, to labour the Proof of it: and the Passages, which I am to take under Examination, may be more than sufficient to demonstrate it to a Stranger.

You have evidently represented *Christianity*, if not *Religion* in general, as an *unreasonable Thing*; for you expressly tells us, not only "that it is not founded on Argument," and that it is incapable of being generally proved by it; but go so far as roundly to say, (*pag. 86.*) "that there is an irreconcilable Repugnance between Reason and Faith." You speak of *Scripture*, as if all your Eloquence was at a Loss for Words strong enough to express your Contempt for it. "*Manuscript Authorities and Paper-Revelations*," as they are insultingly called, are, it seems, "an empty Notion:" (*pag. 60.*)—"The suspicious Repositories of Human Testimony, in which nothing remains that can deserve our least Notice, or be thought of Consequence enough to engage a Moment's Attention." (*Pag. 59.*) It was not, it seems, enough to represent them as superfluous, "We have no longer Need of distant Records:" (*ibid.*) But you briskly maintain, that Omnipotence itself is not able to supply their Defects and Insufficiency;



ciency; "tho' a constant Miracle were to interpose on  
 "the Occasion, and the same Almighty Power that first  
 "indited it," whatever you mean by that singular Ex-  
 "pression, "were to continue hovering perpetually with a  
 "guardian Hand over the sacred Depositum." (Pag. 61.)

As for all the *Scripture-Miracles*, on which we have  
 laid so great a Stress, you declare without Reserve,  
 "that they are to us no more than an uncertain Hear-  
 "say," and "that the Voice of God, bearing Witness  
 "to his beloved Son, has long since dwindled to Hu-  
 "man Tradition." (Pag. 52, 53.) Nay, you strongly  
 insinuate, that these *Miracles* were never meant as Ar-  
 guments of the Divine Authority of the *Gospel*; (pag 46.)  
 and, with very little Complaisance to St. Paul, are  
 pleased to tell us, by a Burlesque on his Words, when  
 speaking of the *Resurrection of Christ*, (pag. 68.) "that the  
 "Thing was done in a Corner," without taking the least  
 Notice of the publick Proofs which were given of it, in  
 the very Place where it had happened but a few Days  
 before.

It is obvious, Sir, that I might transcribe many Pages  
 of your Work in Illustration of these Hints; and I must  
 needs say, that the Language appears so unnatural, and  
 so monstrous, in a professed *Disciple of Christ*, that I am  
 sometimes ready to wonder, you were not a little more  
 careful to save Appearances. But then I recollect, that  
 the Character you assume is such, as leaves little Room to  
 expect Consistency, and seems best supported by such Kind  
 of Paradoxes and Self-Contradictions. By this means  
 also you have artfully enough disarmed your Adversary  
 of the Weapon called *Argumentum ad Hominem*, a whole  
 Magazine of which might otherwise have presented.  
 Were you to be attacked that Way, you would no  
 doubt laugh very heartily, to see an Adversary so fairly  
 bit, in a grave Expectation that you should be solicitous  
*cum Ratione insanire*, to appear a cool-headed, consistent  
 Enthusiast.

You have chosen, Sir, in these Transports, whether  
 real or fictitious, to fight with a two-edged Weapon;  
 and the Blow which you give by a Kind of back Stroke,  
 while avowedly defending *Christianity*, seems to me as  
 threatening as any of the rest. I mean, those Passages of

your Book, in which you so grossly misrepresent that glorious and important Doctrine of the *New Testament*, concerning the *Agency of the Divine Spirit*, in promoting the Reception and Efficacy of the *Gospel*. This, according to you, is nothing less than such an immediate and instantaneous Communication of the whole Sum and System of the *Gospel*, as renders every particular Believer more *Infallible*, than the *Church of Rome* has generally asserted the *Pope* to be, and secures the most illiterate Person, even from a Possibility of Error. (Pag. 89, 90.) This plenary *Inspiration* communicated to every *private Christian*, you represent as the main and only Support of Religion; tho' I think, Sir, you must needs know, that every Difference of Opinion in the *Christian Church* is a Demonstration, that no such universal Influences do in Fact take Place. So that upon the whole, you have left *Christianity* no Evidence but what every one sees it has not, that is indeed you have left it *no Evidence at all*. In one Word, if your Reader were to suppose you serious in what you write, and to fall in with your Reasoning, I think the plain Consequence must be, that all Men of sober Sense would immediately reject the *Gospel*, while among the Remainder, every one that was mad would make himself a *Prophet*, and vent every wild Chimera of his distempered Brain as an immediate Dictate of God himself; in the Plenitude of Inspiration and Distraction, equally scorning to condescend, to assign any Reasons for his Doctrines, or to hear any Arguments against them.

That your late Performance, sprightly and ingenious as it is, has a Tendency to produce these terrible Effects, (for to me they appear *terrible* beyond Expression,) is too evident; and I may afterwards give you a more particular Account of the Reasons, on which I apprehend, that it must in its Consequences affect the Foundations of *Natural Religion*, as well as of *Revealed*. How far any of these Consequences might be intended by you, it is not my Business to determine. You, Sir, are ere long to answer that to the great Judge of Hearts, whose Tribunal I should dread to usurp. Yet I cannot forbear observing, that the *ludicrous Turn* you so often give to *Scripture*, and the Air of *Burlesque* and *Irony*

which

which runs thro' your whole Piece, neither suits the Character of a rapturous *Devotee* so often affected, nor discovers a becoming Sense of the infinite Moment of the Question in Debate. Pardon me, Sir, the Plainness with which I speak my real Apprehensions on this Head, and believe me when I seriously declare, it is with no Design to libel and expose you, but with a sincere Desire to serve you and others, into whose Hand this Letter may come, that I now set myself to examine what you have advanced, and, if possible, to lead you into juster and safer Sentiments.

Agreeably to these Views, and that Regard to the general Good which has engaged me to enter on this Controversy, I shall decline the invidious and unnecessary Task of pursuing you, with severe Criticism, thro' every Paragraph. I am not solicitous to expose every unguarded Expression, to canvass every minute Mistake, nor even to rescue every Clause of the Sacred Writings which I apprehend you have misrepresented or misapplied. I have not Leisure for such a Task as this, and there is hardly any Thing against which my Temper more strongly recoils. I shall examine what I apprehend most material, and most dangerous in your Work, with Calmness and Seriousness; representing, in as few Words as I can, what I take to be the Strength of your Cause, and telling you with the Simplicity and Moderation that becomes a *Christian*, how I answer it to my own Conscience. This I shall do with all possible Plainness, not affecting to be witty in a Case in which Eternity is concerned; nor so consulting in your Taste and Character, as to forget that I am addressing the Publick, and aiming not to divert, but if possible, to edify. And if any cannot relish such a Design, and such a Manner, I give them fair Warning to throw this Letter aside, and to waste, (or shall I rather say, *to kill*), no more of their *precious Moments* about it.

It sufficiently appears, Sir, from your Manner of writing, that you are well aware, the main Strength of your Cause lies in the *First Head* of your Discourse, to which therefore, after some gay Flourishes on the *Two last*, you return again toward the Conclusion of

your Pamphlet. It is *this* therefore, which I shall here examine at large; and the rather, because I think what you urge on this Topick, tho' it be far from any New Discovery, may admit some farther Illustration, than I have commonly met with; and is the Point, which in Proportion to its Difficulty and Importance, has been least discussed by the worthy *Apologetists for Christianity*, in which our Country is so happy. The Foundations of the Solution have indeed often been laid down; but I have long wished to see the Matter placed in that particular Point of View, in which the Difficulties you propose, and which naturally arise, may be most happily obviated.

It is your professed Design under your *First General* to shew, "That *Reason*, or the Intellectual Faculty, could not possibly, both from its own, Nature, and that of Religion, be the Principle intended by God to lead us into a true Faith." (*Pag. 7.*) An ambiguous Proposition, the Sense of which must be ascertained in a few Words, before its pretended Demonstration can be discussed.

You well know, Sir, that the whole Body of *Christians* as such, are, and must ever be agreed, that *Reason* is not our only Guide, but that *Divine Revelation* is most wisely and graciously intended to supply its many Deficiencies; and you know too, that they generally acknowledge the Reality and Importance of *Divine Influences* on the Mind, to confirm our Faith, and to quicken our Obedience. So that if you would not encounter a Puppet of your own forming, with whom we have no Manner of Concern, you must mean by this grand Proposition, "That *Reason* is not to be consulted, in judging either of the *Evidences* or the *Sense* of any supposed *Revelation*, nor in forming any of our Religious Sentiments." An Assertion so apparently extravagant, that one would imagine, that merely to propound it were a sufficient Confutation.

Can any one indeed seriously think, that the noblest of our Powers was intended only to the lowest and meanest Purposes; to serve the little Offices of mortal Life, and not to be consulted in the greatest of Concerns,

cerns, those of Immortality? Strange! that the only Power which renders us capable of saying, *Where is God my Maker?* and of forming any Sentiments of Religion at all, should be discharged from that Province, for which it seems chiefly to have been given! But it will at least have Strength and Spirit enough to say, Why must I be thus discharged? And you condescend to answer at large, without seeming to be aware, that your first Step towards demonstrating your Point supposes it to be false; appealing to *Reason* itself to judge, that it is not capable of judging at all. Nor is this Position only inconsistent with the Pertinency of any *Reasoning* whatsoever, but particularly inconsistent with that Footing on which you profess to place *Christianity*, when its *rational Proofs* are given up. Since, if God were, according to your strange Hypothesis, to reveal to me in a Moment the whole *System of Christianity*, and were I assured, by some inward inexplicable Sensation, that it was indeed *a Revelation from him*, I could not receive it without some *Reasoning*. I must at least have this one short *Syllogism* in my Mind, "What comes from God is to be admitted as true; but this comes from God, therefore it is to be so admitted." And the Foundation of this supposes some previous *Reasoning*, concerning the Existence, and Veracity of that Being, whose Testimony is so readily to be admitted.

A very small Part of your Sagacity, Sir, might serve to discover this, which, obvious as it is, supercedes all you have writ. I will therefore take it for granted, that what you really intend by this general, and very unguarded Proposition, is chiefly this; "That *Christianity* is not capable of such a *rational Proof*, as can be made intelligible to the *Generality of Mankind*, so as to oblige them to receive and obey it." This is what you seem to have at Heart throughout your whole Book, and I shall not farther press the Advantage you have given an Opponent, by asserting so much more than was necessary to your main Design.

You do indeed sometimes acknowledge, I think in direct Opposition to your main Argument, that *Christianity* is capable of being *rationally proved* to the Conviction of a *studious Person*; (however unnecessary, and

however hazardous it may be, even for such a one to meddle with that Kind of Proof: But you always contend, that the *Generality of Mankind* cannot enter into any *rational Proofs* of it, (tho' it is well known that it was intended for them;) and that they who can, will not find them sufficient, to bear the Stress which must in Fact be laid upon them, if we desire to be *Christians* to any valuable Purpose. I shall therefore set myself on the contrary to prove, "That the *rational Evidence of Christianity* is so adjusted, that the *Generality of its Professors* may, if they be not wanting to themselves, attain to some competent Satisfaction with regard to "it." And when I have offered that Proof, I shall consider your Objections.

I am far from asserting, that every one in common Life can have a full View of all the *Controversies* which relate to *Christianity*; a Curiosity of Literature, which to Multitudes would be of very small Importance: nor do I maintain, that every sincere Believer is capable of rendering a sufficient *Reason for his Faith*; an Ability on many Accounts highly desirable, yet not, so far as I can find, at all essential to Salvation. A Man may have Reason in his own Mind, which he cannot readily put into Words. Nay, I apprehend it possible, that a Man may feel and comply with the practical Tendency of *Christianity*, who does not himself rightly apprehend the Force of its *rational Proofs*, and perhaps lays a very great Stress on *Arguments* which are far from being conclusive. And I hope, Sir, you will allow, that when a Man's Temper and Character is such as the *Gospel* requires, such a *speculative Mistake* as to the Strength of an *Argument* does not affect his *Salvation*. Else I fear, we must condemn all those excellent Persons, who have believed the great Fundamental of all Religion, *the Existence of a God*, chiefly on the Force of those *Cartesian Arguments*, now generally, and I think rationally, exploded.

The Question is not, what Knowledge is universally necessary, nor what is in Fact attained; but what Satisfaction might generally be had, if there were a competent Care, on the one Hand, to teach, and on the other,

other, to learn. This is all, which is absolutely essential to my Argument. Nevertheless, for the farther Illustration of the Subject, I shall freely tell you, how I apprehend the Case to stand, with regard to the *Generality* of the *common People*, who are in good earnest in the Profession of Religion; readily acknowledging, tho' with great Grief, that there are thousands and ten thousands, who wear the *Name of Christians* as by meer Accident, without at all considering its Meaning, Reason, or Obligation; a Case very consistent with the Possibility of their being better informed, and rationally convinced.

Now, here, Sir, the leading Thought will be, that God has so adjusted the Nature and Circumstances of *Christianity*, as represented and exhibited in the *New Testament*, that it is attended with a strong Degree of *Internal Evidence*, of which, by an unaccountable Omision, you take not the least Notice; and that what is most essential to the *External Proof*, lies within much less Compass than you seem to imagine, and is capable, if previous Precautions be taken in a proper Manner, of being opened to Persons of an *ordinary Capacity*, and understood by them, tho' they have neither Ability nor Leisure for the Curiosities of learned Disquisition.

For the Illustration of this, you must give me Leave to remind you, that both the *Mosaic* and *Christian* Dispensations have been much *misrepresented*, in Consequence of Mens taking their Notions of them, rather from the Conduct of their Professors, than from the Institutes of their respective Founders. To apply this to the present Occasion, let us consider what the Case of *Christians* would be, with regard to the *rational Evidence* of their Religion, if Things were to flow on in the Channel, into which it was the apparent Design of our Divine Master to direct them.

You will, no doubt, Sir, readily allow, that a *pious Education*, and a *standing Ministry*, are Appointments of our blessed Redeemer, and will spare me the Trouble of proving either of them in Form. And as you take it for granted in the whole of your Letter, that *Infant Baptism* is a *Christian Ordinance*, you will also allow me to

mention it as a common Principle, tho' little of my Argument will depend upon its being so.

A Parent therefore, acting upon the Laws of *Christianity*, (which is what I here all along suppose in stating the Case,) having in a solemn Manner devoted his Child to God in its early Infancy, and having ever since been affectionately recommending it to the Divine Blessing, watches the first Dawning of *Reason*, to instill into its tender Mind, Sentiments of Piety to God, Gratitude to the Redeemer, Benevolence to Men, and every other Grace and Virtue which the *Gospel* recommends, and which the Life of its great Founder exemplified. Quickened by the Obligation, which the Birth and Baptism of every younger Child in the Family renews, the Father and Mother concur in a wise and conscientious Care, to keep their dear Offspring, as far as possible, out of the Sight and Hearing of every Thing profane, cruel and indecent; and *whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are venerable, whatsoever Things are righteous, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise*, the Child will be taught, by the Force of Precept and daily Example, to *think on these Things*, and to pursue them. The Consequence of this, under those Influences of Divine Grace which may be cheerfully expected in the Way of Duty, will probably be an early Sense of Decency, Virtue, and Piety. The Growth of those Seeds of *corrupt Nature*, which will in some Instances discover themselves in the most amiable Children, will in a great Measure be suppressed; *Religion* will grow familiar and pleasant, under the smiling Aspect it will appear to wear; and the *Bible*, which our little Disciple will early have been taught to read, will soon become a most delightful Book. The entertaining Stories, the fine Examples, the beautiful Poems, the wise Precepts so gravely and yet so kindly given, which it will every where meet with, must give it Abundance of Pleasure; and it will be eager to read those Things, the general Contents of which it has learnt, long before it could read, from the daily Discourse of its Parents, who while they are recounting these glorious Things, will  
be



be teaching themselves as well as their Children, and by more familiar and attentive Views of them, confirming their own Faith, and animating their own Piety. And as for the leading Facts which the Child meets with in *Scripture*, strange as some of them may appear, it will readily believe them, on this general Foundation; that its good Parents who know much better than himself, and never deceive him, assure him that every Thing, which this excellent Book contains, is true. And this, Sir, is all the Satisfaction, which a Child of the most extraordinary Genius can have in the first Stages of Life; and if it die before it arrive to greater Maturity, it will be happy in the practical Influence, which the *Gospel*, thus *implicitly believed*, had upon its Temper and Conduct; as it could be under no Necessity of entering into its *rational Evidence*, before those Faculties opened by which that Evidence was to be received, any more than a Blind Man can be obliged to read, or the Dumb to sing God's Praises.

At length, as the Minds of Children open, they will gradually be led into some farther Reflections on the *Certainty of those Things in which they have been instructed*. And here they will soon perceive some Degree of Difference in the Evidence of them, immediately appearing. As for the *Existence of a Supreme Being*, I really think, that the noblest and most satisfactory Arguments, of which the Mind of Man is capable, are those which are obvious even to the Understanding of a Child; I mean, those taken from the Works of Creation and Providence. Common Sense will surely tell these little Creatures, as soon as they can understand the Words, that *if every House*, even the poorest Cottage, *must have some Builder*, there must be one *who built all Things*; who made Heaven and Earth, with all their bright, noble Furniture. And as they see, clearly as they see the Sun, that he who made, and upholds all these Things, is *powerful and wise*; which every Flower, and every Fly, when considered as his Work, may shew them: so they may naturally conclude, such a great and wise Being is *good*; and it will be easy to shew them, that every agreeable Object about them is a sensible Proof of his Goodness; every pleasant Fruit, for

Instance, a Gift of God, which all the Men in the World could not have made, or provided for them, without him.

By such familiar Views of Things they may be brought, not only to *believe*, but to *know*, that there is a great, *powerful, wise, and kind Father of the World* always near them. Nor will it be difficult to give them some rational View and Conviction of his *Moral Attributes*, as inferred from his *Natural*. I suppose they have in those early Lessons of *Sacred History*, which have been their Entertainment from their Infancy, been led to reflect on the *Characters* of Persons mentioned; to see the Aimbleness of some Affections and Actions, and the Deformity of others, which in many Instances are as obvious, as that one Face, or Dress, makes a pleasanter Appearance to the Eye than another. Discerning this visible Difference in *moral Characters*, long before they know what the Words *Morality* or *Character* signify, they will naturally, and I think very reasonably, conclude, that it is just to ascribe every Excellence and Glory to him, in whom they see so many: and by consequence, that he must be pleased with what is *good*, and displeas'd with what is *evil*. They see it in their wise and pious Parents, (for *wise* and *pious* we here suppose them to be;) and they will much more conclude, it must be in him, whom they have learnt to address as *our Father who is in Heaven*. I take the Liberty, Sir, to tell you, that I have examin'd many Scores of Children on these Heads, not as to what they have learnt, but what they themselves think of the Matter; and have put the Questions in various Forms, to suggest an Affirmative or Negative Answer; and I always find, if they understand the Terms of it, they answer right upon a very short Pause.

Agreably to those obvious Principles, they naturally apprehend, that the *Regard* of God to his *Creatures* follows them *beyond Death*; and that he rewards, or punishes them, suitably to their Temper and Behaviour. They cannot think, that God would have suffered such Persons, as *Axel*, or the *Seven Sons* of that good Woman in the *Maccabees*, to have been slain in that cruel Manner, if he had not intended to take them to himself, and  
make

make them happier than they were: that, Sir, is a learned Prejudice, the laboured Error of a *Man*, of a *Minute Philosopher*; the Simplicity of a virtuous *Child* is not able to attain it.

A prudent Parent will easily foresee, that the Child will find greater Difficulties in coming at the Evidence of the Truth of these Things, which depend merely upon the *Authority of Scripture*: he will therefore early be laying in Materials for its seeing the Force of that *noble Part of it*, which you so strangely leave untouched; I mean, that which is *Internal*, and arises from the Contents and Design of the Book itself. A Child trained up as we here suppose, will, probably, of itself make a great many Reflections, what an *excellent Book* it is; especially as to some Parts of it, with which I have known little Children so struck, that they have, of their own Accord, read the same Passage, tho' neither History nor Parable, over and over, till they have almost learn'd it by Heart: the religious Parent or Friend will watch, encourage, and illustrate these Remarks; and at length, when he finds the young Mind strong enough to receive it, he will lead it to reflect, what *excellent Men* they must be who wrote such Things: and when that Reflection is familiar, and has been daily renewed, perhaps for Weeks and Months, another easily follows, that the *Bible* is undoubtedly *true and divine*; for *good Men* would never have invented Lies, and have presumed to teach them in the Name of God himself; and *wicked Men* would not, and could not, have written what is so excellently good, and tends to make others so. This, Sir, my pious Friends taught me when I was a Child; and I think it, to this very Day, an Argument of unanswerable Weight: and I cannot but apprehend, that the more a Man advances in real Goodness, and the more intimately he converses with *Scripture*, the more he will be impressed with it. Here is an Argument depending on no other Fact than this, that there is such a Book as the *Bible* in the World, of which our Children are as sure, as that there is a Sun: and Providence has wisely ordered it so, that they may understand the Force of it, before they can enter into Objections

jections against it; and so far as I can judge, those Objections must be stronger than any I have ever met with, which can be sufficient to balance the Force of it. Yet this is far from being the only Foundation of our Faith, or the only Argument in its Favour, which a *young Christian* may be able, with proper Assistance, to understand.

The *External Evidence* does not indeed lie within so little Room, nor can it perhaps be made equally obvious by every pious Parent; yet, with the Assistance which able *Ministers*, and proper *Books*, may give, I apprehend, a Child of fourteen or fifteen Years old may have some competent View of it. It will be a most easy Thing to shew him, by uncontroverted Testimonies, collected by a Variety of *Writers*,—that *Christianity* was an antient Religion,—for the Sake of which its Professors, in its earliest Ages, endured great Extremities;—that there was, about 1700 Years ago, such a Person as *Jesus Christ*, the great Founder of it;—that the first Preachers of his Religion wrote *Books*, which were called by the Name of those that make up the most important Part of the *New Testament*;—that these *Books* are, in the main, transmitted to us *uncorrupted*;—and that our *Translation* of them may, in the general, be depended upon as *right*. These are the grand Preliminaries; and as the Foundation may be laid without much Difficulty, so the Superstructure may be raised upon it, with yet much more Ease. From the *New Testament*, thus proved to be *genuine*, a Person of very moderate Capacity and Learning will presently be able to shew, that the *Writers of it* certainly *knew* whether the Facts they recorded were true or false;—that their *Character*, so far as we can judge by their Manner of writing, was so excellently *good*, that there is no Reason to suspect them of Falshood;—nay, that the Probability of *their Fidelity* is so great, that it would be astonishing, if the strongest Temptation could prevail upon them to violate it;—at least in so criminal a Manner, as they must have done if they were *Impostors*:—the *Temptations* must have been *exceeding strong*, to justify the least Degree of Suspicion:—but they had *no Temptation* at all to forge such a Story, and  
to

to attempt to impose upon the World by it:—however, that if they had made the Attempt, they *could not have succeeded* in gaining Credit;—nevertheless, it is plain, they *did gain Credit* among vast Multitudes, who were strongly prejudiced against the Religion they taught:—from all which Things compared, it appears, that their Story, and the Religion founded upon it, *i. e. Christianity*, is true; a Conclusion which may be greatly illustrated by shewing them farther, — what wonderful Things have since happened for the *Confirmation of it*; considering, on the one Hand, what God has done to establish it; and, on the other, what Methods its Enemies have taken to destroy it.

It is not my Business, Sir, to state and vindicate these Arguments at large; I have done it already in my *Three Sermons on the Evidences of Christianity*, which were published several Years ago; and I shall be very ready to canvass the Strength of them, as there represented, with any who shall think fit to bring them into Dispute. I rather mention *those Sermons* here, because they are calculated for popular Use, and may assist those who are not so well versed in the Arguments, to propose them to their *Children*, or *Catechumens*, in what I apprehend the easiest and plainest Light. By talking over these Heads in a free and familiar Manner, and then giving the young Person the Book to read two or three Times alone, till he has fixed the leading Thoughts in his Understanding and Memory, I doubt not but such a Foundation might be laid in a few Days, as all the succeeding Years of Life would not be able to shake. Nor must it ever be forgotten, how much it would be cemented and established, by that true Taste of *moral Beauty and Excellence*, which we suppose already formed in the Mind of our young Student. He would find so much to charm him in the Sentiments, Character, and Conduct of the *Apostles*, as would engage him to lay a very great Stress on that important Branch of the Argument which turns on that Point. It would appear to him, *in Theory*, utterly *improbable*, that Men of their heroick *Goodness* should engage in so impious, and mischievous a *Fraud*, as they must have engaged in, if their Testimony was false;

as \*, on the other Hand, the *Good Sense* which may easily be discovered in their Writings and Behaviour, will make it appear equally *absurd* to imagine, they should so madly run on *Sufferings* and *Ruin*, as they must have done, if they had not been conscious of a *Divine Support*, of *miraculous Powers*, and of *immense future Rewards*.

A religious Youth, grown up to Years of Maturity, with a Mind thus furnished, and thus disposed, will not easily be perverted to *Infidelity*: so precious a Freight would be too weighty, to be overset by every *Wind of Doctrine*, or every *Breath of Ridicule*. Yet it might conduce farther to his Security, if a prudent *Parent* or *Minister* should give him, before the Scene of Temptation opens, some short *Hints* of the chief *Topicks* from whence *Objections* against *Christianity* are drawn, and of the *plainest* and most obvious *Answers* to them, which, so far as I can judge, are generally the most solid. If a Person be not intended for some learned Profession, or distinguished Circumstance in Life, it is by no means necessary to be large in this Part of the Scheme; but something of this Kind may easily and profitably be done, and there will be no Reason to be in any Panick, lest every Hint of an Objection should *overturn his Faith*. Answers will be suggested, with those Objections; and he will soon be weary of hearing such poor unsatisfactory Things as most of the Cavils of *Infidelity* are. And here, again, the *good Habits*, and *Dispositions* formed in his Mind, will be of great Service. He will perceive, that *Christianity* wears so favourable an Aspect, and opens upon him so fine a Prospect, that he will not *bunt after Objections* against it; as a Man is not studious to find a Flaw in Writings, by which he stands intitled to the Reversion of some noble Estate: and when they accidentally start up in his Way, he will soon see, that *many of them* are grounded on notorious Falshood, and are in themselves despicably mean; especially when set  
against

\* How impious and mischievous the Fraud must have been, if it were a *Fraud*, is illustrated more fully than I have elsewhere seen it, in the *Sermons* I mentioned above; (see *pag. 259, & seq. 2d Edit.*) and the Thought appears to me of vast Importance,

against the great Arguments for it, of which he is already possessed: and with Regard to *others*, the Assistance of *Ministers* and other religious Friends, which when pressed with real Difficulties he will honestly seek, will, no doubt, furnish him with proper Answers; and, indeed, his *Converse with the Scriptures* will enable him, without foreign Assistance, to obviate most of them, and they will vanish like Birds of Night before the rising Sun: not now to mention those Auxiliaries, which his Faith will often call in, from observing and comparing the *different Characters* of those, who are most solicitous, on the one Hand to destroy it, and on the other to support it, of which I may hereafter speak.

If this, Sir, were merely an imaginary Scheme, on which no Parent acted, and no Children were educated, yet if it were (as, I think, every one must own it is,) agreeable to the original *Christian Plan*, it would not be foreign to our Purpose; as it will prove, that if proper Precautions were taken, and Men were to act in Character, competent *Rational Evidence* might be attained, as young People grew up to a Capacity of exercising Reason; which is all that could be supposed requisite. But bad as the World is, I bless God, I can confidently say, I have in the main Traces copied from the Life. This, to my certain Knowledge, is the Care of *many Parents* and *Ministers*, and this the Felicity of *many Children*. The Success is generally answerable; and I hope, the Instances in which it is so in the *Protestant World*, are not to be numbered by Scores, but by Hundreds and Thousands, who are to be regarded as the precious *Seed of the Church* in the next Age, and who I doubt not will, in Spite of all the Efforts of *Infidelity*, exert themselves so effectually in its Service, that the *Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it*.

Nevertheless, while I bless God, that this is the Case of so many, I very readily acknowledge, that, through a *Negligence*, for which I fear a Multitude of *Parents* and *Ministers* have a terrible Account to render before God, it is generally *much otherwise*. By far the greater Part of *professing Christians* have probably *no better Reason* to give for their Religion, than that they were early baptized into it, and have been trained up in some of its external

Forms. Far from being instructed in its *Evidences*, they are hardly taught its *Doctrines*, or its *Precepts*; or superficially learn them from those, who do not themselves seem to be in good Earnest concerned about the one or the other. The fatal Consequence is too plain. The Corruptions of Nature, abetted by the Force of evil Examples, prevail against them; and they are early plunged into such licentious Practices, that if they ever reflect on the most evident and express Declarations of the Word of God, they must immediately see, that they are condemned by it.

Now there is no Reason to wonder, if many of *this Sort of Christians* are easy *Profelytes to Infidelity*. It is no surprizing Thing, if a bold Jest thrown upon *Scripture*, or a confident senseless Assertion of its Falshood, (perhaps from a Person, on whose Word hardly any Thing else would be believed,) have with them all the Weight of a Demonstration. They will be little concerned to ask Information, or consider how Objections may be answered. Those magical Words, *Priest-craft*, and the *Prejudice of Education*, stun and terrify them: they submit, as you gravely express it, (*pag. 75.*) “ in the Impotence and Impuberty of a dutiful Understanding, in the tractable Simplicity of unpractised Reason: with the obsequious and humble Acquiescence of a Babe, they sit down to learn *their Lesson*” too; and their *Unbelief*, after they have attained the Stature of *Men*, is just as *blind* and *implicit*, as the *Faith* of their *Childhood* was.

This, Sir, is undoubtedly the Case with many; and you cannot but have observed, what large Companies in the Free-thinking Army are raised and enlisted from among these Vagabonds. But the Generality of Men among us, as in every Nation, go on thoughtlessly in the Religion in which they were educated: hearing the Truth of it often asserted, and perhaps never hearing it contradicted, they entertain no Doubts on the Subject, but grow old in a mere speculative and ineffectual Assent to *Christianity*. And if their Heart at any Time smite them, with the Contrariety of their Temper and Conduct to the Rules which they acknowledge to be Divine, they seek their Shelter in the Hope of *making their Peace*  
with



with God, (as they commonly express it,) before they go out of the World; and perhaps abuse some of the noblest Discoveries which the *Gospel* makes, as an Encouragement to continue in those Sins and Follies, from which it was expressly designed to reclaim them.

Nevertheless, it frequently happens among such as these, that some are awakened to think deeply and seriously of Religion: the plain lively *Preaching* of the *Gospel*, or perhaps some *afflictive Providence*, rouses them from their Lethargy. And I must reckon it among the chief Felicities of my Life, that I have had many Opportunities of observing, what are in Fact the Workings of Men's Spirits in such a Circumstance.

And here I have always found, that the Moral Perfections of the great Governor of the World appear to them in a very lively View: the Records of their own Consciences are thrown open before their Eyes, and they feel a Load of Guilt pressing on their Minds, of which they were before utterly insensible. Under this Anxiety, they hear of the *Remedy* which the *Gospel* has provided; and they hear of it with another Kind of Regard than formerly. It is what they now perceive, that they want; (strange, that they should have perceived it no sooner!) and it appears far more important to them, than Animal Life and all its Enjoyments. Hearing of the Love and Grace of a *Redeemer*, concerning the Reality of whose Undertaking they never had any considerable Doubt, their Hearts are transported with a Flow of most ardent and various Affections; they find another Kind of Energy in these Things, than they were ever aware, or could have imagined to be possible. *He has saved their Lives* at the Expence of his own; and under the *Constraints of his Love* they consecrate themselves to a forgiving God, with an Ardor of Soul which nothing but *Gratitude* can inspire. They do now, as it were, *receive the Gospel* anew from his Hand, not as a Revelation now made, but now first endeared to them, by a Sense of their own Concern in it; they exemplify the Beauty of its *Precepts*, and they feel the Force of its *Consolations*. A blessed Effect, in which I humbly acknowledge the Finger of God, and the Agency of his Spirit; tho' I see

see no Reason to pretend to an *immediate Inspiration*, in the Sense which you maintain.

When the first Tumult of Affections, raised by so interesting and important a Scene, subsides, and the happy Converts come more coolly to reflect on what has passed, they draw a new Argument of the *Truth* of this glorious *Gospel* from its experienced *Efficacy*; and, tho' they cannot make a Stranger sensible of the Force of it, will say like *the Blind Man*, as yet little instructed in many other Proofs of our Lord's Divine Mission, *If he were not of God, he could not have opened my Eyes*; and under the lively Impression of it, the Sophistry of *modern Infidels* is as little to them, as that of the *Sanhedrim* was to him. At length, growing in Wisdom and Piety by their Acquaintance with the *Gospel*, and in Proportion to their Regard for it, they likewise, who had formerly no Taste and Sensibility for such Things, become qualified to take a more extensive Survey of its *Internal Evidence*, and to judge of it; and accordingly, they see it much in the same Light with those who had been formed to an earlier Subjection to it, and had grown up with it in their Hands and their Hearts.

Of these recovered Votaries to it, some who have a Head turned for *Reasoning*, perhaps from a Desire to serve others, and honour God, by defending *Christianity*, rather than from any Doubt which they themselves have of its Truth, set themselves to study the *Evidences of the Gospel*, as stated in some judicious Treatise on the Subject; which they carefully examine, and often ground so thoroughly in their Understanding and Memories, as to be able to *silence*, if not to *convince Gainsayers*. And others, who have not Leisure or Inclination to search so particularly into the whole Compass of the Argument, are perhaps greatly *confirmed in their Faith*, by some *Circumstances* which powerfully impress them, tho' they may not be able to communicate the Force of the Argument to others; or tho', where it is communicated, it cannot publicly be stated, without Inconveniences which might overbalance the Advantages arising from the Discovery of such Occurrences.

I am sensible, Sir, I am touching on a Subject, which it is difficult to handle, without the Imputation of *Enthusiasm*, and perhaps without the Danger of it; and therefore I shall dismiss it in a few Words. I take upon me now to assert no Facts, either as my own Experience, or as on the Testimony of others, whom I may have Reason to credit; but I would suggest the Thought in Hypothesis. Is it in the Nature of Things *impossible*, or is it utterly *incredible*, that the Great Author and Governor of all should, in some rare Instances, even in these later Ages, deviate from the Laws by which he stately rules the Natural World, for the Deliverance and Support of some of his faithful Servants in Circumstances of great Extremity; especially, when thereby the Interest of the Moral World may remarkably be promoted? Or supposing this to be ever so rare, I would further ask, Is it impossible, that he may, on a perfect View of every minutest Circumstance, have constituted the Course of Things in such a Manner, that there shall be a remarkable Correspondence between a Train of Thoughts in a *Christian's* Mind, and an Event arising from other Natural, but perhaps unobserved Causes, on which that Train of Thoughts could have no Influence? Do you, Sir, thoroughly understand the Law, by which Thoughts arise in our Mind? or can you say, by what Connection one springs up, rather than another? Can you account for it, why the Mind is sometimes so much more forcibly struck, than at other Times, with the same Object; or why it sometimes feels itself directed strongly into a certain Channel, and Track of Thinking, in which it is not conscious to itself of a Self-determining Agency? Or are you sure that there may not be a special gracious Appointment (whether Natural or Miraculous, I do not now contend,) in certain Events, the Causes of which are so unobserved, that we commonly, but perhaps rashly, say, they happen by Chance? That the Minds of many eminently wise and good Men have been greatly comforted and established by such Events, I am well assured; and it seems probable to me, that to well-disposed Persons, of weaker Abilities, they may more frequently happen: nevertheless, as I know they are liable to a great deal of Cavil, and that it is the

Fashion of the Age to deride every Thing of this Nature, I will not urge this Argument in the present Debate, but content myself with having insinuated it. I think, I ought not entirely to have omitted it; and this seems its most proper Place.

It is, I hope, at least possible, that the *Faith* of an *illiterate Christian* may be not only really, but *rationally confirmed* by such Events; or, if you will admit the commonly received Phrase, by such *special Providences* as these. However, I am sure, there is another Topick of Argument, which is frequently of great and important Service in this View, and which falls under the daily Observation of the *common People* as well as others, and of which they are as *competent Judges* as the most polite and learned of Mankind. I mean *that* which arises from comparing the *Temper* and *Conduct* of those who profess to *reject the Gospel*, with that of those who seem most cordially to *esteem* and *embrace* it.

If it were evident and notorious, that *Infidelity* did generally in Fact *make Men better*; if it increased their Reverence for the Divine Being, and made them more diligent, constant, and devout in paying their daily Homage before him; if it rendered them more sober and temperate, more mild and gentle, more upright and benevolent in their Behaviour; tho' this would be a most unaccountable Phænomenon to any one who examines the *Constitution of the Gospel*, (since *that* diminishes no Natural Motive to Virtue, and adds many peculiar to itself,) I do not say, that this Remark ought to *balance all the Evidence* on the other Side; yet I will venture, Sir, to say, that I think it would shock an honest and candid Mind, more than *all the Objections* I have ever seen or heard of, as advanced by our *modern Free-Thinkers*. But I firmly believe, that what Weight this Thought has, will be found in Favour of *Christianity*, and not in Opposition to it.

You well know, Sir, one can judge of these Things only by one's own Observation, and the Report of others. I will not now insist on the latter; and that what I have to say as to the former, may not be imputed to the Eagerness of Disputation, I think it not unbecoming my Character to use the Solemnity of saying,

in the Words of St. Paul, *I protest to you by our Rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus*, (and a stronger Affirmation I cannot use,) that I write on this Topick, as I would do if my Life were to conclude with this Letter, and I were directly to pass to account before the Judge of Hearts, for the Truth of what I say.

I condescend not to speak of a meer Freedom from gross and infamous Vices; but sure I am, that if I have ever seen amiable and sublime *Virtue* in the World, I have seen it among the humble *Disciples of Jesus*. Where Education and Circumstances in Life have been low, *Christian Principles* have, to my certain Knowledge, so far as Principles could be known from Behaviour, raised, animated, and ennobled the Mind. I have beheld, even in Cottages, that filial Devotion toward the Blessed God, that cordial Submission to his Will under the most painful Dispensations, that calm steady Fortitude, in the midst of Evils, which might have made a Philosopher tremble, that Cheerfulness in the immediate Views of Death; and, in the Tenour of Lives which I have intimately known, that strict Integrity, that Diligence, that Contentment, that Readiness to do Good in full Proportion to their small Abilities, that generous Self-Denial to avoid what might grieve and offend others, and, to crown all, that tender Solitude for the eternal Happiness of Friends, of Strangers, and sometimes of Enemies; which has often filled me with Wonder, as well as Delight. I speak freely, as conscious both of the Truth and Importance of what I say; nor am I at all ashamed thus openly to acknowledge, that *my Faith in Christianity* has been not a little *established* by such Observations as these; which, I bless God, have not been made in a few Instances: and I esteem the Evidence, not the less, but the more, because *Day-Labourers* might enter into it, as well as myself.

I doubt not, Sir, but Thousands more have also made Observations of this Kind; and that it will generally be found, that when the *Principles of Christianity* enter a Mind before unaffected with them, they produce this Effect, which indeed it is most natural they should. On the other Hand, as to *professed Infidels*, and it is on them only that the Observation can pertinently be made, I appeal

appeal to the World in general, whether they do not commonly *make Shipwreck of a good Conscience*, as well as of *Faith*, and plainly shew, that the *Precepts of the Gospel* are as disagreeable to them as its *Doctrines*. It would be strange, indeed, if Good-Nature, a Sense of Honour, and, especially in advanced Life, a Caution not to disgrace distinguishing Principles, did not restrain some from scandalous Enormities, and produce something agreeable in their Behaviour; but I believe, most who know the World will allow, that it is a peculiar Glory for any of this Sect to maintain so much as an uniform external Appearance of what the best *Heathens Moralists* have esteemed *Virtue*.

People of Attention and Reflection in the lower Ranks of Life, are not so stupid, as not to observe these Things, or to neglect drawing the obvious Inference from them: an Inference, in which they will be both directed, and supported, by that Maxim of our Divine Master, *By their Fruits ye shall know them*. What the *Morals of Infidel Writers* in private Life have been, it may seem difficult certainly to judge, because their Pieces have been mostly *anonymous*. Yet I cannot forbear observing, that some of those ingenious Authors have found out a Way of letting the World into *their Characters*, without publishing *their Names*; and that in some such palpable Instances, as one would almost ascribe to a *judicial Infatuation*, or think they had been *hired* to expose their own Cause to Contempt.

And this leads me farther to touch upon that *Confirmation*, which the *Faith of plain Christians* sometimes receives, from observing, not only the *Character* of those who would *subvert Christianity*, but also the *Manner* in which they often *manage their Opposition* to it.

Every one who can read his *Bible* may observe, (and it may be profitable for *Young Persons* especially, to be shewn it,) how *unjustly* the *Enemies of Revelation* often represent the *Doctrines* and *Facts* delivered in *Scripture*. He may see the *Calumnies*, which these Men often throw upon the *Inspired Writers*, or those whom they celebrate, rolling off, like foul Water from the Down of a Swan, without leaving any Trace or Soil behind it. It is obvious also to remark, that instead of *examining*, or so much

much as attempting to confute, the Arguments for Christianity, which these Gentlemen cannot but know; they only advance their *Surmises*, and their *Possibilities*, or make vain Efforts to prove, that those Things cannot in Reason be, which in Fact appear.

It is not to be wondered, if honest Persons of plain Sense have soon enough of such Teachers, and do not often come to seek for *Grapes from Thorns*, or *Figs from Thistles*; or that if the boisterous Attacks, which are made on their Faith by such Methods, seem at first a little to loosen the Roots of it, the Storm afterwards serves only to fix it the faster, and to make Way for its farther Spread. Especially when they see, that Arguments produced in Opposition to Christianity often have as malignant an Aspect on Natural Religion too, and apparently tend to destroy all mutual Commerce among Mankind, which can never be carried on without some Confidence in the Testimony of each other. It is thus that Meat often comes out of the Eater, and Sweetness out of the Fierce; and the *Subtle* are taken in their own Craftiness. The Grossness of such visible and palpable Snares engages prudent People to avoid the Path in which they lie, and so secures them from others of a finer Contexture, and a more dangerous Form.

And thus, Sir, I have fulfilled my Promise, and given you a more distinct Account, than I remember to have met with elsewhere, of the *Rational Satisfaction* which many Christians in common Life have, and others, under due Cultivation, might without any Accuracy of Learning obtain, with Regard to the Truth of the Religion they profess. And I do sincerely apprehend, that this Representation of the Matter, far different from that which you have given, if it appear just, will contain a compendious Answer to what you have suggested on the contrary Side of the Question; and be such a Reply to your Treatise, as *Walking* is to the celebrated Arguments which have been brought to demonstrate the *Impossibility of Motion*.

But here, Sir, as you tell your Friend, “ I am very sensible, I have been holding you for some Time past in the highest Impatience of Zeal, to interpose and remind me,” that even *this Evidence* cannot be ob-

tained by all;—that while it is pursued, it keeps the Mind in a State of dangerous Hesitation;—and where it is had, it is founded in the Prepossessions of Education,—in partial and imperfect Views of the Question;—that much of it depends upon precarious Human Testimony;—and consequently, that it cannot have Efficacy enough to satisfy the Mind, to controul irregular Affections, or to animate against those Extremities, which the *Gospel* may sometimes require us to endure in its Defence. Each of these Particulars you object in your Pamphlet; and I do not remember any Thing material suggested in it, and proper to be considered in this Place, which does not fall under one or another of these Heads.

Now as to the first of these, it is indeed true, that *all the Evidence* which I have here described, cannot probably *be attained by all*; tho' I am confident a great deal more might be done for this Purpose, in an enlightened and *Protestant* Country like ours, than we generally see. Care might be taken, especially if the richer Kind of People had a becoming Compassion on their poor Neighbours, to teach *all Children to read*, and to furnish *all Families with Bibles*; as also to put such *Catechisms* into their Hands, as contain some Hints of the *Reasons of Christianity*. And if that which Dr. *Thomas Burnet* has drawn up in so plain and concise a Manner, were to be used, I will venture to say, that *Children* will be furnished with *Reasons for being Christians*, which, so far as I can learn, the most sagacious *Deists* have been too wise to attempt directly to answer; and till they both attempt, and effect it, the Understanding of a Child may see, that whatever else they do is of very little Importance. There are also several other *plain and popular Pieces*, \* which may, with a very small Expence of Money and Time, be purchased and perused by *young People*: and if they were to be read two or three Times over in *Families* on the Evening of a Lord's Day, *Children* and *Servants* might, by an attentive Hearing, be enabled

\* Either the *Three Sermons* mentioned above, pag. 20. or the *Bishop of London's Pastoral Letters*; or a Pamphlet intitled *Plain Reasons for being a Christian*; or the First Part of *The Gentleman's Religion*.



abled to give some *Reason of the Hope that is in them*. And till they come to be capable of understanding such plain Things as these, if they have no Reason to believe their *Bible* to be true, but that they find it excellently good, and see it believed and revered by the wisest and best of those around them, it is, I suppose, at least, as good a Ground for their *Faith*, as such Infant Understandings can have for *Infidelity*. Nor will it be easy to invent any Scheme, by which a *Child* shall attain any Knowledge at all, without some Confidence in the *Veracity* and *Skill* of its Parents, or other Teachers.

Indeed, Sir, according to the injurious Representation you have made of Human Nature, this is the Case, not of *little Children* alone, but of *most* who are grown up to *Years of Maturity*. “The Generality of Apprehensions,” say you, (*pag. 17.*) “extend not beyond a simple Proposition, and are thrown out at once at the very Mention of introducing a Medium;” that is, in plain Terms, they are not *Rational Creatures*. I shall not now urge, how inconsistent this is with the Arguments, by which those that call themselves (by a strong Catachresis) *Freethinkers*, attempt to *reason People* out of a Regard to *Revelation*; and that, even by maintaining the Natural Abilities of the Human Mind to discover, without any Supernatural Assistance, every Thing in Religion which we are concerned to know. You, Sir, are too zealous a *Christian* to be pressed with such a Consequence; or to be told, that if your subsequent Discourse (*pag. 18, 19.*) be right, when taken in Connection with this Principle, it will lead to a Conclusion, that Men may live at Random, not having *Sense enough* to be capable of rendering an Account to God for their Actions. It would, I doubt not, be well for some, if this were indeed the Case; but I hope, none that pretend to *reason against Religion*, will imagine they have any Pretence to take Shelter in such a Thought. If this Admonition be a Digression, you will, I hope, pardon it, in Favour of those, who I dare say are the greatest Admirers of your Performance; and I will now return to remind you, in direct Answer to what you advance, that daily Experience shews the Capacities of Mankind in general not to be so *weak*, as (just to serve a present Purpose,) you are pleased

to suppose them. Do not People in low Life *reason* on the common Occurrences of it? Do they not learn the *Art of Numbers*, and often know how to apply it in Cases where the Reason of that Application requires much more than *one Medium* to find it out? I suppose, the *Natural Understanding* of Men, in different Stations of Life, is on an Average *pretty equal*, and that *Education* generally makes the *chief Difference*; and I have had an Opportunity of observing, that among those who enter on *Academical Studies*, (and *Reasoning* is not much cultivated in *Grammar Schools*;) there is not one in some Scores, who, with proper Instructions, does not in a few Days grow capable of entering into the Force of *Euclid's Demonstrations*. And I hope, none will have so little Modesty as not readily to acknowledge, that the *Reasonings* by which *Christianity* is proved in the *plain Pieces* I referred to above, are much easier, and less abstruse, than those relating to the Properties of *Mathematical Figures* to Persons to whom they are entirely new. *Objections* therefore taken from the supposed *Impossibility* of entering into the Proofs offered, can only take Place with regard to Persons, who when grown up are so unhappy as to *want common Sense*; of whom it cannot be supposed, that either of us intended to speak, in what we have said on either Side of the Question in Debate between us.

But you will not fail to remonstrate, as you have already done at large, (*pag. 13, 14.*) that supposing the *Rational Evidence* of *Christianity* ever so intelligible, it will at least *require Time* for the most candid Enquirer to make himself Master of it; and while he is pursuing it, he continues in a State of *extream Danger*; because he is *hesitating* about that, on an immediate Compliance with which his Salvation depends. But to this, which really appears to me the most considerable Difficulty you have suggested, I beg Leave to answer, that the *Examination* requires not near so much *Time* as you would represent; and that while the Mind is pursuing it, there is no Need at all that it should be in a State of *Infidelity*, and, consequently, of *Danger* as to its final Happiness, if Life should end before the Examination is finished.

You, Sir, I think by one of the most palpable Sophisms that I have any where met with, every where  
affect

affect to represent the Case in Question, as if a Man could have no *Rational Evidence* of *Christianity*, till he had enquired, on the one Hand, into every Thing that could be said either to confirm, or even to illustrate it; and, on the other, into every *Objection* that has been brought against it. And if this be not granted, all your Flourishes (pag. 61,—63.) will be meer Ornaments of Wit and Eloquence, entirely wide of the Matter in Debate. On the contrary, it seems self-evident, that this is so far from being necessary to make a rational and intelligent *Christian*, that it is not necessary to constitute an able and an accomplished *Divine*. View it in any other Instance, and you cannot but allow what I say. Would you maintain, that a Man cannot be fit to practise as a *Lawyer*, or a *Physician*, till he has read every Thing that has been writ in any Controversy relating to those Professions? It would be much more apparently absurd, to insist upon this *Polemical Omniscience*, (if I may be allowed the Expression,) in the Case before us: since, at that Rate, a competent *Number of Infidels* might, without urging one material Argument, overthrow *Christianity*, supposing it in itself ever so *Rational*, merely by writing a greater *Number of Books* about it, than any one Man could be able to read.

On the whole, *Controversies* relating to *Christianity* are endless; but what is *essential* to the Proof of it lies within a very little Room, and may be set in so plain and easy a Light, that a Man may in a few Hours, with attentive Thought, be competently Master of the Argument. If indeed he desires copiously and curiously to examine the particular Branches of it, he must allow proportionable Time and Labour; but it is by no means necessary, tho' you, Sir, seem constantly to take it for granted, that he should be all this while *in Suspense*, as to the *Truth of the Gospel* in general. Every Topick of Argument is not so *fundamental*, as that the whole *Evidence of Christianity* should depend on that Topick; much less is every particular Proof belonging to each Topick so; and least of all, the Circumstance of every particular Proof. I might, for Instance, see great Reason to believe *Christianity* to be true, even tho' I knew nothing of its extraordinary Success and speedy Propagation in

the first Ages of the Church: or I might be sure, that it was early propagated thro' vast Tracts of Land, with Circumstances which afford a strong Conviction of its Truth, tho' I were yet to learn, whether it reached *India* or *Britain* during those early Days; and if it did, whether the *Christians* of *St. Thomas* received it from the *Apostle* of that Name, or our happy Island from *St. Paul*. I may be sure, that *Jesus* was prophesied of in the *Old Testament*, while I am entirely dubious how *Daniel's Weeks* are to be calculated; nay, I may be uncertain as to some Niceties in the Calculation, and yet be in general sure, that the Period they mark out is elapsed, and that it ended much about the Time of *Christ*.

And as a Consequence of all this it is evident, that *Books* on various Topicks relating to *Christianity* may be highly valuable, and yet by no means necessary to lay a *Rational Foundation* for our *Faith*. They may suggest new Thoughts; they may place Arguments urged many Ages ago, in a clearer and more beautiful Light; they may obviate Difficulties, which ingenious Men have started, and artfully aggravated; and thus they may demand the Esteem and Gratitude of the *Christian World*, to which the learned and worthy *Authors* of the *Analogy between Reason and Revelation*, and of the *Trial of the Witnesses*, are undoubtedly intitled; and yet "the Evidence of the *Gospel*, like its great Author, might be "the Same Yesterday, to Day, and for Ever," notwithstanding all you are pleased so shrewdly to insinuate on this Head. (Pag. 20,—22.)

But waving this, which, tho' I thought it necessary to touch upon it here, relates not immediately to the Case of *common Christians*, you will, I doubt not, be ready to remind me, that let the *Evidence* to be offered to their Consideration be ever so *short*, and ever so *plain*, yet *some Time* must be taken up in *examining* it, even that Part of it which is *most essential*; and while that *Examination* continues, they must be in a State of *dangerous Hesitation*; since to *doubt* concerning the *Truth of Christianity* is (according to your Representation of the Matter,) a *Damnable Apostacy* from it.

In Answer to *this Part* of the *Objection*, I am compelled to say, that I apprehend there is in it a Complication of Errors. I cannot, in the first Place, see how the *Faith* of a *Christian* is utterly cancelled by every *Doubt* and *Suspicion* which arises in his Mind. Our Thoughts are not entirely under our own Command, and Natural Temper may sometimes suggest Fears, which *Reason* can neither authorise, nor exclude. The humble *Christian*, conscious on the one Hand, of the Imperfection of his Character, and on the other, of the Greatness of his Hopes, may be ready sometimes to suspect, that the *Gospel* is *too good News to be true*. Now where will you find your Proofs, either from *Scripture*, or from *Reason*, that every such *Suspicion* is an *Apostacy from the Faith*, and that it is *damnable* thus to be tempted?

But to cut the grand Sinew of your *Objection*, I will presume to say, how widely soever it may differ from the Schemes you have formed on this Subject, that I apprehend, a Man may be *rationally established* in the Faith of the *Gospel*, and may have candidly *examined* the Evidences of it, without *ceasing to believe it* while he pursues *that Examination*; which I think may easily appear from what I have represented above, and I the rather repeat it, as you, Sir, seem so studious to keep your Reader from one Thought of it.

Having once learnt what the *Gospel Scheme* is, I can never doubt of its being admirably calculated to elevate, to purify, and to strengthen the Sou', to fix it on God, and to open it in Sentiments of the most sincere and generous Benevolence to Men. Of this I am as sure, as that there is a *Gospel Scheme* at all, or such a Book as the *New Testament* existing in the World. Nor can I ever question for a Moment, after having read that admirable Book with Attention, that there seem to be in it all imaginable Signs of Integrity, Piety, and Goodness in the Heart of its Writers. Both these will appear *strong Presumptions* of its Truth and Authority, and such as would require cogent Arguments on the other Side to balance them: Arguments, which till I hear, I see no Reason to set myself to surmise. And as it is likely in *Theory*, that a *Religion* attended with strong *Internal Evidence*, will not

be left destitute of *External*, I shall set myself to examine into that, under the Apprehension of a *strong Probability*, that it will turn out *in Favour of the Gospel*.

I remember indeed, that you somewhere speak with sovereign Contempt of “*that Enquiry, which is intended*” with a shrewd *Foreboding* how the Matter will end.” But I must intreat you to ask yourself again, whether it is not possible for the most impartial Mind, in some Cases, to have such *Forebodings*; nay, whether it be always possible to avoid them, even when entering on the most resolutely *impartial Examination*? Consider the Matter in Subjects where the severest *Reasoning* takes Place, and where there can be no Interest to bribe the Assent, I mean, where *Mathematical Theorems* are concerned.

I question not, Sir, but you have observed, if you ever turned your Thoughts this Way at all, that there is often an observable Proportion in the *Figure of a Diagram*, which leads a Man to think the Proposition *true*, as soon as he reads it. Besides, that having found *Demonstration* attending all the former Propositions, suppose of *Euclid*, he naturally concludes, he shall find it in the Proposition in Question. He would not perhaps accept a Bett of a Thousand Guineas to One, against the Force of a *Demonstration*, which he has not yet studied; and which, notwithstanding this grand *Foreboding*, he shall be able as freely and fairly to canvass, as he ever did any of the former. So little does there seem in *this Part* of the Argument, which you have pushed with so much Eagerness and Triumph.

But to return to the Case of *young Persons*, to be instructed in the *Evidences of Christianity*, the Matter we were considering, and from whence my Regard to this favourite Topick of yours led me to digress a little too far:—I freely own, and leave you, Sir, to make the best of the *Concession*, I would not have Youth led into any *Doubts* about these Matters, till their Understandings arrive at a Strength and Solidity capable of encountering with them. I would not represent *Christianity* to my *Catechumens*, or my *Children*, nor indeed to the most intelligent and judicious of my Hearers, as a *dubious uncertain Thing*, where the Probabilities were so equal, that it was quite *precarious* which Way an honest Enquirer would

would see Reason to determine. It appears to my Reason, and Conscience, quite in another Point of Light, as an *evident* and *certain Truth*, which I assuredly know; in which I rejoice as the *Anchor of my own Soul*, and which I verily believe must be the *Salvation of theirs*, if they are saved at all. With these Views it would be a horrible *Iniquity* in me, to speak *slightly* and *dubiously* about it: yet I may, in a perfect Consistence with this Perswasion, and with the Declaration of it, recommend it to others, not as on my own Authority, but on the Force of *Reasons*, concerning the Strength of which they are to *judge for themselves*; tho' I am ever so earnestly solicitous, that they may *judge aright*, as knowing how strictly they are to answer for the Integrity of their Conduct in this Affair.

But here I am well aware, you will glory over me as convicted by my own Confession. You will tell me, that all this Scheme of *educating Children in Christian Principles*, and recommending them with so much Confidence and Delight, is an avowed Method of *prejudicing* their Minds strongly on one Side of the Question, and utterly inconsistent with any Pretence of bringing them to a *fair and honest Enquiry*; in order to which it is absolutely necessary, that a Man come to *search after Truth* without any pre-conceived Opinion at all, and perfectly *indifferent* on which Side he may happen to find it.

This I confess, Sir, has a plausible Sound, and is a charming Subject for a *young Academick*, or a *very young Preacher*, if he has a Mind to display his Talent at Declamation: but after all, it is perfect *Knight Errantry*, and lays down a Law to Mankind, which it is in many Instances *impossible* they should follow, and which, of Consequence, can be neither *necessary*, nor *reasonable*. The Affections of the Human Mind may indeed be controlled, but they cannot be extirpated; nor is it needful Men should be *insensible*, in order to their being impartial. Had *Junius Brutus*, when he saw *his Sons* arraigned before him for Treason against their Country, been thus philosophically *indifferent* whether they were innocent or guilty, he had been *the Idiot* he formerly counterfeited, or something worse than that; and yet he *did Justice*: and in other Circumstances, with all the

Bowels of a Father melting over them, he might have been *equally just* in acquitting them. A Man may have *strict Reason* for assenting, to what he has been *taught* from his very Infancy, and where the *Truth* is greatly for *his Interest*; or otherwise who could have *Reason* to believe himself *Heir* to a Kingdom, or an Estate? A Man may, I hope, have *Reason* to believe the *Being of a God*, yet who among us was not *taught it from a Child*? or what virtuous Mind does not see, that *all its Happiness* is concerned in the Question? Who would not esteem it far worse than Death, to be brought to an Apprehension that he lives in a *fatherless World*, and that all the Resource which he thought he had found in the Guardianship of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, was but the Amusement of a pleasing Dream?

And while I am on this Topick, give me Leave to touch on that Notion, which some have entertained, of *leaving Children untaught in Religion*, that they may come *unprejudiced* to enquire into it: an *Absurdity*, surely, to be numbered among the greatest, which the adventurous *Infidelity* of the present Age has started, or its *implicit Disciples* have imbibed, in open, and perhaps boasted *Desance* of the *common Sense* of Mankind throughout all Ages, Nations, and Religions. And yet I am told, some who have continued to call themselves *Christians*, have been wild enough to admit it. With them indeed I might justly cut short farther Debate, by urging, what on their *professed Principles* must be unanswerable, the most express *Authority* both of the *Jewish* and *Christian Revelations*, strongly requiring that *Children* should be *brought up* in an early and familiar Acquaintance with them. But for the Sake of others I would observe, and would intreat every *professed Disciple of Reason* to consider, that the Notion of omitting an *Education in Religion*, to avoid *Prejudice*, is utterly inconsistent with itself. For it is certain, as the World now goes, and every *Infidel* must surely in his Conscience know it, that if the *Children of Christians* are not *taught Religion*, and trained up in the Exercises of it, they will soon learn *Vice* and *Immorality*, and then they will come to enquire into the *Evidences of Christianity* in Time, (if they ever make the Enquiry at all,) with this terrible *Prejudice* on the



Negative Side of the Question, " If *Christianity* be true, " I am in a State of Condemnation, and an Heir of " everlasting Ruin : and I must relinquish all the dearest " of my Pleasures, in Pursuit of a pretended Felicity, " which I had rather be annihilated, than confined to."

And indeed, Sir, we would gladly know, if *Children* are not to be *taught Religion*, on what Principles they are to be *taught Virtue*. The Philosophical Questions relating to the first Principles, and ultimate Obligations of *Morality*, they can as little understand as those of *Religion*: and if they are to be *taught it*, as in itself an *amiable Thing*, and a Thing which their Parents know to be *reasonable* and conducive to their *Happiness*, they may on the like Foundation be *taught*, to receive the *Gospel* as the *Word of God*, and, according to their little Abilities, to worship, and live like *Christians*.

I think I may conclude this Head with an Appeal to every Man's Conscience, Whether it would not be *best for Society* in general, that our *Children* should be *taught Christianity* in their early Years? Whether the History of a Life and Character like that of the blessed *Jesus*, be not one of the finest Lessons they can learn? And whether an Apprehension of our Obligations to him as our great *Redeemer*, who, as the Messenger and Gift of his Father's Love, taught such excellent Truths, and did and suffered so much for our *Salvation*, be not admirably calculated to touch their tender Hearts, and form them to Humility, Gratitude, and Love? I hope, Men of such lordly and towering Understandings, as our *Deists* generally are, will at least condescend to *own this* of the *Gospel*, which wise Men will reckon no small Circumstance in its Favour: and these Gentlemen must pardon me when I add, that had their own Minds been more deeply touched with it, *their Understandings* might have been more solid, in Proportion to the Degree in which their own Opinion of them had been less exalted.

But should you allow this, you may still insist, that, according to the Scheme I have proposed, our young *Christian*, in his most advanced Stage, must have very *partial* and *imperfect Views* of the Question; since I have supposed him chiefly to have heard the Advocates on one Side, and have not made the Perusal of *Infidel Writers*,

or an Attendance upon *such Catechists*, if such there be, any Part of our Method.

It is here obvious to reply, that I have advised, as young Persons grow up towards Manhood, to give them some *Hints* of the *main Objections* which are generally made to *Christianity*; or at least some View of the *chief Topicks*, from whence those *Objections* are taken. A *Christian Parent*, or *Minister*, will of Course do this in such a Manner, as to shew that there seems to him to be *very little Weight* in them, when compared with the *Evidence* in Favour of our *Religion*; and this he may do in perfect Confidence with giving a plain and honest View of the *Strength of the Objection*, which to be sure he ought to give, if he mentions it at all.

This may commonly suffice; yet I readily acknowledge, there are Circumstances, in which it may be very expedient to enter into a more *particular Detail* of *Objections* and *Answers*. This I take to be especially the Case of those, who are *educated for the Ministry*; and perhaps I might add, of *Gentlemen* intended for the Practice of *the Law*, and indeed of all whose Incomes can afford what is commonly called a *liberal Education*. The strong Temptations, to which such Persons are generally exposed, might, I think, require proportionable Antidotes; at least I am persuaded, every considerate Person will acknowledge, that it is incumbent on those who are to be the *Teachers* and *Guardians* of *Religion*, to be well acquainted with its *Proofs*; in order to which, let *such*, by all means, before they appear in a publick Character, examine the *Evidence on both Sides*. And whatever Use they may make of a *Tutor* on this Occasion, as to the Method and Order of their Studies, and whatever Confidence they may place in his Integrity and Capacities, let them not acquiesce in whatever *Abstracts* he may give them of the *Objections* which our *Adversaries* advance; but let them attentively peruse the most celebrated *Pieces*, which have been written by them; and what they are, no Man of tolerable Acquaintance with the World can be long to seek. Thus let them hear *Infidels* pleading their own Cause; at the same Time weighing, which Justice and Common Sense will require, those *Answers* which have been returned by the learned *Advocates for Chri-*

Christianity, in which our Country, above all others, has been so eminently happy.

Sad, indeed, is the Drudgery our younger Brethren must go through, in reading such Authors, as many of those who have attacked Religion; as I well know by my own painful and laborious Experience. But the Confirmation which their Faith may receive, by the very Efforts made to overthrow it, will, I hope, in many Instances, be a sufficient Reward. And as these Pieces, especially in the Hand of Second Rate Writers, contain little more than a confident and unwearied Repetition of the same Objections, which have been answered perhaps many Scores and Hundreds of Times, without taking any Notice of those Replies; (which, whether it be owing to the Learning, or Modesty of the Authors, I will not undertake to say;) one who is acquainted with these Controversies will be able to dispatch large Volumes in a little Time, and will see that many of them need no New Answers. All which will be Circumstances of some Consolation under so tedious a Task.

This, Sir, is a Method in the Education of young Ministers, which is practised, even among the Protestant Dissenters, in the midst of those many Disadvantages under which their Tutors and Students labour; in several of whose little Seminaries, to my certain Knowledge, the rational Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, with such a View of the Objections against both, are as regularly, and as methodically taught, as Logick or Geometry, or any of the other Sciences: and with what superior Advantages this important Branch of Learning is cultivated in our Two celebrated Universities, it is not for me to say, or perhaps to imagine. But as for the common People, I hope, none will be so unreasonable as to insist upon it, that they should spend their Money for that which is not Bread, or their Labour for that which will yield them so little Satisfaction, as a Course of Polemicks would in their Circumstances do. For them, the plain and practical Method I have offered above, seems abundantly sufficient. And if Objections come in their Way, which in this free Age may very probably happen, let them apply to those who may be most like to answer them, and weigh the answers seriously and impartially; at the same

same Time humbly addressing the great *Father of Lights*, to lead them into *all necessary Truth*, and to preserve them from *every dangerous Mistake*, in a Matter of such apparent Moment: and, with these Precautions, *Reason* and *Experience* concur to teach me, that their *Christian Friends* need be in no Pain for the Event. Their Enquiries, as I before observed, may be *impartial*, and their Determinations *rational*, without *knowing every Thing* that has been said, on one Side, and the other. And for them to remain still *undetermined*, from an impertinent *Suspicion*, that some Body might have something to say which they never heard, but which, if they knew it, might be an invincible *Objection to Christianity*, is a Conduct into which no one will be like to fall, who is not pretty heartily resolved to be an *Infidel* at all Adventures. For if there be any good Sense in such a Turn of Mind, it must be a Foundation of *universal Scepticism* in all the *Affairs of Life*, as well as in *Religion*; and would be full as *absurd*, as if a *Jury* should refuse to *give a Verdict* upon the *Evidence* they have already received, because it is possible there may be some absent Persons in the World, who, if they were present, might give such Information as would turn the Scale the contrary Way.

On the whole, it seems to me strictly *reasonable*, that as every Man should seriously *reflect* on the Nature, *Genius*, *Tendency*, and *Evidence*, of those *Religious Principles* in which he has been brought up; so he should continue to *adhere to them*, till he sees an *Evidence against it*, at least *equal to that* which he has for it. And I farther apprehend, that there are certain *Degrees of Evidence* attending many *Truths*, of one Kind and another, *Moral* and *Religious*, as well as *Mathematical*, in which a candid and upright Man may see Reason to *acquiesce*, without giving himself perpetual Trouble in renewing his Enquiries, as long as he lives; and concerning which he may have a *rational Apprehension*, that he shall never meet with any Thing to be urged against them, which is worthy of his Notice, unless it should be for the Sake of others, rather than for his own. Whether this be not the Case with Regard to *Christianity*, every one must judge for himself, as in the Sight of God, and

On a Review of the Information he has gained with Respect to it. Yet it is possible, that when his Judgment is thus determined in its Favour, *Objections* against it may afterwards occur to him, which tho' he does not seek, he may not be able to avoid hearing. Of these, some may be such, as he has already weighed in the Balance, and found wanting: others may immediately appear to affect only what is *circumstantial*, in the Evidence on which he has already yielded his Assent, and not what is *essential* to it; or at most, but a small Part of the Evidence, which, if it were to be given up, the main Strength of that various and complex Argument in which he before acquiesced, might remain secure; as for Instance, the Meaning of some particular *Prophecy* which he thought to refer to *Christ*, or the like. Now I apprehend, that by far the greater Part of what is commonly advanced against *Christianity*, perhaps Nineteen *Objections* in Twenty, will, to one well instructed and experienced in *Religion*, be reducible to one or other of these Heads. As for those which fall under neither of them, I doubt not, but they will soon appear to be built on some *Ignorance* or *Misrepresentation* of the Plan of *Revelation*, which will, I hope, never want pious and learned *Votaries*, capable of defending it, and of turning the Difficulties urged against it, or the Manner in which they are treated, into Occasions of adding increasing Lustre to its Proofs, and, perhaps, into Arguments in its Favour; as the World has already seen in frequent Instances.

The chief remaining *Objection* is, that, according to the Plan laid down above, we shall have our *Faith* built upon mere *Human Testimony*, which you, Sir, represent as a most *fallacious* and *uncertain Thing*, utterly unfit to be the Foundation of so important a Superstructure. It is by no means necessary here to repeat all the diminutive Things, which you are pleased to say of *Human Testimony*, without any Distinction, and with as much Severity, as if you judged of it in general, by what you may have found in some *Deistical Writings*. It all centers in depreciating its Validity; and the Reader will soon see, how far it is to be regarded, as just in itself, or as applicable to the present Occasion.

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And here I must, in the first Place, remind you, that the Article now in Question does not at all concern, or affect, the *Internal Evidence of Christianity*, which of itself alone is a very considerable Thing; especially when it is considered, how *probable* it is, that God might *favour the World* with a *Revelation*, which in its present Condition it so evidently *needs*. It is not on *Testimony* that I believe, there is such a Book as the *Bible* in the World. I see it, and read it; and that it is in the main *rightly translated*, even an *illiterate Christian* among us may be sure; because if there had been any gross *Prevarication* in this Respect, considering the *Variety of Sects* among us, *Clamours* must have arisen, which he sees in *Fact* do not arise, between the contending Parties; as I have elsewhere argued more at large\*. And therefore *all the Proofs* of the *Divine Authority* of this Book, that arise from its *Contexture, Design, Harmony, and Efficacy*, which I mentioned above, are quite *independent*, even on that *Human Testimony*, on which its *Genuineness* depends, and are built on *Sense, Observation, and Experience*.

There are indeed other, and those I confess *very material, Proofs of Christianity*, in which some considerable *Regard to Human Testimony* is absolutely necessary: but before we farther discuss these, give me Leave to ask you, Sir, Will you, or any Man of Candour and common Sense, venture to assert, that we are in no Circumstances obliged to admit the *Truth* of any *Fact* on the *Testimony* of other Men? You cannot but know, how often the contrary has been demonstrated, by all our best Writers on this Subject: nay, I think, you cannot but see, at the first Glance, the glaring *Absurdity* of such a Principle. Does not the *Course of Human Life every Day* declare, what is, and must be, the *Sense of Mankind* with *Regard to this*? Are not Things of the utmost Importance, in which not only the *Estates and Lives of particular Persons*, but the *Interests of whole Nations* are concerned, undertaken and determined on the *Credit of Testimony*? and is it not absolutely necessary, they should turn upon it? How *dishonest* then, and how *shameful*, would it be to assert, that it

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\* See *Sermons on the Power and Grace of Christ*, &c. Ser. 8.

is to be regarded in other Things of the greatest Moment, but not in those which relate to the Support of the *Gospel*.

If there be any Thing particular in *that Evidence* to which we appeal on this Occasion, which renders it *unworthy of Regard*, let our Adversaries shew it plainly. You will not, Sir, I am persuaded, think fit to assert, that *every Fact* must of Course be *given up*, which is said to have happened *almost Two thousand Years ago*; or that we can never be sure, that *Books* are *genuine*, which pretend to *such Antiquity* as that. Are all the *Classicks* of *Greece* and *Rome* spurious? Or is it to be numbered among the *Uncertainties* of *Antiquity*, whether *Cyrus* conquered *Babylon*, and whether *Julius Cæsar* was assassinated in the *Senate*? *These Facts* are of *more antient Date*, than any which are asserted in the *New Testament*: yet, are you a *Sceptick* with Regard to them? Were you as sure, that you should be possessed of all imaginable Happiness for a Million of Years, as you are of the one or other of these Things, would you entertain any afflictive *Doubt* with Regard to it? or would you risk what you were to hold by such a Tenure, for the certain Enjoyment of any Thing in mortal Life? A Man's own Heart easily answers him such Questions as these: and yet the *Testimony* in Support of *Christianity* is slighted, tho' it is most easy to shew, that it is far superior to *that* by which we are informed of *Cyrus's Conquests*, or of *Cæsar's Death*.

The only remaining Question therefore on this Head, is not concerning the *Learned*, but *common Christians*, and the *rational Satisfaction* which *they* are capable of receiving, with Regard to *those Facts*, on which the *External Evidence of Christianity* depend. And here I doubt not, but they may receive *competent Satisfaction*; that is, they may see much greater *Reason to believe them*, than they can possibly have *to reject them*; which is all the Matter requires.

To evince this, let us consider, what *those Facts* are, on which their *Reasonings* with Respect to the *External Evidence* depend; for that is properly the precise Question. And they are chiefly these:—That there was such a Person as *Jesus Christ*,—who founded a *Religion*,

gion,—which was received by *Multitudes of People* quickly after his Death, (*i. e.* about 1700 Years ago;)—many of which Converts testified their firm Persuasion of its Truth by *enduring great Extremities* in its Defence:—that among these *antient Christians* there were such Persons as the *Evangelists* and *Apostles*,—who wrote the chief *Books* of the *New Testament*;—which *Books* are in the main *transmitted* safely and faithfully down to us:—as also, that when *Christ* and his *Apostles* lived, the *Jews* did subsist as a People,—and had in their Hands *Books* which they accounted *Sacred*,—in the main *the same* with those, which we now call the *Old Testament*.

These, Sir, are the *grand Facts*, which we prove by *Testimony*, and with which we connect our *Reasoning* in Favour of the *Gospel*. What the *Testimony* is by which we confirm these Facts, and what the *Connection* by which we infer *Christianity* from them, I (among many others,) have elsewhere shewn at large; and I have too much other Business, and too much with you in particular before me, to swell this Letter by so unnecessary a Repetition.

Now with Regard to *common Christians*, of whose *attainable Satisfaction* we are treating, I readily own, they cannot be fully Masters of *that Evidence*, which Learned Men may receive of these Facts, by consulting the *Original Writers*: yet they are certainly capable of *knowing something* of considerable Importance even *on this Head*, where their Disadvantages must be acknowledged the greatest of all. Every plain Reader sees many *antient Authors* quoted, as testifying such and such Things, and perhaps sees at the Bottom of the Page, *Characters* or *Words* which he cannot understand; but he reads the supposed Sense of them in *English*, and is told, if the Book be properly written, about *what Time* the Author produced is said to have lived. Now it can never enter into his Heart to imagine, that in an enlightened Age, *Christian Divines*, publishing their Names with their Works, or if they do not, seeming *zealous for Christianity*, would have so little Regard to themselves, or their Cause, as to pretend to quote such Passages, unless the *Books* from whence they were taken were certainly *extant*; and the Passages to be found there, containing the  
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Sense which they give them. The Matter does not by any means rest upon our *personal Integrity*; (tho' I hope, in reporting a Fact, some Regard might be paid to *that* :) were the *Defenders of Christianity* ever so *dishonest*, it cannot be imagined they would obtrude such *palpable Falsehoods* on the World, while so liable to be *contradicted*, and *shamed*, by those who *disbelieve the Gospel*, and make it the great, tho' wretched Business of their Lives, to oppose it to the utmost of their Power, and to revile its *Preachers and Defenders*. But are these *Assertions of ours*, as to the Passages in Question, *contradicted*? Where is the *Deist* who will dare to say, that *Christianity* is not an *antient Religion*; that it did not *arise and spread* about the *Time* I have mentioned; or that its *Professors* did not *early suffer* in its Defence? Where is the Man who will venture to assert, that the most material *Books of the New Testament* were not *early received by Christians*; or that the *Authors* in which we assert, that we find *Quotations* from them, and *References* to them, did not really *live* in the *Ages and Places* we assert? Our *Books* are open; and the *Facts and Testimonies*, on which we build our Reasonings, are liable to be *examined* with all possible Freedom, by our *Enemies*, as well as our *Friends*. If we have Recourse to any *Pious Frauds*, (as they are scandalously called,) let those *Frauds* be detected; and, in the Name of the *God of Truth*, let them be hissed out of the World, with a just Abhorrence. But the contrary is so plain, that there is not an *Infidel* in our Land, that will presume to *oppose the Evidence* of these Things, and to *set his Name* to such an Attempt: nay, either some Remains of Modesty, or a Consciousness of the Hurt which their Cause would receive from so shameless a Defence, prevents even *anonymous Authors* from attacking us here. The Controversy is concerning the *Consequences* drawn from these *acknowledged Facts*; (that *Christianity* was an *antient Religion*, and the *New Testament* *early received*, &c.) Now of these *Consequences* the *common People* are themselves *Judges*, on Principles laid down above; and they do not admit them, because we, or any others, assert them to follow.

And here, Sir, I cannot forbear admiring the Wisdom of *Divine Providence*, in permitting such perverse *Opposition*

sition to the Gospel to arise, and continue; since even its avowed *Enemies*, by the Nature and Manner of their Attack, serve but more assuredly to confirm the Faith of impartial and intelligent Enquirers, and give an *Authority* and *Evidence* to what the *Teachers of Christianity* assert, in some measure beyond what it could otherwise have had. Just as another Kind of *Infidels*, I mean the *Jews*, are also *Vouchers* for the Antiquity and Authority of the *Old Testament*, on which so many of our Arguments depend; and those Arguments of such Validity, that as Mr. Addison well concluded, many who now dispute against the Application of its *Prophecies* to *Christ*, would, no doubt, have concluded them a *Christian Forgery*, and have argued that Conclusion from the Perspicuity of those *Prophecies*, had not *Providence* laid in so incontestable a Proof to the contrary. *The Wrath of Man, Oh Lord, shall praise thee; and the Remainder of that Wrath shalt thou restrain.* I must on the same Principle congratulate the Happiness of our own Country, in which such *Liberty* is allowed, of proposing whatever can be said against *Christianity*; in Consequence of which our *modern Infidels* are deprived of that shrewd Pretence, which perhaps might be more serviceable to them than all the rest of their Weapons, that they could say something convincing against it, if *penal Laws* did not deter them.

I hope, Sir, these Things will evince, that the common People may have some considerable Degrees of *Evidence* for those *Faëts*, on which the *External Proofs* of *Christianity* are built, tho' they are not capable of consulting the *Original Records* from whence they are taken. But I must not dismiss the Subject, till I have considered an *Objection*, which equally concerns the most learned *Christian*: I mean, that none of the most *rational Arguments*, in their clearest and strongest View, can give the *Mind Satisfaction*;—or at least can produce such a *Degree of Persuasion*, as should animate us to subdue our *Passions*,—or to endure those *Extremities* in Defence of our *Religion*, which we may possibly meet with, and which it indispensably requires us to bear.

You make these *Three distinct Topicks*; but the former is so evidently included in the *Two latter*, that all I shall say

say to it at present is, that every Man who will reflect on his own Mind, must find, that there are *Degrees of rational Proof* in which he acquiesces with *entire Satisfaction*. Many *Christians* testify this to be the Case, with Regard to the *Arguments in Favour of Christianity*, of which great Number I must declare myself one; and any one who finds himself *dissatisfied*, will do well to give *his Reasons* for that Dissatisfaction, without making his own Case a Standard, by which to pronounce on that of every one else. You argue, as if there were *no Medium* between an *implicit Faith*, and perpetual *Scepticism*; but the Conclusion is very hastily drawn. You, Sir, may perhaps have *known some*, who have gradually quitted *all religious Principles*, when they had begun to *examine any*; I, on the contrary, have *known many*, who have professed themselves to have been greatly *confirmed in Christianity* by such *Examination*: they have found *its Evidences*, like *Gold*, approved by the severest Trials; and it is to me utterly unimaginable, how a *rational Believer* should be *incapable* of finding *Complacency and Satisfaction of Mind*, in having used his *rational Faculties* on so important an Occasion.

Waving therefore all farther Debate upon this, I shall proceed to what you add under the Two remaining Parts of this Argument; (*pag. 30,—35.*) in which you undertake to shew, that “no Conviction drawn from Reasoning can ever have *Force enough to command our Passions*, so as on common Emergencies” (they are your own extraordinary Words) “to *make a good Christian*,—much less will it serve to *produce a faithful Martyr*, if ever so severe an Exercise be demanded at our Hands.” You employ a great deal of *Rhetorick* on this Subject, in the *Pages* referred to above: but I am sorry to say, that, so far as I can judge, it amounts only to this, “That you apprehend something so extremely *desirable* in the *Indulgences* which *Christianity* prohibits, and something so *terrible* in *Death*, in whatever View and Cause it is to be encountered, that *no rational Argument* imaginable can *induce a Man* to give up the one, and expose himself to the other.”

And is it possible, Sir, that *Sensual Pleasure*, and *Mortal Life* purchased at the Expence of Honour, Gratitude, and Conscience, can indeed appear *so exceeding valuable*? I would not wrong your *moral Character* so much, as to suppose, that you *seriously* meant this, and will abide by it; and yet it is difficult to imagine, how it could be written otherwise than *seriously*, without bearing hard on another Part of *moral Character* too. But I will leave it among the other *Mysteries* of your Book, and content myself with hinting at *those Reasons*, for which the Matter appears to me in a quite contrary View; as I am persuaded, it would have done to *Socrates*, *Seneca*, or *Epictetus*, had they considered it only in *Theory*.

No Paradox in Human Nature appears to me so strange, as that a Man, who in his Conscience *believes*, that the *Arguments in Favour of Christianity* are unanswerably strong, should deliberately allow himself in the *Violation of its Precepts*; or should, by any Temporal Considerations whatsoever, be induced to *renounce it*. All the Pleas of Duty, Gratitude, and Interest, are so weighty, in Favour of a constant and resolute Subjection to it, that one could hardly imagine, did not Fact demonstrate the contrary, that *any Temptation* of Allurement, or of Terror, should, with a *rational Creature*, who believed the *Gospel*, triumph over them.

Nor is a Life of *Christian Obedience* that *violent and constrained Thing*, which you seem to suppose. Were I to judge by these *Pages* alone, I should imagine you had never read the *New Testament*, and did not know how the *Views of a Christian* are animated and raised. Oh Sir, the *rational Believer* is in his Heart and Conscience *persuaded*, that, to all the Bounties of his *common Providence*, God has added the Riches of *Redeeming Love*. He is fully persuaded, that the *Son of God* descended from Heaven, to deliver him from everlasting Ruin; that he has generously *purchased him* with the Price of *his own Blood*; and that (if he be conscious of a true Faith in him,) *Christ* has taken him *as his peculiar Property* under his guardian Care, with a gracious Purpose of conducting him safely thro' Life and Death, of receiving his nobler Part in a very little Time into the

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Abode of holy and happy Spirits, and at length of raising his Body from the Dust, and fixing his compleat Person in a State of immortal Glory and Felicity. Now when this is *really believed*, and the Conviction is firm and lively, (which I hope a *rational Conviction* may very possibly be,) what can be a more *natural Effect*, than that an ardent *Love to God our Father*, and to the *Lord Jesus Christ*, should be excited by it? And it is easy to imagine, that *this Love* must make *Obedience* easy: and when the Mind is taken up with such *sublime and delightful Views*, and those *devotional Exercises* which it is so natural to ingraft upon them, it will not be so hard a Matter as many seem to imagine, to conquer the irregular Propensities of animal Nature, or the *Exorbitancies of Passion*, where only the little Enjoyments and Interests of this transitory Life are concerned. Or rather, many of *those Exorbitancies* will be *superseded*, or, as the *Apostle* justly and finely expresses it, *crucified by the Cross of Christ*; and the Affections without any painful Struggle will generally flow on in an orderly and pleasant Channel.

And where this is the Temper and Character, *Martyrdom* may not appear *so dreadful a Thing*, as you, Sir, have taken Pains to represent it. It may rather be the habitual Judgment of such a *Christian*, that it is to be esteemed an *Honour and Favour*, which our great *Lord* bestows on some of his most beloved Servants. To be excused from the melancholy Circumstances attending *Death* in its Natural Form; to have an Opportunity of turning the common Lot of Mortality into an Occasion of manifesting Heroick Gratitude and Fidelity to the best of Masters and of Friends; *to die* with those warm Sentiments and elevated Views which such a Condition so naturally tends to excite and suggest, would not surely be, as you seem to insinuate, *the Death of a Fool*; (which I cannot think even that of *Socrates* to have been:) surely, Sir, on Second Thoughts you must rather judge it a Consummation of the Labours, Cares, and Sorrows inseparable from Human Life, to be devoutly *wished for*, rather than *dreaded*. I will on the other Hand grant, that hellish Acts of *Cruelty* may be  
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invented and practised, under which the *Resolution* of an Upright Mind may faint, and even *Reason* itself be overborne, unless God were pleased to interpose by *extraordinary Supports*, which there is great Encouragement to hope he would in such a Case do: but while *Reason* remains undisturbed, I should imagine, that *Death* in its most horrible Form, when met in the Cause of such a *Saviour* who had so graciously borne it for us, should appear *more desirable* than *Life* in its most agreeable Circumstances; and surely then, infinitely more desirable than *Life* purchased by base Ingratitude to him, and worn out under the Sense of his just Displeasure, and the sad Prospect of being finally disowned by him, as an *Apostate* and a *Traitor*.

This, I think, to be solid *Reason*; and I bless God, there are numberless *Facts* which confirm it, and shew, that Persons not pretending to any such *immediate Revelation* as you assert to be necessary, have conquered the greatest Difficulties on these Principles, and, after having *adorned the Gospel* by a most exemplary and holy *Life*, have steadily and cheerfully *sealed it* with their *Blood*. And every Fact of this Kind is so unanswerable an Argument against all that you alledge here, that I do not judge it necessary to pursue this Part of my Reply any farther.

With this therefore I conclude what I had to offer in Vindication of the *Perspicuity* and *Solidity* of those *Arguments in Proof of Christianity*, to which the *Generality of its Professors* among us may attain: and I hope it will be allowed, that I have fairly and candidly, as well as seriously, considered what you *object against it*, and so have answered the *First Part* of your Pamphlet, which I take to be by far the most plausible and dangerous.

Your Endeavour to prove, that *Christianity* itself avows, that it is *not built upon Argument*, but on a *Revelation* to be *immediately made from the Spirit of God* to every *Christian*, by which *all Argument* is superseded, and *all Possibility of Doubt and Error* excluded, is such a direct *Contradiction* to the whole Tenour of the *New Testament*, that I hardly think you would be understood *seriously to mean it*. It is sufficient, that you have shewn,  
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you have Wit enough to give a Varnish to so wild a Notion. Yet lest any should be so weak, as to imagine there is any *Solidity* in what you have so adventurously advanced on that Head, I am willing plainly to discuss it with you; and at the same Time to enquire into what you say, with Regard to the *Awful Sentence* which the *Gospel* passes on those who *reject it*: a Circumstance, which you every where represent as utterly *irreconcilable* with a *Religion* to be *rationally proved* and *defended*; but which, on the contrary, appears to me *most wisely adapted* to the rest of the *Scheme*, and, when compared with it, an *Addition* rather than *Abatement* of its *Internal Evidence*. This, and several other Particulars in yours, I should be glad to examine; but I wave it at present, because this Letter is already swelled to a pretty large Size. I therefore reserve what I have farther to say to another Opportunity, and I hope a few Weeks more may afford it. But I chuse to send you what I have already written, without any farther Delay; because I am conscious of the many Hindrances, which, in a Life like mine, oblige me often to postpone, much longer than I intended, the Execution of Attempts to do what little I can towards serving the World, by promoting the *Interest of Christianity* in it; and because I really think your Piece has been already too long unanswered. If you please to offer any Thing in Reply to what I have here proposed, I shall give it a serious Consideration: and hope that I shall, in the whole Course of this Controversy, endeavour to write like a *Christian*, and then I shall not forget any other Character which I could wish to maintain. At present, Sir, I conclude with assuring you, that it is with sensible Regret I have found myself obliged, for the *Honour of the Gospel*, and the *Preservation of Mens Souls*, to animadvert on what you have writ, in the Manner I have already done. Should you prove, which may possibly be the Case, some *old Acquaintance* and *Friend*, I hope I have writ nothing which should make me blush at any Interview with you; and should you, as I rather apprehend,

hend, be an *entire Stranger*, I am, on the common Principles of *that Faith*, which it is the great Glory of my Life to profess and defend, with sincere good Wishes for your Temporal and Eternal Happiness, in any Thing which may conduce to either,

S I R,

*Your obedient humble Servant,*

Northampton,  
Nov. 5, 1742.

P. DODDRIDGE.







TO THE  
 AUTHOR of a late Pamphlet,  
 INTITLED,  
 CHRISTIANITY not founded on  
 ARGUMENT, &c.  
 LETTER II.

S I R,

**T**HOUGH my former Letter considered what I thought *most essential* in your late Treatise, yet there are several other Things in it, which, however designed, have so plain a Tendency to *expose Christianity to Suspicion*, and even to *Contempt*, that on the Principles which led me to animadvert upon it before, I find myself obliged to give you this second Trouble.

I proceed therefore, without any farther Ceremony, to consider the Pains you have taken, under the *Second General Head* of your Tract, to represent the *Gospel* as pleading guilty to the Charge of *not being founded on Argument*; or, in other Words, *not being generally capable of such rational Proof*, as its Disciples may be able to receive.

You would seem indeed, if one may judge by your Manner of introducing this Topick, to think this is doing great Kindness to the *New Testament*, as it delivers it from the *Absurdity* of saying, "Judge, whether you have Time, or not:—Judge, whether you are Judges,

“ or not:—Judge all for yourselves, and yet judge all alike.” (Pag. 35.) But I hope, Sir, before I have finished my Letter, to shew, that *all*, whom we can suppose to be concerned in any Demand of *judging*, i. e. all Persons of common Understanding, to whom the *Gospel* is, or has been, faithfully and intelligently preached, can have no just *Pica* from the Want of Time, or Capacity, and must, on the Supposition of an honest and diligent Enquiry, *all judge alike*, i. e. all agree in receiving it as a *Divine Revelation*.

To illustrate and confirm the View you have given of the Matter, you undertake to shew,—that *Christ* did not propose his Doctrines to *Examination*; (pag. 36,—38.)—that *his Apostles* had neither *Leisure*, nor *Qualifications*, for such a Method, i. e. for the Use of *Reasoning* and *Argument* in the Propagation of the *Gospel*; (pag. 38,—40.)—and that the very *Supposition* of such a Proceeding is evidently *preposterous* from the Nature of the Thing. (Pag. 41,—46.) In Opposition to all which, it is one of the easiest Tasks one can imagine, to shew,—that *Christ* did propose the great Doctrines he taught to *Examination*;—that the *Apostles* did the same, urging (as their Blessed Master had done,) most cogent *Arguments* in the Proof of them;—and that any other Method of Proceeding had been *preposterous*, and must necessarily have exposed the *Gospel* to the Contempt of all reasonable People. It seems hard, indeed, to be put upon proving Things so conspicuous as these; and it cannot but be some *Trial of Temper* to one who honours and loves the *Gospel*, to see it, and its glorious Founders, placed in so *ridiculous a View*, as that in which your Assertions and Arguments represent them; that is, described as *wild Enthusiasts*, running all over the World, at the Expence of their own Lives, to urge Men on Pain of Damnation to receive a *Religion*, for which they did not pretend to give them any *Reason*. But out of Respect both to you, and the Cause in which I am engaged, I will keep myself as calm as I can. And if some following Pages seem to my Reader *unnecessary*, I must beg him to *distinguish* between what was needful to *inform him*, and what was requisite to *confute you*.

But before I proceed to hint at the *Evident Proof* of the *Three Propositions*, which in Opposition to yours I have laid down above, I beg Leave to *promise*, that all you say on this Subject seems to me *founded* on an Artful and Sophistical *Shifting the Question*. The grand Matter in Debate is, whether *Christianity* is *founded on rational Argument*; or whether the *only Cause*, which a Professor of the *Gospel* can generally have to give for his Belief of it, must be, that God has immediately *revealed it* to him by *his Spirit*, and testified the Truth of it to him in a Manner, which as, on the one Hand, he cannot suspect, so on the other, he cannot communicate or explain? Instead of discussing *this Question*, you put off the Reader with *another* very different, (*pag. 36.*) Whether *Christ* and his *Apostles* submitted *their Doctrine* to Examination? which is a very *ambiguous* Manner of speaking: and when you assert *that they did not*, I must beg Leave to ask, what you mean by *their Doctrine*? Do you mean *this general Doctrine*, that they were *Teachers sent from God*? Or do you mean those *particular Doctrines*, which in Consequence of that general Assertion they *proceeded to teach*? If you mean the *former*, it is indeed to your Purpose; but, as I shall presently show, is a Proposition entirely and notoriously *false*. But if you mean the *latter*, which the Course of your Arguments seems to imply, then it is quite *foreign* to your Purpose: for *Christianity* may be *founded on rational Argument*, tho' the *first Teachers* of it, when they had *proved their Mission*, should have put the *Credit of particular Doctrines* on their own *authorized Testimony* alone, without discussing the several Branches of their System, in such a Manner as it would have been necessary they should have done, had they proposed it only as a *Theory*, destitute of *External Proofs*.

Now that our *Lord Jesus Christ* did not expect, that it should be believed *merely on his own Testimony*, that he was a *Teacher sent from God*, and one *whose Doctrine* was consequently *true and divine*, but set himself to *prove it*, is so evident from the *History of the Evangelists*, that I believe few Readers need so much as to be reminded of particular Passages on this Head. No Words can be more express than those, in which he has dis-

disclaimed this. *If (says he,) I bear Testimony of my self alone, my Testimony is not true or valid; but my Father who hath sent me, he beareth Testimony to me\**. And you well know, that he illustrated and argued this *Testimony of the Father*, partly from the *Predictions* of those *Sacred Writings* which they acknowledged to be the *Word of God*, in which *Jesus* declared he was described and foretold; and partly from the *Attestation of John*, whom they generally acknowledged to be a divinely inspired *Prophet*; but principally, from a yet more sensible *Argument* than either, *the Works which the Father had given him to perform*, and which (said he,) *bear Witness of me*†. And all these he represents as illustrated by the excellent *Design and Tendency of his Preaching*, to which he plainly refers, when he says, *The Word which I have spoken, shall judge the Unbeliever another Day*‡.

These were various and cogent *Arguments*; some of them so very plain, that one single *Day, or Hour*, might make a *Man Master of them*: I mean, that arising from his *miraculous Powers*, and the *Tendency of his Doctrine* to promote real *Goodness*. The *Argument from John's Testimony* was, even by the *Confession of his Enemies*, known to all the *Nation*; and as for *that from Prophecy*, he submitted it to their candid and deliberate *Examination*, urging them to *search the Scriptures*, and assuring them that if they did so, they would there find a *convincing Testimony concerning him*||, which was to shine with growing *Evidence*. And on the whole, he *expostulates* with them, in *Language* utterly irreconcilable with your *Scheme*; *And why even of yourselves*, from plain *Appearances*, and without farther *Explications* and *Remonstrances* from me, *judge you not that which is right?* pleading that *the Signs of the Times*, marking them out to be those of the *Messiah*, were as discernable as any of those *Prognostications of the Weather*, which all the *World* had observed, and formed into common *Proverbs*††. So that, in *Consequence* of all, *their continued Unbelief*, in the midst of so many united

\* John v. 31, 37.

† John v. 36.

‡ John xii. 48.

|| John v. 39.

†† Luke xii. 56, 57. and Matt. xvi. 2, 3.

united Testimonies and palpable Proofs, was not only an irrational and criminal, but a most inexcusable Thing. If I had not (says he,) come and spoken unto them, and done among them the Works which no other Man did, tho' their Disobedience to the Law of God had been justly punishable, yet, in Comparison of their present Case, they had not had Sin; but now, they have no Cloak for their Sin\*. Could they have pleaded, as you, Sir, it seems would have taught them to do, "We never had any Reason offered to bring us to believe;" I suppose, it would have been no despicable Cloak for their Infidelity. I cannot forbear saying, that it is a grievous Outrage upon the Character of our blessed Redeemer, to suppose him capable of talking in so wild, so false, and so inconsistent a Manner, as this wretched Hypothesis would imply. I should have too great a Respect for the Memory of Socrates, to advance, or admit, any Thing so injurious to it.

That the *Ap-stles* also reasoned in the Defence of their Mission, is just as certain, as that they preached and wrote; and indeed the *Fifth Book* of the *New Testament* is almost as much the *History* of their Reasonings, as of their *Acts*. The *Second Chapter* contains an Account of their Reasoning at *Jerusalem*, from the *Fact* of the miraculous *Descent of the Holy Ghost* upon them, in Comparison with the *Predictions* of the *Old Testament*, both with Respect to *that*, and to the *Resurrection of Jesus*; from whence they strongly infer, that *all the House of Israel* might know assuredly, that *God had made that same Jesus whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ* †. The *Third, Fourth, and Fifth Chapters* relate their Reasonings before the *People* and the *Sanhedrim*, from the *Cure of the Lame Man in the Temple*, as wrought in the *Name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified* †. And it would be tedious, rather than necessary, to continue the Enumeration of particular Passages, in which we read of *Paul's Reasoning* in Confirmation of these great Points; as we are told he did at *Damascus* †, at *Jerusalem* ††, at

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\* John xv. 22, 24.  
12,—16. iv. 10.

† Acts ii. 36.

‖ Acts iii.

‡ Acts ix. 22.

†† Acts ix. 28, 29.

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*Antioch in Pisidia\**, and particularly at *Theſſalonica*,  
 where then his *Reasoning with the Jews out of the Scrip-  
 tures for three ſucceſſive Sabbaths* is ſpoken of, it is ſaid  
 to have been *as his Manner was* †. You cannot but  
 know, that as he continued this Practice at *Beræa*, the  
 Inhabitants of that Place are greatly *commended*, for ex-  
 amining the Force of his Arguments, and *ſearching the  
 Scriptures daily, whether thoſe Things were ſo* ††. His *Rea-  
 ſoning with the Philoſophers at Athens* ‡, from Natural  
 Principles, to demonſtrate the *Absurdity of Image Worſhip*,  
 is ſo concluſive and ſo noble, that I cannot ſuppoſe it to  
 have eſcaped your Notice or Memory. I am ſorry to be  
 under a Neceſſity of reminding you, that at *Corinth*,  
 where he continued for a Year and a Half, he *reaſoned in  
 the Synagogue every Sabbath* ††, at leaſt for a conſiderable  
 Part of that Time; that at *Ephesus*, he *preached in the  
 Synagogue, for the Space of three Months, diſputing and per-  
 ſuading the Things concerning the Kingdom of God* †††; and  
 after this, having *ſeparated the Diſciples*, he *diſputed daily  
 in the School of one Tyrannus*, continuing this Practice for  
 the Space of *two Years* †††; that he made his Defence with  
 great Preſence of Mind, before the *Jews at Jeruſalem* ††; that  
 he *reaſoned with Felix of Righteouſneſs, Temperance,  
 and Judgment to come*, in ſuch a Manner that he made him  
*tremble* ††, and *pleaded with ſuch Strength of Argument  
 before Agrippa*, that he *almost perſuaded him to be a Chri-  
 ſtian* ††. And the *Hiſtory* cloſes with an Account of his  
*appointing a Day to the Jews at Rome*, in which they at-  
 tended him at his Lodging, and he *expounded and teſtified  
 the Kingdom of God, perſuading them concerning Jeſus, both  
 out of the Law, and out of the Prophets, from Morning till  
 Evening* ††. What the Force and Validity of theſe *Rea-  
 ſonings* was, is not at all the Queſtion between us: it is  
 ſufficient, that the Paſſages referred to demonſtrate, that  
*Reasonings* were uſed, and *Objections* heard, directly con-  
 trary to what you, Sir, have been pleaſed to aſſert,  
 ( pag.

\* Acts xiii. 16,—41. † Acts xvii. 2, 3. †† Acts xvii. 11. ††† Acts xviii. 4, 11. †††† Acts xix. 8. ††††† Acts xiv. 9, 10. †††††† Acts xxii. 1,—21. ††††††† Acts xxiv. 25. †††††††† Acts xxvi. 2,—23. ††††††††† Acts xxviii. 23.

(pag. 39.) with as much Confidence, as if you had never read these Passages, or never expected that what you have written should be compared with the *Records* to which you appeal.

It is equally easy to shew, that the *Apostles* reason in their *Epistles*; and with what Force, many valuable *Commentators* have shewn at large. But as it would be out of my Way to consider those *Reasonings* now, I content myself with mentioning one Passage, as a *Specimen* of many more: *I speak as unto Wise Men, judge ye what I say* \*. A Text, in which there seems to be a *Spring*, that will not easily bend to your Interpretation. But the whole *New Testament* is so full of *Reasonings*, that it is quite superfluous to enumerate Particulars.

Now when these Things are thus evident in Fact, it signifies little to say, that the *Apostles* had not *Time*, or *Qualifications*, to maintain an Argument; and that *in the Nature of Things* it would have been *preposterous* for them to have attempted it. If what you say on *these Topicks* (pag. 38,—45.) were conclusive, when compared with what I have produced above, the *Conclusion* would be something very *different* from what you professedly labour to establish:—it would shew, that the *Apostles* acted in an *irrational and preposterous Manner*. But I am in no Pain for *their Reputation* on this Head, in Consequence of any Thing which you have asserted; for all your *Reasonings* are built on a *Forgefulness*, or *Misrepresentation*, of those *Topicks of Argument*, on which the *Apostles* laid the great *Stress* of their Cause.

It is very true, that many curious and subtle Questions in *Pneumatology*, *Metaphysics*, and *Ethicks*, might have been connected with some Articles which the *Apostles* taught; and a whole Life might have been spent in canvassing all that a disputatious *Caviller* might have objected. It was indeed beneath the Dignity of an *Apostle's Character*, and inconsistent with his important *Work*, to *unravel* all these *Cobwebs*, Thread by Thread. Yet God was pleased to furnish them with the *proper and rational Means* of *sweeping them away*, as it were, at once. *Inspiration* could, no doubt, have

\* 1 Cor. x. 15.

furnished them for a minute Discussion of every artful *Sophism*, and have taught them to range *Metaphysical Arguments* with an Accuracy far exceeding that of *Aristotle*: but the Generality of Mankind was not capable of entering into such *Curiosities*; and therefore it was an Instance of great Wisdom and Goodness in the great Author of our Religion, to furnish them with a much nobler Kind of *Arguments*, equally convincing to all candid and upright Minds, which might soon be set in a very strong and easy Light. And accordingly they insisted upon *these*.—They asserted, that *God*, having sent *Christ* into the World to be a Divine Teacher, raised him from the Dead, after he had been cruelly slain by wicked and incorrigible Men; that, quickly after this, he received him into Heaven, from whence he had sent down upon them an extraordinary *Divine Influence*, to instruct them in the Truth, and to enable them to preach it to the World in a very convincing Manner: in Consequence of which, Men were no longer under the Necessity of investigating *Divine Truths* by the slow Progress of *Philosophical Argumentation*; but were to come, with humble Simplicity of Soul, to hear and receive what *God* by them taught concerning himself, and his Son, and the Way of obtaining final and eternal Happiness.—They never expected, that so important and comprehensive an Assertion should be taken on the Credit of their own Word: but to shew, that *God* was indeed with them, and that he himself taught Mankind by them, they wrought such Miracles as sensibly demonstrated his extraordinary Presence and Agency.—And that this might appear a Scheme, long since formed in the Divine Mind, and intimated to Men long before it opened upon them, they produced Passages in the *Antient and Sacred Books* of the *Jews*, in which their *Prophets* had plainly described *this Jesus* as the *Messiah*, and marked out various Particulars, which had an evident Accomplishment in him; waving many other Predictions, which could not so easily be ascertained and illustrated at that Time, tho' future Ages and Occurrences have made them very considerable to us.—The *Apostles* also urged, or frequently referred to, the excellent Tendency of their Doctrine to promote real Virtue and Goodness in the World, and



the happy *Influence* it had on those who sincerely entertained it, which made the *Acceptance* or *Rejection* of it a *Test of Characters*; as they often intimate, and sometimes expressly assert, that it was \*. And from all these Things, which were plain and evident, they most rationally inferred the *Obligation*, which their Hearers were under, to *submit themselves* to those *Doctrines, Laws, and Institutions of Christ*, which they as his authorized Messengers brought them, and to *adhere to his Cause* whatever it might cost them. And all this they confirmed by *communicating* to great Numbers of their *new Converts* different *Gifts and Operations of the Holy Ghost*, that produced sensible Effects; which might also tend to *convince others*, that the Doctrine they had received was Supernatural and Divine.

These Particulars constituted, what one may call the *Apostolick Demonstration*; and they allowed their Hearers a *competent Time to examine it*. It is true indeed, the *Time and Labour* of these holy Men were of too great Importance, to permit them to make a *long Stay* in Places, where the Inhabitants would not so much as receive them, nor give them an Hearing, nor would the *mild and peaceful Genius* of their Religion allow them to endeavour, even by *Miracle*, to *force their Continuance* in any Place, from which the *Magistrates and People* joined to *expel them*. In Cases of this Nature alone, they were directed to quit them, with that striking Circumstance, which you so much misrepresent, of *shaking off the Dust of their Feet*; in Token of their looking on such *Despisers* as devoted to certain Destruction. But yet in other Places, where any of their Hearers desired *their Stay*, and the *Rulers* permitted it, they *abode a while* with them; and if we may judge of the Conduct of others by that of the *Apostle Paul*, who seems one of the most active

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\* Compare Rom. i. 16,—18. vi. 17,—22. viii. 2, 4. xii. 2. 1 Cor. vi. 9,—11. 2 Cor. iii. 1, 2. iv. 2, 3. Gal. v. 18,—24. Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12. iv. 17,—24. v. 6,—14. Phil. ii. 15, 16. Col. i. 4, 5, 6, 9,—13, 21, 22. iii. 4,—10. 1 Thess. ii. 1,—10. v. 5,—8. 2 Thess. i. 3,—10. 1 Tim. i. 5. Tit. ii. 9,—14. 1 Pet. i. 14,—22. iv. 2,—6. 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. 1 John i. 5, 6, 7. ii. 4, 5, 29. iii. 6,—10. iv. 5, 6, 12. v. 1,—5, 19. 2 John 1, 2, 6.

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and itinerant of them all, *that Stay* sometimes extended to *Months*, and sometimes to *Years*. During this Time they were, so far as we can learn by the *New Testament*, willing to *dispute publickly* with all Opposers, and to *answer any Objections* which could be urged against the Truth of their Doctrine, and the Authority of their Mission, whether by *Jews* or *Gentiles*. And if, which we have no Reason to imagine a common Case, they sometimes *cut short the Debate*, by inflicting on perverse Opponents *miraculous Judgments*, those Punishments carried a *rational Conviction* of the Authority of the *Apostles*: but I recollect no Instance of a *Miracle of this Kind* on such an Occasion, but that of *Elymas the Jewish Sorcerer*\*, who probably *opposed the Gospel*, either by *lying Wonders*, or by *Misrepresentations* of the *Old Testament*, of which a *Roman Governor* could not easily judge: on either of which Suppositions, there would be a remarkable Propriety in this extraordinary Step; in which Instance, by the Way, great Gentleness was intermixed with the apparent Severity, as it was only *for a Season* he was *deprived of his Sight*.

If in Cases, and with Proofs like these, *Thousands* were converted *at a single Lecture*, as you express it, it is certainly to be ascribed to the *Validity of their Arguments*, in Concurrence with the *Operation of God's Spirit*, to subdue their Prejudices, and make them willing cordially to embrace, and courageously to confess the *Truth*; of which, many who did not profess it, were no doubt in their Consciences inwardly convinced. Yet I cannot think after all, that its Success on the *Day of Pentecost*, where so many peculiar Circumstances occurred, is to be looked upon as a Specimen of the *Rapidity* with which it *commonly* prevailed.

This, Sir, appears to me a *just Representation* of the Case: *that* which you have been pleased to make, in the *Pages* last referred to, is very different; and I apprehend, it will be easy to shew, there are *two material Errors* which attend it. It supposes the Case to be determined *much more difficult* than it really was, and the *Affent* universally required *much more immediate*. And as these *two palpable Fallacies* run thro' several other Passages

\* Acts xiii, 6,—11.

sages of your Book, I must take the Liberty to examine them a little more particularly.

You represent the *Question* concerning the *Truth of Christianity*, as taught by the *Apostles*, to have been *much more difficult* than it really was. “*Eternal Relations, moral Differences of Things, and a precise Delimitation of the Religion of Nature and its Obligations, were all*” not only material, but, (as you say in pag. 42.) “*indispensable Articles to be treated of in the Way, and inculcated as the Foundation of such a Superstructure.*” Now here I would *first* observe, that so far as the *Jews* were concerned in this Matter, a great Part of these *preliminary Controversies* was quite superseded. They already believed, that there was *One God*, the supreme Lord of all, whose *Law* required *universal Virtue*, and had denounced an awful *Curse* against every Instance of wilful and presumptuous *Disobedience*: they likewise believed, that in various preceding Ages *this God* had raised up *Prophets*, with *miraculous Powers*, first to introduce, and afterwards to confirm, the *Religion* which they professed: and they were also fully persuaded, that the *Messiah* was to appear, about that Time, to establish the Cause of *God* and of *Righteousness* in the World. To such the *Apostles* presented themselves, as *Messengers* from the *God of their Fathers*; turned them to Passages of their own *Sacred Books*, in which the *Sufferings* as well as the *Triumphs* of the *Messiah* were evidently *foretold*; and shewed them, by the Account they gave of *Christ*, confirmed by the *Miracles* which they wrought in his Name, that they must submit to his Authority, on the very same Principles on which *that of Moses* was acknowledged by them; and that they must *bearken to him*, or, according to the Testimony of *Moses* himself, must expect *to be cut off from among the People*.\*

Where *Idolatrous Gentiles* were to be addressed to, there was indeed a *greater Difficulty*; yet it was by no Means equal to what you, Sir, would represent. Bad as they were, they had not lost *all Distinction* between *Virtue* and *Vice*, nor *all Notion* of a *Supreme Governor* of the World. The *Popular Religion* received among them was so *flagrantly absurd*, as to admit of being easily exposed. And  
when

\* Acts iii, 22, 23.

when they heard that *those Vices*, which contrary to the Light of their own Consciences they indulged themselves in, exposed them to the *Divine Displeasure*; and saw such sensible *Proofs* of his Presence and Power, as the *Miracles of the Apostles* afforded, *Proofs* so unparalleled and so striking; that *Principle of Conscience* which God had implanted in their Natures, and to which their *own Writers* bear an abundant Testimony, would probably be *alarmed*; and there could be no Need of a long Deduction of *Philosophical Arguments* to convince those of them, who had not imbibed *Philosophical Prejudices*, or were not incorrigibly *hardened in their Immoralities*, that such Kind of *Teachers* deserved to be attentively heard. They would evidently see, that *God was with them*, a God far superior to, and quite different from, those *indolent inactive Deities* which they had been taught to adore. And it needs no great Labour to convince a Man's Understanding, that when the *Lord of Nature speaks*, he should *hear and obey* \*. In Consequence of this, as soon as the *Gentiles* heard *one Discourse* of the *Apostles*, as soon as they saw a *single Miracle*, or heard the probable Report of it, they had Reason to pause, and to set themselves seriously to enquire into this *new Doctrine*: and if they did so, then *supposing*, as we must here suppose, that *Facts* were as the *New Testament* represents, it is impossible but they must have *stronger Reasons* to receive the *Gospel*, than they could have to reject it. Ignorant as they were of the *true Principles of Natural*

\* Dr. Stebbing in his late Sermon before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, has especially considered the *Miracles of the Apostles* "as an Application to the Fears of Men, as under the special Notice of God, and liable to his Correction." And it is certain, they did prove that Men are so; yet I cannot think it the *Primary Intention* of these *Miracles* to impart Terror, for this plain Reason, that they were generally of the *beneficent Kind*. It seems therefore, they were *immediate Proofs* of the *Presence and Agency* of an almighty and most gracious God, who pitying the sad State of his degenerate Offspring, the Children of Men, had sent them a *Sovereign Medicine* for their *Souls*, proved chiefly, and with great Propriety, by *miraculous Cures* wrought upon their *Bodies*. Yet as these *Messages of Mercy* were attended with awful *Threatnings* of severe Punishments, in Case of continued Impenitence and Disobedience, the *Display of his Power* in these Works of abused Mercy would in a very solemn and affecting Manner enforce those *Threatnings*.

Natural Religion, they could not be able at first to discern the Force of *that Argument* for the Truth of Christianity, which arises from its Agreement with these Principles: but that it was proposed and attested by him, who evidently appeared to be the great Sovereign of the World, they might immediately see, by those Instances, in which the stable Laws of Nature were controlled in Subserviency to it. And they must also see, as soon as they heard the Plan, that it was admirably calculated, by strong Motives before entirely unknown, to make Men honest, benevolent, and temperate; Virtues, which have always been esteemed among Heathens, how little soever they have been practised. And having embraced it, they would come to have juster and more extensive Notions of the Beauty and Glory of its Internal Evidences, as their Experimental Acquaintance with it increased, and their Understandings improved with their Graces.

This, I hope, may make it evident, that it was not so difficult a Thing, as you suppose, for those to whom the Apostles addressed, to enter into some Rational Proofs of Christianity. I must now add, that the Assent which these Divine Teachers demanded, was not so immediate as you represent it to have been. You say indeed, "There were no Concessions of Time for Doubt or Deliberation; one Declaration of the Terms of the Covenant was often thought sufficient: the least Standing-off gave up the Unbeliever to Reprobation;—they must comply without the least Hesitation;" and the like. (Pag. 38, 39.) Now I own, that if frequent positive Assertions could pass for Proofs, the Point would be clearly demonstrated on your Side of the Question. But I think, the whole History of the Acts, and many Things in the Epistles too, lead us to consider the Matter in a very different Light.

The Man indeed, who, on viewing such Credentials as I have mentioned, and hearing so much of the Gospel as in one Hour he might learn, should on the Force of pre-conceived Prejudices, whether Speculative or Practical, refuse to give it any farther Consideration, and, as some of the Wits of Athens did, answer merely with Scorn and Ridicule, might justly be left to perish in his Delusions. And if this were the Case universally in any City or Town  
into

into which the *Apostles* came, (which one would hope it seldom was,) the *Apostles* must of Course leave them, and not force themselves on those who rejected their Pretensions with *Disdain*. But if others received them, they generally (as I observed before,) made some Stay at a Place; and as they continued to teach and dispute publicly, those who at first derided, might if they pleased hear them again and again: and I can see no Argument to prove, that any Degree of Contempt or Opposition, with which any of them had at first rejected the Gospel, would seal them up under *Reprobation*, if they afterwards came to a better Temper.

If these very Men, as well as any others, expressed a Desire of being further instructed; if they urged their remaining Doubts, not as with a proud Disposition to cavil and insult, but as Persons that desired farther rational Satisfaction, that they might act as in the Sight of God, and as answerable to him in a Point of so great Importance; and if they attended these Enquiries with Prayers for farther Divine Illumination, which both the Principles of the Jewish Revelation, and of Natural Religion, might easily have taught them; Light would gradually break in upon their Minds, and they would know, if they followed on to know the Lord. I challenge you, Sir, to produce any one Line in the New Testament, that intimates the *Apostles* would discourage such Persons as these; on the contrary, that Humanity and Gentleness, that Meekness and Humility, which every where appear in their Conduct and Writings, and for which they so justly celebrate their great Master, would no doubt teach them to treat such Enquirers tenderly and kindly, and to cherish them as hopeful Persons, who were not far from the Kingdom of God. A little Time would probably lead a candid upright Mind thro' its Difficulties, amidst so many shining Evidences, which must impress and convince, in Proportion to the Attention with which they were viewed. And if the publick Concerns of the Churches did require the *Apostles*, as they possibly might, to quit such modest and humble Enquirers as these, before they arrived at full Satisfaction; they would, in every Place where they had planted a Christian Church, leave Persons behind them, furnished with miraculous Gifts, who might build

build on the Foundation they had laid, and compleat the Work which they had begun, in such honest and teachable Souls.

There might indeed be a *third Sort* of Persons, whose State was a *Medium* between that of *these*, and of the *Scorners* we mentioned before: I mean, such as were *indolent* about the Matter; neither positively perswaded that *Christianity* was *false*, nor quite convinced that it was *true*, nor solicitous to bring their Doubts to an Issue; but concluding, that whether it were *true* or *false*, they might find out a Path to Happiness without it. This was probably the Case of *many then*, as it undoubtedly is the Case of *many in our Days*. Now such as *these* were *not* to be looked upon as *fair Enquirers*, but as *Triflers* in the most serious of all Affairs; and as acting the most absurd and inconsistent Part: for *as Christianity* pretended to be a Matter of the *utmost Importance*, in neglecting it they acted as if it were assuredly *false*, while yet they confessed that they knew not but it might be *true*. A Conduct, which was rendered especially *inexcusable* by that *grand Apparatus*, with which Providence interposed to introduce it, which if it proved any Thing at all concerning it, must prove it to be of *infinite Moment*. Persons of the *Sceptical Turn*, which you know, Sir, to have been very common among the Antients, might perhaps sometimes *amuse themselves* with proposing their Doubts to *Christian Teachers*, as they came in their Way; but it is not to be wondered, if they lived and died in this *wavering State*, which was indeed a State of Folly and of Vice, and no doubt ended accordingly. But I cannot find a Line in the *New Testament*, which should lead one to suspect, that they would ever have it to plead before the Tribunal of God, that they were *condemned*, for *rejecting the Gospel*, before they had *Time* to look into its Proofs, tho' honestly and seriously disposed to have done it.

I have in the whole Course of this Argument mentioned *Miracles*, as awakening and convincing *Proofs* of a *Divine Mission*, without any particular Regard to what you have insinuated to the contrary. (*Pag. 46,—50.*) But now, Sir, I shall give it such a Notice as I think it requires; which will be the less, as you seem to lay  
but

but very little Stress on it yourself, and write, so far as I can judge by what follows, in a Consciousness of the Weakness of your own *Objections*. You say, "they were not meant as *Arguments*, but were *natural Effects* of *Gospel-Benevolence*;—and plead their being used by *Impostors*;—that *Care* was often taken to keep them private;—and that the *Seeking* them was discouraged." All which you would seem to think inconsistent with their being *Proofs*, especially *important Proofs* of the *Truth* of the *Revelation*. The *New Testament*, that grand Magazine of Weapons for the Defence of *Christianity*, furnishes me with such easy *Answers* to all these Suggestions, that my only Fear is, lest the Reader should be wearied with the Illustration of Things in themselves so plain, as what I have to advance in direct Contradiction to all these Insinuations of yours.

That the *Miracles* which *Christ* and his *Apostles* performed, were really intended by him and them, as *Proofs* of a *Divine Mission*, is so plain from the *Appeals* made to them, and the *Stress* laid upon them, that it would be quite superfluous to dilate upon it here, especially after what *Bishop Fleetwood*, *Dr. Chapman*, and *Mr. Chandler* have so judiciously urged on this Head. Nor need any Reader who has not had the Pleasure of an Acquaintance with those learned and accurate Writers, go any farther than the *Texts* I have thrown into the *Margin* to prove it beyond Debate\*. So that the Tendency of your remaining *Objection* must be only to shew the *Argument*, which *Christ* and his *Apostles* most largely insisted upon, to be *inconclusive*, and the *Stress* laid on it *unreasonable*. How far the Prosecution of this Design is consistent with the warm Zeal you profess for the *Gospel*, it is not worth while particularly to urge. I cannot see what its greatest Enemy could say, more directly tending to subvert it.

You assert, in a Manner which I confess surprizes me, "that *Miracles* were but the *Natural Effect* of their *Doctrine*, instead of any *Supernatural Proof* of its *Veracity*." (*Pag.* 47.) I acknowledge myself quite at a  
Lofs,

\* John v. 36. x. 24, 25, 37. 38. xiv. 11. xv. 24. Mark ii. 10. xvi. 20. Mat. xi. 4, 5, 20,—24. Acts ii. 22. x. 38. xiv. 3. Heb. ii. 4.



Loss, to find out the Sense of this extraordinary Passage. By a *Miracle* we generally mean a *Supernatural Event*: now I cannot conceive, how this should be in any Case, the *natural Effect* of any *Doctrine*, be it ever so Divine, or ever so important. But if there were a *Doctrine*, whose *natural Effect* it was, to endow its Professors or Teachers with a Power of performing *such Operations* as *Christ* and his *Apostles* did, it would surely be a *Proof of its Veracity* convincing beyond all Dispute or Comparison. However, we know not of any *such Doctrine*; nor can we conceive of any necessary *Connection* between the Knowledge of *Truth*, and a Power of *such Performances*. I suppose therefore your Meaning must be, that when a Person was endowed with these *miraculous Powers*, the *Exertion* of them would be what so benevolent a Religion as *Christianity* would naturally prompt him to, even tho' he should not intend by it to demonstrate the *Truth* of that *Doctrine*. But when the Passage above is thus explained, which after all I can but guess to be your Meaning in it; I would intreat you, Sir, to shew us, what *Inconsistency* there is between these *two Views*, which you have so strangely opposed to each other. Would it not be a glorious *Proof* of a *Divine Mission*, that God gave to *Christ* and his *Apostles* a Power of exercising their *Benevolence* in so extraordinary a Manner? Would not *Miracles* of a *benevolent Kind* appear the most congruous *Proofs* of so *benevolent a Scheme*? And would not *Miracles* intended as *Proofs* of a *Divine Mission* be equally an Exercise of *Benevolence*; nay indeed, would they not be much more eminently so, than if no Reference to that *Mission* had been intended? Surely an unprejudiced Mind must see the View you are guarding against, to be the *Crown* and *Glory* of the Whole. By *curing* a painful and dangerous *Disease*, by *opening the Eyes of the Blind*, and the like, to lead the afflicted Creature into the Way of *Truth* and *Duty*, and so into the Way of *Salvation*; and by his Means to instruct every Spectator, every one who heard the credible Attestation of the Fact, must enhance the Benefit beyond all Expression; extending it to a far greater Variety of Subjects, and, if it were duly improved, producing in each a far superior Degree of Happiness, than the *Cure alone*

92 *A SECOND LETTER to the Author, of*  
*alone* could afford to the Person who was the Subject  
of it.

That *Christ* took Care to *conceal* some of his *Miracles*, is indeed apparent; which, to be sure, was to avoid Ostentation, and to prevent the People from rising tumultuously in his Favour: and that he *silenced the Devils* who bore Witness to him, was an evident Instance of his Wisdom, to cut off every Colour for the malicious and blasphemous Charge advanced against him as a *Confederate* with them. But you well know, that many of our *Lord's Miracles* were wrought in a most publick Manner; some in the Streets of *Jerusalem*, and many more *before vast Multitudes* who were crouding around him, in the Fields, and the Mountains. This is notorious. And give me Leave, Sir, seriously to express my *Astonishment*, how you could venture to say, in the Face of such obvious Evidence to the contrary, "that our *Lord* was always remarkably *on the Reserve* in this Respect, whenever he happened among unbelieving Company." (Pag. 48.) A known Falshood, liable to Conviction in the Eyes of the whole World, is what I am very unwilling to charge upon a Gentleman and a Scholar, tho' ever so unacquainted with his Person, and Character. I will therefore impute *this*, and some other Passages of this Kind, to mere Inattention and Forgetfulness. But permit me, Sir, to say, that you ought to have read the *New Testament* with more Accuracy, and to have fixed the Contents of it more deeply in your Mind, before you had thrown out so many publick Reflections upon it. How must it surprize and pain you, to be told from thence, and to see how plainly it is there asserted, that *our Lord* not only *cast out Devils* before the *Pharisees*, who charged him as a *Confederate of Belzeebub* \* with that very *Miracle* before their Eyes; but likewise, that the *Paralytick* was healed in *Capernaum*, while *there were Pharisees and Doctors of the Law sitting by*, *who were come out of every Town of Galilee, and Judca, and Jerusalem* †; when the *Power of the Lord* was also present to heal several more, and the *Croud* was so great, that the Friends of the *Paralytick* were obliged to take a very peculiar Method  
to

\* Mat. ix. 33, 34. xii. 22, 24.

† Luke v. 17,—19.

to get him laid before Jesus! How you could fail to know this, or knowing could forget it, is strange: as also, how it should have escaped your Notice or Memory, that *Lazarus was raised* before a great *Multitude* of People, some of which were the Friends of the chief Priests, and Pharisees\*: or that a few Days before our Lord's Death, when it was no longer necessary to use such Precautions as he had formerly done, *the Blind and the Lame came to him in the Temple, and he healed them; and the Chief Priests and Scribes saw the wonderful Things that he did*†.

But to dismiss a Head, on which I could not have wished that you should have given me such Advantages, I must just touch upon your other *Objections* against the Validity of the *Argument from Miracles*, taken from *Christ's reluking* those that sought them. In some Circumstances, it is evident that he did: but all that we can infer from hence is, that there were some Circumstances, in which they were *unreasonably demanded*. Thus for Instance, when he had in the Presence of *Multitudes*, (who are, by the Way, expressly distinguished from his Disciples,) *healed the Lame, the Blind, the Dumb, and the Maimed, and MANY OTHERS*, who had been cast down at his Feet‡; and after that, had fed four thousand, with seven Loaves, and a few small Fishes||; we are immediately told, that the *Pharisees and Sadducees came tempting him, and demanded that he should show them a Sign from Heaven\*\**; thereby insolently taking upon them to prescribe to God himself, *what Kind of Miracles* they would have wrought for their Conviction. On this he very justly called them a *wicked and adulterous Generation*, and referred them (with greater Propriety than most Commentators have been aware,) to the grand *Miracle of his Resurrection††*, which was attended with a most illustrious *Sign from Heaven*; the *Descent of an Angel*, in the Sight of the *Roman Soldiers*, who guarded the Sepulchre; which they themselves testified to the *Jewish Rulers†††*, and perhaps to some of these very Persons who now presumed on so unreasonable a Demand.

\* John xi. 31.—46.

† Mat. xxi. 14, 15.

‡ Mat.

xv. 20.     § Ver. 32.—38.

\*\* Mat. xvi. 1.

†† Ver. 4.

††† Mat. xxv. 11: 4.—11.

mand.—He elsewhere blames those, who *would not believe, unless they saw Signs and Wonders* \*; that is, who would not yield to the most credible *Testimony of others*, tho' the Witnesses were ever so numerous and worthy of Belief, unless they had *that of their own Senses* added to the rest.—It is very probable, some very indecent Things had been said by his Enemies while *questioning with his Disciples*, to occasion such a severe Expostulation as that, *Oh faithless and perverse Generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?* We cannot suppose, from the known Candor of our Lord's Character, that this was said without some peculiar Reason; and as the Words refer to much Condescension and Long-Suffering formerly used, in giving them much ampler Satisfaction than they could strictly have demanded, so we see, that whatever *insulting Airs* any of his Enemies might have put on, when they found his Disciples baffled by so stubborn a *Demon*, Jesus himself rebuked him with an Air of irresistible Authority, and immediately *cured the Child* in their Presence and that of all the *Multitude* †.

Now when these Facts are set in this just and easy Light, I leave it, Sir, to your Invention, fertile as it seems, to shew how it follows as a Conclusion from these Premises, that our Lord judged *Miracles* not to be proper *Proofs of a Divine Mission*, and did not perform his *Miracles* as such *Proofs*. I shall only add, that as God never intended every individual Person should be an *Eye Witness* to *miraculous Operations*, it seems an amiable Instance of Wisdom and Goodness, in such Cases as these we have examined, as well as in that of *Thomas*, to check the Petulancy of such, as in those Days would not yield to *any Testimony*, but *that of their own Senses*, on such an Occasion.

All that remains to be examined under this Class of *Objections*, is "what you say concerning the Possibility of *Miracles* being used by *Impostors*." (Pag. 46.) This is indeed an important Topick, and has been handled with that Accuracy which it deserves by those who have professedly written upon it. Some Persons of great  
Eminence

\* John iv. 48.  
ix. 14, —27.

† Compare Mat, xvii, 17, 18, and Mark

Eminence in the *Learned* and *Christian* World have so very lately examined it, that it is quite *unnecessary* for me to resume the Controversy here: and you touch but slightly upon it, conscious as it seems, that after what they have said, it deserves little Stress. I shall therefore answer, in almost as few Lines as your own, only saying,—that I see no Reason to believe, that the Phrase *Lying Wonders* in *Scripture* signifies, as you in your *Objection* suppose, *true Miracles* to confirm a *Lye*;—and that the Patrons of *Christianity* challenge all its Enemies to produce *any Instance of Miracles* wrought expressly to confirm a *Falseness*, which have not been immediately, and on the very Spot, opposed by *superior Miracles* on the Side of *Truth*; and these attended with such *visible Degrees of Superiority*, as to render the *Triumph of Truth* more sensible, and more illustrious, than, in those Instances, it could have been without such Opposition.

What follows in your *51st Page*, concerning the Degree in which *Antiquity* impairs the Weight of *Miracles* said to have been wrought *many Ages ago*, has in Part been obviated already; and has been so often urged by the *Enemies of Revelation*, and so largely considered by its learned *Defenders*, that I think myself fairly dispensed with from insisting farther upon it here. I shall only add, that it must be a sensible Pleasure to those that wish well to *Christianity*, to see its Opposers reduced to the wretched Necessity of attacking it with *such Arguments*, as, if they will prove any Thing against it, will also prove that we can have *no rational Evidence* of any Thing that was done *before we were born*; or indeed, of any Thing which we have not *seen with our own Eyes*: an Absurdity, which I suppose no Man living can practise upon his own Understanding, so far as deliberately to admit it, tho' *Infidelity* can sometimes *remove its Mountains*, and bury them *in the Depths of the Sea*.

But there is another *very different Medium*, by which you endeavour to prove, that *Christianity* is not founded on *Argument*, i. e. that we are not to expect *rational Proof* of it; which will require a larger and more particular Discussion; I mean, “that we are required to believe it on *so high a Penalty*.” It seems methinks at the first Proposal, that *this Medium* is of a very extraordinary

dinary Nature. One would imagine, the Argument lay *the contrary Way*: that if God required our Assent to it *on Pain of eternal Ruin and Condemnation*, he must have made the *Evidences of it* very clear and strong, and such as every upright Mind must be able to see the Force of, on a diligent Enquiry, which such Minds will not fail to make. However you, Sir, are pleased to insist upon it in a contrary Light, and to argue from it, that something more convincing than *any Argument*, even an *immediate Revelation*, must be necessary to justify such a Demand.

The Terms in which you urge this Consideration, are so triumphant, that they rise even to *Insult*. "With what Regard, with what Patience rather, can one" who expects *Reasons* for his Faith, "be supposed to attend to Questions propounded to him, *under the Restraints of Threats and Authority*? to be talked to of *Danger* in his Decisions, and have the *Rod* held out with the *Lesson*? to have Propositions tendered to his *Reason* with *Penalties* annexed?—He disdains, with all Justice, an Attempt equally weak and unjust, of frightening him into a Compliance out of his Power." (Pag. 8, 9.)—It would be tedious to repeat a great deal more which you say in the same Strain; in which I heartily wish, that the *Ignorance* which you seem to discover in the State of the Question, may another Day be allowed as some *Excuse* for the *Rashness* and *Arrogance* of the Language, in which you treat it; which will not universally pass for *Demonstration*, tho' some may be weak enough to be carried away with the Torrent.

I know indeed, that the *Sentence* which the *Gospel* pronounces against *Unbelievers* has been thought by many a considerable *Objection* against the *Christian Scheme*; on which Account I the rather take this Opportunity of opening my Sentiments upon it, especially as I apprehend, it has often, on one Side or the other, been set in a very wrong Point of Light.

Now here I shall not attempt to solve the supposed Difficulty by pleading, that the *Denunciation* only refers to the Case of those, who should *refuse* to admit the *Testimony of the Apostles*, confirmed by *miraculous Works* of which they were themselves *Eye-Witnesses*. The

Answer would not be allowed by you; since your *Objection* lies against the Demand in any Circumstance of Evidence: Nor do I indeed think the Foundation of the Solution just and true; since whatever Reference *one Text in Question* \* might have to the *Testimony* immediately borne by the *Apostles*, there are *many others* which cannot be so evaded. I chuse therefore to encounter the *Objection* in all its Force, allowing that every one who finally rejects Christianity is in a State of *Condemnation*, and that there remains for him only a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries †. But then I conclude, on the Principles of common Equity, that this only extends to those who have *Capacities* and *Opportunities* of enquiring into its Evidences; since *Ignorance absolutely unavoidable* is a Plea so considerable, that it must have its Weight before a wise and righteous God. In the Instance of *Idiocy* and *Lunacy*, all the World allows it; and as the only Reason of that seems to be, that *Ignorance* is then *unavoidable*, wherever it is so, it must certainly, on the like Principles, be allowed. But with these Limitations I freely declare, that the Sentence which the Gospel passes on *Unbelievers*, is so far from appearing any *Objection* against Christianity, that I apprehend it greatly *increases* its *Internal Evidence*, when taken in Conjunction with the rest of the Scheme; tho' considered alone, it would to be sure be very absurd, to pretend it to be any *Proof* at all.

For the Illustration of this, I must first remove one *Mistake*, which seems to me a Source of perpetual Confusion on this Head, and on which most of the confident Things, which you have ventured to say on this awful Subject, depend, and with which they fall to the Ground; I mean, that an *Assent to the Truth of Christianity* is the main Thing intended by the Word FAITH, and required under *so high a Penalty*.— On the contrary, nothing is more evident to me, than that (as I have largely shewn elsewhere,) *Faith* in such Passages of the *New Testament* as are here in Question, is considered as a *Practical Thing*, which includes in it, what the Word

\* Mark xvi. 16.

† Heb. x. 26, 27.

98 A SECOND LETTER to the Author, of exactly expresses, an Act of Trust, or Committing the Soul to Christ, to be, under his Influence and Care, formed for Happiness, and conducted to it, according to the Method of Salvation exhibited in the Gospel.

It is true, indeed, a Persuasion of the *Speculative Truth of Christianity* must be the Foundation of such a Faith, but it is far from being the *only*, or indeed the *primary* Property of it; nor is it that, which is chiefly referred to in these Passages in Question. I readily agree with you, that such an Assent of the Understanding, simply considered, could not without great Absurdity, have been demanded under *so high a Penalty*, or indeed under *any Penalty* at all; and this is all, that your Arguments and Defiances here amount to. But if Provision be made, that (excepting as above,) *all* to whom the Gospel comes, shall on due Consideration see *irrefragible Evidence* to determine *that Assent*, they may justly be *threatned* with fatal Consequences as *Unbelievers*, whether that *Speculative Assent* be, or be not produced: Since it will appear, on that Supposition, they have either on the one Hand, notwithstanding fair and solemn Warning, *criminally omitted* taking those Measures which would infallibly and necessarily have produced a Conviction of the Truth; or on the other Hand, being convinced of it, have *acted contrary* to what they knew in their own Consciences that Reason and Duty required.

Taking the Matter in this View, it may perhaps seem so clear, that some of my Readers may wonder I should pursue it any farther: Yet as you lay so great a Stress on *this supposed Difficulty*, and as so many other Persons have seemed shocked with it, and some (as I have been informed,) have carried it so far as to *reject Christianity*, because they were *threatned with Damnation* if they did not believe it, I will more particularly open to you that View of Things, which convinces me that these *Damnatory Sentences* increase, rather than weaken, the *Internal Evidence* of that Gospel, to which they are annexed. And here I shall more particularly shew, *first*,—that there is not in the general any *Absurdity*, in supposing *such a Sentence* may attend a *Revelation* from God; and *then*,—that there is a peculiar



liar Propriety in it, when connected with *such a sort of Revelation* as Christianity in other Respects appears to be.

For the Illustration of the *first* of these, I would desire you, Sir, calmly to consider, whether it be in the Nature of Things absolutely *impossible*, that an infinitely wise God should contrive *such Evidence* of the Truth of a *Revelation*, as should be *sufficient* to convince every honest Enquirer, who is capable of exercising Reason in the common Affairs of Life; and such only are here in Question. Can a *Mathematician* invent a *Demonstration*, which almost every one of a common Genius shall with due Application infallibly understand; and cannot the *great Former* of the Human Spirit find out a Way of effecting the like, by a *Proof* of another Kind? Or if no *one Argument* which Omniscience could furnish out, can have such an universal Effect, (which I think it would be great Peculancy and Folly to assert,) could not this wise and glorious Being exhibit a *Complication of Arguments* so adjusted, that some one of them at least should be suited to strike every such Enquirer, and to convince him? Nay, to bring the Matter yet lower, when a strong *Complication* of various *Arguments* is provided, is it absolutely *impossible*, that an all-comprehending Mind should contrive a *Scheme of Providence*, in Consequence of which every sincere and honest Enquirer should, either by some *External Occurrence*, (as meeting with a Book, or Friend, in some critical Moment of Doubt or Danger) or by some *Inward Impression*, (his Thoughts being fixed and guided, as it seems to him, in a Natural Way, and without any particular Revelation,) be led into *such Views* of the *Evidence* as shall engage his Assent; while at the same Time, a Mind under the strong Force of *vicious Prejudices* shall be left to *harden itself* against opening *Proofs*, to turn away from the increasing Light, and to aggravate trifling Objections, till it utterly rejects a most salutary Scheme? I ask you, Sir, and I ask every Reader, whether you, or he, will venture so to *limit* an All-wise and Almighty Being, as to say, that it is absolutely *impossible* he should adjust Matters, as on any one of the *three* former Supposi-

tions? But if you cannot say, and prove it to be so, then be pleas'd with me to reflect on the *Consequence* of supposing any one of these to be a possible Case.

On such a Supposition, I would farther ask you, whether it would not be *Just* with GOD, to condemn those who should *reject a Revelation* attended with Evidence so adjusted and supported? that is, on this *Hypothesis*, to condemn Persons who thro' *vicious Prejudices* should *refuse* an upright and candid *Enquiry* into the *Truth*, and perhaps into the *Evidence of it*, attended with some *Circumstances* which tend powerfully to strike the Mind, and awaken Examination and Attention? I see not, how the *Justice* of this could be denied on any Principle, which will not infer, that GOD cannot punish any Vice of a Sinner's Mind, or any Irregularity of his Life, and will consequently overthrow *Natural Religion*.

Let us then imagine, in *Hypothesis* at least, (since it appears *no Impossibility*;) the *Evidence* adjusted as above, and the Resolution of *punishing* the Infidel formed; I would farther ask, whether in such a Circumstance it was, or could be, *unworthy* the Divine Being to *declare* such a Purpose and Resolution? Some valuable Ends, which might be answered by such a *Declaration* are obvious enough. It could not indeed *convince* any Man's Understanding, that the Doctrine so enforced was *true*; and I do not know that any one was ever weak enough to pretend it: But it might in some Degree *awaken* the Attention of an Enquirer; since tho' he could not believe the *Threatning*, till he discerned the *Evidence* of that *Revelation* of which it made a Part, yet he would easily see, that if it should indeed prove *true*, it must be a Truth of vast Importance; and would also see, that whatever Degrees of *Probability* appeared to be in its Favour when first proposed, there must be equal Degrees of *Probability* that he would be miserable in Consequence of rejecting it. Besides, *this Declaration* might excite the Persons employed to publish the *Revelation* of which it made a Part, to act with greater Ardour and Spirit, and to suffer with greater Courage and Resolution, when they knew that the Happiness of Mankind was so intimately concerned in it. It might also

also awaken in all who embraced this *Revelation*, a Concern to keep it pure and unmingled with any Thing; which by a wrong *Association of Ideas* might occasion a *Prejudice* against it, whether from the *Absurdity* of its supposed Doctrines, or the *Immorality* of those who received and maintained it; since such *Prejudices* might prove so fatal. Now each of these appears to me a very important End, of which many *Objectors* against this Part of *Christianity* seem to be very little apprized \*.

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\* Agreeable to what I have said above, of the various Use of such *Threatnings*, it may be observed, that many of those Passages of the *New Testament* which express the Divine Purpose of *punishing* the *Rejectors* of *Christianity*, are not immediately addressed to *Unbelievers*, (tho' they are at other Times, as was very reasonable, solemnly warned;) but to those who were to be *Preachers of the Gospel*, whom therefore (if any such read this Passage.) I beseech and intreat in the *Bowels of Christ* seriously to consider them. Thus it is, in his Charge to the *Twelve Apostles*, (*Mat. x. 15*) and to the *Seventy Disciples*, (*Luke x. 12.*) that our Lord represents *Unbelievers* as certainly devoted to so dreadful a Destruction, that it should be no more tolerable for *Sodom and Gomorrah* in the Day of Judgment than for them. And it is to his *Apostles* also, that, when risen from the Dead, he says, just after a Commission to go and preach the Gospel to every Creature, (*Mark xvi. 16.*) He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned. Many Passages of the same Purport in the *Epistles* are addressed to *Christians*, no Doubt with the same general View of awakening their compassionate Efforts to deliver those wretched Creatures who were in such extrem Danger. Compare *2 Thess. i. 7,—9.* *2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.* and *Jude, ver. 23.*

I must also take the Liberty to add, that there seems to me a very beautiful *Propriety* in the Manner of our Lord's expressing several of these *Denunciations*, which is not in a direct, but an oblique Form; which particularly became that gracious Messenger of the Divine Love, who visited the World, not to condemn, but to save it. Thus the awful Doom of *Capernaum* and *Bethsaida* is uttered by *Christ*, not when speaking to them, but when distant from them, in the Form of a Lamentation over them. (*Mat xi. 20,—24.*) So likewise is *Jerusalem* lamented over, as abandoned to Destruction for its incorrigible and perverse Infidelity, once when *Christ* was as far off as *Galilee*, (*Luke xiii. 34, 35*) and afterwards, when only approaching, and beholding it from *Mount Olivet*. (*Luke xix. 41, 42.*) And this last Time the Ruin was predicted in broken Language, and with a Flow of Tears; expressing on the one Hand, the Benevolence of our Lord's Temper, which engaged him to mourn over the

On the other Hand, Sir, if no such *Threatnings* were annexed, and the Purpose of God to execute his deserved Displeasure on the *Rejecters* of this *Revelation*, should at length take Place, would not the unhappy Creature have Room to make some such Reflection as this, when he was plunging into a final Destruction? "Why was not I *admonished* of the *Danger of Unbelief* in such a Case as this? When so many other Things were declared, and so many other Messages sent, why was not this one Article added, by the Messengers who brought the rest?" Now tho' *Conscience* might tell such a Wretch, that every *vicious Prejudice* was *fatal*, and that if Mercy were indeed offered and slighted, the Consequence must be dangerous and fatal; yet it seems congruous to the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, to foreclose such a *Plea* as this, even in the Mouth of a perishing Sinner.

On this View I hope it will appear *not incredible* in *Hypothesis* and *Speculation*, that a *Revelation* might come from God, the *Evidence* of which should be so adjusted, that all who have an Opportunity of examining into it might be *required* to receive and submit to it, *as Pain* of God's *highest Displeasure*; tho' you, Sir, have been pleased to paint this as a *Supposition* in itself flagrantly absurd. Nay I apprehend, it must follow from these Principles, that the very *Supposition* of a *Revelation* in general implies, on the one Hand, *Sufficiency of Evidence* to every candid Enquirer; and on the other, certain *Divine Displeasure* against the *Rejecters* of it, which if not expressly declared, will at least be implied.

But how far this is from a real *Absurdity*, may farther appear by viewing the Matter in an opposite Light. Let me imagine, a Man should profess to bring me a *Divine*

justest Condemnation which Sinners could bring on themselves; and on the other, the inevitable Certainty, and unutterable Terror of that *Destruction*, which was coming upon them. It is one Instance among a thousand, of that *fine Spirit* which runs thro' all our *Lord's* Behaviour; and which renders it astonishing, that his Cause should meet with such malignant Oppositi on among many who set up for *Criticks* in the *TO ΠΙΠΕΙΟΝ*, and the *TO ΚΑΑΟΝ*, the *Decorum*, and the *Beauty* of Actions. I have known a *Criminal* touched, and even charmed, with the *Tenderness* which a *Judge* has shewn in passing a *capital Sentence* upon him; and I wonder, it should not be the Case here.

*Divine Revelation* with great Solemnity; and yet at the same Time should declare, that I might *reject it without any Danger*. I know not how others might judge, but I am sure *this* would appear to me so incoherent, that I should hardly give myself the Trouble of enquiring into his Credentials, unless some very striking Circumstance appeared at the first View. For it would be natural to conclude, it may be *true*, or it may be *false*: And if it be *true*, by the Confession of the Messenger I have no great Concern in it; I may be happy, without paying any Regard to it: It is therefore comparatively a *Trifling Concern*, and by Consequence so much *less likely* to be the Subject of a Divine Interposition.

Take it therefore in any Light, and it appears to me, that an Obligation on *some high Penalty* to enquire into Credentials, and by Consequence to receive and obey the Command, is in the Nature and Reason of Things to be supposed as the Counterpart of the Honour of receiving a Message from God; and, as the *Law* speaks, *transit cum Onere*, it comes to a Man (if I may be allowed the Expression,) with this awful Incumbrance, "He must *reject it at his Peril*." And agreeably to this Remark, we always find (so far as I can recollect,) thro' the whole Series of the *Old Testament*, that where the Message sent from God was disregarded, some *signal Punishment* was inflicted on the Person to whom it was addressed; which I mention, not as arguing from it, but as a Circumstance illustrating in one View the Reasonings above, and in another receiving Illustration from them.

These, Sir, are the Principles, on which I said above, that *Threatnings* against those who should disbelieve and reject a *Revelation* in Question, are so far from being any Argument against its being reasonable and Divine, as some have vainly pretended; that on the contrary, they are so suitable to a wisely concerted Scheme, that the *Omission of them* would rather be an *Objection* against a pretended Revelation, than any Argument in its Favour.

I shall beg Leave, Sir, to detain you a little longer on this Head, while I attempt to shew that *these Reasonings*, which appear of general Force have a peculiar

and singular Weight when applied to *Christianity*: Which will appear from considering the *Degrees of Evidence* to which it pretends; and several other *Circumstances* attending the *Scheme* itself, and the *Manner* in which it was introduced into the World.

I have discoursed at large already on the Kind of *Evidence* with which *Christianity* was attended, during the Ministry of *Christ* and his *Apostles*, and have referred to several Passages, in which the *Rejection* of it is charged on such *vicious Prejudices*, as must render Men *highly criminal* before God; and some other Passages to the same Purpose may be seen in the *Margin*\*. I shall only add here, that I apprehend, our blessed *Lord* (who said nothing in vain, and in whose short Sentences there is often a Weight far beyond what the Generality of his Enemies, or his Followers, have considered,) seems expressly to have asserted the *most extraordinary* of all the *Suppositions* made above to be *Faët*; I mean that of a *Divine Superintendency* over every well disposed Mind, to lead it into the *Evidences* of the *Truth of his Doctrine*. And this, you will observe, he hath spoken in Terms suiting not only the Period of *his own*, or the *Apostles* Ministry, but future Ages too. You will perhaps, from this general Hint, recollect that important Passage†; *If any Man will do his will, i. e. the Will of my Father, εἰς τὴν βίαν ποιεῖται*, “if he be resolutely determined upon “it,” (as I have elsewhere observed the *Phrase* plainly signifies‡) *he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of GOD, or whether I speak of myself*. And the Prophet *Isaiah* seems long before to have represented the Matter much in the same View, tho’ according to his Manner, in more figurative Terms; when he says, *An High Way shall be there; and it shall be called THE WAY OF HOLINESS;—the wayfaring Men, tho’ Fools, shall not err therein* §.

I might also shew at large, if I were not afraid of running out this Letter to too great a Length, that not only those *Degrees of Evidence* to which *Christianity* pretends,

\* Acts xiii. 46. xviii. 6. Rom. ii. 8, 9. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. 1 Theff. ii. 14, —16. 2 Theff. i. 6, —9. ii. 10, —12. Heb. iii. 7, —12. vi. 7, 8. 1 John v. 19. † John vii. 17. ‡ See *Family Expofitor*, Vol. ii. pag. 47. § *Isai. xxxv. 8.*

tends, but also several other *Circumstances* attending the *Scheme* itself, and the *Manner* in which it was introduced into the World, render the *Threatnings* annexed peculiarly *suitable* to it, beyond the Degrees in which they might, on the Principles above, have suited a *Revelation* in these Respects *different from the Gospel*.

It is very material for the Illustration of this Point, to recollect that the *Christian Scheme* supposes Mankind under *Guilt*, and obnoxious on Account of it to *Misery*, to dreadful *final Misery*; and accordingly makes its Proposals, not merely under the Notion of a *Benefit*, but of a *Remedy*; of a *Remedy* without which Men were *perishing*. Now the necessary Consequence of this must be, the *Death* and *Destruction* of those who *reject it*. In this View the Sacred Writers, with great Propriety, sometimes place it. *GOD sent his Son into the World, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish;—and therefore he that believeth not on him, is condemned already, because he hath not believed* \*;—It plainly appears from his *Unbelief*, that he is actually *under Sentence*; and as it follows afterwards, *The Wrath of GOD*, that *Wrath* from which he might otherwise have been saved and rescued, *abideth on him* †. And to this Purpose *Christ* declares elsewhere, *If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your Sins* ‡, shall perish with the *Guilt* of all those *Transgressions* on your Heads, from which I was so sincerely willing to have delivered you.

The *Threatnings* in Question are also *congruous* to the Importance of those *Blessings*, which are offered to all who embrace and obey the *Gospel*. These are well known in Speculation; but, were they duly considered, they would appear to have much greater Weight than many are aware. A full Pardon of all the most aggravated Sins, which the true Penitent has ever committed; the Communication of Divine Influences, to enable us to conquer the Power of Sin to which we were enslaved, and to fit us for Happiness present and future; an Admission into the Family of God, and a Participation of all the Joys and Privileges of his Children; the Reception of our separate Spirits into the Presence of God, and to the most glorious Society, Enjoyments, and Services

\* John iii, 16,—18, † Ver 36. ‡ John viii, 24.

vices there; and at length, the Resurrection of our Bodies, and the Eternal Happiness of the whole Man: *Such Favours* offered to *condemned Sinners* by the offended Majesty of Heaven and Earth, must certainly have drawn after them *severe Punishments* on the presumptuous Creatures by whom they were slighted and despised, had they been notified and proposed by the meanest Inhabitant of the Celestial World, or even of our own, as an Ambassador from God. But when to all this it is added, that a Person so glorious, so excellent, and so divine as the *Son of GOD* himself, *his only begotten Son*, became the messenger of his Father's Love and Grace to us; and that he might testify it in a more effectual Manner, became also, for many succeeding Years, an Inhabitant of our low World; and at length submitted to such extream Evils, even to *Death itself*, to a *Death* attended with such astonishing Circumstances of Ignominy and Torture, for this great Reason among others, that he might affect our Minds with powerful Sentiments of religious Veneration, of Gratitude and Love; who can wonder, if there be an *awful Counterpart* to all these Miracles of Condescension and Mercy? Who can wonder, if the *Contempt of such a Gospel*, so circumstantiated, and so sealed, be *penal* in Proportion to the Degree in which it is *criminal*? Can it possibly be imagined, that the *Son of GOD* should become Incarnate, and Bleed, and Dye; and that *his Spirit* should afterwards be sent down from Heaven, with all that splendid *Apparatus of various Languages* instantaneously taught, and *Miraculous Powers* every where exerted; and all this to make Way for a Discovery, which those to whom it was sent might trample upon with Impunity? that they might reject and deride it themselves, and perhaps make it almost the only serious Business of their Lives, to expose it to universal Contempt; and yet, tho' living and dying impenitent, partake in the Day of final Retribution, with that *Redeemer* whom they have rejected and opposed, in the Joys he will bestow on his faithful Servants, and which he will share with them? This, Sir, is such a shocking *Incongruity* even in *Hypothesis*, that you yourself could not forbear exploding it; and I think you have done it with great Propriety and Spirit. (Pag.



45.) It is indeed as you represent it: The least Intimation of *Mercy* to the *finally Unbelieving* and *Impenitent* would have been a *Blemish* on the *whole Scheme*, and a Kind of *Toleration* for that *Neglect*, which in such a Case it would probably have met with in the World. Whereas it is now with the most becoming Majesty, that such a Dispensation of Wonders terminates in a *Day*, when this humbled and dishonoured *Saviour* shall appear in *flaming Fire*, taking *Vengeance* on them that *know not GOD*, and that *obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ*; who shall therefore be punished with *everlasting Destruction*, from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power \*.

Permit me only to touch on one Consideration more, which illustrates the *Congruity* of these *Denunciations*, as a Part of the *Gospel Scheme*; and that is, the *Difficulties* thro' which *that Scheme* was to *struggle* in its early *Infancy*. It was wisely ordered by *Providence* for the *Establishment* and *Edification* of succeeding Ages, that the *first Professors of Christianity* should encounter great *Hardships* and *Sufferings* on Account of it; and it would be easy to shew, that a *Scheme* calculated for *universal Reformation* must expose to such *Trials*, when it made its Entrance into *so degenerate a World*. Now in this View there was an evident *Necessity*, that the *Fear of him, who after he had killed, could cast both Soul and Body into Hell* †, should be opposed to the *Threats* of cruel *Persecutors*. It was necessary, that the *Danger of Rejecting, Deserting, or even Dissembling the Faith* should be plainly and affectionately represented; otherwise Men would have held themselves fairly dispensed with from enquiring and looking into a *Scheme*, so likely to prove destructive to their *Fortunes*, and even to their *Lives*, in this World, and by its own *Confession*, by no means necessary to avoid greater Evils in another.

From all these Reasonings it appears to me undeniably evident, that as some *severe Threatnings* to those who *reject it* must probably in any Case attend a *Divine Revelation*; so *these Threatnings* are so evidently *congruous* to the peculiar *Nature, Design, and Circumstances* of

\* 2 Theſſ. i. 8, 9.

† Mat. x. 28.

*Christianity*, that had they not made a Part of it, the *Absence of them* would have been a great *Diminution* to its *Internal Evidence*, and probably an effectual Bar to its *Propagation* in the World.

I am sensible, Sir, the grand *Objection* against all these Reasonings is taken, from the Appearance of a *virtuous* and amiable *Disposition* in some who *disbelieve the Gospel*, and from the Possibility that a *wrong Association of Ideas* in others, leading them to conclude those Things to be contained in the *Christian Revelation* which do not indeed belong to it, may engage some to *reject the whole* from the apparent *Absurdity* which they see in these spurious, tho' solemn, Additions to it; as for Instance, in those vast Tracts of Land, in which *Transubstantiation* and *Image Worship* are represented, not merely as *consistent* with *Christianity*, but as in a Manner *essential* to it, by those who are its established Teachers, and may therefore be presumed best to understand it.

As for the latter of these Cases, it must be considered, how far the Person so *misaken* in the *Idea* he has formed of *Christianity* has fallen into that Mistake necessarily, and how far it may be charged on his own *Negligence* or *Mismanagement*. It is possible, that in some Countries *Christianity* may be so *misrepresented*, and the *common People* may be so utterly *incapable* of coming at its true Contents, that they may be looked upon as *Persons unavoidably ignorant* of it; and consequently are not included in the Number of those, whose Case we are now considering. But if any may have Recourse to the *Scriptures*, and will not give themselves the Trouble of *searching them*, to see whether these *supposed absurd Doctrines* are really contained in them, or no, they must stand by the Consequences of their *Idolence* and *Rashness*: And I fear, the *Nobility* and *Gentry* in *Papish* Countries, (who are the Persons among whom *Deism* probably prevails most,) are generally in this Case. Such might easily have discovered so much Good in *Christianity*, and so many Arguments in its Favour, as might have proved it worth their while to have read over the *New Testament* again and again, with an honest Desire of knowing what are *indeed* the *Doctrines* and *Precepts* con-  
tained

tained in it. I question not, but such an Employment would have been a much more rational and useful Way of spending Time, than what the Persons in Question have often preferred to it; and it is not so *obscure*, as to leave a *candid Reader* in such a Case *capable* of imagining, it teaches, or requires, any Thing *absurd*.

As for the *supposed Virtues* of some who *know the Gospel* and *reject it*, I fear, Sir, when they come to be tried by the great Standard of *true Excellence in Character*, they will be found exceedingly deficient. *Virtue* is a Word of a very dubious Signification; and, as it is generally used, that Man is denominated *virtuous*, who is *temperate, just, and humane* in his Conduct, be he never so *destitute of Religion*. Now with Regard to such Persons it is evident, that a wise and righteous God will never treat them, as if they had been *debauched, unjust, and inhumane*. Nevertheless, if such as these live *without GOD in the World*; if they *cast off Fear, and restrain Prayer before GOD*; if (which the very Fact of their *rejecting Christianity* proves,) they will not set themselves to *enquire* diligently and impartially in the Intimations of the Divine Will; if they are *unknubled* before God for the various Transgressions of their Lives, and so *proudly conceited* of their own Reasonings, that they will set their *preconceived Opinions* on particular Subjects against all the Weight of *Internal and External Evidence* attending the *Christian Revelation*, when contradicting those Opinions; I cannot see on what Ground they can complain, if they be finally treated as persons, who, while they have *reverenced Men*, have *forgotten GOD*: Nor can it be imagined, that, under the Load of so much Guilt, they will have any Claim to *future Rewards*, merely because they have had *Sense and good Nature* enough, to *judge rightly* concerning what would generally be the *best Interests and Enjoyments* of Human Life, even if there were *no Deity*; and so have chosen to live *like Men* rather than *Brutes*, so far as *Sobriety and mutual Kindness* alone were in Question.

Had the *best of Men* a suitable and continual Sense of the Majesty and Purity of the Divine Nature, and of that Love, Duty, and Zeal, which a reasonable Creature owes to its Creator, they would, with all their

*human*

*human and social Virtues* about them, fall down into the Dust before GOD, and say, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servants, for in thy Sight shall no Man living be justified* \* / and they would feel a *Load of Guilt* pressing on their Consciences, and engaging them most attentively to listen to a *Scheme* by which *free and full Pardon* might be expected, in a Way most honourable to the Rights of the Divine Government. And if no Admonitions can bring those who are now *insensible* to such a Temper, we can only lament, that their *Conviction* is delayed to *so late*, and probably to *so fatal a Day*.

But if there be any where in a *Christian and Protestant Nation*, a Man *not yet* thoroughly convinced of *Christianity*, who, on the Principles of *Natural Religion*, reverences and loves the great *Author of his Being*; who pours out his Soul before him in the Exercise of private and publick Devotion; who humbly traces every Intimation of his Will which he has already received, that he may yield a constant and uniform Obedience to it; and seeks *Illumination* from the great *Father of Lights* for the farther Discovery of it: If there be a Person, who tho' yet in the State of *Hesitation* concerning the *Divine Authority* of the *Scriptures*, will diligently search them, not with a View to cavil and object, but honestly to see what is the *Genius and Design* of them, and will also read and consult the ablest *Defenders of Christianity*, in order to gain a fuller Information in its *Evidence*; I will venture to pronounce, that such a Man is *not far from the Kingdom of GOD*, and doubt not, but that according to the Declaration of our faithful *Saviour*, he will ere long know that the *Doctrine is of GOD* †. I cannot believe, that such a one ever *died an Infidel*; because I have abundantly stronger Evidence that *Christianity* is true, than I have of the *Virtue* of any one who *died denying it*. But you well know, Sir, that the *Generality* of our *Deists* are quite out of the present Question, being *most of them* such as a *Roman Censor* would not have borne in any of the highest Ranks of their *Citizens*, how eagerly soever any may plead for their Admission into the *New Jerusalem*, the Presence of GOD, and the Mansions of the Blessed.

Nevertheless

\* Psal. cxliiii. 2.

† John vii. 17.

Nevertheless it is possible some may object, with Regard to the Person, whom we described above, as making *so hopeful a Progress* towards embracing the Gospel, what will he be the *better* after all, when it is embraced? What can the single Circumstance of *believing Christianity* to be true, effect towards recommending a Man to the Divine Favour, who is already supposed not only *temperate, just, and benevolent*, but *downt* too? This is a Question which I have sometimes heard advanced, tho' I do not recollect that you mention it; but I wonder it should enter into any Mind, who knows what the *Faith* which constitutes a Man a *real Christian* is, according to the Account given of it above, agreeable to the whole Tenour of the *New Testament*: And by the Way, had you, Sir, considered *that*, you would have found very little Room to triumph (as you do, pag. 10.) in our being obliged to *pray for its Increase*. Were it merely a *Speculative Assent*, your Arguments on this Head would be as conclusive, as they are foreign to the *Scripture Idea* of it; which is a *cordial and practical Acquiescence in the Scheme of Salvation by Christ*. This, Sir, evidently includes in it a becoming Affection towards *the Son of GOD*, that illustrious Person, whom, venerable and amiable as he is, every *Infidel* must necessarily neglect, and to whom, when once revealed, God may most reasonably require express *Homage, Duty, and Subjection*, on Pain of his highest Displeasure. *Faith* also, in this View of it, will be the Foundation of such deep *Humiliation* before God, of such ardent *Love* to him, and does, in one Word, so illustriously ennoble, and improve, all the other Branches of a *lovely and virtuous Disposition*; that surely no one, who has either felt *its Power*, or even studied *its Nature* and genuine *Influence*, can long doubt to what Purpose it is demanded and insisted upon. And he that has observed the *Effects* it has produced, and the illustrious as well as numerous *Victories* it has gained *over the World*, beyond what any other Principle could ever obtain, will be unable to *depreciate it*, without greatly debasing the Nature and Extent of that *Moral Virtue*, which he pretends to exalt in Preference to it; as I think it were easy to shew

112 A SECOND LETTER to the Author, of  
shew at large, if the Compass of this Letter would admit it.

And thus, Sir, I have given you my deliberate Thoughts on the *Reasonableness, Justice, and Necessity* of the *awful Sentence* which the *Gospel* passes on those who *reject it*; and whether it may move you to *Gratitude*, to *Anger*, or to *Scorn*, I cannot dismiss the Subject without solemnly and earnestly *intreating you*, seriously to reflect upon it, as your own Concern, and to ask yourself, as an *Immortal Creature* shortly to appear at the *Tribunal of God*, whether you have not Reason to *humble yourself before him* in the Review of this, when compared with the Manner in which you have ventured to talk on this *tremendous Subject*? Your Heart may perhaps be less impressible; but I am sure that for my own Part, were I to think, I will not say as an *humble Christian*, but as a *sober and religious Deist* in Character ought, if *Christianity* had never been heard of, I would not for the whole World presume to say, as you have in *Effect* frequently done, “that an *Ininitely Wise God* could not give a *Revelation* attended with such *rational Evidence*, as should “render every Man to whom it came, † justly obnoxious to *high Penalties* for *rejecting it*.” Nay, I think it would fill me with *Astonishment and Grief*, that a *mortal Man* should be found, *arrogant and petulant* enough, to *limit the Majesty of Heaven*, by such an Assertion; and to declare in express Words, a *Disdain* at the Mention of *his lifted Rod*, when *held out* over those who should *despise* his appointed Method of Pardon and Salvation. May the Hour never come, when this *ill-judged Bravery* shall be lamented amidst *inconsolable Horrors*!

After so copious an Examination of this important Question, in which I have laboured to give you, and my other Readers, all the Satisfaction I could, I have not left myself Room to mention *many other Things* in your Essay, which might admit and require Animadversion. Of those yet remaining unhandled, your Account of the *Agency and Office* of the *Divine Spirit* seems the most considerable. I leave my Reader to consult it for himself, as it stands in your *56th and following Pages*: In  
which

† N. B. I here suppose *extraordinary Cases* allowed for, as above.

which he will find a *Mixture of Truth and Falshood* so blended together, as on the whole to amount to a *Scheme* apparently contrary to *Fact*; and in *Theory* so wild, that he will not find it easy to believe, it could be *seriously* proposed by any who enjoyed the Use of his *Reason*; or that you in particular meant any Thing by it, unless it were to *expose Christianity*, by representing *this* as its *Doctrine*, and its grand *Foundation*.

You must at least, Sir, add the Sanction of *your Name* to your Pamphlet, before you will be thought *seriously* to teach, (as in *pag. 59.*) "that every *baptized Person* "is *inspired* in a Moment with an *irresistible Light from Heaven*," which yet, according to your 63<sup>d</sup> Page, may be resisted, and thereby *make Infidelity criminal*; "a *Light*, by which our *Faith* is compleated in an *Instant*, "the most perfect and finished *Creed* produced *at once*, "and made *self-evident* to the Mind in which it is lodged, in a Way perhaps little differing from *Intuition* "itself; such *Characters* being stamped upon the Heart, "as *no Misrepresentations* can ever possibly intervene to "corrupt, *no succeeding Suggestions* of a different Style, "to dispute the Preference, or shake its Authority in "the Mind." In one Word, "we are" in Consequence of this *Extraordinary Operation*, (if we are to take the Matter as you represent it,) "brought under a *Monitor* "and *Guardian*, which does not leave us *for one Moment* "liable to a *Possibility* of Error and Imposition." These, Sir, are *your own Words*; and if any Reader, to whom I am personally a Stranger, should question whether any Thing *so absurd* as the last Clause is any where in the World to be found, your 60<sup>th</sup> Page will convince him how faithfully they are transcribed.

I apprehend, perhaps *with you*, that merely to *propose this Notion*, is to *confute it*. However for the Credit of the *Christian Works*, I am glad to say, it is *no very common one*, and may, for any Thing I at present know, be *quite peculiar*; whatever *unguarded Approaches* some good Men may have made towards it, or whatever *Airs of Infallibility* they may have assumed, which, to do you Justice, I cannot but imagine, you meant by all *this Gallimatia* to expose. It would be an easy Matter to vindicate *the Scriptures*, which you have pressed in to support

support this strange Representation; but every good *Commentary* upon them may furnish the Reader with an *Antidote* against such an Interpretation, if his *own Reflections* do not (as might reasonably be expected,) immediately supersede the Necessity of having Recourse to any *Commentary* at all. I shall not therefore at present pursue the Matter any farther; but leave you to be *confuted*, I will not say by every rational *Christian Writer* on this Subject, but even by every *Error* which any good *Christian* has fallen into, on this Head, or on any other; for every such *Error* as effectually *confutes* this Notion, as a thousand Volumes of the strictest Argument could do it.

Nevertheless, Sir, if you still continue to urge the Matter, and the *Publick* seem desirous of it, I may perhaps take this your *Third General* under as particular a Consideration, as your *Two former*. In the mean time, I am well satisfied, that none who knows me will imagine, that I have declined the Task from any *Suspensions* which I entertain concerning the *Reality* or *Importance* of the *Operations of the Blessed Spirit* on the Mind, to enlighten and renew, to sanctify and strengthen, to cheer and to guide the *Children of GOD*, and the *Heirs of Glory*. I am continually bearing my *Testimony* to this great and weighty *Truth* in my *Sermons* and *Writings*; as I can never expect, that any *Course of Preaching* or *Writing* should be useful to the *Souls of Men*, in which so glorious a *Doctrine of Christianity* is either *denied* or *omitted*.

There are many other *Particulars* in your *Letter*, about which I shall have no *Controversy* with you at all, but shall willingly leave *those Deities* to plead, whose *Altars* you have cast down. The *Imputation of the Faith of Sureties* to the *baptized Infant*;—the *necessary Connection* between the *Administration of that Rite*, and the *Communication of some extraordinary Influences of the Spirit*;—the *Power of the Magistrate* to determine *Articles of Faith*, and to impose *Forms of Worship* by *sanguinary Laws*, or *Laws* in any lower *Degree penal*;—the *compelling young Persons* to declare their *Sentiments* on some of the nicest *Theological Controversies*, before they can be supposed at all to have examined them,—and *fringing severely* upon them, as soon as they appear to

*suspect,*



*suspect*, what they never had any *convincing Evidence* to engage them to *believe*:—These, and some other Particulars (which lie between the 95<sup>th</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Page of your Book,) I confess you have *rallied* with a just Severity. And I am particularly pleased with the serious Air with which the *Raillery* on these Heads is carried, even to the Defence of *Fire and Faggot* in the Cause of Religion; from which I presume, Sir, you apprehend yourself to be in no Danger. It will, no Doubt, be of Service to those Readers, who, without such a Key, might, in the Simplicity of their Hearts, have been led into a wrong Judgment of your Views, from those Airs of *Devotion* and *Orthodoxy*, which you assume in other Passages.

A Design to overthrow *Natural Religion*, as well as *Revealed*; to confound the Nature of *Virtue* and *Vice*, and subvert, so far as a Mortal can do it, the *Throne of GOD* among Men; to destroy all the Foundations of *Truth*, *Justice*, and *Benevolence*, which arise from a Perswasion of his Divine Presence and Providence, leaving us to all the Absurdities, the Temptations, and Miseries of *Atheism*; is so black, and so horrid an *Enormity*, that I would by no Means charge it, by any Train of Consequences, even on a *Nameless Author*. And indeed I will not allow myself so much as to think, that you were *capable* of setting yourself about it, as *our Law* expresses it in Matters of much less Importance, *knowingly and with Malice forethought*. Charity teaches me rather to hope, that it was in mere *Sport*, and Wantonness of Heart, you have thrown about these *Fire-brands*, *Arrows*, and *Death* \*. But what the *Sport* has been, the Weapons themselves shall shew: And whatever you meant, I think it my Duty, before I conclude, to shew, that you have in Fact, *laid the Foundation* of the *Temple of Confusion*, (if I may be allowed the Expression,) and pointed out the Way to the utter *Destruction of Religion*, in every Form, and in every Degree. I hope therefore, Sir, that how ungrateful soever the Subject may be, you will give me a patient Hearing, while I spend a few Moments in the Illustration of it; partly lest some unthinking People, dazzled by the *Sophistry* of your boasted Arguments, should implicitly follow you, *not knowing whither they*

\* Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.

they go; and partly, as I insinuated in the Entrance of my former Letter, that I apprehended your Pamphlet had *such a Tendency*; for I should think I acted unworthy my Character as a *Christian* and a *Divine*, if I left such an Insinuation entirely unsupported. And indeed, Sir, if your Pamphlet has those Views, which (so far as I can learn) are universally imputed to it, I should hope nothing might be more likely to convince you of the *Weakness of those Arguments*, by which you attempt to shake the Foundation of *Christianity*, than to shew you, that if they *prove* any Thing, they prove a great deal too much; *prove*, what I hope you would abhor, as infinitely the most pernicious of all Falsehoods.

In order, if possible, to make you sensible of this, give me Leave to suppose an *Atheist*, or if that be too great a Monster to be supposed, a *Sceptick*, who has, and will have, no fixed Sentiments in *Religion* of any Kind; addressing himself to you, or to some Patron of *Natural Religion*, on *your own Principles*, and in many of *your own Words*, to some such Purpose as this.

“ It is a most *absurd Thing*, so much as to pretend to  
 “ offer any *Defence of Religion*, so far as even to argue  
 “ the *Existence of a Deity* from the *Works of Nature*, or to  
 “ go about to prove that we lie under any Obligations  
 “ to *Sobriety, Honesty, or mutual Kindness*. If such  
 “ *Disputes* as these be allowed, there is *no ensuring Con-*  
 “ *vicition*. (Pag. 5.) If the *Motives*, even to these Vir-  
 “ tues, may be examined and considered, they may be  
 “ *innocently rejected* to; for who shall ascertain the *Mo-*  
 “ *ment* when I am to *become virtuous*, if I am allowed to  
 “ *examine* why I am to be so? (Pag. 93.) Your boasted  
 “ *rational Evidence* of these Things is a false unwar-  
 “ ranted Notion, without the least Ground to support it  
 “ in Nature. (Pag. 7.) You say, *all Men* are to *think*  
 “ *alike* upon these Topicks, *all to acknowledge*, there is  
 “ an Original, Intellectual Being, endowed with all  
 “ Natural and Moral Perfections, and that all the Rules  
 “ of Virtue and Duty are to be inviolably observed:  
 “ But how should these Reasons of yours, whatever they  
 “ are, and which therefore I will not condescend so  
 “ much as to hear, produce this *Unity of Opinion* in  
 “ these important Articles? I disdain to bestow a se-  
 “ cond

cond Thought on *so preposterous a Scheme.* (Pag. 8.)  
 Tell me not, that by neglecting to enquire into the  
*Existence of a GOD*, and thereby running into an  
 utter Disregard to all that Gratitude, Veneration, and  
 Obedience, which, you say, I owe him, I may incur  
 his Displeasure; or that by refusing to enquire into  
 the Nature and Obligations of *Virtue*, I may incur a  
 thousand other Inconveniences;—I cannot have Pa-  
 tience to be *threatned* into Consequences, to be talked  
 to of *Danger* in Decisions, and to have the *Rod* held  
 out with the Lesson. (*Ibid.*) It is *impossible*, there  
 should be any such Thing as *rational Religion*; for if  
 it be *necessary* at all, it must be *equally necessary* for all  
 Men, and at all Times. *Children* must love and fear  
 the Deity, before they could know any Thing of  
 him: and their *Knowledge*, if built upon such Prin-  
 ciples as these you offer me, would come quite *too*  
*late to regulate the Practice.* (Pag. 13.) You say, you  
 find *Religion reasonable in Speculation*; but I tell you, in  
 your own Words, *that is nothing to the Purpose*: The  
 Question is, Whether I, and every Man, be *bound to*  
*believe it?* (Pag. 18.) And who can imagine this,  
 who considers how *few Men* are *qualified for Reasoning*;  
 (Pag. 17.) and how possible it is, that if the *Exami-*  
*nation* of these Things were to be attempted, a Man  
 might not *live long enough to go thro' with the Proof?*  
 (*Ibid.*) What if it be indeed so, that the Perfections  
 of the *Deity*, and the Obligations of *Virtue*, may be  
*rationally demonstrated*; yet you know, the *Generality of*  
*Apprehensions* extend not beyond a *Simple Proposition*,  
 and are thrown out at once at the very Mention of a  
*Medium*: (*Ibid.*) Nay the very *ablest and best of Men*  
 are (as you have taught me,) *disqualified for fair Rea-*  
*soning*, by their *Natural Prejudices*. We *Atheists* have  
 contracted a *Partiality* for particular Objects and  
 Notions, familiarized to us by long Acquaintance:  
 An honest and natural Fondness for *Hobbes*, and *Spinoza*,  
 and the rest of our *old Friends*, will never permit  
 us to exert our Judgments in a *disinterested* Manner;  
 not to say, how many of the *Living* may be concerned  
 in the Event.” (Pag. 23.)

“ Besides,

“ Besides,” might your *Atheistical* or *Sceptical* Disciple say, “ it is an *immense Task* you would assign me, “ a *Task* for which *Years* will not suffice, to run thro’ all the *Acute* and *Metaphysical* Writers, *Masters in Israel*, who have each of them had their darling Argument, and have many of them perhaps written whole *Folio’s* to illustrate it. Or if you would lead me to quit the high *priori* Road, (without examining which, it is nevertheless plain that I can have no full Idea of the Subject,) and would argue from *Second Causes* and the *Harmony of Nature*, how can I judge of this without understanding the *Laws of Nature?* and how can I attain the Knowledge of *those Laws*, but by a deep and long Attention to *Mathematical* Studies? As I must take the *Faith of a Deity* in the Way to *complete Virtue*, according to your *circular Argument*, that *he who comes to GOD, must believe that he is;* (*Pag. 78.*) so I must also take *Sir Isaac Newton’s Principia*, after a great many other *preparatory Books*, in the Way to *that Faith*. And however the Gentlemen of the *Boylean Lecture*, on whom you so pleasantly exercise your Talent of *Raillery*, may confine their Hearers to examine only into the *Evidence* on *one Side of the Question*; I hope you, Sir, will give me Leave to hear, what my Brethren, the *Atheists* and *Fatalists*, have said to *destroy Religion*, as well as what *its Votaries* have said in *its Defence*.”

“ Now,” may he proceed to say, “ if by some happy Conjunction of Circumstances, I have Genius and Learning, and Resolution, and Leisure, and Fortune enough, to go thro’ this *Encyclopædia* of *Ethical* and *Physico-Theological* Studies, it is not the Happiness of one in a thousand; and yet according to you, *Natural Religion* and *Morality* are Matters of *universal Concern*. And which is worst of all, when I have finished this Course, in some future distant Period of Life, if I happen to attain it, the *Event* of this *Examination* is quite *uncertain*. Perhaps all my Labour may be lost, and I may find myself obliged to sit down in my present *Infidelity*; or if I attain to any Notions of these Things, they may be *changeable with every Wind of Doctrine*. (*Pag. 26.*) Nay, if I continue to believe,

“ my Faith will administer no Comfort in the Reflection; for I shall continually forget the Fundamental Principles, on which I have formed my Determination; (Pag. 29.) and even while I remember them, my Faith will never influence my Practice. (Pag. 13.) You,” may this importunate *Echo* of your Philosophy and Wisdom retort, “ you, who have studied what *Virtue* is, tell me it will require me to deny my Appetites, and to bridle my Passions: But what will all these Principles (even the rational Apprehensions of the Presence of God himself, a View to his Favour, and the Expectation of Immortality) do, when weighed in the Scale against Demonstrative Good, (Pag. 32.) i. e. the Pleasures of Sense, and the Ties of Secular Interest? The most valuable *Reversion* is but of small Regard, when compared with that which is actually before us. To what purpose then should I lavish away my Time, my Labour, and my Substance, to build a Vessel, which, even while you offer me the Plan of it, you tell me will founder in the first Storm, if it be not saved by Miraclic.”

And now, Sir, arise and plead the injured Cause of GOD and of *Virtue*, against all this Train of wretched *Sophistry*; and I will venture to say, that the Arguments; and the Distinctions, by which you confute the *Atheist*, shall be your own Answer. You would not, for Shame, acknowledge that he reasoned justly, in a Speech like *this*, which I, or rather yourself, have put into his Mouth. You would not urge him, to throw up all Thoughts of the Reasons and Evidences of Natural Religion, and to wait “ till he be inspired in a Moment with an irresistible Light from Heaven, by which his Faith should be completed in an Instant, a perfect Creed produced at once, and made self-evident to the Mind, in a Way little different from Intuition.” (Pag. 59) I charitably believe you would think the Subject too serious for such Kind of Jargon, and forgetting your Harangue to your Oxonian Friend, you would gravely inculcate very different Principles.

You would, no Doubt, shew your Antagonist, that he talked in a very crude and indigested Manner, and confounded Things, which should by all Means be carefully

*distin.*

120 A SECOND LETTER to the Author, of distinguished, and indeed are very easily distinguishable.—You would then to be sure own, and urge, that all Mankind are capable of some Reasoning, unless they be Lunatics or Idiots, who are confessedly out of the present Question; and that the great Proofs of Religion are so plain, that a few Words, and a little Time and Labour, may clear them beyond all reasonable Objections.—You would remind him, that common Sense might teach him in general to distinguish between what is essential, and what is merely circumstantial in an Argument, and might find out a Medium between being exquisitely learned in the History of Controversies relating to the Deity, and utterly unacquainted with any Reason for believing his Existence.—You would tell him, that the great Author of Nature, having given him some Hints of his Being and Perfections, (which the very questioning of them, or even the Denial, would prove he in Fact had,) might justly require, that he should seriously and candidly weigh at least the most obvious Proofs; which, if he did, he would undoubtedly see his Obligations to believe and practise accordingly. And when he urged the Inefficacy of these Persuasions to influence his Practice, you would perhaps add, before you were well aware,—that if a rational Creature could commit such an Outrage upon Reason, as to rush on to prohibited Gratifications, in the apprehended Presence of God, and at the known Expence of his Favour, he must charge the fatal Consequence on himself alone; and might in the mean Time be ashamed to confess himself so mean a Slave to every irregular Propensity of Appetite and Passion, and to talk of the Demonstrative Good of those Baits, which he knew in his own Conscience to be the Instruments of final Destruction.

In short, Sir, not to swell this Recapitulation, into which I am thus accidentally fallen, to the Length that you have yourself given, (Pag. 109,—111.) I think you must answer him by the very same Considerations, which I urged in my former Letter, when replying to you, and by Consequence must confute yourself. And as one who knows the Importance of the Matter, and wishes nothing more sincerely than to see you extricated from these Labyrinths of Sophistry and Error, I do now beseech you, that you would enter into your own Conscience, while

while the Matter stands in this Point of Light, and ask yourself, how you could possibly on your own Principles *reply* to this *Enemy of Natural Religion*? I dare say, the Publick would be pleased to see, how you would manage the Debate. But if you could not *defend* even *Natural Religion* without *confuting yourself*, then consider how you will answer it to God and to the World, not openly to *renounce Tenets* that must be so utterly subversive of it.

You are pleased, Sir, in one of your concluding Pages, (Pag. 112.) to intimate your Purpose of offering up in Behalf of your young Friend "your most ardent *Prayers*" "at the Throne of Grace, that God would illuminate" "and irradiate his Mind with a perfect and thorough" "Conviction of the Truth of his *holy Gospel*." But if the *End of your Letter* be indeed, what I find every Body I converse with supposes it was, to overthrow what you here call "the *holy Gospel*," and presently after, "that" "Divine Law dictated by the *holy Spirit*;" I cannot forbear saying, that such a Speech as this would become an *Atheist* much better than a *Deist*. It is, in that Case, so notorious an *Insult* on the Majesty of God, and the Throne of his Grace, as one would imagine no Creature should dare to commit, who apprehended but a remote Possibility that he might at length be obliged to prostrate himself before it, and ask the Life of his Soul there. It would pain my Heart so much, to think you should be capable of carrying Impiety to such a Height, that I am sometimes ready rather to *forget* all that looks like *Infidelity* and *Profaneness* in what you had before written, and charitably to *hope*, tho' *against Hope*, and tho' it be perhaps at some Expence of my Character that I should mention it, that you are indeed a *de-vout*, tho' *irrational*, *Believer* of the *Gospel*, and that your Treatise is to be numbered amongst the Wonders which *Enthusiasm* has wrought. But whether you wrote this Passage *in Earnest* or *in Jest*, it is with all *Seriousness* I now assure you, that I pour out my ardent *Prayers* before the Throne of Grace *for you*; that by the secret Influences of the *Blessed Spirit* on your Heart, (to whose Agency no *Prejudices* are invincible) you may be led into a wiser and a happier *Way of Thinking* than you seem at present to entertain; and that God may not charge to your Account the

122 *A SECOND LETTER to the Author, of, &c.*  
*Ruin of those Souls, whom this unhappy Pamphlet, what-  
ever was intended by it, has so palpable and so fatal a  
Tendency to destroy. Could what I have written, in  
either of these Letters, be at all subservient to the Ac-  
complishment of this Wish, it would be one of the most  
sensible Pleasures which can ever reach the Heart of,*

S I R,

*Your faithful humble Servant,*

*Northampton,  
Dec. 1. 1742.*

P. DODDRIDGE.







T O T H E

A U T H O R of a late Pamphlet,

I N T I T L E D,

C H R I S T I A N I T Y not founded on  
A R G U M E N T, &c.

L E T T E R III.

S I R,

W H E N I concluded my last *Letter* to you, I was not determined upon this *Third Address*: But I make it in Compliance with the Request of several of my Friends, who think, that in Order to do full Justice to the Work I have undertaken, I ought to consider your *Third Part*. This they the rather urge, as it may give me an Opportunity of vindicating an important *Doctrine of Scripture*, which some of the *Friends of Christianity* have unwarily represented in such a View, as to encourage its *Enemies* to endeavour to plant their Artillery against the *Gospel*, on that Ground, from whence, if there be due Care taken, it is most capable of being defended. I am the more willing to comply with this Request, because I find your ingenious Correspondent at *Oxford* (whose *Letter* to you has, I doubt not, given the World a great deal of Pleasure,) has modestly omitted the Discussion of *this*, as well as of several *other Points*, which I have examined at large in my *Two former Letters*.

I proceed therefore directly to the Consideration of what you have advanced in the *Third Part* of your Book; in which you undertake to shew, that *Christianity*

cannot be *founded on Argument*, i. e. that we cannot be obliged to exercise our *Reason* in discovering its *Evidences*, or judging of its *Doctrines*, because GOD has prescribed another, and *very different Method* of coming at the *Knowledge of Divine Truths*; which is, (as you represent it, in the 56th and following Pages,) the *immediate Operation of the Holy Spirit* upon our Minds, infallibly dictating to us the whole Scheme and System of them, in such a Manner, as to leave nothing to be done by *ourselves*, but merely to receive and assent to *Doctrines* seen by their own Light, under the Influence of his Teachings.

Now, here, Sir, had you separated some Things, which you offer in Illustration and Proof of this general Assertion, from the rest, I should have been very ready to have acknowledged their *Truth* and their *Moment*, and had it been necessary, (which I am well aware it would not have been,) to have joined with you in the Defence of both; as you will easily see by what I am farther to offer, and must indeed well perceive from what I have already written in this Controversy, even tho' you should be ever so much a Stranger to my other Writings; in all which I am continually referring to the *Necessity of Divine Influences* on the Mind, to form it to *Knowledge* and *Holiness*; and in some of which, (particularly my *Seventh Sermon on Regeneration*,) I have set myself to defend the Doctrine at large, in a Manner which must certainly appear very sincere, and will, I hope, be found thoroughly convincing to all; who will seriously weigh it, and will abide by *Scripture* as the *Standard of their Faith* \*. But my Complaint is, that  
what

\* Had I not observed many other Marks of *very great Haste* in good Mr. Seagrave's Pamphlet, in which he has undertaken to adjust Matters between us, long before he had heard me out; I should have been much surprized to see myself charged with representing the *Agency of the Spirit* as *only necessary to confirm Faith, and quicken Obedience*, and with intimating that *Saving Faith must of Course follow a Religious Education*. Surely, he is too honest, thus to *misquote my Words* with Design, or to say such Things, had he read with any Attention at all, I will not say, my *Sermons on Education*, (in which I strongly assert the contrary, as well as in *those on Regeneration*,) but even the 34th Page of my *First Letter* on which he animadvert; in  
which

what you teach on this Head, tho' in many Places very true, and expressed with great Propriety, is intermingled and connected with other Assertions, which seem to me quite unscriptural, and extravagant; and which, if they were to be admitted, must necessarily end in the *Subversion of Christianity*. For all your Scheme centers in this, "that these *Influences* and *Assistances* of the Spirit of God are of such a Kind, as to contain an ample *Revelation* of the *whole System of Christianity*, to every particular Person who is the Subject of it; so as to supersede the Necessity of any *Rational Enquiry* into the Evidences or Contents of Religion; and in such a Manner as to place him above all Dependence on *Scripture* and, in one Word, to make him absolutely *infallible*."

That the Reader may not imagine, I mistake your Meaning, and aggravate the Matter beyond due Bounds, I shall transcribe a few Passages of yours, in which it will plainly appear, that you carry the Matter to this extravagant Height. And whoever attentively considers the Connection of many of these Passages with the rest, will immediately find, that what is *most extravagant* in these *Assertions*, is so *essential* to your Scheme, that were these Passages to be moderated, the Mention of this *Doctrine* would be quite foreign to your Purpose.

While you plead for the *Reality* and *Necessity* of such an *Influence*, you call it, in the General, "*A constant and particular Revelation, imparted separately, and supernaturally, to every Individual*." (Pag. 112.) And elsewhere, (Pag. 56.) you speak of the Spirit, as "the *great Dictator, and infallible Guide, who is the promised*

F 3

"Oracle

which I speak of the *Influences of Divine Grace* as necessary to the Success of the most pious and prudent Attempt which Parents can make: And in my *Second Letter*, published several Days before his Pamphlet, (Pag. 114.) I speak of it "as the *Office of the Spirit*, to enlighten and renew, to sanctify and strengnen, to cheer and guide the Children of God and Heirs of Glory." I believe this *Rashness* to have been the Effect of a *pious*, tho' in this Respect, *ill governed Zeal*, and therefore I can easily excuse it; but my Respect to that Gentleman leads me to wish, that he may have Patience, as *Solomon* well expresses it, (*Prov. xviii. 13.*) *to bear a Matter before he answers it*, because I desire that every Thing in which he engages may be *Wisdom and Honour to him*.

“ Oracle to attend Believers to the <sup>b</sup> End of the World, to  
 “ irradiate their Souls at once, as the *all sufficient Origin*  
 “ of Faith, in Opposition to the Aids and Advices of  
 “ Reason.” This you call (Pag. 58.) “ the Light of  
 “ Inspiration, and infused Evidence, which is of immediate  
 “ Influence, and operates, as in the Case of Saul,” (as if  
 that were to be considered as a common Standard,)  
 “ without Delay:” A Principle, which effects Conver-  
 “ sion,” (you must, I suppose, mean, to the Belief of  
 Christianity as a *Speculative Truth*) “ by an irresistible  
 “ Light from Heaven, and flashes Conviction in a Mo-  
 “ ment;—producing,” as you express it, (Pag. 59.)  
 “ the most perfect and finished Creed at once;”—so as  
 to be “ the Sum and Substance of all Argumentation,  
 “ and” (whatever that sublime Expression may mean,)  
 “ the very Spirit and Extract of all Convicting Power,  
 “ of a Nature, perhaps, but little differing from *Intuition*  
 “ itself;—in Consequence of which there is nothing  
 “ in the *Suspicious Repositories of Human Testimony*,” (in  
 which, it is evident from other Passages, you include  
 Scripture,) “ that can deserve the least Notice, or be  
 “ thought worthy of a Moment’s Attention on this  
 “ Subject.” You call it, (Pag. 60.) “ A present and  
 “ standing Miracle of our own, in Consequence of which  
 “ we stand no longer in Need of any of the Credit of  
 “ Ancient Miracles.” You tell us, it produces “ such  
 “ indelible Characters stamped upon the Heart, as no  
 “ Misrepresentations can ever possibly intervene to cor-  
 “ rupt.” And say, “ that this faithful Monitor and  
 “ Guardian has promised to continue this Office to the  
 “ End of the World, that we may not be left liable one  
 “ Moment to a Possibility of Error and Imposition.” So  
 that, (not to multiply Citations from many parallel  
 Passages,) as you express it, (Pag. 90.) in as strong and  
 determinate Terms as can be imagined, “ Actual Infal-  
 “ libility is the only Title whereon to ground any plausible  
 “ Claim to our Discipleship.”

Now, Sir, I seriously apprehend, that every intelligent  
 Reader will immediately conclude, that if *this Representation*  
 of the Matter were indeed the genuine Doctrine  
 of Christianity itself, this *Third Part* of your Treatise,  
 separate from the *Two former*, which I hope have been  
 already

already sufficiently confuted, would alone be an unanswerable Demonstration, that *Christianity* was *false*. If this be its Language, and these its Engagements, it is evidently *condemned out of its own Mouth*, for surely *all Christians are not in Fact infallible*. Every *Error*, and every *Contradiction* maintained by any of them, on one Side the Question or the other, evinces this; unless *both Parts* of a *Contradiction* could be *true*. You must therefore, on these Principles, reconcile *Error* and *Infallibility*, which it seems every difficult to do: Unless you should think fit to evade that Necessity by saying, that *they only* among all the Contending Parties are to be acknowledged for *Christians*, who are *free from Error*; from *any Error*, of any Kind, or any Degree, in any Question in which *Religion* is concerned. And this surely, in the Judgment of every candid and impartial Man, would be no other than acknowledging, that there is *no such Thing as a Christian* now in the World. And this would consequentially prove *Christianity* itself *false*, as it is confessedly a Part of the Scheme, that it was to be perpetuated to all Ages by a *Succession of faithful Disciples*; which, according to the whole of your Argument, it was the Design of *this extraordinary Agency of the Spirit* to secure.

The *Absurdity* of this is so flagrant, that I suppose you will rather chuse to say, that the Reason why *Christians* fall into *Error* is, because they do not follow this *infallible Guide*. But you must give me Leave to remind you, that you have cut yourself off from this Retreat, by asserting *this Light* to be *irrefragible*, and to *fast Conviction in a Moment*; and by saying expressly, that it is an *indelible Character*, instamped (as it seems by what you elsewhere maintain,) *at our Baptism*, and *incapable of being corrupted*. You cannot surely imagine such a *Subterfuge* consistent with saying, (as in the Place quoted above,) "that *actual Infallibility* is the *only Title* to the *Claim* of being a *Disciple*." An *actual Infallibility*, liable for want of due Attention to be mistaken, is as *incoherent an Idea*, as that of a *Square Circle*, or a *Cylindrical Cone*. *Christianity* must appear *ridiculous*, if it taught *such a Doctrine*; and you will, I hope, Sir, examine your own Conscience, as to the *View* in which you wished it should appear, when you fathered such a Scheme upon it.

As I cannot remember ever to have seen *the Doctrine of the Spirit's Influence* set in so injurious a Light, and turned so visibly to the *Reproach* of that *Gospel*, to which, when duly explained, it is so distinguished a *Glory*, I shall therefore set myself to canvass this Point with you at large: And hope to shew, that *this Misrepresentation* of what the *Scripture* teaches on this Head is as *gross*, as the *Scheme* itself is *inconsistent* and *absurd*.

Now that this Point may be set in as clear and easy a Light as possible, I shall endeavour to shew,

*First*, That the *Scripture* may say many *very important Things* of the *Agency* and *Operation* of the *Spirit* on Mens Minds, without carrying it to such a Height as you suppose.

*Secondly*, That it says many Things concerning *these Influences*, and the *Persons* under them, utterly *inconsistent* with your *Scheme*. And,

*Thirdly*, That the *Passages* on which you build your *Hypothesis*, will none of them, if fairly interpreted, *support* it, and several of them are in themselves sufficient to *subvert* and *overthrow* it, tho' they have been *unnaturally pressed* into a contrary Service.

Most of what I have farther to offer in Reply to your *Letter*, will be comprehended under one or other of these *Heads*: But before I enter into the Discussion of them, I must take Leave to premise one *Preliminary*; which is, That the *Question* we are debating, is not by any Means to be decided by *Human Authority*. I am very sensible, Sir, that some eminent *Divines* of the *Roman Communion*, and of the *Established Church* at Home, as well as among our *Nonconformists*, have, in the Zeal and Humility of their Hearts, *expressed themselves* in a Manner which *cannot be defended*, and thereby have given too plausible an Occasion for your dangerous and fatal *Misrepresentations*. Yet I am not aware, that any of them, even *Bishop Beveridge*, or the celebrated *Archbishop of Cambray* himself, ever ran your Lengths; and their other Writings shew, how utterly they would have *abhorred* some of the Consequences, which you have drawn, or suggested, from these Principles. But my Business is *with the Law*, and *with the Testimony*; and where these holy and excellent Men have not spoken

ken according to that Rule, I cannot believe that Celestial *Light* to have been in them, or suppose their Minds under the Guidance of that *Spirit*, whom, tho' by ill-judged Methods, it was undoubtedly their sincere and affectionate Desire to glorify. Taking the Matter, therefore, as the *Scripture* represents it, it will be very easy to shew,

*First*, That the *Scripture* may say many *very high* and *important Things* concerning the *Agency* and *Operation* of the Blessed Spirit on the Hearts of Believers, without carrying it so far as you represent, or laying any just Foundation for the Arguments you would build on such Passages.—Many Things may be said of the *Χρισμᾶτα*, or the *Extraordinary Gifts* and *Powers* of the *Apostles* and *Primitive Christians*, which were so *peculiar* to that Age, that We have no personal Concern in them at all:—And many Things might be said of *those Operations* which were to continue in all Ages of the *Church*, which tho' of great Moment and universal Concern, may fall *very far short* of what you assert, and must maintain, in Order to establish the Consequences you would connect with these Principles.

It is of great Importance here to recollect, (tho' you have artfully contrived, if possible, to keep your Readers from such a View,) that many Things in *Scripture*, which relate to the *Operations* of the *Spirit* of God on the Mind, have a *Reference* to those *Extraordinary Gifts*, which were *peculiar* to the *Apostles*, and in which we of these later Ages have no farther Concern, than as the general Knowledge of them may establish our Regard to the *Writings* of those eminent *Servants of Christ*, who were wisely and graciously distinguished by their Divine Master, by such *Extraordinary Endowments*, to fit them for the *Extraordinary Office* they sustained: An *Office*, by which they were called out to *plant the Gospel*, amidst a thousand Oppositions, Discouragements, and Dangers, in *Countries* where it was before utterly *unknown*; and also to *draw up* those important and sacred *Records*, by which the *Knowledge* of it was, in the purest and most comprehensive Manner, to be *communicated* to the *remote*st Ages and *Nations*. It would be quite foreign from *my* Purpose, to enter into a nice Enumeration of their

*peculiar Gifts and Powers.* It plainly appears congruous to the general Scheme of *Providence*, so far as we can judge of it, that Persons destined to such a Work should have some *uncommon Furniture* for it; not only beyond what could be expected by *Christians* in future Ages, when the *Gospel* was settled in the World, and many *ordinary Helps* provided, of which the *Church* was then destitute; but also beyond what could be pretended to by *private Christians*, or even by *subordinate Ministers*, in those early Days: And accordingly, modest and humble as the *Apostles* were, we frequently find them speaking in their Writings as the authorized *Embassadors of Christ*, who bore unequalled Credentials from him; to whose Decisions therefore, both *Churches*, and their *Ministers* were to submit, if they would not incur the Guilt of *despising their common Lord*.

It will on these Premises therefore be very readily granted to you, that *these holy Men* might, as you speak, “have many *particular Revelations, separately and supernaturally imparted to each;*” and that in such a Manner as, while they were receiving them, might so far supersede the Exercise of *Reason*, as to leave them only to observe, report, and record *the Oracles of GOD*, delivered to *them*, as of old to the *Prophets*, who *spoke as they were immediately moved, or borne on, by the Holy Ghost\**, tho’ *all the Lord’s People* had no Warrant to expect to be so immediately instructed and favoured. Whatever were the peculiar Signification of *the Word of Wisdom*, and *the Word of Knowledge*, which were given to the *Apostles* by the *Spirit*†, (concerning which there has been, and perhaps still may be, much Debate,) it is put out of question by many evident Passages in the *New Testament*, that the *Apostles* were *divinely assisted* in the Interpretation of the *Sacred Oracles* of the *Old*, and were also favoured with such comprehensive Views of the whole *Christian Scheme*, as they could not have learnt by any *Human Methods* of Investigation; or even by the *personal Instructions* they had received from *Christ* in the Days of his *Flesh*, who expressly referred them to *the Spirit* as the great *Teacher*, by whom they were to be instructed in many Things which, while he was with them, they *were not able to bear*‡. These were such Things

\* 2 Pet. i. 21.

† 1 Cor. xii. 8.

‡ John xvi. 12.



Things, as Eye had not seen, nor Ear heard, neither had it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive them; and it is easy to imagine, that with respect to these, they might very properly say, in a Sense peculiar to themselves, *GOD hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, which searcheth all Things, even the deep Things of GOD\**: For we have received the Spirit which is of GOD, that we might know the Things which are freely given us of GOD; which Things also we speak, in Words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, so as to be judged by no Man, because we have the Mind of Christ †.

These, Sir, were glorious *Apóstolical Prerogatives*, in the highest Sense which the Words will bear; yet I cannot but observe, that, so far as we can judge by the *New Testament*, the Degree of *Inspiration* granted to them would not warrant some of those Expressions which you use, when describing that which you suppose common to every Christian. You will find it hard to prove, that all this Conviction was flashed into their Souls in a Moment; that a finished Creed was produced in their Minds at once; and that none of them were for a Moment left liable to a Possibility of Error. I think the contrary is demonstrable, even with regard to them; tho' I doubt not their being at length led into all necessary Truth, and qualified to transmit it to us, without any Mixture or Alloy of Falsehood.

The Scripture may also, without establishing your peculiar Doctrines on this Head, farther teach, (as I am well satisfied it does,) that the *Holy Spirit* was to continue with the Church in all Ages, even to the End of the World; that it was to be his stated Office to convince Men of Sin, to direct their believing Regards to a Saviour, and to glorify Christ, by taking of his Things, and shewing them ‡, not only to the *Apóstles*, but to succeeding Believers. It may teach us, that, by his Influence, GOD, who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, shines into our Hearts, to give the Knowledge of his Glory, as reflected from the Face of his Son §; that he irradiates our Understandings, and sanctifies our Affections, so that in Consequence of this, when we commence cordial Be-

\* 1 Cor. ii, 9, 10. † Ver. 12, 13, 15, 16. ‡ Joh. xvi, 14. § 2 Cor. iv, 6.

lievers, *we are born of the Spirit*. The whole Genius of *Scripture* may lead us, (as I am fully perswaded it does,) chiefly to ascribe unto his gracious *Influences*, our *Understanding* in Divine Things, as well as our *Disposition* to comply with the *Method of Salvation* which the *Gospel* exhibits, and with the *Precepts* it establishes. *All this* may be granted, may be asserted, may be contended for, without maintaining “a constant and supernatural *Revelation*, to be imparted to every *Individual*, so as to “be the *All-sufficient Origin of Faith*,” not only in *Neglect* of the *Aids of Reason*, but “in *Opposition* to “them.” There may be all that I have here supposed, and yet there may be no “*irresistible Light*, to flash such “a *Conviction in a Moment*, as to produce a *finished Creed at once*,” so that from that illustrious *Æra* of *Illumination*, “*Scripture* should be thought unworthy of “a *Moment’s Attention*, and a *standing Miracle* produced, which should supersede our *Necessity* of attending to *those* which were anciently wrought in “*Confirmation of the Gospel*.” Great Encouragement may be given, in the Use of *Rational Means*, to hope for the continued *Influence* of the *Spirit* to improve our *Knowledge*; tho’ we may be, not only for a *single Moment*, but during every *Moment* of our *Lives*, liable to *err*, in the *Circumstantial*s of *Religion*: Nay, I see no *Reason* to ground the *Claim* of our *Discipleship*, upon any *Pretence* at all to *actual Infallibility*.

Prove, Sir, if it lies in your Power, the *necessary Connection* between what I have here acknowledged, (I think, with most other *Christians* in all *Ages*,) and *that Part* of your *Scheme*, which I here deny to be by any *Means* a *Consequence* from it. For you must easily see, that these *controverted Branches* of it are the only *Foundation* of *that Conclusion*, towards which you are all along driving: Since upon any other *Hypothesis*, but that which the extravagant Language I have so often repeated expresses, the humble and diligent Use of our own *Reason* in *Matters of Religion* is so far from being *superseded*; that on the other Hand, it will (as I shall presently shew more at large,) appear a most *necessary Duty*, in *Consequence* of this very *Promise of Divine Assistance*; if we would not turn it into an ungrateful

grateful Insult on those Natural Methods of Information, which *Providence* has given us, and to the Improvement of which the *Promises of Grace* were intended to animate us.

Having thus illustrated and confirmed this general Remark, which may be applied to a Multitude of *Texts* in the *New Testament*, which it will not by any Means be necessary particularly to enumerate in this Debate; I now proceed,

*Secondly*, To shew that the *Scripture* says many Things concerning the *Influences of the Spirit*, and the *Persons* under various Degrees of them, which are utterly *irreconcilable* with your *Representation* of them, as stated above.

And here the leading Thought is, that the *New Testament*, (of which we here especially speak,) frequently supposes, and expressly requires and institutes *the Use of such Means*, in Persons under the illuminating and sanctifying *Influences of the Spirit*, as you suppose to be entirely *superfeded* by those Influences.

And for the Truth of this, I appeal to the whole Tenor of the *Sacred Writings*, in which you find *such Exhortations* and *Instructions* given, and *such Regards* required to them, as must certainly prove, how far the *Christians* to whom they are directed, were from such an *Extent*, and such an *Infallibility of Knowledge*, as you suppose inseparably connected with a *Claim of Discipleship*, and necessarily result from the *Teachings* of their *Divine Monitor*. But it would be tedious and useless to take up my Reader's Time with Particulars: Let him read over the *Epistles* to the *Corinthians* and *Galatians* in particular, with your *Principles* in his View, and judge whether almost *every Chapter*, and in some Places *every Verse*, does not strongly reclaim against them. Indeed, according to your Representation of the Matter, nothing could have been more *superfluous*, than the very Institution of a *Stated Ministry* in the Church. According to *St. Paul's* View of it, *this* was a great and important *Design* of our Blessed Redeemer, when after the Triumph of his *Ascension* he distributed the Royal Donative of his *Spirit*, and gave under its Influence, besides *Apostles*, *Prophets* and *Evangelists*, *Pastors* and *Teachers*;—to perfect  
the

the Saints for the Work of the Ministry, in Order to the gradual Edification of the Body of Christ; till all should come, in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of GOD, unto a perfect Man, even unto the complete Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ, or to the State of a full-grown Christian\*. Reconcile this, Sir, if you can, with your Scheme of their shooting up at once, into the full Knowledge of every Thing relating to Religion, into actual Infallibility, and such a glorious Independency on all the Methods of Human Instruction.

The Contrariety of this to the whole Scheme and Tenor of Scripture is so plain, that I shall add on this Head only one Remark farther, as a Specimen of many more which might fill a Volume: I mean, that such Advices are given even to those, who were appointed the Teachers of others, and consequently must be supposed to have a peculiar Share of Divine and Supernatural Illumination; whereas, on your Hypothesis, they would have been unnecessary, even to the least and meanest of their Charge. Thus, when Paul takes his Leave of the Elders at Ephesus, he solemnly commends them to the Word of GOD's Grace, as what was able to build them up †. And in Terms yet less liable to Objection, when writing to Timothy, (tho' as an Evangelist, superior by far to the Class of Ordinary Ministers, and endowed with Miraculous Gifts nearly approaching those of the Apostolick Office,) he charges him, in his First Epistle, to give Attendance to Reading, and to Meditate on the Divine Things he had learnt ‡: And yet more expressly in his Second Epistle, as Timothy from a Child had known the Holy Scriptures, which the Apostle testifies, were able to make him wise to Salvation, thro' Faith in Christ Jesus, he solemnly charges him to continue in the Things which he had learned ||; that is, no doubt in the Study of these Scriptures, as well as of those Instructions he had received from Paul; each of which would, according to you, have been equally superseded. And then, instead of talking of "Manuscript Authorities, and Paper Revelations, the suspicious Repositories of Human Testimony, in which to a Man illuminated from above, there could be

\* Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. † Acts xx. 32. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15.  
 || 2 Tim. iii. 14, 15.

“ be nothing of Consequence enough to engage a Mo-  
 “ ment’s Attention,” (*your own* never to be forgotten  
*Words,*) the *Apostle* closes the Period with this remark-  
 able Testimony; *All Scripture, (or the whole Scripture)*  
*is given by Inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for*  
*DOCTRINE, as well as for Reproof, for Correction,*  
*for Instruction in Righteousness; that the Man of GOD, i. e.*  
*not only the Christian, but the Minister, the Evangelist,*  
*the Apostle, may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all*  
*good Works †.*

And thus, Sir, by the Review of *these Passages*, in  
 Comparison with a Multitude more which might easily  
 be added to them, we are taught the true *Scripture-*  
*Doctrin*e of the *Illuminating Influences of the Spirit*, (which  
 are now chiefly in Question;) and I shall endeavour in  
 a few Words to propose it, without the Assistance and  
 Incumbrance of those *Technical Phrases*, which *Modern*  
*Divines* have introduced; and which, how profitable  
 soever many of them may be, cannot I suppose seem  
 absolutely necessary, to any who regard the *Scripture*  
 as a compleat Rule.

Now I apprehend the Substance of it to be this.  
 GOD is the great *Father of Lights*, the *Author* of all  
 the *Understanding* divided among the various Ranks of  
 Created Beings; who, as he at first *formed the Minds* of  
*Angels and Men*, continues the Exercise of their *Intellec-*  
*tual Faculties*, and one way or another *communicates* to  
 them *all the Knowledge* of every Kind, which they pos-  
 sess \*. But whereas there were *certain Points*, which it  
 was *necessary* for Men to know in this fallen State, in  
 Order to their Recovery and final Happiness, which  
 they could not possibly have discovered by the most ac-  
 curate and intense Use of their Natural Faculties; GOD  
 was pleased by his *Holy Spirit*, in a Manner which we  
 cannot

† 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

\* In this View, *all our Knowledge* of every Kind may be called  
 a *Revelation from GOD*, and be ascribed, as it is by *Eihu*, to *the In-*  
*spiration of the Almighty*: (Job xxxii. S.) But the Words REVELA-  
 TION and INSPIRATION are so generally used in a much stricter  
 Sense, and with Reference to a miraculous *Divine Interposition* to  
 communicate *Knowledge*, not attainable, or to be expected in a Natu-  
 ral Way, that I think it *fittest* commonly to confine *these Words* to that  
 more special and elevated Signification,

cannot particularly explain, to reveal them to the Apostles; and after having furnished them with sufficient Credentials, to prove, to all impartial Enquirers, that the extraordinary Doctrines they taught, were not the Reveries of an heated Imagination, but indeed Instructions from Heaven, he directed these Apostles, by an extraordinary Influence on their Minds, to record the History of such Facts, and to write such Instructions to the Churches with whom they were immediately concerned, as should happily contain an exact, unaffected, and full Representation of the genuine Christian Doctrine, as well as of the Manner of its being introduced into the World, and established in it. This grand Design is so happily executed, that I doubt not, but every Person of common Capacity might, on Reading the New Testament, understand, by the mere Use of his Natural Faculties, what the Institutions of Christ are; as well as he might understand those of Solon or Lycurgus, by reading the Writings of Xenophon, Plutarch, or any other ancient Historian.

But I further apprehend, that as the Gospel was a Scheme, in which the Divine Glory and the Salvation of Men were so intimately concerned, the Spirit of GOD, which had in a more imperfect Degree operated on Mens Minds under the Mosaick Dispensation, to assist their Understandings in apprehending the Sense of the Sacred Oracles, and to affect their Hearts in Conformity to their practical Design, did, and does, in a yet more abundant Manner, interest himself in the Preservation and Efficacy of this nobler Institution, in the first Establishment of which he had so illustrious a Part.

There is Reason to think, that in the earliest Age his Interposition, even in those who were not the Original Depositories of this Revelation, might be more sensible and remarkable, than now. It seems very congruous to the Nature and Circumstances of Things, so far as we can judge of them, (for I take not upon me absolutely to assert it,) that among the other miraculous Gifts bestowed by the Apostles on the first Ministers, whom they settled in new formed Churches, some of them might immediately relate to the Understanding and Memory of the Persons so ordained; in Consequence of which they should, for the Benefit of the Flocks respectively committed

to their Care, more readily apprehend, and more exactly retain, what the *Apostles* taught them, than in the mere Strength of their *Natural Faculties* they could have done.

Yet, as the *Spirit* was to *abide with the Church always*, and all true *Christians* are, agreeably to that Promise, represented as *born of the Spirit*, as led by it, and, by Virtue of its Operations, as *one with Christ*, it seems to me apparent, that to confine his Operations to the *miraculous Gifts and Powers* of those *early Ages*, is in a great Measure to *subvert Christianity*, or at least to rob it of its greatest Glory, and its Professors of their noblest Support and Encouragement. But, if we grant his *continued Influence* on the Minds of *Christians* in any Degree, as we cannot suppose it to be a blind and irrational Impulse, urging us to what we see no just Reason to pursue, it is very *analogous* to the Reason of Things to suppose, that he *operates* upon our *Understandings*, as well as on the *other Faculties* of the Soul.

We readily allow, that *the Manner of these Operations* cannot be clearly and fully expressed, as neither can we explain that of *Sensation or Memory*. But this Ignorance of the *particular manner* does not, as one would imagine some apprehended, leave Men at Liberty to assert, at Random, whatever they please about it. We may reasonably conclude, that it is not the *Stated Office* of the *Divine Spirit* to reveal *New Doctrines*, which the *Scripture* does not teach; for if it were, *GOD* would undoubtedly, as when he formerly added to *prior Revelations* given to his *Church*, furnish the Persons to whom such Discoveries were made, with *proper Credentials* to authorize their Report: And if this cannot be proved, it ought not to be asserted. Nor can we imagine it *his Office*, to reveal, by an *immediate Suggestion*, the *Doctrines* already delivered in *Scripture*, to those who may have daily Opportunities of learning them from thence. My *First Letter* proved, that there is in the Nature of Things *no Necessity* for this, since the *Truth of the Revelation* may to such be *known* without it; and to say, that where *that Truth* in general is *known*, there is a *Necessity* of such a *Revelation of particular Doctrines*, in Order to their being understood, is making a sad Compliment to the *written Word of God*, and is indeed making it quite an insignificant

ficant and useless Thing. If any such Facts can be produced, let the Evidence of them be laid before the World, and all due Regard shall be paid to them; but *in Theory* it seems *improbable*, because so plainly *unnecessary*, that GOD should do that in a *miraculous*, which he has so amply provided for in an *ordinary Way*. Of this at least I may be very confident, that he hath never given any Encouragement, either in the *Old Testament*, or the *New*, which should lead Men to expect and hope, that he should thus come, and *whisper in their Ear*, by *immediate Inspiration*, the *Truths* and *Doctrines* which he *speaks aloud in his Word*, and which they will neither *read nor hear* there. I think a Man might as well expect, that if, when entering on a *Course of Study*, he were to *put out his own Eyes*, GOD should, by *Miracle*, give him the compleat and orderly Idea of all the Characters of *Books*, which he might otherwise have read \*.

Far be it from me in the mean time to deny, that GOD may, by an *extraordinary Agency*, render *Mens Faculties* more capable of *Apprehension*, where Divine Things are concerned, than they might otherwise be. He may, no doubt, *do it*: He may also awaken a *dormant Idea*, which lay neglected in the Memory, with unusual Energy; he may secretly attract the *more attentive Regard* of the Mind to it; and give a Man both an *Inclination*, and an *Ability* of tracing its various Relations, with an unusual Attention, so that a Lustre before quite unknown shall be (as it were) poured upon it; while in the mean time *Prejudices*, which rendered the Mind indisposed for the Search, or Admission and Acknowledgment of *Truth*, may be *suspended*, and even by imperceptible Degrees *dissipated*. In all these Particulars, there may be a *real Operation* of the *Spirit of GOD* upon Mens Minds, under which they may not themselves be conscious

\* I must intreat the Reader to observe, that I do, in the following *Paragraphs*, speak chiefly of *such Influences of the Spirit*, as I apprehend, in some Degree, *common* to all real and sincere *Christians*; allowing there are Cases of a very peculiar and distinguished Nature, in which GOD goes out of his usual Methods, both of *Providence* and *Grace*, to reclaim, renew, and enlighten some very great Sinners, in a Manner which no Man living has any Warrant to expect. See my *Sermons on Regeneration*, Sermon, VIII. pag. 263, 264.



scious of any Thing at all *extraordinary*, tho' it be indeed so. You well know, Sir, that in the *Natural World*, the *Divine Agency* accomplishes all by *Second Causes*, and yet in such a Manner, that hiding itself (as it were) behind them, it is seldom taken Notice of: According to that fine Expression of Mr. *Trompſon*,

Alone HE works in all, yet HE alone,  
Seems not to work.—

As *Christians* we must believe, that *Angels* are employed for our Preservation from Day to Day; yet I suppose we generally pass through Life, without being able to fix on any one Circumstance concerning which we can assuredly say, "This was the Effect of *Angelick Interposition*." And thus may there be a *real Operation* of the *Holy Spirit* upon the Mind, to render it *more susceptible*, or *more tenacious* of Divine Knowledge; while all seems to be done by the *Regular Exercise* of the *Human Faculties*, in Concurrence with which God works. And in Consequence of this a *Divine Truth* so learnt may not, and will not, be considered, as an *immediate Revelation* from GOD, nor be assented to as on the Credit of *this Operation*; but as on the Evidence of *Reason* or *Scripture*, which the Mind under this Guidance is enabled to discern.

And on this Head I desire it may be remembered, (for it is too evident to be disputed,) that our Obligation to attend to any *particular Notice*, which GOD has given us either of *Truth* or *Duty*, does not depend on its being a *Notice* given us in *this*, or *that distinguishing Way*, whether *Natural*, or *Supernatural*; but upon that which is common to all Kind of *Notices* from GOD as such. Nor does our Obligation to follow any *good Inclination*, which arises in our Mind, depend upon its being *naturally* or *supernaturally* produced, but simply, or at least chiefly, upon the *Evidence* we have of its being *Good*. Nay, I will venture to say, (on this Foundation,) that it seems to me, that *extraordinary Divine Influences*, imparted in this *imperceptible Way*, are much more *suitable* to the Wisdom and Goodness of the adorable Being, from whom they come; as they much better agree with a *State of Trial*, and with the general Scheme of conducting

ducting us by Faith rather than Sight: As it likewise does, that *Angels and Devils* should be invisible to Human Eyes.

On the whole, therefore, comparing one Part of this Account with the other, when our Minds have been deeply impressed with *Divine Truths*, when we have been awakened diligently to attend to them, studying the *Scripture*, not merely as Matter of Curiosity, but with a serious Desire of learning how the Favour of God is to be obtained; when we have felt our Hearts strongly impressed with good Affections; when we have been animated by an *inward Vigour*, much better felt than described, to vanquish strong *Temptations*, and with Patience and Resolution to discharge our *Duty* in the midst of Difficulty and Discouragement; I think, the *whole Tenor of Scripture* directs us to ascribe this, not only to the *Goodness* of Providence, in making us *Rational Creatures*, and making us acquainted with the excellent *Revelation of Truth and Duty* contained in *Scripture*; but also to the secret and gracious *Influences* of the *Holy Spirit* on our Hearts, in Concurrence with those other Advantages. And it seems to me quite trifling, to amuse ourselves with nice *Speculations*, where *Nature ends*, and where *Grace begins*, or what *Specifick Difference* there is between the *Knowledge* we obtain from each, while their *Operation* is united. Should a Number of *Mechanicks*, to whom their Master had allowed *Two Candles* for their Work, instead of pursuing their Business, set themselves curiously to observe the *Difference* between their *Size* and *Materials*, (if such Difference there were;) and in Consequence of those Observations to dispute, whether in the *Compound Light* of both they could *distinguish* the Rays of each, by any peculiar *Purity* and *Lustre* apprehended in the one, rather than the other; we should certainly think them very *idly employed*, and their Master would give them very little Thanks for so ill-judged a *Curiosity*. On the like Principle, I freely acknowledge, it has often grieved me to the Heart to observe, how many *Volumes* of *Polemical Divinity* have been written on *Questions*, which neither need, nor admit *Determination*, on this Topick, as well as others.

But

But it is much for the Honour of Scripture, that it meddles not with *these Niceties*. It lays down the *general Principles* I have mentioned: It exhorts Men to take all *proper Measures*, to obtain the Knowledge of Divine Things, by *Reading*, by *Meditation*, i. e. undoubtedly by the Exercise of their *Rational Faculties*, which it expresses by *being Men in Understanding* \* : And it farther directs, that all these *Pursuits* should be undertaken, and carried on, in an humble Dependance on GOD, who *giveth Wisdom*, and *out of whose Mouth cometh Knowledge and Understanding* †. He *begins the good Work in us*, he *carries it on until the Day of the Lord* ‡, and *worketh in us both to will and to do* §. Under these *Influences*, we ascribe unto GOD the Glory of every Intellectual, Moral, and Spiritual Attainment, humbling ourselves before him, that these Attainments have been no greater; which they undoubtedly might have been, in Consequence of a more diligent Use of the Means and Opportunities, which he has afforded, and to the faithful Improvement of which he has given, and limited, his *Promises* of farther *Supernatural Assurances*; though I am very far from saying, they are imparted *only to such*, as might on *these Promises* have pleaded a Claim to them.

This, Sir, I really take to be the *Scripture-Doctrine* of *Divine Influence*, and particularly of the *Spirit's Office* in Illuminating the Mind: But you easily saw that *this*, instead of establishing what you teach of throwing aside the *Exercise of Reason in Religion*, would utterly have overthrown it, and would (as I observed above,) have made the diligent Use of *that Reason*, in Concurrence with humble *Prayer* and the Use of *proper Means* of Information, *the only Way* in which we could warrantably have *expected* such enlightning and sanctifying Influences. You therefore have thought fit to give *another Representation* of the Matter, directly contrary to what I have stated above; and you have attempted to prove it by many remarkable Passages of the *New Testament*.

Now I really apprehend, and own, whatever you might intend by this Argumentation, that if *these Scriptures*

\* 1 Cor. xiv. 20. † Prov. ii. 6. ‡ Phil. i. 6. § Phil. ii. 13.

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*tures are rightly applied, and will establish the Purpose for which you bring them, Christianity is overthrown; and all I have been saying, in this Part of my Letter, must prejudice, rather than support it: Since if your Representations are just, it teaches a Doctrine, not only absurd in Theory, and false in Fact, but also self-contradictory; and contrives to render entirely vain and insignificant all those grand Preparations, which it describes as made for teaching the Gospel in a Natural Way, and the prudent Use of which it so warmly inculcates, in a Multitude of other Passages. And therefore,*

*Thirdly, I shall consider in this View what you alledge from Scripture upon this Head; which I shall handle as an Objection, drawn from the supposed absurd and contradictory Representation of the Doctrine of the Spirit's Influence in certain Passages of it; and shew, that those Texts on which you build your Hypothesis, will none of them, if fairly interpreted, support it, and several of them are in themselves sufficient to subvert and overthrow it.*

Now, here, Sir, it seems proper to observe to the Reader, that you have no where *marshalled your Arguments* on this Head; perhaps conscious, that they would make but an indifferent Figure, when professedly brought together. You chuse rather to boast, that they are many and great, than particularly to shew us *what they are*: And therefore after slightly mentioning a few Texts in your 56th Page, which I shall presently examine, you gallantly say, "It were endless to recount all the innumerable Passages, throughout the whole Scripture, that concur in ascertaining this:" And then you intermingle the Mention of several other Texts, with the Course of your Declamation on this Subject; not canvassing the Sense or Connection of them, nor seeming to attend to any thing more than the Sound: For which in the 105th Page you make a general, and, I think, remarkable Apology. "That in the Haste of your Zeal you may have laid yourself open unguardedly enough, if the Thing were to be examined according to the Rules of strict Criticism: But that it is enough for your Design, if the main Drift and Scope of your Argument may be allowed to be, upon the whole, maintained only with some tolerable Degree of Propriety,

“priety, so as to carry just the Face of something plausible and consistent.”

Your *young Friend*, in his Reply, has touched upon this extraordinary Passage of yours, in so handsome a Manner, as to render it less necessary for me to insist upon it. I am very ready to make you all the Acknowledgments, which such a frank Confession of your own Uncertainty, on a Point which you have so often confidently asserted, can be supposed to merit. But really, Sir, I cannot agree with you, “that a *Critical Punctuality* is not at all material to the Purpose in hand.” If so desperate a *Charge* be advanced against the *Gospel*, as that it teaches the *monstrous Doctrine*, which I have from *your own Letter* represented above, I am sure it ought to be proved in the most convincing Manner, with such a *Critical Punctuality* as shall make it apparent, not only that *some Passages* in it may possibly admit of such a Sense, but that *those* on which you lay the main Strefs of your Argument, cannot with any tolerable Propriety bear any other. And if, when both the Interpretations were proposed, there were *some Degree of Probability* in Favour of yours, which I am persuaded will never in any one Instance be the Case; it would remain farther to be examined, whether that Preponderancy of *Probability* were sufficient to counterballance *all the Arguments* in Favour of *Christianity*, which must otherwise be given up as absurd. But this *last Consideration*, which I mention chiefly on Account of its great Weight in every Objection against the *Gospel*, and because it seems to be so often forgot, need not be insisted upon here; as I believe the Reader will easily perceive, when the Particulars are examined.

I have therefore given myself the Trouble of *collecting your Proofs*, as carefully as I can; and when I have placed them in what I apprehend their *most natural Order*, I shall consider them particularly: And so much the rather, as several of the *Texts* must be acknowledged to have *some Difficulty* attending them, and I apprehend the *Examination of them* may be agreeable and useful to many of my Readers; though it be so *unnecessary* with Regard to *yourself*, who it seems meant nothing more, than to amuse the World with what might carry just the

*Face of something plausible*: A Trial of Skill, which on so weighty a Subject might well have been spared, and which may perhaps on the Sequel be found, what *Attempts on Scripture* generally are, *rolling a Stone* which may return upon the Mover, and may prove far more burthenfome than was at first imagined.

Now here, that we may proceed in something of *Method*, I will range the *Texts* you have been pleased to produce, (either as containing your Doctrine, or as referring to it,) in such an Order, as I imagine may give the best Varnish to the *Conclusion* you would infer from them; at the same time mentioning the *Page* in which you cite them, that the Reader may be fully satisfied, they are such as you have thought fit to mention, how needless, and how unfortunate soever to your Cause, the Mention of some of them may appear.

In different Places therefore you think proper to remind us, that *our Lord* himself taught, that *no Man* could come unto him, unless it were given him by the Father; (Pag. 57.) and promiseth the Spirit, who was to testify of him, and to lead his Followers into all Truth: (*Ibid.*) That accordingly the *Apostles* declare, that Faith is the Gift of GOD; (*ibid.*) and that he who believeth, hath the Witness in himself; (Pag. 56.) which is so necessary in Order to Faith, that *no Man* can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost; (*ibid.*) for the Natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of GOD, for they are Foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, (Pag. 103.) even by that Spiritual Man, who judges all Things, while he himself is judged of none: To him is made known that Internal Word, which is in his Mouth, and in his Heart, so that he need not say, *Who shall ascend into Heaven, or who shall descend into the Deep?* (Pag. 79, 80.) In Reference to this therefore, he who believeth not, makes GOD a Lyar. (Pag. 54.) Without granting this, you tell us, we can never account for the *Apostle's* pronouncing an *Anathema* on himself or an Angel from Heaven, who should preach a contrary Doctrine; (Pag. 11.) or for his exhorting *Christians* to be all of one Mind, and to think and speak the same Thing, which without such an infallible universal Teacher would be quite impossible. (Pag. 65.) With Reference

also to this Teaching we are exhorted to *become as little Children, that we may enter into the Kingdom of GOD*; which you seem to understand as a Command to lay aside *our Reason* wherever *Religion* is concerned: (Pag. 75.) In which Sense, it seems, *every high Thing*, i. e. every Argument, is to be *captivated to the Obedience of Christ*. (Pag. 84.) And finally, that if *Faith* were built upon any other Foundation, it would be utterly *absurd to pray for its Increase*; (Pag. 10.) and that *Infant-Baptism*, here taken for granted to be a Divine Institution, would on any other Scheme be *unjustifiable and unintelligible*: (Pag. 69.) These, Sir, are (so far as I can find,) the *grand Foundations*, on which you build the Doctrine I am now opposing; but how precariously, I question not many will see from reading the *Enumeration* I have given in this Connection, which is *that* I would have chosen for them, if they had been in this View *my own Arguments*. Nevertheless, for the Reasons given above, we will discuss them a little more particularly.

That we may remember what we are about, I must intreat my Reader to recollect, that if the *Texts above* answer your Purpose, they must prove an *immediate Revelation* of the whole System of *Christianity*, to every particular *Christian*, in such a Manner, as to make it unnecessary for him to enquire into any other Evidence from *Reason* or *Scripture*, to evince the *Truth* of the *Gospel* in general, or of any *Branch of it* which might be proposed to his Examination.

Having premised this, I hope to make it appear, on the Review,—that *some* of the *Texts* in Question do not refer to any *Revelation of Truth* at all;—that *others* were *peculiar* to the *Apostles*;—and that *no one* of them will answer your Purpose; because there is none but what may be fairly interpreted, in an important and useful Sense, far short of what you would give it. I think, *every one of the Texts* will fall under one or another of these *Three Classes*. And here, as I am not at puzzling the Cause, but at *stating the Truth* in a fair Light, I shall at once *allow you* every where, as much as I do in my Conscience think *ought to be allowed* to each Passage in Question; though I am very well aware, (as you may perhaps learn from some other Hand,) that a great

many Things might be said to render some Things *dubious*, which in the Course of the Argument I am ready to grant you.

When our Lord tells us, *No Man can come unto him, except it be given him of the Father* \*; and the *Apostle* testifies, that *Faith is the Gift of GOD* †; it may indeed imply, that any one, who is brought cordially to *believe the Gospel*, and to *apply to Christ* for Salvation, according to the Scheme laid down in it, has Reason to ascribe it, not only to the *Divine Goodness* in granting him a *Revelation* of the great *Truths* of our Religion, but also to the *secret Influence* of *Divine Grace* upon his Heart; so fixing his Attention to those *Truths*, and so affecting his Soul with them, as effectually to produce that *cordial Consent* to the Terms of the *Christian Covenant*, which is often in *Scripture* expressed by *believing*, or by *coming to Christ*. And how many Thousands will gladly acknowledge the *Reality* of such an *Influence* on their Minds, who pretend to no *immediate Revelation*, and who embrace the *Gospel*, because they see such *Rational Evidence* of it, as they apprehend sufficient to convince every impartial Enquirer; an *Evidence*, within the Reach of *all*, who live in a *Christian Country*; nay, actually attained by *many*, who, clearly as their *Understandings* are convinced, feel nothing of the *Efficacy* of these *Truths* on their *Hearts*!

Again, Our Lord pronounces, that *the Spirit should testify of him* ‡: But you will please to recollect, that *this Promise* was immediately addressed to the *Apostles*; and that it would have had an important Meaning, if it had only referred to those *Miraculous Works*, by which the *Spirit* confirmed that glorious and convincing Testimony, which the *Apostles* bore to the Truth of the *Gospel*.—A *Promise* to them, to *guide them into all Truth* §, might also be *peculiar* to the *extraordinary Office* which they sustained, in Order to the Execution of which it was *necessary*, that *these Things* should be taught them by an *immediate* and *personal Revelation*, which Thousands more might receive, without any *such Revelation*, from their Lips, or their Writings. So that, if such an *immediate*

\* John vi. 44. † Eph. ii. 8. ‡ John xv. 26. § John xvi. 13.



ciate Revelation to every Christian in all Ages cannot be proved from some other Argument, it is certain that the Mention of *this Scripture* will prove nothing to the Purpose, and *St. Paul's Question, Are all Apostles \*?* will be a sufficient Reply to the Allegation of it on this Occasion.

It seems indeed much more to your Purpose, that the *Apostle John*, when writing to a Community of *Christians*, speaks in Language bearing some Resemblance to this of *our Lord*, to him and his Brethren in that illustrious Office, particularly where it is said, that *he who believes, hath the Witness in himself †*; and that *they had an Unction from the Holy One, and knew all Things ‡*. Yet will neither of these Expressions, which are some of the strongest used in the whole *New Testament* with Reference to this Point, by any Means, answer the Purpose for which you produce them.

The *Believer* may surely be said to *have the Witness within himself*, as his *personal Experience* of the *Power of the Gospel* on his *own Heart* affords him a noble *Internal Evidence* of its *Truth*. This is the Interpretation, which *Dr. Watts* has at large given of *this Text*, in his excellent *Sermons* upon it; and what I have said in my *First Letter* may, I hope, do something towards setting it in its just Light. And though I acknowledge, that it is a very possible Case, that *some Christians* may be favoured by *God* with *uncommon Operations* on their Souls, in Consequence of which the Evidence of their own sincere Piety may, in an extraordinary Manner, be cleared up, and their Dejection and Distress of Spirit removed; yet I apprehend, that given above is the *only Sense* in which it can be *universally asserted* concerning *every Believer*, that *he has such a Witness within himself*: As if it had been said, The true *Christian*, in whatever State or Circumstance, *has a Work within*, which, were it to be attentively surveyed in its proper Light, would appear a glorious *Evidence* of the *Divine Authority* of the *Gospel*, by Means of which it was to be produced.— And as *this* is the *Work* of the *Spirit of GOD* upon the *Christian's Heart*, it is an *Unction from the Holy One*, in

\* 1 Cor. xii. 29. † 1 John v. 10. ‡ Ibid. ii. 27.

Consequence of which *he knows all Things*: Not absolutely, so as to be omniscient, which I think you do not yourself pretend to be the Sense of the *Phrase*; but *he knows*, (according to that *lax Sense*, in which the Word ALL is frequently used,) whatever is absolutely necessary for him to know, in Order to his Salvation and Happiness, which is to him *all in all*: He knows many great and glorious Things, of which *all* who reject *Christianity* remain ignorant, and which *those*, who, though they profess it, yet do not cordially believe it, know but in a very lifeless and unaffecting Manner, so that it hardly deserves to be called *Knowledge*. In Consequence of this, the happy Persons spoken of above need not that any should teach them \*, i. e. they need not to be taught over again those great Lessons, which to the Rest of the World are the most necessary of all others, and such as the *Apostle* had been laying down above, that *Jesus is the Christ*, and that *God hath promised us eternal Life in him* †. Yet it was necessary, in the ordinary Method of Divine Proceeding, that, previous to this Anointing, they should be taught these Things by Human Methods of Instruction, as *St. Paul* argues; *How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher* ‡? Nay, it is plain from other Passages in this *Epistle*, that the *Apostle John* thought other Lessons might be useful to them, though this *Unction of the Spirit* had been poured out upon them, and had effectually taught them this.

I now come to that *Text* of the *Apostle Paul*, which you mention immediately after laying down the *Proposition* of your *Third Part*, as if it were in so many Words a *Demonstration of your Doctrine*, and call it “one plain Word, by which it is fully set forth,” that *no Man can say, Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost* ||. But here, Sir, I suppose you will not maintain, that this *Text* means to assert, that it is impossible for any Man, without some special Assistance of the *Holy Ghost*, to utter these Words, *Jesus is the Messiah*; or even that it is impossible, without an immediate Revelation of the *Truth of Christianity*, to make an hypocritical Profession of the

\* 1 J hn ii. 27. † Ver. 22, 25. ‡ Rem. x. 14. || 1 Cor. xii. 3.

the *Christian Faith*. Common Sense therefore, and common Justice will require, that they be taken in a *qualified Interpretation* of them. And I think, the Design and Meaning of them may best be fixed by *consulting the Context*: A Task, which in this, and every other Place, seems too great a Drudgery for such a sprightly and free Genius as yours; and yet, Sir, quite *necessary* to every Man, that thinks it worth his Care *not to speak at all Adventures* when he quotes *Scripture*, and especially (as one would imagine) *important*, where a *Text* is introduced with such a grand Parade.

The *Apostle*, in the *Chapter* referred to, is evidently discoursing on the Subject of *Spiritual Gifts*, or some *extraordinary Operations* of the *Holy Ghost* in the primitive Church, concerning which the State of Things at *Corinth* made it necessary that he should give some Directions. Now he lays down this as a *Preliminary*, that there was no Reason to apprehend, that *any but Christians* had any Room to pretend they were under *such Operations*; and on the other Hand, that *every true Christian*, whether he were, or were not distinguished by his *Miraculous Gifts*, had however *felt the Power and Operation* of the *Spirit of GOD* on his Heart. And this I take to be the general Sense of the *3d Verse*, on which you lay so great a Stress: “*No Man, to be sure, speaking by the Spirit of GOD, calleth Jesus accursed: The Jews, who pronounce their solemn Anathema’s upon Christ, and blaspheme his Name,*” (to which this Phrase seems clearly to refer,) “*tho’ they may pretend to the Spirit of GOD, so often spoken of in their Scriptures, make a vain and impious Pretence to it: And no Man can call Jesus Lord, i. e. can really and cordially acknowledge his Authority, but by Virtue of the Operation of the Holy Ghost upon his Heart: So that some Reverence is due in this Respect to every Christian, even though his Gifts should not be peculiarly bright; nay, though*” (which for any Thing I can find might often been the Case,) “*he should have received none of those Miraculous Gifts at all, about which you Corinthians so eagerly contend.*” In this easy View of the Passage, the *Remark* seems exceeding *pertinent*. But what imaginable *Connection* is there, be-

tween a *sanctifying Influence on the Heart*, productive of real Piety, and a *full Revelation of a perfect Creed at once*, or of any single Article before unknown, with a *Light little different from Intuition itself*, and which renders the Assistance of Reason and Scripture quite *superfluous*. The Manner in which the *Apostle* addresses to the real *Christians at Corinth*, abundantly demonstrates, how far he was from supposing *that* to be the Case, and how far he would have been from allowing *such an Inference* from any Principle laid down by him, here, or elsewhere.

As little to your Purpose will you find that other boasted Passage of *St. Paul* in his *Epistle to the Romans*, which you quote in your 79th Page, as if it were the very *Design* of the *Apostle* to establish your whole Notion and Doctrine in it. Accordingly you say, "But the Passage, that most fully, and beyond all Possibility of Misconception, describes to us the true Nature of Faith, in manifest Opposition to that mistaken Notion of a Rational One, which some had it seems erroneously entertained, is in the Tenth Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where the whole Question is discussed at large, and thus precisely determined:" And then you quote the Words themselves, which are these. *The Righteousness which is of Faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine Heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven?—or who shall descend into the Deep?—The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth, and in thine Heart, &c \**.

Now, Sir, you must pardon me, if I express my Surprise, that you should thus pompously quote a Passage, in which the *Clearness* of the *Scripture Revelation* is asserted, to prove that it is attended with *such Obscurity*, that it is not to be expected, that any Man should understand it, otherwise than in Consequence of an *immediate Revelation*, i. e. by *Miracle*. I readily acknowledge, that the Passage is something difficult; but it seems to me so far from clearly *expressing your Doctrine*, that I do not see, how it can bear to be interpreted so, as in any Measure to give it the least Countenance.

You well know, Sir, that *these Words* are an *Allusion to*, and a *Quotation from the Old Testament* †; where *Moses*,  
in

\* Rom. x. 6, &amp; seq.

† Deut. xxx. 12, 13, 14.

in his eloquent Manner, congratulates the People of *Israel* on their being favoured with so clear and so full a *Discovery* of the Will of God in his *written Law*; in Consequence of which there was no Need for them to say, *Who shall go up for us to Heaven?*—or, *who shall go over the Sea for us?*—The Word is very nigh thee, says this illustrious Legislator, *even in thy Mouth, and in thine Heart, that thou mayest do it*: It is easily understood, easily remembered, and on the whole, admirably fitted to impress and affect the Mind. In *Allusion* to this, the *Apostle*, with great Beauty and Propriety, tells the *Christians* to whom he wrote, that the *Revelation* of the *Gospel* by *Christ* was as plain and evident, as that of the *Law* by *Moses*: *The Righteousness which is of Faith* (i. e. the *Gospel*, which teacheth us the Way of *Justification by Faith*,) *speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine Heart; Who shall ascend into Heaven?* (that is, to bring *Christ* down from above?) Or *who shall descend into the Deep?* (that is, to bring up *Christ* again from the Dead?) As if he should have said, “Had *Christ* never descended from Heaven, or had he never risen again from the Depths of the Earth in which he was buried, we might indeed have been at a Loss to know the Way of Salvation, and might have been left, like the Rest of the World, in a Thousand Doubts and Uncertainties. But now, since *Christ* has descended from Heaven to bring the *Gospel*, and has risen from the Dead to confirm it, we well know the Way: And blessed be God, it is very easy and practicable, open to every one that shall receive the *Gospel*, and very nigh him, in more Senses than one, *in the Mouth, and in the Heart*. Let but the *Mouth*, and the *Heart*, do their respecting Parts, the one cordially believing in *Christ*, and the other courageously confessing him, in such a Manner as to approve that inward Sincerity; and *Salvation may be obtained*, even though the *Law* hath been broken, that awful *Law*, which, intelligible as it was, did still rigorously insist upon it, that the *Man* should exactly do its Precepts, who would hope to live by them †.” This, Sir, is the Assertion, and Illustration of the *Apostle*; and how widely this differs from the View in which you have

introduced it, I am perswaded, that you and my other Readers will easily see. They will, no doubt, think the Turn you have given it, an Instance of admirable Invention and dextrous Address; and as you seem not solicitous, that it should be thought *solid*, I hope all Parties will be agreed.

Another of your *Texts*, which I would by no means leave uncanvassed, and which, at first Appearance, seems much more favourable to your Cause than the former, though not so much gloried in, is that of *St. Paul* in his *first Epistle to the Corinthians*: *The Natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of GOD, for they are Foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, &c. †* From hence you would infer, that it is only by an *immediate Inspiration* from the Spirit, that *Divine Truths* can be known, and consequently that *Reasoning* must be quite *superfluous* in such a Pursuit. I shall not here Reply, as some have done, that  $\psiυχικος$  signifies a Man who proceeds in his Religious Enquiries merely on Principles of *Natural Reason*; while  $\piνευμαλικος$  signifies one who admits of a *Divine Revelation*, and allows Arguments deduced from its Authority. If this were to be granted as the Sense of these two Words, the *Meaning* of the *Text* would be, that *Revelation* teaches some Things which *Reason* could never have discovered. This, I think, is the Sense *Dr. Clagget* gives of the Passage, in his laboured Explication of it: But I cannot acquiesce in it; because it will by no Means follow from hence, that *the Natural Man cannot receive them*, and they must be *Foolishness to him*: On the contrary, were a Man to *reason well*, he might in many Instances discover Harmony, Beauty, and Wisdom, in those Doctrines, Schemes, and Facts, which are known *only by Revelation*. I shall therefore grant, that by the *Natural Man* we are to understand, one who is sunk in the *Animal Life*\*; one, who under the Influence of those false Maxims, which the Corruption of Mankind has

† 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

\* This, I think, the *Etymology* of the Word  $\psiυχικος$  may well intimate; and the *Use* of it elsewhere may warrant the Explication. Compare 1 Cor. xv. 44, 46. *Jam.* iii. 15. and *Jude* ver 19. in the two last of which Passages it is rendered *Sensual*.

has introduced into the World, is rendered *Carnal*, and *Sensual*, and consequently attached to Views of Secular Interest, or Vain Glory. Such Persons are indeed *unwilling* to admit of *such Truths* as the *Gospel* teaches, and therefore choose rather to object against its *Evidence*, than to submit to its *Instructions*. This the *Apostle* might well assert; and as the Counter-Part of the Thought might lead his Readers to reflect, that they who feel these Prejudices conquered in their Minds, and are brought to discern the Beauty and Glory of those *Truths* which the *Gospel* teaches, have Reason to ascribe it to the *Influence* of the *Divine Spirit* on their Hearts; or in other Words, to own, that *these Truths* (which were at first revealed to the *Apostles* by the *Spirit of God*, and therefore are called *his Things*;) are *spiritually discerned*. In Consequence of which *the happy Man*, almost like one restored to Sight among the Blind, *αὐτοὺς πάντα*, discerns all the Objects with which he is surrounded, *ἡμῶν* while he himself *πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἀκροαῖται*, is discerned by none of them; but perhaps is proudly censured, by these prejudiced and bigotted Creatures, as a *mere Visionary*, for those Judgments which are most rationally formed, on Principles which every impartial Enquirer will understand. If this easy Interpretation of the Words be admitted, they will appear quite foreign to your Purpose, and applicable to Multitudes to whom no single Truth of *Christianity* was taught by *Miracle*, but who by *Divine Grace* were inclined to receive that *Gospel*, which the *Apostle* tells us, in the preceding *Versè*, he and his Brethren taught, *comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual*: A Care, which, whether it refers to the Manner of their Investigation, or to that of communicating the Sacred Knowledge, would be quite *unnecessary on your Hypothesis*. So unlucky for your Cause will *Criticisin* and *Comedission* be found, in this Instance, as well as the former.

That he, who *disbelieves* the *Gospel*, *μαρτυρῆσθε τὸν θεόν ψευδομαρτυροῦντες*, (i. e. rejects his Testimony as unworthy of Credit,) will be true, if *God* has borne any Testimony to the *Gospel* at all, which is, or might be known by such a Rejector of it; and will be no less the Case, where the *External Testimony* of *Miracles* is in Question, than if the

*Inward Impression*, which you maintain, were to be granted. *This Text* therefore, by no Means determining *how* the Testimony is borne, can be of *no Service* to your Cause.—Nor will that Cause find a surer Refuge in those Words of *St. Paul*, in his *Epistle* to the *Galatians*; *Though we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach a different Gospel to you, let him be accursed* †. This is only a strong Way of saying, that the *Gospel*, which they had already been taught, was so *assuredly true*, that *any one*, who should presume to *contradict it*, far from being worthy of any Regard, would rather be *worthy of a Curse*; and that it would be an Argument of damnable *Apostacy*, in an *Apostle*, or even an *Angel*, to attempt to *subvert it*. Were this Passage to be taken in the most rigorous Sense that can be imagined, it would amount to no more than this; that the *Evidence*, which they had received of the *Truth of Christianity*, was *greater* than God would ever permit an *Angel* to bring against it, were it possible for one of those *Celestial Spirits* to revolt, and appear with a *contrary Doctrine*. And this is what we *all believe*, upon this general Principle, that *GOD* will never permit any *Evil Spirit*, (and *such* any *Angel* contradicting the *Gospel* would certainly be,) to work more and greater *Miracles* to *overthrow Christianity*, than have already been wrought to *confirm it*. Now this might have been true, even though all the Operations of the *Spirit* had ceased in the remoter Ages of the Church, or though the Illumination of our Minds by his *immediate Influence* had been no Part of his Office.

But you triumph greatly in this Thought, that without such a *plenary Revelation* of the *Truth*, to every particular Person, by the *immediate Inspiration* of the *Holy Ghost*, it would be impossible that *all Men should be of one Mind*; which nevertheless the *Apostle* prays that *Christians* might be, and *exhorts* them to labour after. But I wonder, Sir, you should not see, that when he offers *this Petition* for them, or addresses them with *such an Exhortation*, he plainly supposes, they were not at present under such an *uniting Guidance*, in Consequence of which (as you express it,) they were preserved from the *last Possibility of Mistake*. So that, even on your  
own

† Gal. i. 8.



own Principles, you must be obliged to admit of some *qualifying Interpretation*: And it so easily presents itself, that I think hardly any Writer but yourself has missed it. *To be perfectly joined together in the same Mind, and the same Sentiment*, (as I think it is most natural to translate  $\epsilon\nu\ \tau\eta\ \alpha\upsilon\lambda\eta\ \gamma\omega\omega\mu\eta$  \*; *to have the same mutual Disposition or Affection*, ( $\tau\omicron\ \alpha\upsilon\lambda\omicron\ \phi\omicron\sigma\omicron\nu\nu\ \epsilon\nu\ \alpha\lambda\lambda\omicron\mu\omicron\nu\iota\varsigma$ , as it is elsewhere expressed †, or  $\epsilon\nu\ \alpha\lambda\lambda\omicron\mu\omicron\nu\iota\varsigma$ , as in the *Parallel Passage* ‡;) plainly signifies *to cultivate Harmony, or Unanimity, or to maintain a Friendly Disposition towards each other*, notwithstanding some Diversity in their Taste, Opinion, or Customs. And that *this* is the Meaning of the Expression is evident, from what the *Apostle* elsewhere says, both to the *Corinthians*, and to the *Romans*, to whom these Exhortations are addressed; where he supposes, there would be a *Difference* in Opinion and Practice among them in some Things, and yet urges them to *think favourably of each other*, and to *receive one another* §, as *Christ had received them all*, if sincere *Christians*, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*; and how *different* soever their Apprehensions might be, as to the Lawfulness or Unlawfulness, the Expediency or Inexpediency, of some Practices which were in Question among them. And thus does the *Apostle* explain himself in that *Parallel Text* §, where, when he had so tenderly intreated them, *by the Consolation of Christ, by the Comfort of Love, and by the Communion of the Spirit, that they should be like-minded*, [ $\iota\sigma\alpha\ \tau\omicron\ \alpha\upsilon\lambda\omicron\ \phi\omicron\sigma\omicron\nu\iota\varsigma$ , *that ye may be unanimous,*] he adds, *having the same Love, being of one Accord*,  $\tau\eta\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\lambda\eta\nu\ \alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta\nu\ \epsilon\chi\omicron\nu\iota\varsigma$ ,  $\sigma\upsilon\mu\psi\upsilon\chi\omicron\iota$ , which two Phrases explain the former; as if he should have said, *Let your Souls be joined together in the same Love*: And then he adds,  $\tau\omicron\ \epsilon\nu\ \phi\omicron\sigma\omicron\nu\iota\varsigma$ , which if it be not a mere Repetition of the *first Clause*,  $\tau\omicron\ \alpha\upsilon\lambda\omicron\ \phi\omicron\sigma\omicron\nu\iota\varsigma$ , *be unanimous*, may perhaps be rendered, *attend to and prosecute* (the  $\tau\omicron\ \epsilon\nu$ ) *the One Thing*, that great leading Concern of vital practical Religion, *the Service of GOD and the Salvation of the Soul*, which our Divine Master has recommended to us as *the One Thing needful*. How well this Interpretation suits the *Greek Word*,  $\phi\omicron\sigma\omicron\nu\nu$ , used

\* 1 Cor. i. 10. † Rom. xv. 5. ‡ Rom. xii. 16. § 2 Cor. xiii. 11. Rom. xv. 7. § Phil. ii. 1, 2.

in all these Places, you, Sir, if at all conversant with *Greek Writers*, cannot but know. And if you are a Stranger to them, which I would not suppose, I am sorry you have been misled by an *English Translation*, to fasten an *Absurdity* upon the *Sacred Writer*; as if he was childish enough to imagine, that *Intreaties* could bring People to think alike in disputed Points; and this without telling them, (which on your Supposition must be the Case.) what that *One Thing* was, in which they were to think alike. Whereas on our easy and obvious Interpretation there needed no such Explication at all; as the Exhortation referred to a *Charitable Temper*, recommended in a Variety of strong Expressions, and not to this or that particular Sentiment. And, permit me to say, though by way of Digression, Would to GOD that *these Texts* were rightly understood by *Christians* in general; and that such a Divine Principle of *mutual Love*, in Consequence of our *Union in Christ*, might prevail more, where we cannot in your Sense be of one Mind, nor unite in one External Form, whether of Worship, or Discipline! I would hope, the *Attacks* made on common *Christianity* are in some Measure leading us to this: And I earnestly pray, that Infinite Wisdom may overrule that *Evil*, to the Production of *so great a Good*.

The only *Scriptures* in the *Catalogue* which I gave above, which remain yet unhandled, are those which relate to our *becoming as little Children*, that we may enter into the *Kingdom of GOD* \*, and to the *captivating every Thought to the Obedience of Christ* †. The former of these Passages stands more immediately opposed to ambitious Views of *worldly Greatness*, than to an overweening Opinion of our *own Understandings*; tho' I readily acknowledge, that according to the Genius of *our Lord's* teaching in general, it may well be considered as a Warning against the latter, to which the *Text* in *Corinthians* does not doubt relate. But what can you infer from hence, to support the Peculiarities of *your Doctrine*? We readily grant you, that *such Texts* remind us, of what indeed *Reason* itself would teach, if impartially consulted, that when we have discovered the *Evidence* of a *Divine*

Revs-

\* Mat. xviii 3.

† 2 Cor. x. 5.

*Revelation*, which the Natural Weakness of our Minds might engage us to wish, and to enquire after, we are teachably to *submit* to its Instructions. We are to be sensible, that *our own Understandings*, when compared with the *Supream Intelligence*, are infinitely less than *that of a little Child*, when compared with *ours*. We are therefore humbly and quietly to *sit down*, as it were, at the Feet of the *Divine Teacher*; and though several *plausible Objections* may arise in our Minds, and many Things taught may be *inconsistent* with our preconceived *Prejudices*, and with what through their Influence we should have expected, we are to suffer *those Prejudices* to be over-ruled by so high an Authority, and to acquiesce in this, that *the Lord has said it*: And this is as really *our Duty*, when he is speaking to us by *his Messengers*, as it was *theirs* when he was speaking *immediately* to them. So that you can never infer from hence a *personal*, and much less a *complete and instantaneous Inspiration*, till you have proved, either that I can never be assured that *God speaks by another*, or that if I am, I may *disregard it*, and dispute against it. The *latter* of which is so notoriously *absurd*, that I never heard it seriously maintained; and the *former* has been a thousand Times *confuted* by those who have written in Defence of *Christianity*, and so lately in particular by those who have *answered* that unhappy Creature who called himself *the Moral Philosopher*, that I need say nothing of it here, especially after what I have written in my *former Letters*.

But I cannot dismiss the Head, without reminding you of one important *Scripture*, which illustrates the Explication I have given of those last mentioned, with a beautiful Variety of most proper Expression. I mean that in the *first Epistle of Peter*, where the *Apostle* exhorts *Christians*, that *laying aside all Malignity, and Debate, and Hypocrisy, and Envy, and Calumny*, (so common among some who call themselves *Christians*, and so often exercised against the most faithful and zealous *Ministers of the Gospel*;) they should *like new-born Babies desire* (as we render it,) *the sincere Milk of the Word, that they might grow thereby* \*. It is in the *Original*, το δεσμεον αδιδωγατο, *the rational fraudless Milk*: Which is as if he had said,

“ The

\* 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

“ The *Instruction* we give to those of you, who are yet  
 “ but *little Children in Christianity*, is *sincere* and *unadul-*  
 “ *terated*, as *Milk* that flows *immediately* from the Breast  
 “ of the Mother into the Mouth of the Infant; and if  
 “ you will exercise your *Reason* honestly and wisely, you  
 “ may easily see, how excellent and useful *our Doctrine*  
 “ and *Precepts* are. Come then, with the Gentleness  
 “ and Simplicity of *little Children*, and receive them;  
 “ while we are ready, with all the Tenderness of an  
 “ affectionate Mother for her Suckling, to impart  
 “ them to you; *to impart, not only the Gospel of GOD,*  
 “ *but, if it were possible, even our own Souls also, because*  
 “ *you are dear unto us* \*.”

This is indeed, according to the wise and affectionate Expression of *St. Paul*, to be at once *in Malice Children*, and *in Understanding Men* †. For I can think of nothing so *Rational*, as diligently to *examine* the Credentials of any Thing offered us as a *Message from GOD*, and then humbly to *submit* to it without cavilling and disputing, when we are satisfied that it wears the Stamp of his Authority. Whereas to set at nought all the *Internal* and *External Evidence* of *Christianity* so often represented, insisting on it as the *absolute Condition* of our *believing*, that it be *immediately revealed* to us from Heaven by *miraculous*, perfect, and irresistible *Inspiration*, is so far from looking like this *Infant Simplicity*, that it seems much more to favour of that *Malignity* and *Haughtiness of Temper*, which such Passages as these were intended to guard us against. So *unhappy* have you generally been, from first to last, in the *Choice* of those *Scriptures* by which you would *just add some Face of Probability* to a *Notion* in itself so *absurd*, as that which you have advanced concerning the *Illumination of the Spirit*.

There are several *other Scriptures*, Sir, which, in the Course of your Harangue, you have *occasionally* touched upon; as if you thought they afforded some Countenance to *that Notion*: But the Inference is so precarious, that one would really imagine, you mentioned them only with an Intent to make *your Pamphlet* as rich as possible in such Kind of *Burlesque*. I am sure you will acknowledge, that *those* I have already canvassed are the

\* 1 Theff. ii, 8.

† 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

the *Strength of your Cause*. However, for the *Vindication* of the *others* from that *Injury* you have offered them, I shall touch here (by way of *Digression*,) on two or three *Passages of Scripture*, which you, Sir, seem to have brought in merely for the Sake of *exposing them to Contempt*: A *Contempt*, of which I think they will appear by no Means worthy, and consequently which may fall where it was least intended.

In your 66th Page you refer to what is said of the *Samaritans* \*, and tell us, “that it is recorded, *Many believed in Christ readily for the Saying of the Woman.*” And then you add, with great Triumph, “A notable Foundation truly for Confidence and Conviction, and perhaps Martyrdom, &c.” Now, Sir, it is hard to imagine, for what Purpose *this Reflection* could be introduced, unless it were to give a Specimen of *your Good-will* to the *Scripture*: It seems in effect telling the World, that you think *St. John* has assigned a very ridiculous Reason for *their Faith*, and consequently was a despicable Writer, in this Instance at least. I shall not insist on your quoting the *Text* with the Addition of the Word *readily*, which is perhaps in *Italicks* by a Mistake of the Printer. But I desire it may be remembered, that we cannot infer from this Expression, that these *Samaritans* were brought to a *true and saving Faith in Christ*, so as to *continue in his Word*, and approve themselves *his Disciples indeed*; which you artfully take for granted, in your Manner of putting the Case. You will find little Reason confidently to infer this, from its being said *they believed in him*, if you recollect, that the *Evangelist*, but a few Paragraphs before, (i. e. in the Conclusion of his *Second Chapter*,) had spoken of *many who believed in Christ*, to whom *he would not commit himself, because he knew what was in Man* †; i. e. he knew that *their Faith* was not resolute and sincere, nor *they* Persons on whose Steadiness and Fidelity he could depend, So it is very possible, that some of these *Samaritans*, knowing *the Woman*, might from her Report learn to conceive of *Christ* as an *extraordinary Person*, from whom therefore they entertained some great Expectation; though they might not have the Resolution to *follow him fully*, as you suppose they would of Course

\* John iv. 39.

† John ii. 24, 25.

Course do, even to *Martyrdom*. Indeed when *Christ* was come into their City, and had discoursed among them, we are told, that *many more believed, because of his own Word*; and they declare, that *now they believed, not because of her Saying, but because they had heard him themselves* \*; which intimates, that they looked on *her Testimony* as a very small Matter, when compared with the Satisfaction which their *personal Converse with Christ* had given them. And if any of the Persons, who at first declared their Regard to *Christ* on the *Testimony of the Woman*, could afterwards be so regardless of him, as *not to give him the Hearing*, though *he abode two Days in their City*; it was surely a very *bad Specimen* of that *Faith and Zeal*, which you think would have engaged them to *lay down their Lives* in his Cause; as it would plainly shew, that they apprehended themselves very little concerned with him, how extraordinary a Person soever he might be.

Presently after you mention *another Text*, as it seems much with the same pious Design, namely, that in which *our Lord* upbraids the *Two Disciples* on the Way to *Emmaus*, saying, *Oh Fools, and slow of Heart to believe!* &c. †. And then you add, “Can any one imagine, all this was merely because a Narrative of four Hours had not wrought a thorough Conviction?—Is it to be believed, that God would reproach any of his Creatures with a *defective Intellect*, when he was pleased to give them no better?” We have here, Sir, a Complication of *Mistakes*: The *one* (as in a former Instance,) founded upon the Impropriety of *our Translation*, in rendering *αἰῶνες*, *Fools*, which (as I have elsewhere observed, ‡) ought to be translated, in a softer Manner, *thoughtless* or *inconsiderate Creatures*; which contains *no Reflection* at all on the *Natural Defect* of their *Intellect*, but on their *culpable Neglect* of using the *Rational Powers* which they possessed. I cannot forbear adding, that if the *Miraculous Illumination*, which you suppose referred to, had been so *irresistible* and *instantaneous*, as you tell us it was, there would have been *no Room* for any such *Reflection*, and consequently the *Text* would be left quite defenceless, which on the common Interpretation admits

\* John iv. 41. 42.  
Vol. ii. p. 618. Note (c).

† Luke xxiv. 25.

‡ *Family Expos.*

mits of so easy a Solution.—There is *another Error* in supposing, as you do, that the Ground of this gentle Reprehension was only, “that a Narrative of four Hours had not wrought a thorough Conviction.\*” If you mean by a *Narrative of four Hours*, our Lord’s Discourse with them as they were walking to *Emmaus*, it is unlucky indeed. For not to say, *how many Hours* this Conversation might employ, which is not very material; it is certain, *this Reproof* was *previous* to the principal Part of *this Conversation*, as you will easily see in the Passage itself, and referred to the Opportunities they had enjoyed for *Months* and *Years* before, of acquainting themselves with the *Prophetick Writings*; which if they had diligently and impartially done, they would have judged it *no incredible* or *improbable Report*, which they had received from the *Women* who had *been at the Sepulchre*, and affirmed that *Jesus was risen from the Dead*.

I shall take Notice but of *Two Passages* more, which you have in like Manner *disguised*, that you might the more easily *expose* them. These are what you introduce in *Pag. 78.* where you say, “That the Scripture-Test and Standard for finding out the Spirits of Truth is no more than this; *Hereby shall ye know them: Every one that confesseth that Christ is come in the Flesh, is of GOD.* Now (say you,) this is evidently what Philosophers call *Arguing in a Circle*, and *begging the Question*;” (which, by the way, are not quite *synonymous Terms*;) “But in *Faith* we see it is a necessary Preliminary, *He that cometh to Christ, must believe that he is.*” —As to the *latter Part* of this Sentence, every body will perceive, that, however dignified by *Italicks*, it is a *Scripture of your own making*. It is indeed said in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, that *he who cometh to GOD, must believe that he is* †. The Sense of which is plainly this,  
“ that

\* I find, since *this Letter* was gone to the Press, the *Author* is so conscious to himself, how little Ground there was for *this Reflection*, as to alter the Passage in his *Second Edition*. But as he has not acknowledged any *Mistake*, I did not think it needful to recall my Papers, and shall leave the *Animadversion* as it stands for those, who may have only seen the *same Edition* I made use of in writing these Remarks.

† Heb. xi. 6.

“ that a Persuasion of the *Being of a GOD* must be the  
 “ *Foundation of all Rational Religion*, and particularly of  
 “ all Devotional Addresses.” And how a Person of your  
 Sense could think of representing this as a *Circular Ar-*  
*gument*, it is almost impossible to imagine; unless it were  
 merely to humour the *Character* you had assumed, of a  
*Christian* whose *rapturous and enthusiastical Divinity* might  
 transport him into an entire *Forgetfulness* of his *Logick*,  
 and perhaps teach him to reckon that *Forgetfulness* among  
 the special *Gifts of the Spirit*, which he imagined he had  
 received?—But as to the *former*, or to speak more pro-  
 perly the *only Text of Scripture* which you have here re-  
 peated, (for the *other* is merely *burlesqued*;) I mean that  
 in *Jobn* \*, Archbishop *Tillotson* might long since have  
 furnished you with an *Explication*, which sets it above this  
*Cavil*, which I confess, from the mere *Sound of the*  
*Words*, might easily present itself to the Mind of a  
*Superficial Reader*. He justly observes, (if I remember  
 his Interpretation right,) that *this Epistle* was written,  
 when *Christianity* had been for a considerable Time set-  
 tled in the World; and that it might now be considered  
 as a *Test of Doctrines*, sufficiently confirmed by a Train of  
 most illustrious *Miracles*, and a Variety of *other Evidence*.  
 In Consequence of this, a Person, presuming to teach  
 by any Spirit, that *Jesus was not come in the Flesh*, might  
 as reasonably be rejected by *Christians*, as a *pretended*  
*Prophet* among the *Jews*, who, upon the Credit of a  
*Dream*, or a *Vision*, should attempt to draw them to *Ido-*  
*latry*. The *Evidence* attending the *Mosaic Religion* was  
 so vastly superior to that, which could be supposed to  
 arise from any *pretended Dream, Vision or Sign*, that he  
 might be justly and reasonably rejected without looking  
 into his *Credentials*. But will this, Sir, at all prove,  
 that *these Persons* to whom the *Apostle* addresses, received  
*Christianity* at first without any *Evidence* at all; laying  
 it down as a first Principle, that *it was true*, and (re-  
 solving nevertheless to *reason* a little,) inferring from  
 thence *it was true*, and roundly concluding, *It is Di-*  
*vine, because it is Divine?* This, Sir, is your candid Re-  
 presentation of the Matter: But I would hope, few  
 Readers

\* 1 John iv. 2.



Readers Heads are weak enough, even after your *Whirl of Words*, to be turned round in this imaginary Circle.

But to return from this *Digression*, I shall proceed now to examine the *only Two Arguments* which I remember on the Head I have been speaking to, that are yet *unanswered*; I mean, *that from our being required to pray for the Increase of our Faith*, and *that which you draw from Infant-Baptism*.

I readily grant you, (without cavilling at the Argument as drawn from a particular *Scripture*;) that it is our Duty to *pray that our Faith may be increased*: But I think *no Argument* can be drawn from hence, to prove that it is *not to be promoted by Rational Methods*; any more than we can argue, that *Virtue* is not to be *rationaly cultivated*, because we are to *pray for its Growth* in our Souls. What I have already said of God's operating upon us as *Rational Creatures*, and in Concurrence with the *Exercise of our own Faculties*, when compared with what I have said in my *Second Letter*, concerning the *Nature of true Faith*, is an abundant Solution of this Objection. *Reasonably* may we *desire*, that God would awaken our Minds to Diligence in *searching after Truth*; that he would present the *Evidence of it* before us in a clear and convincing Light; that he would guard our Hearts from those corrupt *Prejudices* which might obstruct its Entrance into them; and that he would *re-mind us*, from Time to Time, of those great *Religious Truths* which we do believe, with such *Spirit and Energy*, that our Temper of Life may, in a suitable Manner, be *influenced* by the realizing Persuasion. In *such a Prayer*, methinks, every *virtuous Deist* must join; as I firmly believe, that would Men heartily join in it, and act accordingly, they would soon cease to be *Deists* in the *Negative Sense* of the Word. And in Proportion to the Degree in which we see *evident Reason* to believe the *Truth of Christianity*, we may *reasonably pray*, that God, by the *Influences of his Holy Spirit* on our Minds, would give us more comprehensive Views of its *Evidence*, and would impress a more lively Sense of its great *Principles* on our Hearts; that our *Faith* may not be a *cold Assent*, but *powerful* in the Production of its genuine Fruits.

It is, on the other Hand, very true, that a Man, who does not see *Reason* to believe the *Gospel* to be a *Divine Revelation*, cannot *rationally pray* to be confirmed in that Belief, or even to be brought to it; but it is evident, that whatever Rule the *Scripture* gives on this Head, it gives to those who profess to admit its *Divine Authority*. And a Search into *Rational Evidence* is so far from being *inconsistent* with *such a Prayer*, that where Doubts and Difficulties arise in the Mind, which, though they do not entirely destroy the Assent, introduce Perplexity, *such Enquiry* is the wisest Method we can take to secure an *Answer* to our *Prayers*; provided they be reverently, prudently, and candidly made. But this rather belongs to the Subject of my *First Letter*. What I have just now said may be sufficient to shew, that the *Scripture*, if it encourages us to *pray for the Increase of Faith*, (which I readily allow that it does,) gives us no Room at all to expect any *New Revelation* in Answer to *those Prayers*, which is the only View in which the Mention of them could be material to your Cause.

I shall conclude this Head with asking you seriously, whether you think *Simplicius* desired or expected an *immediate Revelation*, like that which you describe, when he *prays*, “that God would accurately rectify the *Reason*” which he has given us, and remove the Mist that “hangs upon our *Understandings*, that we may discern “Things *Human* and *Divine*!”\* If you think *such a Prayer* as this consistent with the Use of *Reason*, which he desires might be *justified* and *guided*, you will easily see, that we may on the very same Principle *pray for the Increase of Faith*, without any of those *Enthusiastical Apprehensions*, which you represent as *essential to Christianity*.

There yet remains to be considered the Argument you draw from *Infant-Baptism*, which you apprehend would be very *absurd*, if it were not supposed to be attended with such a *Communication of the Spirit*, as that which is now in Debate between us. “Can a Man,”  
say

\* Ἰκεῖνον, Δεσπότα, — συμπραξαίως αὐτοκτεταίς κριν — πρὸς διορθωσιν ἀκρίβη τῆ ἐν κριν λόγῳ, — καὶ ἀφελεῖν τελεῶς τὴν ἀχλύ τῶν ψυχικῶν κριν ἐμμάθῃ; ὅρα γινώσκωμεν εὐ — η μὲν Θεοῦ, ἡδὲ καὶ ἀνδρα. *Simplic. Comment. ad fin.*

say you, "be baptized into a rational Religion?" (by which I suppose you mean, Can that Religion be rational of which *Infant-Baptism* is a Part?) "Where is Reason concerned, when *Babes* accept the Terms of Salvation by Deputy, and are entitled to all the Privileges of the most extensive Faith by another's Act? By the *Baptismal Ceremony* they commence true Believers at once, and are made Heirs of Heaven, you know, by the Faith of their Bondsmen." (Pag. 9.) And to the same Purpose, in your 69th Page, "The Merits of the most finished Conviction are already theirs by Imputation, &c."

Now here, Sir, I am obliged to say, that if there be any Form of Baptism in the Christian World, which justifies such Inferences, and such a Manner of speaking, I am extremely sorry for it. But I am very confident, the Scripture teaches nothing of this Kind; and it is by that, and not by the Rubrick of any particular Church, whether *Papish* or *Protestant*, that the Merits of this Cause are to be tried.

I cannot see, how any Sponsor, whether he be, or be not a Parent, can pretend to answer for a Child, that he shall believe, or obey the Gospel: Nor does the bringing Children to Baptism, by any Means imply it. What Reason we have to conclude *Infant-Baptism* a Rite of Divine Institution, I shall not now enquire. It is enough if I shew, that admitting it to be so, (which I really think it is very reasonable that we should admit,) it by no Means implies this absurd Consequence. Other Ends might be answered by it, valuable enough to justify the Wisdom of the Ordinance: As for Instance, Hereby Parents may give a publick Token of their Faith in Christianity, and their consequent Desire that their Children may partake of its Benefits, and answer its Demands: Hereby they may solemnly declare their Resolution to train them up in the Institutions of our Blessed Master, and their Resignation of them to the Disposal of Divine Providence, if God should see fit early to remove them: This also may remain, throughout all Generations, as a Memorial of the Tenderneſs which our Lord shewed to little Children, and of the Perpetuity of that Covenant, the Efficacy of which reaches from one Generation

ration to another: And to add no more, it may lay a *Foundation* for affectionate *Addresses* to the *Children* afterwards, as being already *listed* under the *Banners* of *Christ*, so far as they could be *listed* by the *Act* of another; so that they must either *confirm*, or, in *Effect* at least, *renounce* what was then done. All these valuable *Purposes*, and many more, may be answered by *Infant-Baptism*. But it will by no *Means* follow from hence, that this *Rite* *affects* the *Eternal State* of the *Child*; or that, if it did *affect* it, there must be such an extraordinary *Communication of the Spirit* to it, as you suppose. You allow, in express *Terms*, that there is *no Act* of the *Child* at all, and that it *believes nothing*. How this consists with its having a *perfect Faith* wrought in its *Mind* at once, is not possible for me to conceive. I must therefore conclude, that you meant nothing more than to *expose this Practice*, as you elsewhere *expose Persecution*, by intimating that it *cannot be defended*, unless *your Doctrine* were to be granted; whence you are sure, every thinking *Man*, who yields to this *Part* of your *Argument*, will conclude, that it *cannot be defended at all*. On the other *Hand*, it seems sufficient for me here to have shewn, that *your Notion* is not connected with *Christianity*, even allowing *Infant-Baptism* to be a *Part* of it. May the *Time* at length come, when a *Zeal* for the *Honour* of the *Gospel* shall more effectually engage all its *Ministers*, to adhere to the *Purity* both of its *Doctrines* and *Institutions*, and not to overload it with those *Additions of their own*, which furnish its *Adversaries* with *Matter of Triumph*! In the *Mean Time*, may *these Adversaries* consider, that they are answerable to *God* for the *Impartiality*, with which they enquire into the *Contents* of *Christianity*, and that they are to take their *Notions of it* from the *New Testament* alone! which if you, *Sir*, had been pleased to have done, you would never have mentioned *this Argument*; nor from any *Thing* you could have met with *there*, could you ever have thought of it.

Having thus dispatched the *Three grand Articles* of your *Pamphlet*, I do not remember any *Thing* very material in it, which I have left untouched; for *little Slips*,

*Slips*, which neither affect the *Main Argument*, nor the Honour of *Scripture*, are not proper for the Notice of One, who values his own Time and his Reader's, and seeks not to insult *his Antagonist*, nor to expose him to any unnecessary Contempt. Yet I cannot close without a Remark or Two, on what you insinuate, with so much Disdain, concerning "the ingenious Contrivance," (as you are pleased to call it,) "of abating the Degree of Evidence, to leave the more Room for the Merit of Volunteers; with the Duty of cultivating a pious Propensity to the Affirmative, soliciting the Assent of our own Minds, and endeavouring to help our Unbelief." (Pag. 111.) This Manner of Representation is so ludicrous, that it is not easy to determine your Meaning. But I suppose it to be this. Some considerable Writers in Favour of our Religion have often said, what indeed many Passages of *Scripture* seem to favour, "that the Degree of Evidence attending it was wisely adjusted in such a Manner, as to make it as a Touch-Stone to the Temper of those to whom it came; and that instead of quarrelling with Providence for not giving it the greatest possible Evidence, we ought rather to adore its Wisdom in such an Adjustment." This seems to be the Notion you ridicule; and if it be, I wish, that for your own Security from the Rebound of Ridicule ill-placed, you had condescended to shew its Absurdity.—Seriously to maintain that such a Sentiment is contemptible, would indeed be another Stab at Natural Religion, as well as Revealed. Do you imagine it, Sir, impossible, that the Blessed God should have given any more convincing Proofs of his Being and Perfections, than those which every Man now actually sees? I grant, these Proofs are sufficient, to convince any Reasonable Person: But I ask it again, Whether God could not contrive any which should be more striking, and in Fact more effectual? To say, that he could not, is limiting the Holy One of Israel in so foolish and so profane a Manner, that I hope, Sir, you would abhor the Imputation of it: And to own, that he could have done it, and yet has omitted it, if at the same Time he acts wisely, is in Effect owning the Notion you so scornfully reject; or, in other Words,

owning

168 A THIRD LETTER to the Author, of  
owning that an Evidence attempered and abated in a certain Degree is such, as it is fit for GOD to give, and to prefer, in many Instances, to higher Degrees in their own Nature very possible.—And where, I beseech you, Sir, is the Absurdity of thus trying Mens Integrity, any more than of trying their other Virtues in the Course of Life? Is it not possible, there may be a certain Degree of Pride, or of Licentiousness, so odious to GOD, that he should give even to his own Revelation, only such a Degree of Evidence, as he knows such Persons will, through the free and criminal Abuse of their own Faculties, be ready to reject with Scorn; while Persons of a more humble and ingenuous Temper will see and submit to it? Nay, I will add, must it not of Course be so in the Nature of Things, that the Internal Evidence of any Revelation must strike those Minds most, which have the truest Taste of Moral Excellency.—One would have thought, that what the sagacious Author of the *Analogy between Reason and Religion* has there said on this Subject, might have engaged any one who has read it, as you intimate you have done, to treat the Topick with more Respect; and I shall remit you to a repeated Perusal of that solid and useful *Treatise*, with only this one farther Question; “Whether you do not think there is such a Thing in the Human Heart, as the Counter-part to the Character you deride,—an impious Propensity to the Negative, a Soliciting the Dissent of our own Minds, and an endeavouring to promote our own Unbelief?” If you think, the Will has no remote Influence upon the Understanding as to its Enquiry into Truth, and that corrupt Affections never lead a Man into Error, from which (had his Heart been more upright,) he might easily have been preserved, you contradict not only yourself, (compare Pag. 63, 64.) but the Common Sense and Experience of Mankind; and introduce an Universal Fatality, that worst of Monsters, which will swallow up Virtue and Religion together, and leave the Mind an easy Prey to every Error, and to every Vice, which will owe its cheap Victory to the Air of Irrefragability, with which it makes its Appearance.

And

And is *this*, Sir, after all, *the Situation*, in which you would wish to leave the Mind of your Reader? or is it such a *Situation*, that a *wise and benevolent Man*, would think it worthy of his Time and Labour, to endeavour to bring *his own Mind*, and *that of others* into it; I would intreat you, Sir, at parting, seriously to consider, how far you would have Reason to *rejoice in the Success* of what you have writ, if it should be thus successful. I should think nothing more instructive and edifying to you, than to pause on the *Consequences*. You would indeed thereby *gain a Triumph*: But would you if you were a *Soldier*, for the Sake of *that*, lay your Country in Ruins? And what else would *your Success* in this Controversy do? Let us suppose Men convinced, that neither *Christianity*, nor *Natural Religion*, are capable of being *rationally defended*, or (if you like the Expression better,) are *founded on Argument*: And what follows? You would indeed thereby *free some*, for whom it is possible you may have some peculiar Concern, *from the Anxiety* which the secret Apprehensions of *Religion* give them, in the Pursuit of their prohibited Pleasures: Yet could you not *secure them* entirely from some *Revoltings of Heart*, and Anguish of *Conscience*, which will sometimes be *thrown into Convulsions* even by these very *Opiates*. At least, in the *Intervals* of these *Agonies*, you would embolden them to *lay the Reins* on the Neck of *Appetite and Passion*, which, where *Human Laws*, or an innate *Generosity of Temper* did not *restrain*, would trample down every other *Obstacle*, and drive on to the *Ruin of Society*. And as for those who are *truly Religious*, you would, as *Tully* speaks, on Supposition of a much *smaller Evil*, (the *Ruin of Friendship*;) *take the very Sun out of their Heaven*. You would *destroy* the Entertainment of their *Solitude*, the Cement of their *Friendship*, the Joy of their *Prosperity*, the Support of their *Alderssity*, the Light of their *Life*, the Hope of their *Death*; and would leave the *most pious Mind*, of all others the *most desolate*. For what *Desolation* can be imagined equal, or comparable, to *that* of falling from *so high a Hope*, from *so glorious a Prospect*, into the gloomy, cheerless, and *hopeless State*, in which a Mind destitute of Religion must of Necessity

find itself? If *this*, Sir, were to be the *certain Effect* of reading your Book, (as I think it must be, if the Principles of it were to be admitted, and its Consequences pursued;) what a *Calamity* must it have been to any wise and good Man to *meet with it*? I shall not aggravate at large, but only add, that to have been, though ever so undesignedly, *the instrument of such Mischiefs*, the fatal Occasion of grieving the Good, of hardening the Bad, of subverting Religion, and, by an inseparable Consequence, of dishonouring God, and of ruining Men, is certainly to be numbered among the most *lamentable Evils*.

It is possible, indeed, that you did not *lay a Plot* for all *this*. If you will permit me, Sir, to speak with all Plainness and Freedom, I am ready in my own Judgment to conclude, from comparing one Thing with another, that you are a Kind of *humorous Sceptick*, who intended chiefly to *amuse the World*, and to shew your Address in *fuzzling the Cause*, and *attacking Christianity* in a peculiar Disguise, which you apprehended you could manage artfully, on a Side which seemed to you most open. Perhaps you attended to no farther *Consequence*, than that some of your Readers would *smile*, and some of them would be *confounded*, and many say you had *played your Part* in a dextrous Manner, and cut out *Work for Divines*, who, amidst the Variety of *Forms* you assume, might find it *more difficult* to deal with you, than with an *Enemy* who *more openly* declares War, and wears a Habit by which he may more certainly be known. *Views like these* may amuse and animate a *light Imagination*, and it may look no farther. But *the Effect* of Action depends not on *our Foresight*. This is certain; either *Religion*, both *Natural* and *Revealed*, must be judged *irrational*; or your *Book*, whatever were meant by it, must be judged *ternicious*, and must draw after it a very *Solemn Account* in the Presence of God. I heartily pray, you may be thoughtful of *that Account* in Time, and dismiss you, as you did your Young Correspondent, with a *Text of Scripture*, which contains an *Admonition*, the Weight of which no intelligent *Heathen* could question. How gaily soever you may have affected to *sport yourself*, with these



Christianity not founded on Argument. 171

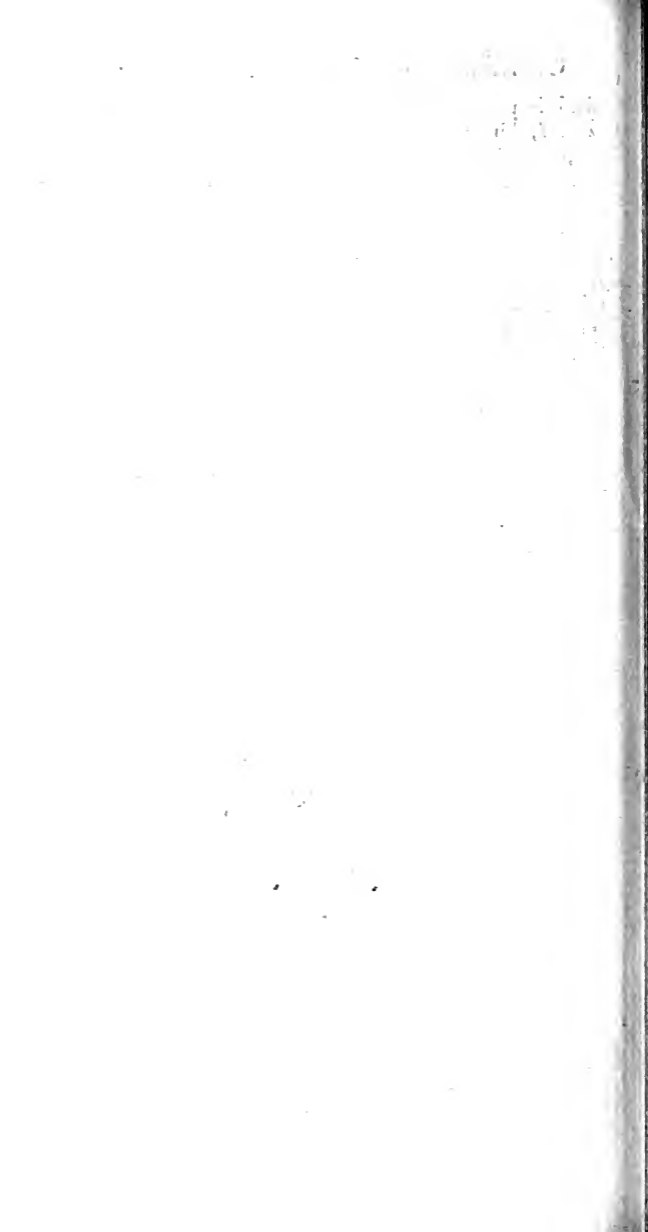
these important Topicks, *Be not deceived, for GOD is not mocked; but whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap.* A Harvest of Future Glory, I suppose, no Man in our Age and Country expects to secure by *opposing Christianity*; and I will venture to say, that, so far as I can learn, few of its *Enemies*, various as their Forms, and specious as some of their Pretences may have been, have for the Present raised the Character of their Knowledge, or of their *Virtue*, among the best Judges and Examples of both, by any *Attack* they have made upon it. And if you, Sir, how considerable soever your Natural Talents may be, should prove the *first Exception* to this general Remark, it will be a great Surprise to

Your most humble Servant,

Northampton,  
March 4, 1742-3.

P. DODDRIDGE.



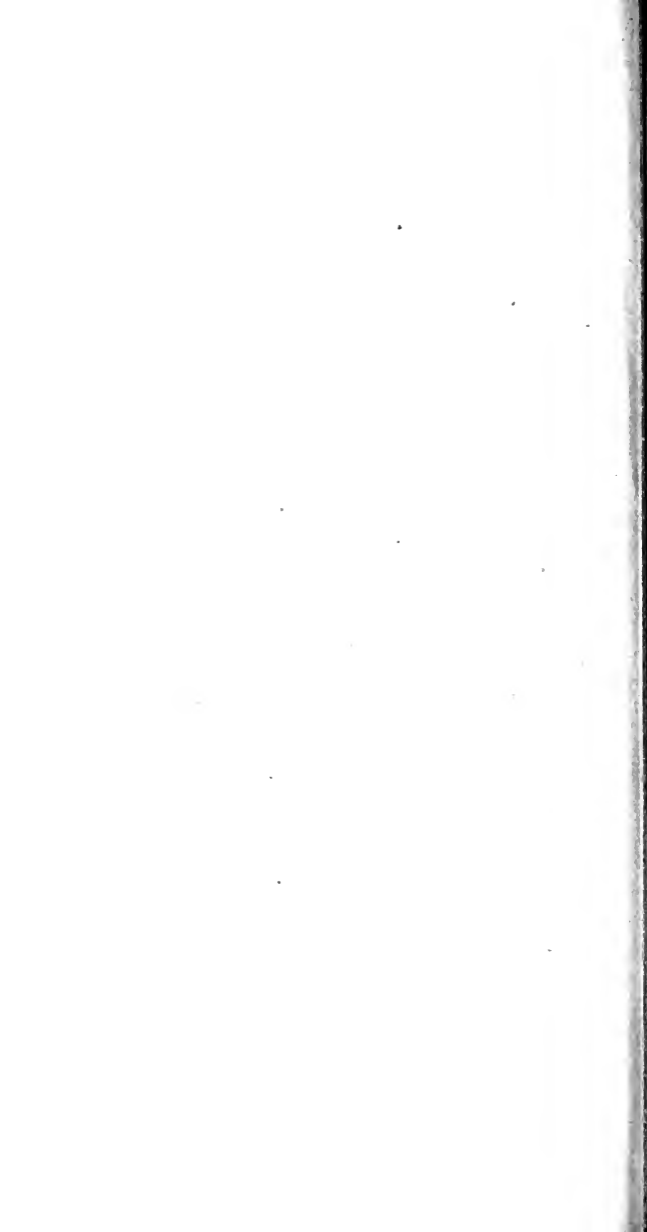


THE  
P R I N C I P L E S  
OF THE  
Christian Religion,  
Expressed in  
Plain and Easy VERSE,  
And Divided into  
SHORT LESSONS,  
For the Use of  
CHILDREN and YOUTH.

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JESUS said unto Peter,——*Lovest thou me?*——*Feed my Lambs.* John xxi. 15.

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## P R E F A C E.



*THE little Verses now before the Reader were written at the Desire of my most worthy and honoured Friend the Reverend Mr. Clark of St. Albans, and are published at his Request, as what he hopes may by the Divine Blessing do some Good in the rising Generation. I was*

*the more willing to undertake the Task, because I had often observed, with how much Ease and Pleasure Children learn Verses by Heart, how fond they are of repeating them, and by Consequence how much longer they retain them, than they do what they learn in Prose.*

*In this View Dr. Watts's Songs for Children have been a singular Blessing to our Land: And it is but Justice to that Great yet Condescending Writer to own, that if this light Essay be of any Service in it, a great Part of the Thanks will be due to him, who had digested the chief Heads of Christianity in so natural a Method, and expressed them in such easy yet comprehensive Language, in the first Part of his Second Set of Catechisms, that he had left me very little more to do under many of the Articles, than to translate them into Rhyme; for I can hardly presume to call it Poetry.*

*That Simplicity and Ease, which may suit Children, I have been always careful to maintain; and have endeavoured here and there, where I conveniently could, to strike the Fancy with a little Imagery, and especially to affect the Heart of my dear little Scholars, by giving a serious and practical Turn to the several Truths which are delivered. It has also been my great Care to insert nothing into these Verses, but what I apprehend the Generality of serious Christians believe, so that I hope they will suit different Denominations; as indeed I could wish, the rising Age might be*

*instrued, in what is like to unite, rather than divide us. Their own Comfort, as well as the Credit of our common Christianity, is much concerned in it.*

*Some will, no doubt, think this a trifling Performance: But I have been told, that the familiar System of Religion, which Grotius drew up in easy Verse for the Use of the Dutch Sailors, was esteemed by him and others, one of his most useful Works: And if I had not the Patronage of such illustrious Names, as have gone before me in such humble Labours, I should think myself unworthy the Honour of calling Jesus my Master, if I thought it beneath me to be desirous of doing Good to the least Child of the poorest of the People.*

*No Nation under Heaven appears to me so well furnished with Hel's for the Christian Education of Children, as our own. I heartily pray, that Parents may be diligent in using them, and that they may enforce their good Instructions with a suitable Example; and then I doubt not, but, thro' the Divine Blessing, the happy Fruits will be visible: Nor will a gracious GOD, who taketh Pleasure in the Prosperity of his People, forget the least pious and benevolent Attempt for promoting so good a Work.*

*Northampton,  
October 31, 1743.*

P. DODDRIDGE.

L E S S O N.



LESSON I.

*Of our own Nature, and its chief Glory and Happiness.*

**N**OW for a while aside I'll lay  
 My childless Trifles, and my Play;  
 And call my Thoughts which rove abroad,  
 To view myself, and view my God.  
 I'll look within, that I may see  
 What I now am, what I must be.

I am the Creature of the LORD:  
 He made me by his pow'ful Word.  
 This Body, in each curious Part,  
 Was wrought by his unfailing Art.  
 From him my nobler Spirit came,  
 My Soul, a Spark of heav'nly Flame:  
 That Soul, by which my Body lives,  
 Which thinks, and hopes, and joys, and grieves,  
 And must in Heav'n or Hell remain,  
 When Flesh is turn'd to Dust again.

What Business then should I attend,  
 Or what esteem my noblest End?  
 Sure it consists in this alone,  
 That GOD my Maker may be known:  
 So known, that I may love him still,  
 And form my Actions by his Will:  
 That He may bless me whilst I live,  
 And when I die my Soul receive,  
 To dwell for ever in his Sight  
 In perfect Knowledge and Delight.

## L E S S O N II.

*The Knowledge of GOD, and our Duty to be learnt  
from the Bible.*

**H**OW shall a young Immortal learn  
This great, this Infinite Concern,  
What my Almighty Maker is,  
And what the Way this GOD to please?

Shall some bright Angel spread his Wing  
The welcome Message down to bring?  
Or must we dig beneath the Ground,  
Deep as where Silver Mines are found?

I bless his Name for what I hear;  
The Word of Life and Truth is near,  
His Gospel sounds thro' all our Land;  
Bibles are lodg'd in every Hand.  
That sacred Book inspir'd by GOD  
In our own Tongue is spread abroad:  
That Book may little Children read,  
And learn the Knowledge which they need.  
I'll place it still before my Eyes,  
For there my Hope and Treasure lies.

## L E S S O N III.

*Of the Nature and Attributes of the blessed GOD.*

**G**OD is a Spirit none can see;  
He ever was, is, and shall be:  
Present where-e'er his Creatures dwell,  
Thro' Earth and Sea, thro' Heav'n and Hell.

His Eye with Infinite Survey  
Views all their Realms in full Display:  
What has been, is, or shall be done,  
Or here, or there, to Him is known;  
Nor can one Thought arise unseen,  
In Mind of Angels, or of Men.



Yet far above all anxious Cares  
Serene He rules his grand Affairs ;  
While Wisdom Infinite attends  
By surest Means the noblest Ends.

Majestick from his lofty Throne  
He speaks, and all his Will is done :  
Nor can united Worlds withstand  
The Force of his Almighty Hand.  
Yet ever Righteous are his Ways :  
Faithful and True whate'er he says :  
The Holy, Holy, Holy LORD  
By all th' Angelick Host ador'd.

The Bounty of his Gracious Hands  
Wide as the World he made extends ;  
And tho' Himself compleatly bless'd,  
With Pity looks on the Distress'd ;  
And by His SON, our Saviour dear,  
To Sinners brings Salvation near.

All that is Glorious, Good, and Great,  
Does in the LORD JEHOVAH meet.  
Thereto his Name be Glory given  
By all on Earth, and all in Heav'n.

#### L E S S O N I V.

##### *Of GOD's Relations to us.*

**T**HE LORD my Maker I adore,  
Created by his Love and Power.  
He fashion'd in their various Forms  
Angels, and Men, and Beasts, and Worms ;  
And all their well rang'd Orders stand  
Supported by his powerful Hand.

Father of Light ! Amidst the Skies  
He bids the Golden Sun arise :  
He scatters the refreshing Rain  
To cheer the Grass, and swell the Grain ;  
And ev'ry Day presents the Food,  
That satisfies my Mouth with Good.

180      *The Sum of our Duty.*

At Home, Abroad, by Night, by Day,  
He is my Guardian, and my Stay,  
And sure 'tis fit my Soul should know,  
He is My LORD and Sov'reign too.

Oh may that Voice, that speaks his Law,  
My Heart to sweet Obedience draw;  
That when I see the Judge descend,  
I in that Judge may see my Friend!

L E S S O N V.

*The Sum of our Duty to GOD and Man.*

**T**HE Knowledge which my Heart desires,  
Is but to learn what GOD requires.  
Speak then the Word, my Father dear,  
For all my Soul's awake to hear:  
And Oh, what Joy my Breast must move,  
'To hear, that all thy Law is LOVE!

This is the Sum of ev'ry Part;  
To love the LORD with all my Heart,  
With all my Soul, with all my Might,  
And in his Service to delight:  
'That I should love my Neighbours too,  
And what I wish from them should do.

How short and sweet, how good and plain,  
Easy to learn, and to retain!  
Oh may thy Grace my Soul renew!  
And 'twill be sweet to practise too.

L E S S O N VI.

*How our Love to GOD is to be expressed.*

**S**INCE LOVE is as my Duty known,  
How must this Love to GOD be shown?  
Sure I the highest Thoughts should raise  
Of Him, who is above all Praise:

His Favour most of all desire,  
 And still to please him should aspire :  
 To him be constant Worship paid  
 And all his Sacred Laws obey'd.

If to afflict me be his Will,  
 I'll bear it with Submission still :  
 A tender Father sure he proves,  
 And but corrects because he loves.

His Word with Diligence I'll hear :  
 To him present my daily Prayer :  
 And while new Mercies I implore,  
 For Blessings past I will adore ;  
 And ev'ry Action shall express  
 A Heart full-charg'd with Thankfulness.

## L E S S O N VII.

*How Love to our Neighbour should be expressed.*

**I** By my LOVE TO MEN must prove  
 How cordially my GOD I love.  
 To those whom He hath cloth'd with Power,  
 I would be subject every Hour :  
 To Parents, and to Rulers too,  
 Pay Honour and Obedience due :  
 In ev'ry Word I'll Truth maintain,  
 In ev'ry Act shall Justice reign.

In all my feeble Hands can do  
 The Good of all I would pursue :  
 And where my Powers of Action fail,  
 Kind Wishes in my Heart prevail  
 For ev'ry Man, who e'er he be,  
 Stranger, or Friend, or Enemy.

Since by GOD's pard'ning Grace I live,  
 Well may I all my Foes forgive ;  
 And, as CHRIST's Word and Pattern shew'd,  
 Conquer their Evil by my Good.

## L E S S O N VIII.

*Sins to be avoided, in Thought, Word, and Action.*

**G**UARD me, O God, from ev'ry Sin;  
 Let Heart, and Tongue, and Life be clean!  
 Tho' with Ten Thousand Snares beset,  
 I never would my LORD forget.

Fain would I learn to lay aside  
 Malice, and Stubbornness, and Pride,  
 Envy, and ev'ry evil Thought;  
 Nor be my Breast with Anger hot.  
 Each other Passion wild and rude  
 I long to feel by Grace subdu'd.

When thus my Heart is well prepar'd,  
 My Tongue I easily shall guard  
 From ev'ry Oath, and Curse profane,  
 Nor take God's Rev'rend Name in vain:  
 No sacred Thing shall I deride,  
 Nor scoff, nor rail, nor brawl, nor chide:  
 My Soul will ev'ry Lye detest,  
 And ev'ry base indecent Jest.

This humble watchful Soul of mine  
 Shall with Abhorrence then decline  
 The Drunkard's Cup, the Glutton's Feast,  
 That sink the Man down to the Beast;  
 Th' injurious Blow, the wanton Eye,  
 The Loss of Hours that quickly fly;  
 And that which leads to every Crime,  
 The vain Mispencc of Sacred Time;  
 What brings Dishonour on God's Law,  
 Or what on Man would Mischief draw.

L E S S O N IX.

*The Corruption of Nature, and Sins of Life acknowledged.*

L O R D, when my wretched Soul surveys  
The various Follies of my Ways,  
The Guilt of ev'ry Word and Thought,  
Ev'ry Neglect, and ev'ry Fault,  
Well may I tremble to appear,  
Laden with Horror, Shame, and Fear.

A D A M our common Head, alas,  
Brought Sin and Death on all his Race.  
From him my ruin'd Nature came,  
Heir to his Sorrow, and his Shame:  
My Body weak, and dark my Mind,  
To Good averse, to Sin inclin'd:  
And Oh, too soon the deadly Fruit  
Ripen'd from that unhappy Root.

Duty requir'd my early Care  
Each fond Indulgence to forbear;  
Requir'd me, all the Good I knew  
With constant Vigour to pursue.  
But my vain Heart, and stubborn Will,  
In its own Ways would wander still;  
Like a wild Ass's Colt would go  
On to this Wilderness of Woe.  
Vainly I seek to plead a Word,  
Silent in Guilt before the L O R D.

L E S S O N X.

*Of the Misery which Sin hath brought upon us.*

W H O can abide God's Wrath, or stand  
Before the Terrors of his Hand?  
J E H O V A H's Curse what Heart shall dare  
To meet? or what be strong to bear?

He ev'ry Good can take away,  
 And ev'ry Evil on us lay :  
 Can by one single Word bring down  
 The tallest Head that wears a Crown,  
 The Statesman wise, the Warrior brave,  
 To moulder in the silent Grave;  
 And send the wretched Soul to Hell,  
 To the fierce Flames where Devils dwell,  
 For endless Years to languish there  
 In Pangs of Infinite Despair.

I then, poor feeble Child, how soon  
 Must I dissolve before his Frown?  
 And yet his Frowns, and Vengeance too,  
 I by my Sins have made my Due.

Is there no Hope? And must I die?  
 Is there no Friend, no Helper nigh!  
 Is it beyond Repeal decreed,  
 That ev'ry Soul that sins must bleed?  
 Oh let my longing trembling Ear  
 Some Sound of Grace and Pardon hear!  
 My Soul would the first News embrace,  
 And turn its Tremblings into Praise.

## L E S S O N XI.

*Of the Gospel, or the Good News of Salvation by CHRIST.*

WHAT joyful Tidings do I hear?  
 'Tis Gospel-Grace salutes my Ear:  
 And by thy gentle Sound I find,  
 This righteous GOD is mild and kind.

JESUS, his only Son, displays  
 The Wonders of his Father's Grace,  
 The great Salvation long foretold  
 By Prophets to the Jews of old,  
 Is now in plainer Words made known,  
 As to th' Apostles clearly shown.  
 By this blest Message brought from Heav'n  
 Pardon, and Peace, and Grace is giv'n.

Oh may I know that Saviour dear,  
Whom GOD has represented there!  
And that Eternal Life receive,  
Which he was sent by GOD to give!

L E S S O N XII.

*Who CHRIST is, and how he lived on Earth.*

JESUS! how bright his Glories shine!  
The great EMMANUEL is Divine.  
One with the Father he appears,  
And all his Father's Honours shares.  
Yet he to bring Salvation down  
Has put our Mortal Nature on.

He in an humble Virgin's Womb  
A feeble Infant did become:  
A Stable was his Lodging made,  
And the rude Manger was his Bed.

Growing in Life he still was seen  
Humble, laborious, poor, and mean.  
The Son of GOD from Year to Year  
Did as a Carpenter appear.

At length, when he to preach was sent;  
Thro' Towns and Villages he went,  
And travell'd with unwearied Zeal  
GOD's Will and Nature to reveal.

To prove the Heav'nly Truths he taught,  
Unnumber'd Miracles were wrought.  
The Blind beheld him; and the Ear,  
Which had been deaf, his Voice could hear;  
Sickness obey'd his healing Hand;  
And Devils fled at his Command;  
The Lame for Joy arround him leap;  
The Dead he wakens from their Sleep.

Thro' all his Life his Doctrine shines,  
Drawn in the plainest, fairest Lines.

And

And Death at length did he sustain,  
 Our Pardon, and our Peace to gain;  
 That Sinners who condemn'd stood,  
 Might gain Salvation by his Blood.  
 All Honour then ascribed be  
 'To him who liv'd and died for me!

### L E S S O N XIII.

*Of CHRIST's Death, Resurrection, and Ascension.*

JESUS the Righteous! Lo, he dies,  
 For Sin a spotless Sacrifice!  
 Justice has on his sacred Head  
 The Weight of our Transgressions laid.  
 If God's own Son would Sinners save,  
 He must be humbled to the Grave;  
 That so a pard'ning God might shew  
 What Vengeance to our Crimes was due.

Nail'd to the Cross with torturing Smart,  
 What Anguish rack'd his tender Heart!  
 Alas! how bitterly he cried,  
 Tasted the Vinegar, and died!  
 Cold in the Tomb that mournful Day  
 My Saviour's mangled Body lay.  
 Well may I blush, and weep, to see  
 What JESUS bore for Love of me.

But, Oh my Soul, thy Grief refrain,  
 JESUS the Saviour lives again.  
 On the third Day the Conqu'ror rose,  
 And greatly triumph'd o'er his Foes;  
 Prov'd his recover'd Life, and then  
 Ascended to his Heav'n again.

Exalted on a shining Throne  
 At God's Right Hand he sets him down,  
 To plead the Merits of his Blood,  
 And rule for all his People's Good:



Wide o'er all Worlds his Power extends,  
And well can he protect his Friends.  
May I in that blest Band appear,  
Secure from Danger, and from Fear!

L E S S O N   X I V .

*Of the Nature of Faith, and Repentance.*

**T**HEY must repent, and must believe  
Who **CHRIST**'s Salvation would receive.  
Oh may thy Spirit Faith impart,  
And work Repentance in my Heart!

Bless'd **JESUS**, who can be so base,  
As to suspect thy Power, or Grace!  
Or who can e'er so stupid be  
To slight thy Blessings, **LORD**, and thee!  
With humble rev'rent Hope and Love  
I to thy gracious Feet would move,  
And to thy Care my All resign,  
Resolv'd to be for ever thine;  
Secure, if thou vouchsafe to keep  
My feeble Soul among thy Sheep.

The Sins and Follies I have done  
Humbled in Dust I would bemoan;  
And while past Guilt I thus deplore,  
I would repeat that Guilt no more:  
But by a Life of Zeal and Love  
True Faith and Penitence approve:  
So shall thy Grace my Sins forgive;  
**JESUS** shall smile, and I shall live.

L E S S O N   X V .

*Of the Assurances and Influences of the Blessed SPIRIT.*

**'T**IS not in my weak Power alone,  
To melt this stubborn Heart of Stone,  
My Soul to change, my Life to mend,  
Or seek to **CHRIST**, that gen'rous Friend.

'Tis GOD's own SPIRIT from above  
Fixes our Faith, inflames our Love.  
And makes a Life Divine begin  
In wretched Souls, long dead in Sin.

That most important Gift of Heav'n  
To those that ask and seek is giv'n :  
Then be it my immediate Care,  
With Importunity of Prayer,  
To seek it in a Saviour's Name,  
Who will not turn my Hopes to Shame.

GOD from on high his Grace shall pour ;  
My Soul shall flourish more and more,  
Press on with Speed from Grace to Grace,  
Till Glory end and crown the Race.

Since then the FATHER and the SON,  
And Holy SPIRIT, Three in One,  
Glorious beyond all Speech and Thought,  
Have jointly my Salvation wrought ;  
I'll join them in my Songs of Praise,  
Now, and thro' Heaven's eternal Days:

## LESSON XVI.

*Of the Means of Grace, which GOD has appointed.*

**W**HAT kind Provision GOD has made,  
That we may safe to Heav'n be led !  
For this the Prophets preach'd and wrote,  
For this the blest'd Apostles taught ;  
Taught, as that SPIRIT did inspire,  
Who fell from Heav'n in Tongues of Fire,  
And gave them Languages unknown,  
That distant Lands his Grace might own.  
His Hand has kept the sacred Page  
Secure from Mens and Devils Rage.

For this He Churches did ordain,  
His Truths and Worship to maintain :  
For this He Pastors did provide,  
In those Assemblies to preside :

And from the Round of common Days  
Mark'd out our Sabbaths to his Praise.  
Delightful Day, when Christians meet!  
To hear, and pray, and sing, how sweet!

For this He gives, in Solemn Ways,  
Appointed Tokens of his Grace:  
In Sacramental Pledges there,  
His Soldiers to their General swear.  
Baptiz'd into one common LORD,  
They joyful meet around his Board;  
Honour the Orders of his House,  
And speak their Love, and seal their Vows.

## L E S S O N XVII.

*Of the Design and Obligation of Baptism.*

**I**N Baptism wash'd we all must be,  
In Honour of the Sacred THREE,  
To shew how we are wash'd from Sin  
In JESU'S Blood, and born again  
By Grace Divine; and thus are made  
Members of CHRIST our common Head.

The FATHER form'd the glorious Scheme,  
And we adopted are by Him.

The SON, great Prophet, Priest, and King,  
Did News of this Redemption bring:  
He by his Death our Life procur'd,  
And now bestows it as our LORD.

The Holy SPIRIT Witness bore  
To this blest Gospel heretofore;  
And teaches those he' has purified  
Faithful and Patient to abide.

Into these Names was I baptiz'd;  
And be the Honour justly priz'd:  
Nor let the Sacred Bond be broke,  
Nor be my Covenant-GOD forsook.  
Thus wash'd I'd keep my Garments clean,  
And never more return to Sin,

One Body now all Christians are :  
 Oh may they in one Spirit share !  
 And cherish that endearing Love,  
 In which the Saints are blest'd above !

### L E S S O N XVIII.

*On the Nature and Design of the Lord's-Supper:*

**T**HE Mem'ry of CHRIST'S Death is sweet,  
 When Saints around his Table meet,  
 And break the Bread, and pour the Wine,  
 Obedient to his Word Divine.

While they the Bread and Cup receive,  
 If on their Saviour they believe,  
 They feast, as on his Flesh and Blood ;  
 Cordial Divine, and Heav'nly Food !  
 Thus their Baptifmal Bond renew,  
 And Love to every Christian shew.

Well may their Souls rejoice, and thrive :  
 Oh may the blessed Hour arrive,  
 When ripe in Knowledge, and in Grace,  
 I at that Board shall find a Place !  
 And now, what there is People do  
 I would at humble Distance view ;  
 Would look to CHRIST with grateful Heart,  
 And in their Pleasures take my Part ;  
 Resolv'd, while such a Sight I see,  
 To live to him who died for me.

### L E S S O N XIX.

*Of the Nature and Office of Angels.*

**M**Y Soul, the Heav'nly World survey,  
 The Regions of Eternal Day.  
 There JESUS reigns, and round his Seat  
 Millions of glorious Angels meet.

Those

Those Morning Stars, how bright they shine !  
How sweetly all their Voices join,  
To praise their Maker ! watchful still  
To mark the Signal of his Will ;  
While with their feather'd Brethren's Wings they stand,  
To fly at his Divine Command.

All happy as they are, and great,  
Yet scorn they not on Men to wait.  
And little Children in their Arms  
They gently bear, secure from Harms.

Oh may I, with such humble Zeal,  
My Heav'nly Father's Word felicitate !  
That I, when Time has run its Race,  
May with bless'd Angels find a Place,  
Borne on their friendly Wings on High  
To Joys like theirs, which never die.

## L E S S O N XX.

*Of the Fall, and State of the Devils.*

WELL may I tremble, when I read  
That Sin did Heav'n itself invade :  
Curs'd Pride, with Subtilty unknown,  
Perverted Angels near God's Throne :  
They sinn'd against his Holy Name,  
And hateful Devils they became.  
But Wrath Divine pursu'd them soon,  
And flaming Vengeance hurl'd them down.

Now in the Pangs of fierce Despair,  
Pris'ners at large they range in Air ;  
Walk thro' the Earth, unheard, unseen,  
And lay their Snares for thoughtless Men ;  
Tempt us to sin against our God,  
And draw us to Hell's down-ward Road.

But God can all their Pow'r restrain :  
My Saviour holds them in his Chain,  
Till at his Bar they all appear,  
And meet their final Sentence there.

## L E S S O N XXI.

*On Death.*

L O R D, I confess thy Sentence just,  
That sinful Man should turn to Dust;  
That I e'er long should yield my Breath,  
The Captive of all-conqu'ring Death.

Soon will the awful Hour appear,  
When I must quit my Dwelling here:  
These active Limbs, to Worms a Prey,  
In the Cold Grave must waste away;  
Nor shall I share in all that's done,  
In this wide World, beneath the Sun.

To distant Climes, and Seats unknown,  
My Naked Spirit must be gone:  
To God its Maker must return,  
And ever joy, or ever mourn.

No Room for Penitence and Prayer,  
No farther Preparation there  
Can e'er be made; the Thought is vain:  
My State unalter'd must remain.

Awake, my Soul, without Delay;  
That if God summons thee this Day,  
Thou chearful at his Call may'st rise,  
And spring to Life beyond the Skies.

## L E S S O N XXII.

*On the Resurrection of the Dead.*

W H A T awful Ruins Death hath made!  
How low the Wise and Great are laid!  
Alike the Saints, and Sinners, die;  
Mould'ring alike in Dust they lie.  
But there's a Day shall change the Scene,  
How awful to the Sons of Men!

When the Arch-Angel's Trump shall sound,  
And shake the Air, and cleave the Ground ;  
JESUS inthron'd in Light appears,  
Circled with Angels, bright as Stars.  
" Rise ye that sleep," the LORD shall say :  
And all the Earth, and all the Sea,  
Yield up the Nations of the Dead,  
For Ages in their Bowels hid.  
Bone knows its Kindred Bone again,  
All cloth'd anew with Flesh and Sin :  
Each Spirit knows its proper Mate ;  
They rise an Army vast and great.

But Oh what different Marks they bear,  
Of Transport some, and some of Fear ;  
When marshall'd in the Judge's Sight,  
These to the Left, those to the Right,  
That they may that last Sentence near,  
Which shall their endless State declare !  
My Soul, in deep Attention stay,  
And learn th' Event of such a Day !

## L E S S O N XXIII.

*Of Judgment and Eternity, Heaven and Hell.*

WHEN CHRIST to judge the World descends,  
Thus shall he say to all his Friends :  
" Come blessed Souls, that Kingdom share,  
" My Father did for you prepare  
" 'Ere Earth was founded : Come, and reign,  
" where endless Life and Joy remain "

Then to the Wicked,—“ Cursed Crew,  
" Depart, Heav'n is no Place for you :  
" To those Eternal Burnings go,  
" Whose Pangs the Rebel Angels know. ”

He speaks, and strait his shining Bands,  
With fiery Thunders in their Hands,  
Drive them away : Hell's Lake receives  
The Wretches on its flaming Waves :  
Justice Divine the Gates shall bar,  
And for a Seal affix Despair.

While JESUS, rising from his Throne,  
 Leads his triumphant Army on,  
 To enter their Divine Abode,  
 In the fair City of their GOD.  
 There everlasting Pleasures grow;  
 Full Rivers of Salvation flow;  
 And all their Happiness appears  
 Increasing with Eternal Years.

## L E S S O N XXIV.

*The Conclusion, in a practical Reflection on the whole.*

**A**ND now, my Heart, with rev'rent Awe  
 From hence thine own Instruction draw.  
 I at this Judgment must appear;  
 I must this solemn Sentence hear,  
 (As I'm with Saints or Sinners plac'd,)  
 "Depart Accurs'd," or "Come ye Blest."  
 For ME the Fruits of Glory grow;  
 Or Hell awaits MY Fall below.

Eternal GOD! what shall I do!  
 My Nature trembles at the View:  
 My Deathless Soul herself surveys,  
 With Joy, and Terror, and Amaze.  
 Oh be thy Shield around me spread,  
 To guard the Spirit thou hast made!  
 Save me from Snares of Earth, and Hell,  
 And from my Self preserve me well:  
 Left all the Heav'nly Truths I know  
 Should aggravate my Guilt and Woe!

Thy Pow'r in Weakness is display'd:  
 If Babes by thee be Conqu'rors made,  
 If Satan's Malice shall confound,  
 And Heav'n with Praises shall resound.



*Compassion to the Sick recommended and urged,*

I N A

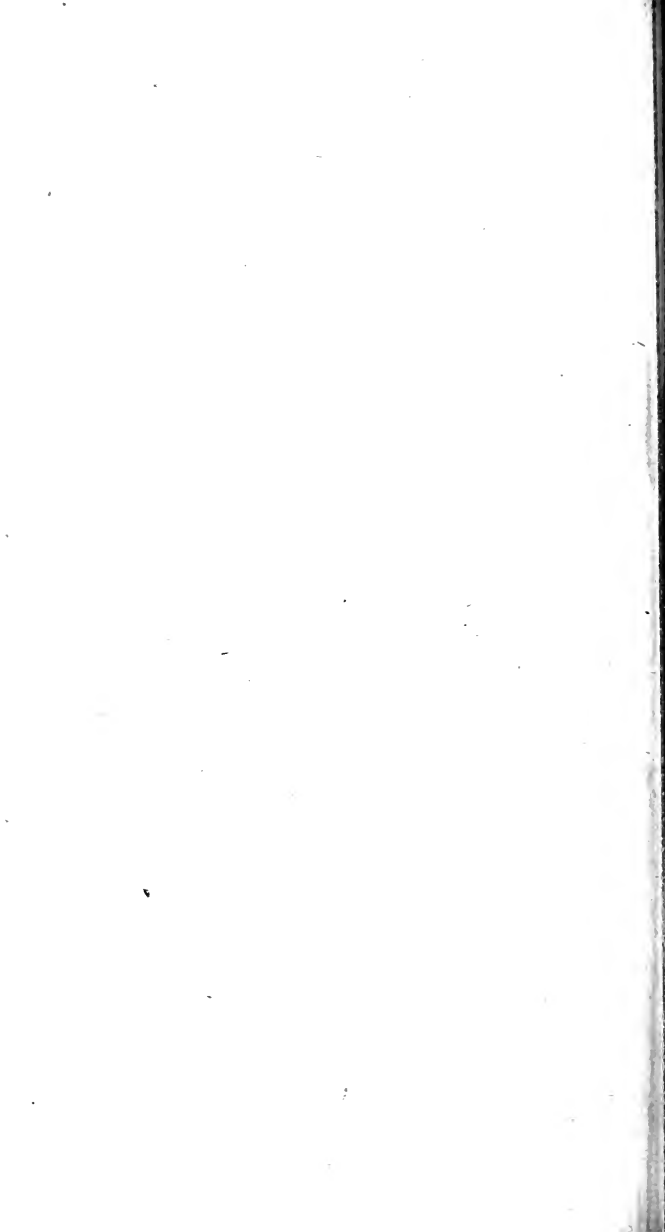
S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D A T

*N O R T H A M P T O N,*

S E P T E M B E R 4, 1743.

In Favour of a Design then opening to erect  
a COUNTY INFIRMARY there for the  
Relief of the Poor *Sick* and *Lame*.





To the Right Honourable the

Earl of *HALIFAX*.

MY LORD,

**T**HE Generous and Active Zeal with which You have espoused the *Charity* this Sermon is intended to recommend, and the Assiduity with which You have vouchsafed to preside in the *Committee* appointed for ripening the general Scheme, and bringing it into Effect, might justly have intitled Your Lordship to this Application; had Your various Abilities been much less conspicuous, and the other Parts of Your Character (incomparably more valuable than any Abilities,) been less known to the Author, or less revered by him. Yet I am very sensible, that the plain and hasty Discourse, which I have now the Honour of presenting to Your Lordship, might fear the Review of an Eye so accustomed to all that is eloquent, beautiful, and finished in *Antiquity*, did it not trust to that kind Prejudice, which Your Attachment to its general Design will naturally give You in its Favour.

I am sensible, how impertinent it would be in me on this Occasion, to give myself a Liberty of

saying all the respectful Things, which from my Heart I think of the *Earl of Halifax*, or to imagine, that his general Permission of inscribing this Sermon to him would authorize the doing it. But it would be over rigorous in Your Lordship to prohibit my intimating that Pleasure I have shared with so many more discerning Persons than myself, in observing that accurate Judgment, that steady Application, that impartial Equity, and that engaging Address, with which Your Lordship, under the Character of our *Chairman*, has conducted the Counsels and Affairs of the *Committee*. I know, that I speak the Sentiments of several of its Members, and I believe I speak the Sentiments of all; when I say, that in the Fatigue of that close Attendance, which we have thought it our Duty to give on this good Occasion, we have often been relieved by reflecting, as it was most natural to do, on the Benefit which the *Publick* must receive from such Talents, when exerted in the highest Assembly of our Nation. There Your Lordship finds a Sphere of Action more amply proportioned to the Largeness of Your Heart, and suited to that high Sense of Liberty, and benevolent Concern for the general Good, which is the brightest Ornament of a *Peer*, and of a *Briton*.

Go on, my Lord, to shine in this Ornament more and more. Animated by every Principle, which *Humanity*, and *Nobility*, and (what is most humane, and most noble,) true *Christianity* can suggest; go on to exert the distinguished Capacities of Usefulness, with which Providence has blessed You, in such Services, and by exerting to increase them; and with them to increase that Veneration and Affection, which every worthy Heart will pay You as its just Tribute, and that infinitely more Important and Divine Pleasure, which Your own will find, in the Consciousness of having acted well. A Pleasure, indeed worthy of the most ardent Pursuit; and

on which Heaven sets so high a Value, that it allows it not to be treated with *by Proxy*; nor will grant any Thing like it, to the most illustrious Birth, the most ample Fortune, or the most elevated Genius, unless the Possessor of them all will go to the Price of it by a resolute Exercise of Personal Virtue.

I rejoice, not for myself alone, but for my Country, that our *Civil*, and *Sacred Liberty* hath *One such Guardian* among the *rising Nobles* of our Age: I hope, it has *many*; and I pray God, their Number and their Virtues may be increased; and that where-ever they are, they may be rewarded with a rich Variety and a long Succession of External Blessings, joined with that Inward Satisfaction which is inseparable from such a Character.

May Your Lordship especially, not only have the sublime Joy of beholding *Great-Britain* distinguished among the Nations by Publick Honour and Prosperity, but see every Thing, which can conduce to Your Personal and Domestick Happiness, added in Private Life! And in particular, when you condescend to turn your Thoughts towards *Northampton*, (a Town under *Hereditary Obligations* to Your Lordship's Family, which I hope it will never be to ungrateful as to forget,) may you soon and long have the Satisfaction to see its COUNTY HOSPITAL, which you are now so kindly cherishing in its Infant-Weakness, grown up to full Maturity, and giving more certain Presages of being an extensive Blessing to Generations yet to come!

I sincerely congratulate Your Lordship, and the other illustrious *Nobles* and worthy *Gentlemen*, who are exerting themselves in this good Work, on a Capacity of *doing greatly* for its Service, while my narrow Sphere will allow me little more than to *wish it well*. Yet it is a Comfort to me to think, that *this Discourse*, in which (imperfect as it is,)

.cc DEDICATION.

I flatter myself there will be found Traces of an honest and a tender Heart not easily to be counterfeited, will be some *Memorial* of the Affection with which I have endeavoured to serve it, and at the same Time of the unfeigned and profound Respect with which I am,

*My Lord,*

*Your Lordship's most faithful,*

*most obedient, and most obliged humble Servant,*

Northampton,  
Oct. 8, 1743.

P. DODDRIDGE.

PRE-



# P R E F A C E.



THE great Desire which I have to promote that noble and amiable Charity which is now set on Foot among us, has engaged me to comply with the Request of some of my Friends in publishing this Sermon, which was delivered on too little Notice to allow of much Preparation. But indeed very little Reflection is necessary, where the Arguments in its Favour are so obvious; and little Art can be required to plead a Cause, which, as soon as it is admitted to a short Hearing, speaks so loudly and so eloquently for itself.

The only plausible Objections, which I remember to have heard against it, are these Two:—That the distant Parts of the Country can expect little Benefit by it;—and that any private House, which can be taken for the Purposes of a COUNTY HOSPITAL, can bear but little Proportion to what the Necessities of so large a County will require. But I hope, neither of these Objections will be found unanswerable; and if every Objector will do his Part towards removing them, I am sure they cannot be found so.

I apprehend myself to have no Right to speak here of the particular Precautions, which the Committee has taken with regard to the First of these; but shall refer the Reader to the Statutes of the intended Hospital, when they shall be published, as they quickly will. But it may, and ought to be taken for granted, till the contrary appear, (which I persuade myself it never will,) that the Rules for the Admission of Patients will be so constituted among us, as well as elsewhere, that Patients coming from distant Parts will have some Preference given them, to those that are near Home. And as none but Chronical Cases are like to offer from a Distance, if due Precautions be taken in writing and answering Letters, in the Representation of Cases, and in bringing Patients, I cannot see any Probability

of frequent Disappointments. *If the contrary be suspected, let Gentlemen and others, who are willing to act for the Encouragement of the Charity if it be duly ordered, favour us with their Presence at our next general Meeting of Subscribers, and there let them examine what the Committee will then offer on this Head, as well as on others; and if they are not satisfied with what is already adjusted, let them propose any more effectual Methods of making them easy on this Head: They will no doubt be heard with all due Regard, and the Assistance of their Counsels be thankfully acknowledged by all who have the Interest of the Hospital at Heart.*

*As for the Second Objection, the Force of it cannot be thoroughly judged of, till the House intended for the Reception of Patients be known, and the projected Alterations in it are examined. If after this it be still insisted upon, that we should build, then let those, who are in that Sentiment, subscribe their respective Benefactions for that Purpose; and there can be no Doubt, but the Work will be joyfully undertaken, as soon as there appears any Fund so considerable as to render it safe. But in the mean time it would surely be most unreasonable to clamour against any Governours, or Committee, who may be established, for not attempting it, while they have no Stock for so great an Undertaking, in any tolerable Degree proportionable to it. This County, so well cultivated and inhabited, and celebrated for the Seats of so many of the Nobility and Gentry, is capable of doing great Things if it pleases, and may, (like Devonshire,) without feeling any sensible Burthen, command a spacious and commodious Edifice to arise for this Purpose in a few Months; and if no unexpected Providence obstruct it, I know not what should forbid us to hope and expect it. Good Examples are already given, great Patrons are engaged\*, and Measures are entered into for solliciting the County*

in

\* This refers to the Honour, which his Grace the Duke of Montague and the Earl of Northampton have done us, the former in accepting the Office of Grand Visitor of the Hospital, and the latter that of perpetual President; as well as to the important Assistance, which the Earl of Halifax has given, and his giving, as he has done his generous and zealous Service to the Design, so especially distinguished as *Chairman* in the present Committee for drawing up the Statutes of the Hospital, and taking other preparatory Measures

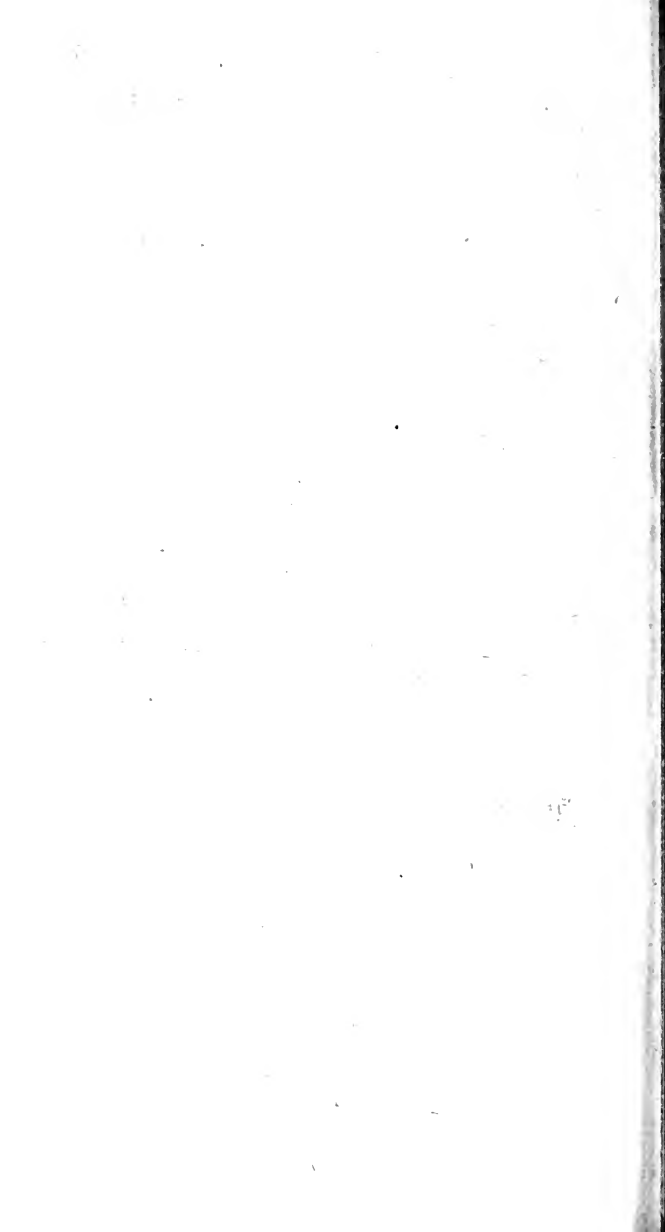


*in the most prudent and engaging Methods that could be contrived. The Effect will soon be seen; and then, not till then, the Managers will be able to judge what they can at first safely attempt, and will, I dare say, greatly rejoice to see a much grander Scheme practicable, than they have allowed themselves particularly to project.*

*It is with great Pleasure, that I see Persons, who have been listed under opposite Parties, and who bear different Denominations, cordially uniting to advance this generous Scheme, and consulting to make each other as easy as possible in the Execution of it. There is very little in the following Sermon, which is no Matter of common Concern, as we are Christians, and as we are Men; and I am not aware of one Word, which can reasonably give Offence to any: And therefore I hope, the Name of the Author will be no prevailing Prejudice against its Acceptance and Usefulness. I cannot think an Attempt of this Kind out of Character in present Circumstances. I have peculiar Obligations to love a County, where I have spent so many agreeable Years, and in the various Parts of which I have the Pleasure of enjoying a personal Friendship with so many deserving People. But had I been only an occasional Resident in it for a few Months or Weeks, I could not have refused what little I might have had an Opportunity of doing, in Subserviency to a Design so friendly to Human Nature as this. Homo sum, humani nihil à me alienum puto.*

P. D.

*asures for putting the Plan into the most speedy and effectual Execution: Circumstances, which in so happy a Concurrence, have given a Spirit and a Weight to its Resolutions, which it is hard to imagine how they could otherwise have had. I mention not the Names of several others of the Nobility, Gentry, and Clergy, who have distinguished themselves on this Occasion: The List, when published, will speak the Generosity of their Subscription; and other Services, not capable of being represented there or here, will, no doubt, live in the grateful Memory of all who have particularly known them, without any such Records,*





*Compassion to the Sick recommended and urged.*

P S A L M xli. 1, and 3.

*Blessed is he that considereth the Poor; the Lord will deliver him in Time of Trouble: The Lord will strengthen him upon the Bed of Languishing: Thou wilt make all his Bed in his Sickness.*



IT is Matter of certain Observation, and of delightful Reflection, that, under the Administration of a wise and gracious Providence, even the *Distresses* of *Human Nature* are so over-ruled, as to occasion some of its most exquisite Pleasures. *Our own* have this Effect, when generously encountered in a good Cause; or when, from whatever Source they arise, we bear them with a calm Resignation to the Great Governour of all, animated by an humble Confidence in his Goodness. And the Calamities of *others*, deeply as they wound every compassionate Heart, are the accidental Cause of a proportionable Satisfaction attending every humane Attempt for their Relief. This is what I am persuaded, many of you, to whom I now speak, have often experienced already; and I hope, that Experience will now be largely and happily renewed. I am confident it will, if what I am about to lay before you in Favour of the Scheme, which is now opening upon us, for a COUNTY INFIRMARY to be erected here, be regarded in such a Manner, as I have great Reason to hope it will; considering how *noble a Charity* it suggests, and how *ready* I have ever found you to comply with every Call of Providence to *contribute liberally* for the Assistance of the Necessitous.

That

That important Branch of *Christian Charity*, which consists in *giving Alms* to the Poor and Indigent, has been the Subject of so many of my Discourses, that almost every *Topick*, and every *Argument*, which I could think of to inforce it, has been warmly and frequently urged upon you; and the fairest *Examples* of such a Disposition have been particularly illustrated, that, charmed with the Beauty of them, you might *go and do likewise*. Especially have you been often pressed by that noblest and tenderest of all Arguments, which arises from the infinite *Compassion* and *Benevolence* of the Blessed *JESUS*, and the distinguished Genius of *his Religion*; as having *Charity* for its declared *End*, and rising above all other Religions, as much in the *Excellence of its Tendency*, as it doth in the *Dignity of its Author*. And therefore, without so much as recapitulating what I have said on such Occasions, I shall make it the whole of my present Work, to suggest such Things, as may have a peculiar Suitableness to that *particular Kind of Charity* which we have now in View: And I think myself exceedingly happy in this Opportunity of offering you a Set of Thoughts, which would never before have been equally seasonable here. Many of them will naturally arise from the *Words* which I at first read, as the Foundation of my Discourse; *Blessed is he that considereth the Poor*; &c.—

It would perhaps be too bold a *Criticism*, to pretend to determine the *particular Distemper*, under which *David* had been labouring, just before he composed this admirable *Psalms*. But I think it is in general abundantly evident, that it was *occasioned* by a violent and dangerous *Fit of Sickness*; in which he met with most inhuman Treatment from some *base and wicked Men*, who had pretended great Affection to him. “*Mine Enemies,*” says he, *“speak Evil of me, saying, When shall he die, and his Name perish?”* They think the Distemper, terrible as it is, does its Work too slowly, and would gladly, if they durst, aid its Victory by Murder. “*And as for him who is the Chief of them,*” (by whom some suppose he meant *Absalom*, whose unnatural Rebellion might be ripened by the Concurrence of this Circumstance,) “*if he come to see me, as he frequently does under specious Pretences of Duty and Affection;*

“ yet.

“ yet in all his most respectful Condolences, *he speaks*  
 “ *Vanity and Falsehood, and his Heart is in the mean*  
 “ *time gathering Iniquity; is making one malignant*  
 “ *Remark or another, which, when he goeth away out*  
 “ *of my Apartment, he proclaims abroad, to increase the*  
 “ *Disaffection he is endeavouring to sow among my*  
 “ *Subjects: And their mischievous Counsels are quick-*  
 “ *ened and imboldened hereby, while they say, an Evil*  
 “ *Disease cleaveth fast unto him, as a peculiar Judgment*  
 “ *of Heaven upon him; and now that he lieth disabled*  
 “ *in his Bed, he shall arise no more. Yea, mine own fa-*  
 “ *miliar Friend, in whom I trusted to have given me the*  
 “ *surest Assistance in my pressing Affairs, while I am*  
 “ *thus rendered incapable of attending to them myself,*  
 “ *even he who did so long eat of my Bread, and had a*  
 “ *Place at my Table, has, like an ungrateful Brute that*  
 “ *strikes at his Feeder, lifted up his broad Heel against me,”*  
 as the Original imports \*, “ and endeavoured to do  
 “ me all the Mischief in his Power.”

This was King David's unhappy Circumstance in his Illness, as Royal Dignity can neither secure the Continuance of Health, or the Fidelity of Friendship; nor fortify the Heart against the Sting of Ingratitude; especially in such a Concurrence of afflicting Circumstances. On his Recovery he described it in the most lively Colours; and to represent how much it impressed him, he speaks of the Scene, as if it were actually present: And that a proper Contrast might set it off the more forcibly, he begins the Psalm with an affectionate Reflection on the Beauty of a contrary Character, and on the Happiness to which the Possessor of it was intitled. *Blessed is he who considereth the Poor.* The Original is yet more emphatical and extensive: *Oh the Blessedness, or the various Felicities of that Man, who wisely reflects on the Case and Circumstances of him that is brought low †.* The Margin renders it, *him that is Weak or Sick:* And another Translation gives it thus, *Blessed is the Man that provideth for the Sick and Needy;* which is a Sense undoubtedly comprehended in the Words, tho' I cannot think them limited to it. They speak of a Person reduced and brought low, whether by Poverty, or Oppression,

or

\* הגדל עלי עקב \*

† אשרי מיטיב אל דל †

or *Sickness*, or any other Calamity, affecting Mind, Body, or Estate \* : From whence it will clearly follow, that where *several of these Causes* join, as the Circumstance is peculiarly worthy of Compassion, the *Virtue*, and therefore the *Blessedness*, of him who is ready to pity and relieve it, must be proportionably great.

The *Word* which we render *considereth*, is sometimes used for *taking an intelligent View of a Thing*, and sometimes for *acting in a prudent and reasonable Manner, suitable to such Views* †. And accordingly it well expresses the Character of one, who *examines into the Circumstances* of the afflicted Creature of whom *David* speaks, and upon that *takes wise and proper Measures* for giving him the most convenient and effectual *Assistance* he can. And as on the one Hand, it may be intended to recommend the *Use of Discretion* in directing and managing our *Charities*;

\* They who can consult the *Original*, and will give themselves the Trouble of tracing the *Etymology* from לל, and examining the many Places in which *this Word* is used, will soon see the Justice of this Remark. It most frequently signifies *Poor*, and accordingly is often opposed to *Rich*; as, *Exod.* xxx. 15. *Roth* ii. 10. *Job* xxxiv. 19. *Prov.* x. 15. xx. 4. xxviii. 11. It is sometimes rendered *brought low* in our Version; as, *Psal.* lxxix. 8. cxlii. 6. and cxvi. 6. in which last Place the Correction shews, it relates to *Sickness*. It is sometimes applied to *Streams emptied and dried up*; *Job* xxviii. 4. *Isai.* xix. 6. and sometimes it signifies *emaciated*, *Isai.* xvii. 4. and is in that Sense applied to *Pharaoh's lean Kine*, *Gen.* xli. 19. and to *Amnon* when *pinning away for Tamar*; *2 Sam.* xiii. 4. agreeably to which נדלה derived from the same Root is rendered *pinning Sickness*, *Isai.* xxxviii. 12. And it is elsewhere used to express a *Weakness* in the Eyes and Limbs: Compare *Isai.* xxxviii. 14. where דלו עיני לחרום should be rendered, *mine Eyes are so weakened*, (i. e. by languishing Illness,) *that I am not able to look up*: And *Prov.* xxvi. 7. which Verse might most naturally be translated, *As the Legs of the Lame sink under him*, (דלו שקים מפסח) *so doth a Parable in the Mouth of Fools*: *Salomon* thereby beautifully expressing how feeble the sublimest Discourses on Moral and Religious Subjects are in the Mouth of a vicious Man. I know many Critics have produced these two last Texts, as Instances in which לל signifies *to be lifted up*; but I believe, if most of the Place, in which the same Hebrew Word is said to signify *contrary Things* were accurately weighed, they would be found as little to the Purpose of proving that *very improbable*, and in many Instances *mischievous Assertion*, as they Two.

† עכל has plainly the former Signification. *Neh.* viii. 13. *Job* xxxiv. 27, 35. *Psal.* xiv. 2. *Jer.* ix. 24. *Dan.* i. 4. and the latter, *1 Sam.* xviii. 14, 15, 30. *Psal.* cvi. 7. *Amos* v. 13.

ties; so on the other, it may intimate, that where Men overlook those that are brought low, it is an Evidence of a narrow inattentive Mind, that takes up with short and superficial Views of Things; whereas if Men's Sentiments were juster; their Affections and Actions would be kinder and more beneficent. They would find, that Nature, and Duty, and Interest too, if rightly considered, and justly estimated, would all dictate the same Thing on such Occasions.

This will especially appear, when it is considered, in how gracious and condescending a Manner the Blessed God, the Supreme Disposer of all Events, is pleased to interest himself in the Cause of the Indigent and Distressed, and the kind Notice which he takes of the Man that appears as a Patron of such Persons. The LORD will deliver him in Time of Trouble, or (as it might more literally be rendered) in the Day of Calamity \*: As if it had been said, "There is a Revolution in Human Affairs, as well as in the returning Seasons of Day and Night, of Summer and Winter. Calamity will have its Day, and the Time will come, when they, who are now most prosperous, will find themselves surrounded with dark and gloomy Schemes. And then may the generous and charitable Man hope to receive the Compassion he hath extended; or (as we elsewhere read,) with the Merciful thou, LORD, wilt shew thyself merciful †." And indeed one cannot without Astonishment, as well as Delight, reflect on what is so suitably and so tenderly added in the third Verse, to express the Divine Care of such a Person. The LORD, (JEHOVAH himself, in whom is everlasting Strength ‡, and who bears up the Pillars of Heaven,) will strengthen him upon the Bed of Languishing, or as it might be rendered, will support him, or hold him up there ||: Thou wilt make all his Bed in his Sickness §: Some would literally render it, thou wilt change his Bed, and explain it of turning a Bed of Pain and Distress into a Couch of Pleasure and Delight; supposing it alludes to their Custom of lying on Couches in their Banquets. But I think the Image which our Translation suggests equally suits the Original, and is, on Account

of

\* בים יתה † Psal. xviii. 25. ‡ Isai. xxvi. 4. || יתה  
§ כל משכבו הפכת בדרתו

of its Tenderneſs, greatly to be preferred. The *Good Man* is now ſuppoſed in his 'Turn to be brought low by *Illneſs*, ſo exceeding low, that he is not able to much as to ſit up in his Bed; and God does not diſdain to repreſent himſelf under the Image of an *affectionate Friend*, or *Parent*, who holds him up in his Arms; and himſelf *affiſts* in turning his Bed, and making it *eaſy* to him, when, being too weak to riſe, he is only able to *ſhift the Sides*.

Amazed and charmed with an *Expreſſion* of ſo much *Condeſcenſion* and *Indearment*, I ſet myſelf, with additional Pleaſure, as in the Preſence of this *Compaſſionate God*, to open my Mouth, and plead the *Cauſe of the Poor and the Afflicted*; and would attempt to cultivate in your Minds, and in my own, the *Temper* which the *Words* recommend. That I may do it in the moſt ſuitable and uſeful Manner, I ſhall,

I. Represent the *Reaſonableneſs* of a *Compaſſionate Temper*, towards thoſe in general, who are *languiſhing on Beds of Sickneſs*.

II. Shew how *wiſe* and *happy* a *Method* of expreſſing our *Compaſſion* towards ſuch, that which is now recommended to us is *like to prove*: And,

III. Conclude with the *Mention* of *ſome Circumſtances* in the preſent Situation of Affairs, by which the *Deſign* is *peculiarly recommended* to us at this Time.

I. Let me represent in general how *reaſonable* it is, that we ſhould *feel Compaſſion* in our Hearts towards thoſe, who *languiſh* under the Burthen of *Bodily Diſorders*, and particularly are *confined to Beds or Chambers of Sickneſs*.

And this you will not only *ſee*, but *feel* too, if you reflect — on the *Calamity of their State*; — on the *Tender Senſe* they naturally have of the *Treatment* they meet with in it; — and how *liable* we *ourſelves* are to the *ſame Circumſtances of Diſtreſs*.

1. Consider the *Calamity of their State*.

Some of you know it by familiar Acquaintance, by dear-bought *personal Experience*, and muſt have the *Worm-wood and the Gall* in a long and a painful *Remembrance*\*. Go back in your Thoughts to *theſe Chambers*, which you

were

\* Lam. iii. 19, 20.



were almost ready to consider as *your Sepulchres*, and *those Beds*, from whence perhaps you expected to *rise up no more*, or which seemed as *Racks*, if not as *Graves*, to you; and then say, whether you were not *Objects of Compassion* yourselves, and whether others, in the like Circumstances, must not necessarily be so. Others of you have, no doubt, been *conversant* with the *Sick* and the *Pained*: Reflect on what you then *saw* and *heard*; and let *your Eye*, and *your Ear* affect *your Heart*.

There are indeed some, who seem solicitous to keep as much as possible *from the Sight* of such *mournful Objects*; as if they were afraid, that in such a Circumstance an *involuntary Kind of Humanity* should invade their Hearts, and force them on a sudden, and as it were before they are well aware of it, to do something *more generous* than they care to allow themselves in. But no Man, who hath lived any Time in the World, can be such a *Stranger* to *Human Nature*, and to *Human Life*, as not to know something of the *various Distempers* and *Accidents* to which we are liable in this feeble State, and of the sad *Symptoms of Sorrow* that attend them: Fatal *Effects* of the *Entrance of Sin* into this World of ours, and awful *Monuments* of the *Divine Displeasure* against the first Instance of it!

I am not indeed learned enough to run over the *Tenth Part* of those Names, which *Physicians* have given to the *various Maladies* under which their Aid is demanded. But the *Fever*, the *Dropsy*, the *Gout*, the *Stone*, the *Rheumatism*, the *Cholick*, the *Asthma*, the *Cancer*, the *Palsy*, *Consumptions*, and the like, are Words of *dreadful Import*; to the general Signification of which few are Strangers, tho' perhaps none, who have not *themselves* laboured under them, can distinctly understand how much Terror they express.

Let us however think a little closely, (for the Thought may have an apparent Tendency to *humble* and to *humanize* our Hearts,) into how *sad an Object* the Greatest, the Richest, the Strongest, and the Fairest of Mankind is reduced in a few Weeks or Days, when attacked by any of these, and *crushed*, as it were, into an early, and an untimely Old Age. *When thou, LORD, with thy Rebukes dost correct Man for his Iniquity, how dost thou cause*

cause his Beauty and his Vigour to consume away like a *Moth*, which moulders under the lightest Touch \*? How are all the Services of Life *obscured*, and all its choicest Pleasures *blasted* at once, as the opening Blossoms of Spring by the Severity of Winds and Frosts! According to that most natural Description of *Job*, when a Man is *chastened with Pain upon his Bed, and the Multitude of his Bones with strong Pain*, how does his Life *abhor Bread*, and his Soul *dainty Meat*; so that his *Flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen, and his Bones, which were not seen, stick out* †! In some Distempers, what *convulsive Strugglings*, what *terrible Heavings and Pantings for Breath*! In others, what *deep Sighs* do we observe, what *piercing Groans*, what *doleful Cries*! Or in Persons of a more resolute Temper, amidst a painful Silence, what *earnest speaking Locks*, while perhaps *large Drops of Sweat* are trickling down the Face, and Nature seems, as it were, to be *wEEPING ITS DISTRESS* at every Pore! And in Cases *less acute* than these, what *Months of Vanity* are many active Souls *made to possess*, and what *wearisome Nights* are appointed to them ‡! How *slowly* do the Hours and the Moments roll away, while *in the Evening they say, Would to GOD it were Morning; and in the Morning, Would to GOD it were Evening* §! but find themselves *equally disappointed* in their Expectations of Relief, from the Silence of the Night, or the Amusements of the Day: Till at length perhaps *Nature is weakened* to such a Degree, that it can scarce bear the Voice of the dearest Friend, if a little louder than a Whisper, or endure so much Light as shall discover his Countenance! God only knows, how many are at this Moment in a Condition *sadder* than I have described, while *we are ourselves at Ease in Zion* §, and are too little *grieved for the Afflictions* of our Brethren ¶. Yet surely, if we have any Thing of the *Man*, and the *Christian*, we cannot be *wholly unmoved*, but must feel some *tender Solitude* rising in our Hearts, and must be *casting about in our Thoughts* for some *proper Manner* of expressing it; especially when

e consider,

2. The

\* Psal. xxxix. 11.    † Job xxxii. 19, 20, 21.    ‡ Job vii. 3.  
 ¶ Deut. xxv. i. 67.    § Amos vi. 1:    ¶ Ver. 6.

2. The peculiar *Tenderness of the Spirits* in such Circumstances as these, and that *exquisite Sensibility*, either of *Regard*, or *Neglect*, which is almost inseparable from them.

Such is the *Vanity of Human Friends*, that they can do much to *account*, where they can do very little to *heal*; their *Negligence* can greatly *afflict*, where their most solicitous *Care* can administer very little *Comfort*. And this is more especially the Case in *Sickness*. When the *Blood* is impoverished, when the *Animal Spirits* are weakened, and when *melancholy Humours* prevail in the *Body*, *little Things* impress with a very disproportionate *Weight*. *Solomon* hath observed long ago, that *when Illness is in the Heart of a Man maketh it stoop, the heaviest Word maketh it peculiarly glad* \*. And by a *Loss of Reason* then, any Thing that looks like *Unkindness* in a *Friend* pierces much deeper, than at another *Time*; when *Nature* is in all its *Vigour*, and the *Business* and *Amusements* of *Life* divert the *Mind* from pausing on such Things, and the *Imagination* from dressing them up in *Colours* of its own, which, unnatural as they often are, appear to the *distempered Mind* inherent in the *Objects* themselves. *Sick People* likewise, conscious to themselves that they cannot but be *less agreeable* than at other *Times*, easily conclude, that they grow *insupportably burthenome* to those about them: And if great *Care* be not taken to prevent it, they will be very ready to infer, that *their Friends* are *wearied out* with them; and perhaps will secretly suspect, they *wish them out of the Way*, that they may be eased of their *Burthen*: While they imagine, like *Job*, that were *their Friends* in such an *afflicted State* as themselves, they should study all *Opportunities* of *softening their Sorrows*, by every *Circumstance* of the most *tender Address* †: And then they bemoan themselves, and think, Surely it is *enough*, to bear all this *Illness* and *Pain*, without having the *Unkindness* of such and such a *Friend* added to it: And so perhaps, the *saddest Complaints* of *Job* ‡, *David* §, and *Heman* §, are thought over as *applicable* to their *forrowful Condition*. This

\* Prov. xii. 25. † Job vi. 14. xvi. 5. ‡ Job vi. 15. xiii. 4, 13. xvi. 2, 20. xix. 2, 3, 14,—22. § Psal. xxxviii. 11, 14, 12, 13. lxxix. 8, 20. cxlii. 4. § Psal. lxxxviii. 8, 18.

This is indeed very often *their Infirmity*; but we should bear it, and pity it, and study, as well as we can, to accommodate ourselves to it: For it undoubtedly makes their Case *much more afflicted*, and therefore *more compassionate*. And it will especially appear so, if we reflect,

3. How *liable* we ourselves are, to share in *these Sorrows* and *these Infirmities*.

This Thought is beautifully touched upon by the *Apostle*, when he says, *Remember those that suffer Affliction, as being yourselves also in the Body* \* : As if he should have said, “ In necessary Consequence of being in the  
“ *Body*, you are yourselves *obnoxious to the like Affliction* ;  
“ and therefore should *readily impart* to your afflicted  
“ *Brethren such Assurances*, as you in a Change of Cir-  
“ cumstances would reasonably desire.”

And is it not most evidently *the Case here* ? What are *we*, Sirs, *better than our Fathers* † ? better than *our Brethren* ? better than *those*, who have *drooped*, and *sunk*, and *died*, under *such Burthens* as those I have described ? *Is our Strength the Strength of Stones*, or *is our Flesh Brass* ‡, that we should plead an *Exemption* from Sorrows and Complaints *common to our Species* ? In all Probability, they *await us* ; and would await us, if we were *Nobles* and *Princes of the Earth* : And God only knows, how soon we are to *begin our Encounter* with them, or how soon they may *compleat their Victory* over us, and bring us *beyond the Reach* of being *helpful to Men*, or *receiving Help from them*.

And, which is peculiarly interesting, *these* are probably some of *our last Scenes*. When we have done with our *Merchandise*, our *Husbandry*, or our *Studies* ; when we have finished our *Journies*, our *Visits*, our *Sports*, and our *Feasts*, *we must*, unless *Death* surprise us with a very sudden Blow, *retire into our Chambers of Illness* to come out no more, but *languish away* the Remainder of our *Days* there, till the *Moment of our Exit from Life* shall come. *There* shall we *need the Compassion*, we are now exhorted to extend ; shall *need all the Relief*, which a generous Heart may then feel, in a *Consciousness* of having been, in its better *Days*, an *Helper to the Afflicted* ;

and

\* Heb. xiii. 3.

† 1 Kings xix. 4.

‡ Job vi. 12.

and above all, shall need that *Divine Consolation*, which *God* is ready to impart to that *blessed Man*, who has considered him that is brought low, so graciously expressed in the *Text*, by holding him up on his *Bed of Languishing*, and by making all his *Bed* in his *Sickness*.

And therefore, in the Conclusion of *this Head*, let me intreat you to *suffer the Word of Exhortation* \*, and to bear away in your Hearts a firm Resolution of doing all you can, to be *helpful to the Sick*, whatever their other Circumstances in Life be, as Providence may give you an Opportunity and Call. Consider those that are brought low: Reflect seriously and tenderly on their Condition; for they sometimes suffer a great deal from the *mere Inattention* of those about them, who yet could not bear on any Terms *deliberately to do* what they apprehended *cruel or unkind*. Let us, as *afflicted Job* expresses it, (as afflicted Persons know best how to speak of Afflictions,) *put our Souls into their Souls Stead* †. Let us *inwardly commiserate* their melancholy Case; and let our Behaviour express that *Commiseration* in the most natural and genuine Manner. Let us be *ready*, where it may be useful to them, to *visit them*; for *visiting the Sick* is, you know, mentioned among those *Acts of Charity*, which *Christ* assures us he will commemorate with *peculiar Honour*, even upon the *Throne of his Glory* ‡. Let us *patiently bear* those Instances of *Fretfulness* and *Peevishness*, into which under such a Pressure they may be ready to fall; imputing them to *their Distemper*, and not to *themselves*. Let us avoid every Thing *rough and boisterous* in our Behaviour, near the Apartments in which they are; and let *nothing be done*, which might give the *poor Patient* Reason to  *sigh on his Bed*, and say, "Alas, they do not regard me! they little think *what it is to be ill!*" Shew in all your Conduct a *Concern for their Comfort and Happiness*: Shew it, above all, by endeavouring by *wise and pious Discourses* to lead them into the *best Improvement of their Afflictions*, and to form their Minds to such Sentiments and Characters, that thro' *Divine Grace* they may be intitled to the *noblest Supports*; those which arise from a Sense of the *Divine Favour*, from *pardoned Guilt*, and from a comfortable Prospect

in

\* Heb. xiii. 22.

† Job xvi. 4.

‡ Mat. xxv. 36.

in the Invisible and Eternal World; that so they may not struggle at once with the Agonies of a distempered Body, and a wounded Spirit; but rather, as the Outward Man declines, may find the Inward daily renewed\*. And to shew how sincerely you are concerned for their Spiritual, neglect not their Temporal Interest. If they are Poor, extend your Alms to them, and endeavour to procure for them such Medicines, Food, Attendance, and other Accommodations, as may promote their Recovery, or at least alleviate their Sufferings. It is what, I question not, many of you are often doing, and you now have an Opportunity of doing it with some peculiar Advantages; as you will evidently perceive by what I have to offer under my Second General, the Business of which is,

II. To shew how wise and happy a Way of expressing our Compassion to the Sick and Infirm, that which is now proposed to us is like to prove.

You apprehend, that I mean our Concurrence in this Scheme for establishing a COUNTY HOSPITAL in this Town, for the Relief of the Poor, who are sick or wounded; into which, in extream Cases, they may be freely received, and in which they may be properly assisted, without Expence to themselves, or the Families to which they belong.

The very Mention of this Design might seem sufficient to recommend it to every intelligent and generous Person; and I am sure none, who have perused the printed Paper in Favour of it, which has been generously published and spread over the whole County, can be uninformed on this Subject: Nevertheless, as it may be new to some, and others may have reflected but slightly upon it, I shall say something briefly on the Head, and I hope a few Words may suffice; since the Scheme wears so beautiful an Aspect, if only viewed in its first Appearances: as well as appears so fruitful of Good, when attentively examined in its remoter Consequences.

1. You will easily see, that the Scheme wears a very beautiful Aspect, if viewed only in its first Appearances.

It promises, in its most obvious and direct Design, Relief to the Poor in their Sickness; and their Case is attended

\* 2 Cor. iv. 16.

attended with *many Circumstances* to recommend it to our Compassion, which have not yet been touched upon in the preceding Branch of my Discourse. What I have *said before* might be sufficient to prove, and *one Day's Experience of our own* might in a yet more convincing Manner demonstrate, that *Sickness* is of itself a *Barthen heavy enough*, tho' we languish upon Beds of Down, and have *all the Relief* we can derive from the Skill of *Physicians*, the Attendance of *Servants and Friends*, with every other additional Accommodation which the most plentiful Fortune can furnish out. What then must it be to *bear all this*, and perhaps more than this, in the *Want of all Things!* What must it be for a Person, who perhaps found it *hard enough to live* when he was in all the Vigour of Nature, and *his own Hands ministered to his Necessities* \*, to find himself under his Languor, perhaps under his Agony, *destitute of Medicines*, destitute of *Attendance*, and it may be, destitute of *convenient Food*, with hardly any Thing but *Inclination*, in these Cases *no certain Guide*, to direct him what is so. Or if pressed with a Sense of urgent Necessity, after long Delay, he calls in *such Assistance*, and procures it, perhaps it is at *such an Expence*, that his *Spirits are broken* with the Thoughts of the *Debt* he is contracting, which either prevents, or retards, or imbibbers *his Recovery*; and when it is perfected, almost tempts him to *wish* he had quitted the World, rather than survived under such an insupportable Pressure.

But so far as *the Scheme* now opening upon us *succeeds*, this additional *Load of Misery* will be *taken off*. The *Patient* will be encouraged to seek for *timely Assistance*, before his Illness becomes inveterate, the Neglect of which is, no doubt, yearly the Destruction of Thousands: And when his Case is *so bad*, as to require his being *taken into the Infirmary*, he will be *kept clean and warm*, with convenient Accommodations of *Food, Physick, and Lodging*: He will be kept under *proper Regimen and Government*, which may shelter him, on the one Hand, from becoming a *Prey to ignorant Pretenders*, whose chief Merit seems to be, to *sell Diseases and Death* at Reasonable Rates; and on the other, he will be pro-

ted from *Imprudence*, which is oftentimes *more fatal* than the Disease; while according to the *Rules of the House*, it is put out of his own Power to *indulge himself*, or to be *indulged by over fond Friends*, if such he have in what would be *pernicious to his Health*.

In Consequence of this we see, that *many are recovered* in such Houses as these, who have *long languished* in their own, under tedious and extremely dangerous *Distempers*; some of them, perhaps, after having, like the *poor Woman* in the Gospel, *consumed all their Living on Physicians*, and been *nothing the better, but rather the worse* \*.

Facts impress the Mind more strongly, than any *Reasonings* unsupported by them. I therefore think it proper here to tell you, that I have made the most careful *Observations* I could, on those *Yearly Accounts* of other *Hospitals* which have come to my Hands, *viz.* those of *Winchester, Bath, Exeter, York, Bristol*, and the *London and Westminster Infirmaries*. Few of these have reached back farther than *Three Years*, and some have extended only to *One*; and I find on the whole, that we have an Account of *Seven Thousand Three Hundred and Thirty*, who are known, or supposed to be *cured*, and only of *Seven Hundred and Eighty-four*, who have *died*, or been *discharged as incurable*: So that it should seem by this hasty and *imperfect Calculation*, (for such I confess it to be,) that near *Ten Patients* have been *relieved* for *One* who has *failed of Success*.

I find *Palsies, Droppies, Consumptions, Fevers, Leprosies, Rheumatisms, Cholicks, Stone*, as well as *Multitudes of Ulcers, Fractures, Dislocations*, and the like, on the *List* of those *Calamities* from which these *poor Creatures* have been *relieved*: And it farther appears, that *great Numbers* of these had been *languishing* under their *Distempers* *Two Years*, others *Five, Ten, Twelve, Fourteen*, and a few *Twenty Years*; and this after *some of them* had been reduced to so low an *Ebb*, that *their Admission* was blamed as an *hopeless Attempt*, yet a *few Months* have *turned their Captivity*, and they have gone out from those *Gates vigorous and chearful*, into which they were  
brought

\* Mark. v. 26. Luke viii. 43.



brought almost like *Corpses* borne on Men's Shoulders\*.

What Heart does not feel a secret Pleasure at hearing such an Article! Who would not rejoice, if even large Contributions could be the Means of procuring so happy Effects! But it ought farther to be considered in Favour of this Design, that there is, in Proportion to the Good to be expected from it, great Frugality and Liberality so dispensed. For it is certain, (as many have observed on such Occasions,) that a small Sum thus managed will go farther, than a much larger given to relieve the Sick Poor at their own Houses; as the same Person may attend on different Patients at the same Time; and as the Medicines and Provisions to be used in the House may be bought at the best Hand; whereas it is often, and I fear, too justly said, that the Poor generally pay dearer than others for what they have †.—What is thus given is also much securer from being misapplied, either by the Persons themselves, or by others, who might be base enough to make a Prey of them.—Nor can I forbear mentioning it, as another most agreeable Circumstance attending the Charity proposed, that it often shelters the Person, who receives the Benefit of it, from the Mortification of Coming to a Parish-allowance; and perhaps of being assigned over to a Work-House: Which is generally a ter-

K 2

rrible

\* I am credibly informed, that at Exeter there has been an Instance or two of Persons, who on Account of their extream Weakness were brought into the Hospital laid in their Coffins, who have gone out carrying their Coffins, on their Backs.

† It has been spoken of (in the Supplement to the Account of Exeter Hospital, pag. 3.) as a Thing universally confessed, that more Remedies may be administered for Ten Pounds in this Way, than for Fifty in another. And the truly Reverend and excellent Dr. Abner Clarke, (whose Memory will ever be dear to all good Men who knew his Character, says in the Preface to his Sermon at the Opening of Winchester Hospital, pag. 5. "If Half the Money that is given should really be perverted, (which I hope there is not the least Reason to suspect,) there would still be more Good done by it than by any other possible Way of distributing to the Necessities of the Poor: So that every wise Man would think it worth his while to exert his Endeavours in this Way, out of more good Husbandry to himself and the Publick." He afterwards adds, pag. 9, 10. "It is well known, that several Thousands are relieved in the Hospitals at a less Expence, than can be afforded for so many Hundreds in any other Way."

ible Sort of *Infirmity* indeed, where we have Reason to fear, there is seldom *sufficient Care* taken to secure the *Cleanliness*, the *Quiet*, or the *Morals* of those, who are so unhappy as to be brought thither; tho' perhaps *some of them* have lived *creditably* and comfortably in *Families of their own*, have long contributed for the Support of the *Poor* around them, and have been at last reduced by the afflictive Hand of Providence, without any visible *Crime of theirs*, or any remarkable *Imprudence*. A State, which, when *Sickness* is added to it, appears one of the *most disolate* and *deplorable* which can be imagined: So that it is no Wonder, the very *Prospect* and *Apprehension of it* should press, in a very painful Manner, on an honest and tender Spirit, and greatly increase the Force of any *bodily Disorder*, which seems to threaten so sad an Event.

Reflect, *Christians*, on such Considerations as these; and add to all, that you are the *Disciples* of that benevolent Jesus, who went about doing Good\*, and who particularly expressed the Tenderness of his generous Compassion, by *healing all Manner of Sickness, and all Manner of Disease among the People* †. This was the *Calamity of Human Nature*, which seems of all its *Temporal Evils* to have impressed him most; and I am sure, if we have any Thing of *his Spirit and Temper*, without which we are *none of his*, we must necessarily wish well to a *Design of this Kind*, if it were only considered in Reference to those, who receive in their own Persons *immediate Relief* from it. But I am to add, that as the *Scheme* appears thus amiable in its *most obvious Aspect*, so likewise,

2. It will appear more abundantly fruitful of future Good, when attentively weighed in its *remoter Consequences*.

The *Benefit* extends much farther than the *Persons* thus relieved. It evidently affects *others of their Families*, who have that *Time and Labour* to employ in the *Business* of their respective *Callings*, which must otherwise have been taken up in attending the *Sick*. It extends also to *all those*, to whom the *Patients* themselves may be *useful* when recovered from their *Illness*; whether

\* Acts x. 38.

† Mat. iv. 23.

ther their *near Relations* and *Friends*, who have any Dependance upon them; or *the Publick*, who owe much more, than we are generally aware, to the *Labours of the Poor*, and upon that Account are under great *Obligations to them*, which I fear are seldom considered. Not to say, that in many Cases the very *Existence* of those yet to be born may, under God, depend on such Cures.

I shall not now insist on the *Advantage* which others may receive in *their Illness*, by the *improved Skill of Physicians and Surgeons*, in Consequence of their Attendance on such *Hospitals*; tho' it is evidently a very possible Thing, that the Lives of some very useful and valuable Persons may be so preserved. It is yet more obvious and certain, that many *other Poor* may be relieved, in the respective *Parishes* to which they belong, by that *Money* from the *Parish Stock*, which must otherwise have been employed upon *the Sick*: Or if, in Consequence of being discharged from this Burthen, the *Parish Rates* be lessened, (as perhaps in many Places they sensibly may be,) the *Subscribers of that Parish* are then paid in *Specie*; and after the *Honour and Pleasure* of bestowing their Bounty, a *Part of it* immediately flows back upon them again. And how much may so flow back, and with what large *Accessions of Blessing*, God only knows; as He only can tell, what *Casualties and Diseases* are warded off, what *Prosperity and Success in Affairs* may be allotted, as the Token of his favourable *Regard* to this pious *Munificence*.

Neither can it be improper for me to add upon this Head, that what was more directly intended as a *Benefit to the Body*, may prove a *Blessing to the Soul*. For *disolute Persons*, by this Means being brought for a while *under regular Discipline*, may perhaps be broken and reclaimed: The good *Instructions* they receive from *Ministers* who attend them, especially while the *Rod of God* is upon them, and his *Sword* may seem to hang over them; the *Spectacles of Mortality* frequently before their Eyes; together with the *Regularity and good Order* to which in such Places they will be accustomed, and their being sheltered from many *Temptations*, from which, in some *Kinds of Sicknes*s, the *Patient* is not necessarily secure; may all, under the Influence of *Di-*

*wine Grace, prove the Means of sowing the Seeds of true Religion in their Hearts, and of infusing into their Minds that noblest of all Cordials, an Antidote against the servile Fears of the Second Death.*

Nor does it appear to me a contemptible Effect of *this Charity*, that as it is necessarily concerted upon a *Plan*, in which *all Parties and Denominations* are equally concerned, it will probably be a Means of *promoting* more *cordial* and *catholick Sentiments*, in Consequence of repeated Opportunities of *mutual Converse*. This wears out that *Narrowness* and *Bigotry of Spirit*, which, where it prevails, renders the *Christian* so *unlike himself*; and which is generally the *Effect of Ignorance*, and arises from viewing our Brethren thro' *false Mediums*, which represent, what may in itself be regular and fair, in a distorted and disagreeable Form. As *Interviews with each other* have a general *Tendency* to rectify such *mistaken Apprehensions*, that *Tendency* is peculiarly evident, where this Circumstance is added, that *all are associated* in the *same good Design*, and have agreed on *laying aside every Party View* in pursuing it. This may promote something of that *Unity of Heart*, under a *Variety of Professions*, which *good Men* on all Sides *wish*; and which, amidst such an unavoidable *Diversity of Sentiments*, is the *only Method* of securing the *Honour of Christianity*, and the *Peace of the Church*.

I must by all means add, that whatever *good Consequences* this *Scheme* may produce, which are many more than I have enumerated above, *our engaging* heartily in it may render them both *extensive* and *lasting*. It is probable, that *neighbouring Counties* may quickly learn to *imitate our Example*, when they see in Fact that it is *no impracticable Design*: An *Apprehension*, which I suppose has hitherto been the *chief Obstruction*, where its obvious Benefits have been at all thought of. At length it may *spread from County to County*, till perhaps there will not a *Parish* be found in *Britain*, which shall not have an *Interest* in some such *charitable Foundation*; to which they may send their *Sick* in the most obstinate *Chronical Cases*, with some Prospect of Relief. Thus the *remotest Regions* of our Land may have Reason on this Account to *call us Blessed*; and I will add, the *remotest Genera-*

Generations may also have Reason to do it. Reflect how many Hundreds are at this Day, enjoying the Benefits of those wise and charitable Foundations, which our Nation owes to the pious and beneficent King Edward the Sixth, of truly sacred and immortal Memory. So would I hope, that in *this Place*, when our Children, and our Grand-children are in their Graves, their remotest Descendants, which arise in their Stead, (and God only knows, what Revolutions may bring any of them to need it,) may have Cause to reflect on *this Year 1743*, as the happy *Era* of an Establishment, to which many around them may owe their Health, their Comfort, their Usefulness, and possibly, under God, their Christian Principles, and their immortal Hopes. Whatever Streams may in the mean time have flowed into it, (and God grant, they may be as large as shall be needed,) the Fountain will be traced up hither; and Blessings will be pronounced on the Memory of those, who have opened to these refreshing and healing Waters so free and so pleasant a Course.

These Considerations I lay before you, not to extort any Thing from you, as against your Wills, by mere Importunity; but to convince you of what I hope will be abundantly sufficient to engage your Concurrence in the Design; I mean, that it is eminently calculated for Extensive Usefulness. I wish you may heartily join in it, because I wish your present Happiness, and your future Comfort. It is observable, that when our blessed Redeemer sent forth his Apostles, as Sheep among Wolves, he gave them this Consolation in the midst of their Poverty and Affliction, that tho' as for Silver and Gold they had none, they should be able to command one of the noblest Delights which Riches could purchase, in being the Means of healing the Sick\*. This was, if I may be allowed the Familiarity of the Expression, one of the great Perquisites which he permitted to these his most favourite Servants; that their Hearts, rendered no doubt by his Grace exquisitely sensible, should have the God-like Pleasure of beholding from Time to Time the cheerful Countenances of those, who had lately been among the most lamentable Spectacles of Human Nature, and

\* Mat. x. 8.

now under God *owed their Health, their Limbs, and their Lives* to them; and of seeing the Joy of Families and Neighbourhoods, made happy by the Recovery of those who were dear to them. I wish you, *my Brethren, beloved in the Lord*, a Pleasure something like *this of the Apostles*; and may I not add, *of their Master* too, so far as a Diversity of Circumstances will admit. And it is not only in *Compassion to the Afflicted*, but in the Overflowings of the *sincerest Friendship to you*, that I go on, unnecessary as it may almost seem,) in the Conclusion of my Discourse,

III. To touch on *some Circumstances* peculiar to the present Season, which may especially recommend this Scheme to our immediate Regard.

And here it is obvious to think of *the War* in which we are now engaged, — of the *Mercies of the Harvest* which we have lately reaped, — and of the *Crisis* to which *the Scheme* is now brought, which therefore must be immediately supported, or sunk beyond all probable Hope of future Recovery.

1. The Consideration of *the War*, in which we are embarked, may properly be introduced as what should have some Weight *with us* on this Occasion.

This should engage us *as a Nation*, to conduct ourselves in as *virtuous and pious a Manner* as possible; as the *most probable Way* of drawing down the *Divine Blessing* upon our Arms: Now it is very reasonable to suppose, that *deeds of publick Charity*, being in their own Nature *so peculiarly pleasing* to the gracious Father and Governor of the Universe, must have a *great Tendency* to this. An ancient *Jewish Writer* expresses this in Terms remarkably adapted to the present Purpose: “*Help the Poor,*” says he, “*for the Commandment’s Sake; and shut up Alms,*” as it were, *in thy Store-house;*” almost as if he had said, *Raise Hospitals for Magazines:* “*And it shall fight for thee*” against thine Enemies, *better than a mighty Shield, or a strong Spear;*” that is, than any Kind of *defensive or offensive Armour*. Nay an *inspired Prophet*, when giving Advice to him, who was then the greatest Monarch upon Earth, *Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon*, expresses himself thus: *Oh King, let my Counsel be acceptable unto thee:*

*Break*

*Break off thy Sins by Righteousness, and thine Iniquities by showing Mercy to the Poor; if it may be a Lengthening out of thy Tranquillity\*.*

And as a View to our future Interest, especially in this nice Conjunction of Affairs, may require such a Care; so it will be a very proper Expression of our Gratitude, for the Assistance which GOD has lately given us. The Victory at Dettingen was a very remarkable and seasonable Appearance of Providence in our Favour, which we have been solemnly acknowledging again and again in our Publick Devotions. Let us also acknowledge it in our Actions. Let us present some grateful Tribute toward this good Work, as a Thank-Offering to Him, who giveth Salvation to Kings †, for having so graciously guarded the Life, the Liberty, and Safety of our Sovereign, KING GEORGE. Had the Breath of our Nostrils, the Anointed of the LORD, been taken in the Snares of the Enemy ‡, and our Glory in any Sense been delivered into their Hand ||, Expences of a very different Nature might have been occasioned, and have fallen upon our broken Spirits with a very afflictive Weight. But I will not dwell on so melancholy a Thought. We are presenting our daily Prayers for HIS MAJESTY'S Security and Prosperity, while, with a Generosity which I hope our Nation will never forget, he is hazarding his Life for us in the high Places of the Field §: Let our Alms rise with our Prayers, if we desire they should come up as a grateful Memorial before GOD ††.

2. The Mercies of the Harvest may likewise properly be mentioned, as rendering the Charity I have been proposing peculiarly seasonable.

GOD has remarkably appeared for us, to crown the Year with his Goodness \*\*, and to load the Earth with his Bounty; and he has added this, to compleat the Favour, that he has reserved to us, in as agreeable a Manner as we could ourselves have wished, the appointed Weeks of the Harvest |||. More seasonable Weather on such an Occasion has not, so far as I can learn, been known in the Memory of Man: Seasonable in this respect, that as the

\* Dan. iv. 27. † Psal. cxliv. 10. ‡ Lam. iv. 20. § Psal. lxxviii. 61. || Jer. v. 24. ||| Judg. v. 18. †† Acts x. 4. \*\* Psal. lxxv. 11

*Bottles of Heaven* have been so restrained ||, that there have been no violent Rains in the Time of Harvest, to sweep away or corrupt the Fruits of the Earth; so for several of the most busy and important Days, GOD has spread his Cloud over the Heavens, so as to shelter the Reaper in the midst of his Toil from those excessive Heats, which often render Autumn much more sickly than it would otherwise be. Since then GOD hath made such Provision for satisfying our Poor with Bread |||, and for preserving our Health too, he may seem thereby to call upon you, by the gentlest Voice, to give him, in this pious Work, a Part of that Substance with which he hath replenished you. And surely you must feel yourselves drawn, as by the Cords of a Man, to lay out this Way some of the Stores which he has with so liberal a Hand poured in upon you, and which in sparing your Health he has both spared and sweetened. Honour the LORD therefore with your Substance, and with the first Fruits of all your Increase §, as a thankful Acknowledgment of what he hath already done; and then you may by his Promise be encouraged to hope, that in future Instances, your Barns shall be filled with Plenty, and your Presses burst out with new Wine \*. Know, my Friends, that GOD hath given you your Corn, and your Wine, and your Oil †, and hath multiplied your Wool and your Flax. Lay by therefore for charitable Uses, as GOD hath prospered you ‡, and as you hope and desire he should prosper you in Years to come: Otherwise you may chance to have calculated your Interests very wrong, and may find to your Cost, that as there is that scattereth, and yet greatly increaseth, so there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to Poverty ††. Once more,

3. Let me plead from the particular Crisis, to which this Affair is now brought, which is such, that it must be determined by what is immediately, or at least quickly, done.

The Scheme of a COUNTY HOSPITAL among us was thought of, and hinted at long ago; but it was then looked upon as a Thing to be wisht, rather than attempted

|| Job xxxviii, 37.

||| Psal. cxxxii, 15.

§ Prov. iii. 9.

\* Prov. iii, 10.

† Hof. ii, 8.

‡ 1 Cor. xvi, 2.

†† Prov.

xi, 24.



tempted and hoped. The *Attempt* is now courageously and vigorously made, and *no inconsiderable Sum* has already been subscribed for that Purpose: And what is *much more important* than any *Subscription* yet made, many of the *Nobility* and *Gentry* of the County, who have not yet ascertained Particulars, have declared their Approbation of the *general Design*, and their Resolution to favour it. It is greatly for *their Honour* to have it, and we may have Reason to *blefs G O D* who hath put it into *their Hearts*: But it would be most *ungenerous* and *unreasonable*, to leave the *whole Burthen* upon them. It is the *general Concurrence* of the Inhabitants of this County, which must give the greatest *Strength, Stability,* and *Extent* to the Scheme. Let me therefore intreat your *cheerful* and *resolute Concurrence*. Suffer not *this amiable Infant*, (if I may be allowed the Expression,) to be *deserted*, and *die*, for Want of *due Support* in its tenderest State; nor let it be said, in *Hezekiah's Words*, that *when brought to the Birth, there was not Strength and Assistance to bring it forth* \*. Lend your *charitable Aid* now, if you ever purpose to *do it at all*; for if it *drop now*, we cannot expect ever to see it *revived*: Since the *Defeat of this Attempt*, so far advanced, and so warmly solicited, will be looked upon as a *Demonstration* to many, that the Thing cannot be effected; whereas it is most evident, that if it *miscarry*, it must not be charged on *Providence*, but on *ourselves*. Nothing surely can *prevent its Success*, humanly speaking, but such *Dispositions*, as I am unwilling on this Occasion so much as to name, in those who should be *Leaders in every good Work*.

If these *shameful Causes* should prevail to *frustrate all*, we love our *Neighbours*, our *Brethren*, and the *Publick* too well, *not to lament it*. But let us at least have so much *Regard* to the *Credit of our Characters*, and the *Peace of our Consciences*, as to shew, that it fails not for Want of our *Concurrence*. I know, it is but very little in Comparison that *we can do*. We are by no means *distinguished for our Wealth*, and we have of course our *Burthens* and *Expences* peculiar to us, as a *Society of Dissenters*. Nevertheless, let us judge equitably, as to

what we are able to contribute, and let us do it cheerfully: Rejoicing in this, that we act in the Presence of a most gracious and merciful Father, who, *where there is a willing Mind, accepts a Man according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not* \*.

Let not therefore any of the poorer Part of Mankind, who often have as generous and as compassionate Hearts as any which are to be found on Earth, be discouraged, because they have not their *Guineas*, or even their *Crowns* to give on this noble Occasion. Were great Numbers to join their *smaller Contributions thro' such a County* as this, it would swell to a very considerable Sum. And which is the most agreeable Thought of all, *each* would have *his Part* in the Honour and Pleasure of *doing Something* towards helping forward *so worthy a Design*. And I am sure, it is the Part of *Humanity* to wish, that those, who move in a *lower Sphere*, may share with the *Rich and Great* in such Pleasures as these; tho' they cannot in many others, much more expensive, yet not equally exquisite and refined. The Joys of *Liberality*, and the Delights of *Benevolence*, were intended by the great Author of our Nature, like the *Light of the Sun*, to be the Portion of the *whole Species*, and to extend themselves to the *lowest of Mankind*.

I hope therefore that all, who can without great Inconvenience to themselves and their Families afford it, will do something to promote *this generous Scheme*. But I would remind those of you in particular, who are in more *distinguished Circumstances* of Life, that you are in the Sight of God and Man obliged to *distinguish yourselves* in the various Exercises of *Liberality*. I have a *great Authority* to warrant me to do it, and I think it one of the truest Offices of *Friendship* which a *Minister* can perform to such, to *charge them that are Rich in this World, that they trust not in uncertain Riches, but in the living GOD*; and that, as they desire any well-grounded Trust in him, they practically acknowledge him as the *GREAT LORD OF ALL*, by being *rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, so laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold on Eternal Life* †. And if there are any of you  
whose

\* 2 Cor. viii. 12.

† 1 Tim. vi. 17,—19.

whose *Riches* GOD hath lately *increased*, either by causing your *Grounds* to bring forth plentifully, or by giving a *favourable Turn* to the *Commodities* in which you deal, or by any other *Methods* of sudden Prosperity; as I may say to you, *I come in a good Day*, so I should think, you had Reason to fear that very *Prosperity* were a *Curse*, and might be the *Means* of *Destruction* to you, if you did not feel your *Hearts* as it were *melted* by it, and disposed to flow forth in the *Streams* of *large* and *cheerful* *Benevolence*. I would rather hope, that GOD has been providing an *easy* and *abundant* *Accession* for this *publick* *Charity*, by the *Accession* he has been making to your *Capacity* of supporting it.

I would also particularly beseech *those of you*, who are of *tender* *Constitutions*, and know, by your own frequent Experience, the *Calamity* of *Illness*, to pity the *Sorrows* you have so often felt, and to shew a *Readiness* to *relieve* the *Poor* who are labouring under them; as you desire that the *Eye* of *Mercy* may be directed toward you, and that the *Arm* of *GOD* may be extended for your Support, if *such* *Distresses* should return upon you. And I hope, any whom GOD may lately have raised up to *Life* and *Health*, when they seemed in the *extreamest* *Danger* of being *deprived* of the *Residue* of their *Years*, will hear how loudly he calls upon them, to present a *Thank-offering*, so suitable to the *Nature* of that *Favour* which they have received.

To conclude all, I would beseech *every one of you* who hear me this *Day*, both *High* and *Low*, *Rich* and *Poor* together, that they aid this good Work by their *Prayers*: A *Contribution*, by which some of the *Poorest* may be *eminently* *helpful*; for *such* are often peculiarly *rich* in *Faith* †, and high in the *Favour* of the *King* of *Heaven*.

And may HE, the *Great Patron* of the *Afflicted*, and of *those* that *pity* them, say AMEN to our *united* *Petitions*! May He graciously *guide* the *Minds* of those, who are *concerting* the *Scheme*, and ripening it for fuller *Execution*! May He *open* the *Hearts* of those, who shall be *applied* to, that they may *give* *freely* and *cheerfully*, in *full* *Proportion* to what He, the only perfect Judge, certainly knows to be their *respective* *Abilities*! And may He abundantly  
reward

† James ii. 5.

*reward all, who from worthy Principles shall assist in so excellent a Work, with Health in their Persons, Prosperity in their Families, Peace in their Minds, and at length, thro' the Merits and Grace of the great Redeemer, with an Eternal Abode in that World, where the great Physician of Souls having fully accomplished his healing Purposes, the Inhabitant shall not say, I am sick \*! Nevertheless, the Grace of Charity shall live and reign there †; tho' such Methods of expressing it, as I have now been recommending, be happily superseded: Nor is it at all improbable, that some, whom we have for a few Days lodged in our House of Mercy here, may there, as our LORD himself expresses it, receive us into Everlasting Habitations ‡. AMEN.*

\* Isai. xxxiii. 24.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

‡ Luke xvi. 9.



THE  
C H A R G E

Delivered in

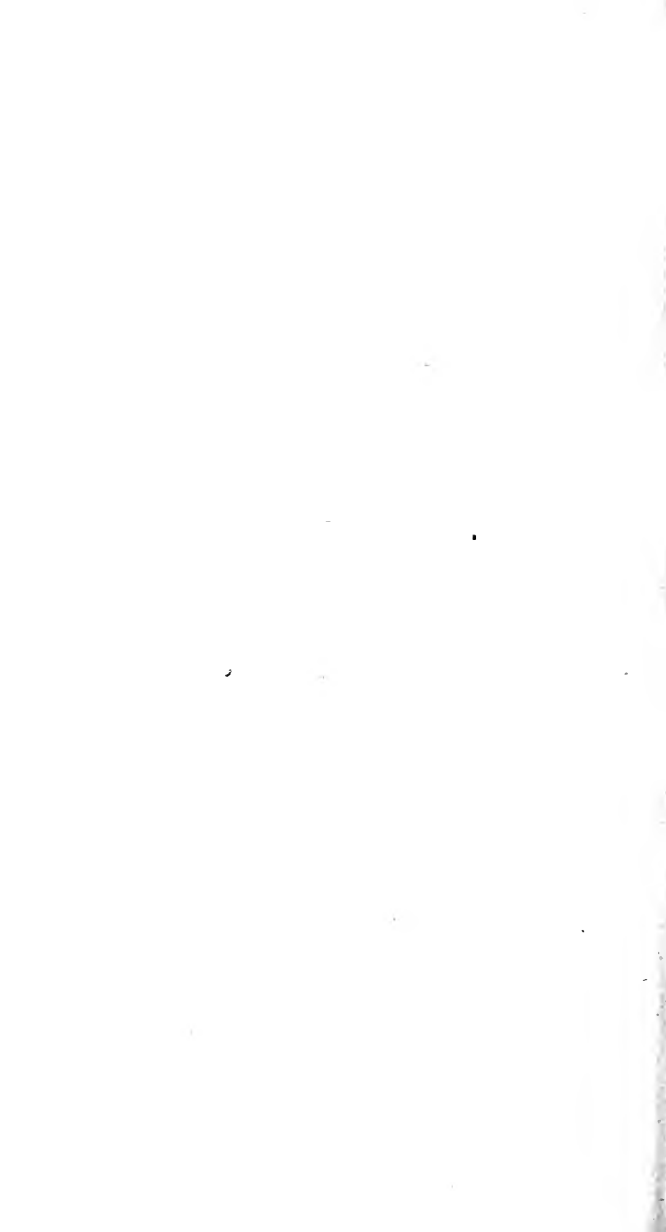
*N O R W I C H,*

On *June* 20, 1745, at the

ORDINATION

Of the Reverend

Mr. *ABRAHAM TOZER.*





A

## C H A R G E, &amp;c.

*My Dear* BROTHER,



W H E N I consider the rational and edifying Manner, in which the Solemnities of *Ordination-Days* amongst us are adjusted and conducted, and recollect what I hope I may justly call the various and delightful *Tokens of the Divine Presence* in our Assemblies on such Occasions, I cannot but esteem it my Happiness to have been an Attendant on so many of them. My Memory goes back with Joy to many former Years, in each of which Providence has given me, in one Part of our Country or another, to see *young Ministers*, who have a *good Report of all Men, and of the Truth itself\**, after having *approved themselves* to Christian Societies, generally by some considerable Series of Probationary Labours, *unanimously chosen* by the respective Churches, and invited to the *Pastoral Office* over them without one dissenting Voice. With Delight have I heard their faithful and affectionate Testimony to the great Truths of the Gospel, in judicious *Summaries of the Christian Religion*, drawn up by them in such Expressions as they freely chose, without the Imposition of Human Forms; *Summaries*, which, in this Connection, I must acknowledge to have been in the Number of the most affecting and edifying publick Discourses. If I have ever known *the Spirit of Prayer* poured forth, as in a Kind of Celestial Torrent, to add at once Dignity, Sanctity, and Transport to our Assemblies, it has been on such Occasions: And the Exhortations of my Brethren

\* 3 John, ver. 12.

thren in their *Sermons* and *Charges*, have often been the Means of humbling, of melting, and of animating my Soul.

The present Pleasure attending these Sacred Hours, the religious Improvement received from what has passed in them, the cheering Prospect which they give relating to the Church in future Years, and even in Generations yet to come, do all concur to demand my Thankfulness, that I have so often on such Seasons been called *to go with the Multitude to the House of GOD* †. But I will freely own, the Enjoyment has often been abated by the Obligation I have been under to officiate, not only in some publick Work, but especially in the Part which is now devolved upon me. Nor should I, after having delivered *so many Charges*, as well as opened my Heart so fully to you, *Dear Sir*, in a more private Manner, on almost every Subject relating to the Ministry, know how to set myself with any Spirit to what must be in a great Measure *a Repetition of former Things*; if I did not recollect, that what is immediately addressed to one's self, in the Midst of such peculiar Solemnities, may have some singular Weight, beyond what the same Thing would have in a more private Address, or if thus publicly offered to another Person. And therefore I persuade myself, you will hear me with all Attention and Regard, while I give a little Vent to the Fulness of my Heart, in such Fraternal *Congratulations, Admonitions, and Encouragements*, as may suit the present Occasion, and may, by the Divine Blessing, be of some Service to you, and my other beloved and honoured *Brethren*, who are sharing in the Honours, the Labours, and the Burthens of this *Evangelical Ministry*, to the full Exercise of which you have now been solemnly called and set apart.

I. Let me most cordially and affectionately *congratulate you*, my dear Brother, that you have now been thus publicly called and devoted to the *Ministerial and Pastoral Office*.

*Paul* esteemed it Matter of most joyful Reflection, when he said, *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, that he hath counted*



counted me faithful, putting me into the Ministry\*. And I thank him from my Soul, as the great Head of the Church, that He is still raising a Succession of those who are to bear it, and that you, Dear Sir, are numbered among them. I most heartily congratulate you, on the Honour,—the Pleasure,—and the Usefulness of that Station of Life, on which you now enter.

1. I congratulate you on the Honour of your Office.

For with whatever Contempt Ignorant and Profane Men may treat it, it is highly honourable in its simplest Forms; and needs none of the external Ornaments which Men can hang about it, to render it so. If it be honourable, to be (tho' confessedly in a lower Sense, than the Title was applicable to the Apostles,) an Ambassador of Christ, and a Man of GOD, you have that Honour. If it be honourable, to sustain the highest Trust, that can, in the Methods of common Providence, be reposed in mortal Man, even to have the glorious Gospel of the Blessed GOD committed to our Charge †, and to be made Guardians of Souls which are to exist for ever:

—— If it be honourable, to bear an Office which was sanctified by Christ, who himself bore it, and by bearing it has dignified it for ever; an Office, which is mentioned in the Sacred Oracles, as the great Gift of Christ to his Church; as the immediate, tho' not the ultimate End of the most visible and extraordinary Effusion of his Spirit:

—— For when he ascended up on high, and led Captivity Captive, he gave Gifts unto Men; and distributed the Royal Donative, giving first Apostles, then Prophets, then Evangelists, then Pastors and Teachers; that by it Holy Men might be perfectly fitted for the Work of the Ministry, that so the Body of Christ (that is, his whole Church,) might be edified ‡, or built up §: —— Rejoice, that your Name is now (as it were) inserted in the Catalogue of these his Servants, and reflect frequently on the Honour; not to be exalted above Measure, but to be awakened and animated to a Dignity and Sanctity of Behaviour correspondent to it.

2. Let

\* 1 Tim. i. 12. † 1 Tim. i. 11. ‡ Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12.

§ This Verse I think the original Words will bear; προς τον καταλιτισμον των αγιων εις εργον διακονιας, εις οικοδομαν τε σωματος τε Χριστου.

2. Let me also congratulate you on *the Pleasures* of that Office, on which you are entered.

For *Pleasures* mingle themselves amidst all its Labours and Difficulties, all its Reproaches, and its Persecutions; yea, when duely executed, it is a *Series of Pleasures*. Pleasures will meet you *in your secret Retirements*; they will attend you here *in the House of your GOD*; they will follow you *to the House of your Friends*: They will crown *all your Days*, and above all *your Sabbaths*: And these, *rational, pure, sublime Pleasures*, which *the Man* may approve, *the Christian* relish, and which, did *Angels* dwell in Human Flesh, they surely would pursue.

Must it not necessarily be *pleasant* to a devout Heart, (and God forbid, that any other should here be in Question!) to give itself up in Secret to the Contemplation of Divine Things, to search the rich Mines of Scripture, to investigate the glorious Mysteries with which they are pregnant, and *which Angels stoop down that they may look into* \*? to compare one Part of the Sacred Oracles with another, that each may be illustrated by the Comparison? to discover, I will not say *New Doctrines* of Importance, (for I persuade myself, God has not left his Christian Church to learn them *in these last Days*;) but *New Illustrations* of the great and acknowledged Truths of his Gospel, *New Beauties* in the Arrangement and Expressions of particular Texts, *New Methods* of touching the *Hearts* of Men, by Truths already familiar to their *Ear*?

What can be more delightful also, than to rise up to lead the *Publick Devotions* of a worshipping Assembly? to spread before the Blessed God, in their Name, and our own, *Prayers* and *Supplications*, *Intercessions* and *Thanksgivings*? to remind them of the Divine Mercy? to proclaim among them the everlasting Gospel; animated with a secret Hope, (while meditating in Private, while speaking in the Assembly,) that by the Divine Blessing, the Knowledge and Love of God in a Redeemer may be shed abroad on some ignorant and wretched Soul, hitherto destitute of it; and in many other Instances, that truly Christian Sentiments may  
be

\* 1 Pet. i. 11.

be kept alive, in Hearts that have already received them, and be transmitted from the present to the next Generation ?

Nor can any *Subjects of Conversation* administer a nobler Delight in the Houses of your Friends, than those which will naturally fall before you, as a Minister. For if Religion add so much Sweetness and Endearment to Friendship, when contracted between Persons of the most private Characters, it must much more do it in such Instances ; where past Ministerial Services may be recollected, where the Fruits of them may be made apparent, and the Man of GOD more abundantly furnished for the future Discharge of his Office, in the most suitable, and therefore the most edifying Manner. Which naturally leads me,

3. To congratulate you on that Prospect of Usefulness, which this happy Day may open upon you.

It is true, that how well so ever we may be furnished for the Ministry, and how agreeably so ever we are placed in it, we must not hope, that our Success will be universal: Hardly can we flatter ourselves, that it will be general. What are we better than our Fathers \* ? Or how comparable to our Master ? That we should never complain with them, and even with Him, that we labour in vain, and spend our Strength for nought † ? Yet we can ourselves witness, from what we have seen, and from what we have felt, the Blessing that hath attended the Ministry of others. And I trust, that even those of us, who are least advanced in Life, least experienced in the Work, have already been favoured with some Seals of our Ministry, some who are as Letters of Recommendation, written as it were by the Hand of Christ himself ‡ ; and that you, Sir, will be thus honoured. Oh that it might be abundantly ! Yes, I trust, God will give you to convert many. And if it were but one, who can express the Happiness of saving one Soul from Death, of conducting one immortal Creature to Life and Glory everlasting ?

You will also, I doubt not, edify many by every publick Prayer you offer, and by every Sermon you preach. Your Words, proceeding from your own Heart, will reach the Hearts of others, and rekindle the languishing Flame

\* 1 Kings xix. 4. † Isai. xlix. 4. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 1, 2.

Flame of Devotion. Every Virtue, and every Grace will, I hope, flourish under your Cultivation; while you strengthen, with renewed Exhortations, every good Resolution already formed: And *the rising Generation*, growing up under your Care, in Concurrence with that of pious Parents whom you animate to the important Charge of their Education, will, by insensible Degrees, be furnished with the Knowledge of Religion, and brought, not only to the Speculation, but to the Sentiments and Practice of it. So that while *others* have, it may be, their Bags, their Houses, their Furniture, and their Fields, to shew as the Effect of *their Labours*; you will have *Captives of Satan*, rescued from his Tyranny, adopted into the Family of God, and honoured with the Privileges of his Children, crowding his Courts, and surrounding his Table, as the infinitely more valuable Fruits of *yours*. You will see the Character of Christians brightening from Sabbath to Sabbath, under your Evangelical and Practical Instructions; their Blemishes wearing out, and their Graces contracting (as by Exercise they *will contract*) more Strength and more Beauty continually.

God will also undoubtedly give you, to wipe *the weeping Eye*, to cheer *the mourning Heart*; to be His Instrument in taking off the Burthen from *tender depressed Spirits*; in which Number you will sometimes find those, who may (if any in the World may,) be justly called *the Excellent of the Earth* \*. CHRIST, the great Lord of the Church, will in many Instances make you (as it were) the Almoner of his Bounty, and Messenger of his Love; while He is *giving to them that mourn in Zion, Beauty for Ashes*, and sending them *the Garments of Praise* in Exchange for *the Spirit of Heaviness* †. Your kind Offices, and the happy Effects of them, will attend your Friends, not only in all the darkest Hours of preceding Affliction, but even on their *dying Beds*. There will you animate their Faith; there will you be *a Helper of their Joy* ‡; and furnish the Hand of the departing Pilgrim, with the Promises of God as a sure Staff, to support him in his Way thro' all the gloomy Horrors

of

\* Psal. xvi. 3.

† Isai. lxi. 3.

‡ 2 Cor. i. 24.

of the last Valley, by which he must pass to the *New Jerusalem*.

By such Traces of Usefulness will you mark (as it were) the several Years, and Months, and Days of Life; while the Passage of so many others thro' it is *like that of an Arrow thro' the trackless Air*: 'Till at length you die with a pleasing Consciousness, that you have not lived in vain, and rise to Rewards never to be described by mortal Voice, never to be conceived by the Human Heart, and of which I must not say any Thing more now, as I am briefly to touch upon them in the concluding Part of my Discourse.

Now while you have these Things in View, do you not, my Brother, congratulate yourself upon this happy Occasion? I am persuaded, you do. I am persuaded, that your Heart is even now bowing itself in secret Thankfulness before God, that He hath honoured you with *Capacities* for this Work; that He hath furnished you with the Means of a proper Education for it; and that his Providence has at length called you out to it. Nor can your Gratitude forget His distinguished Goodness in settling you with so generous, so affectionate, and so pious a *People*, and now in the Bonds of *Joint-Pastorship* with that faithful and venerable *Servant of Christ*, with whom you share the Office\*. You will, I doubt not, *serve with him, as a Son with a Father, in the Gospel of Christ* †. Nor can the warmest Friendship form a greater Wish for you, than that you may learn by the daily Opportunities of conversing with him, to improve more and more in that rich Variety of Christian and Ministerial Graces, which have for a long Series of Years rendered *his Name* so honourable in our Churches, and *his Flock* so peculiarly happy. Oh that I could also congratulate you, and them, on returning and continued Opportunities of learning, as formerly, by *his publick Labours*! In the mean Time, permit me with these cordial *Congratulations* to intermingle,

II. Some faithful *Admonitions*, relating to the *Labours*,—the *Difficulties*,—the *Oppositions*, attending the Station

of

\* The Reverend Mr. Thomas Scott, Senior.

† Phil. ii. 22.

of Life on which you are entered, — and the *solemn Account* in which it is to terminate.

Of these indeed you have just now been reminded by my dear and honoured *Brother*, in so judicious, and in so pathetic a Manner, that it is the less necessary for me to enlarge upon them. Yet were they to be wholly omitted by me in this Discourse, it could hardly be called a *Charge*; and I fear, it is a Subject, on which we all need *Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept*. Let me therefore solemnly, tho' briefly, remind you,

1. Of the *Labours*, that attend this Situation in Life.

These indeed are such, as will demand an almost uninterrupted Attention of Mind, and Vigour of Diligence. *Labours* await you *at Home, and Abroad*: — *Labours on your own Days, and on the Sabbath*; a Day of *Rest* to others, but to you of the most strenuous, tho' most delightful *Service*: — *Labours in the Study*; that Knowledge may be increased; that Provision may be made for publick Ministrations, with Solidity, with Perpicuity, with Propriety, with Energy, with Tenderness: — *Labours in the Pulpit*; that *publick Devotions* may be suitably and fervently poured out before GOD; and *Sermons* so delivered, as, if possible, to command the Attention of the Auditory, and to communicate, in a natural and effectual Manner, those good Affections to others, which you feel in your own Breast. — Not to mention the *Labours* to be gone thro' *in visiting your Friends*, and in the Exercise of that prudent *personal and domestick Inspection*, which you must necessarily attend to, if you would approve yourself a *skilful*, yea I will add, if you would approve yourself a *faithful* Shepherd. — What a Combination on the whole! *Labours of the Head, Labours of the Voice*; but oh, above all, *Labours of the Heart*! For this is indeed *the Labour*: 'To fix on our own inconstant Spirits a *becoming habitual Sense of GOD*; to feel always in our own Breast *those pious Affections*, which it is our Business to endeavour to raise in others; in a Word, to keep *the Sacred Flame* of Love to GOD, to CHRIST, and to the Souls of Men, *ever burning, yea ever glowing*, with an Intenseness of Heat proportionable to the Number  
and

and Nature of *those Sacrifices*, which are *daily*, which are *hourly* to be presented!—Help, Lord, or it will soon be extinguished! Feed it continually by Thy celestial Stream; or *who is sufficient for these Things* \*!—You will surely say so, when you consider,

2. The *Difficulties* attending your Work, of which I am next to admonish you.

But here, as indeed under the former Head, your own Experience must already have done it in the most convincing Manner. You find the *Ministry*, a Work that requires not only *patient Industry*, but wise Conduct and happy Address. *Difficulties* meet us in the *Closet*, even when our own Minds are competently furnished with Divine Knowledge, so as to adjust the *Composition* of our *Discourses*, as that the Understanding of our Hearers may be enlightened, their Conscience convinced, and their Affections impressed; that the Ignorant may be instructed, that the Careless may be awakened, that the Hypocrite may be detected, that the Mourner may be comforted, the Dejected revived, the Backslider restored, the confirmed Christian yet more established; in a Word, that every one may have *his Portion of Meat in due Season* †, and every one, so far as may be, according to his own Taste too; at least, that what we say, while it is intelligible to the meanest, may not be justly contemptible to the more refined, but that *Things* and *Words* may be *sought out*, so far as Faithfulness will permit, *acceptable* to both ‖. And *how hard* is it, to unite all these Views, especially amidst such a Diversity of Sentiments, as well as Circumstances! And this, not only where those are in Question, who have apparently *made Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience* ‡, and whom in some Respects it might be Infamy to please; but even where, among the best of Men, *different Apprehensions of Things*, conscientiously received and retained, will lead one to *disrelish* what another *most wishes to hear*, and possibly in some Instances, one to *censure* even because another *applauds*.

It may on all these Accounts, and many others, be *difficult to instruct*, and it will be still *more difficult to reprove*. General Hints given in *Publick* will by guilty

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Consciences

\* 2 Cor. ii. 16.

† Luke xii. 42.

‡ Eccl. xi. 10.

Consciences be interpreted as *Personal Reflections*, and perhaps aggravated into *open Abuse*, and Occasions of declared Enmity : And *private Applications* will be evaded, discouraged, and very probably *resented*. The Corruptions of the Heart will rise against the most friendly Efforts of Cure ; and *those Wounds* which most absolutely require a *deep Search*, will be least patient even under the *gentlest Touch*. Your Solicitude to *please GOD* will, in many Instances, *displease Men*. Your Heart will be *grieved* by many *unsuccessful Labours*. And to close the melancholy Scene, you will probably *see some*, of whom you had very agreeable Hopes, *falling away* from all Regard to serious Religion ; and perhaps may find yourself obliged, tho' with a reluctant Heart, to bear your Part, *in separating some from your Communion*, whom you gathered into it with the greatest Joy, and in whom you blessed yourself as *the Seals of your Ministry*.

These are *Difficulties*, which may arise *from within* ; and besides these, the Prejudices of the World will lie strongly against you *from without*. Many Eyes will be upon you, to observe *your Conduct*. By some *your Slips* will be magnified into *Crimes* ; and if you walk so cautiously, (tho' who can promise himself that he shall,) as to escape any *just Blame*, Malice will create Occasions of *Censure*, perhaps in some Instances even *from your Solicitude to avoid it*. Your Zeal will be called *Bigotry*, and your Candor *Hypocrisy* ; your Humility *Affectation* ; and your Activity will be imputed, either to a high Opinion of *your own Abilities*, or to a vain Desire of *outshining others*, or to a low Pursuit of *Popularity* from arrogant or interested Principles. Such Treatment have *the best of Men* found ; and such must you expect, unless *Satan* lose his Influence over the World by much swifter Degrees, than we have any Warrant to hope that he will. But this naturally leads me to warn you,

3. Of the *Oppositions*, which you may meet with in your Ministry.

These may indeed, in different Circumstances, be more or less extream : But something of this Kind is at all Events to be expected ; and it will be our Wisdom to provide against the worst. *Gird up* therefore



the Loins of your Mind \*. Remember, that you are putting on your Harness †; and God only knows, to what Combats you may be called.

We have long enjoyed *Halcyon Days*, thro' the Favour of *Providence*, and the Equity of our *Civil Governors*; to whom, I hope, we are grateful for it, as we ought. But *He that rules in the Heavens* can only say, how soon *Clouds* may gather, and how soon *Tempests* of Thunder and Lightning may burst upon us. Sometimes, you know, a *Storm* arises on a sudden, and the Deadness of the preceding *Calm* increases both its Terror and its Strength. So sinful a People as we must confess ourselves to be, can never have Reason to wonder, at any *publick* and *national Calamity*, which may break in upon us in a Moment. But should Circumstances more gradually change, you, *Sir*, and our younger Brethren, may live to see an *Enemy in the Sanctuary of the Lord* †; may live to see our *Religious Liberties* trampled under Foot, and with them undoubtedly our *Civil*, for they are *Twins* that will live and die together. You may perhaps be called to *resist unto Blood* †, to glorify God in the Flames, and to teach your Flock *Christian Courage* and *Fidelity*, not by *Words*, but by *Martyrdom*. Such Things you may suffer, as a *Protestant*, as a *Christian*.

And *more peaceful Times* have their Trials too, tho' perhaps not equally severe. I do indeed hope, that *mutual Love* is growing, among the various Denominations of *Christians*, and particularly between *us*, and our *Brethren of the Establishment*. And may the Blessings of the *GOD of Peace* rest on the Men who cultivate it, on both Sides!—But we cannot hope to see the Time, when *all* shall be *so moderate* and *so equitable*, as not to think and judge *with some Severity* of those, whose Conscience obliges them, tho' in the modestest Manner, to maintain *different Forms of Worship* and *Discipline*, even where the great *Articles of Faith* are the same.—And a *different Judgment* relating to the *Articles of Faith* may draw down yet *severer Censures* and *Opposition*, from those whose Judgment in *Worship* and *Discipline*

\* 1 Pet. i. 13.  
 † Heb. xii. 4.

† 1 Kings xx. 11.

† Psal. lxxxiv. 3.

agrees ever so well.—And I must faithfully warn you *Sir*, that if you go on to assert (as I hope you always will,) *those great Doctrines of the Gospel* to which you have now borne a Publick Testimony, (I particularly mean *the Deity and Attonement of CHRIST*, the Ruin of our Nature by *the original Apostacy*, and our Restoration by *the Agency of the Blessed Spirit*;) you are not to imagine, that any Moderation of Temper, or any other personal Virtue, or all your Zeal for the Service of *the Common Cause of Christians, Protestants, or Dissenters*, will atone for what some will imagine so great a Crime; or shelter you from the affected Contempt, and severe Reproaches of *some angry People*, who amidst all their Professions of *the most unbounded Charity* will think yours an excepted Case, or will rather chuse to be injurious to you than consistent with themselves.—But *it is* after all a *very small Matter*, to be judged of Man's Judgment: He that judgeth us is the Lord\*: And that is the most solemn Thought of all, concerning which I am lastly to admonish you, even

4. The awful Account, which you are shortly to give up to Him, from whom you have received your Ministry.

*We must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ* †: And if He account with the meanest of his Servants, we may assure ourselves, He will do it with *his Stewards*. And let us remember, that *when the Books are opened*, it will not only be found upon Record there, “that such a Congregation was at such a Time committed to this, or that Minister;” but a particular Register will in effect be produced of every Soul consigned to our Care: “So many Heads of Families, together with such Children, and such Servants.” And then our Conduct will be reviewed, and Examination made, “how far we have answered our Trust.” Should it be found, that we have neglected and abused it, the Displeasure of our great Lord and Master will rise in Proportion to its Importance, and to the Opportunities we have had of doing good in it: Opportunities, which tho' we may not perhaps so thoroughly examine, as to conceive of their full Extent, He most circumstantially knows. And surely, if it be then found, as it undoubtedly will, a

*fatal*

*fatal Thing to have betrayed the Bodies, or the Estates of Men, when committed to our Care; much more will it be so, to have betrayed, and by betraying to have destroyed, so far as in us lay, immortal Souls. This is a Matter of such Weight, that when we seriously think of it, and compare it with those criminal Neglects, which Conscience will charge even on the best of us, there is just Reason for us with one Voice to cry out, Enter not into Judgment with thy Servants, Ob Lord; for in thy Sight can none of us be justified\*. And when you, my Brother, think of it, in such a Moment as this you may find your Heart ready to fail; and even may be tempted to draw back, and say, Who shall stand to minister before this Holy Lord GOD †? lest he break forth upon us, and we die ‡. But I would not leave you under the Distress of such a View, and therefore conclude,*

III. With a few Hints addressed to you by Way of Encouragement, to animate you to go forth with Courage and Cheerfulness, notwithstanding these awful Views which I have been giving you of your Office.

And, thro' the Goodness of our Divine Master, I have many Considerations of great Importance to urge here. As,

1. That you have an unerring Rule in the Word of GOD, from whence your Instructions, Admonitions, and Directions, are to be drawn.

You well know, that Scripture was given for this End, that the Man of GOD, that is, the Christian Minister, might be perfected, thoroughly furnished to every good Work §, various as the good Works of his Office are. The best of Human Writings have their Defects, and their Blemishes: But in this Respect, as well as others, it is true, that as for GOD, his Way is perfect, and the Word of the Lord is tried ||. When we read the most excellent Moral and Religious Writings of the Heathens, we find a great deal of Error and Superstition, which mingles Compassion with our Admiration. When we read the merely Human Writings of the most celebrated antient and modern Divines, there is much to exercise our Caution, and

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\* Psal. cxliii. 2. † 1 Sam. vi. 20. ‡ Exod. xix. 22.  
§ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. || Psal. xviii. 30.

our Candor. As for any *New Theological Hypothesis*, we generally find, on a more accurate Examination, the Proofs of its Falseness, proportionable to the Confidence with which it is advanced, and the Importance to which it pretends. And where Men write with the greatest Caution and Modesty, tho' such generally *err the least*, yet there is something defective, or something redundant; something unguarded, or something overstrained: So that, tho' they may be *useful Companions* in our Journey, we dare not commit ourselves to any one of them as *our Guide*; and they often differ so much among themselves, as to increase our Perplexity, and indeed to give us painful Apprehensions as to *our Safety*, or *theirs*; did we not recollect, that *various Paths*, after having divided a while, may so run into each other, as to *lead to the same Place*, tho' some may be more direct than others. But of *Scripture* it may be said, as of its *great Original*, that in it *there is perfect Light, and no Darknes at all* \*. Oh how happy are you, that have in so small a Bulk, *The Oracles of Eternal Truth*, and particularly the Volume of *the New Testament*, which may so easily be carried about with you, to entertain you *Abroad*, as well as *at Home*; to talk with you, *when you lie down, and when you rise up* †; to be *the Man of your Counsel* ‡ when you are preparing to instruct your Flock in Publick, and more privately to guide and advise them in the most intricate Circumstances! This is like *the Pillar of Fire*, to direct your Way amidst the darkest Night; and like *the Pillar of Cloud*, to refresh your Soul amidst the most painful Labours, and most scorching Heats. Let it be followed faithfully; and you, and that Part of *the Israel of GOD* over which you preside, will be *happily conducted*, thro' all the Windings, thro' all the Fatigues of *the Wilderness*, till your Feet and theirs stand upon *Mount Zion*. Consult it, *my dear Brother*, and reverence it as you ought; and you will be *safe*, not only under the Shelter and Guard of *Aged Wisdom*, but in every Change that can be apprehended or imagined.

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\* 1 John i. 5.

† Deut. vi. 7.

‡ Psa'. cxix. 24.

2. You have also for your Encouragement *the daily Prayers* of many, whom you have Reason to think not destitute of an Interest at the Throne they address.

You have your Share, I trust, in *all the Prayers*, which are daily put up by *the Church*, under its various Forms, for *all the faithful Ministers* of CHRIST: But you may assure yourself, that you are more particularly and distinctly remembered, by *your Christian Friends* to whom you are related in Ministerial Bonds. You need that Remembrance; and they consider that you need it. In their Families, in their Closets, they see not a Day, in which they do not supplicate earnestly for *the Blessing of GOD* on your Person, your Studies, and your Labours. When you come to them in the House of GOD, you may consider yourself, (if your will pardon the Expression,) as *raised on the Wing of their Prayers*; and may hope to experience, in Answer to them, some *New Untion from above*. How great an Encouragement, amidst the daily Consciousness of our own Unworthiness! whether we consider it, as testifying *their Love*, and so securing in a great Measure their Candor to us; or as effectual to obtain *those fresh Supplies of Divine Assistance*, which they have sought. Nor can I conclude this Head without saying, that it is happy, when *the Minister*, amidst all his various Cares, is as constant, as earnest, and as affectionate, in *praying for the whole People* committed to his Care, as many a *pious*, and it may be *obscure Christian* in each of our Assemblies is, in striving with GOD for a *Blessing on his Minister*.

3. You may also expect *the Countenance, Esteem and Friendship*, of all *Good Men* that thoroughly know you.

I put in this Limitation, because *the Misrepresentations of Character* which Ignorance and Malice may draw, often *alienate the Minds* of very deserving People from each other; so that they turn away with some Dislike from *they know not whom*, or *what*. But where a *valuable Character is known*, (and that of a *faithful Minister* will always be such,) it must command *Esteem and Affection*; and Prejudices which had been conceived against it, will melt away before the Radiancy of it, like Snow before the Sun. Be diligent and resolute in

the Execution of your Office, and you will find *Favour*, and good Acceptance, *in the Eyes of GOD*, and of *worthy Men*; and perhaps, should *your Reputation* be *aspersed* by the Ignorant and the Malicious, you may find that *Providence* will exert itself to *bring forth your Righteousness as the Light*, and your Honour, as well as your *Salvation, as a Lamp that burneth* \*. You will be sure of a *peculiar Share* in the Affection and Veneration of *the Flock* over which you preside. They will look upon you, as *the Gift of GOD* to the Society: They will consider you, as, in some Measure, *the Representative of our Lord Jesus Christ* himself; of whom every faithful Minister is indeed a living Image. They will therefore *esteem you very highly in Love for your Work's Sake* †. The *Maintenance* they give you, will be *cheerfully offered*, in Proportion to their respective Abilities, as the Tribute of Gratitude, and the Pledge of Endearment. *Your Afflictions* will be the Common Grief, and *your Prosperity* their Joy; and each of them will look upon himself as obliged in Duty to approve himself, *the Guardian* of your Character, and of your Peace. *Their Hearts*, as well as *their Houses*, will be open to you; *their Countenances* will tell you, better than any Words can do it, how *welcome* you are to them; and every proper Token of *Respect* will be *cordial*, in Proportion to the Degree in which it is *unconstrained*. And where this is the Case, you will have no Cause to *envy any Dignities or Revenues*, which mere Power may command, but which no superior Splendor and Abundance can render equally sweet. Above all must it *encourage you*, to reflect,

4. That you have the Promise of *your Master's Presence*, and may trust in him for *the Communication of his Spirit*.

He that told his Ministers, *He will be with them always, even unto the End of the World* ‡: And you may rest on the Veracity of a *Word, that shall continue, tho' Heaven and Earth shall pass away* §. CHRIST will meet you; CHRIST will strengthen you. He will feed and cheer *your Soul*; that you may be enabled to feed and to cheer *those* that he has committed to your Care. It is not a mere empty Sound: *Your Brethren, and your Fathers*, among whom

\* *I sai. lxii. 1.*

† *1 Theff. v. 13.*

‡ *Mat. xxviii. 20.*

§ *Luke xvi. 17.*

whom you stand this Day, can from their own Experience attest the Truth of the Promise. He has softened our Fatigues; He has sweetened our Afflictions; and carried us with Songs in our Mouths through Scenes, at the very distant Prospect of which we should have trembled. Having obtained Help from Him, we continue even to this Day \*, the living, the cheerful Witnesses of his Power, his Goodness, and his Faithfulness. Thou therefore, my Son, be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus †. And remember,

5. That in Consequence of this, you may expect such considerable Improvements in Personal Religion, as shall be a rich Equivalent for all your Labours, and for all you can resign for the Ministry, or suffer in it.

It must be nourishing to the Soul, if it be spiritually alive, to be so continually conversant with Spiritual and Divine Things. Your Meditations, your Prayers, your Publick Discourses, your Private Converses on Religious Subjects and Occasions, together with the Administration of both the Sacraments, will all have a great Tendency, under a Divine Blessing, to make good Impressions on your own Heart, and to advance you in a holy and devout Temper. While you are thus daily watering others, you will be watered yourself ‡; as I doubt not but you will remember, that while you teach others, you teach yourself also §. While the daily Cares of others in their Secular Callings, have an apparent Tendency to divert their Minds from God, yours will tend directly to him, and give you Advantages, beyond what can easily be imagined, for being continually with him ¶: Such Advantages indeed, that, were the Nature, and the Value of them sufficiently known, Men would be ready to contend for the Ministry, as for a Sacred Prize. They would esteem it among the greatest Privileges of a plentiful Estate, that it might give them Opportunities of being educated for it, and of being independent in it; while that Independency was considered as some additional Security for their Fidelity. And the Zeal, with which Persons of the highest Rank among us would then press forward to this Work, would bring us into a Necessity of directing into some other Channel

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\* Act. xxvi. 22.  
§ Rom ii. 21.

† 2 Tim. ii. 1.  
‡ P. al. lxxiii. 25.

‡ Prov. xi. 25.

that Provision, which the wise Charity of some publick Benefactors, the Living and the Dead, has made for the Support of *poor Students for the Ministry*: A Charity, which in the low Ebb to which Religion is fallen amongst us, may almost, under God, be called *the Hope of our Churches*, even for the very next Generation. Especially would the richest and greatest esteem it *their Honour and their Happiness*, did they consider what I am in the last Place to mention to you, *my dear Brother*, viz.

6. The *glorious Expectation and Hope*, which closes the whole Prospect.

What if every *other Hope*, but that of *Religious Improvement*, were in a Moment to vanish? What if nothing should remain, between this and the Grave, but the View of *Labours*, of *Reproaches*, of *Tribulations*, of *Persecutions*? What if you were to conflict, thro' the whole of your Course, with the Malice of *Enemies*, the Coldness and Ingratitude of *Friends*, the incorrigible Obstinacy of *Sinners*, the Perverseness and Imperfections of *those*, whom, if any are such, we must hope to be *Christians*? Here is enough to balance all. *Death* is approaching: *Death*, that stripped *Aaron* of his Garments and of his Burthens together, and ended all his painful Pilgrimage. *Be faithful unto Death*, says our Divine Master, *and I will give thee a Crown of Life* †. Oh think every Day, of *the Extasy* with which you shall receive *that Crown*, and of the high everlasting *Exultation* with which you shall wear it. Think of *the Joy*, with which, after a Life of persevering Fidelity to him, *your separate Spirit* shall ascend into his Presence, e're yet *this Body*, the Instrument of his Service, shall be laid in the Grave. Think of *the Congratulations*, with which your venerable *Predecessors*, your eminently pious *Parents*, and those of *your Flock* who have fled upwards before you, will then *meet you*, and hail your Arrival. And think, how *JESUS* will, by one Smile and Embrace, *overpay* all the *Labours* and *Sufferings* of a long protracted Life. Think of *the Complacency and Delight*, with which you will look down on *the Field* which you have cultivated, and on the grow-  
ing



ing Harvest you have left behind; while perhaps some of the blessed Fruits of your Labours may be running on from Age to Age, so as to be the Means of propagating Christianity to the last Rounds of Time. And Oh think, above all, of the great Day of the Lord, when the chief Sheppard shall appear, that he may confer on you, and on all those who have faithfully discharged their Ministry, a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away\*. Then, when every Christian of the lowest Station and Character shall receive his proper Share of Honour and Reward, what may you expect, if you faithfully improve your Ten Talents; when those of your People whom you have converted or edified, appear with you as your Joy and your Crown in the Presence of the Lord †, and are honoured with the publick Applause and Remunerations of the Eternal and Universal Judge in the Face of the whole assembled World? All the Pageantry of Human Greatness passes away like a Dream; the Sun shall be turned into Darkness, and the Moon into Blood ‡: But Human Souls are durable and immortal; and they that have turned many of them to Righteousness, shall have, in each, an Everlasting Ornament, and decked with a New Lustre from each, shall shine as the Stars for ever and ever ||.

May that GOD whom we serve, thro' the Riches of his Grace, give us all a Portion in the Triumph of that Day! And may He add to all the Joy, which the most unworthy of his Servants is humbly bold to expect in it, that of seeing you, my dear Brother, giving up an Account of a faithful and happily successful Ministry! To encourage and assist you in the Discharge of which, may these plain Hints conduce, through the Blessing of Him, who knows how, from the least and most inconsiderable Seeds, to call up a rich and plentiful Harvest! Amen.

\* 2 Pet. v. 4.  
|| Dan. xii. 3.

† 1 Thess. ii. 19.

‡ Acts ii. 20.





A N

## A P P E N D I X,

Relating to the

Usual Methods of ORDINATION among  
the *Protestant Dissenters*.



**A**S in the Beginning of the CHARGE I have touched upon the *decent Solemnities* attending the *Methods of* ORDINATION generally used among *the Protestant Dissenters*, it may not be improper to give a brief Account of them; especially as I have been earnestly desired to do it, by a pious and learned *Clergyman* of the Established Church; who apprehends, it may obviate some Mistakes, and promote that mutual Candor among *Christians of different Denominations*, which both of us concur to wish, and labour to promote. There is indeed *a little Variety* in the Usages of different Places; but that which I have generally seen, does, I believe prevail in most of our Churches, with the Exception, and sometimes no more than the Transposition, of a few Circumstances.

It very rarely happens, that a Minister among us is admitted to the Pastoral Office, till he hath spent *some Years* as a Kind of *Candidate* for it; and, so far as I can recollect, more undertake it *after*, than *before* their *Twenty-sixth Year* is compleated. But as our *Theological Students* generally employ either *Four* or *Five Years* in Preparatory Studies after they have quitted the Gram-  
mar-

mar-Schools, so they are *examined* by three or four Elder Ministers before they begin to preach \*. A strict Enquiry is made into *their Character*, and into *their Furniture*; both with respect to *the Learned Languages*, especially *the Sacred*, and also as to the various Parts of *Natural and Moral Philosophy*; but above all, into their Acquaintance with *Divinity*; and some Specimen of *their Abilities*, for Prayer and Preaching, is generally expected.

An unordained Minister is seldom *chosen* to the Pastoral Office in any of our Churches, (for in the Members of each of these Societies the whole *Right of Election* lies,) till he has resided among them *some Months*, or perhaps *some Years*; preaching stately to them, and performing most other Ministerial Offices, excepting the Administration of the Sacraments.

When *the Society*, which generally proceeds with entire Unanimity in this great Affair, has received what it judges *competent Satisfaction*, the several *Members of it* join in giving him a solemn and express *Call* to take upon him the Pastoral Inspection over them: And if he be disposed to *accept it*, he generally signifies that Intention to *neighbouring Pastors*; whose Concurrence he desires in solemnly *setting him apart* to that Office.

Previous to the Assembly for this Sacred Purpose, *his Credentials and Testimonials* are produced, if it be required by any who are to be concerned; and Satisfaction as to *his Principles* is also given to those who are to carry on the Publick Work, generally by his communicating to them *the Confession of his Faith* which he has drawn up; in which it is expected, that *the great Doctrines of Christianity* should be touched upon in a proper Order, and *his Persuasion of them* plainly and seriously expressed, *in such Words* as he judges most convenient. And we generally think this a proper and happy *Medium*, between the Indolence of acquiescing in a general Declaration of *believing the Christian Religion*, without declaring what it is apprehended to be, and the Severity of demanding a *Subscription to any Set of Articles*, where if an honest Man, who believes all the rest, scruples

\* See the *Dedication* to my Sermon on *the Evil and Danger of neglecting Men's Souls*, &c. pag. 6. §. x.

scruples any one Article, Phrase, or Word, he is as effectually excluded, as if he rejected the whole.

The *Pastors*, who are to bear their Part in the Publick Work, having been thus in their Consciences *satisfied*, that the Person offering himself to Ordination is *duly qualified* for the Christian Ministry, and *regularly called* to the full Exercise of it; they proceed, at the appointed Time and Place, to *consecrate him to it*, and to recommend him to the Grace and Blessing of *GOD*, and of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the great Head of the Church, by *Fasting and Prayer*, generally accompanied with the *Imposition of Hands*; and the Publick Work of the Day is usually, so far as I have been Witness, carried on *in the following Order*, or something very near it.

It commonly opens with a *short Prayer*, and the *Reading some select Portions of Scripture* which seem most proper to the Occasion: Then a *Prayer* is offered of *greater Length and Compass* than the former, in which most of our common Concerns as *Christians* are included; which is sometimes, tho' less frequently, succeeded by *another* of the same Kind. Then follows a *Sermon*, on some suitable Subject, such as the Institution, Importance, Difficulty, and Excellency of the Ministerial Work, the Character and Conduct of the first Ministers of the Gospel, or the like.

After this Introduction of a more general Nature, *another Minister* (usually one of the *Elders* present, who is a Kind of *Moderator for the Day*;) gives the Assembly a more particular Account of *the Occasion* of its being convened. *The Call of the Church to the Candidate* is then *recognized*, either in Word, or Writing, or by lifting up the Hand; and *his Acceptance* is also declared. He is then desired, for the Satisfaction and Edification of the Assembly, to pronounce *the Confession of Faith*, (which his Brethren have already heard and approved;) and pertinent *Questions* are put to him, relating to the *Views and Purposes* with which he undertakes the solemn Charge, that he may be brought under the most awful Engagements to a suitable Behaviour in it; and an express *Renunciation* of the Errors and Superstitions of the *Romish Church* generally makes a Part of *these Answers*, as well as a Declaration of *his Resolution*, by  
Divine

Divine Grace, never to forsake the Ministry, whatever Inconveniences and Sufferings it may draw after it.

This being dispatched, *the presiding Minister* comes down from the Pulpit, and *prays over the Person* to be set apart. There is no particular *Form of Prayer* on this Occasion, or on any other among us; but I have observed, that the Person who officiates is generally led in such a Circumstance, to adore the Divine Wisdom and Grace, in the Constitution and Revelation of the *Gospel*, in the Appointment of an *Evangelical Ministry*, and in supporting the *Succession* of it throughout all Ages of the Christian Church, as well as in vindicating it from *Papish* Corruption and Bondage. Some Notice is often taken of what may have seemed most remarkable in Providence, with Regard to the particular Circumstances of *the Society* then to be settled, and *the Person to be set apart* to the Ministerial Office in it; who is then solemnly offered up to the Service of God, and recommended to his Blessing, in all the several *Parts of his Work*, which are distinctly enumerated. And this Prayer seldom concludes without  *fervent Intercession* with God, for the *Christian Church* in general, and all its faithful *Ministers* of every Denomination: And as those rising up to succeed in the *Work* are often mentioned here, so I have had the Pleasure frequently to hear the *Universities of our Island*, as well as more private *Seminaries* of learned and pious Education, affectionately recommended to the Divine Protection and Favour on such Occasions, with all the genuine Appearances of a truly Christian and Catholick Spirit. When *that Part of this Prayer* begins, which immediately relates to *the Person then to be consecrated to the Service of the Sanctuary*, it is usual for *the Speaker* to lay his Hand on his Head; and the other *Pastors* conveniently within Reach, (frequently to the Number of Six, Eight, or Ten,) lay on their Hands also, at the same Time: By which we do not pretend to convey any Spiritual Gifts, but only use it as a solemn, and expedient, tho' not absolutely necessary, *Designation of the Person* then to be set apart.

When this Prayer is over, (which often engages a very profound Attention, and seems to make a very deep Impression both on Ministers and People,) *the Charge* is given.

given to the newly ordained Pastor, who generally receives it *standing* (as much as may be) in the Sight of the whole Assembly: And an *Exhortation to the People* is sometimes joined with the *Charge*, or sometimes follows it as a distinct Service, unless (which is frequently the Case,) it is superseded by the *Sermon*, or some other previous Address. Another *Prayer* follows; and *Singing* having been *intermingled*, so as properly to diversify a Service necessarily so long, the whole is concluded with a *Solemn Benediction*.

I know no Method of proceeding on such Occasions, more rational, edifying, and scriptural than this: And I hope, few, who believe any Thing of *Christianity*, can be so ignorant or abandoned, as to *make light of such Solemnities*. But however any of our *Fellow-Servants* may judge, I have a calm, steady, and joyful Assurance, that *Transactions like these* are registered in Heaven with Approbation, and receive the Sanction and Blessing of the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls.

Northampton,  
Sept. 18, 1745:





P O S T C R I P T.

**A**S the Want of *Psalms* or *Hymns*, peculiarly suitable to these Occasions, has often been regretted on our *Ordination-Days*, when we have generally been confined to the *132d* or *133d Psalms*, I was desired by several of my Brethren to publish *that which followed this Charge*; and I accordingly do it without any farther Apology. The Reader will easily perceive, it is a Kind of *Devout Paraphrase* on *Eph. iv. 8, & seq.* And it is One of some Hundreds lying by me, on a Variety of *Scripture-Subjects*.







A N

H Y M N.

I.

FATHER of Mercies, in thine House,  
Shine on our Homage and our Vows!  
While with a grateful Heart we share  
These Pledges of our Saviour's Care.

II.

Blest Saviour! when to Heaven he rose  
In splendid Triumph o'er his Foes,  
What Royal Gifts he scatter'd down!  
How large, how permanent the Boon!

III.

Hence sprung th' *Apostles* honour'd Name,  
Sacred, *beyond* Heroick Fame:  
Hence dictates the *Prophetick* Sage;  
And hence the *E-vangelick* Page.

IV.

In lowlier Forms, to bless our Eyes,  
*Pastors* from hence and *Teachers* rise;  
Who, tho' with feebler Rays they shine,  
Still gild a long extended Line.

V.

From CHRIST their varied Gifts derive,  
And fed by CHRIST their Graces live:  
While guarded by his potent Hand,  
Midst all the Rage of Hell they stand.

VI. So

## VI.

So shall the bright Succession run  
Thro' the last Courses of the Sun ;  
While unborn Churches by their Care  
Shall rise and flourish, fresh and fair.

## VII.

JESUS our Lord their Hearts shall know,  
The Spring whence all their Blessings flow :  
*Pastors* and *People* shout his Praise  
Thro' the long Round of endless Days !



FREE THOUGHTS

ON THE

Most Probable MEANS of Reviving

THE

DISSENTING INTEREST.

Occasioned by the late

ENQUIRY

INTO THE

Causes of its DECAY.

Addressed to the Author of that ENQUIRY.





T O T H E

AUTHOR of the E N Q U I R Y

*Into the Causes of the Decay of the  
Dissenting Interest.*

S I R,



YOU will probably be surpriz'd at this Address on occasion of your Enquiry, so many Months after the Publication of it. But my Distance from the Town, and Engagement in Business, hindered me from an early Sight of it; and many Accidents, which 'tis of no Importance to mention, oblig'd me to delay finishing these Papers, so soon as I intended, when I began to write them. On the whole, as I am not attempting to criticise on your Performance, but only to offer some Remarks, which I hope may be of common use, if what I say be just and important, it cannot be quite too late; and if it be either false or trifling, it appears after all too soon.

As I am persuad'd that the Dissenting Cause is founded on Reason and Truth, and that the Honour of God, and the publick Good is nearly concern'd in its Support, you have my hearty Thanks for that generous Zeal with which you have appear'd for the Defence of it. On this account, I should think myself highly oblig'd to treat you with Decency and Respect, how much soever my Sentiments might differ from yours, as to the particular Causes of its Decay. And indeed, Sir, you have taken the most effectual Method in the World to prevent any thing of a rude Attack, by treating All whom you  
mention,

mention, even the meanest and the weakest, with remarkable Candor and Humanity.

But I have the Happiness of agreeing with you in far the greater Part of what you advance. I will not now debate, whether the Principles of our Dissent are less known than they formerly were; and consequently whether that be, properly speaking, a Cause of the late Decay of our Interest: But I will readily grant, Sir, that it is highly necessary they should be known; and I think you have done us a great deal of Service by setting them in so easy, and yet in so strong a Light. I hope it may be a Means of informing and establishing some, who are too busy or too indolent to give themselves the Trouble of perusing what Dr. *Calamy*, Mr. *Peirce*, and some others have written so copiously and so judiciously upon the Subject.

I farther apprehend, Sir, that nothing can be said upon the Case before us of more certain Truth or more solid Importance, than what you have frequently observ'd; *viz.* that our Interest has receiv'd great Damage from our acting in a Manner directly opposite to our Principles, by unscriptural Impositions, and uncharitable Contentions with each other. I hope many of us have seen our Mistakes here, and shall be careful for the future, to avoid what has been attended with so many unhappy Consequence.

After having thus declar'd my Agreement with you, in the greater Part of your Discourse, I hope, Sir, you will pardon me, if I add, that I cannot think that you have exhausted your Subject. To speak freely, I think you have omitted some Causes of the Decay of our Interest, which are at least as important as those you have handled. It is the Design of my present Undertaking, to point out some of the most considerable of them, which have occurred to my Thoughts: And I persuade myself, Sir, you will be no more offended with me, for offering this Supplement to your Enquiry, than I imagine I should myself be with any third Person, who should fix upon others which may have escaped us both.

You will the more readily excuse the Freedom which I take, as I imagine that the Scenes of our Lives have

been widely different †, and consequently I may have had an Opportunity of making some useful Observations which have not fallen in your Way: Tho' I question not but if you, Sir, had been in my Circumstances, you would soon have remark'd them; and perhaps have communicated them to the Publick with much greater Advantage.

I shall add nothing more by Way of Introduction, but that I chuse the Title I have prefix'd to these Papers, rather than that of a *farther Enquiry into the Causes of the Decay of the Dissenting Interest*; partly, Sir, as it seemed most respectful to you, but principally that I may not appear to advance any direct Charge against any of my Brethren in the Process of this Discourse. I am sensible that would be highly indecent on many Accounts, and particularly as it is from the Example of several amongst them whom I have most intimately known, that I have learnt many of those particulars of Conduct, which I am now going to offer to your Consideration, as the happiest Expedients for the Revival of our common Cause.

But before I proceed to Particulars, I would observe (what we immediately allow, but too quickly forget) that we are to be concerned for this Interest, not merely as the Cause of a distinct Party, but of Truth, Honour, and Liberty; and I will add, in a great Measure, the Cause of serious Piety too. I would be far from confining all true Religion to the Members of our own Congregations. I am very well aware that there are a Multitude of excellent Persons in the Establishment, both amongst the Clergy and the Laity, who are (in their different Stations) burning and shining Lights; such as reflect a Glory on the Human Nature, and the Christian Profession. Yet I apprehend some of these are the Persons who will most readily allow, that, in

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† As the Author to whom I write is not certainly known, I take it for granted he is what he seems by his Manner of Writing, a Gentleman of the Laity: And tho' I have been told since I drew up this Letter, he is supposed by many to be a young Minister in Town, I have no Evidence of it which is convincing to me: And as I apprehend, it would be ill Manners to appear to know him under such a Disguise, I thought it not proper to alter what I had Writ with regard to the late Report.

Proportion to the Numbers, there is generally more practical Religion to be found in our Assemblies, than in theirs. This was surely the Original, and this, if I mistake not, must be the Support of our Cause. It was not merely a generous Sense of Liberty, (which may warm the Breast of a Deist or an Atheist) but a religious Reverence for the Divine Authority, which animated our pious Forefathers, to so resolute and so expensive an Opposition to the Attempts which were made in their Day, to invade the Rights of Conscience, and the Throne of God its only Sovereign. And if the Cause be not still maintain'd on the same Principles, I think it will hardly be worth our while to be much concern'd about maintaining it all. It must argue a great Defect, or Partiality of Thought, for any with the *Jews* of old to boast of their being free from human Impositions, when they are *the Servants of Sin* \*. And all the World will evidently perceive, that it is the Temper of a *Pharisee*, rather than of a Christian, to contend about *Mint, Anise and Cummin*, (on one Side of the Question or the other) while there is an apparent Indifference about *the weightier Matters of the Law* †. We that are Ministers may entertain ourselves and our Hearers with fine Harangues in Defence of Liberty; but I apprehend that in the near Views of Death and Eternity, we shall have little Satisfaction in reflecting on the Converts we have made to that, unless at the same Time we have some Reason to hope that they are Persons of true substantial Piety; such as will be our Crown in the Day of the Lord, and our Companions in the Glories of the heavenly World. I cannot say how trifling and contemptible our Labours appear to me, when considered in any other View. And therefore, Sir, it will be my Concern throughout this whole Discourse, to point out those Methods for the Support of the Dissenting Interest, which I imagine will be most subservient to the Cause of practical Religion, and vital Holiness in all its Branches.

It was the Observation of Dr. *Burnet*, almost forty Years ago, in his incomparable Discourse on the Pastoral Care ‡, “That the Dissenters had then in a great Measure lost that good Character for Strictness in Religion,

\* John viii. 33, 34. † Matt. xxiii. 23. ‡ Cap. viii. p. 204.



“ gion, which had gained them their Credit, and made  
“ such Numbers fall off to them.” Whether that good  
Character has since been recover’d, or has not been  
more and more declining, some others are more capable  
of judging; but I think it calls for our serious Reflection.  
And if we find upon Enquiry, that this our Glory  
is departing, it surely deserves to be mention’d, as one  
Cause, at least, of the Decay of our Interest: And that  
all who sincerely wish well to it, should express their  
Affection, by exerting themselves with the utmost Zeal,  
for the Revival of practical Religion amongst us.

This must be our common Care, according to the  
various Stations in which Providence has placed us:  
And as for Ministers, nothing can be more evident, than  
that they, by Virtue of their Office, are under peculiar  
Obligations to it. And in order to pursue it with the  
greater Advantage, I cannot but think that it should be  
their Concern, TO STUDY THE CHARACTER AND  
TEMPER OF THEIR PEOPLE; that, so far as they can  
do it with Conscience and Honour, they may render  
themselves agreeable to them, both in their publick  
Ministrations, and their private Converse.

This, Sir, is so obvious a Thought, that one would  
imagine it could not be overlook’d or disputed; yet it  
is certain our Interest has receiv’d considerable Damage  
for want of a becoming Regard to it, especially in those  
who have been setting out in the Ministry amongst us.  
It was therefore, Sir, with great Surprize, that I found  
you had intirely omitted it in your late Enquiry, and  
had dropt some Hints, which (tho’ to be sure you did  
not intend it) may very probably lead young Preachers  
into a different and contrary Way of thinking, than  
which hardly any Thing can be more prejudicial, either  
to them, or to the Cause in which they are imbark’d.

The Passage of yours, to which I principally refer, is  
in the 33d and 34th Pages of your *Enquiry*: Where,  
amongst other Things, you observe, that “ a great many  
“ of those Things that please the People, have often a  
“ very bad Tendency in general.” And you add, “ the  
“ being pleas’d, which they so much insist upon, seldom  
“ arises from any Thing but some Oddness that hits  
“ their peculiar Humour, and is not from any View to

“ Edification at all, and therefore too mean to be worthy  
 “ any one’s Study. The People do not usually know  
 “ wherein Oratory, Strength of Speech, the Art of  
 “ Persuasion, &c. consist; and therefore it is Vanity in  
 “ such to pretend to be Judges of them. I wish I could  
 “ deny, that amongst us, they generally fall into the  
 “ falsest and lowest Taste imaginable.”

There is, no doubt, Sir, a Mixture of Truth and good Sense in some of these Remarks; but for want of being sufficiently guarded, they seem liable to the most fatal Abuse. I frankly confess, that when I began to preach, I should have read such a Passage with Transport, and should very briskly have concluded from it (as many of us are ready enough to conclude without it) that, with regard to our publick Discourses, we had nothing to do but to take Care that our Reasoning were conclusive, our Method natural, our Language elegant, and our Delivery decent; and after all this, if the People did not give us a favourable Reception, the Fault was to be charged on a Perverseness of Humour, which they should learn to sacrifice to good Sense, and the Taste of those who were more judicious than themselves; and in the mean Time, were the proper Object of Contempt, rather than Regard.

I say not, Sir, that what I have now been quoting from your Letter, would lay a just Foundation for such a wild Conclusion; but I apprehend that a rash young Man, ignorant of the World, and full of himself, might probably draw such a Conclusion from it. And if such a Conclusion were to be universally received and acted upon, by the rising Generation of Ministers, it must in a few Years be the Destruction of our Interest, unless the Taste of our People should be miraculously changed.

I am not so absurd and perverse as to \* *assert, that Learning and Politeness will be the Ruin of our Cause*, nor have I ever met with any that maintain’d so extravagant an Opinion. But surely, Sir, a Cause may be ruin’d by learned and polite Men, if, with their other Furniture, they have not Religion and Prudence too: And I hardly conceive how a Minister, who is possessed of both these, can be unconcern’d about the Acceptance he meets with  
 from

from the Populace, or can ever imagine that the Dissenting Interest is generally to be supported in the Contempt or Neglect of them.

I cannot believe, Sir, that a Gentleman of your good Sense intended to teach us such a Contempt. Had Religion, and the Souls of Men been entirely out of the Question, and had you considered us only as Persons whose Business it is to speak in Publick, you well know that such a Thought had been directly contrary to the plainest Principles of Reason, and the Rules of those amongst the Ancients, as well as the Moderns, who were the greatest Masters in that Profession. You will readily allow (what no thinking Man can dispute) that a true, skilful, unpopular Orator is a direct Contradiction in Terms. And I question not, Sir, but that you could in a few Hours throw together whole Pages of Quotations, from *Aristotle*, *Quintilian*, *Longinus*, and especially from *Tully*, (not to mention *Rapin*, *Gisbert*, *Fenelon*, and Bishop *Burnet*) which all speak the same Language. You know that *Tully* in particular declares, not only "That \* he " desired his own Eloquence might be approv'd by the " People," but that his Friends might accommodate their Discourse to them; and therefore says to *Brutus* †, " Speak to me and to the People." And this he carries so far as to say ‡, " That whatever the People approve, " must also be approved by the Learned and Judicious; " and § that Men of Sense never differ'd from the " Populace in their Judgment of Oratory." And that to speak in a Manner not adapted to their Capacity and the common Sense of Mankind, is the greatest Fault an Orator can commit §. These were the Sentiments of *Tully* on a Subject peculiarly his own. And few that have ever heard of *Longinus*, are Strangers to that celebrated Passage, in which he makes it the Test of the true

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\* Eloquentiam autem meam POPULO probare velim. *Cic.* Orationes, quas nos multitudinis judicio probari volebamus; POPULARIS enim est illa facultas, & effectus eloquentiæ est audientium ad probatio. *Tusc. Disp. Lib. II. sub init.* † Mihi cane & populo mi Brute dixerim. *Ibid.* ‡ Quod probat multitudo hoc idem doctis probandum est *Ib.* § — Nunquam fuit populo cum doctis intelligentibusque dissensio. § In dicendo vitium vel maximum est a vulgari genere orationis atque a consuetudine communis sensus abhorreere. *Cic.*

Sublime, that it strikes Persons of all Tastes and Educations, the meanest as well as the greatest \*.

But indeed (as I hinted above) the Necessity of an Orator's accommodating himself to the Taste of the People, depends not on the Authority of the greatest Writers, but on the apparent Principles of Reason, obvious to common Sense: Since without it the Ends of his Undertaking cannot possibly be answer'd, as the People will neither be instructed nor persuaded by what he says.

Again, if the Matter were to be considered merely in a *Political* View, and with Regard to the Support of our Interest, as a separate Body of Men, I can imagine nothing more imprudent, in present Circumstances at least, than a Neglect of the Populace, (by which I mean all plain People of low Education and vulgar Taste, who are Strangers to the Refinements of Learning and Politeness:) It is certain they constitute, at least, nine Parts in ten of most of our Congregations, and are generally the Supports of the Meetings they belong to, by their Subscriptions, as well as their Attendance. In Boroughs (especially) several of them have a Vote for Members of Parliament, and are so numerous, as to have it in their Power frequently to turn the Ballance, by throwing themselves into one Scale or the other. Now to speak plainly, Sir, I apprehend it is chiefly this that makes us considerable to many, who have no Regard at all to our religious Principles. And to the Bulk of Mankind there is something in the very Idea of a large Place, and a crowded Auditory, which strikes the Thought, and secures a Society from that Contempt, which might perhaps fall upon Persons of the most valuable Characters amongst them, if they stood alone as the Support of the Interest, and appear'd in their Assemblies but as an Handful of Men.

Now, Sir, as this is the Case, as Numbers make our Interest considerable, and those Numbers are principally to be found amongst the common People, would you advise us Ministers to neglect the People; or could you wish that any thing you have writ, should be

\* Οπως δε καλα νομιζε Υψη και αληθινα τα διαπαντος αρεσκοιτα και πασιν. κ. 7. 2. Dion. Cap. VI. ad. fin.

be interpreted as an Encouragement of such a Neglect? When we have lost our Interest in them, (as we must necessarily do, if we take no Care to preserve it) I would fain know what must become either of *us* or *them*. As for *them*, I imagine, that many of them would grow indifferent to all Religion, and seldom appear amongst us, or in any other Places of divine Worship; and others of a warmer and more resolute Temper, would find out Ways of making us uneasy; and if they could not get rid of us any other Way, would draw off to neighbouring Congregations, or form new Societies, and chuse Ministers agreeable to their own Taste, who might perhaps think it their Prudence to maintain and inflame their Resentments against those they had left. Thus our common Interest as Dissenters would moulder and crumble away, by our frequent Divisions and Animosities. And *we*, who by our Contempt of the People, had been the Occasion of them, shall have the great Pleasure of being entertain'd with the Echo of our own Voices, and the Delicacy of our Discourses, in empty Places, or amidst a little Circle of Friends, till perhaps, (like some of our Brethren) we are starved into a good Opinion of Conformity: And in the mean Time, shall have the publick Honour of ruining the Cause we undertook to support. For the Generality of People, who never reason accurately, will readily conclude it was ruin'd by us, if it sink under our Care: Tho' you, Sir, will be so complaisant as to own, it fell by the Obstinacy and Perverseness of a People, "*whose Humour was too mean to be worthy any one's study* \*."

But perhaps, Sir, you will tell me, that we need not be apprehensive of being driven to such Extremities; for tho' some of the lowest of our Auditors are lost, we shall gain over others to fill up their Places, in a Manner much more agreeable to ourselves, and more honourable to our Cause in the Eyes of the World. "*Many Gentlemen have left us because they were asham'd of our Interest, and nothing can recover them but the study of Learning and Politeness* †." I assure you, Sir, I am an Enemy to neither; but heartily wish they may both

M 4 be

\* *Enq.* p. 34.

† *Enq.* p. 32.

be cultivated, so far as is consistent with our being acceptable to the People, (and I apprehend, as you will afterwards perceive, they are both in a very high Degree consistent with it.) But I imagine it will never be worth our while, to neglect and displease the People, in order to bring over these Gentlemen; or to make other Profelytes of their Rank, Character and Taste.

I shall, perhaps, surprize you when I say, that I am not much charm'd with your Proposal, allowing it ever so practicable, and the Prospect of Success ever so fair. You suppose the Gentlemen whom you describe, have not left us upon Principles of Conscience, on Apprehension of our being Schismatics, &c. (for then no Alteration in the Manner of our preaching could bring them back) but merely from a Delicacy of Taste, and because they were ashamed to continue amongst so unpolish'd a People. You must then suppose, either that they acted in direct Opposition to the Dictates of Conscience, or else, that they did not consult them at all in the Affair, nor regarded any Thing more than Fashion or Amusement in the Choice of the religious Assemblies with which they have join'd. The former Supposition charges them with an outrageous Contempt both of Truth and of Honour; and the latter, with a shameful Mixture of Pride and Weakness, which has little of the Gentleman, and less of the Christian. And I freely declare, that I think an honest Mechanick, or Day-labourer, who attends the Meeting from a religious Principle, tho' perhaps it may expose him to some Ridicule amongst his Neighbours, and be in some Measure detrimental to his temporal Affairs, (which is often the Case) is a much more honourable and generous Creature, and deserves much greater Respect from a Christian Minister, than such a Gentleman, with all his Estate, Learning, and Politeness.

In the Sight of God, you will readily allow, that it is so; but perhaps, Sir, you will tell me, that I am now considering the Matter in a political View. It is Time to recollect it, and I ask your Pardon for this Digression.

I shall therefore speak more directly to the Point when I answer, with all due Submission, that I apprehend

hend this Scheme of bringing back these Gentlemen to our Assemblies, is but wild and chimerical.

If their Conformity entirely depended on the Delicacy of their Taste, we could never expect to recover them, till we could entertain them with more polite and elegant Discourses, than those which they hear in the Churches they now frequent. Now, Sir, whatever your Complaisance may suggest in our Favour, I have not the Vanity to believe, that if we and the establish'd Clergy were to try our Skill in the Contest, we should generally exceed them. At least, I see no such certain Evidence of our being superiour to them here, as should encourage us to risque the whole of our Cause upon this Attempt; as I imagine we should do, if we were to neglect the People.

And farther, I think there is the less Reason for making so dangerous an Experiment, as it is very apparent to me that those who have left us, have not been influenc'd merely by such a critical Exactness as you suppose. I know not any among them of a more judicious and refined Taste, than some who still continue the Ornaments and Supports of our Assemblies: And it is undeniably evident, that many who have quitted us, have acted on very different Principles. Some have been influenced by secular Views, (in which they have not always been disappointed,) and some by Complaisance to their Friends, and particularly those who have married into Families of a different Persuasion, (which has been a very fatal Blow to our Interest.) Many more, I fear, have forsaken us from a secret Dislike to strict Piety, and with us have abandon'd all Appearances of Religion, and perhaps of common Decency and Morality. And I question not, Sir, but you very well know, that many others who have broken off from us, and perhaps make the greatest Pretences to Strength of Thought, and Politeness of Taste, are sunk as low as Deism itself, (if not yet lower,) and may probably enough reckon it Matter of boasting, that having thrown off one Fetter, they have had greater Advantage for throwing off the other; *i. e.* the Faith of the Christian, after the Strictness of the Dissenter.

And are these, Sir the Persons who are to be brought back by our Learning and Address? Some of them may, perhaps now and then, make an occasional Visit to our Assemblies for their own Amusement, as they frequent the Theatre; but surely they can never be depended upon as the Support of an Interest: Nor could you on the whole think it prudent for us to hazard the Approbation and Affection of our People, in a View of making ourselves agreeable to them.

But *Religion* furnishes us with many Considerations to the present Purpose, of much greater Importance than any which could arise merely from prudential Views. Surely there is a Dignity and a Glory in every rational and immortal Soul, which must recommend it to the Regard of the Wise and the Good, tho' it may be destitute of the Ornaments of Education, or splendid Circumstances in Life. Let us think of it in its lowest Ebb of Fortune, or even of Character, as still the Offspring and Image of the great Father of Spirits, and as the Purchase of redeeming Blood: Let us consider what an Influence its Temper and Conduct may have at least on the Happiness of some little Circle of human Creatures, with whom Providence has link'd it in Kindred, in Friendship, or in Interest; and especially, let us consider what it may become in the gradual Brightenings and Improvements of the eternal State: Let us but seriously dwell on such Reflections as these, (too obvious to be miss'd, yet too important to be forgot) and we shall find a thousand Arguments concurring to inspire us with a Sort of paternal Tenderness for the Souls of the meanest of our People. This will teach us to bear with their Prejudices, to accommodate ourselves to their Weakness; and to consider it as a Mixture of Impiety and Cruelty, to neglect Numbers of them, out of Complaisance to the Taste of a few, who are perhaps some of them but occasional Visitants, and whom we judge by their Habits, rather than by any personal Acquaintance, to be a Part of the polite World.

Did I affect to throw together all that might be said on this Subject, I might both illustrate and confirm what I have already written, by shewing at large that *Christianity* is a Religion originally calculated for the



plainer Part of Mankind, by that God who \* *has chosen the foolish Things of the World to confound the wise, and the weak Things of the World to confound the Things which are mighty*; and consequently that a Neglect and Contempt of the common People, is far from being the Spirit of the Gospel. I might add many Remarks to this Purpose on the preaching and Conduct of *St. Paul*, and fill whole Pages with Quotations from him and the rest of the Apostles, and many more from some of the most ancient and celebrated Fathers of the Church. But I do not think it necessary for the Support of my Argument, and I am persuaded that you, Sir, in particular, have no need of being taught these Things from me.

Permit me only to add, (what you must frequently have observed) that our *Lord Jesus Christ* is a most amiable and wonderful Example of a plain, familiar, and popular Preacher. When we come to peruse those divine Discourses, which extorted a Confession from his very Enemies that he spake as never Man spake, we find neither a long Train of abstract Reasonings, nor a Succession of labour'd Periods, adorn'd with an artificial Exactness; but the most solid and important Sense, delivered in an easy and natural Way, illustrated by Similies taken from the most common Objects in Life, and enforced with lively Figures, and the strongest Energy of Expression; which is well consistent with all the former. So that upon the whole it was most happily calculated, at once to instruct the most ignorant, and to awaken the most negligent Hearer. I cannot but wish that some judicious Writer would attempt to set this Part of our Lord's Character in a clearer and a more particular Light; and would shew us how the whole of his Conduct, as well as the Manner of his Address, was calculated to promote his Usefulness under the Character of a Preacher of Righteousness. I hope such an Essay might be very serviceable to those of us, who have the Honour to succeed him in that Part of his Work; and I persuade myself that it would furnish us with a Variety of beautiful Remarks on many Passages in the evangelical Historians, which are not to be found in the most celebrated Commentators.

M 6

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You will excuse me, Sir, for having insisted so largely on the Necessity of endeavouring to render ourselves agreeable to our People; because I am fully persuaded, that it is of great Importance to the Support and Revival of the Dissenting Interest. I hope you already apprehend that I intend nothing in this Advice, which is below the Pursuit of the most elevated Genius, or the most generous Temper; nothing inconsistent with the Politeness of the Gentleman and the Scholar, or the Dignity of the Christian and the Minister. You cannot imagine that I would recommend a Popularity raised by Quirks and Jingles, or founded on affected Tones, or ridiculous Grimaces; and much less on an Attempt to inflame the Passions of Mankind about trifling Controversies, and the peculiar unscriptural Paraphrases of a Party. Such a Popularity as this, is almost the only Thing that is more despicable, than the insolent Pride of despising the People.

If any of my younger Brethren were to enquire how another Popularity, of a far more honourable Kind, is to be pursued and secured, I answer, that their own Converse and Observation on the World, must furnish them with the most valuable Instructions on this Head. And tho' some of their particular Remarks may differ, according to the various Places and Circumstances in which they are made; yet I apprehend there are many Things of considerable Importance, in which they will all agree. As for Instance:

They will quickly see that the Generality of the Dissenters, who appear to be Persons of serious Piety, have been deeply impress'd with the Peculiarities of the Gospel-Scheme. They have felt the divine Energy of those important Doctrines, to awaken, and revive, and enlarge the Soul; and therefore they will have a peculiar Relish for Discourses upon them. So that if a Man should generally confine himself to Subjects of natural Religion, and moral Virtue, and seldom fix on the Doctrines of Christ, and the Spirit, and then perhaps treat them with such Caution, that he might seem rather to be making Concessions to an Adversary, than giving Vent to the Fulness of his Heart on its darling Subject, he would soon find, that all the Penetration

tration and Eloquence of an Angel, could not make him universally agreeable to our Assemblies.

Many of our People have pass'd thro' a Variety of Exercises in their Minds, relating to the great Concern of eternal Salvation. And they apprehend that the Scripture teaches us to ascribe this Combat to the Agency of Satan, and the Corruptions of our own Heart on the one Hand, and the Operations of the holy Spirit of God on the other. It is therefore very agreeable to them, to hear these experimental Subjects handled with Seriousness and Tenderness. It raises their Veneration for such a Minister, as for one who has himself tasted of the Grace of God, and encourages their Confidence in him, and their Expectations of improving by his Labours. On the other Hand, it grieves them when these Subjects are much neglected, and gives them the most formidable Suspicions if one Word be dropt which seems to pour Contempt upon them, as if they were all Fancy and Enthusiasm; (with which, it must be granted, they are sometimes mix'd.)

The greater Part of most Dissenting Congregations consisting (as we before observ'd) of plain People, who have not enjoy'd the Advantages of a learned Education, nor had Leisure for Improvements by after-study, it is apparently necessary that a Man should speak *plainly* to them, if he desire they should understand and approve what he says. And as for those that are truly religious, they attend on publick Worship, not that they may be amus'd with a Form or Sound, nor entertained with some new and curious Speculation; but that their Hearts may be enlarged as in the Presence of God, that they may be powerfully affected with those great Things of Religion, which they already know and believe, that so their Conduct may be suitably influenced by them. And to this Purpose they desire that their Ministers may speak as if they were in Earnest, in a *lively* and *pathetick*, as well as a clear and intelligible Manner.

Such is the Taste of the Generality of the Dissenters; a Taste which I apprehend they will still retain, whatever Attempts may be made to alter it. And I must take the Liberty to say, that I conceive this Turn  
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of Thought in the People to be the great Support of our Interest, and not the little Scruples which you hint at in the 34th Page of your Letter, nor even those rational and generous Principles of Liberty, which you so clearly propose, and so strenuously assert. And I cannot but believe, that if the established Clergy, and the Dissenting Ministers in general, were mutually to exchange their Strain of preaching, and their Manner of living but for one Year, it would be the Ruin of our Cause, even though there should be no Alteration in the Constitution and Discipline of the Church of *England*. However you might fare at *London*, or in some very singular Cases elsewhere, I can hardly imagine that there would be Dissenters enough left in some considerable Counties, to fill one of our largest Meeting-places.

We have then advanced thus far; that he who would be generally agreeable to Dissenters, must be an evangelical, an experimental, a plain and an affectionate Preacher. Now I must do our common People the Justice to own, that when these Points are secured, they are not very delicate in their Demands, with Regard to the Forms of a Discourse. They will not in such a Case be very much disgusted, though there be no regular Chain of reasoning, no remarkable Propriety of Thought or of Expression, no Elegance of Language, and but little Decency of Address. The Want of all these is forgiven, to what they apprehend of much greater Importance. Yet, Sir, I would not from hence infer, that these Things are to be neglected; on the contrary, I apprehend it is absolutely necessary, that they should be diligently attended to, in Order to obtain that universal Popularity, which I think so desirable for the Sake of more extensive Usefulness. A Man of a good Taste will certainly take some Care about them. 'Tis what he owes to himself, and to the politer Part of his Audience, whom he will never be willing to lose in the Crowd: And he need not fear that a prudent Regard to them, will spoil his Acceptance with the People. Few of them like a Discourse the worse for being thoroughly good; and the accomplished Orator will find, perhaps to his  
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Surprize, that they will not only know and feel the important Truths of Religion, in the most agreeable Dress he can give them, but that they will even applaud the Order and Regularity of his Composures, the Beauty of his Language, and the Gracefulness of his Delivery, at the same time that they have the Candour not to complain of the indigested Rovings, the unnatural Transports, and the awkward Distortions of the pious well-meaning, but injudicious Preacher. For human Nature is so formed, that some Manners of thinking and speaking are universally agreeable and delightful 'Tis the Perfection of Eloquence to be Master of these, and should, I think, be the Care of every one that speaks in publick, to pursue them as far as Genius and Opportunity will allow \*.

The Man who forms himself upon such Views as these, if he be not remarkably deficient in natural Capacities, will probably be popular amongst the Dissenters as a Preacher: But a thinking Man will easily perceive, this is not the only Character under which a Minister is considered. His People will naturally and reasonably expect a *Conduct* answerable to his publick Discourses; and without it, he cannot be thoroughly agreeable to them. They will take it for granted, that a Man so well acquainted with divize Truths, and one that seems to be so deeply affected with them, should be regular and exemplary in the whole of his Behaviour, and free from the Taint of Vice, or of Folly, in any remarkable Degree. They will expect that he should be far from being a Slave to secular Interest, or to the little Trifles of Food, Dress, or domestick Accommodation; and that he should avoid every Thing haughty and overbearing, or peevish and irascible in his daily Converse. They will conclude, that a Desire of doing Good to Souls, will make him easy of Access to those who apply to him for Advice, with Regard to their spiritual Concernments; and that it will likewise dispose him at proper Times to visit all the People of his Charge, the Poor as well as the Rich; and that not only under the Character of a Friend, but of a Minister,

\* This is that regard to the *SENSUS COMMUNIS*, which *Tully* thinks so necessary,

Minister, in a direct View to their spiritual Edification. And if a Man desire the Affections of his People, he must not disappoint such Expectations as these.

The Tenderness with which Parents interest themselves in the Concerns of their Children, and the earnest Desire that all religious Parents must necessarily have, that theirs may be *a Seed to serve the Lord*, will engage them very kindly to accept our Care, in attempting to bring them under early Impressions of serious Piety. Catechising has therefore been generally found a very popular, as well as a very useful Practice. And here I think it is much to be wish'd that our Labour may extend to the Youth, as well as to little Children; that in a familiar Way they may be methodically acquainted with the Principles of natural Religion, and then with the Evidences of the Truth of Christianity, and with the Nature of it, as it is exhibited in the New Testament; both with regard to the Privileges and the Duties of Christians. As this might be a Means of filling our Churches with a considerable Number of rational, catholick, and pious Communicants, from whom considerable Usefulness might in Time be expected, so it would greatly oblige their religious Parents, and lay a Foundation for a growing Friendship between us, and our Catechumens, in the Advance of Life.

I once thought to have insisted more largely on these Hints, but am happily prevented by the Publication of Mr. *Some's* Sermon, on the Methods to be taken by Ministers for the Revival of Religion. He has fully spoken my Sentiments, with Regard to many of those Articles on which I have only glanced. I persuade myself, Sir, you will read it with a great deal of Pleasure; for (so far as I can judge) this Sermon is almost as agreeable an Example of that preaching, as his Life is of that Conduct, which he recommends. I am confident that a Man of your good Sense must necessarily approve the Scheme which I have briefly laid down, and which is there largely considered and recommended. Were you to chuse a Pastor for yourself, I doubt not but you would rejoice in such a one; and you wou'd probably have the hearty Concurrence of the weakest and most illiterate

of your pious Neighbours. My younger Brethren (for whom alone I am now presuming to write) can have no Reason to complain, that I have assigned them either a mean, or a severe Task. I heartily desire to be their Companion in all the most laborious, and self-denying Parts of it; and I persuade myself, that we shall find it, on the whole, as delightful as honourable, and as advantageous to ourselves, as it will be serviceable to the publick Interest.

There seems to be but one material Objection against all this; and it is an Objection, in which, I doubt not, but your own Thoughts have already prevented me. It may perhaps be pleaded, that we have a Sort of People amongst us, whose Approbation and Esteem cannot be obtained by such honourable Methods as I proposed. For they, whom we call the *rigidly Orthodox*, are so devoted to a peculiar Sett of human Phrases, which have been introduced into the Explication of some important Doctrines, that they will hardly entertain a favourable Thought of any who scruple the Use of them, or who do not seem to value them as highly as they, though they may, on all other Accounts be ever so considerable.

You, Sir, hint at \* a very expeditious Remedy for Uneasiness arising from this Quarter; that Persons of generous and bigotted Sentiments, should meet in different Places. In *London* it is certainly practicable, and may perhaps be most expedient; but to attempt any such Separation in the Country, would be the utter Ruin of many of our Societies, which now make some considerable Appearance. But besides my Regard to the Ministers and Societies to which they are related, I must confess, I have too much Tenderness for the Persons themselves, to be willing entirely to give them up. I have been intimately acquainted with those who have been accus'd, and perhaps not unjustly, of this unhappy Attachment to human Phrases, and Nicety in controversial Points; and I must do many of them the Justice to own, that I have found very excellent Qualities mingled with this Excess of Zeal, (which must methinks appear pardonable in them, when we consider how artificially

tificially it has been infused; and how innocently they have received and retained it, from a real Principle of Conscience to GOD.) But, indulging them in this one Article, several of them will appear to be Persons of so much Humility and Piety, of so much Integrity and Generosity, of so much Activity and Zeal for the common Interest, that separate from all Views to private Advantage or Reputation, one would heartily wish to do all he honestly can, to remove those Prejudices, which give them so much Uneasiness, and impair the Lustre of so many Virtues and Graces. And if at the same Time we can secure their Esteem and Friendship, it may have such an Influence, both on our own Comfort and Usefulness in Life, that it must be great Ignorance or Pride to despise it.

You will readily grant, Sir, that the Thing is in itself desirable: The great Question is, how it may be effected? And here I will venture to say freely, that I apprehend Bigotry of all kinds, to be a Fortrefs, which may be attacked by Sap more successfully than by Storm. It is evident that we have most of us something of the Humour of Children, that grasp a Thing so much the more eagerly, when an Attempt is made to wrest it out of their Hands by Violence; and yet perhaps will drop it themselves in a few Minutes, if you can but divert their Attention to something else.

From such a View of Things, I apprehend, we are to judge of the most proper Methods of dealing with those, whose Case is now under Consideration. You, Sir, may tell them again, and again, with your natural Coolness and Moderation, \* *That it would be an Instance of their Modesty to resign their Pleasures to the general Notions and Judgment — that instead of assuming the Characters of Judges and Censors, they should put on the humble Temper of Learners — and receive the Truth without being jealous of Heresy in our younger Preachers.* — And at the same Time, that you are thus giving your Advice, you may give your Reasons, as clearly and handsomely, as you have given them for Nonconformity in this Enquiry; yet after all, you will probably find, that the *Civium Ardor* PRAVA JUBENTUM will out-noise the Voice of the

\* Enquiry, p. 34, 37.



the Charmer, charming ever so wisely. And should I exert myself with greater Warmth and Eagerness, should I grow a Bigot in the Defence of Catholicism, and load those of different Sentiments with Reproaches, because they have profited no better by so many solid Arguments; I should indeed pay a very great Compliment to them, in supposing them capable of knowing, and admitting Truth, under so disagreeable a Disguise; but it would be at the Expence of my own Character and Ease, and I should run the Risk of being severely scorch'd by that Flame, which I pretended to extinguish, by pouring on Oil.

I cannot but think it much more adviseable, according to the Apostle's Maxim of *becoming all Things to all Men*, to study to accommodate ourselves in this Respect, as well as in others, to the Infirmities of our Hearers, as far as with a safe Conscience we may. If we can put a tolerably good Sense on any of their favourite Phrases, it would surely be a most unreasonable Stiffness and Perverseness of Temper, to avoid it merely because they admire it. Or if we cannot go so far, we may at least lay aside any darling Phrases of our own, which we know will be offensive to them. (For if the Bible be a compleat Rule, *our* human Forms are no more necessary than *theirs*.) Christians as such profess a Reverence for the Scripture, and many of these Christians have a distinguishing Regard to it, as they have felt its divine Energy on their Souls. Now, Sir, with Submission to the better Judgment of my Brethren, I think we, who are Ministers, should take them by the Handle, and should labour to discover to them, more and more, the Beauty and Fulness of the Word of God, not only with Regard to this or that particular Doctrine, but to the whole System of Truth and Duty contained in it. 'Tis a Subject on which we might speak, and they would hear with Pleasure; and it would not only divert their Attention, and their Zeal from other Things, which might give Uneasiness, but would have a direct Tendency to enlarge their Views, and sweeten their Tempers, beyond all our Encomiums on Liberty and Catholicism, or our Satires on Bigotry and Imposition.

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I likewise apprehend, that a Regard to what was said under the former Heads, will farther conduce to this happy End. When these exact People hear us preaching in a truly spiritual and experimental Strain, and at the same Time in such a rational and graceful Manner, as may set our Discourses above Contempt, and make them agreeable to the younger and politer Part of our Auditory, as well as to others; they will quickly see that it is not for their own Interest, or that of their Children, to drive us away with a rigorous Severity. And therefore, instead of studying to find us Hereticks, they will rather put the most favourable Sense on ambiguous Expressions, and labour to believe us as orthodox as they can: Or, if they suspect us to be in the Dark as to some Particulars, yet they will charitably hope, that Age and Experience will perfect what is wanting; and that *God will reveal it to us* in his own Time. With these Views they will cheerfully commit themselves to our Ministerial Care, if Providence seems to open a Way for our Settlement amongst them. And when they find, that they are handsomely treated by us, that no direct Attack is made upon their darling Notions; but that the great Concerns of practical Religion (as dear to them as to any People upon Earth) are plainly and faithfully pursued by us, both in publick and private (to the Refreshment of their own Souls, and to the evident Advantage of many others) they will contract a tender, growing Affection for us: And thus their Bigotry will gradually wear away, till perhaps they come at last joyfully to embrace those more generous Notions, from which they would at first have started back with Horror.

Thus we may, after the Example of our great Master, teach our Followers, as they are able to bear it: And by this Moderation, may be instrumental in healing the Breaches which we profess to lament, in rescuing many an excellent Soul from a painful and dishonourable Bondage; and in spreading a generous, candid, Christian Spirit, which will be the Glory and Happiness of our Interest in general, as well as of the particular Societies under our Care. And in the mean Time another Generation will be rising, whom we may hope to form,  
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in a Manner agreeable to our own Sentiments, who may transmit to remote Ages, those united Principles of Piety and Catholicism, which they have happily learnt from us.

I cannot but think, that such rational and noble Prospects may encourage us to submit to some Restraints, which we should not otherwise have chose. But if, after all, we inflexibly insist on “\* as unbounded a Liberty “ of speaking our Sentiments in Publick, as of forming them in “ Private,” or in the Language of Solomon, of uttering all our Mind, I think we shall dearly purchase the Pleasure of hearing ourselves talk, on a Subject on which we can do little more, than echo back a Part of what has been so copiously and judiciously written, and so frequently repeated by others. The wiser Part of Mankind will look upon us as forward Heirs, who spend our Estate of Reputation and Importance in Life, before we come to it; and upon the whole, we shall not only exceedingly injure ourselves in private Life, which is comparatively but a Trifle, but shall impair our future Usefulness, and even wound the darling Cause of Liberty, to which we are so ready to sacrifice all. For I seriously declare, that if I could be so wicked as to form a Design against it, and so base as to prosecute it by clandestine and hypocritical Methods, I would only set myself to declaim in its Favour, with imprudent Zeal, and unbounded Fury.

You have now, Sir, all that I think it proper to say, at present, concerning the Methods by which I apprehend those of us, who are employ'd in the Ministry, may most effectually contribute to the Revival of the Dissenting Interest. I can assure you, they are not the Reveries of my own Closet, but Observations which I have drawn from Life, as Occasions have occurred in conversing with a Variety of Persons of different Stations, Relishes, and Characters. I have the better Opinion of many of them, as I know that they are thoroughly agreeable to the Sentiments and Conduct of some of the most considerable Persons of all Denominations amongst us, both in Town and Country; whose Friendship is the Honour and Pleasure of my Life. I am particularly  
confirm'd

confirm'd in this Way of thinking, by observing the Success which such Measures have had in the Congregations of my Fathers and Brethren in these Parts. For I know, that in many of them, the Number of Dissenters is greatly increased within these twenty Years; and the Interest continues so to flourish, that I am confident some of our honest People, who converse only in their own Neighbourhood, will be surprized to hear of an *Enquiry into the Causes of its Decay*.

If what I have writ appear reasonable to you, Sir, I cannot but wish that you, and other Gentlemen of the Laity, who are heartily concerned for our Interest, would endeavour to cultivate such Sentiments as these in the Minds of young Ministers of your Acquaintance. We are naturally very desirous of being known to you, and singled out as the Object of your Regard. Whereas we early begin to look with a comparative Contempt upon the meaner Sort of People, as an ignoble Herd — *Fruges consumere nati* — Whilst engaged in our preparatory Studies, we are indeed so generous, as to give up one another to the Vulgar; but we have each of us the Penetration to discover, that there is something uncommon in our dear selves, by which Nature seems to have intended us to be (as we absurdly enough express it) Orators for the Polite. These arrogant and pernicious Sentiments we sometimes carry along with us, from the Academy to the Pulpit; where perhaps, we make our first Appearance infinitely solicitous about every trifling Circumstance of a Discourse, yet negligent of that which should be the Soul of it. And if the People are not as much charm'd with it as ourselves, we have then an evident Demonstration of their incorrigible Stupidity; and so Resentment concurs with Pride and Ambition, to set us at the remotest Distance from those, who ought to be the Objects of our tenderest Regards.

If an elder Minister have so much Compassion and Generosity, as to deal freely with us upon these Heads, and give such Advice as Circumstances require, 'tis great Odds but we find some Excuse for neglecting what he says ———— “He is ignorant and unpolite; or  
“ perhaps intoxicated with his own Popularity, and  
“ means his Counsels to us as Encomiums upon him-  
“ self.” —

“ self.”—— Or if neither of these will do, some other Artifice must be found out, to fix the Blame any where rather than at Home. And if in the midst of a thousand Mortifications, we can but find out one Gentleman of Fortune, Sense, and Learning, that admires us, we are happy. A single Diamond is worth more than a whole load of Pebbles; and we perhaps adapt, with vast Satisfaction, the celebrated Words of *Arbuscula* in *Horace* †,

*Men' moveat Cimex Pantilius, &c.*

Without considering that what was highly proper in the Mouth of a Player, and a Poet, would be extremely absurd in a Heathen, and much more in a Christian Orator.

Now, Sir, what I intend by all this, is to shew that you Gentlemen may have it in your Power to do a great deal to correct these mistaken Notions. If we plainly see that you regard us, not merely according to the Manner in which our Performances are accommodated to your own private Taste, but according to our Desire and Capacity of being useful to the publick Interest, we shall perhaps be taught to place our Point of Honour right; and when that is once done, a moderate Degree of Genius, Application, and Prudence, may be sufficient, by the Blessing of God, to secure the rest.

I would here, Sir, have ended my Letter, but the Hints you give in the Conclusion of yours concerning *Academical Education*, lead me to add a few Words on that Head. I would be far from the Insolence of pretending to teach Tutors; but I apprehend that if my former Principles be allowed, it will follow, by the easiest Consequence in the World, that it is a very important Part of their Business, to form their Pupils to a Regard for the People, and to a Manner of Preaching, and of Converse, which may be agreeable to them.

There is hardly any Thing which should be more discouraged in a young Student, than such a mistaken haughty Way of thinking, as I so freely described a little above, especially when it discovers itself in a petulant

† Hor. Sat. Lib. I. x. v. 78, &c.

tulent Inclination to employ their Talent at Satire, in ridiculing the Infirmities of plain serious Christians, or the Labours of those Ministers, who are willing to condescend to the meanest Capacities, that they may be wise to win Souls.

A young Man of Sense will easily enter into such plain Reasonings as I have offered in the Beginning of this Letter, and be convinced by them, that if he ever appear under the Character of a Dissenting Minister, he must not neglect the People, But it is greatly to be desired, that our Students may be engaged to regard them, not merely from political, but religious Views.

It is therefore, no Doubt, the Care of every pious Tutor amongst us, (and may God make it a more constant and successful Care) to possess his Pupils, who are designed for the Ministry, with a deep and early Sense of the Importance of the Gospel-scheme, for the Recovery of Man from the Ruins of the Apostacy, and his Restoration to God, and Happiness by a Mediator.—To shew (as it may easily be shewn) that this has been the great End of the divine Counsels, with Regard to which, the Harmony of Nature in the lower World has been supported, and the various Oeconomies of Providence disposed:—To point out the Son of God descending from Heaven in Favour of this Design, pursuing it by humble Condescensions to the lowest of the People, and unwearied Labours amongst them; and at last, establishing it by Agonies and Death:—To shew them the Apostles taking up their Master's Cause, prosecuting it with unwearied Vigour and Resolution, and sacrificing to it their Ease, their Reputation, their Liberty, and their Lives:—To trace out those generous Emotions of Soul, which still live and breathe in their immortal Writings:—And then (when their Minds are warmed with such a Survey) to apply to the Students themselves, as Persons designed by Providence, to engage in the same Work, to support and carry on the same Interests who therefore must be acted by the same Views, and imbibe the same Spirit.

Something of this Kind is, I doubt not, attended to; and I must take the Liberty to say, that I think these  
the

the most important Lectures a Tutor can read. You cannot but see, Sir, that by the Blessing of God, such Addresses must have an apparent Tendency to fill the Mind with sublime and elevated Views, and to make a Man feel and own too, (though it may appear something unpolite) that the Salvation of one Soul, is of infinitely greater Importance, than charming a thousand splendid Assemblies, with the most elegant Discourses that were ever delivered. A young Minister under these Impressions, will come out to his publick Work *naturally disposed to care for the State of his People*; and such sincere Zeal and Tenderness will form him to a popular Address, abundantly sooner, and more happily, than the most judicious Rules which it is possible to dictate.

As Examples are the best Illustration of Precepts, it must certainly be a great Advantage to Pupils to hear such preaching, and see such pastoral Care, as is recommended to them in the Lecture-room. A prudent Man, who is concerned in the Education of young Ministers, will be particularly careful to avoid those Faults in preaching, which they are in the greatest Danger of falling into; and particularly too abstracted a Train of reasoning, and too great a Care about the little Ornaments of Speech, when addressing to a common Auditory. And if (where other Circumstances may allow it) he sometimes engage the Attendance of senior Pupils in his pastoral Visits, and introduce them to the Acquaintance and Freedom of some serious Christians in the Society, it may be much for their Improvement. A more intimate Knowledge of their hidden Worth, and perhaps of those noble Traces of natural Genius, which they might discover amongst some of a very low Education, would something increase their Esteem for the Populace in general. And from their Observations on Books and Sermons, and their Accounts of the various Exercises of their Minds, (where our politer Hearers are generally more reserved) a Man may best learn how they are to be addressed, and form himself to that experimental Strain, on which so much of his Acceptance and Usefulness amongst us will depend.

If you apprehend, Sir, that such a Course will make them Preachers for the Vulgar, *and for them only*; I think it sufficient to answer, that I intirely agree with you in what you say of the great Advantages of an intimate Acquaintance with the learned Languages, and the classical Writers both of the *Romans* and *Greeks*. I heartily wish our Students may always be well furnished with it before they leave the Schools, and think it highly proper it should be carried on through the whole of their academical Course. And I cannot imagine, that a Man of tolerable Sense, who is every Day conversing with some of the finest Writers of Antiquity, and who is (as most of our Students are) a little exercised in the mathematical Sciences, (to teach him Attention of Thought, and Strength, and Perspicuity of Reasoning) will be in great Danger of saying any Thing remarkably impertinent, or contemptibly low.

As for being Masters of our own Language, 'tis a Point which I think should be thoroughly laboured from the very Beginning of their Education. They should to be sure make themselves familiarly acquainted with those Writers, which are allowed to be the Standards of it, and should frequently be translating and composing. And if this be not only practised at School, but continued through four or five Years of academical Education, they will have formed a Habit of expressing themselves gracefully, or at least tolerably well: So that in their ordinary Composures, when they have digested their Materials, and ranged their Thoughts, they will often find proper, expressive, and elegant Words, flowing in faster than they can write them.

And as Composition is far from being the only Business of an Orator; so I heartily wish, that not only Tutors, but School-masters (whose Character and Conduct, by the Way, is of vast Importance to our Interest) would make a very serious Business of teaching Lads, who are designed for the Ministry, to read well, and to pronounce properly and handsomely. Thus an early Remedy would be provided on the one Hand, against those unnatural Tones and Gestures, which (as you well observe) \* *are a grand Cause of our Reproach*

*and*



*and Contempt*; and on the other, against that cold insensible Air, which sometimes, amongst Strangers at least, affects even the moral Character of the Preacher.


I think some Care should be taken, both at the School and the Academy, to engage Students to a genteel and complaisant Behaviour, not only as what is apparently conducive to their mutual Ease and Pleasure, and the Convenience of the Family where they are; but as what may render them more agreeable and useful in Life, to Persons of superior Rank, and even to the Populace themselves. For a well-bred Man knows how to condescend, in the most obliging Way; and the common People (such is either their good Sense or their Humour) are peculiarly pleased with the Visits and Converse of those, who they know may be welcome to greater Company.

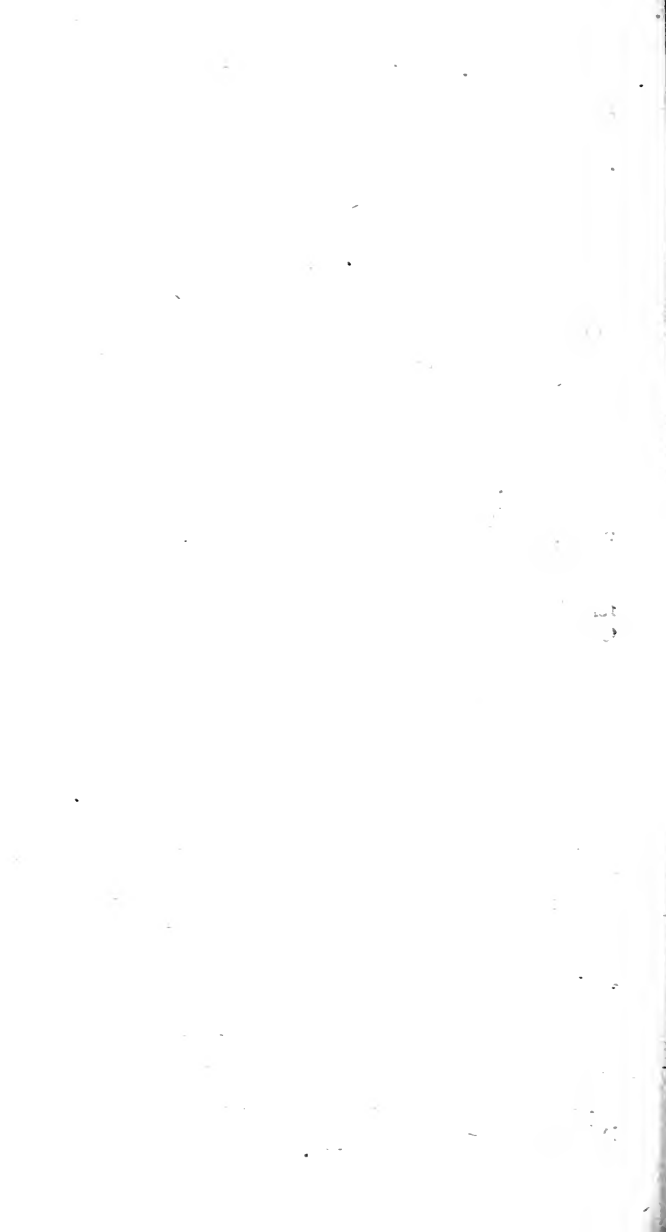
And now, Sir, I have done with my Subject, and must conclude, with assuring you, that it is not the Design of one Line which I have writ, merely to prove, that you are mistaken in any Thing that you have asserted; and therefore I have purposely avoided many Citations from your Letter, which might easily have been connected with what I have said. You will infer from what you have read, that I differ from you in some other Particulars, which are not mention'd, but they apparently depend on what I have debated at large; and I chose to omit them, not only because my Letter is already longer than I intended, but from a general Observation, which I have had frequent Occasion to make; that if a Man desires to do good by what he says, he must oppose and contradict as little as possible. If I am mistaken in what I have advanced, I shall be heartily thankful for better Information; and, if it come from you, it will be peculiarly agreeable, as I shall have nothing to fear from your Reproaches, and much to hope from your Arguments.

*I am, S I R,*

*Your most Humble Servant,*

P. DODDRIDGE:

 This was printed in the Year 1729, being the first Piece the *Dedæ* published.



A  
DISSERTATION  
ON THE  
INSPIRATION  
OF THE  
NEW TESTAMENT,

As proved from the FACTS recorded  
in the HISTORICAL BOOKS of it.





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**N**OTHING can be more evident, than that a firm and cordial Belief of the INSPIRATION of the *Sacred Scripture* is of the highest Moment; not only to the Edification and Peace of the Church, but in a great Measure to its very Existence. For if this be given up, the Authority of the Revelation is enervated, and its Use destroyed: The Star, which is to direct our Course, is clouded; our Compass is broke to Pieces; and we are left to make the Voyage of Life in sad Uncertainty, amidst a Thousand Rocks, and Shelves, and Quickfands. I hope therefore, I may perform a Service acceptable to God and my Christian Brethren, while I endeavour, as plainly and as briefly as I can, to place some *leading Proofs of it* in a convincing View. And I undertake the Task

the more willingly, as in the *Preface* to the *First Volume* of the *Family Expositor*, I laid myself under an Obligation (several Years ago) to attempt something of this Kind, and have often been reminded of it by Persons for whom I have the highest Regard.

I then proposed to handle the Subject in a few *Sermons*, to be added to *those*, long since published, on the *Evidences of the Gospel*. But on a Review of that particular Connection, which the Argument I am here to pursue has with the *History* of the *New Testament*, I apprehended, it could no where appear better, than at the End of my *Exposition* on the Books which contain it. The Reader will, I hope, recollect, that in the *Sermons* just now mentioned, I have endeavoured to demonstrate *the Truth* of that *History*; and every Year convinces me more and more, of the unanswerable Force of the Evidence there displayed. It is with great Pleasure that I reflect on the *Divine Blessing*, which hath seemed to attend those Discourses; and it is a great Encouragement to me to hope, that what I am now to offer may be a Means of establishing some of my Readers, in that *Regard to the Sacred Oracles*, which will be their *best Preservative* against the Errors and the Vices, of that licentious Age in which Providence hath cast our Lot; whereby our Fidelity and our Zeal are brought to a *Trial*, which few Ages but *those of Martyrdom* could have afforded.

It will be my Business, — *First*, to state *the Nature* of INSPIRATION in general, and of *that Kind of it*, which (as I apprehend) we are to ascribe to the *New Testament*: — I shall then prove, that it was undoubtedly *written by such Inspiration*: — And after this, I shall briefly hint at *the Influence*, which this important Truth ought always to have upon *our Temper and Conduct*; by enforcing which, I apprehend, I shall take the best Method to promote a *growing Persuasion* of the Truth I am labouring to establish.

I will only premise, That I do not intend this, as a *full Discussion* of the Subject; but only, as such a *compendious View* of the *chief Proofs*, as may suit the Place in which it stands; and as may, from the easiest and plainest Principles, give *Rational Satisfaction* to the Minds  
of

of *common Christians*; who have not Leisure, nor perhaps Ability, to enter into all the Niceties of *Theological* and *Scholastical* Controversy.

I. I shall state *the Nature* of INSPIRATION, and of *that Kind of it*, which we are to ascribe to the *New Testament*.

In this I shall be more particular, as I apprehend, the Want of a sufficient Accuracy here has occasioned some Confusion in the Reasoning of several worthy Persons, who have treated this important Subject more largely, than I must here allow myself to do. I shall not however criticise on their Account of the Matter, but plainly lay down what seems to me intelligible, right, and safe.

By INSPIRATION in general, I would be understood to mean "Any Supernatural Influence of GOD upon the Mind of a Rational Creature, whereby it is formed to any Degree of Intellectual Improvement, beyond what it would, at that Time, and in those Circumstances, have attained in a natural Way, that is, by the usual Exercise of its Faculties, unassisted by any special Divine Interposition." Thus, if a Man were instantaneously enabled to *Speak a Language* which he had *never learned*, how possible soever it might have been for him to have obtained an equal Readiness in it by Degrees, I believe few would scruple to say, that he owed his Acquaintance with it to a *Divine Inspiration*. Or if he gave a true and exact *Account of what was doing at a Distance*, and published a particular Relation of what he neither saw nor heard, as some of the *Prophets* did; all the World would own, (if the Affair were too complex, and the Account too circumstantial, to be the Result of a lucky Guess,) that he must be *inspired* with the Knowledge of it; tho' another Account equally exact, given by a Person on the Spot, would be ascribed to no *Inspiration* at all.

But of this *Supernatural Influence* on the Minds of Men, forming them to such extraordinary intellectual Improvements and Abilities, there are *various Sorts and Degrees*, which it will be of Importance for us accurately to distinguish from each other.

If a Person be *discourſing* either in *Word* or *Writing*, and God do *miraculoſly* watch over his Mind, and, *however ſecretly*, direct it in ſuch a Manner, as to keep him *more ſecure from Error* in what he ſpeaks or writes, than he could have been merely by the natural Exerciſe of his Faculties, I ſhould ſay, he was *inſpired*; even tho' there ſhould be no extraordinary Marks of High Genius in the Work; or even tho' another Perſon, with a ſtronger Memory, or relating a Fact more immediately after it happened, might naturally have recounted it with equal Exa<sup>c</sup>tness. Yet ſtill, if there was *in this Caſe* any Thing *miraculoſous*, we muſt, on the Principles above, allow *an Inſpiration*; and I would call this, to diſtinguiſh it from other and higher Degrees, *an Inſpiration of Superintendency*.

If this Influence ſhould act in ſuch a Degree, as *abſolutely to exclude all Mixture of Error* in a Declaration of Doctrines or Facts ſo ſuperintended, we might then call it *a Plenary Superintending Inſpiration*; or, as I would chuſe for popular Uſe to expreſs myſelf in this Diſcourſe, *a full Inſpiration*.

Now it will from hence follow, (and I deſire that it may be ſeriously attended to,) That *a Book*, the Contents of which are entirely true, may be ſaid to be *written by a Full Inſpiration*, even tho' it contain many Things which the Author might have known and recorded merely by the Uſe of his natural Faculties, if there be others which he did not ſo know, or could not without miraculous Aſſiſtance have ſo exactly recollected; or if, on the whole, *a Freedom from all Error* would not in Fact have been found, unleſs God had thus *ſuperintended* or watched over his Mind and Pen. And in Regard to ſuch a Production, it would be altogether impertinent and inſignificant to enquire, how far did Natural Memory or Natural Reaſon operate, and in what particular Facts or Doctrines did Supernatural Agency prevail. It is enough, if I know, that what the Author ſays or writes is *true*, tho' I know not particularly how he came by this or that Truth: For my Obligation to receive it ariſes from its being *known Truth*, and not merely from its being made *known* this or that Way. And ſhould God miraculoſly



lously assure me, that any particular Writing contained *nothing but the Truth*; and should He at the same Time tell me, it had been drawn up without any miraculous Assistance at all, tho' I could not then call it *inspired*, I should be as much obliged to receive and submit to it on its being thus *attested* by God, as if every single Word had been immediately *dictated* by Him.

It will farther follow from what is said above, That *a Book* may be *written* by such *Full Inspiration* as I have described, though, the Author being left to the Choice of his own Words, Phrases, and Manner\*, there may be *some Imperfection* in the *Style and Method*, provided the whole Contents of it are *true*; if the Subject be *so important*, as to make it consistent with the Divine Wisdom miraculously to interpose, to preserve *an entire Credibility* as to the exact Truth of Facts recorded, and Doctrines delivered as Divine. If indeed God were represented, as declaring such a Book to be *intended* by Him as an *exact Standard* for *Logic, Oratory, or Poetry*, every apparent Defect in either would be an Internal Objection against it. But if it be represented only as *intended* to teach us *Truth*, in order to its having a proper Influence on our Temper and Actions, *such Defects*, would no more warrant or excuse our rejecting its Authority, than the Want of a ready Utterance or a musical Voice would excuse our Disregard to a Person, who should bring us competent Evidence of his being a Messenger from God to us.

I have been more particular in stating *this Kind of Inspiration*, because it is *that* which I shall endeavour to assert to the *Sacred Books* of the *New Testament*, and this without any Exception or Limitation, as they came out of the Hands of the *Apostles*; tho' I allow it is possible, they may, in this or that *particular Copy*, and in some minuter Instances which now perhaps affect *all our remaining Copies*, have *suffered something* by the Injuries of *Time*, or the Negligence of *Transcribers*, as well as *Printers*: Which, that they have in some Particulars

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suffered,

\* It is very evident, that the learned *Maimonides* thought this to be the Case with Regard to *the Prophets*; tho' I think it least of all to be apprehended in such Oracles. See *Maimon. Mor. New. Lib. ii. cap. 29.*

suffered, is as notorious a Fact, as that there is a *written* or a *printed* Copy of them in the World; yet is at the same Time a Fact, which no Man of common Sense or Honesty can seriously urge against their Authority.

Though it be the main Point in my View, to prove that the *New Testament* is written under *that Kind of Inspiration* which I have been explaining, I must nevertheless beg Leave to mention *Two other Kinds*, of which *Divines* often speak, and which do also in a considerable Degree belong to *many Parts of Scripture*, tho' I think it neither expedient, material, nor safe, to assert that they run through the whole of it: I mean, *an Inspiration of Elevation*, and of *Suggestion*.

The *former* (as its Name plainly intimates,) prevails, where the *Faculties*, tho' they act in a regular, and, as it seems, a common Manner, are nevertheless *elevated*, or raised to some extraordinary Degree, so that the *Performance* is more truly *sublime*, *noble*, and *pathetick*, than what would have been produced merely by the Force of a Man's Natural Genius. As for the *particular Degree* of the *Divine Agency*, where there is indeed something of *this Inspiration*, perhaps neither the Person that is under it, nor any other Creature, may be able confidently to pronounce concerning it. Perhaps, nothing less penetrating than the Eye of God Himself, may be able universally to distinguish *that narrow Line*, which divides what is *Natural* from what is *Supernatural*, in all the Productions and Powers of Imagination, Reasoning, and Language, or in the Effects and Powers of Memory under the former Head. It is a *Curiosity*, in the minute Particulars of which we are not at all concerned; as it is *the same GOD*, *which*, whether naturally or miraculously, *worketh all and in all.* (1 Cor: xii. 6) But if any Excellency in the Performance itself can speak it to be *more than Human*, Productions of this Sort are to be found in *Scripture*; and the Rank and Education of some of the *Sacred Penmen* render the Hand of God peculiarly conspicuous in the Sublimity and Lustre of their Writings. What *the Gifts of the Spirit* may in every Age of the Church have done, by Operations of this Kind, we know not. And I think, it  
would

would be presumptuous absolutely to deny, that GOD might act in some extraordinary Degree on some of the *Heathen Writers*, to produce those glorious Works of Antiquity, which have been, under the Direction of his Providence, so efficacious on the one Hand to transmit the *Evidences of Divine Revelation*, and on the other to illustrate the *Necessity* of it: In Consequence of which I cannot forbear saying by the Way, that I think they who are intimately acquainted with them, are of all Men upon Earth *the most inexcusable* in rejecting *Christianity*. But our Inability to mark out *the exact Boundaries* between Nature and an extraordinary Divine Agency, is not much to be regretted; since it does not appear to be the Design of Providence, by such *Elevations* of Sentiment, Style, and Manner, by any Means to *bear Testimony* to the Person adorned with them, as a Messenger sent to speak in His Name; which may as effectually be done in the plainest and simplest Forms of Expression, without any Thing which looks like the Heightenings of Art, or the Sparklings of an extraordinary Genius.

The *other*, which *Divines* have called *immediate Suggestion*, is the highest and most extraordinary Kind of *Inspiration*; and takes Place, when the Use of our Faculties is superseded, and GOD does as it were *speak directly* to the Mind; *making such Discoveries* to it, as it could not otherwise have obtained, and *dictating the very Words* in which these Discoveries are to be communicated to others: So that a Person, in what he writes from hence, is no other than first *the Auditor*, and then (if I may be allowed the Expression,) *the Secretary of GOD*; as *John* was of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, when he wrote from His Sacred Lips *the Seven Epistles* to the *Asiatick Churches*. And it is, no Doubt, to an *Inspiration of this Kind* that the Book of *the Revelation* owes its Original.

It is evident from the Definitions above, that there may be a *Full Superintendency*, where neither of the *latter Kinds of Inspiration* (of *Elevation*, or *Suggestion*;) take Place: But I think, we must necessarily allow, that an *Inspiration of Suggestion*, so far as it goes, must also imply a *Full Superintendency* in recording the *History*

story of what has been seen or heard in any *Prophe-tick Vision*, when it is necessary to make a Report of it. For as it would, on the one Hand be impious to imagine, that the Blessed GOD would *dictate a Falsehood* to any of his Creatures; so neither can we suppose it consistent with the Divine Wisdom, to suffer *the Prophet*, through Infirmity, to *err in delivering a Message*, with which He had expressly charged him; and which would be given in vain, so far as there was a Failure in the exact Delivery of it.

Besides *the last Book* of the *New Testament*, I mean, *the Revelation*, which I have already mentioned in this View, it seems evident to me, that some *other Parts* of it were given by *such a Suggestion*; seeing there are so many *Predictions* interspersed, and so many *Mysteries* revealed, which lay entirely *beyond the Ken* of any Human, or perhaps *Angelick* Mind. But that this is applicable to *all the History* of it, or to all Things contained in its *Epistolary Parts*, I chuse not to assert. For as it cannot be necessary to its *entire Credibility*, (which nothing can more effectually secure than a *Full Superintendency*;) it would subject us to *many Difficulties*, which have been so forcibly urged by others, that it is not necessary for me here to repeat them. But I am well assured, that the apparent Insufficiency of the *Answers* which have been returned to these Objections, by some very sincere, but I think in this Instance, less judicious *Defenders of Scripture*, has led some People to conclude, that the Scripture was *not inspired* at all; as if it had been on both Sides agreed, that an universal *Suggestion* was the only Kind of *Inspiration* worth contending about. The Consequence of this hath been, that such as are dissatisfied with the Arguments which *these Defenders* of the Divine Authority of the Scripture insist upon, read the *Scriptures*, (if they read them at all,) not to learn their Authentick Dictates, but to try the Sentiments contained in them by the Touch-Stone of *their own Reason*, and to separate what that shall allow to be right, from what it presumptuously concludes to be wrong. And this *boasted Standard* has been so very defective, that on this mistaken Notion they have not only *rejected* many of the most vital Truths of *Christianity*, but even some essential

cial Principles of *Natural Religion*. And thus, they have in effect *annihilated the Christian Revelation*, at the very same Time that they have acknowledged the *Historical Truth of the Facts* on which it is built. This is the Body of Men, that have affected to call themselves *Cautious Believers*: But their Character is so admirably well described under that of *Agrippa*, by my honoured Friend *Dr. Watts*, in his little Treatise called *the Redeemer and Sanctifier*, that it may be sufficient here to have hinted it thus briefly, as the Reason, why out of Regard to them as well as others, I have resumed the Subject of *Inspiration*, and endeavoured to place it in what I do in my Conscience apprehend to be both a safe and a rational Light.

That I may remedy, so far as God shall enable me to do it, the great and destructive Evil I have just been mentioning, and may establish in the Minds of Christians a due Regard to the *Sacred Oracles* of Eternal Truth, I shall now proceed to the *Second Part* of this Discourse: In which

II. I am to shew, how evidently the *Full Inspiration* of the *New Testament*, in the Sense stated above, follows from the acknowledged *Truth* of the *History* which it contains, in all its leading and most important Facts.

But before I proceed to the Discussion of the Matter, I must beg Leave to observe, That tho' *this* is what I apprehend to be *the grand Argument*, and that which may most properly be connected with an *Exposition* of the *Historical Books*, I am very far from slighting those *other Arguments* which fall not so directly in my Way here.

I greatly revere the *Testimony* of the *Primitive Christian Writers*, not only to the *real Existence* of the *Sacred Books* in those early Ages, but also to their *Divine Original*: Their Persuasion of which most evidently appears from the Veneration with which they speak of them, even while *Miraculous Gifts* remained in the Church; and consequently, an exact Attendance to a *written Rule* might seem less absolutely necessary, and the Authority of *inferior Teachers* might approach nearer to that of the *Apostles*. I believe every candid Reader will acknowledge,

ledge, that nothing can be objected to many strong Passages in *Clemens Romanus, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Theophilus Antiochenus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius*, and some other antient Writers he has mentioned that are now lost. It is needless to produce them here, after those valuable Specimens of them, which *Dr. Whitby* and *Mons. Du Pin* have given; and especially, considering what my learned Friend *Dr. Lardner* has with so much Industry and Accuracy of Judgment collected on this Head, in the *Second Part* of his *Credibility of the Gospel History*. I shall therefore content myself with observing here, that several of the most learned and considerable of *these Antients* speak of *this Veneration* for the Sacred Writings of the *New Testament*, not as the Result of their own Private Judgment, but as that in which *all the Churches* were unanimously agreed\*.

The *Internal Characters* of *Divine Inspiration*, with which every Page of the *New Testament* abounds, do also deserve our attentive Notice; and render the *Book itself*, if considered as detached from all *External Evidence* whatsoever, a *Compendious Demonstration* of its own *Sacred Original*, and consequently of the *Certainty* of that Religion which it teaches. The *Excellency* of its *Doctrines*, the *Spirituality* and *Elevation* of its *Design*,  
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\* Thus *Origen* says, (*Pbilocal. cap. xii. pag. 41.*) Δει σε, — ως πιστος παραδείξασθαι, εἰ θεοπνευστοί εἰσιν. “That if a Man would not confess himself to be an *Infidel*, he must admit the *Inspiration* of the *Scriptures*.” And he elsewhere places the *Gospels* in the Number of Writings, “which were received as *Divine* by all the Churches of God, and were the Elements, or first Principles, of the Churches Faith:” Ἐν πασαις ἐκκλησιαῖς θεοῦ πεπιστευμένων εἶναι θεῶν, — στοιχεῖα τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐκκλησίας. — *Tertullian* also lays it down as a fundamental Principle in disputing with *Hereticks*, “that the Truth of Doctrines is to be determined by *Scripture* :” For the Question has evidently the Force of a strong Negation. *Aliunde scilicet loqui possunt de Rebus Fidei, nisi ex Litteris Fidei?* (*De Præscript. Hæret. cap. xv.*) — And *Eusebius* quotes a much more antient Writer than himself, (*Euseb. Eccles. Hist. Lib. v. cap. 28.*) who calls the *Scripture*, πίστεως ἀρχαίας κανόνα, “the Rule of antient Faith;” and who afterwards speaking of *Hereticks* declares, “that if they denied the *Scriptures* to be Divinely inspired, they were *Infidels*.” The Expression is remarkable; but having transcribed it in the *Additional Notes, pag. 2, No. III.* I shall not insert it here.

the Majesty and Simplicity of its Style, the Agreement of its Parts in the most unsuspecting Manner, with its more than human Efficacy on the Hearts and Consciences of Men, do all concur to give us a very high Idea of the *New Testament*: And I am persuaded, that the wiser and better any Man is, and the more familiarly he converses with these *unequall'd Books*, the more will he be struck with *this Evidence*. But these Things in the general are better felt, than expressed; and several of the Arguments arise, not from particular Passages, but from the general Tenour of the Books; and consequently, they cannot be judged of, but by a serious and attentive Perusal.

Dismissing therefore these Topicks, not with Neglect, but with the sincerest Expressions of just and high Veneration, I now proceed to that *grand Proof* of the *Inspiration* of the *New Testament*, which is derived from the *Credibility of its leading Facts*; which having so fully illustrated in the *Sermons* referred to above, I think I have a just Title to assume as the Foundation of what farther Reasonings may occur.

Admitting *this great Principle*, it is undeniably certain, — That *Jesus of Nazareth* was a most extraordinary Person: — That after having been *foretold* by many *Prophets*, in distant Periods of Time, he was at length, agreeably to the repeated Declaration of an *Angel*, first to a *Priest* ministering at the Golden Altar in the Temple, and then to his *Mother*, *conceived* by a *Virgin* of *David's* Family: — That his *Birth* was proclaimed by a Choir of *Angels*, who celebrated it in Celestial Anthems, as the Foundation of *Peace on Earth*, and the most glorious Display of *Divine Benevolence to Men*: — That before his Publick Appearance, a *Person* greater than any of the *Prophets*, and whose Birth had also been foretold by an *Angel*, was *sent to prepare his Way*: — That on his being *baptized*, he was anointed with a wonderful Effusion of the *Spirit*, poured down upon him by a visible Symbol: And that the Efficacy of this Sacred Agent, continually residing in him, was apparent throughout the whole Course of his Ministry; not only in the unspotted *Sanctity of his Life*, amidst a Thousand most violent Temptations, and in the bright Assemblage of *Virtues and Graces* which shone

shone in it; with a Lustre before unknown, and since absolutely unparalleled; but also in a Multitude of various *Works* of Wonder and Mercy, which he *miraculously* wrought, on those whose *Diseases* were of the most desperate and incurable Nature, and even on *the Dead*, whom that Almighty Voice of his, which had *driven out* the fiercest *Infernal Spirits*, and *calmed* the Rage of *Tempests*, did with serene Majesty *awaken into Life*, as from a Slumber.—It is also on the same Foundation certain, That this illustrious Person, having by the Malice of his Enemies been most unjustly and cruelly *put to Death*, did *on the Third Day arise from the Dead*:—And that, after having given to *his Disciples* the most abundant *Proofs* of that important Fact, he at length *ascended to Heaven* gradually *in their Sight*; *Angels* appearing to assure them, he should as visibly *descend from thence* to the Universal *Judgment*, the Administration of which he had declared to be *committed to him*.

I must freely declare, that had I been an entire Stranger to the Sacred Story, and proceeded no farther in it than this, (supposing me firmly to have *believed* all these wonderful Things, tho' delivered in the shortest *Abstract* that could have been made of them,) I should readily have concluded, That this extraordinary Person, being *sent* (as it plainly appears from the History, that he was,) *with a Divine Revelation* for the Benefit of all Nations, and of all Ages, had taken Care to leave some *Authentick Records* of the Doctrine which he taught. And if I had farther found, that he had left no such Records written by himself, I should naturally have concluded, that he took effectual Care, that some of *his Followers* should be enabled to *deliver down to Posterity* the System of Religion which he taught, in the most accurate Manner; with all such extraordinary *Affistance from G O D*, as the Nature of the Subject required, in order to rendering their Accounts exact. And I believe, every reasonable Man would draw this Inference: Because it is very apparent, that the *great End* of this vast and astonishing *Apparatus*, (for vast and astonishing it would appear, if what relates to *Jesus alone* were taken into the Survey,) must in the Nature of Things be *frustrated*, if *no such Records* were provided: It being morally impos-

sible,



able, that *unwritten Tradition* should convey a System of Religion pure and uncorrupted, even to the next Generation; and much more, that it should so convey it to the End of Time. And it would seem, so far as we can judge, by no Means worthy the Divine Wisdom, to suffer the good Effects of such a great and noble Plan to be lost, for Want of so easy an Expedient: Especially, since Men of the Age and Country in which these Things happened, were not only blessed with the Use of *Letters*, but were remarkable for their Application to them, and for great Proficiency in various Branches of Learning. And if I should not only have an *Abstract* of this *History of Jesus*, which I judged *credible*, but should also be so happy as to have the *Four Gospels* in my Hand, with convincing Evidences of their being genuine, (which we here suppose,) I should on these Principles assuredly argue, That not only the *leading Facts*, but likewise the System of *Doctrines* and *Discourses* delivered in them, might entirely be depended upon: Nor could I conceive *the Truth* of such Doctrines and Discourses to be separable from the general Truth of the leading Facts referred to above; having (as I here suppose,) *proper Evidences* to convince me, that *the Penmen of these Books* were the Persons, by whom the Memory of these Events was to be delivered down to Posterity: Which is a farther Principle, that none of common Sense and Modesty can pretend to contest; none appearing as their Competitors, whose Pretensions are worthy to be named.

But my Apprehension of the full Authentickness and *Credibility* of *these Writers* would, on the Supposition I am here making, greatly increase, as I proceeded to that excellent and useful Book, which the good Providence of God has now given me an Opportunity of illustrating; *the Acts of the Holy Apostles*: Since I learn from thence, That in a very few Days after the *Ascension* of *Jesus* into Heaven, *the Spirit of GOD* was, according to his Promise, *poured out* upon his *Apostles* in an abundant Manner, attended with the visible Appearance of a lambent *Celestial Flame*: And that, in Consequence of this amazing *Uction*, the poor *Fishermen* of *Galilee*, and their Companions, were in a Moment *enabled to*  
*speak*

Speak with the greatest Readiness and Propriety, *Latin, Greek, Arabick, Coptick, Persick*, and a Variety of other Languages, the first Rudiments of which they had never learnt; and also to perform all Kinds of Miracles, equal to those of their Master, and in some Circumstances superior to them. My Veneration for the Writings of these Men (and I here suppose, I know those of the *New Testament* to be so,) must be unparalleled, when I think *who* and *what* they were: And I am so struck with this plain, but divinely powerful Argument, that I must intreat my Reader to review with me, a little more particularly, some of the *Actions* and *Circumstances* of these Holy Men, to whose Writings I am labouring to conciliate his unreserved Regard.

Let them *all* be considered, as *preaching the Gospel* in that extraordinary Manner, on the *Day of Pentecost*; and a few Days after; when some of their Companions had been seized and threatened by the *Sanhedrim*, as anointed again with such an *Effusion of the Spirit*, as *shook the very House* in which they were, and inspired them *all* at once with the same sublime *Hymn of Praise*. Let them be considered, as afterwards *led out of Prison by an Angel*, and commanded by him *to go and preach the Gospel in the Temple*, under the remarkable Phraseology of the *Words of this Life*; as if the whole Life and Happiness of the Human Race depended on their knowing and receiving it. Nor let us here forget that extraordinary Power, common to *all the Apostles*, of communicating the *Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit*, by the *Imposition of their Hands*. Had we nothing particularly to say of any one, more than these grand Things which we hear of *them all*, it must surely command our Reverence to *their Writings*, and set them at a vast Distance from any of merely Human Original.

But through the singular Providence of God it hath so happened, that we have the *most particular History* of the Lives of *those Apostles*, to whose Writings we are generally most indebted: I mean, *John, Peter, and Paul*.

With respect to *John* we know, that besides the Concern he had in the *Cure of the Lame Man*, he was favoured with the *Visions of GOD* in the *Isle of Patmos*; where *our Lord*, after an Abode of more than half a Century  
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on the Throne of his Glory at his Father's Right Hand, did him the unequalled Honour to use him as his *Amanuensis*, or *Secretary*; expressly dictating to him the *Letters* he was pleased to send to the *Seven Churches in Asia*. How easily then may we suppose Him, so to have presided over his *other Writings*, as to have secured him from Mistakes in them!

Consider *Peter*, as striking *Ananias* and *Sapphira* dead with a Word; as curing by the like powerful Word, one *Cripple* at *Jerusalem*, and another at *Lydda*; and calling back *Dorcas* even from the *Dead*. Let us view him in that grand Circumstance, of being marked out so particularly by an *Angel* to *Cornelius*, and sent to him as the Oracle of *God* himself, from whom that worthy and honourable Person was to hear Words, by which he and all his House should be saved: And after this let us view him, as once more delivered out of the Hand of *Herod*, and from all the Expectation of the People of the *Jews*, by an *Angel*, who struck off his Chains, and opened the Doors of his Prison, the very Night before he was to have been executed. And let any one, with these Particulars in his Eye, added to the foregoing in which he shared with all his Brethren, say, what more could be necessary to prove the *Divine Inspiration* of what he taught; so far as *Inspiration* was requisite, to render it entirely *Authentick*: Or let any one farther say, upon what imaginable Pretence the Authority of his *Writings* can be denied, if that of his *Preaching* be granted.

And to mention no more, let *Paul*, that great *Scribe*, instructed in the Kingdom of *Heaven*, to whose Pen we owe so many invaluable *Epistles*, be considered in the same View: And let us endeavour to impress our Minds with the various Scenes through which we know he passed, and the distinguished Favours with which his *Master* honoured him; that we may judge, how we are to receive the Instructions of his Pen. Let us therefore think of him, as so miraculously called by the Voice of *Christ* to the Profession of his *Gospel*, when he was persecuting it even to the *Death*; as receiving a full and distinct *Revelation*, of that Glorious, but to him quite unknown *Gospel*, by the immediate *Inspiration* of its *Divine Author*; which is a Fact he expressly witnesses, and in which he

could not possibly be mistaken. Think of the Lustre of *those astonishing Works* which shone round him wherever he went, and of those wrought in his Favour, which shewed him so eminently the Care of Heaven: *Dæmons* ejected; *Distempers* cured, sometimes *with a Touch*, and sometimes *without it*, by a Garment sent from him to the Patient; *his Motions* guided from Place to Place by a Divine Oracle; *Elymus struck blind*, for opposing him; *his Bands loosed* by an Earthquake; *his Strength and Vigour* instantaneously *restored*, when the Rage of the mutable and barbarous Populace at *Lystra* had *stoned him* and left him for Dead; and to add no more, *his Safety in a Shipwreck*, with that of *near Three Hundred more*, in the same Vessel for *his Sake*, promised by an *Angel*, and accomplished *without the Loss of a single Person*, when they had expected nothing but an universal Ruin. Let us, I say, think of *Paul* in these Circumstances; and with these Facts full in our View, let us judge, Whether it is at all probable, yea whether it be morally possible, that a Man sent out and attended with such Credentials as these, should be *so left of GOD*, amidst all these Tokens of his constant Care, as to mingle Error with *sound Doctrine*, and his own Fancies with the *Divine Revelations*, which we are sure he received: Or whether, if he were *not left* to such Effects of Human Frailty in *his Preaching*, but might have been regarded by his Hearers with entire Credit, he would be *left* to them in *those Writings*, by which he was (as it were) to preach to all future Generations of Men, from one End of the World to the other; and by which, *being dead*, he yet *speaketh*, in all Languages, and to all Christian Assemblies.

I cannot forbear thinking *this plain Argument*, so well adapted to popular Use, *abundantly sufficient* to carry Conviction to every candid Mind, in proportion to the Degree of its Attention and Penetration. And I am almost afraid, that some should think I have bestowed an unnecessary Labour, thus particularly to state a Matter, which hath such a Flood of Light poured in upon it from almost every Page of the Sacred Story. But I have been obliged, in the Course of this Exposition, to meditate much on these Facts; and under the deep Impression.

pression I could not but *speake*, as *out of the Fulness of my Heart*.

Yet after all I have already said, I should be very unjust to *this Argument*, if I did not endeavour to represent to my Reader, how much it is *strengthened*, on the one Hand, by the express and comprehensive *Promises* which *our Redeemer* made to his *Apostles*; and on the other, by the *peculiar Language* in which the *Apostles* themselves speak of their *Preaching* and *Writings*, and the *high Regard* they challenge to each; a Regard, which nothing could justify them in demanding, but a Consciousness that they were indeed *under a Full Inspiration*.

The *Promises* of our Lord *Jesus Christ* must undoubtedly have a very great Weight, with all that have reflected on that indisputable *Testimony* which *GOD himself* bore to him in numberless Instances. And therefore, tho' they are so very well known, I must beg Leave, not only to *refer to them*, but to *recite* the Chief of them at large: And I intreat the Reader to consider, how he can reconcile them with an Apprehension, that our Lord *Jesus Christ* did at the same Time intend to *leave the Persons* to whom he made such Promises, *liable to mistake* both in Facts and Doctrines; and being deceived themselves, to *mislead such* as should depend upon their Testimony, where they professed themselves to be thoroughly informed.

In that copious and excellent Discourse, which *our Lord* addressed to the *Apostles*, just before he quitted the *Guest-Chamber* to go to the *Garden of Gethsemane*, (that is, but a few Hours before his Death,) the *grand Consolation* he urges to his sorrowful Disciples, is this; That he would send his Spirit upon them. The Donation of which Spirit is represented, as the *First Fruits of Christ's Intercession*. When after so long an Absence, and such terrible Sufferings, he should be restored to his Father's Embraces. This is spoken of as the *First Petition* preferred by him, and the *First Favour* granted to his Church for his Sake: (*John xiv. 16.*) *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. Yea, Christ declares, (and he could not be mistaken in it,) that the Agency of this Spirit should*

should so abundantly counter-balance all the Advantages they received from *his Bodily Presence*, that strong as their Affection to him was, they would in that View have Reason to rejoice in his leaving them: (*John xvi. 7.*) *I tell you the Truth*, that is, I say what may be depended upon as a most important Certainty, (and very important indeed such a Representation was;) *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.* Now from these Expressions, were they alone, I think we might probably infer, that the *Apostles*, after having received *the Spirit*, would be in no more Danger of erring in their Writings, than they would have been, if *Jesus himself* had been always near them, to inform them concerning any Fact or Doctrine, of which they might have Occasion to speak.

This is farther confirmed by *the Title* which is given him no less than *thrice* in this Discourse, *The Spirit of Truth*; almost in a Breath with these great and weighty Circumstances, that he should *abide with them for ever*; (*John xiv. 16, 17.*) that he should *guide them into all Truth*; that he should *teach them all Things*, yea and *shew them Things to come*; (*John xvi. 13.*) which must surely secure them from any *Danger of erring* in relating Things that were past. But lest any should be perverse enough to dispute the Consequence, *our Lord* particularly mentions this Effect of *the Spirit's Operation*, that they should thereby be fitted to *bear a Testimony to him*, as those who had long been conversant with him, and whose *Memories* were miraculously assisted in recollecting those Discourses which they had heard from him: (*John xv. 26, 27.*) *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me; and ye also (being so assisted) shall bear Witness, because ye have been with me from the Beginning.* And again, (*John xiv. 26.*) *The Holy Ghost shall teach you all Things, and bring all Things to your Remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

Soon after this *our Lord*, on the very Day in which he rose from the Dead, in a Dependence on the Aids of this promised *Spirit*, gives them a *Commission*, which nothing but its *plenary Inspiration* could have answered,

or have qualified them to fulfil: For coming to them, he declares, (*John* xx. 21.) *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you: And upon this he breathed upon them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever Sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose soever ye retain, they are retained:* Which, whether it signifies a Power of inflicting and removing *miraculous Punishments*, or of authoratively declaring that *Sins* were in particular Instances *forgiven* or *retained*, must either Way suppose such a constant *Presence of Christ* with them, as it is hard, or rather impossible, to *reconcile* with supposing them to *err in what they wrote* for the Instruction of the Church in succeeding Ages.

These are the grand Passages, on which I rest this Part of the Argument: Yet I think, I ought not to omit those, in which *Christ* promises them such *extraordinary Assistance of the Spirit*, while defending his Cause in the Presence of *Magistrates*; and it is the more proper to mention them, as the Language in which they are made is so remarkable. On this Occasion then he tells them, (*Mat.* x. 19. 20.) *When they deliver you up, take no Thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same Hour what ye shall speak; for it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.* May we not therefore on the same Principles conclude, that when they were to write for the Use of all future Generations of *Christians*, it was not so much *they who wrote*, as *the Spirit of the Father*, who in Effect *wrote by them*, and as it were dictated to them? For the Occasion will surely appear as important, in one Instance, as in the other; or rather much more important in the latter, than in the former; as *an Error in their Writings* would have a much more extensive and lasting Influence, than a *Slip of their Tongues* in a transient pleading before a *Magistrate*. Nay, to give this Argument the greatest possible Weight, we find that *the same Promise* was made, almost in the very same Words, (*Luke* xii. 11, 12.) to Persons in the Dignity of their Office *inferior to the Apostles*; I mean, to *the Seventy*; which might have intitled *their Writings* to such a Regard, as I am now labouring to engage to those of *their Superiors*.

I shall only farther remind the Reader, that *our Lord*, when just ascending to Heaven, refers to *that Effusion of the Spirit* which was quickly after to happen, even *before they departed from Jerusalem*, as the *Æra*, from whence the grand Accomplishment of the Promises relating to the *Aids of the Spirit* was to be dated. (See *Luke xxiv. 49. Acts i. 4, 5.*) And as all the *Apostolical Writings* which now remain, were written several Years after that Event, it plainly proves, they lie *within the Period*, in which they were to expect all the Assistance which *these Promises* import.

The most plausible *Objection*, which can be urged against the Application of *these Promises* to the Matter now before us, is this: "That *these Promises* only refer to the *Supernatural Assistance*, granted to the *Apostles* on great and pressing Occasions: But that they might easily *without such Assistance*, have written a true Account of the Life and Preaching of *Christ*, and of such other Facts as they record; and consequently, that *their Historical Writings* at least, how credible soever we suppose them, might be drawn up *without any Inspiration at all.*"

To this I might reply, That if it be allowed, that the *Apostles*, in the *Books* which we have been endeavouring to explain, *wrote the exact Truth*, and that in *their Epistles* they have made a *right and unerring Representation* of the *Revelation* with which they were charged, so that we may safely make their Writings a *Rule both of Faith and Practice*, the remaining Question would only be about the *Propriety* of using the Word *Inspiration* when speaking of them; and therefore would, on the Principles I have laid down above, be comparatively of *small Importance*. Yet I think it easy, in that View of the Question, to prove that *these Writings* could not have been thus *entirely credible*, if they had not been written under such a *Full Inspiration of Superintendency*, as is stated in the *First Part* of this Discourse.

I do indeed allow, and no candid Man can dispute it, that *the Penmen of the New Testament*, supposing them able to write all, might *merely* by the natural Exercise  
of



of *their Memory*, under the Direction of the common Sense and Reason of Men, have given us a *plain, faithful, and very useful Account*, of many extraordinary Scenes, to which they had been *Witnesses* during the Time they conversed with *Jesus* on Earth, and in which they were active *after his Ascension*. And I cannot forbear saying, that supposing the Truth of the *grand leading Facts*, (as that *Jesus of Nazareth* taught a *Doctrine* confirmed by *Miracles*, and was himself raised from the *Dead*;) I should have esteemed *such Writings*, supposing them merely an *honest Account* of what such Men must have known, to be beyond all Comparison *the most valuable Records of Antiquity*. But when these Writings came to be perused, it is evident to me from the particular Contents of them, that *honest and worthy Men* would never have pretended to have *written in such a Manner*, if they had not been conscious of *Superior Direction*, and extraordinary *Divine Influence*.

For *the Historians* of whom we speak, do not merely give us a very circumstantial Account of *Actions*; as what *Journies Christ* made, what *Miracles* he performed, in what Manner he was *received*, where, and how he *died*, and *rose again*, and *ascended into Heaven*: But they do also, as we may reasonably expect they should, give us an Account of *the Doctrine he taught*: And indeed, if they had not done this, the Knowledge of his Story, amazing as it is, would have been but an unprofitable Amusement to us. Nor do they content themselves with giving us a *short Summary* of his *Doctrine*, or a View of *the Religion* he intended to introduce, as the general Result of their having attended so long on his Instructions; but they *presume to tell us his very Words*. And here, they do not merely relate *some short Sayings*, the remarkable *Poignancy* of which, or their *Propriety* to the Circumstances in which they were spoken, might have *struck the Memory* with a peculiar Force; but they insert *long Discourses*, which he made on Publick Occasions; tho' they do not pretend, that he left *any Copies* of them, or that they themselves took them from *any written Memoirs* whatsoever: And it is worth our Notice, that (besides the many *shorter Sayings* and *Replies* with which the

*History* is interspersed,) near one Half of the Four Gospels is taken up with the Insertion of these Discourses \*.

Now it was highly necessary, that if the *Speeches of our Lord* were recorded at all, they should be recorded with great *Exactness*: For many of them relate to the *System of Doctrines* which he came to teach; and others of them are *Predictions of future Events*, referring to a great Variety of curious Circumstances, where a *small Mistake* might greatly have affected the *Credit of the Prediction*, and with it the *Cause of Christianity* in general: So that *common Prudence* would have taught the *Apostles* to wave them, rather than pretend to deliver them to *Posterity*, if they had not been sure they could have done it *exactly*.

But how could they have expected to have done this, merely by the natural Strength of *their own Memories*; unless we imagine each of them to be a *Prodigy* in that Respect, to which no one of them makes the least Shadow of a Pretence? It is well known, that several of those *Speeches of Christ* which *Matthew* and *John* give us, (not now to mention the *other Evangelists*;) contain several Pages; and some of them cannot be deliberately and decently read over in less than a *Quarter of an Hour*. Now I believe, if my Reader would make the Experiment, on any Thing of that Length which he read or heard Yesterday, or even on one of those *Discourses of Christ*, tho' perhaps he has read or heard it an *Hundred Times*; he would find on a careful Examination, many Things would probably be omitted; many transposed; many expressed in a *different Manner*: And were he to write a Copy of such a Discourse from his Memory, and then critically to compare it with the Original, he would find the *Sense* in many Particulars where there was some general Resemblance, more different than he could perhaps have imagined; and *Variations*, which at first seemed but *inconsiderable*, would appear greatly to affect the *Sense*, when they came to be more nicely reviewed. If this would so probably

\* If my Computation does not deceive me, 93 of our 203 Sections are taken up thus; and some of them are long Sections too: And the Number of Verses contained in these Discourses, to that of the whole, is as about 1700, to 3779, which is the Number of Verses in the Four Gospels.

probably be *the Case* with Ninety-nine out of a Hundred of Mankind, (and I certainly speak within Compass,) when a Discourse to be repeated, had been delivered *but a Day* or an *Hour* before; what could be expected from the *Apostles*, with an Interval of *so many Years*? And especially from *John*, who has, in proportion to the Length of his Gospel, recorded *more Speeches* than any of the rest, and wrote them (if we may credit the most authentick Tradition,) *more than Half a Century* after our *Lord's Ascension*?

This Argument would have great Weight, with Relation to a Man, whose *Life* was ever so *peaceful*, and his Affairs contracted in the narrowest Sphere: But it will be greatly strengthened, when we come to consider *the Multitude* and *Variety* of Scenes, and those too *the most interesting* that can be imagined, through which the *Apostles* passed. When we consider all their Labours, and their Cares; the Journies they were continually taking; the Novelty of Objects perpetually surrounding them; and above all, the Persecutions and Dangers to which they were daily exposed; and the strong Manner in which the Mind is struck, and the Memory of past Circumstances erased, by such Occurrence; I cannot conceive, that any Reader will be so unreasonable, as to imagine, these Things could have been *written with any Exactness* by the *Apostles*, if they had not been *miraculously assisted* in recording them. And what is particularly mentioned by *the last of these Writers*, of the promised Agency of *the Spirit* to bring to their Remembrance *all Things* they had heard from *Christ* himself; (*John* xiv. 26.) must I think incontestably prove, that this was *one Purpose* for which *the Spirit* was given; and therefore, we may be sure, that it was *a Purpose* for which *it was needed*.

I hope, I have by this Time convinced my Reader, that it is *agreeable* to the other Circumstances of the *Apostles* Story, and to the *Promises* which our *Lord* so largely and so frequently made to them, (and the *frequent Repetition* of the *Promise* strongly intimates the *Importance* of it,) to suppose, that they were indeed favoured with *a Full Inspiration* in their Writings.

But to compleat the Argument, it must be observed, That *these Holy Men* (for such the History plainly shews them to have been,) assume to themselves *such an Authority*, and speak of their own Discourses and Writings in *such peculiar Language*, as nothing but a Consciousness of *such Inspiration* could warrant, or even excuse.

To make us duly sensible of the Force of this Argument, let us hear *Paul, Peter, and John*, and we shall find the Remark *applicable to them all*; tho' as *St. Paul* wrote much more than *either of the latter*, we may naturally expect to find the most frequent Instances of it in his Writings.

When the *Apostle Paul* had taken Notice to the *Corinthians*, that the Subject of his Preaching was *the Wisdom of GOD in a Mystery*, and related to Things which transcended the Sense and Imagination of Men, he adds, (1 Cor. ii. 10.) *But GOD hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all Things, even the deep Things of GOD: And again, (ver. 12.) We have received, not the Spirit of the World. so as to act in that artful Way which a Regard to Secular Advantages dictates; but the Spirit which is of GOD, that we may know the Things that are freely given us of GOD.* Now it is natural to conclude from hence, that *this Knowledge* being given them, not merely or chiefly for themselves, but for the Church, (in which View they speak of themselves and their Office, as *the Gift of GOD to the Church*; compare *Eph. iv. 11, 12.* and *1 Cor. iii. 21,—23.*) they should be assisted to communicate it in a proper Manner; since otherwise, the End of God in giving it to them would be frustrated. But the *Apostle* does not content himself with barely suggesting this; but he asserts it in the most express Terms: (1 Cor. ii. 13.) *Which Things also we speak, not in the Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth, that is, not with a vain Ostentation of Human Eloquence; but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual; or, as some would render and paraphrase it, adapting Spiritual Expressions to Spiritual Things* \*. And in the Close of the Chapter, when with a noble Freedom, in a Consciousness

\* Πνευμαλικοις πνευμαλικά συζητοῦντες.

ness of the distinguished Character he bore, he puts the Question to the whole World besides; *Who hath known the Mind of the Lord?* he adds, *But we have the Mind of Christ.* Which last Clause plainly determines the Sense, in which we are to take those Words at the Close of *Chap. vii.* *And I think also, that I have the Spirit of GOD* \*; that is, "I certainly appear to have it;" or, "it is evident and apparent, that my Pretences "to it are not a vain Boast." For, a'ter having so expressly asserted it just above, none can imagine, he meant here to insinuate, that he was *uncertain*, whether he had it, or not. He appeals therefore to those whose Gifts were most eminent, to dispute it if they could: (1 Cor. xiv. 37.) *If any Man think himself to be a Prophet, or Spiritual*, that is, if he have ever so good Evidence that he really is so, (for it cannot be thought, he meant to appeal only to those, who falsely pretended to these Endowments,) *let him acknowledge that the Things which I write unto you, are the Commandments of the Lord.*—In his *Second Epistle* to the *Corinthians*, (*Chap. ii. 10.*) he speaks of *forgiving Offenders in the Person of Christ*; and amidst the humblest Acknowledgments of *his own Insufficiency*, boasts a *Sufficiency of GOD*, *who had made him an able Minister of the New Testament.* (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.) Of which he was so thoroughly sensible, that in the *First Epistle* which he ever wrote (so far as Scripture informs us,) to any of the Churches, I mean, his *First Epistle* to the *Thessalonians*, he ventures to say, (*Chap. iv. 8.*) *He that despiseth*, that is, (as the Context plainly implies,) he that despiseth or rejecteth what I now write, *despiseth not Man*, only or chiefly, *but GOD*, *who hath given us his Holy Spirit*: Which manifestly intimates, that what he wrote was under Supernatural Divine Guidance and Influence, as in the *Second Verse* of that *Chapter* he had spoken of *Commandments* which he had *given them by the Lord Jesus Christ*; just as he afterwards declared to the *Corinthians*, (2 Cor. xiii. 3.) how well he was able to give *Proofs of Christ speaking in him.*—In his *Epistle* to the *Galatians*, the *Ap<sup>osto</sup>le* solemnly assures them, (*Gal. i. 11, 12.*) that *the Gospel which he had preached among them, was not*

\* ΔΙΧΩ ΔΕ ΧΑΡΩ ΠΙΣΤΕΥΑ ΟΥ ΕΧΩ,

after Man, that is, not of any Human Original: And he gives this substantial Proof of it, *that he was himself taught it*, no otherwise than *by the immediate Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Agreeably to which Assertion, when he gives the *Corinthians* an Account of the Institution and Design of the *Lord's Supper*, he says in so many Words, (1 Cor. xi. 23.) *that he had received of the Lord what he delivered unto them*; that is, that he had his Notion of *that Sacrament*, and of the Actions and Words of *Christ* on which it was founded, *by an immediate Inspiration from him*, or, in the Language we have used above, *by Suggestion*. And he speaks of his Brethren, as well as of himself, in these Terms, (Eph. iii. 3, 5.) *that the Mystery of Christ which was before unknown*, that is, the Right of the *Gentiles* on believing the Gospel to full Communion with the *Christian Church*, *was made known to the Holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit*, and not merely by the natural Recollection of what they had heard *Christ* say, or by their own Reasonings upon it.

Most agreeable to this is the Strain of *Peter*, who in one *Epistle* joins the *Commandment of the Apostles* with the *Words of the Holy Prophets*; (2 Pet. iii. 2.) and mentions the *Epistles of Paul* with other *Scriptures*, (ver. 15, 16.) no Doubt in Allusion to the Sacred Oracles of the *Old Testament*, which so generally went by that Name. And in his other *Epistle* he insists strenuously upon it, that the *Gospel was preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven*, in exact Conformity to the *Prophe-tick Oracles* of former Ages, *not understood by those who uttered them*; a Circumstance, in this Connection, highly worthy of our Remark: And he seems strongly to intimate, that the *Angels themselves* did by these *Apostolick Preachings* learn some Things, which with all their Superior Faculties they did not before so fully know: *Which Things*, says he, *the Angels desire to look into*: (1 Pet. i. 12.) As *Paul* had also said, that *to the Principalities and Powers in Heavenly Places was made known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of GOD*. Eph. iii. 10.

To conclude this Argument, *St. John*, remarkable as he was for his singular Modesty and Ingenuity of Temper, does not only tell us, that *Jesus Christ* shewed him the *Revelation*, (Rev. i. 1.) but speaks in his

*Epistle,*

*Epistle*, of an *Uction* poured out from the *Holy One*, by which they knew all Things. (1 John ii. 20.) And in another Passage he in effect asserts, that he had, in Concurrence with his Brethren, given such abundant Proof of his being under a Divine Influence and Direction in his Teaching, whether by *Word* or *Letter*, that an Agreement or Disagreement with his Doctrine was to be made the Standard by which they might judge of Truth or Error, and Obedience or Disobedience to his Injunctions the Test of a Good or a Bad Man; which is considerably more, than merely asserting the fullest Inspiration. (1 John iv. 6.) *We are of GOD: He that knoweth GOD, heareth us; he that is not of GOD, heareth not us: Hereby know we the Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of Error.*

I might here add, if it were necessary, the several Passages of the *New Testament*, in which the *Gospel* preached by the *Apostles*, is called the *Gospel of GOD*; (such as 2 Cor. xi. 7. 1 Tim. i. 11. and the like :) But I omit them, as the Stress of the Controversy does undoubtedly rest on those I have mentioned; and the Importance of the Question must be my Defence, for so large an Enumeration of Texts which are so well known.

I shall only remind my Reader in a few Words, of those many Passages, in which the *Gospel* as preached by the *Apostles*, is so evidently equalled with, yea and preferred to, the *Law* given by *Moses*, and the *Messages* brought to the *Jews* by the succeeding *Prophets*. These afford a further Illustration of this Argument, which will appear with very considerable Weight, when we reflect on the high Opinion they had of the *Old Testament*, and the honourable Terms in which they speak of it, as the *Word* and *Oracles of GOD*, (Rom. iii. 2.) as given by his Inspiration, (2 Tim. iii. 16.) and as that which *Holy Men* spake, as they were moved, or borne on, [σπινθη] by the *Holy Ghost*. (2 Pet. i. 21.) None can fail of observing, that they quote its Authority on all Occasions, as decisive; yea, our Lord himself strongly intimates, not only the strict Truth of the whole, but (which is much more) that it were intolerable to suppose it chargeable with any *Impropriety of Expression*; for this

this must be the Sense of those remarkable Words, (*John x. 35*) that *the Scripture cannot be broken*; and the whole Force of our Lord's Argument depends upon interpreting them thus. I might argue at large the *Improbability*, and indeed the great *Aburdity* of supposing, that such *Assurances* were given to *Moses* and the *Prophets*, as to make *their Writings* an infallible Rule of Faith and Practice, and that the *Subjects* of *God's only begotten Son*, and the grand Minister in his Kingdom, should be left destitute of equal Assistance in *their Work* and *Writings*. I think the Argument would be unanswerable, if *consider'd apart*: But I now mention it in another View, as illustrating the Persuasion the *Apostles* had of *their own Inspiration*, when they speak of *their Teachings* and *Decisions*, as *equally authentick* with those of the illustrious *Prophets*, for whom they had so great and so just a Regard.

I am fully satisfied, that this last Argument, from the *Manner* in which the *Apostles* speak of *themselves* in their *Writings*, will strike the Reader, in Proportion to the Degree in which he reflects upon the *true Character* of these excellent Men, and especially upon that *Modesty* and *Humility*, in which they bore so bright and so lovely a Resemblance of *their Divine Master*. Let him ask himself, what he would think of any *Minister of Christ* now, supposing him ever so eminent for Learning, Wisdom and Piety, that should assume to himself *such an Authority*? Suppose such a Man, under the Influence of *no miraculous Guidance*, to say, not with Reference to what he might quote from others, but with Regard to his own Dictates, "*The Things which I write unto you, are the Commandments of the Lord: He that despiseth, despiseth not Man, but GOD: We have the Mind of Christ; and he that heareth not us, that receiveth not our Dictates in Religion, is not of GOD:*" Suppose, I say, such Language as this to be used publickly by any *Christian Minister* now on Earth, and you must necessarily suppose *his Character* from that very Hour *overthrown*. The whole World would immediately join in loudly demanding *miraculous Proofs* to verify such Assertions; or in condemning, with just Indignation, such a Claim *unsupported by them*, as an unpardonable *Lording*



it over Men's Faith and Conscience, and thrusting themselves into their Master's Throne. Let us not then charge *the Holy Apostles* with a Conduct, of which we should not suspect any wise and good Man now upon the Face of the Earth; and which if we saw in any of our Friends, our Charity and Respect for them would incline us to enquire after some Marks of *Lunacy* in them, as its best Excuse.

I have now given an easy and popular View of the *principal Arguments* for the *Inspiration* of the *New Testament* \*, on which my own Faith in that important Doctrine rests; and such an one, as I hope by the Divine Blessing may be useful to others. I shall not enter into a particular Consideration of the several *Objections* against it, which chiefly arise from *Texts of Scripture*, in which some pretend to find that the *Apostle* were actually *mistaken*. I have considered most of these *Objections* already, in my *Notes* on the *Texts* from whence they are taken: For almost all of them relate to *Passages* in the *Historical Books*, and I don't know that I have omitted any one of them; but have every where given (tho' as briefly as I could,) *such Solutions* as appeared to me in Conscience *satisfactory*, tho' I have not stood formally to discuss them as *Objections against the Inspiration of those Books*.

The Reader will observe, that *very few Instances* have occurred, in which I have judged it necessary to allow an *Error* in our *present Copies*: But as in those *few Instances* the supposed *Change* of a *Word* or *two* makes the Matter perfectly easy, I think it *most respectful* to the *Sacred Writings*, to account for the seeming Difficulty thus, and to impute it to the *Transcribers*; (tho' it is certain, some of these *Mistakes*, supposing them such, did happen *very early*;) because, as *Mr. Seed* very properly expresses it in his excellent *Sermon* on this Subject †, (which, since I wrote the former Part of this

\* I was desired by a Friend, for whose Piety and good Sense I have a very great Regard, to add a *Note* here, on the *Inspiration of the Old Testament*: But as it would require a large one, and might perhaps interrupt the Reader, I chuse to throw it into a *Postscript* at the End of this Dissertation.

† See *Mr. Seed's Sermon*. Vol. ii. pag. 322.

this Dissertation, fell into my Hands,) “ a *partial Inspiration* is to all Intents and Purposes *no Inspiration at all*: For,” as he justly argues against the Supposition of any *Mixture of Error* in these *Sacred Writings*, “ *Man-kind* would be as much embarrassed, to know what was *inspired*, and what was *not*, as they could be to *collect a Religion* for themselves; the Consequence of which would be, that we are left *just where we were*, and that God put himself to a great Expence of *Miracles* to effect nothing at all: A Consequence, highly derogatory and injurious to his Honour.”

The Arguments brought from a few Passages in the *Epistles*, to prove that the *Apstles* did not think themselves *inspired*, weak as they are, will be considered, if God permit, in their *proper Places*. At present, I shall content myself with referring the Reader to *Dr. Whitby*, who I think has given a satisfactory Solution to them all.

There are *other Objections* of a quite different Class, with which I have no Concern; because they affect only *such a Degree of Inspiration*, as I think it *not prudent*, and am sure it is *not necessary*, to assert. I leave them therefore to be *answered by those*, if any such there be, who imagine that *Paul* would need an *immediate Revelation* from Heaven, and a miraculous Dictate of the *Holy Ghost*, to remind *Timothy* of the *Cloak and Writings which he left at Troas*, or to advise him to *mingle a little Wine with his Water*.

Waving therefore the farther Discussion of these Topicks, on which it would be more easy than profitable to enlarge, I shall conclude *this Dissertation* with a *Reflection or two* of a *practical Nature*, into which I earnestly intreat the Reader to enter with a becoming Attention.

Let me engage him seriously to pause, and consider, *what Sort of an Impression* it ought to make upon us, to think that we have *such a Book*; a Book, written by a *Full Divine Inspiration*: That amidst all the uncertain Variety of Human Reasonings and Conjectures, we have a *Celestial Guide* through the Labyrinth: That God hath condescended to take Care, that we should have a *most authentick and unerring Account* of certain  
important,

important, tho' very distant *Facts*, many of which were wrought with his own Hand; and with *these Facts*, should have a *System* of most weighty and interesting *Doctrines*, to the Truth of which, he makes himself a Witness. Such a Book must to every considerate Person appear an *ineffimable Treasure*; and it certainly calls for our most affectionate Acknowledgment, that God should confer such a Favour on any of his Creatures, and much more on *those*, who by abusing in too many Instances their Natural Light, had made themselves so utterly unworthy of *Supernatural*.

From this View of the *Inspiration of Scripture* we may also infer, our Obligation to study it with the greatest Attention and Care; to read it in our Closets and our Families; and to search in the most diligent and impartial Manner into its genuine Sense, Design, and Tendency; which is in the main so evident, that no upright Heart can fail of understanding it, and every truly good Heart must delight to comply with it. This is indeed a most important Inference, and that without which all our Convictions of its Divine Authority will only condemn us before God and our own Consciences. Let us therefore always remember, that in Consequence of all these important Premises we are indispensably obliged, to receive with calm and reverent Submission all the Dictates of Scripture; to make it our Oracle; and, in this respect, to set it at a due Distance from all other Writings whatsoever; as it is certain, there is no other Book in the World, that can pretend to equal Authority, and produce equal or comparable Proofs to support such a Pretension. Let us measure the Truth of our own Sentiments, or those of others, in the great Things which Scripture teaches, by their Conformity to it. And Oh that the powerful Charm of this blessed Book might prevail to draw all that do sincerely regard it, into this Centre of Unity! That dropping those unscriptural Forms, which have so lamentably divided the Church, we might more generally content ourselves with the Simplicity of Divine Truths as they are here taught, and agree to put the mildest and kindest Interpretation we can, upon the Language and Sentiments of each other. This is what I cannot forbear inculcating again and again,  
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from a firm Persuasion, that it is agreeable to *the Spirit of the Gospel*, and pleasing to *its great Author*: And I inculcate it in this Place, and at this Time, with peculiar Affection, as the Providence of GOD around us calls us loudly to do all we can with a safe Conscience, to promote a *Union among Protestants*. And I heartily pray, that our mutual *Jealousies* and *Prejudices*, which some are so unseasonably labouring to exasperate, may not provoke GOD to *drive us together* by a Storm of *Persecution*; if peradventure *the Bond of Suffering together* may be strong enough to *bind those*, whom the Endearments of the same *Christian Profession*, the same Rule of Faith, of Manners, and of Hope, have not yet been *able to unite*.

On the whole, let me most affectionately invite and intreat every Reader, whatsoever his Rank in Life, or his Proficiency in Learning may be, seriously to consider *the Practical Design* of these *Sacred Oracles*, the Sense and Authority of which I have been endeavouring to explain and assert. It is indeed a *Mystery* in Divine Providence, that there should still remain *so much Difficulty* in them, as that *in many Points of Doctrine* thoughtful, serious, and, I trust, upright Men should form *such different Opinions* concerning the Interpretation of so many Passages, and the Justice of Consequences drawn from them, on the one Side, and on the other. But of this there can be no Controversy, "That the *great Design* of the *New Testament* (in delightful Harmony with the *Old*;) is to call off our Minds from the present World, to establish us in the Belief of a Future State, and to form us to a serious Preparation for it, by bringing us to a lively Faith in *Christ*, and, as the genuine Effect of that, to a filial Love to GOD, and a fraternal Affection for each other." Or, in one Word, (and a weightier and more comprehensive Sentence was never written,) *to teach us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World; looking for that blessed Hope, even the glorious Appearance of the great GOD and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* (Tit. ii. 12, 13.) To His Almighty Hand may our Souls be committed, by a Faith productive of these glorious Fruits; and,

and, under the sanctifying, quickening, and supporting Influences of *His Spirit*, may we wait for *his Mercy unto Eternal Life!* Then shall no Terror of *Suffering*, no Allurement of *Pleasure*, no Sophistry of *Error*, be able to seduce us; but guided by that *Light and Truth* which shines forth in the *Sacred Pages*, we shall march on to that *Holy Hill*; where, having happily escaped all the Dangers of that *Dark Path* which we now tread, we shall greet the *Dawning* of an Everlasting Day, the arising of a *Day Star* which shall go down no more. Amen!





## P O S T S C R I P T.

*A Sketch of the Arguments, by which the Inspiration of the Old Testament may be proved in the easiest Method, and by the most solid and convincing Evidence.*

**I**F the Proof of the *Inspiration* of the *Old Testament* be deduced in its full Compass from its first Principles, we must have Recourse to a *Method*, very nearly resembling that which is taken in the *Three Sermons* referred to above, for proving the Authority of the *New*; that is, we must first prove, that the *Books* are genuine; and then, that the *History* which they contain is credible: From which Premises the *Inspiration* of the *Old Testament* may easily be inferred, by a *Train of Arguments* similar to that which we have pursued in the *Dissertation* above.

For proving the *Genuineness* of the *Books*, I should think it proper briefly to shew, (what I think hardly any will be so ignorant and confident as to deny,) that the *Jewish Religion* is of considerable *Antiquity*, and was founded by *Moses* about *Fifteen Hundred Years* before *Christ's* Time: And farther, — That the *Jews*, before and at the Time of *Christ*, had *Books* among them bearing the *Titles* of those, which make up what we *Protestants* call the *Canonical Books of the Old Testament*: — And that these *Books*, then received in the *Jewish Church*, were the *genuine Works* of the Persons to whom they were respectively ascribed: — From hence it is easy farther to shew, that they have not suffered, and (considering what a Guard the *Jews* and *Christians* were upon each other,) could not suffer, any *material Alteration* since; and consequently, that the *Old Testament*,

*ment,*

ment, as now extant in the *Hebrew* and *Chaldee* Languages, is *genuine*, and in the main such as it originally was.

In order to prove its *Credibility* from this established *Medium*, we may prepare the *Way*, by shewing, That many *material Facts* which are there recorded, are also *mentioned* by very antient *Heathen Writers*.—— And it is yet more important to shew, as we very easily may, That there is *Room* to go over the same leading *Thoughts*, with those insisted upon in the *Second* of the *Three Sermons* mentioned above, and to argue the *Credibility of the Story*, from the certain *Opportunities* which the *Writers* had of informing themselves as to the *certain Truth* of the *grand Facts* which they assert, as having themselves been *personally concerned* in them; and from those many *Marks of Integrity* and *Piety* to be found in their *Writings*, which may do as much as any *Thing* of that *Kind* can do, to obviate any *Suspicion* of an *Intention to deceive*.—— We may here also advance farther, and demonstrate beyond all *Contradiction*, That the *Facts asserted* were of such a *Nature*, as could not possibly have *gained Credit*, had they been *false*; yet that they did gain *most assured Credit*, of which the *Persons* receiving these *Books* gave the most *substantial Evidence* that can be imagined, by receiving, on the *Authority* of these *Facts*, a *System of Laws*, which tho' considered as to be *Divinely supported* they were admirably wise, yet were of such a *Nature*, that without *such an extraordinary Providence* as nothing but an *Affurance* of such an *Original* could have warranted them to expect, they must necessarily have proved *ruinous to the State* they were intended to regulate and establish\*.

A farther and very noble *Evidence* of the *Truth* of the *grand Facts* attested in the *Old Testament*, and of the *Inspiration* of a considerable *Part* of it, may be drawn

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\* The Reader will easily imagine, I here refer especially to the *Laws*, relating to letting all the *Land* lie fallow together once in *Seven Years*, and *Two Years* together at every *Jubilee*; the *Desertion* of their *Borders* at the *Three great Feasts*, when all the *Males* went up to the *Tabernacle* or *Temple*; and the *Disuse* of *Cavalry*; to omit some others.

from the Consideration of those numerous and various *Predictions* to be found in it; which refer to a Multitude of Events, several of them before utterly unexampled, which no Human Sagacity could possibly have foreseen, and which nevertheless happened exactly according to *those Predictions* \*.

Having advanced thus far, we may take up a *Set of Arguments* correspondent to those insisted on above, to prove from its *Genuineness* and *Credibility*, now supposed to be evinced, that the *Old Testament* was written by a *Superintendent Inspiration*: And this we may argue, not merely, or chiefly, from the *Tradition* to this Purpose, so generally and so early prevailing in the *Jewish Church*, tho' that is considerable; nor even from those very signal and glorious *Internal Evidences* of various Kinds, which every competent Judge may easily see and feel; but from surveying the *Characters* and *Circumstances* of the *Persons* by whom the several Books were written, in Comparison with the *Genius* of that Dispensation under which they lived and wrote. This may, in all the Branches of the Argument, be proved in this Way, with the greatest Ease and Strength, concerning *Moses*, and *his Writings*: And when the Authority of the *Pentateuch* is established, that of the most material *succeeding Books* stands in so easy and natural a Connection with it, that I think few have been found, at least since the Controversy between the *Jews* and the *Samaritans*, who have in good Earnest allowed *Moses* to have been a *Messenger from Heaven*, and denied the *Inspiration* of the *Prophets*, and of the Books which we receive as written by them.

But it is obvious, that the Illustration of *all these Propositions* would be the Work of a large Volume, rather than of such a *Postscript* to a *Dissertation*, itself of so moderate a Length. I have discussed them all, with the most material *Objections* which have been advanced against them, in that Course of *Theological Lectures*, which I mentioned in the *Preface* to the *First Volume*; and which it is my continual Care to render worthy the Acceptance of the Publick in due Time, by such Alterations and Additions as frequent Reviews, in Con-  
junction

\* See Dr. Sykes's *Connection*.



junction with what occurs to me in Reading, Conversation, or Meditation, may suggest.

I shall conclude these Hints, with the Mention of one Argument for the *Inspiration* of the *Old Testament*, entirely independent on all the former; which a few Words may set in a convincing Light, and which must be satisfactory to all who see the Reasonableness of acquiescing in what I have urged above. I mean,——That *the Inspiration*, and consequently *the Genuineness* and *Credibility*, of the *Old Testament*, may be certainly inferred from *that of the New* \* : Because *our Lord* and his *Apostles* were so far from charging the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, (who on all proper Occasions are censured so freely,) with having introduced into the *Sacred Volume* any merely Human Compositions; that, on the contrary, they not only recommend a diligent and constant Perusal of *these Scriptures*, as of the greatest Importance to Men's Eternal Happiness; but speak of them as *Divine Oracles*, and as written by the extraordinary Influence of the *Holy Spirit* upon the Minds of the Authors.

I desire that the following *List of Scriptures* may be attentively consulted, and reflected on in this View. I might

\* It may be objected to this, that the *Authority* of the *New Testament*, as stated in the *Sermons* referred to, and in most other *Defences of Christianity*, is in Part proved from the *Prophecies* of the *Old*; so that *the Argument* here urged would be circular. To which I would answer, (1.) That if we were to take *this Medium alone*, we must indeed substract from the *Proof of Christianity* all that Branch of its Evidence which grows from *Prophecies* in the *Old Testament*; and then, all that arises from *Miracles*, *Internal Arguments*, and the *wonderful Events* which have followed its First Promulgation, would stand in their full Force, first to demonstrate (I think, to high Satisfaction) *the Divine Original* of the *New Testament*, and then to prove *the Authority* of the *Old*. (2.) That most of the *Enemies* of the *Mosaick* and *Christian Revelations* con- vertheless own those which we call *the Prophetical Books* of the *Old Testament* to be *more antient* than *the New*: And on this Foundation alone, without first taking for granted, that they are either *inspired* or *genuine*, we derive an Argument for *Christianity*, from their *mere Existence*; and then may argue backward, that they were *Divinely inspired*, and therefore *genuine*; and so, by a farther Consequence, may infer from them *the Divine Authority* of the *Mosaick Religion*, which they so evidently attest: Which is an Argument something distinct from the *Testimony* of the *Authors* of the *New Testament*, but important enough to deserve a Mention.

might have added a great many more, indeed *several Hundreds*, in which the *Sacred Writers* of the *New Testament* argue from *those of the Old*, in such a Manner, as nothing could have justified, but a *firm Persuasion* that they were *Divinely inspired*. Now as the *Jesus* always allowed, "that the *Testimony* of an *approved Prophet* was sufficient to *confirm the Mission* of one who was supported "by it;" so I think every reasonable Man will readily conclude, that *no inspired Person* can *erroneously attest another* to be *inspired*: And indeed the very *Definition of Plenary Inspiration*, as stated above, absolutely excludes any Room for *Cavilling* on so plain a Head. I throw the *particular Passages* which I chuse to mention, into the *Margin* below \*; and he must be a *very indolent Enquirer* into a *Question* of so much *Importance*, who does not think it worth his while to *turn carefully to them*, unless he has already such a *Conviction* of the *Argument*, that it should need no farther to be *illustrated* or *confirmed*.

\* *Jobn* v. 39. *Mat.* iv. 4, 7, 10. *Mark* xii. 24. *Luke* x. 26, 27. *Mat.* v. 17, 18. xxi. 42. xxii. 29, 31, 43. xxiv. 15. xxvi. 54, 56. *Luke* i. 67, 69, 70. xvi. 31. xxiv. 25, 27. *Jobn* x. 35. *Acts* ii. 16, 25. iii. 22, 24. iv. 25. xvii. 11. xviii. 24, 28. xxviii. 25. *Rom.* iii. 2, 10. ix. 25, 27, 29. x. 5, 11, 16. xv. 4. xvi. 26. *1 Cor.* x. 11. *2 Cor.* iv. 13. vi. 16, 17. *Gal.* lii. 8. *1 Tim.* v. 18. *2 Tim.* iii. 15, 16. *Heb.* i. 1, 5,—13. iii. 7. *Jam.* ii. 8. iv. 5, 6. *1 Pet.* i. 10,—12. *2 Pet.* i. 19,—21.

*The END of the SECOND VOLUME.*







