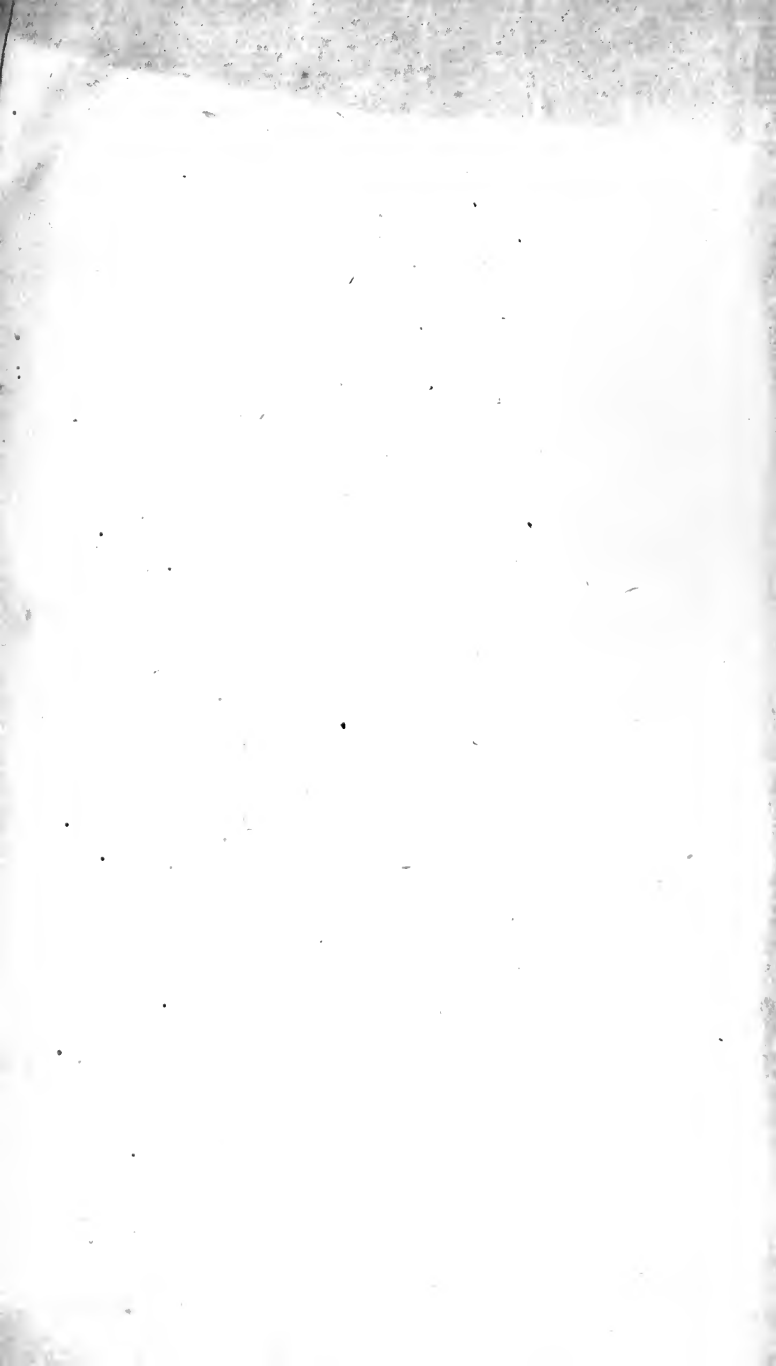
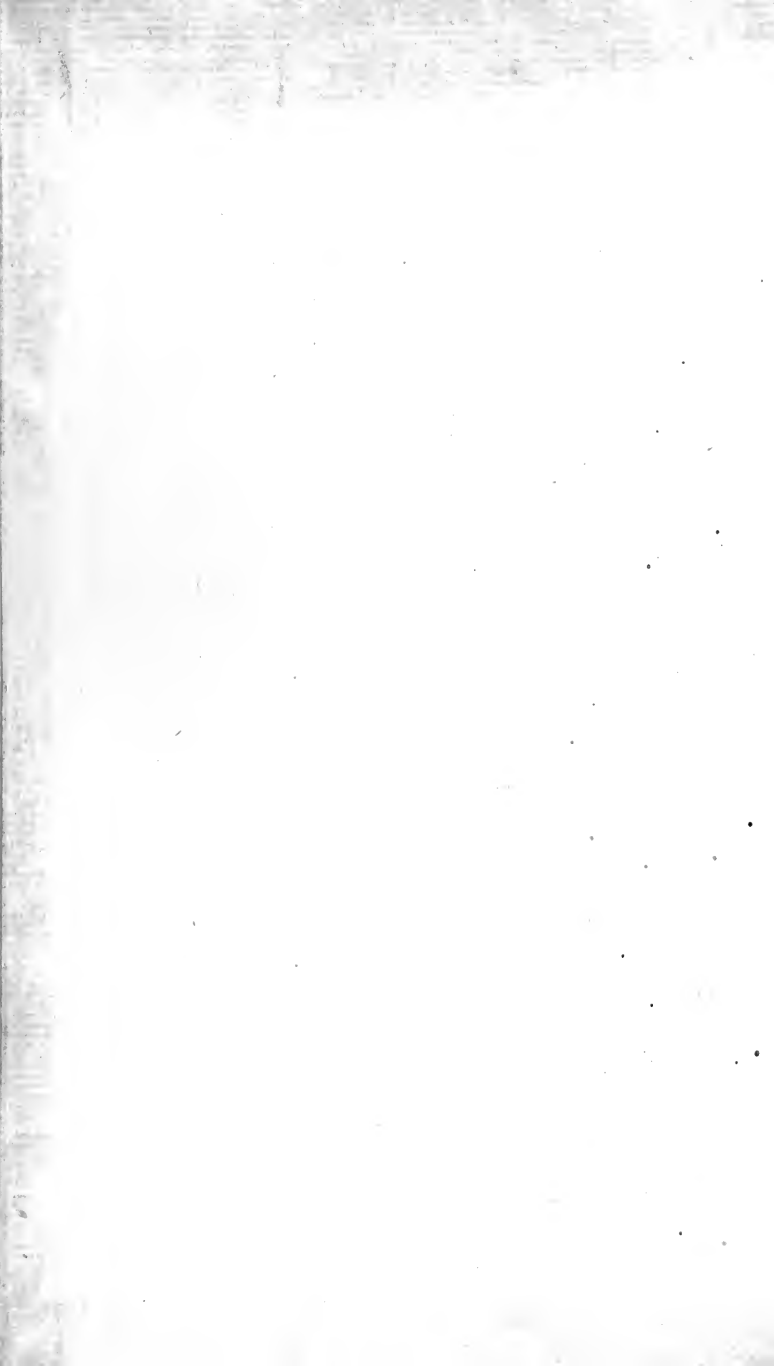




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T H E  
Divine Original,  
A N D  
Incomparable EXCELLENCY  
O F T H E  
*Christian Religion,*

As founded on the Holy SCRIPTURES,  
Asserted and Vindicated:

I N  
VIII SERMONS,  
Preach'd at the  
LECTURE

Founded by the Honourable  
*Robert Boyle Esq;*

In the Year of our Lord, 17<sup>09</sup><sub>10</sub> 546690  
25. 7. 52.

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By JOSIAH WOODWARD, D. D.

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L O N D O N:  
Printed and Sold by *Joseph Downing* in *Barthole-*  
*mew-Close* near *West-Smithfield*, 1712.

T H T  
Divine Original

A N D

Incomparable Excellence

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Christian Religion

As taught in the Holy Scriptures  
Altogether and Unmixed

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PREACHED AT

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Reverend Mr. Field

In the Year of our Lord 1723

By Joseph Woodcock

A N D

Printed and Sold by J. Woodcock in the  
City of London, in the Strand, at the Sign of the

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T O T H E

Most Reverend Father in GOD,

**T H O M A S**

Lord ARCH-BISHOP of

**CANTERBURY,**

And PRIMATE of all

*England, &c.*

Trustee of the pious CHARITY  
of the late Honourable

**ROBERT BOYLE, Esq;**

For founding a Yearly LECTURE,  
in Opposition to *Atheism, Deism, &c.*

The following

**S E R M O N S**

Are humbly Dedicated.

T H E

M O S T R E V E R E N D F A T H E R I N G O D,  
T H E  
**CONTENTS.**

**T**HE *Incomparable Excellency of the Christian Religion, founded on Divine Revelation, asserted and vindicated: In Eight Sermons; shewing,*

Sermon I. *The Certainty of GOD's Being, and of his Universal Government.*

Serm. II. *The Divine Light, Succour, and Comfort of the Christian Religion.*

Serm. III. *The Divine Original of the Holy Scriptures.*

Serm. IV. *The Divinity of our LORD Jesus Christ.*

Serm. V. *Further Proofs of it.*

Serm. VI. *Causes of Modern Infidelity.*

Serm. VII. *The Reasonableness of the Christian Hope.*

Serm. VIII. *The due Practice of our Holy Religion, a good Refutation of Infidels and Scoffers.*



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# SERMON I.

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The Certainty of GOD's Being,  
and of his universal Government.

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1 Corinth. I. 21.

*For after that, in the Wisdom of GOD,  
the World by Wisdom knew not  
GOD, it pleased GOD by the  
Foolishness of Preaching to save  
them that believe.*

**T**HE Design of these *Lectures*  
being to manifest the in-  
comparable *Excellency* of the  
*Christian Religion*, as found-  
ed on *divine Revelation*, in Opposition  
to the Insults of NOTORIOUS INFI-  
DELS; the Text before us affords a  
solid Ground for this Undertaking, in  
a Way too, as remote as any I could  
think of, from what has been already  
insisted on in this Place. For here  
St. Paul's Argument from the Com-  
passion

passion of the infinitely good GOD to the Ignorance of Men, in revealing to them, by his *Incarnate SON* and *Inspired Servants*, many Truths of the greatest Importance, which they could never have found out by their *natural Light*; gives us a good Evidence of the *Truth and Excellency* of the *Gospel-Revelation*, and consequently of the *Christian Religion* that is built upon it.

For we may hence argue with good Reason, that the *Christian Religion* cannot but be true, because it is built on the *Word of GOD*; that the *Word of GOD* cannot fail us, because it is his very Nature to be *infinitely Perfect*, and therefore *infallibly true*; that the *Scriptures*, which *Christians* call the *Word of GOD*, appear to be so, because they reveal such excellent *Doctrine* as is far above the *Sphere* of the *Wisdom of the World*, or meer humane *Wisdom*. For after that, in the *Wisdom of GOD*, the *World* by *Wisdom* knew not *GOD*, it pleased *GOD* by the *Foolishness of Preaching* to save them that believe.

That is, when *GOD* in his *Wisdom* saw, that the *Light of Nature* in *Men* was not sufficient to guide them

them to their *true Happiness*, and to instate them in it; and that their best natural *Notions* and moral *Rules*, could not advance them to such a Knowledge of their Maker, as would reduce them to his *Likeness* and *Favour*, it pleased GOD to send his SON in the Flesh, and to inspire his Prophets and Apostles with his *Spirit*, to lead and support Men in the Ways of eternal Happiness; and tho' this was not done in the Flourishes of humane Eloquence, and was therefore censured, by Men conceited of their own Learning, as *foolish* and inaccurate, yet thus it pleased GOD to save them that believe; that is, them that received these holy Truths with resigned *Minds* and *Hearts*.

It will be to our Purpose to remark, that whereas the *Learning* of Greece was in great Reputation in the World, when this great Apostle of the *Gentiles* wrote this first Letter of his to the *Grecian Converts*: It was expedient that he should shew them, how far the *divine Philosophy* of the Christian Religion excell'd those *crude* and unsuitable Notions of Things, which their *wisest Men* had attained by their imperfect *natural Light*;

minding them, that since they were instructed in the divine Doctrine of the Gospel, they were advanced in useful *Knowledge* and solid *Learning*, far above any Thing they could ever have attained by the Instructions of their best Philosophers.

For, of all Knowledge, that is certainly the highest and best, which brings Men to the truest Sentiments of GOD and themselves; and by correcting their Errors, and purging away their Corruptions, brings them first to the *Likeness*, and then to the *Favour* of GOD.

Now, had there been any Power or Sufficiency in *Nature* to have wrought this great *Change* and *Cure* on the Souls of Men; the infinitely wise GOD would never have been at the inestimable Expence (if I may so express it) of the *Sacrifice* of his dear SON, which was the *Price* of our Redemption; nor of the marvellous Effusion of his *Holy Spirit* for the *Sanctification* of Men and for the inditing of the holy Scriptures, which are called *His Oracles*. For these were the Effects of GOD's infinite Mercy and Compassion, says the  
*Text,*

Serm. I. *Being of GOD.*

5

*Text*, after that he saw, that the whole Sum of *humane Wisdom*, gathered up out of all the pretended Stores of it among the *Jewish Rabbies*, and the *Gentile Philosophers*, could not amount to such a Pitch of true Wisdom, as to make Men *wise to Salvation*, as every true Christian is taught of *GOD* to be.

Yea, what is still worse, when *GOD* in his Wisdom saw, that the *Rabbinical Notions* of the *Jews*, and the *natural Theology* of the *Gentiles*, were not only *empty* and *insufficient* Instructions, which could never make Men *wise* and *good*; but, on the contrary, that they were for the most part pernicious *Fables* and *Delusions*, which were to be renounced and cashier'd; as we read, 1 Cor. I. 18. *I will destroy the Wisdom of the wise*, (the then famous *Sages* (*Σοφοί*) that were the *Masters of Wisdom* among the *Heathens*,) *and will bring to nothing the Understanding of the Prudent*. Intimating, that the glorious Light of Revelation would bring Men to condemn the then magnified Sentences of their *Philosophers*, and their imperfect Doctrines of *humane Prudence*.

This is likewise applicable to the Folly of the prophane *Wits* of Greece, such as their *Lucian*, *Celsus*, and other *Scoffers*; who would indulge their prophane Jest upon Religion, (as some others have since) tho' to the Hazard or Ruine of their Souls, and therefore droll'd on the Sermons of the Apostles, as unpolite and inaccurate Discourses, tho' their Preaching was indeed the Wisdom of GOD for the Salvation of Men. Thus *professing themselves to be wise, they became Fools.*

But the Rebuke chiefly points at the Institutions of their most celebrated Philosophers, which the Text calls *the Wisdom of the World*, or meer *humane Wisdom*; of which it may be truly affirmed, that it never gave Men a *perfect Scheme* of moral *Doctrines* and *Rules of Life*, from right *Principles* and for just *Ends*; and that it never could *excite* in Men a sufficient Power to conform to them, in their inward Dispositions and outward Deportment.

So that we find them exploded in the Verse before the Text. *Where is the*

*Wise?* (the σοφῶν) probably the *Moralist*, such as the Seven wise Men of Greece, as Dr. Hammond understands it: *Where is the Scribe?* (Γραμματικός) probably the learned *Philologer*, as *Tertullian* renders it: *Where is the Disputer of this World?* (Συζητητής) the Searcher and Inquirer into the Nature of Things, which the *Hebrews* call the *natural Philosopher* or *Magician*. *Hath not God made foolish* (says our Apostle) *the Wisdom of this World?* Hath he not, by the Light of revealed Truth, demonstrated the Imperfection and Ignorance of those who were greatly esteemed in the World for their Learning and Knowledge? And justly turned the Reproach of *Folly*, on such as term'd the preaching of the Gospel *Foolishness?*

It is far from my Intention, (and we are sure, it was far from the Design of the *Noble and Learned Founder* of these Lectures,) to cast any injurious Reflexion on *humane Reason*, truly so call'd; or upon the due Improvement of natural Light by *humane Learning*. The intellectual Capacity of Man, is the Glory of his Nature; and the Improvement of it by

Study and Reasoning, is one of our best and brightest Embellishments. But I am to shew, as my Text does, the Imperfection of both these, yea, the Darkness and Insufficiency of the best humane Knowledge, unassisted by *Divine Light and Succour*, to make Men truly *wise* and *good*, and to render them duly *happy* and at *Rest*, in the present Satisfaction of a well-grounded Peace with GOD, and in the *blessed Hope* of his eternal Kingdom.

This is the Scope of the Apostle's Argument throughout a great Part of this Chapter: And this is very reasonable Doctrine for these Times, wherein *Deism* (that is indeed *Heathenism*) is so much pleaded for, and gloried in, and the Writings of *Heathens* more *perused*, (I wish I could not say, esteem'd) by some Persons, than the *Sacred Books* of GOD.

Have we not seen humane Learning exalted in Opposition to the Principles of the Christian Faith? And the *Oracles* (alas!) of *humane Reason* set up in Defiance of the *Oracles* of GOD? Truly these Persons are in a ready Way to erect *Altars*



to their own Understanding; yea, some have already *sacrificed* their *Faith* and *Hope* thereon; But this their senseless Idol is dash'd in pieces by that one Sentence of divine Wisdom, *He that thinketh he knoweth any Thing, as yet knoweth nothing as he ought:* For it is a manifest Defect in *Sense*, not to be conscious of our own *Ignorance*.

<sup>1</sup> Cor.  
VIII. 2.

I do readily grant, that the Memory of some excellent *Heathens*, will ever deserve Honour and Esteem in the *Christian* World; and that some of their Writings will be of perpetual Use in their Place: But when Men professedly revolt from the Guidance of *GOD's Holy Spirit*, and fancy their own Wit and Ability to be a more sufficient Director and Assistant in the Ways of Truth and Piety: When they affirm, that the *Candles* of Mens natural Reason give a *better Light* than the *Noon-Day* Beams of the *Sun of Righteousness*, and extol the *Instructions* of moral *Philosophers*, above the *Inspirations* of the holy *Prophets* and *Apostles*; it is then high Time for such as would partake of the *Christian Hope*, through Faithfulness to the

the *Author and Finisher of their Faith*, to contend earnestly for the *Principles* of their divine Religion, and for the *Christian Prerogatives* built thereon; and to declare their Preference of one *Epistle of the Holy Apostles* before the whole World of *uninspired Treatises*. And this, for the Reason alledged in the Text; namely, because one Book of the *New Testament* may lead us, by the Grace of GOD which accompanies it, to the saving Knowledge of GOD in his SON *Jesus Christ*, which all the *Volumes* of the Heathens can never do. For, when in the *Wisdom of GOD*, the World by *Wisdom* knew not GOD; it pleased GOD by the *Foolishness of Preaching*, to save them that believe.

In treating of these Words, I shall desire you to remark,

I. That whereas our Apostle affirms, that the *Gentile World by their Wisdom* (or *Philosophy*) knew not GOD; he does not mean, that the Light of Nature is not able to discover the Being and prime Attributes of GOD, for he elsewhere affirms that

that it is, in Opposition to the *Atheist*.

II. That the Words of the Text do imply, yea, they do expressly declare, that many Truths of great Importance to the present Peace and everlasting Happiness of Men, are clearly revealed in the holy Gospel, which could not be duly known by the Light of Nature; in Opposition to the *Deist* and other *Infidels*. For, when in the Wisdom of GOD, the World by Wisdom knew not GOD, it pleased GOD, by the Foolishness of Preaching, to save them that believe.

Let us in the first Place observe, that whereas the Apostle affirms in the Text, that the *Heathen World*, by their *Wisdom* (or *Philosophy*) knew not GOD; he does not mean, that the *Light of Nature* in Men, is not sufficient to discern the *Being* and *prime Attributes* of GOD; for he elsewhere affirms that it is, in Opposition to the *Atheist*.

This same Apostle is very positive in this Point, in his Epistle to the *Romans*, (Chap. I. Ver. 20.) where he de-

declares, That the invisible Things of G O D, from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead; so that they, the Heathens, if they are ignorant of this Truth, are without Excuse; for that it is scarce imaginable, that a Man, in the right Use of his Senses, can be a steady and a persevering Atheist; for there are Five Demonstrations of a Deity continually before his Eyes.

I. The admirable Frame of the visible Universe.

II. The manifest Footsteps of an over-ruling Providence.

III. The reasonable Sentiments of all wise and sober Persons in all Ages and Countries, concerning these Things.

IV. The wonderful Frame and Contexture of our own Bodies.

V. The divine Faculties and Operations of our Souls.

These are such Evidences of the Being and Government of G O D, as nothing but such a Degeneracy in Men

Men as is perfectly *brutal*, can wholly overlook.

I begin with the first Indication of a Deity, in the admirable Frame of the visible Universe, which must refute Atheism, wherever there is reasonable Thought.

Can a Man retain this senseless Thought when he looks up to Heaven, and sees those innumerable Globes of beauteous Light, which fill the dazzling Hemisphere? Many of them vastly bigger than the whole Mass of this terraqueous Globe on which we live, yet observing the most exact Order and Discipline, like an Army under the strictest Command.

The fixed Stars of the first Magnitude, which to the common View appear but as the Sparks of Diamonds in a Crociat, are most certainly of a very vast Bigness. The most accurate Judges of the Matter assure us, that many of them are above a Hundred Times bigger than the whole Earth; and some learned Astronomers astonish us with very reasonable Conjectures, of their being so many *Suns* to other Globes, which  
may

may perhaps be as likely to be inhabited as this under our Feet.

That glorious Creature the SUN, is so admirable for its Beauty and Usefulness, that it has been adored by almost all the Heathen World in all Ages; insomuch that infinite Wisdom saw Reason to foreclose that beaten Path to Idolatry, by a special Law given to his peculiar People, (*Deut. IV. 19.*) For indeed this principal Luminary of Heaven, is wonderful beyond Expression, too splendid to be steadily beheld, too transcendent to be fully known. The Frame, Glory, Position, Motion, and Uses of this admirable Globe of Light appear clearly to be the Effects of infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, to all but resolute and abandoned Infidels. And how senseless and besotted are they, who cannot conceive that a common *Lamp* or *Candle* could be made and lighted up by Chance, and yet affirm it of this most *glorious Planet*, which is the *Ornament* of the Heavens, and the *Life*, under GOD, of this lower World? How comes it so minutely just in its Distributions betwixt  
Light

Light and Darknes, that it has not rob'd the Night of one Moment due unto it by the Laws of their Constitution, for above Five Thousand Years past, except where the special Command of the Creator interposed, as in the Days of *Josbua*? (*Jos. X. 12.*) Should the Sun remove to a greater Distance from the Earth, we should perish with Cold; should it come nearer, we should be burnt up: Whence then comes this nice and exact Order in Things without Sense? And how come they to serve so wonderfully to such good and merciful Ends? And to continue so to do, without Interruption or Decay? Truly, these and a Thousand other Queries of the like Nature, cannot be accounted for to a wise Man, by the random Fancies of *blind Chance* or *meer Nature*; but the only reasonable Account of all is, that these are the *glorious Works* of the Omnipotent G O D, (the Παντοκράτωρ) *who is wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in working,* (*Isa. XXVIII. 29.*) Were there no other *Proof* of a Deity but this, a discerning Man could never be an *Atheist*, were he never so willing to be

be One for some carnal Respects; for even a Man of common Sense would chuse rather to be deprived of his Reason, by a natural *Idiotism* or *Phrensy*, than to be bubbled out of it by such palpable *Delusions*.

It is truly said, *The Heavens declare the Glory of GOD, and the Firmament sheweth his handy Work,* (Psal. XIX. 1.) These are *natural Sermons* on the Subject of the Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of their Maker; and they speak in the true universal Language, known of all: Nor can the Scoffers call this *the Foolishness of Preaching*, because the *wisest Men* of all Ages have been instructed by them.

If we hence descend to consider the admirable Nature and Uses of the *Air*, with all the various Kinds of *Birds* that inhabit it, from the little Hum-bird in *America*, not much bigger than a Fly, and that weighs but a few Grains, to the Ostrich of Eight Foot, and the Ruck in *Madagascar*, of many Hundred Weight.

If we consider in the next Place, the Element of *Water*, with the invaluable Uses and medicinal Tinctures thereof; together with the un-



unspeakable Variety of *Fishes*, which increase in Sholes, and grow up in different Sizes and Shapes, from the little Minny to the mountainous Whale.

And if at Length we come down to the *Earth*, and consider it as the common Promptuary of all Things living; with the many *Beasts* of Burden and Food, of Diversion and of Prey, that live upon it, from the little Mite wick is hardly visible, to the vast Elephant, whose Bulk is terrible. If we consider withal the wisely proportionable Capacities of these Animals; for if the Horse had less *Sense*, he would not be fit to be our Servant; and had he more, he would be our Master. If the wild Beasts and Birds for Food had less *Sagacity*, they could not preserve their own Lives, so as to continue the Species; and if they were more subtile, we should never be able to catch them for our Use.

If we consider also the *Vegetables* of the Earth, we find that they abound in Virtue and Variety to such Degrees, that the ingenious Author of *Micrography* proves, by mathematical Proportion,  
 C that

that one Kind of them exceeds some other Kinds in Size above *Two Millions of Millions*. The wise King of Israel, who wrote of them all, *from the Hyssop on the Wall to the Cedar in Lebanon*, performed a Work of unspeakable Use to Mankind, for one Leaf of which, a learned Physician of ours (Sir Thomas Brown) professed himself ready to part with his whole Library, which was very valuable. But after all, Solomon's Subject excell'd its Author, in the very Thing too, wherein he out-did other Princes, namely, in *Splendour* and fine *Array*; for a greater than Solomon hath affirmed, That that magnificent Prince, *in all his Glory, was not array'd like the Lilly in the Field; or, as some explain it, the Tullip in the Garden.*

If we consider also those innumerable Creatures, with which almost every Leaf is plentifully stock'd, tho' they are not *visible* to us without the Assistance of proper Glasses: Every One of which very probably contributes its *Mite* toward the Accommodation of Man.

And

And if after all, we consider the numerous *Kinds* of *Minerals* and *Fossils* which abound in the Bowels of the Earth, with their various *Uses* and *Virtues* for the Benefit of humane Life; together with those Interspersions of *marine Shells* which are found among them all, which are so many *Demonstrations* of the *Deluge*, and consequently of the Being and Government of *GOD*: I say, whosoever considers these Things with the proper Judgment of a *Rational Being*, cannot but cry out, in the highest Veneration of the *Maker* of all Things, as a wise Prince once did; *O LORD! How wonderful are thy Works? In Wisdom hast thou made them all.*

Let us now leave the Survey of the glorious *Fabrick* of the World, and come to the wise *Government* of it, which will afford us a *Second Proof* of the *Being* of a Deity.

II. The manifest *Footsteps* of an *overruling Providence*, by which all Things in the Heavens and in the Earth, are preserv'd and dispos'd for infinitely wise and good *Ends*, are another

Demonstration of the Being and Perfections of a Supreme Director and Governour.

Can any One, that has the Use of Reason, conceive that the *Sun* and *Moon*, and the innumerable *Host* of **Heaven**, can be so exactly *marschal'd* and *march'd*, without the *Command* and *Orders* of some *Great General*? Can those Millions of living Creatures which abound in the *Air*, *Earth*, and *Water*, be so constantly subsisted and provided for, without the *Care* and *Contrivance* of some *common Provider*? Would not so large a Family as that of the whole World, very often want many *Necessaries*, did not their *Heavenly Father* provide for all the Members of it, *filling all the Earth with his Plenteousness*?

Who can consider the political Adjustment of *Power* and *Interest* in the various *Nations*, *States*, and *Governments* of the World, by which the greater Potentates are obliged in *Interest* to preserve the less, and by which the *whole Administration* of *Worldly Government* is admirably adjusted, except where the *Sins* of Men by their *Disorder*, cause their

own

own Punishment, which is still a further Evidence of a divine Providence: I say, who can consider this, without a forcible Inducement to admire and adore the infinitely wise and good *Disposer of all Things, whose Dominion is an everlasting Dominion, and whose Kingdom ruleth over all?*

There is also a *special* Providence attending good Men, as legible to all the World in the admirable Administrations of divine Providence, as to Christians in the Holy Bible.

The Accomplishment of *Joseph's* Prophetick *Dreams* by a long Train of dark Providences; the Deliverance of *David* when surrounded by his mortal Enemy, by the Invasion of the Land by the *Philistines* at that very Moment; and the righteous and seasonable Promotion of *Mordecai* the Jew, with the surprizing Disgrace and Execution of *Haman* his avowed Enemy, are Demonstrations of a watchful and tender Providence above, and serve as Clews to trace the wise and wonderful Footsteps of the Government of the World, thro' all its mysterious Windings and Turnings.

Of this the most prudent and virtuous Men of all Ages have been fully perswaded: Which leads to the *Third Proof of a Deity*.

III. If we consult the *Sentiments* of the *wisest* and *best* Men of all Ages, in all Parts of the World, we shall find in them an unanimous Acknowledgment and Fear of a *Supreme Being*, who *made* them, and will call them to *Account*. We find many Philosophers, Statesmen, and Men of the best *Parts* and *Learning*, influenced by these *Sentiments*, and we find the same Impressions on *Emperors*, *Princes*, and great *Generals*: The former were *too wise* to be *impos'd* upon, and the latter *too great* to be *over-aw'd* by vain Imaginations. Yea, we have seen and heard of many Persons of all Ranks, whose *Sins* have been so turned into *Punishments* by the Horroir of their Minds, that we cannot but look upon them, not only as *Prefages*, but as *Introductions* of a Judgment to come.

On the other Side, the same Power of *Conscience* comforts and cheers up the innocent Person, tho' under *Injuries*

juries and Aspersions, that he feels a Satisfaction which he cannot express, and would not part with for the whole World.

These present Evidences of a divine Superintendency are so general and so observable, that I cannot but be persuaded, that if any Person who so ever did but take a true and full Account of the *Good* and *Bad* Purposes and Endeavours of his past Life, with the *Favours* and *Rebukes* of divine Providence that have attended them, he would often find himself stop'd and turn'd back from ill Purposes by an invisible Opposition, (in his *first* Applications to ill Courses) like *Balaam* in his Pursuit of the *Wages* of *Unrighteousness*; and as often animated and encouraged in the Ways of *Virtue* and *Piety*, more especially in his *Sufferings* for it, as *St. Paul* in his *Shipwreck*, by the comforting Voice of *G O D*, saying, *Fear not Paul, for I am with thee.*

(I am afraid of being prolix on so growing a Subject, and will therefore only produce the Testimonies of those *Two Domestick Witnesses* of a Deity, which every Man carries about with

him wherever he goes, that is, his *Body* and his *Soul*.

IV. The *Body* of Man is such an admirable Piece of Mechanism, that the Lectures of *Galen* upon it, raised him; we see, to a higher Pitch of Devotion, than we perceive in any of his other Discourses: And the ingenious *Scharron*, descants on the Frame of a Man's Hand, fitted for so many various and excellent Uses, as a *Miracle in Nature*. What shall we then say of the *Eye*, and all the curious Organs of our other *Senses*? What of the noble *Palace* of *Thought* in the *Brain*; and of the *Laboratory* of *Life* in the *Heart*? What of the regular *Circulation* of that noble *Fluid*, the *Blood*? returning back in just Seasons to the *Fountain*, to receive new *Spirit* and *Life*, by a new *Reflection*; To this, *Solemon* is thought to allude, when he describes the *Approach* of *Death*, as *breaking the Wheel at the Cistern*, (*Eccles. XII. 6.*) confounding, say they, the *Circulation* of the *Blood*, and running the very *Cistern*, the *Heart*, that supplied it.

What



What can we in Reason conceive of the capillary Vessels in our Bodies, not so big as a *Hair* of our Head, and of other superfine Pieces of Workmanship appearing therein, by the Use of Microscopes, but as of the *wonderful Works* of GOD? So that every sensible Person will find himself constrained to cry out on this Occasion, with the Psalmist, (*Psal. CXXXIX. 14.*) *I will praise Thee, O LORD, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: Great and marvellous are thy Works, and that my Soul knoweth right well.* This properly introduces the other *Witness* of a Deity, which was the last to be considered.

V. The other Witness is a very noble One, our *S O U L*; of whose *Original* and *Capacity* no reasonable Account can be given, without the Supposition of a *Deity*. We find nothing in this visible World that has such noble Faculties and Operations, as the Soul of Man; that can *reason* and *reflect*, *fore-cast* and *recollect*, *meditate* and *abstract*, as we our selves can: Nor is it conceivable, that meer Matter can be wrought up to this

this Pitch of Rationality, because there is no Degree of it in Things merely material. Man is surely something higher and better than a refined Stone, or a superior Mushroom. Besides, we find something of Religion connatural to Man; for tho' the learned Mr. Lock does not allow of innate Ideas of GOD in the Reasonable Soul, yet he affirms, that the Sentiments of a Deity are so agreeable to Reason, and so deducible from all Things that a Man beholds, that his Reason is prone to receive the Notion of a GOD, and to fall in with it, upon the first Hint or Inquiry. This serves our Purpose as much as the Supposition of innate Ideas. For, if the Constitution of Man be so framed, that he can no sooner open the Eyes of his Mind, and think like a Man, but he discerns the Glory of his Omnipotent Maker, his Reason must as naturally conclude, that the highest Veneration ought to be given to infinite Majesty, the highest Affection to infinite Goodness, the greatest Fear to infinite Power, and the firmest Obedience to infinite Authority; and that it must be the best Improvement

of

of humane Nature to resemble the *Truth, Justice, and Beneficence* of GOD, which is the Sum of *natural Religion*.

So that *Religion* is as true as our *Faculties*. If there be such a Thing as *Reason*, there is a GOD of infinite *Perfection*; for thus is the Lesson that true Reason reads in every Page of the *Book of Nature*: And if there be an All-perfect Being who made us, we ought in *Duty, in Interest, and in Honour*, to love, reverence and serve this glorious Being, all the Days of our Life.

This proves the *Atheist* to be the most *unreasonable* Person in the World, like an *Ape* or a *Baboon*, which have only such a Likeness of Man as disgraces the Species: And therefore the best *Philosophers* of old allowed no better Title to the Followers of *Epicurus*, than the *Swine* of *Epicurus's Herd*.

The Principles of *Atheism* are also the most *mischievous* of any to humane Society; They loosen the Bonds of civil Government, and destroy the Foundations of humane Commerce and social Confidence.

For,

For, if a Man stands in no Fear of future Punishment, he may hope to escape the present by Privacy, or Power, or Flight; and so be prompted to do any Ill that serves his Lust or Passion.

The Atheist has also a very *dark* and desolate Sort of Life; for, being cut off from the common Succour of Man from GOD, his *Fountain-Good*; he stands alone in all the Shocks of this uncertain Life; and so, in any great Affliction, is crush'd by the Weight of it, and flees to those dismal Refuges, the *Pistol*, the *Knife*, or the *Halter*.

These were the Ends of those prime Patrons of Irreligion, *Epicurus* and *Lucretius*, as it is affirmed by Two ancient Historians: And the Two Modern Admirers of *Lucretius*, one of which translated his Book into *English Prose*, and the other into *Verse*, followed their Author in his sad *Exit*, the one by a *Pistol*, and the other by a *Halter*. And what must be the Portion of these Men in the other World, if, instead of *Lucretius's* Poetick Fancy of the Soul's *vanishing into soft Air*, they find St. Paul's Words

Words true, *We must all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, to receive according as we have done in the Body, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil?* Here they'll find themselves at once deceived and undone for ever.

Let us therefore now make a few prudent and serious Reflexions on the important Matter before us: Since Atheism then appears to our Reason to be a most absurd Imagination in the *Theory*, let us ever abhor it as the most detestable Villany in *Practice*. If it be a *Folly* to think there is no GOD; it can be no less than a *Phrensy* to acknowledge a GOD infinitely *righteous* and *holy*, and yet insult his *Laws* and contemn his *Threatnings*; as a profess'd Atheist once replied to a Person of corrupt *Morals* that exclaim'd against the Absurdity of his *Principles*.

Atheism is indeed most vile and execrable both in the *Speculation* and the *Practice*: And on both these Accounts, we are in extreme Danger at this Day; to wit, by Reason of that speculative Infidelity which is abetted by Persons of no mean *Rank* and *Parts*, and by the *practical* Infidelity  
of

of those who own better Principles. All this too, under the brightest Beams of *divine Light*.

May the infinite Mercy of GOD prevent the pernicious Consequences of these *portentous* Evils, by our speedy and general Amendment. And to this End,

May the *Holy Scriptures* regain their just Authority over the Minds and Manners of Men; and may every Thing that relates to the *Great and Holy GOD*, be treated with a *distinguishing* Reverence and Regard.

May the Glorious and Awful Name of Almighty GOD never be prophaned any more among Us. And may the intolerable Imprecation of Damnation, which is an implicit Atheism, never again be uttered in our Language.

May every One that is call'd a *Christian*, walk in the *Fear of GOD all the Day long*; demonstrating that there is such a Place and State as Heaven, by their apparent *Conversation* therein.

May

May such Silence and Seriousness fill our Churches and Cathedrals, as may affect the Atheist himself, and constrain him to confess, that GOD is among us of a Truth.

May all prophane Plays and Pamphlets be banish'd from Us, with all trifling and jesting about Religious Matters: And may such an awful Veneration appear in mentioning the tremendous Name of GOD, as was observable in the Honourable Founder of these Lectures; whom I never observed to mention that Great and Holy Name, even in common Discourse, but with a most awful and observable Reverence.

In a Word, as the whole Earth is a visible Scene of the Goodness of GOD, may it ever be an universal Temple of his Praise.

I shall only add, that such as will not allow themselves Time to consider these great Things now, will have abundant Leisure, as well as Cause, to revolve them in their Minds with infinite Anguish and Regret, in the eternal World. May it please GOD, infinite in Mercy, to prevent  
this

37 *The Certainty of GOD's, &c. Serm. I.*

this irreparable Ruine of Men, by their timely Repentance, for the sake of Jesus Christ our only Saviour; to whom, with the Father and the Eternal Spirit, be all Praise and Glory ascribed evermore. *Amen.*

The first part of this Sermon is a  
description of the state of the  
souls of those who are  
in a state of sin and  
unbelief. It is a state of  
darkness and misery, and  
of the most dangerous nature.

The second part of this Sermon is  
a description of the state of the  
souls of those who are  
in a state of grace and  
faith. It is a state of  
light and joy, and of the  
most precious nature.

The third part of this Sermon is  
a description of the state of the  
souls of those who are  
in a state of temptation and  
struggle. It is a state of  
darkness and light, and of  
the most dangerous nature.

**SERMON**

The first part of this Sermon is  
a description of the state of the  
souls of those who are  
in a state of sin and  
unbelief. It is a state of  
darkness and misery, and  
of the most dangerous nature.

The second part of this Sermon is  
a description of the state of the  
souls of those who are  
in a state of grace and  
faith. It is a state of  
light and joy, and of the  
most precious nature.



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# SERMON II.

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The divine Light, Succour, and Comfort of the Christian Religion.

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1 Corinth. I. 21.

*For after that, in the Wisdom of GOD, the World by Wisdom knew not GOD, it pleased GOD by the Foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.*

**H**AVING remark'd, in a former Discourse on these Words, that whereas the Apostle of the Gentiles affirms here, that the Gentile World, by their best *Wisdom*, (or Philosophy) *knew not GOD*; he does

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not mean, that the Light of Nature is not able to discover the Being and prime Attributes of GOD ; for he elsewhere affirms that it is, in Opposition to the *Atheist*. *The invisible Things of GOD* (saith he, *Rom. I. 20.*) *from the Creation, (or ever since Men were created upon Earth) are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and God-head, so that they (the Heathens) are without Excuse :*

We now come to consider what the Apostle doth particularly intend, and expressly declare in these Words ; which is,

II. That many Truths, of great Importance to our present *Peace* and everlasting *Happiness*, are revealed in the *Holy Scriptures*, which could not be duly known by the Light of Nature ; in Opposition to the *Deist*, and other *Unbelievers*. *For, when in the Wisdom of GOD, the World by Wisdom knew not GOD ; it pleased GOD by the Foolishness of Preaching, to save them that believe.*

We readily grant, that the Law of Nature is the Law of GOD. He who gave Man a rational Mind

to know and consider the Infinite Perfections of his Maker, did by the natural Result of the same Reason teach and oblige him to esteem, reverence and regard that infinitely perfect Being in a supreme Manner. *This is Natural Religion*, namely, a comparing of the *Nature* of GOD and the *Nature* of Man together, by the best Light that human Reason gives, and a drawing of proper Conclusions from these Premises. So that Natural Religion is as sure as our Faculty of Reasoning; and the natural Conscience of the Heathens did accordingly *smite* or *cheer* them, by very sensible Reflections, as they observed or disobey'd those Rules and *Laws* of their *Minds*.

But now, it must also be granted, that whatever was truly apprehended of GOD by *Natural Light*, is more clearly and fully known by the superinduced Light of *Revelation*. Yea farther, it cannot be denied, that many other Truths are revealed of GOD by way of Mercy and Succour to sinful Men, relating to their *Pardon* and *Peace*, *Sanctification* and *Salvation*, which could

not be discovered by the Light of Nature in its highest Improvement. Yea, what is greater yet, there is a *Divine Warmth* as well as *Light* imparted to Men by the rising of the SUN of Righteousness: The Gospel is attended with a *Power from on High*, (*Acts I. 8.*) which influences the Practice of the Doctrines it reveals; being the *Power*, as well as the *Wisdom* of GOD unto *Salvation*: For thus it pleases GOD to save them that believe; that is, them that so firmly believe the Gospel to be the Will of GOD, as to make it the Rule of their *Faith* and *Practice*.

Hence it is, that those wise and learned Men of Old, who having thoroughly considered the Writings of the *Heathen Moralists*, were afterwards enlightened by the *Christian Revelation*, were filled with Admiration at the surpassing Excellency of this Divine Dispensation of the Gospel; crying out, with that Primitive Martyr S. *Justin*, *This is the only true and safe Philosophy I ever found.*

The Wisdom of this World, mentioned in the Text, is a *False Wisdom*,  
or

or rather Wisdom falsely so called; as *Lactantius* proves at large, with a Force of Argument equal to the Sweetness of his Eloquence, in his *Third Book of False Wisdom, Chapter the Fifteenth. Nulla itaq; Ratio, &c.* “ There is no Reason (says he) “ or Science or Law of good Life, “ unless it be built on the only “ true and heavenly Wisdom, (the “ holy Gospel,) which hath been un- “ known to the *Philosophers*. For “ their terrene Knowledge being “ false, may be various, multiform, “ and contrary to it self: But as “ there is *one Maker* and Gover- “ nour of this World, GOD; so “ there can be but *one Source* “ of uncorrupt Truth; because “ whatsoever is true and perfect, “ must of necessity be uniform and “ unmix’d. And in the Sequel of his admirable Discourse, he makes it clear and undeniable to the last Degree of moral certainty, that the Heathens could not by their utmost Study attain the true way of *worshiping* GOD, or *reforming* themselves in the inward Man.

The inspired Wise Man tells us, That *the Spirit of Man is the Candle of the Lord*, Pro. XX. 27. but it is no less than Madness to affirm, that these little Candles of humane Reason, tho' never so well snuffed by humane Prudence, and fed by humane Learning, can equal the Light of the glorious Sun of Righteousness.

This is demonstrated by the Apostle, 1 Cor. II. 14. *The natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of G O D, for they are Foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are Spiritually discern'd.* A Man in his natural Capacity cannot ad above the Sphere of *Humanity*; and consequently cannot suitably know the sublimer Nature of Angels, much less of the Infinite G O D, any farther than he finds some Analogy to their Nature in his own, which can afford but a very maimed Conception of them at the best.

The Beasts, we see, have some degree of Reason, but yet they cannot have any just Idea of the Nature of Man, for want of a humane Spirit;

Spirit: Even so Man cannot truly know *Divine Things*, without the Inspiration of a *Divine Spirit*. And thus the Apostle argues, Ver. 11. *For what Man knoweth the Things of a Man, save the Spirit of Man that is in him? Even so the Things of GOD knoweth no Man, (in his mere humane Capacity) but the Spirit of GOD.* So that all Men that are truly Godly, are enlighten'd and *taught of GOD*, Jo. 6. 45. They are supernaturally instructed; for GOD hath revealed his Will to them by his holy Spirit, 1 Cor. II. 10. We find a pious Prince praying earnestly for this, (*Psal. CXIX. 18, 33.*) *Open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold the wondrous Things of thy Law. Teach me, O Lord, the Way of thy Statutes, Give me Understanding, and I shall keep thy Law;* with many like Expressions: By which we are taught, that some Degree of the Assistance of the same Spirit, which was extraordinarily dispensed for the inditing of the Holy Scriptures, are necessary to the *true and saving Knowledge* of them in every real Christian.

Hence it is, that we find *the Spirit of Wisdom, of Light and Revelation*, mentioned in the holy Gospel, as the Author of that Light and Knowledge by which Christians are distinguished from all others; and as the peculiar *Gift of GOD* in Jesus Christ, 1 Eph. I. 17, 18. *That the GOD of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of Him. The Eyes of your Understanding being inlightened, that ye may know what is the Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints: And what is the exceeding greatness of his Power to us-ward who believe.* Such Expressions as these are Paradoxes and Mysteries to the Adepts of the *Wisdom of this World*, and to every One that has not received Light from Him who is the *Wisdom of GOD*, in whom are hid-*den all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*, that is, **JESUS CHRIST**, the *Light of the World*, and *Saviour of Men*, Act. V. 31.



Serm. II. of the Christian Religion. 41

It is for this Reason, that the Wisdom of GOD frequently pours Contempt upon *humane Understanding* in its degenerate Estate, and upon *humane Learning* unassisted by Divine Light; affirming, that the *Wisdom of this World is Foolishness with GOD*, 1 Cor. III. 19. And that, *not many Wise Men according to the Flesh, not many Rich, not many Mighty, are chosen*, 1 Cor. I. 26. GOD was pleased to impower a few unlearned Fisher-Men, and Men of little Esteem in the World, to instruct the most accomplish'd in Human Learning; and to shew all Men their chief Good, and the true way to it. This was a Matter of infinite Importance to Men, because the whole Tribe of Philosophers had wrangled in endless Disputes and Amusements about it, and were not able to come to an Agreement in these two Points, which are the first Lessons of true Wisdom; namely, what is the *chief Good* of Man? And what is the *direct Way* to attain it? For in Truth, their most improved Notions never came up to the just Knowledge of GOD or Them-

Themselves, nor to those admirable and sure Methods for the Peace of their Minds, and the Happiness of their Souls, which the glorious Gospel doth most fully and clearly reveal.

I shall therefore make it the Business of my present Discourse, to manifest the Excellency of the Christian Religion, as founded on the Will of GOD revealed by his SON JESUS CHRIST; above that which is called Natural Religion, as founded on the Light of Nature. In order to which, I propose to manifest the Truth of these Three Assertions.

I. That the Christian Religion discovers many *Truths*, necessary to our *Pardon* and *Peace*, and to our *Purification* and *Hope*, which could not be found out by the Light of Nature, tho' they are of infinite Importance to us.

II. That the Christian Religion communicates supernatural *Aids* and *Succours* in order to the Reformation of Mens Hearts and Lives; by which such Improvements  
are

Serm. II. *of the Christian Religion.*

43

are made upon Humane Nature as cannot otherwise be attained.

III. That the Christian Religion lays such a solid Foundation of *Comfort* in all Conditions, and in the Approaches of Death, and thereby leads Men to such a State of Serenity and *Peace* in Life and Death, as no other Rules or Prescriptions can bring us to.

By the *First* of these Advantages Man is made more *Wise*, by the *Second* more *Excellent*, and by the *Third* more *Happy*, than he can possibly be, by any Improvements of Natural *Light*, or Humane *Learning*; which undeniably proves the Excellency of the Christian Religion above all other.

I begin with the first Prerogative of it; which is, That it discovers many Truths necessary to the *Pardon* and *Peace*, and to the *Purification* and *Hope* of Men, which could not be found out by the Light of Nature, or humane Learning. To prove this, I shall instance in several Things wherein it is verified.

I. The

I. The Nature and Attributes of GOD cannot be known by the Light of Nature, so far as is necessary to the present Peace and future Happiness of Men. *The World by its Wisdom knew not God.*

For here we should know, not only that there is but One GOD, but also in what Way he may be *worshipped* acceptably; and how he may be *served* according to his good Pleasure. We should also know, how he may be *reconciled* and render'd *Propitious*, when we have offended his Infinite Majesty, and provoked his consuming Wrath.

But instead of proper Instruction in these great Points, what abominable *Notions* and *Rites* do we find in *the Doctrine* and *Worship* of the best of the Heathens!

The *Romans*, about the Time of our Blessed Saviour's coming into the World, enjoyed some of the most learned and eminent *Philosophers* that the Heathen World has produced. Their famous *Cicero*, who seemed to excel others in *good Morals* as much as in *good Language*, flourished a little before the *Birth* of our Blessed LORD; and

and their renowned *Seneca*, a little after his *Death*: Yet what a monstrous and absurd Miscellany was the *Roman Theology* at that time! They embraced all the Gods of the Countries they conquered: They worshiped above Three Hundred *Jupiters*; and of inferior Deities, they had a whole *Turba Deorum & Deorum*; as I may so term it, a perfect *Mob* of Gods and Goddeses. And all these were worshiped by senseless Idols, which debased the Venerable Notion of the invisible GOD; and in filthy Rites, which overturn'd the Foundations of Virtue. For, as the Apostle reproaches them, *they changed the Glory of the Uncorruptible GOD into an Image like to corruptible Man, and to Birds and Four-footed Beasts, and creeping Things,* Rom. I. 23. So that here, their Philosophers, who were accounted *Wise Men*, betrayed their shameful *Folly*: as the Apostle goes on; *professing themselves to be wise, they became Fools*; and that in Things of the most momentous Consequence.

Again, what a Reproach was it to learned *Athens*, the other famous  
Seat

Seat of Humane Learning in those Days, that they should erect such a glaring Monument of their Folly, as that of an Altar in the open Streets dedicated to the *Unknown GOD!* On which Account St. Paul demonstrates the gross Ignorance of their chief *Philosophers* to their very Beards at *Areopagus*; telling them, that they felt after the Almighty GOD, like People groping in the *Dark*, *if haply they might feel after him, and find him, tho' he be not far from any of us,* Act. XVII. 27.

What a base Subject was *Hesiod's Theogonia*, which gave an Account of the *Genealogy* of their Gods; wherein he shews where some of their Gods were *born*, where others *died*, and where some others did many *foolish* and *unseemly* Things!

These gross and impious Absurdities in the Heathen Divinity brought the learned *Justin*, afterwards Sur-nam'd the *Martyr*, into great perplexity (as he afterwards confessed) about this Fundamental of all Religion, the Knowledge of GOD. And whilst he was walking alone full of Thought and Concern about  
this

this grand Point, it pleased the Divine Providence to introduce a plain old Man into his Company, who in a private Conference convinced him of the Excellency of the Christian Religion, in which he was afterwards so stedfast, that he suffer'd Martyrdom for it. We find this Account of his Conversion related by himself in his Dialogue with *Tryphon* a Jew, about the 140th Year after Christ.

*Tatian*, who also lived about that Time, having been educated in humane Learning in the Schools of *Athens*, and afterwards instructed by *Justin Martyr* in the Knowledge of the *Holy Scriptures*, was so incensed against the *Pagan Idolatry*, that he derided the Deities of the *Grecians* in pungent *Sarcasms*; and fully exposed their mistaken notions of *Virtue*. As to their *Theology*, he upbraids them with their Accounts of the *Fights* and *Amours* of their Gods, and other foolish Figments of their inverted Brain. And as to their *Morality*, he calls them *Ἀρρητοποιοὶ* Men that did abominable Things, not fit to be mentioned,

mentioned, who, under a Pretence of *Philosophizing*, licensed many *Vices* under the Stamp of *Virtue*, and turn'd their Temples into Brothels. After which, he insults them with great Wit and Eloquence; and challenges them to shew any one eminent *Advantage* procured to Mankind by all their magnified Philosophers; or to produce one of them that seem'd to excel the rest, that did not abound in *Pride* and *Arrogancy*. He lays open the Secret Faults of *Plato*, *Arristippus*, *Aristotle*, and many other celebrated *Philosophers*; and declares, that *Dio-genes*, notwithstanding his high Pretences to an *abstemious* Life, died of a *Surfeit*. Τατῖαν πρὸς Ἑλληνας. p. 7, 8.

To this *Tertullian* adds, that this same retired Philosopher lived unchastly with one *Phrene*, who often resorted to him: That *Spencippus* of *Plato's* School was Slain as *Zimri*, in the Act of Adultery: That *Pythagoras* did many tyrannical Things at *Thurium*, and *Zeno* at *Priene*. That *Lycurgus* made away with Himself, as not able to bear the Alteration of his Laws by the *Lacedemonians*:  
And



And to come to *Socrates* himself, to whose Character one is rather inclined to add, than detract, because he stood up bravely in Opposition to the Notion of many Gods; yet (says our Christian *Apologist*) he ordered his Friends to sacrifice a Cock to *Esculapius* for him a little before his Death; and all the World must grant, that he made a very mean and shifting Answer to his Judges, when they ask'd him concerning his *Sentiments* of their *Deities*: *The Things above us*, replied he, *are Nothing to Us*: And it cannot be dissembled (says the learned *Father* before-named) that one Article charged upon him was the unnatural Sin of *Sodom*.

After all this, our zealous *Apologist* concludes thus: Where then is the Comparison betwixt a *Philosopher* and a *Christian*; when the One is a Trader in *Fame*, the other a Saviour of *Souls*; Between a Man of *Words*, and a Man of *Deeds*; Between a *Destroyer* of *Virtue*, and a *Builder* of it; Between a Dresser-up of *Lies*, and a Restorer of *Truth*; Between a *Thief*, and a *Guardian* of this  
 E sacred

sacred *Depositum*? *Tertul. Apol. Chap. 47.*

*Lactantius*, in his Second Book against Paganism, exposes the Heathen Idols, and the base Representations of their *Deities*: and proves that the Gods they adored were most of them Mortal Men, and many of them very wicked and profligate Wretches; instancing in *Ganimedes* and *Antinous*, and reproaching the obscene Rites of their Worship.

But the Zeal, and Reasoning of *St. Paul* against the Heathen Idolatry is superior to all other: for he plainly demonstrated to the most learned of them the Monstrousness of their Theology, and the Madness of their Idolatry. And here, methinks, we may observe in *St. Paul*, a wonder not inferior to those *special Miracles which GOD did by his Hands*. For we behold this One Apostle, (tho' he himself owns that he had no good *bodily Presence*, nor a very graceful way of *speaking*) confronting and confounding both the *Roman* and the *Grecian Philosophy*, which was the Top of humane Learning then in the World; baffling all

all the Sects of their Philosophers and wisest Men; teaching them, as he would so many Children, the first Principles of Learning and true Knowledge.

Thus it pleased GOD to choose the foolish Things of the World, to confound the Wise; and the Weak Things of the World, to confound the Mighty, I Cor. I. 27. Yea, the base Things of the World, and Things which are despised, hath GOD chosen; yea, and Things that are not, to bring to nought Things that are: That no Flesh should glory in his Presence. For of Him are we in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us Wisdom, &c. Ver. 28, 29.

In a Word, the Notions of GOD among the Heathens were so low and base, and their ways of Worship so unsuitable and unseemly; that a Child of ours that is well catechized is able to explode the Falshood and Folly of them. For it is evident, that they sometimes offered up the Sacrifices of Men, and sometimes of their own Children, and sometimes used filthy Rites, not fit to be mentioned \* which was indeed, as St. Paul says, to sacrifice to Devils. (I

\* Witness  
of the Myste-  
ries of Ce-  
res and  
Liber Pa-  
rer. Gro.  
de. Ver.  
Ch. Rel.  
Cor. p. 18.



their *Effects*, are both of them Eter-  
 nal, and consequently that one Eter-  
 nal is of longer Duration than ano-  
 ther, because the Cause must of ne-  
 cessity be before its Effect. Or if  
 to shun this, they say, that the  
 World did not always consist of  
 Causes and Effects, as we now see  
 it; we reply, that thus they prove  
 that the World was once another  
 Thing than it now is, and conse-  
 quently is not Eternal, because sub-  
 ject to Changes and Alterations.

*Democritus* and others saw the Ab-  
 surdity of this Opinion, and set their  
 Brains to work to contrive a fanciful  
 Method of the World's Beginning,  
 which would be too *ludicrous* to be  
 mentioned in this Place, were it not  
 that Experience shews, that many  
 have ruined themselves for ever by  
 it. I mean the extravagant Fancy  
 of the forming of the Universe, in  
 the admirable Order, Harmony and  
 Exactness in which we behold it,  
 from a *casual Hitt* of innumerable  
 Atoms, which *Democritus* fancied to  
 come by *Fate*, and *Epicurus* by *For-*  
*tune*. This, says the learned *Cicero*,  
 is to *Fancy*, not *Philosophize*. We

may say, it is to *Dream*, and to lay by all serious *Judgment* and *Discretion*. For they cannot tell us, how these Atoms came to have a *Being*, or how they began to *move*, or how they came to be differently *shaped*, or what occasioned their *oblique Motion*, to which they are not prone, and without which, they could not have met; or why some of them moved obliquely rather than the rest; or how the different Quantities of them came to be justly proportioned for such and such Productions; or how all Things in the World continue in such admirable Order without an Understanding Governour. The Legends of *Rome*, and the Fables of the *Alchoran*, have nothing more palpably Fabulous than this. But such as resolve to get loose from *religious Restraints* (which *Lucretius* freely owns to be the Bottom of the Design) and to set up for *Licentiousness*, will take any Occasion for it, be it never so absurd. A mere *Fiction* shall serve to put by the Thoughts of a *Righteous GOD*, and a *Romantick Story* shall be made use of to stop the Mouth of a Conscience that

that proclaims a *future Account* in Mens Ears.

The Wit of *Des Cartes*, who dress'd up this *Dream* with many Flourishes of ingenious Fancy, has undone many. It is evident, that *Spinosa* took the Hints of his *Atheistical Principles* from this *French Philosopher*. But *Des Cartes* was too discerning to believe it in *Spinosa's* Length. He plainly asserts the Being of Almighty God, and grants that He gave Being and Motion to all Things in Nature. But here we see the disingenuity of some Modern *Cartesians*, who follow their Master where they think he leads them from God by some *precarious Notions*, but basely desert him when he brings them by *true reasoning* to own God's Being and Government.

But after all, the whole World cannot excuse *Des Cartes* in two Points. First, In that he renounces all *Final Causes* in God's creating the World: as if we might not say that the *Glory* of God was the *End* of the Creation. Secondly, In that he ascribes an *undue Power* to Matter alone when in Motion. For many

Men have been led by the former Point to forget GOD, and by the latter, to exclude him. But both of these Errors are fully refuted, the former by the Honourable Mr. Robert Boyle, in his Disquisition about the *final Causes of natural Things*; the latter, by the learned Dr. Cudworth, in his *Intellectual System*; and by others,

Upon the whole; We cannot but say, that these fanciful *Atomists* have not dealt fairly by the World in setting forth their Books as a Scheme of *Philosophy*. They ought to have term'd them the *Sports of Wit*, and *Entertainments of Phansy*; and Supercribing this running Tittle, *A Fable of the Atoms that club'd together to compose the glorious Fabrick of the Universe*.

We see here, that the Heathens had no true Notion of the Origine of the World, and that their Followers are not able to support their feeble Conjectures in this Matter, tho' they have a Good Will to it.

But by Faith we learn, that the Worlds were made by the Word of God, so that the Things which are seen,



were not made of the Things that do ap-  
pear. (Heb. XI. 03.)

III. We do not find in any un-  
inspired Author any true Account of  
the Depravity and Misery of Mankind. It  
is very evident, that such Things as  
are Spiritually good, as the Image,  
the Love, and the Grace of God; are  
the greatest Happiness of Man, be-  
cause they tend to the greatest Be-  
nefits, and these of the longest Du-  
ration that Man is capable of. How  
comes it then, that Men are gene-  
rally averse to these Things by na-  
tural Disposition, or rather Indispo-  
sition? Why are so many Persons  
very difficultly brought to serious  
Prayer to G O D, which is their  
greatest Privilege and Advantage?  
Why are Men so prone to transgress  
God's Commands, since His Will must  
be owned to be the wisest and  
best?

The more judicious Sort of Hea-  
thens saw and lamented the universal  
tendency of Men to Vanity and  
Wickedness, and their Disregard of  
their chief Good; but were ignorant  
of the true Source of it. Both the

*Peripateticks* and the *Stoicks* conceived that the chief Good of Man consisted in the perfect Exercise of *Virtue*; and the *Platonists* in being like *God*, which is all one: But all these complain'd of an invincible *Anomalia*, an irregular Sway in the Minds and Wills of Men, which render'd their Precepts of little Use to them; and *Aristotle* was so ingenuous as to confess, that he could only bring old People to observe his *Morals*; that is, such as were no longer able to prosecute their Lusts. But where was the Virtue of this?

Upon the whole Matter, it puzzled them to give a Reason, why Man, that has the noblest Faculties of any *Being* upon Earth, should be more averse to his chief Good than any of them? And why Multitudes of *Men* pursue the ways of their Destruction as industriously as a *Bird* or a *Beast* shuns them?

It was also difficult for them to assign a good Reason, why Man, that is undeniably the *Superior Being* in the whole visible World, should be more afflicted than any of the rest; and why a Person that is *Sober* and

*Virtuous*, many times suffers more Pain and Sorrow from Diseases, and other Accidents in his Life, than many Flocks of Birds, and Herds of Cattle. Especially, if to these we add the Anguish of a Man's Mind, which is the worst of his Case, and to which no visible Creature is liable but himself. The Heathens call'd these humane Sufferings the *Tributes of Life*; but the Christians more properly, the *Penances of Sin*.

IV. We do not find in all the *Pagan* Volumes any Account of the *Incarnation*, *Sufferings* and *Mediation* of the Son of God for Men: Which is the most comfortable Truth in the World, and the only ground of our Hope of Happiness beyond the Grave. They had no Knowledge of the *Pardon* and *Justification* of Sinful Men thro' the good Offices of a *Mediator*: Yea, the very Notion of a Man's being *justified*, when he was *pardoned*, could not but seem absurd to their natural Apprehensions. We see in the Text, that the Divine Method of our Salvation, which appeared to St. Paul (as it does to every *inlighten'd* Chri-

Christian) to be the admirable Contrivance of the *only wise* GOD, (*Tim. E. 17.*) was contemned by the conceited *Grecians* as *Foolishness*; and that for two Reasons. First, because they did not find the preaching of the Apostles adorned with such a sort of Eloquence and Rhetorick as was in Vogue among them: And Secondly, because they preached Salvation to Men by the Merit of a crucified *Messiah*: As St. Paul shews, *1 Cor. I. 18.* *We preach Christ crucified, to the Greeks Foolishness.* Thus they trampled on Pearls, because they knew not the worth of them. As to what is said of the Writings of the *Sybits*, tho' some few of the Fathers quoted them, yet St. *Augustine* declares his Dissatisfaction of the Truth of them, in his *Book of the City of God*.

\* Lib. 18. \* Yea, he further adds (*Chap. 47.*)  
 cap. 47. That it is very credible, that all the Prophecies relating to *Jesus Christ*, that are not contained in the Holy Scriptures, are forg'd. Monsieur *Du Pin* presses this Matter upon the Consciences of Christians with very weighty Arguments, slighting the Quotations made out of the Writings

tings of *Mercurius Trismegistus*, *Hystaspes*, *Lentulus*, and *Pilate*; and the Letters supposed to be written by *Seneca* to *St. Paul*. It is true, *Dr. Parker* and others are offended at the giving away of these Heathen Authorities from the Cause of Christianity, as if there were the Guilt of the ancient *Traditores* in it. But the Pillar of Truth needs not the pitiful Prop of a Fiction, for GOD hateth the Maker and Lover of a Lie: And we do not find any clear Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles in Holy Scripture before that glorious *Epiphany*, which is Annually celebrated in the Christian Church; when a Star led the Wise Men of the *East*, to the Person of our Blessed Saviour (*Matth. II. 11.*) before which Time, the Gentiles are said to be a People that sat in *Darkness*, and in the *Shadow of Death*. (*Luk. I. 79.*) Which is the Point I am insisting on.

V. They had no Notion of any way in which GOD would pardon their *Offences* against him, that could satisfy their Reason. Their natural Light could shew them their *Guilt*,  
but

but could not shew them a *Remedy* for it. They could not conceive a way wherein *Infinite Justice* could stoop to one Thought of pardoning Offences against his *Infinite Majesty*. The Sacrifices of Beasts could not in Reason be judg'd to be an Equivalent to the Execution of a Man for his Offences, in the Administration of Justice: Or if they had Hope that God would pardon them of his *mere Good-Nature*, as the *Socinians* imagine; how could they at this rate retain such *venerable Idea's* of God's perfect Righteousness and Majesty as are necessary to overawe Men into a Fear of Sinning against Him?

VI. The Sanctification of a Sinner by the *Holy Spirit* of G O D, which is the only way of attaining it, was a Thing foreign to their Notions by natural Light. The Spiritual *New-Birth* of a Person advanced in Years, was a Paradox to *Jews* and *Gentiles*. *Nicodemus*, a Master of the *Jewish Learning*, and one of the *Sanhedrim*, cries out, *How can these Things be?* And some of the *Heathens*, who were

were *Masters* too in their way, forbid Men to pray to their Gods to *make them good*; which was, they said, a lazy and hypocritical Sort of Cant; but that they ought to make themselves *Good*. *Juvenal* allows Men to pray for Health and Plenty, but is very Satyrical on such as pray'd for Amendment of Life, for that they ought to do it themselves. But what Hope could a vicious Person have of this, when their Rules for the Mortification of any *Lust* or *Passion* were utterly insufficient for that purpose.

They rather diverted or palliated the carnal Distemper, than *crucified the Flesh with its Affections and Lusts*. Their Catharticks were superficial, and never came to the Root of the Malady; which is indeed only to be laid in *Regeneration*, by the Spirit of GOD, and the Divine Gift of a *new Heart*.

VII. The Heathens had not any *perfect Scheme* of moral Rules for Piety and good Manners, and those they had were not carried up to a due Pitch of *Virtue* by the Principles of *Love, Trust, and Obedience* to  
G O D.

G.O.D. They never taught it to be a general Duty to *love Enemies*, and to deal *kindly* by such as did them *Wrong*. They allow'd Polygamy, and nourish'd Pride and Vain-Glory as proper Incentives to Virtue and great Actions; the Subduing of which is the first Lesson in true Virtue and Religion. *Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily*, Luk. IX. 23.

And then as to the interior Acts of the Soul; the Adultery of the Eye, the Murder of the Heart, and such Enormities as were *unseen* by Men, they were little regarded. As *Pirrho*, that Adept in *Stoicism*, is said to have replied to his Sister, when she reproached him for being in *Passion*; *It is not worth my while*, said he, *to keep up to my Principles in the Presence of so mean a Person*.

VIII. Lastly, they had no Certainty of the *Eternal Rewards and Punishments* of a future State. They had indeed general Notions of a future Life: *Plato* wrote for it, but in a very uncertain Manner; and *Socrates* died with some Expectation of it, but with great Doubts. For in this very



*Socrates*, who was evidently one of the wisest and best of the Heathens, we find what *Obscurity* and *Doubts* lay on his Mind, as to this very Point. He confess'd his Uncertainty of the Matter to his Friends, the Night before his Execution; and his great Comfort was, that if there were no Life to come, he could not be miserable after Death; but if there was, that he should enjoy the Society of *Palamedes* and *Ajak*, and other excellent Men, he had known or read of. We also see with what Doubtfulness *Cicero*, *Seneca*, and the best Heathen Writers, treat of this Subject.

Now, the Doctrine of the Eternal Rewards and Punishments of the other World being the chief Support of Virtue, and the strongest Barrier against Vice, the Heathens wanting this, were very unhappy in this Respect, and in the other Points before-mentioned, for they nearly concern the Peace and Bliss of all Men.

Now since all these Eight Particulars are either the necessary Means or Method of our Salvation; and since none of these can be duly known

by our Natural Light; We may hence undoubtedly infer, that no mere humane Learning can be sufficient to make us good and happy.

But on the other Hand; *Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Gospel*, with all the necessary Directions to attain it: And not only so, but we find there such Supernatural Assistance as enables Men to perform what they are there taught to be their Duty; which is the Second *Prerogative* of the Christian Religion, in which I am constrained to be very brief.

II. The Christian Religion communicates Supernatural Aids and Succours, in order to the Practice of what it teaches; by which such Divine Improvements are made upon humane Nature as cannot be attain'd by any other Means. *Thus it pleases GOD to save them that believe.*

The Holy Gospel comes in the Demonstration of the Spirit and with Power; And the principal Grant of the Gospel Covenant, in which it excels that of the Law, is, that GOD will

will give his *Holy Spirit* to them that ask him, to succour and assist them in all Things necessary to their *Spiritual Life*: And that by this *Divine Power*, he will put his *Laws in Mens Minds*, and write them in their *Hearts*, Heb. VIII. 10. i. e. He will fix them as Principles in the Souls of Men, and will make their Minds and Hearts agreeable thereto.

This is the most honourable, and most happy Change that can be wrought upon humane Nature. When a Man comes to make his Duty his Delight; and to take Pleasure in submitting his Will to the Will of GOD. This is effected by the *Grace of GOD* which bringeth *Salvation*, and teacheth us to deny all *Ungodliness* and *Worldly Lusts*, and to live righteously, soberly and godly in this present World. Looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great GOD and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (Tit. II. 11, 12,) Which leads us to the last Excellency of the Christian Religion above all other, viz.

III. That it lays such a solid Foundation of Comfort in all Conditions, and in the Approaches of Death, and thereby leads us to such an honourable and comfortable State, in *Life and Death*, as no other Ways or Rules can possibly bring us to.

While we keep to those Directions, which we are assured are the *Will of God revealed for our Salvation*, as the Text affirms, we know that we are safe; and that we enjoy the Favour of the Governor of the World, who will make all Events work together for the Good of them that love him: Who will direct us in all our Doubts, comfort us in all our Tribulations, supply all our Wants, and after a little while, will finish our Labours, and receive us to everlasting Rest. This is the noble Life, and blessed Death of the true Christian: For so it is written (*Isa. LIV. 13.*) *They shall all be taught of GOD, and great shall be the Peace of his Children.* So that whilst the Atheistical Profligate, and the unbelieving Naturalist walk on from a *dark State* here, to utter  
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*Darkness* for ever: The Faithful Christian passes on from *Glory to Glory*: From a State of Hope, which affords a Joy *unspeakable and full of Glory*, according to our present Capacity; to a State far more capable of glorious Manifestations and Communications from GOD, and from the Lamb for ever.

Let us now apply these Things briefly to our Practice.

I. We may, in the foregoing Particulars, see the infinite Blessings of the glorious Gospel: and be assured, that it is the chief Wisdom of Man to walk by this Heavenly Light, rather than by humane Imaginations, which are a Sort of Meteors of Earthly Extraction. *The Entrance of GOD's word giveth Light, it giveth understanding to the simple,* (Psal. CXIX. 130.) So that a well-instructed Christian may say, *I know more than the Ancients, because I keep thy Precepts.* (Psal. CXIX. 100.) We may learn more in the Church of Christ in one Sermon, than in attending many Years on the Schools of the Philosophers. So that it would be the

worst of all Calamities to be deprived of the Light of the Gospel. Those poor Souls would be involved in horrible perplexity, that were to search among the wrangling Philosophers for every step they were to take towards everlasting Life. If the People of Old cried out, *It were better the Sun should not shine, than that Chrysostome should not preach:* We may add, it were better to be deprived of *common Bread*, than of the *Bread of Life*, the *Manna* that came down from Heaven.

II. We may hence learn, that such as neglect the Seasons of the Ministration of God's holy Word and Sacraments, are Enemies to their own Souls in their chief Interests. They that choose to spend the Lord's-Day in Idleness or ill Company, rather than among the *Worshippers* of God, and *Hearers* of his Word, will be confounded at last, when they shall consider with Regret and Anguish of Mind, that this was the way whereby *it pleased GOD to save them that believe.* Then the indecent Scoffs they have cast on the Ministers of the Gospel, as the

*Greeks*

Greeks in the Text did, will fall upon themselves, and they will own, that the *Foolishness* mentioned in the Text, did more properly belong to the *Despisers*, than to the *Preachers* of Salvation. The Ministers of the Gospel are the *Messengers* of God, and the *Stewards* of Christ, and their Message relates to the present and eternal Welfare of Men, and the Consequence of respecting or despising their Message will seal up the perfect Happiness or remediless Misery of every One of us: So that the Ministry of sacred Things cannot be despised till Religion and the Kingdom of God are.

And it is by this *Order* of Men, however despised, that Religion is kept on Foot in the World. The Good God make every one of them *Examples* of all Christian Duty to their Flocks, and cloath his *Ministers with Righteousness*, and his *Priests with Salvation*. They are call'd Angels from their Office, as being sent from God; may they ever be as like Angels, as this present State admits, in Purity and Zeal for GOD, and in a Proneness to good Offices towards Men.

III. We here see the Reason of the too little Efficacy and Progress of the blessed Gospel: Which is that which makes one of the most mournful Complaints of all serious Christians, *viz.* because of the general Want of true Faith. Too many want that Faith which is the *Evidence* of the Promises and Threats of the Gospel, those *Things not seen as yet*, and the *substantial* esteem of *Things hoped for* thereby. It is our extreme Unhappiness, that we have too many Instances of pleading and scoffing Infidelity; and that Rudeness which shews it is brought into the Christian Assemblies for Devotion. These Persons must be saved from their *Unbelief*, or they *cannot enter into GOD's Rest*. They dare not, for any Inducement, put their Hand into the *Fire on their Hearth* for a few Minutes, because they feel the Smart of so doing; but they dread not, because they believe not, *the Fire that never can be quenched*.

Did People consider every Line in their Bibles, as the Word of Him that cannot lie, they must, with the *Psalmist*, *stand in awe of GOD's Word*; and be most seriously reverent when they



they hear it preached ; for tho' it be published by the *Voice* of Man, it is the *Word* and *Will* of GOD.

But this will not *profit* except it be *mingled with Faith in them that hear it*, for it pleaseth God, says my Text, to *save them* (that is, them only) that *believe*: Which GOD grant to us all, thro' the Merit of Jesus Christ his only SON, to whom with the Father and the eternal Spirit, be all Honour and Glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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SER.

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# SERMON III.

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## Of the Truth of the Holy Scriptures.

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Joh. VI. 68, 69.

*LORD, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of eternal Life: And we believe, and are sure, that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living GOD.*

**H**AVING already considered the Evidences of GOD's Being and Attributes by the *Light of Nature*, and the more clear and full Display of them by the Beams of *Revelation*: We come now to consider upon what Grounds

Grounds we believe that *Jesus Christ* is the true *Messiah*, and his *Gospel* the *Word of GOD*. Now, blessed be *GOD*, we have as full Evidence of this as the *Case* can bear, and therefore as great as any one can in *Reason* desire. For we do not embrace the *Christian Faith* on the probability of bare *Conjectures*, or on the precarious *Opinions* of Men; but we have a Faith which is the *Evidence of Things not seen*, and the *Substance of Things hoped for*. Yea, we have a *Plerophory* and full *Assurances* of Hope, as *St. Peter* confesses in the Text; *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of eternal Life: And we believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living GOD.*

○ We find in the Verses before the Text, that some who had professed their Belief in Christ for some Time, did afterwards quit their Profession, and desert their Master, on the Account of some Expressions in his *Doctrine*, which they could not reconcile to their *Reason*. It was the *Doctrine of eating the Flesh of Christ, and drinking his Blood*, which they

they thought a barbarous and impracticable Thing; taking it in the wrong Sense, as the *Romanists* do, that is, the literal. But our blessed Saviour kindly corrected their Mistake, and told them that they must take these Words of his in a *Spiritual* Sense. (Ver. 63.) That he meant, they should receive Him as the *Messiah*, with as earnest and craving a Desire as any *hungry* and *thirsty* Person takes his *Meat* and *Drink*. But there is a Perverseness in the Corruption of Humane Nature. Many that are once disgusted to a Thing, are with difficulty brought to a Temper fit to receive Instruction.

It is said, (Ver. 66.) *From that time many of his Disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.*

We have still some Persons, (O unhappy Case!) that object the same thing against the Christian Religion; namely, that it suits not their Reason, or rather indeed, their Appetites; and so they fall into a ruinous Apostacy. But I would beseech such, in the Bowels of Jesus Christ, to consider these Words of the Text; *LORD, whither shall we go?*

30? Let them, before they slight or quit the Christian Faith, consider *where they can do better.* We challenge all the World to produce any Way of Life that is in it self more excellent, or has a greater Recompence of Reward; or that has any ground of Hope, that is more reasonable and sure, than that which is recommended by the *blessed and glorious Gospel.*

But the Truth of this is what they call in Question, and we are as ready to give a *Reason of the Hope that is in us*; desiring only one Thing, which they cannot well deny us, that is, that they will be satisfied with a *reasonable Proof* of it. For we have, as the Text implies, such Reason for our Belief, that we are *sure* that Jesus Christ is *the Son of the Living GOD*, and that his holy Gospel contains *the Words of Eternal Life*: i. e. the sure Directions and Aids that God has given to Men in order to everlasting Happiness.

We must here note, that St. Peter's Confession of Christ, as the *Son of the Living GOD*, implies his believing him to be the *begotten* or *co-essential* Son of the *GOD* of all Life, that is,  
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GOD of GOD: Otherwise his Faith had not come up to that which Christ affirmeth of Himself: For he said, He had *Life in Himself*, and a *Power to give Life* to as many as he pleased, (Jo. V. 26.---) and so he was that *Eternal Life* and *vitality* by whom the *World was made*, and now is the *Life* and *Light* of it, (Jo. I. 3, 4, 5.) *And by Him all Things consist*, Col. I. 17.

This is the Account given of our Blessed Saviour in the Gospel; and we now come to shew upon what Grounds we believe this to be the *Word of God*, and how we come to be sure that these are the *Words of Eternal Life*.

In order to this, we must premise, that there are Three Sorts of *Certainty* or Assurance, according to the different Natures and Circumstances of Things.

I. There is a *physical* or natural *Certainty*, which depends upon the Evidence of Sense. As that I see such or such a Colour, or that I hear such or such a Sound: Which no Body

Body questions, where the *Organ*, the *Medium* and the *Object* are rightly disposed.

II. There is a *Mathematical Certainty*, about which no Man in his Wits can raise Scruples. As that Twenty are more than *One*: And that a *Man's* Finger is less than his *Whole* Body.

III. The Third sort of Certainty is that we call *Moral*, in which the Evidence depends upon a due *Connexion* of Circumstances and *Clearness* of Testimony; and when these fully agree, the Thing will appear so *certain* and *evident*, as not to admit of any *reasonable Doubt*. As, that there is such a *City* as *Rome*, because we hear it affirmed by many People, that we have no Reason to suspect of Fraud, who assure us, that they have been there, and have had *Commerce* and *Conversation* in it. And that there was formerly such an *Emperor* there as *Julius Caesar*, (tho' it was before the Days of our Saviour) and that he wrote the

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*Commentaries* which pass under his Name: Because the *Historians* of those Times have left it upon Record, and no one has ever disproved it since.

This affords a Certainty, in common Sense, so great, that all the World would think him a *Fantastick* Fellow, next to a *Fool* or a *Mad-Man*, that should disbelieve these Things, or so much as call them in Question.

Now, we have far greater Evidence, that the *Christian Religion* was founded by *Jesus Christ* and his *Apostles*, and that *GOD* confirmed the same by *miraculous Signs and Deeds*; with many other Evidences. Infomuch, that tho' a *prejudiced*, or a *vicious*, or a *vain* Man may raise needless Scruples about it, yet a *good* and *wise* Man may comfortably say; *I believe, and am sure, that Jesus Christ came forth from GOD, and that the Gospel of Christ is the Word of Eternal Life.*

This is a Sort of Certainty that is proper to Religion: The Nature of the Thing depends very much upon the Truth of Matters of *Fact* (such



as, that there was such a Person as *Jesus Christ*, celebrated for his *strict Life* and *mighty Deeds*. That he was born in the Reign of *Augustus Caesar*, and crucified under that of *Tiberius*. That several of his Followers *preached* and *wrote* of Him and his Doctrine, did many *marvellous Works* in his Name, and laid down their *Lives* in Confirmation of the Truth of what they said and wrote. With other things of like Importance; in which, if the *Sacred Revelation* which we embrace has but common Right done it, we shall soon come to a just Evidence of the Point before us.

In order to this, let us consider the following Arguments.

I. The Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, our adored LORD and SAVIOUR, appears to be the Will of GOD revealed for the Salvation of Men, by the *unparallel'd Excellency* of its *Doctrine*.

II. By the exact Completion of many ancient Prophecies relating to it.

III. By the Divine Power and Goodness, which appeared in the Miracles that attested it.

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IV. By

IV. By the vast Cloud of credible Witnesses that have attested it, by all the Ways that any thing can be testified.

V. By the marvellous Efficacy, Progress and Continuance of this Doctrine by Means in themselves insufficient to attain such Ends: Which therefore demonstrates the Assistance of a super-natural Power.

Here is a Complication of many kinds of Evidence together, for our full Assurance in a matter of such Importance. Here is both *Divine* and *Humane* Testimony; here is both *inward* and *outward* Evidence; sufficient to satisfy the most searching Inquiry: which we therefore recommend to every *One* that is capable of it; for our Religion never appears with greater Advantage than when it is set in a true Light.

I must here premise, that the *Christian Religion*, and the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*, are the same Thing. We embrace nothing as an *Article* of our *Faith*, or as necessary to *Salvation*, but what is *contained* in the Holy Scriptures, or evidently *inferred* therefrom,

from, as our Church declares in her *Sixth Article*. And according to this, the excellent *Chillingworth* cries out to the Popish Adversaries of this Truth: *The Bible, the Bible is our Religion: No more, nor no less: Prove me any thing out of this Book, and I will embrace it with both my Arms: But I will rather lose my Life, than yield to any Thing contrary thereunto.*

This is certainly the most prudent Resolution that can be taken, if the *Bible* be indeed the Word of God, which we now come to prove.

I. From the *Divine Excellency* of its *Doctrine*. This is the Foundation of all subsequent Proofs; For if the Gospel is not Holy, Just and Good; and altogether worthy of God in the *Matter* of it, nothing can prove it to come from GOD. But here we have all the Evidence that the Thing will bear. We see *Rays* of *Divine Glory* darting forth in every Page of the *New-Testament*, or (as *Foreign Divines* term it) the *New-Covenant*. Our Holy Bible is absolutely the *Best Book* in the World, and some part of it the most *Ancient*. It contains the most

important *Truths*, the most sublime *Mysteries*, the most improving *Doctrines*, and the most perfect *Morals* that ever were published to the World; together with the most sure *Prophecies*, the most bright *Example*, the most powerful *Perswasives*, and the most Divine *Aids*; And with-all the most constraining *Motives*, the most heavenly *Consolations*, and the most awful *Rewards* and *Punishments*. It is a plentiful *Magazine* to supply all our *Spiritual Wants*. If we are in never so great *Doubts*, there is something in this Book, that is able to give us *Counsel*; if we are in any *Darkness*, here is a sufficiency of *Light*; if in any *Trouble*, here is abundant *Consolation*. In a Word, it is a Book worthy of God, and infinitely *advantageous* to Men.

No Book in the World is so free from Error, as the *Christian Bible*. Here are the pure Streams flowing from the Fountain of Eternal Truth. No Book tends so fully and effectually to the Reformation and Improvement of humane Nature. In the Writings of the Heathen Philosophers, we have, as the learned *Mornai* observes,

observes, in one Century perhaps one Truth, and must wait till another Century for an Other: So that we have a Thousand Errors for one Truth, as *Amyraldus* complains. And if we consult their Poets, who were their Teachers too we find, a Rapsody of Folly and Impurity, not to be endured. But in our Bible we find every where very excellent Doctrines relating to GOD and Ourselves, which cannot be discovered by the Light of Nature; with this great Satisfaction, that all the Malice in the World has not been able to find out one *Untruth*, or one *unsound* Doctrine, in the whole.

There are Two Things, which clearly demonstrate the Divinity of the Gospel from the more intrinsic Excellency, and unparallel'd Worth of the Doctrine it self.

The first is, in that it directly and connaturally improves and perfects the *Moral Law*, which is founded in the Nature of Man corresponding with the Nature of GOD. For since this Law was first written by the *Finger of God*, and was greatly demolished by Man's Apostacy; there was

no Hand, but that which first formed it, that could repair and restore it to its primitive Perfection. When the *Two Tables* of this Law engraven in *Stone* were broken, *Moses* could hew *Two Tables* of *Stone* like the former, but it was *GOD* alone that could *write* the same Words again upon them. How much more evidently must it be the *only* Work of *God* to *write* these Laws in the wicked Hearts of Men, contrary to their Lusts and corrupt Propensions, and to their violent Passions, and Prejudices: And consequently, none but *GOD* can make good that Article of the New-Covenant, (*Heb. VIII. 10*) *Of putting his Laws in our Minds, and writing them in our Hearts.* And therefore *GOD* says, *I will do it.*

We see in the Gospel, particularly in our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, what vast Advances and Improvements are made upon the Moral Law by *Jesus Christ*. For there the Moral Duty of acknowledging the true *GOD*, laid down in the First Commandment, is exalted to the Pitch of *loving God* with  
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all our *Heart* and *Soul*, and *Might*, and *Strength*. The Moral Laws relating to our Duty to Men, are carried up to as true a Love to them as to our selves. So that we must be so far from shedding his *Blood*, that we must not give him a *reviling Word*, or harbour an *Ill-wish* towards him; but must in all Affairs deal by him as truly, and as kindly, as we would have him deal by us were we in his Case.

Now, where these exalted Rules are so written in a Man's Breast, as to be the manifest Principles of his whole Life, after such a State of Degeneracy and Apostacy, as Men are fall'n into; this is without doubt as true a Demonstration of the Divine Power and Goodness, as any thing of this Nature can be. We are all satisfied, where we see a Child endued with Reason, that he descended from Rational Parents; and we have, I conceive, the same Reason to conclude, that the Person that is freed from the Prevalency of Sin, and lives according to the Divine Rules of the Gospel in Heart and Life, is

born of GOD, being renewed by his Holy Spirit. His Divine Temper shews him to be a partaker of the Divine Nature.

There have been, and doubtless now are, some particular Artists in various Sorts of Works, (as in *Painting, Writing, and the like*) who have so excelled others, that their Labours have been at first sight readily distinguish'd from all others; insomuch, that no other Hand could restore any of their Works, when any wise impair'd, to their original Beauty and Perfection. This is so well known in *Painting, Sculpture, and other Arts*, that it is undeniable. And by the same Reason, in a higher Instance, we may and must conclude, that the Repairs of Humane Nature by the Gospel, being so exactly correspondent with the first Lines of Morality drawn upon it by God in Man's Creation, are done by the same Hand. So then since none could be the Redeemer and Restorer of Men, but he that was their Creator; and since our Lord Jesus Christ does by his Gospel, effectually reimpres the Image of GOD upon Men, in  
true



in true Righteousness and Holiness; we may say, by this we *believe and are sure, that He came forth from GOD, and that he only hath the Words of Eternal Life.*

The Second Evidence of the Divinity and unparallel'd Excellency of the Gospel is, That it supplies us with the Revelation of those *supernatural* Truths which we extremely wanted, and which we could not have elsewhere. We have here an unparallel'd Method of Relief to such as find themselves under the Displeasure of the Almighty God; the just Sense of which is a Burthen intolerable. We see with what tender Affection, these *broken Hearts* and *wounded Spirits* are reliev'd in the Gospel, wherein the *weary and heavy laden* are kindly invited to come to a tender Saviour, with a Promise, that *they shall find Rest.* Here is the Anti-type of the Cities of Refuge. What a Sacrifice for Sin is here made to the Righteous GOD! We find the Writers of all Nations and all Ages have continually harp'd upon a Sacrifice for Sin, but could never hit on it, but here it shines in its Brightness

ness. What a Price is here paid for the Redemption of Men sold under Sin and Satan! It at once amazes and satisfies our Souls. The Gospel is like that happy Wood that *Jonathan* enter'd into, when he was faint and ready to die with Heat and Hunger; in which he found a cool Retreat, and such Plenty of Honey dropping from these Trees of Life, (as I may term them) as reviv'd his Spirits, and saved him from Death. Thus the Soul that is pressed by the Weight, and pursued by the Guilt of his Sins; and is even parched with the Desire of Happiness, and grown faint by the long Expectation of Relief; coming at last to the Blessed Gospel, he finds in every Page the Leaves of the *Tree of Life* that are for the *healing* these spiritual Sores. He there finds the Great and Terrible GOD, whose Displeasure had almost distracted him, sitting on a Throne of Mercy, and holding forth the golden Scepter to him; and, what increases his Consolation, he sees a *merciful and acceptable Mediator* sitting at the Right Hand of the *Majesty on High*. He there also finds a most gra-

gracious *Covenant* with GOD, suited to his *Infirmities*; which promises *Pardon* to the penitent Believer in Jesus Christ, for the sake of the perfect *Righteousness* that was in this Saviour of Men, and of his meritorious *Sufferings* in their Behalf. And that they may be able to live up to the sincere Holiness required in this *Covenant*, they have the Grant of divine Support, Succour, and Assistance by the *All-sufficient Spirit* of God; who will be no less a *Comforter* than a *Helper* of all that sincerely enter into the Bonds of this *Covenant*; and will be as a *Seal* upon them, by the inherent Holiness he produces in them, thereby *consigning* them to everlasting Happiness.

This fills the utmost Cravings of an immortal Soul, and gives entire Relief to the wounded Spirit. That one Verse of the Gospel, (*Luk. IV. 18.*) surpasses all the humane Writings in the whole World: Where it is written, *The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the Poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted to preach Deliverance to the Captives,*  
and

*and recovering of Sight to the blind, to set at Liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable Year of the LORD* This is mentioned, as prophesied of our Blessed Saviour by the Prophet *Isaiab*, and as repeated by our LORD himself, in whom they were fulfilled, as he testifies (*Ver. 21.*) *This Day is this Scripture fulfilled in your Ears.*

I say then, since the blessed Gospel administers to us such supernatural Truths and Succours, as no other Book in the World ever did; and darts forth such divine Beams of Light and Love, as could not proceed from any, but the infinitely wise and good GOD: I am not more convinced that the Light of the Sun is more clear and excellent than that of the Moon, or of a Taper; than that the Bible excels all other Books, by a Glory of divine Light and matchless Excellency of Doctrine; and is therefore properly called the *Book of GOD.*

I now pass on to the Second Evidence of this.

II. The Gospel appears to be the Word of God, by the exact Accomplish-

plishment of the many ancient *Prophecies* relating to it. For *the Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy*, (Rev. XIX. 10.) The whole System of Prophecies in the *Old Testament*, are punctually fulfilled in the *New*: what the one utters in Prediction, the other declares in Fact; and the *Two Volumes* agree as exactly as a *pair of Tallies* struck in the same Hand. The Prophecies concerning the *Messiah* were some of them of about Four Thousand Years Date before they were accomplish'd. They began at the Time of Man's Apostacy and Expulsion from *Paradise*, after which all the Hope of humane Happiness depended on the Promise of a *Saviour*, who, as a *second Adam*, or general Head, should repair the sinful and miserable Condition brought upon Mankind by the *first Adam*. In order to this, GOD was pleased to promise to enable *the Seed of the Woman* to bruise the Head of the *Serpent*, and so frustrate all his Envy and Malice against Man's Happiness.

After this, GOD was pleased to inspire a long Train of *Prophets*, who by degrees, foreshew'd the full Design,

sign, Temper, and Office of the Messiah, the *Divinity* as well as the *Humanity* of his Nature, with all the material Circumstances of his *Conception, Birth, Life, Doctrine, Contempt, Abuses, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Intercession,* and sending the *Holy Ghost*; with the Department of the *Jews, Gentiles,* and his Disciples towards him. Yea, the very Times of his Birth and Death were so punctually foreshewn, that a *Jewish Rabbi, Nechumias* by Name, is said to have declared to the World, *Fifty* Years before the Birth of Christ, that the coming of the *Messiah* could not be prolonged above *Fifty* Years, according to the Prediction of the Prophet *Daniel*. The learned *Grotius* quotes two Authorities for this, one out of the *Jewish Talmud*, under the Title *Sanhedrim*; the other out of *Abenada* upon *Daniel*. At last the Prophet *Malachi*, who was the last of the *Jewish* Prophets, foretold the sending of *St. John the Baptist*, as the *Messenger* that was to usher in the *Messiah* in the *Spirit of Elias*: And with this eminent Prophecy, he closes the Canon of the Old Testament.

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And with the fulfilling of this Prophecy in the Zealous Baptist, the Evangelists begin the New Testament, and so pass regularly on to the Accomplishment of all the rest.

Now, as this could not be imagined to be the contrivance of human Counsel, so it could not be effected by human Power; but is plainly the Work of the great Creator of the World, whose are *Wisdom and Might*; and who has herein given Testimony to his Son, by bringing those Things to pass which he foretold by all his Prophets, which have been since the World began; that we should be redeemed from the Hands of our Enemies, and be Partakers of the Salvation which he hath raised up in the House of his Servant David.

And by what we have seen fulfilled already, concerning the Events foretold in the New-Testament, concerning the *Destruction of Jerusalem*, the *Dispersion of the Jews*, the *Self-Exaltation of the Man of Sin*, and the *general Decay of Christian Faith and Piety*; we may be assured, that every Title of it will be fulfill'd in its Season, whether it relates to this Life,

Life, or that to come. St. *John* speaks of the Appearance of *Jesus Christ*, the Judge of the World, as of a Thing already in View, as indeed to Faith it is, *Behold he cometh with Clouds, and every Eye shall see Him, even they that persecuted him; and shall weep and wail because of Him, even so, Amen, Rev. I. 7.* Let us always remember this, and we cannot do amiss. Thus much of the Second Proof of the Divinity of the Blessed Gospel.

We now come to consider the *Third Proof* of it.

III. From the divine Power and Goodness which was manifested in the *Miracles* that attested it. The *Works that I do*, said our Blessed Saviour, *they bear Witness of me, (John. X. 25.)* A Miracle is a Thing done, either contrary to the Course of *natural Causes*, or above the Power of *natural Agency*. So that it can only be the Work of *GOD's Hand*; who, as he gave certain Powers to the Creatures he made, so he can suspend, abridge, or extend them, as He pleaseth.



pleaseth. It must therefore be noted, that in the working of a *Miracle* God *himself* doth the Work by his own *immediate* Power. It is not a peculiar *Permission* of secondary Causes, but an extraordinary Effect of *supernatural* Power. Wherefore, when the Prophet foretold the miraculous Power that would attend the Appearance of Christ, to verify his Mission; he terms it the *revealing* or uncovering of the *Arm of the Lord*. *To whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed?* So that every Miracle wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ did as fully declare Him to be the Messiah, which was the Thing it was to attest, as if a Hand had visibly pointed from Heaven upon him, attended with a Voice from thence too, saying; *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.* Yea, the Attestation by miraculous Deeds seems to be more unquestionable than such a Voice from Heaven: For tho' our Blessed Saviour's Messiahship was twice thus *proclaimed* from Heaven, yet it is not mentioned in the Gospel as the *Motive* which induc'd his Disciples to believe on him, so much as the *Mi-*

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acles they saw him do. For St. *John* relating the Miracle of our Saviour's turning Water into Wine, remarks in the Close of it, *This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his Glory, and his Disciples believed on him.*

This, saith the learned *Grotius*, induced those judicious and learned Men, who liv'd near the Time of our Saviour's *Miracles*, to believe on him. Such as *Sergius* the Governour of *Cyprus*, *Dionisius* the *Areopagite*, *Policarp*, *Justin*, *Ireneus*, *Athenagoras*, *Origen*, with many others, who, living near the Time when these Things were done, could easily be satisfied of the Truth of these Reports; and finding them unquestionably true, they renounced the false Religions in which most of them had been educated, and became Worshipers of *Jesus*, and exhibited due Honour to him as *G O D*; tho' they could expect nothing in this World for so doing, but Reproach, Imprisonment, Loss of Goods and of Life. The Reason of which can be only this, that they were assured, as *Nicodemus* (one of the *Jewish* Sanhedrim) was, that  
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none could do the Works that *Jesus* did, but by the Power of GOD; and that it is impossible that GOD should assist an Impostor in a Design to cheat and destroy the whole Race of Mankind, by giving Testimony to him in such a Train of unquestionable Miracles.

Moreover, these Miracles were too many to be mistaken, being wrought almost every Day by our LORD himself, and by his Twelve Disciples and his Seventy Missionaries. They were also too great to be counterfeited; such as the controlling the *Winds* and *Seas*, the healing of the most *inveterate Diseases*, and raising the *Dead*. They were done too openly to be an Illusion, being done before Thousands of Enemies and prejudic'd Persons. In the miraculous *feeding of Thousands* at once, it was impossible that there could be a Mistake in them all: And so in the raising of *Lazarus* to Life before many malicious *Jews*, who ran officiously with the Account of it to the *Sanhedrim*, who would be sure to search into it. And lastly, they served to introduce a Doctrine so *Divine* and *Beneficent*,

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that all impartial Reason in the World must say, This is the Religion by which it is the Pleasure of GOD to govern and save them that embrace it, and to reject and condemn such as despise it.

There can be no Room for Suspicion that any *Diabolical Power* could raise a Man to Life, or give Sight to one whose Organs of Sight were ruined before he was born, and the like. There stood up no *Jannes* or *Jambres* to dispute the Original of this mighty Power: The *Devil* did not so much as pretend to a Power to do the like. And we know, that if he had Power, yet he had no Inclination to do so much *Good* to Men. The *roaring Lion* has no such *Bowels of Mercy*; nor is the *old Serpent* so destitute of *Policy*, as to favour a Doctrine that undermines his Kingdom. Our Saviour *loosed* those whom Satan had *bound*, and *exorcised* those whom many Devils had *possess'd*: And *Satan* cannot be imagin'd to cast out, and cast down, *Satan*.

I must not, tho' somewhat streighten'd in Time, pass on without taking Notice of that *special Miracle* which

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our Saviour made the *decisive* One, which was the *raising* of his own Body on the *third Day* after his Death. We find, that as our LORD laid a great Stress upon this Sign, as the Anti-type of the *Prophet Jonas*, so the *Jews* remember'd it, and took all possible Care to seal the Sepulchre, and to set a good Guard of Soldiers to secure it. They were the more intent on this Issue, because our LORD had said several Times that he had Power to raise up his own Body. *I have Power*, said he, *to lay down my Life, and I have Power to take it up again: Destroy this Temple*, (said he, speaking of his Body) *and I will raise it up on the Third Day*. The *Jews* therefore took particular Care to get this Point cleared, being resolved to see whether this dead Man could raise *himself*, as evidently as he did *Lazarus*. And when, in the Consequence, this verily came to pass, with what a pitiful Lie did they sham it off? Truly, they bring the Soldiers to accuse themselves of failing in their Watch, and allow them to be good Evidences of what was done when they were asleep, by their own Confession.

The greatest Absurdities that could be imagined.

It is matter of Grief to see, that the modern Pretenders to *Prophecy* and to *Miracles*, have publicly traduc'd this decisive Sign of our Blessed Saviour's Messiahship, to countenance (O horrible) the Failure of the Miracles, they promised as *decisive* Signs of their *divine Inspiration*; one of which was, the raising of the dead Body of Mr. Emm's, that had lain many Weeks in the Grave. This fail'd; and to make some Apology, they betake themselves to what I cannot but account a horrible Pitch of Impiety; namely, to say that our Saviour's Resurrection was not literally fulfilled; because he says: *As Jonas was three Days and three Nights in the Whale's Belly, so shall the Son of Man be three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth.* Now they plead that our Saviour was not in his Grave any Part of the third Night, and therefore did not exactly keep to the Time prefixed, Which is plainly to make Sport for Infidels, and to say, that He, who is *the Truth it self*, did not speak truly. But let GOD

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be true, and every one that *contradicts* Him, a *Liar*. The Vindication is very easy and very clear, which is this.

The true Sense of any common Expression, is that which it bears in common Estimation. Now in all common Estimate, any Part of the Twenty Four Hours which make the natural Day, passes in Account for the whole of the Day. It is said, *And the Evening and the Morning were the first Day*. Hence the *Hebrews* call'd the natural Day an *Even-Morn*, and the *Greeks* *Νύκτῆρα*: which implies the daily Circuit of the Sun from one Point till it comes to the same Point again, including the Time it is *beneath* the Horizon, which makes the *Night*. as well as the Time it is *above* the Horizon, which makes the *Day*: Now any Time of this natural Day justly passes in the Number of Days for the whole Day and Night. For Instance, the Child that was born at Eleven of the Clock last Night, will be as truly register'd two Days old this Day; as the Child that was born Twenty Two Hours before. And the Man that died *yesterday Morning*, died *yesterday*, as truly as he that died

at *Noon*, or in the *Evening*. So our Saviour rising early on the First Day of the Week, had the proper Calculation of the whole natural Day, which contains a Day and a Night, and arose truly according to what he foretold.

And besides, the Words of our Saviour imply nothing more than that he would remain in the Grave three Days and three Nights, in the same Sense that the Prophet *Jonah* lay in the Body of the Fish, which, without doubt, was no otherwise so, than as fulfilled in our Saviour's Resurrection. *As Jonas was, so shall the Son of Man be.* And indeed, if *Jonas* had remained three full Days and three whole Nights, that is, three full Natural Days in the Belly of the Fish, he must have been cast forth on the fourth Day; and so must it have been in our Saviour's Resurrection, which would have been contrary to his Prediction. It is therefore to be hop'd, that no Person will continue in the gross Delusions of these false Modern Prophets, who have been so notoriously self-condemn'd, and who have been so fully disprov'd by so many Events



Events directly contrary to what they foretold.

On the contrary, the Truth of our Saviour's Miracles was so Evident, that neither *Celsus* nor *Julian*, those early and prying Enemies of Christianity, could disprove them, but did both of them grant, that divers *Prodigies* were wrought by him: And the *Jews* in their *Talmud* do openly confess the same. Had there indeed been any Question of those Matters, *St. Peter* durst not have made that Appeal to them which he did, *Act. II. 22.* *Ye Men of Israel, hear these Words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of GOD among you, by Miracles, Wonders and Signs, which GOD did by Him in the midst of you, as ye your selves also know----- Him hath God raised up, having loosed the Pains of Death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.* The Apostle here appeals to the very *Crucifiers* of our LORD, concerning what themselves knew of his *Miracles* wrought among them, particularly of his glorious *Resurrection*; alledging the *impossibility* of his remaining under  
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the Power of Death. And these plain and pathetick Remonstrances of the Apostle's became effectual, thro' the Grace of God, to the Conversion of Thousands of Souls to Christ that same Day.

IV. The Gospel is verified by a vast Cloud of credible Witnesses, who have attested it by all the Ways that any Thing can be testified. *Thousands* and *Ten Thousands* of the most sober and upright Persons that ever lived, and who held it to be a damnable Sin to tell a *Lie*, have by Word and Writing declared the Things which *Jesus did and taught*. They assured their Children, whose Salvation they tender'd as they did their own, that these were the Words of *Eternal Life*. And they persisted in the same Confession to their Enemies, tho' they were not only buffeted and imprison'd, but put on red hot *Grid-irons*, and into glowing *Iron Chairs*, and torn to pieces with wild Beasts for so doing: Not one of them ever discovering any Combination to set forth a false Report to the World. For what a Madness had

had it been in them, to suffer all manner of Torments and Death in this World, for the sake of a *Lie*, for which they could expect nothing but *Damnation* in the World to come?

Moreover, they instituted *Anniversary Solemnities* upon the Days on which the principal Points of their Religion depended; as the Day of the *Birth, Death, Resurrection* and *Ascension* of their Lord and Master; and his sending down the *Miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost*: Of which Facts, had not they themselves and others had the fullest Assurance, they never durst to have attempted the Anniversary Commemoration of them. *First*, because they durst not praise God for what they knew to be false; nor to *compass him about with Lies*, which they knew he *hated*. *Secondly*, because if those Facts had not been fully and generally known, their Enemies would have laughed them to scorn, and would have proved the contrary to the World: Which I have before shew'd they did not, but owned the Truth of divers of them;

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These Enemies of Christianity were more ingenuous than the Modern *Scepticks* and *Deists*; who rather than allow the Truth of these notorious Facts, deny the Faith of all *History*, and the Kindness of *Parents* to their Children in the delivering these Matters to them; which is a *Rudeness* beyond parallel. Any Person that is about to inhabit a House, acts very reasonably in considering well the strength of the *Building*, and the Firmness of the *Foundation*; But if he will not be satisfied, unless he may be permitted to unpin all the *Timbers*, and undermine the whole *Foundation*; it appears, that he rather desires to overturn the House, than to *inhabit* it.

I pass on therefore to the last Proof of the Divinity of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Namely,

V. From the Marvellous *Efficacy*, *Progress*, and *Continuance* of this Doctrine, by means in themselves utterly insufficient to attain these Ends; which must demonstrate the Assistance of a *Supernatural* Power.

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The Self-abasing and Flesh-crucifying Doctrine of the Gospel prevailed like a Torrent over whole Nations, and over some of the most remote Corners of the World. And this, contrary to the then reputed Learning of the World, and the darling Lufts of Men, and in Opposition to the Laws and Customs, and the utmost Endeavours of evil Men, and evil Spirits. It profelyted *Jews* and *Gentiles*: It advanced into the *Jewish Sanhedrim*, and into *Cesar's* Household; and at last, after it had out-liv'd the Policy of *Julian*, and the Fury of *Dioclesian*, it got into the Throne; and was congratulated by general Consent, in that famous Confession in *Constantine's* Time, *We are all Christians.*

Yet nothing of this was carried on, either by the Power of Princes, or the Severity of Humane Laws; or by the Eloquence or Sophistry of Humane Learning: But contrary to all these, and to all the Wit and Malice of Men and Devils.

The Apostles and Others plainly declared the Things which they had heard and seen, and left it to the  
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Consciences of Men to make a serious Judgment of them, as they lov'd their Souls. So that if this Thing had been of *Men*, it must have sunk in a very short Time; but it was of GOD, and so prevailed, and will continue to the Consummation of all Things: And we hope, will shine in greater Glory before that Time, than it has hitherto done.

So then; since the glorious Gospel contains the most *Divine* Instructions of all the Books in the World: Since it nobly exalts the *Glory* of GOD, and advances the *Dignity* of humane Nature: Since the whole Train of *Prophecies*, which ran thorough the Generations of Men for many Thousand Years before their Accomplishment, was exactly fulfilled in it: Since it has been attested by the *Power* of the Almighty in such numerous and glorious Miracles as never were done before in the World; and since these Miracles were as *useful* and *comfortable* to Men, as they were amazing in their Sight: Since so many pious and virtuous *Persons* have assured their Children, that this is the only way of Salvation, and have suffer'd the worst  
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of *Deaths*, rather than deny this before their Enemies: Since the blessed Gospel pierces and changes the Hearts of sinful Men, and makes them *New Creatures*, rendring them as like GOD as Men can be made on Earth, with the blessed Assurances of an Eternal Vision and Enjoyment of God in Heaven: All these Things duly considered, afford us undeniable Evidence of the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of his Holy Gospel. So that the *Deist* argues very vainly, when he says; “ The Christian Religion is not so certain as the Light of Nature, and therefore Men must in Prudence keep only to their Natural Light in Matters of Religion. The Case is not truly stated. For our Natural Light is miserably impaired, and needs the Assistance of Supernatural Illumination; even as much as the Traveller who passes on the Way by *Star-Light*, in many Doubts and Dangers, needs the Rising of the Sun to enable him to go on directly and cheerfully in his Journey.

Yea, I must say, there is no Room left for a *Christian*, that knows the  
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*Foundation* of his Religion, to admit of one *reasonable* Thought of *changing* it: For, all imaginable Evidences of GOD's Power, Wisdom, and Providence, have so fully appear'd in the Institution, Progress and Defence of the Christian Religion: That to say, all these are Impostures, is the same as to say, *There is no God*, and consequently, *no such Thing as Religion*. But these are such Violations of Reason, and Outrages upon Common Sense, that *Humane Nature* cannot bear them.

Let us now therefore seriously apply the whole.

I. since these Things are so, we must heartily embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as the Rule of our Faith and Life, as we hope for Salvation. *These are the Words of eternal Life*; and this is that Prophet, that was foretold by Moses, with a Command, *that we should hear him in whatsoever he should declare unto us*, Acts III. Tho' some Things which he has revealed are great *Mysteries*, that surpass our Comprehension, these however are to be believed with



with great Firmness; for it was very likely that Revelations from *GOD* would be so; and it is a good Argument that they were not invented by *Man*, because they could never enter into the Mind of *Man* till revealed from above. And tho' many Commands of the Gospel are contrary to our carnal Inclinations, yet we must apply our Hearts to them; for this is their Excellency, and our necessary Medicine, and the Proof of our Obedience.

We have therefore a short Answer to make to that anti-scriptural Triumvirate, the *prophane Scoffer*, who idolizes his Lufts; the *self-exalting Deist*, who sacrifices to his own Reason; and the *deluded Enthusiast*, who follows vain Imaginations: To all these we briefly reply, that as we have all reasonable Assurance, that our Bible is the Word of *GOD*, so we are sure, that no Reason in the World can be more clear than this; namely, *that what GOD has said is true.* And if so,

II. It must be the chief-Interest of all Persons to be religious: Which

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may serve to break the Force of all Temptations to Sin that can assault us. We have the greatest Rewards and Punishments laid before us that can be made to Men. *The Wicked shall go into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.* If we believe this, it must affect us. Ah! How long will it be e're we believe the Contents of our Religion in good earnest, and e're we live as such who fully believe that GOD *is true,* and will *do* as he has *said.*

The *Epicure* himself could not consent to *forbidden Pleasures,* were he indeed perswaded that for every *Hour* thus spent, he should suffer the Torment of a *Thousand Years:* Nor would he decline any Service to GOD, were he sure, that every *Hour* thus employ'd would be rewarded with the Happiness of a *Thousand Years.* How much more, were he *sure,* that that the Rewards and Punishments of what we do in this mortal State would be everlasting. A Duration which Millions of Ages cannot diminish. And therefore,

*Lastly,*

*Lastly,* The Gospel directs us to the most honourable and comfortable Life that Man can live on Earth, since the Loss of Paradise; for it comes from GOD to restore the Happiness of Man that was lost there. We are by our Corruption *alienated from the Life of GOD*; but we are by Christian Regeneration restor'd to the Hope of it, and set into a Way to regain it. Jesus Christ has brought *Life and Immortality to Light by the Gospel*, where we may take a daily View of it, and rejoice in our reverential Interest in it, with a *Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.*

If we are of Christ's Fold, GOD is with us, the Devil is chain'd, the Soul is made bright and glorious, and we have this Cordial continually in our Bosoms, That our *Hope is sure*, and the End *happy.*

We have the Word of eternal Life in our Hearts, yea, *Jesus* himself dwells there, and *Christ in us* is the *Hope of Glory*; for we cannot be cast into *Hell* with the *King of Heaven* in our *Breasts.*

So that while our Integrity is *clear*, nothing can reasonably make us *sad.*

The Shortness of the present Life is a comfortable Consideration; Afflictions are then on our Side, and Death is the Gate to eternal Life.

We may daily celebrate the *Triumphs* of the *Flesh* crucified, the *World* conquer'd, and the *Devil* put under our *Feet*. - And e're long the happy Hour will come, when we shall die, and then we shall cast off these frail Bodies, and put away all Pain, Weakness, and Corruption with them.

O glorious State! No sensual *Epicurism* can come near it; and nothing but the *Paradise* above can excel it; where they that formerly had the *Promise*, have now the *Possession* of *Eternal Life*.

Which GOD grant to us all, thro' the Merit of his Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all Praise and Glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON.

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# SERMON IV.

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## The Divine Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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JOHN I. Ver. 1.

*In the Beginning was the WORD,  
and the WORD was with GOD,  
and the WORD was GOD.*

**H**AVING in the Three former Discourses opposed the *Anti-scriptural* Adversaries of the Christian Religion, we come now to consider the Opposition made to a *fundamental Article* of it, by some who own the Authority of the Holy Scriptures, and

pretend to the Christian Name. I mean the *Arians* and *Socinians*, who deny the *Divinity* of Jesus Christ the Son of GOD, contrary to his own Assertion, and to the Faith of his universal Church.

The Doctrine of GOD *manifest in the Flesh*, and as St. *John* says, *made Flesh*, is the greatest Honour as well as Advantage of Mankind: It is the only Ground of Comfort to us in this Life, and of solid Hope concerning the Life to come. So that we have infinite Reason to contend for this Foundation of our Faith, as it was once deliver'd to the Saints, by the Evangelists and Apostles of our Lord; among whom, St. *John*, his beloved Disciple, gives us this Account in the Text, *That in the Beginning was the WORD, and that the WORD was with GOD, and that the Word was GOD.*

A *Socinian* Writer, and indeed none of the meanest of them, finding this Text to bear hard on their Sentiments, pleads that it is not certain that by the *Word* in the Text, is meant the *Lord Jesus Christ*; but our holy Evangelist can best explain himself; and he speaking of Christ, (*Rev. XIX.*

13.) says expressly, *His Name is the WORD of GOD.*

Another of that *Seēt* speaks more boldly and prophanelly, affirming, that *St. John* took the Notions of this Chapter out of *Plato*. But this *blasphemēs* the holy Spirit by which *St. John* spake; and it is as unreasonable and unjust to accuse him who had renounced the *Wisdom of the World* with *Platonism*, as to tax him of Covetousness, who had parted with all his *Goods and Lands* for *Christ's sake*.

To come to the Words then, it must be noted, that *St. John* living to the one Hundred and first Year after our Saviour's Incarnation, according to *Monſieur du Pin's* Calculation, liv'd to see the Heresies of *Ebion* and *Cerinthus* springing up, who deny'd the LORD that bought them; because by denying his *Divinity*, they accounted him *unable* to pay the *Price* of their Redemption. We therefore plainly see, that this Evangelist wholly omitted the Account of our Saviour's *Generation as Man*, which had been so fully declared by the Three former Evangelists, and applied him-  
 I 4 self

self expressly to declare the *Eternal Generation* of Jesus Christ the Son of GOD, as the Ground-Work of his Gospel. And we find both these Natures, the *Divine* and the *Humane*, expressly asserted by St. Paul, in the Beginning of his Epistle to the Romans, where, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, he saith, *Who was made of the Seed of David according to the Flesh; and declared to be the SON of GOD with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the Dead.* For, since he rose from the Dead *by his own Power*, (Joh. X. 18.) it must be granted that *this was GOD.*

Now, this being the *Article* that our Evangelist here is directed by the Spirit of GOD to teach Men: We see how *plainly* and *fully* he declares it for many *Verses* together: And that he might leave no Room for Doubt in a Case of such Importance, he expressly declares the *Eternity*, *Omnipotence*, and *Vitality* of Jesus Christ; neither of which can be affirmed of a Creature. Yea farther, (which is surely worth our Remark) he declares each of these Divine Attributes *twice* in



in express Terms in the Beginning of this Chapter.

1. His *Eternity* is twice asserted. For it is positively said, *In the BEGINNING was the Word*, (Ver. 1.) And again, *The same was in the BEGINNING with God*, (Ver. 2.) This declares our Blessed Saviour's *Eternity*. For who-soever had a Being when the first created Being *began*, must be *before* all created Beings, and is therefore *Eternal*.

2. His *Omnipotency* is declared, Ver. 3. All Things were made by him; which one would think were plain enough; yet it being fore-seen by *Divine Wisdom*, that some would fall into the absurd Notion of a *Made-GOD*, the Evangelist repeats the Assertion, and adds, *that without Him nothing was made, that was made*. (Ver. 3.) This directly overthrows that vain Suggestion of *Arius* and *Socinus*; for since *nothing* was made but by Jesus Christ; to say that he himself is *made*, is to say, *He made himself*: And if so, he must be before himself, and greater than himself, which are direct Contradictions.

3. The *Vitality* or *Self-Existency* of Jesus Christ is also twice mentioned.

Ver,

*Ver. 4. In him was Life, and the Life was the Light of the World. The Life, (ἡ ζωὴ) the Life that was to restore Life to the Race of Mankind, that was fall'n into a State of Sin and Death. This is more fully declared by the same Apostle, 1-Joh. I. 2. For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear Witness, and shew unto you that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.*

So that these *Divine Attributes* are here, I conceive, as *positively* and as *vehemently* affirmed of our Lord and Saviour, *again and again*, as if this Evangelist had said; *Jesus Christ is Eternal, Omnipotent, and Self-sufficient, being Life it self; I say, He is Eternal, Omnipotent, and Life it self: and therefore this Essential Word of GOD is God.*

A *Word* is the most clear *Representation* and *Image* of the Mind: and *Jesus Christ* is the *Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person, and upholdeth all things by the Word of his Power.* (Heb. I. 3.)

The *Second Article* of Religion in our Church relates to this Point of Faith, and is as follows;

“ The

“ The Son, who is the *Word* of the  
 “ Father, begotten from *Everlasting* of  
 “ the Father, the *very* and *Eternal* God,  
 “ of *one Substance* with the Father,  
 “ took *Man's* Nature in the Womb of  
 “ the Blessed Virgin, of her Substance:  
 “ So that Two whole and perfect  
 “ Natures, that is to say, the *Godhead*  
 “ and *Manhood*, were joined together  
 “ in one Person, never to be divided,  
 “ whereof is one Christ, *very* GOD  
 “ and *very* MAN, who truly suffer'd,  
 “ was crucified, dead and buried, to  
 “ *reconcile* his Father to us, and to be  
 “ a *Sacrifice*, not only for *Original*  
 “ Guilt, but also for *actual* Sins of Men.

To these Truths, *Arius* and others  
 of old, and *Laelius* and *Faustus Socinus*  
 of a much later Date, have made  
 great Opposition. *Arius* insists on a  
*Priority* of Time in GOD the Fa-  
 ther, and on the Son's being *creat-*  
*ed* by the Father; which would  
 prove that the Son is a finite,  
*created* Being, and consequently un-  
 able to be the Saviour of the dege-  
 nerate Race of the First *Adam*.

*Socinus* and his Followers do also  
 oppose this Article, denying that our  
 Blessed LORD had any *Existence* be-  
 fore

fore his Conception in the Blessed Virgin, being in their Opinion a *mere Man*. And they *allegorize* the whole Account of his *Divinity* in the Holy Scriptures, in a very *harsh* and *unnatural* Manner, to make way for this their *novel* Doctrine. It is about 150 Years ago, that the first *Socinian Book* came abroad into the World, under the Title of that Christian Verity, which it tended to overthrow, namely, *Christ the Saviour*. It was written by *Faustus Socinus*; for his Uncle *Laelius* publish'd nothing, but bequeath'd by Will his Papers to his Nephew. This first Book of his occasioned such a Tumult in *Cracow*, in the Kingdom of *Poland*, (a very unfit way, we grant, to determine Controversies) that he had lost his Life in it, had not Dr. *Martin Vadovite*, the *Cracovian* Professor, succour'd him in that Instant.

These are the principal Adversaries of the Truth delivered in my Text: And I shall take the most clear and plain Method that I can think of, to maintain and assert this Fundamental Article of the Christian Re-

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Religion, to wit, the *Divinity* of the Author of it, by the Four Arguments which follow, viz.

I. The Scriptures of the *old* and *new* Testament speak of the *Messiah* in Terms and Attributes so manifestly *Divine*, that a serious Mind cannot but take them in the Sense of our Church; that is, as declaring Him to be God, of one *Substance* with the Father.

II. This has been the Doctrine of the *Catholick Church* of Christ in all Ages, tho' less open in the short Interval of the *Arian Persecution*, when the Sentiments of the *Orthodox* were for a while reclused and reserved.

III. No other Notion of our Blessed Saviour clears the *Justice* and *Honour* of GOD in the *Pardon* of Sin.

IV. No other Notion of our Blessed LORD Answers the *principal Ends* of his *Messiah-ship*: Which were,

I. To restore *corrupt* Men to the *Image* and *Favour* of the All-pure GOD.

2. To

2. To give the *highest Glory* to the infinitely wise and good GOD hereby.

3. To lay the *greatest Obligations* upon Men to serve GOD faithfully for the Future.

I. I begin with the Testimony of the Holy Scriptures, concerning the Nature of the Messiah, the SON of GOD, and Saviour of degenerate Men; as prophesied in the *Old Testament*, and fulfilled in the *New*. The Authority of these Oracles of God being on both sides granted to be binding and conclusive, we cannot take a better mean to end the Dispute.

Now here we find such high Expressions, and such Divine Attributes applied to *Jesus Christ* as would certainly lead serious and honest Minds into pernicious Mistakes, were they not intended to declare his *Divine Nature*: And we cannot conceive so unsuitable and intolerable a Thought of the infinitely *wise* and *good* GOD, as that he would reveal the most important Doctrines, concerning the Salvation of Men, in such Terms as were likely to lead those

those Persons into a most pernicious Snare, who take most heed to form their Sentiments according to the Declaration of his *revealed* Will.

As to the Old Testament; it is very observable, that after the Promise of a *Redeemer* to apostatized Mankind, *Gen. III. 15*, There was all along at various Times, some Appearances of a *Divine Presence* in the *Jewish Church*, either *approving* or *directing* that People. Of this *St. Paul* speaks, *Rom. IX. 4.* *whose is the Glory and the Covenants*, and the *Jews* called it the *Shechinah*. This was probably vouchsafed to *Abel*, as he made his Oblation to God: A *Beam of Glory* from the Clouds darted down on *Abel*, and on his Sacrifice, is thought by learned Men, to be that which moved his Brother *Cain's* Envy, and excited his cruel Wrath. For in this Manner did God testify his Approbation of *Abraham's* Sacrifice. *Gen. XV. 17.* *A burning Lamp passed between the Sacrifices*: that is, a divine *Glory*, like the Flame of a *Lamp*. The Answer of God by *Urim*, on the Breast-plate of the *High-Priest*, was of this Nature. *Num. XXVII. 21.*

\*

As

As was the Cloud that filled the Tabernacle, *Exod. XL. 34.* And the Pillar of a Cloud which by Day, and the Pillar of Fire which by Night, directed, defended, and comforted the Israelites, in their Passage through the Wilderness, *Exod. XIII. 21.* Now the New Testament expressly shews us, that some of these *bright Effulgen- cies* (which is a Key to open the Nature of the rest of them) were *Beams of Glory* from the *Eternal Son of GOD*, to which *St. Paul* plainly directs the unbelieving *Jews*, when in the very Beginning of his Epistle to them, he tells them: That God *had in these last Days spoken to them by his Son*; *Heb. I. 2.* And that they might know who this *Son of God* was, he there minds them of the *Shechinahs*, to which their Fore-fathers had been long used, as a Dispensation from God, to *train* them up, to expect the Appearance of his Son in a *visible Manner*. For (saith he) this *SON of GOD* is the *Brightness of the Father's Glory*, (the *Shechinah*) and the *express Image of his Person*, *Ver. 3.* which is the very Word, that was often used by *Philo the Learned Jew*, in his De-  
 \* description



scription of the *Divine Logos*, who frequently calls him the *Image* or personating *Shechinah* of GOD.

And as there were frequent *Efulgencies* of the Son of GOD, who is the *Divine Brightness* (as the Apostle says) so there were many Appearances of the same *Divine Person* in human Shape; for as *Solomon* says, *His Delight was with the Children of Men*, Prov. VIII. 31.

There is just Reason to conclude, that One of the Angels that appeared to *Abraham*, a little before the Destruction of *Sodom*, was the *Son of God*, prefiguring and foreshewing his Incarnation: For our Saviour himself says, that *Abraham* saw his Day, and was glad, (*Joh. VIII. 56.*) Now there were only Two Angels that went down to *Sodom*, Gen. XIX. 1. The *Third* stay'd behind, prone to *save*, not to *destroy*. And we find the Faithful *Abraham* praying to Him to spare *Sodom*; and he received several Grants from Him, as if he had seen GOD *face to face*, Gen. XVIII. 23, &c. saying, if I find *Fifty* Righteous Persons in *Sodom*, yea, if I find *Forty Five*, or but *Forty*; and at last, if

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but *Ten*, I will save the Place for their Sake. Now, as none but GOD could make these *Grants*, to kill, and to save *alive*; and as this Faithful *Patriarch* would pray to none but GOD; so *Abraham* calls Him by the Name of *Jehovah*, which is a Name incommunicable to a Creature, for it implies the *Being of all Beings*; Yet is applied *Four Times* to this Angel in this Passage: And he is called *the Judge of all the Earth*, Ver. 25.

The same *Angel of the Covenant* appeared (as we must conclude) to *Abraham* out of Heaven, when he lifted up his Hand to offer up his Son, *Gen. XXII. 12.* saying, *Now I know that thou fearest GOD, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thy only Son from ME*, which no mere Angel would or durst apply to himself.

This was *He*, we may well conceive, that appeared to *Jacob* in the Form of a *Man*, with whom *Jacob* wrestled all Night, (laying hold on him probably as *Moses* did, *Exod. XXXII. 9.* by strong Efforts of *Faith* and *Prayer*) who blessed *Jacob*, and changed his *Name* to *Israel*, and who granted him every thing he ask'd,

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ask'd, except the revealing of his *Name*, which was a *Myfterious Secret*, Gen. XXXII. 24. after which *Jacob* acknowledges with *Thankfulness*, that *he had seen GOD Face to Face*, yet his *Life was preserved*, Ver. 30.

When *Manoah* was favour'd with the like *Appearance*, he had a like *Answer*, *Judges XIII. 18. Wherefore askest thou after my Name, seeing it is Secret?* And *Manoah* said to his *Wife*, *We shall surely die, because we have seen GOD*, Ver. 22.

This was *He*, it is conceiv'd, that appear'd to *Joshua*, as *Captain of the Lord's Host*, whom *Joshua* worshiped with the most profound *Prostrations*, and who made the *Ground Holy* whereon he stood. *Josb. V. 14.*

This *Angel* is many *Times* call'd an *Angel of God* in one *Verse*, and *GOD* in another. As, *Exod. III. 2, 4.* And both the ancient *Hebrew Paraphrasts*, and the ancient *Christian Fathers* did conceive, that these *Appearances* were the *Preludia Messie*, the *Prefigurations* or *Preludes* of the *Incarnation* of the *SON of God*. *Philo* speaks of this *Divine Logos*, both in

his Book of *Dreams*, and in that of the *Confusion of Tongues*: Which is the very Term of my Text,  $\alpha\gamma\theta\omega\ \lambda\omicron\gamma\omega\ \iota\ \lambda\omicron\gamma\omega$ , and *God was the Logos, or, the WORD was GOD.*

The First Christian Martyr, St. *Stephen*, leaves this important Point of Instruction with the *Jews*, tho' his Murderers, that he might with his last Breath direct them to the *Messiah*, Act. VII. 38 *This is He that was in the Church in the Wilderness, with the Angel that spake to him, (i. e. to Moses in Mount Sinai;) and with the Fathers who received the lively Oracles to give unto us.* And to this the Old Testament agrees: For when God said he would not go with them, but would send his Angel with them, to dispossess the *Seven Nations* of the Heathens, and to seat the *Jews* in it, *Exod. XXXIII. 2.* It is said, *When the People heard these Evil Tydings, they mourned, and no Man did put on his Ornaments, Ver. 4.* Why were these evil Tydings? Here is no Alteration of any outward Grant, the Angel of God was to go with them, and to give them *the Land flowing with Milk and Honey.*

But

But the grand Point was, That an *Angel*, and not the *Son of God*, was to go with them. Infomuch, that *Moses* declares exprefly, Ver. 15. *If thy Prefence go not with me, carry us not up hence*: Which was the fpecial Favour they had enjoyed before this their Sin of *Baal-Peor*, as *St. Stephen* affirms in the Words before cited.

So alfo, as to our Saviour's giving the *Law* on *Mount Sinai*, *Exod. XX.* The *Lord Jesus* is affirmed to be with the *Angels* that were in the *Mount*. *Pfal LXVIII. 17, 18.* *The Chariots of God are Twenty Thousand, even Thousands of Angels, the LORD is among them as in Mount Sinai, in the Holy Place: Thou haft ascended on High, Thou haft led Captivity Captive, Thou haft received Gifts for Men, &c.* Now, fince it is Evident, that thefe laft Words are fpoken of our *Bleffed Lord Jesus Christ*, and of the Gifts he fent on Men by the *Holy Ghoft* after his *Ascenfion*; the former alfo muft be fpoken of him. And moreover, thefe very *Idolaters* in the *Cafe of Baal-Peor*, who did *Eat and Drink, and rofe up to Play*, are faid by the *Apoftle* to have tempted *Christ*,  
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I Cor. X. 9. *i. e.* to provoke Him with whose Presence they were honoured.

I have here a very large Field of Argument before me, relating to the Appearances of the *Glory* of the *Son of GOD* in the Old Testament: But I am confined to the narrow Limits of a Sermon; and do therefore refer such as are desirous to see further Instances of this kind, with the Proofs of the Divine Nature of Jesus Christ from them, to the excellent Treatise of *Idolatry*, written by His Grace the Lord *Arch-Bishop of Canterbury*: And to the late Account of the Reasons of the Conversion of *Jonab Ben Jacob Xeres* from the *Jewish* to the *Christian* Religion, drawn up by his own Hand.

Let me only add, that the *Arians* as well as the *Orthodox* of Old, asserted the *Visibility* of the *Son*, and the *Invisibilty* of the *Father*, tho' upon different Reasons, as we see in the Epistles of *St. Jerome*. And *Bisterfeldius*, in that very Treatise in which he defendeth the *Natural Divinity* of the *Son of GOD* against *Crellius*, maintains, " That the *Father* is

" in-

“ *invisible* to the very Angels, and  
 “ that Christ was the *visible* Image  
 “ of the Father, even in the Ages  
 “ long before the Gospel. *Bistr. contr.*  
 “ *Crell. l. 1. p. 298, &c.*

Let us now consider the *Divine Names and Attributes* given to the *Messiah* in the Old Testament. He is called *Jehovah*, as we saw before. He is term'd the *Mighty GOD*, the *Everlasting Father*, which is verified by his being the *Eternal Creator* of all Things. He is term'd, *The Man that is GOD's Fellow*; To which of the Apostle agrees, that *he thought it no Robbery to be equal with GOD*. He, whose *Goings forth were from Everlasting. Jehovah our Righteousness*. He is called *Immanuel*, that is, *GOD with us*: And is foretold to be *born of a Virgin*.

In the New Testament, Christ is named *Immanuel* by an Angel of *GOD* when he was in the *Virgin's Womb*. He is positively affirmed to be *GOD*, which is spoken absolutely, with the *Attributes of Eternity, Omnipotency, and Eternal Vitality*, as I before shew'd in the opening of my Text. It is said, that the *Fulness of*

Col. II. 9. *Godhead dwells in him bodily. It is declared, That by him all Things were created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible; whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers: All Things were*

Col I. 16. *created by Him and for Him. And He is before all Things, and by him all Things consist. These Words are full and expressive of the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and all the Interpretations which our Adversaries put upon them, that ever I have seen, are forced and unnatural. Moreover, the Apostle affirms, That Christ took not on him the Nature of Angels, but the Seed of Abraham.* This proves that he had

Heb. II.

16.

a *Præ-existence* before his Incarnation, and that he was not of the Nature of an *Angel*; what could he then be that made the *Choice of Abraham's Seed*, but the All-wise and All-good GOD? As the Apostle himself proves in the *Second Chapter* of the *Hebrews*, and the 24th *Verse*, where he proves the *Divinity* of the *Son of GOD* by his *Power to create*. Now he that built all Things is GOD. If any say, that the Father lent the Son his *Omnipotency* in the Creation of the World,



World, they then say, that he lent him his *Godhead*. Or if they say, that *G O D* wrought by him as by an *Instrument*; they thus make Him only a *Tool*, as any Thing else might have been. But then it could never be affirmed, that *all Things were made by Him and for Him*, as (Col. I. 16.) Or if they say, these Expressions of *Creation*, are only meant of the new State of the Gospel in Man's Restoration to the Image and Favour of *G O D*: We reply, that this could not be effected but by the same *Fountain of Life* by which Man was *created even the working of GOD's mighty Power*. And moreover, this is contrary to what is before-cited, *By Him all Things were created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible*.

I will add but one Text more, tho' Multitudes might be alledg'd, which is that of St. John, (Revel. I. 8.) *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the L O R D, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty*. Omnipotency and Eternity are incommunicable Attributes of the *One GOD*, and are only applicable to the Son, as *One in Essence with the Father*;  
as

as himself said, *I and my Father are One*, *Ἐν ἑομας*, we are *One Thing*, or *One Substance*.

But tho' we prove many incommunicable Attributes of GOD to be applied to our Blessed Saviour, we shall not give Satisfaction to some of the Adversaries of this great Point, except we prove (they say) that the Title of the *Most High*, is given to the SON of GOD. I reply, it is most absurd and impious for dark Mortals, who, with their best Learning, *fully know Nothing*, to dictate to the infinite GOD, the Terms of his Revelation to us, where the Thing is sufficiently declared in other Words. But however, if it be granted that it was the Son of GOD that descended to divide the Tongues of the Builders of *Babel*, (as it may be proved from what is before alledg'd, and from many other Arguments) the Title of *Most High*, is given to the *Son of GOD* by *Moses*, in his Recapitulation of that memorable Passage, *When the Most High divided to the Nations their Inheritance, when he separated the Sons of Adam*. *Novatian* \* proves this to be spoken of the *Son of GOD*,  
by

Deut.  
XXXII.8.

\*De Trin.  
p. 723.

by sundry Arguments, too large to be here repeated: And whereas, it is said (*Gen. XI. 7.*) *Go to, let us go down, and there confound their Language.* The Apostle seems to let us into the true Knowledge of him that *went down* from Heaven for that Purpose; when he saith (*Eph. IV. 10.*) *Now he thrt descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all Heavens.* Tho' this is spoken of another Ascent and Descent of Christ, the Reason of it is equally valid. So that the *Arabick* Version, *The Angels came down,* must be interpreted (saith a most Reverend Author) of that part of the *Shechinah*, which was made up by the Attendance of Angels on the Son of GOD. (*Discourse of Idol. p. 337, &c.*) This then fully answers that Elusion of the Truth of my Text, to which the *Socinians* frequently resort; namely, that when our Lord *Jesus Christ* is called GOD, it must be taken as when it is applied to *Princes*, (whose Power is a *Ray* of Divine Majesty) and to *Prophets*, to whom *the Word of the Lord came*, (*Joh. X. 35.*) For no Prince or Prophet was ever call'd the true GOD, (as *Joh. V. 20.*) *the Almighty*

mighty G O D, (as Rev. I. 8.) nor the Everlasting and most High G O D, as before alledg'd; nor is a creative and vital Power ascrib'd to any such, as in the Chapter to which my Text belongs. It is true, that since the Jews had a scriptural Acceptation of the Word of G O D, in this metaphorical Sense, they ought not to have condemn'd our Blessed Saviour of Blasphemy, till they had known in what Sense he called himself, *the Son of GOD*; and then he would, without doubt, have witnessed as full a Confession as he did of his being the King and Judge of the World before Pontius Pilate: And one Thing that is very material, is evident both from the Sentiments of the Jews, and the Words of our Saviour; namely, that the Son of GOD implies the same Thing with GOD. *Thou blasphemest,* said the Jews, *because thou sayest, I am the Son of GOD, making thy self GOD.* (Joh. X. 33.) Our Saviour owns the Force of their Argument, and says, the Term GOD, is sometimes applicable to Men of Piety and Power. *I have said, ye are GODS,* but then their Mortality is immediately subjoin'd;

join'd; but ye shall die like Men. But of Christ it is said, *Thy Throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever*, (Heb. I. 8.) And it is evident that Christ is called the Son of God, and therefore GOD, in a higher Sense than it was ever ascrib'd to the Prophets, to whom the Word of the Lord came; for it is said, *God, who at sundry Times, and in divers manners spake in Time past to the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last Days spoken to us by his SON*. This denotes a Dignity of Person superiour to all preceding Prophets: For He is the *only begotten Son of God*. And whereas, God spake with *Moses Face to Face*; this Appearance to *Moses*, is supposed by *St. Augustine* (Ep. 119.) to be the Appearance of the Son of GOD, (Num. XII. 8.) *For no Man hath seen God at any Time, the only begotten Son, who is in the Bosom of the Father, he hath declar'd him*. (Joh. I. 18.) *And we beheld his Glory, saith St. John* (Ver. 14.) *the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father full, of Grace and Truth*.

The WORD, as *Tertullian* observes, was God's Minister before the Law, and under it; being the Angel  
D<sup>e</sup> Resur.  
Car.  
p. 357.  
of

of the Covenant ; and then the *Logos* spake by some Principal Angel, and assisted the Angel, in a miraculous Motion of the Air, to form an articulate *Voice* ; or by an intelligible Impression on the Brain of the Persons spoken to, equally miraculous. But now, under the Gospel, the *Logos* in my Text spake with his own Mouth, as having assumed Humane Nature into Unity of Person. For *the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt* (or tabernacled) ἐσκήνωσεν, *among us*

If the *Socinians* and *others* would give these Things a free and due Consideration, they would forbear their Clamour so often expressed against the Term Person, especially as we now consider it, with Relation to Christ as the προσῶπον, the *Face*, or *personating Shechinah* of the Father.

They also who rightly distinguish betwixt Christ, as GOD's *Word* and *Shechinah* under the former Covenants made with *Adam*, *Noah*, and *Abraham*, and as the Mediator and the *incarnate Son* of God, under the *Gospel* ; will the better understand such Places of holy Scripture as speak of Christ's *Pre-existence*, and likewise those which speak

Speak of his coming into the World in the *Fulness of Time*. And consequently will be better able to solve the *Doubts*, and answer the *Arguments* made by *Socinians* on these Points.

And now, I conceive, it is apparent that the holy Scriptures abound with such Indications of the *Divinity* of the only begotten Son of God *Jesus Christ*, that it cannot be thought agreeable to the infinite Goodness and Philanthropy of GOD, to expose, or rather to lead Men to such a dangerous Error, as those Persons who give the greatest Heed to God's Word, could not but be likely to fall into, were these Expressions to denote any Thing less than what our Church understands by them; namely, That *Jesus Christ* is the Son of God, of the Substance of the *Divine Nature*, as well as the Son of Man, of the Substance of *Humane Nature*.

Let us now consider in what Sense the primitive and succeeding Churches of Christ understood these Expressions: Which was the *Second Evidence* proposed.

II. The *Catholick Church* of Christ hath, in all Ages, acknowledg'd the *Divinity* of Jesus Christ the Son of God and Saviour of Men; tho' perhaps less openly in the short Interval of the *Arian Persecution*, by reason of which, the Sentiments of the *Orthodox* were at that Time more reserved and reclude.

The Grounds of our Belief of this Article are so copiously evident in the holy Scriptures, (as we have already seen in some Measure) that the Generality of Christians, who grounded their Faith on these *divine Revelations*, could not but assent to this Truth, tho' there might be here and there an unhumble *Rationalist*, or wild *Enthusiast*, that thought otherwise.

We are initiated into the Church of Christ at our Baptism, by the standing Order of Christ himself, in Words that cannot be well understood in any Sense but what implies the Doctrine of the *Tri-une GOD*. Go ye, teach (or disciple) *all Nations*, *Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. By this



this Sacrament they were solemnly dedicated to GOD their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; and washed with Water, to denote the efficacious purifying of the *Blood* of Jesus, which is called *God's own Blood*, (Acts XX. 28.) In this *Blood* they were wash'd in a Sacramental Sense, as the Laver of Regeneration, and by the Merit of this *Blood*, they trusted to be *ransomed* from the Power of *Sin* and the *Devil*, and were thenceforth denominated *Christians*. Now to be devoted to *Jesus Christ* and to the *Holy Spirit* at the same Time, in the same Words, and with the same awful Solemnity as to the *Father*, making this the very *Constitution* of our Faith, and the *Condition* of our Salvation, is a very extraordinary Bond upon us to be steadfast in this Doctrine. As is also the Apostolick Blessing pronounced, (2 Cor. XIII. 14.) *The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of GOD, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.* This is the Apostle's solemn Prayer to the Three Persons in the Holy Trinity, for the special Blessings of each particular Person: And what can be a

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greater Proof of the *Divinity* of each Person, than a formal Prayer to each of them, in Hope of a special Blessing from each? Thus we own, from *Scriptural Authority*, a Distinction of Person, but a strict Unity of *Essence* in the Adored GOD HEAD. When we use the Word *Person* here, we are sensible of the *Disproportion* of our common Words when applied to this *Sacred Mystery*; and do declare, that we do not use it here in the vulgar Sense, so as to denote three individual complete Beings; or in short, in any Sense that implies *Tritheism*, or denotes a *Plurality* of Gods; for we contend for the *Unity* of the GOD HEAD with as true a Zeal as any of those who unduly appropriate to themselves the Name of *Unitarians*. This being the Doctrine of the Apostles, it must be the Doctrine of the Primitive Church. The Learned *Grotius* affirms of *Dionisius the Areopagite*, *Polycarp*, *Justin*, *Irenaeus*, *Athenagoras*, and other Successors of the Apostles, that they exhibited due Honour to *Jesus Christ* as G O D. For as *St. Cyril* professeth, they had Man-Worship in Abhorrence [Truth  
of

of Ch. Rel. Book 2. Sect. 5. Anf. to Fal-  
son.] When the Pagans carried away  
the dead Body of the Martyr Policarp,  
(A. D. 167.) under Pretence of pre-  
venting an Adoration of it by Chri-  
stians: The Church of Smirna re-  
ply'd in a Letter to their Friends;  
*Fools that they were, who did not know  
that Christians worship no Martyr but  
Jesus Christ, because he is the Son of  
GOD.* Now this Church learn'd this  
Dœctrine from Policarp their Bishop,  
who was the Disciple of St. John.  
Ignatius, who was Bishop of Antioch,  
(A. D. 70.) refuted the Heresies of  
Ebion and Cerinthus, who thought Je-  
sus Christ a mere Man.

Tertullian, who flourish'd in the  
194th Year after Christ, sets himself  
to manifest the Divinity of our Lord  
Jesus Christ in his *Apology for Chri-  
stians*, where, in his Discourse of the  
Christian Faith, he says, *Christians do  
not look on Jesus Christ as a mere  
Man, but as GOD; because he is the  
WORD of GOD, begotten of the same  
Substance: That he is thus God, and the  
Son of God, and that his Father and He  
are One: That the W O R D came down  
into the Womb of the Virgin, and took*

*Flesh upon him, and was born G O D-  
MAN, (Du Pin, p. 74. Vol. 1.)*

*Clemens of Alexandria* wrote his Exhortation to the *Gentiles* about the latter End of the Second Century; in which he shews them, *that Jesus Christ, who, from all Eternity, was the WORD of GOD, in tender Compassion to Men, took their Nature upon him, to free them from the Slavery of Demons.*

In the Time of the *Arian* Persecution, *Athanasius*, and *Vigilius Thapsitanus*, confessed the true Faith, and by Arguments defended it: And they who opposed the Doctrine of *Arius*, have been called the *Orthodox* by the Churches of Christ throughout the World ever since.

And in the Year of our Lord 325, the Council of *Nice*, consisting, as it is said, of 318 Bishops, having heard *Arius* his Explanation and Defence of his Opinion, did utterly condemn it; with an Anathema against such as said, *That there was a Time when the Son of GOD was not.* And tho' there were some Disputes about the Word *Consubstantial*, they all consented to it at last, and signed it, except two Persons, *viz. Secundus* and *Theonas,*

nas, who join'd with *Arius*, and were all Three censured together by that Council, as Depravers of the Christian Doctrine.

Now if this had not been the Doctrine generally taught before this Time in the Christian Church, we cannot conceive that so many Hundred Persons of the most eminent *Piety, Learning, and Station*, in those early Days of Christianity, could have agreed so unanimously in a Doctrine of this high and important Nature. Important indeed, in the most eminent Degree: For where is that Manifestation of the *inexpressible Love of GOD*, which is mentioned very often in the Gospel, to appear in the Gift of his SON *Jesus Christ*, if he was a mere MAN, as others are? And if so, what wonderful Love did Christ shew to Men by suffering as he did, to be exalted as He is? So that the Glory of the *Contrivance and Undertaking* of our Redemption, which the Gospel represents as such a *Height and Depth* of divine Love, as exceeds humane Comprehension, (*Eph. III. 18.*) falls at once, and with it our Christian Hope and Trust,

by this Socinian Dream. Great Reason therefore had the *Nicene Fathers* to contend so earnestly for the *Consubstantiality* of the SON of GOD, which was no *novel Term*, tho' the Adversaries of this glorious Truth call it so; as the Learned *Bishop Bull* has fully proved against *Episcopius*.

And here, in common Christian Charity, we cannot but lament, that two Persons of such fine Parts as *Episcopius* and *Curcellæus* trod so nigh the Steps of *Socinus* in many of his Errors. The chief Causes of their Halting seems to be these Two; namely,

I. Their Unwillingness to come to the Confession of Original Corruption, which the great Pretenders to Reason are not prone to acknowledge,

II. Their Slighting the Writings of the Primitive Fathers, thro' a Conceit of their own Capacity and Comprehension. This, as well as the former, was also the Stumbling-Block by which *Faustus Socinus* fell; for he boasts in his Answer to *Squarcialupus*, that the whole Stock of his Knowledge in Divinity was owing to no other Master but

but his Uncle Lælius, and to his Manuscripts and Notes. And what was the Effect of this conceited Man's setting up a System of Divinity out of his own, and his Uncle's Stock of Reason? Truly, the same that often happens to other vain *Free-Thinkers*, who usually reason themselves out of their *Christianity*. He taught that Christ was a mere Man; yet was to be worship'd, with other impious Absurdities of the like Nature. But what Wonder is it, that Men of great Parts fall by Pride, when Angels, of a higher Nature, fell by it?

If we consider the Faith of the *Jews* as to this Article, we find that they were so well instructed by the Doctrine of their *Prophets* and *Paraphrasts* concerning the *Divine Nature* of the *Messiah*; that when they came to own Christ as their Saviour promised of Old, they easily admitted the Doctrine of his *Divinity*. For their *Prophets* gave him not only the Names of *Elohim* and *Edonai*, but even that of *Jehovah*, which implies *Self-sufficiency*, and the *Original Being*; which cannot be ascribed to a Creature, as we before hinted. Hence

the Jewish Talmud in Tannith (as Grotius observes in his *Annotations*) affirms, that in the Days of the Messiah, Jehovah shall be shewn as with a Finger; and it shall be said, Lo! there is Jehovah, as Isa. XXV. 9. Lo! this is our GOD, q. d. Behold him cloath'd in Flesh, and so made *Visible*.

Eusebius takes Notice, in his Book of the Preparation of the Gospel, of an excellent Remark made by Philo the Jew, in his Treatise of the Confusion of Tongues: It is a Thing, says he, most becoming those who join Divine Knowledge and Fellowship together, to desire to see God, as we find Moses did. If this cannot be, they must content themselves with the sacred Image of GOD in his WORD; The divine Logos which he so often mentions: For the WORD was GOD, says my Text.

But if after all, any think they find too little said upon this Article, by the Writers of the first Ages of Christianity: Let them consider, that it was a Doctrine daily laid before the Church in the Form of Baptism appointed by our L. O. R. D, and in many Parts of the Sacred Oracles. And there is a plain Reason, why such as set themselves



to propagate the Gospel, ought not, in Prudence, to begin with Discourses of the *Mysterious* Points of Religion to those they would proselyte; namely, because they are not prepared to hear them. *I have many Things to say unto you*, said our Blessed Saviour to his Disciples in his last Discourses with them, *but ye cannot bear them now*, (Jo. XVI. 13.) And St. Paul complains of the same *Incapacity* in his Country-men the *Hebrews*, (Chap. V. 11.) *Of whom*, (i. e. of the Heavenly *Melchizedech*) *I have many Things to say, and hard to be utter'd, seeing ye are dull of Hearing*. So that he tells them, he must yet feed them, as Catechumens, with the first Principles of Religion, like Children, who must be fed with Milk till they can bear *strong Meat*; reserving the more abstruse Points of the Christian Faith, till their Senses were, by Exercise and Application, render'd capable of higher Instruction.

However, every One that had St. *John's* Gospel before him, had not only the *Affertion* of the Divinity of our Blessed Saviour in the Words of my Text, but the *Confession* of it by  
 St. *Thomas*

St. *Thomas* the Apostle to Christ himself, (*Joh. XX. 28.*) My LORD and my GOD; with our Saviour's Approbation, and his Blessing to all such as should afterwards confess the same Article of Faith, (*Ver. 29.*) *Jesus* said unto him, *Thomas*, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: Blessed are they who have not seen me, and yet have believed. Of which blessed Number, may we all be found, that we may be accepted of the Blessed *Jesus*, who is the AUTHOR of *Eternal Salvation* to them that obey him.

Let us therefore revere that Holy and Blessed Name of *Jesus*, which some *Miscreants* revile; and adore the *Word made Flesh*, which some deny: Let us heartily embrace him in his sacred Offices, and devoutly worship Him in his divine Glory: For to him every Knee shall bow both in Heaven and in Earth, and under the Earth. The Angels and Saints in Heaven and Earth shall worship him in zealous Affection; and wicked Men and Devils shall bow, with Terror to his Sceptre: For whosoever is ashamed of the SON of MAN, and of his Words,

*in this adulterous and sinful Generation; of him will the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels, (Mar. VIII. 38.)*

And in like Manner, Such as confess Him before Men, shall be confessed by Him before the Angels of GOD, (Luk. XII. 8.) that is, they shall be owned and applauded by him in the last Judgment.

Thus have I, tho' too defectively, gone through the Two first Proofs of the Divinity of the Son of GOD, our adored LORD and Saviour. I must refer the Two other Proofs to another Opportunity.

Now to GOD the Father, GOD the Son, and GOD the Holy Ghost, one Eternal and Incomprehensible GOD, be all Honour and Glory ascribed evermore. Amen.

SERMON

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# SERMON V.

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## The Divine Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ.

GOD JOHN I. Ver. 1.

In the Beginning was the WORD,  
and the WORD was with GOD,  
and the WORD was GOD.

**H**AVING in my last Discourse  
on these Words, asserted the  
Divine Nature of *Jesus Christ* the SON  
of GOD, and Saviour of the World,

I. From those incommunicable  
Names and Attributes of GOD which  
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are given to Him both by the *Prophets* and *Apostles.*

II. From the continued Consent of the Universal Church of GOD to this Article of Faith; even of the *Jewish Church* in some Measure, as well as of the Christian.

I now proceed as I promised, to a further Proof of this Fundamental Article of our Faith, by two other Arguments, which tend to confirm our Belief, *that the WORD was GOD.*

III. No other Notion of our Blessed Redeemer clears the *Justice* and *Honour* of Almighty GOD in the *Pardon* of Sin.

If we trace this Matter from the Beginning, we find in the Book of GOD an Account of the first *Transgression* and *Pollution* of Man, which no other *Book* or *Author* has, or could relate to us. Namely, that GOD having finished the beautiful Frame of this visible World, placed the first *Man* and *Woman* (then newly created) in a very commodious Part of it, which was a perfect Scene of true Delight and suitable Accommodation. So that every Thing they saw or  
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partook of, afforded them a Lecture of the *Goodness* and *Bounty* of their Maker, and refreshed the Sense of their infinite Obligations to *love* and *serve* him.

Yet they had scarce tasted every *Kind* of GOD's plentiful Provision for them in this Heavenly Paradise, before they gave Way to the Devil's Suggestion of such an unworthy Thought of their Maker, as amazes one to think of; which was, that GOD, notwithstanding all these Demonstrations of his *Love* and *Bounty* given them, was not a thorow Friend to them; and had reserved the Fruit of the *forbidden Tree*, to prevent their Exaltation to a more *Divine* State: That the Death he threaten'd, would not be executed if they sinn'd; and in short, that they now had found out a *Being*, that would be more *free* and *true* to them than their Creator.

It is very strange, that such *black* and *absurd* Conceits could find Entertainment in Minds so *clear*, and Breasts so *pure*, as theirs were. Whether it was, that the *Evil Angel* first climb'd the Tree in the Form of a *Serpent*, and upon eating the forbidden  
Fruit,

Fruit, transform'd himself into the Appearance of a glorious *Angel*, and then using the Voice of Man, attributed this advantageous Change to the Virtue of the *Fruit* of that Tree? Or whether, as others think, the *Eternal Logos*, or Son of GOD, having conversed with them in a visible *Shechinah* of glorious Angels; this *envious* Demon might appear like one of them, and being a *Liar from the Beginning*, might averr to them, that He was of the Retinue of the Son of GOD, and that he suggested this in Friendship to them? *Tertullian* gives us this Thought in his Book *de Prescriptione Hæreticorum*, (Pag. 220.) where he says, *Eve gave Attention to the Serpent as to the Son of GOD.* And in his Book against the *Valentinians*, he says, that *the Serpent from the Beginning was one that sacrilegiously usurped the divine Image.*

However it came about, we here see the *Proto-types* and *Roots* of Mankind fall'n from their *Innocency* and the *Favour of GOD*; and justly fallen under his *Displeasure* and *vindictive Justice*: And in them the *Hope* of a happy *Posterity* entirely cut off.

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How can the Righteous GOD now forbear to take Vengeance, tho' we cannot but conceive it to be done with some Sounding of his Bowels, and great Inclinations to Mercy?

The Case seems attended with dark Consequences both Ways. If impartial *Justice* cuts off these two Criminals without Respite, there is an End of the Race of *Mankind*; and the Devil seems to have defeated the *Honour* proposed to come to God by their Creation. And if they are suffer'd to live, and multiply their Offspring on the Earth: This could not mend the Matter; for no *clean* Streams can be expected to flow from a *polluted* Fountain. Or, if this whole *Race* be swept away, and new *Progenitors* of *Mankind* be created, the latter Production might be as likely to offend as the former, and this might give Occasion for multiplied Creations, which would obscure the Brightness of infinite Wisdom, as if he fail'd in producing sufficient Means to attain his End. On the other Hand, if there were never so vehement Inclinations to *Mercy* in this Case, how could infinite *Wisdom* and  
*Truth,*



*Truth, Righteousness and Purity* yield to it? All Acts of Mercy are not virtuous and commendable. If a wealthy Man bestows his Alms on *idle and vicious* People, and maintains them in their wicked Way of Life; this is an *imprudent and unvirtuous* Liberality. And if a Prince pardons *unnatural and unrelenting* Parricides and Traytors, it blemishes his *Administration*; and he cannot be revered as a righteous and wise Magistrate.

We find, that a just Sense of the *Veneration* due to the Authority of *Laws and the Legislature*, hath put many great Men upon doing Justice even on Persons most near and dear to them, when they have fallen under the Penalties of them. When the Son of *Zaleuchus* had forfeited both his Eyes by his Adultery, according to the Decree of his Father's Laws; the Father would not abate of his Indignation to Vice, and his Zeal for Justice: But to mingle the *Compassion* of a Father with the *Impartiality* of a Judge, he order'd one of his Son's Eyes to be put out, and one of his *own*; which fully preserv'd

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the Honour of the Legislature. When King *Darius* found himself circumvented by the Envy and Malice of the Enemies of his beloved *Daniel*; and had strove, in vain, till the Evening, to find out Expedients to deliver him from the Penalty of the Law. The Prince at last gives up his *Favourite* as a *Prey* to the *Lions*, rather than suffer any Contempt to be put on the *Sanction* of his *Laws*, (Dan. VI. 16.)

There is nothing, I think, on Record that speaks the *Princely* Spirit of King *Saul*, so much as the Sentence he pronounc'd on his Son *Jonathan* for his Transgression, tho' thro' Ignorance, and only against the rash Aduration of his Father, in the Case of his eating in the midst of the Pursuit of his Enemies; for, as soon as *Jonathan* was convicted hereof by the *Divine Testimony*, the King passes the Sentence of Death on his dear and dutiful Son, a Prince of intrepid Valour and great Accomplishments, and who had that very Day obtain'd the greatest *Victory* that ever the World heard of; having just then defeated and put to Flight, a vast

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Army of *Philistines*, encamp'd on a Hill almost inaccessible, with no other Forces but *himself* and his *Armour-Bearer*: Yet his Father's *Honour* makes him pronounce his *Condemnation* without any *Appearance* of relenting; and to shew that he had no *Intention* to do otherwise, he binds his *Words* with an awful *Imprecation*; *GOD do so, and more also*, (that is, to me if I spare thee) for *thou shalt surely die Jonathan*, (1 Sam. XIV. 44.)

But all *Instances* of wise and just *Men* fall infinitely short of the *perfect Righteousness* and *Wisdom* of *GOD*. Shall not the *Judge* of all the *Earth* do *righteously*? Will the *Sovereign* of the *World* part with his *Honour*? Will he part with his *Glory* to his *Enemy*? Shall the *Devil* appear *true* in his *Contradiction* of the *Sanction* of *GOD's Law*; who said, *ye shall not surely die, tho' ye eat of the forbidden Fruit*? If *Men* transgress so heinously, and come off free, will any one fear to *offend* *God* for the future? And will it not be *Partiality* to pardon one in *mere Mercy*, and to punish another in *mere Justice*?

Moreover, was not the World then newly made to display the Glorious *Attributes* of GOD? And can infinite *Majesty* and *Perfection* slight the chief End of the World's Creation, in some of the *first* Acts of the *reasonable* Part of it? If so great an Offence committed against the *first positive* Law given to Man, against a Law so *equitable* and *easy* to be observed, a Law so *newly* and so *solemnly* made, shall be passed over without any Testimony of *Divine Vengeance*, how can Angels or Men retain *just* and *awful* Notions of GOD? *viz.* of his *inviolable* Love of *Obedience*, and of his *inexorable* Zeal for *Justice*, which are the strongest Ties on *reasonable Beings* to observe his Laws. Yea, would not the *fallen Angels* have complained of a Blot in *divine Justice*, *Purity*, and *Perfection*, had they seen *sinful Men* pardon'd on the Motions of *mere Mercy*, and themselves condemn'd for ever without the least *Glimpse* of it? But this whole Matter is fully adjusted by the wonderful Expedient of the *Sacrifice* of the SON of GOD, to the great *Glory* of GOD in all his

his blessed Attributes, to the great *Comfort* of Men in all their Guilt and Infirmities, and to the *stopping* of the Mouths of blaspheming Spirits in all their Envy and Misery.

Since the *Eternal SON* of GOD condescended to take on him the Nature of MAN, and in it to keep the whole Law *inviolably*, and to offer up himself a Sacrifice of *Peace-Offering*, as the *Lamb of GOD* that took away the Sins of the World; here is a full *Satisfaction* to the Demands of divine *Justice*, a full *Redress* to the Sin and Misery of Man, and a *Display* of such a high Pitch of *Justice* and *Mercy* together, as afford Matter of *Speculation* and *Instruction* to the glorious Angels; which seems to be typified in the *Cherubims* looking down on the *Mercy-Seat*, (Exod. XXV. 10.) and is expressed (1 Pet. I. 12.) *Which Things the Angels desire to look into.*

The Justice of God is fully satisfied hereby, for the Love of God to his Law, his Zeal for his *Honour*, and his Indignation against *Sin*, or in one Word, his *Righteousness*, is more brightly display'd in the *Sufferings* of his only begotten Son, as smitten by

the Hand of his *Righteous Father*, than it could have been in the *Condemnation* of the whole World. This is undeniable; for, a Judge that has a Cause brought before him, wherein his *dear Relation* is bound in Suretyship for a *Stranger*, acts more severely, tho' with equal Justice, in levying the Forfeiture on his *beloved Relation*, in Case the *Stranger* becomes insolvent, than if he had levied the Distress as first intended by the Bond. We find a Proneness to smite a Person that has *provoked us*; but to smite our most *beloved Child*, who has undertaken to make up the Difference betwixt us and our Adversary this Way, is such a Pain to our *Bowels*, as nothing, but a very high *Indignation* to the Fact of the Offender, could induce us to consent to.

But no Instance can come near that of the Sufferings of the Son of GOD, as our *ἀντίλυτρον*, a *Ransom* for us. *ἀντί* here signifies *Commutation*, as *ὄφθαλμὸς ἀντὶ ὄφθαλμοῦ*, an *Eye for an Eye*, as *Grotius* observes. For he bore our *Griefs*, and carried our *Sorrows*. He was wounded for our *Transgressions*, and was bruised for our *Iniquities*:

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The Chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes we are healed. All we, like Sheep, have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on him the Iniquity of us all, (Isa. LIII. 4, 5, 6.) Christ is our Passover that was sacrificed for us, (1 Cor. V. 7.) He is the Propitiation for our Sins; and not for ours only, but for the Sins of the whole World; (1 Joh. II. 2.) In whom we have Redemption through his Blood, the Forgiveness of Sins, (Eph. I. 7.) This attoning, purifying, pleading, and redeeming Blood; is that which was prefigured by all the Rivers of Blood shed on the Jewish Altars; and the whole Scheme of our Salvation depends upon the Merit of it, both in the Old and New Testament: And the Merit of his Sufferings wholly depends on the Dignity of his Person, as the SON of GOD.

The Argument of Socinus against this, is so little to the Matter, that it falls short of his usual Subtilty: For he argues, that since the Godhead (according to our Faith) did not suffer, it could add no Merit to the Sufferings of Christ, tho' he should be supposed to be GOD and MAN.

Which is the same as to say, that a  
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Man that gives a Blow to a *King*, deserves no more Punishment than he that gave the like Blow to a *private* Man, because it was the *Man*, not the *King*, that felt the Blow given; which appears *absurd* at the first Hearing.

I dare not say, that there was no other Way to save Men beside the Death of the SON of God: But I may say, this was the *best* and *fittest* Expedient for it; because it seem'd best to infinite Wisdom. Ought not *Christ* to suffer, and to enter into his *Glory*? (Luk. XXIV. 26.) And we may be sure, that this glorious Way of our Redemption was not the *Invention* of Man, because only infinite *Wisdom* could ever have found it out. And tho' a *shorter* and a less *painful* and less *shameful* Death of the Son of God, might have been a sufficient Attonement; yet in such Mitigations, the *Indignation* of God against *Sin* had not been so fully seen. So that, on this Account, we see the Righteous GOD inexorable as to any Abatement of the Sufferings of his SON, appointed for a *Sacrifice* for sinful Men, though his dear Son plead-



pleaded for a *Passing by* of the Cup (*if possible*) with *strong Cries* and dreadful *Agonies*, (Luk. XXII. 44.)

In the Case of *Compensation*, where a Friend offers to bring himself under a Penalty to exempt another from it; this being a Way of Payment, which the Person, to whom it is due, may *accept* or *refuse* at his Pleasure: More may be required very fairly, than a bare valuable Consideration. So that it may here be said, to the Glory of God, *He hath received of the LORD's Hand double for our Sins*, (Isa. XL. 2.) *And that he hath magnified his Law, and made it honourable*, (Isa. XLII. 21.) For now it must be said, That God, infinite in Righteousness and Majesty, never *dispenced* with his Law but once, and that was on such a Consideration, as makes it terrible to be thought on. He pardon'd *Sin* indeed, but not without the Expence of the *Blood* of his only Son: Yea, and that Blood was not *honourably* or *easily* shed, but with the utmost *Disgrace* and *Pain*; in *Mockery* and many disdainful *Insults* from Men, and with deep *Anguish* of Soul, and *Agonies* of Spirit from God: That no Soul may  
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henceforth ever admit a Thought of Impunity in Sin, except by *bitter* Repentance and an effectual Faith in this *Blood* of Jesus: For there remains no further *Sacrifice for Sin*. GOD has no other SON to slay, this is his *only begotten*. Wo, Wo therefore, to every Sinner that flees not for Refuge to this Hope; and that is not by the holy Spirit *animated* and *united* in this JESUS, as a *Member* of his mystical Body; for then he must suffer *alone*, and in his own *Person* for his Sins, and he will not come out of the Hands of the Tormentors till *he has paid the last Mite*. O sad! the *last Mite* of an infinite Debt! This can never be paid by a worthless, a polluted, an undone Creature; a Creature that has no *Ransom* to plead, no available *Sacrifice* to offer, and no *Mediator* to make his Peace.

Let all that think of this *perfect* Righteousness of GOD, tremble at it in any other View, but in the sweet Conjunction of it with the free *Grace* and plenteous *Mercy* of the *blessed Gospel*. For there it is that *Mercy* and *Truth* have met together; and Righteous-

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*teousness and Peace have kissed each other,*  
 (Psal. LXXXV. 10.) The Apostle explains this Agreement of divine Righteousness and Peace, in the Pardon of a Sinner interested in the Propitiation of his SON, in Words very remarkable, (Rom. III. 24, 25, 26.) *Being justified freely thro' the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ: Whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation, thro' Faith in his Blood; to declare his Righteousness for the Remission of Sins that are past, thro' the Forbearance of G O D. To declare, I say, at this Time, his Righteousness; that he might be just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.*  
 The RIGHTEOUSNESS of God was never so gloriously manifested as in this sublime Act of it on the Cross of his SON: So that the Apostle might well repeat the Assertion, *to declare, I say, at this Time, his RIGHTEOUSNESS:* Even at that Time when he made his *only* begotten and *dearly* beloved SON to groan and agonize, to bleed and die, in the utmost outward Shame and Contempt, and in the heaviest inward Pressure and Darknes, when he stood in the Place  
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of Sinners, as a *Sacrifice* for their Transgressions.

Let the *Socinians*, who say, that our Blessed Saviour died only for an *Example* of good Behaviour to Men, tell us what it was that made him so *solely amazed* at the Prospect of his Sufferings? Why was his righteous Soul exceeding *Sorrowful*, even unto *Death*, when the Spirits of holy Martyrs are usually revived by Joy unspeakable in their Sufferings? What caused his *Agony* and *bloody Sweat* in the Garden? and what meant that mournful Cry on the Cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* We here see, that he *tasted the Bitterness of Death for every Man*: And his Soul was made an *Offering for Sin*; and the *Dignity* of his Person, as *GOD manifest in the Flesh*, gave *infinite Merit* to his Sufferings; so that the Justice of God is hereby more glorified than if the whole Race of Mankind had underwent the Punishment threaten'd to their Sins; which was the *Third Proof* of the *Divine Nature* of the Son of *G O D*.

IV. *Lastly*, No other Notion of our Blessed Redeemer is sufficient to answer the principal Ends of his *Messiahship*. Which were,

I. To restore corrupt Men to the *Image and Favour* of G O D.

II. To give the *highest Glory* to the infinitely Great and Good GOD hereby.

III. To lay the greatest Obligations on Men, to *love and serve* God faithfully for the future.

I. If our Blessed Redeemer had been any Thing less than the *Eternal WORD, which was GOD, and was made Flesh*, he could not have been sufficient to restore corrupt Men to the *Image and Favour* of the pure and holy G O D.

It is a fundamental Truth, demonstrable from Reason, Experience, and the holy Scriptures, that Men are, by their Apostacy from G O D, cut off from the *Source and Principle* of spiritual *Life*; and are, as of themselves, dead as to spiritual *Light, Affection, and Action*. The *Heart of Stone* - per-

*ceives*

ceives not the Evil of Sin, feels it not, complains not of it.

Now the SON of GOD comes as the Spring of *Divine Life*, to communicate the *Divine Nature* to a dead and wretched World. To give *Light* to the *Blind*, *Strength* to the *Lame*, and *Life* to the *Dead*. In him was *Life*, and the *Life* was the *Light* of *Men*, (Joh. I. 4.) And now, he that hath the SON hath *Life*; which is the only *Remedy* for *Men* dead in *Trespases* and *Sins*; and their only *Hope*.

This spiritual *Resurrection* of an abandoned Sinner to a *holy Life*, is said to be done by the same *Power* that raised up *Jesus* from the *Dead*, (Eph. I. 19, 20.) For as *Christ* had *Power* to raise his own *Body* from the *Grave*, (Joh. X. 18.) so had he *Power* to quicken whomsoever he would, (Joh. V. 21.) For the *Law* of the *Spirit* of *Life* in *Christ* *Jesus* sets *Men* free from the *Law* of *Sin* and *Death*, (Rom. VIII. 2.) not by superseding or overthrowing, but by quickening and sublimating, our humane *Faculties*.

It is thro' the gracious *Gifts* of this most bountiful *Mediator* ascended up on *High*, that the *Work* of *Sanctification*

tion is advanced in all true Christians, who are consecrated by his Spirit as so many Temples of God. For *of his Fulness do they receive, Grace for Grace,* (Joh. I. 16.) And it is through the ordinary Communication of the Gifts of this infinite Mediator, *in whom all Fulness dwells,* that any Man is not as *violently and incorrigibly* set on Wickedness as Devils are. For we see some, in whom these common *Degrees* of Grace (which are given them as *Talents* to be employ'd for greater Measures of it) are utterly worn off and wasted; that they are *impious and mischievous* to the utmost Extent of their *Capacity*: And as St. James speaks, they are *twice dead* (even to *Morality* as well as *Christianity*) *pluck'd up by the Roots,* (Jude, Ver. 12.) Now where the *Root* it self is *wither'd,* it is above all *humane Art* and *Power* to revive it. There must be a *new Influence* of the same Divine Power to *restore* this Sort of *Life,* as there was at first to give it *Being,* so that they must be *created in Christ Jesus to good Works,* (Eph. II. 12.)

The Expressions of spiritual *Regeneration,* a new *Creation,* and a divine  
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*Resurrection*, which in Scripture describe our Restoration to the Image of GOD by *Jesus Christ*, were not revealed from Heaven to amuze or mislead us in the greatest *Work* we have to do upon Earth: But to shew us at once the *Depth* and *Danger* of our Distemper; and the infinite *Goodness* and *Power* which only can work a *Cure* upon us. The Rules of Moralists may *polish* a Man, but they cannot *quicken* or *renew* him, any more than the polishing of a Marble Statue by the Artist, can make it a living  *Creature*.

Whether God was pleased to give any *uncommon* Degrees of Grace for his Son's Sake, to some *sober* and *honest* Heathens, we cannot say; nor how he will deal with them in the other World: For it does not appertain to us to judge *them that are without*. But one Thing we know, and it should never be out of our Minds; namely, that *except our Righteousness exceeds the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*; (yea, and that of the Heathen *Moralists* and *Philosophers* too) *we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, (Matth. V. 20.)

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It is the matchless *Glory* of the Christian Religion, and the principal *End* of Christ's coming in the *Flesh*, that he is a common *Fountain of Life* to all that receive him in his saving Offices: For *Him* hath God exalted to be a *Prince and Saviour*, to give *Repentance to Israel*, and *Forgiveness of Sins*, (Acts V. 31.) The *Second Adam*, as a common *Root* to his Church, communicates that divine *Efflux* of spiritual *Life and Power*, and of *Light and Consolation*, which was cut off from the *First Adam* and his *Posterity*, by their *Departure* from GOD. For the *Son of God* comes to *turn Men from Darkness to Light*, and *from the Power of Satan unto God*, (Acts XXVI. 18.) And as a *Man* in his *corrupt State* feels the *Springs, Inclinations, and Urgings* of a *sinful Principle*, tending to *Impiety and Vice*; so will the same *Person*, when renewed by the *Spirit of Life* in Christ Jesus, feel the *Motions, Persuasions, and Impellings* of a *Divine Principle*, to *Righteousness and Holiness*. So that we must be *born again of Water, and of the Holy Ghost*, (brought into a truly Christian State by the *Covenant of Baptism*, and the

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Thing therein covenanted, that is, *Spiritual Regeneration*) or we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God, (Joh. III. 5.)

Would to God, we were well surpriz'd of the deplorable Damages the Christian Church has suffer'd for want of a due insisting on these Two grand Principles of the Christian Religion, which are the Characteristick of it, *viz.* the *natural Depravity* and *Corruption* of all Men, and the *Necessity* of *Spiritual Regeneration* thro' Jesus Christ. The Holy Scriptures are very exprefs and clear in both these Assertions, and the whole Scheme of Man's Salvation in the Gospel turns upon them; so that they are *cardinal* and *fundamental* Principles: And, to our Comfort, no Church in the World is more Orthodox in both of them than the Church of *England*, as we see in her *Ninth Article*, and several other, and in the whole Composition of our *Liturgy*.

I have been often surpriz'd by the Complaints of several *Foreign Divines*, who have favoured me with their Correspondence, intimating that they have been inform'd, that the  
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*Church of England* is tinctur'd with *Socinianism*. This is a Calumny perfectly groundless; for no Church in the World is more firmly fortified against it. Our publick *Confessions*, *Articles*, and *Devotions*, are perfectly opposite thereunto; nor has any Church sent forth braver *Champions* against it, as these Learned Foreigners have afterwards fully owned.

We cannot teach any other Doctrine, without a manifest Deviation from the Doctrine of our *Church*. Yet the vain Conceit of a Sufficiency of *Wisdom* and *Strength* in our selves to become *Good* and *Happy*, seems to be a very pleasing Delusion to the natural Man. We see, the *Deists* profess it, and *carnal* Men are usually fond of it, thro' the Pride of their Hearts. Now to cure this radical Distemper in Men, the first Lessons of our divine Religion direct us to deny our selves, and to take up our Cross daily, and follow the meek and lowly Jesus. And the inspir'd wise Prince bequeath'd this Fundamental Maxim of Wisdom to Posterity, (*Prov. III. 5.*) *Lean not to thine own Understanding. He that trusteth in his own Heart is a Fool.*

Here therefore I cannot but say, that it deserves our serious Remark, that while some *Christian Divines* have, by their *mere moral* Discourses, seem'd to bring down our *divine Religion* too near the Level of *Heathen Morality*; they have, by the righteous Providence of God, been permitted to be insulted and despis'd by the *Deists* and *Rationalists*; to the Rise and Progress of whole *Errors*, they themselves gave too great *Occasion* and *Advantage*.

Those who, in these Days of the *Gospel*, set themselves to imitate the Writings of the *great Masters* of *Morality* among the Heathens, will be despis'd by those who see that they come not up to their *Original*. And thus the Writings of *Seneca* and *Cicero* come to be more esteem'd by some, than some modern Books of *Christian Theology*.

And in Analog to this, it seems a very reasonable Conjecture, that as the Want of *due Christian Discipline* has given Occasion to the Prevalency of that *Belial-Spirit*, which vents it self in Books like that call'd, *The Rights of the Christian Church*: In  
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which the *Erastian* seems to level the Way for the *Hobbist*, confounding the Order, that they may destroy the Being of the Christian Church: So the *Pelagian Conceit* of the Natural *Rectitude* and *Sufficiency* of Man, has given too great Occasion to *Socinians* and *others*, to deny the *Divinity* of our LORD and Saviour. For while People entertain a Fancy, that they have no Need of such a *MIGHTY* Saviour, as the Scriptures represent, it is no Wonder that they do not believe in him, as the *WORD made Flesh*. While they see not their want of such a *propitiatory Sacrifice*, they care not to believe on him as the *Lamb of GOD that taketh away the Sins of the World*. They do not perceive their Want of *spiritual Life*, and therefore do not believe on Him as that *Life which is the Light of the World*, whilst the *broken Heart* and the *wounded Spirit* thirst for these Doctrines as the *Waters of Life*.

It would be a Cure to many Divisions and Disorders among us, if there was a general Care to keep to the *Articles* of our Church in Points of *Doctrines*; especially those of *Ori-*

ginal Depravity, and Christian Regeneration: And could we also attain such a *primitive Discipline* as might distinguish such as *honour* their Profession, from such as are a *Scandal* to it, (which was certainly the *Intention* of our Church in the compiling of her *publick Offices*) we should obtain *Favour* in the Sight of God and all good Men.

If the Purposes of the Great and Good GOD are to establish us, and to make our *Zion* a *Praise* in the *Earth*, He will give us the Means of bringing these Things to pass, which, however difficult to attain, seem altogether necessary to the *Honour* and *Subsistence* of our divine Religion; which is, alas! at this Day made a *Reproach* and a *Taunt* by harden'd *Jews, Turks, and Pagans* abroad, and by *petulant Hereticks* at Home in the Want of them.

The Sum of this Particular is, that none but *He that made Man after God's own Image*, could reimpress that *Image* of God upon Man after his *Apostacy and Depravation*, which proves the *Divinity* of the Son of God.

II. Another End of Christ's Messiahship was, to give the greatest Glory to the infinitely Great and Good G O D hereby. For this was proclaim'd by Angels at his Birth, (*Luk. II. 14.*) *Glory to G O D in the Highest.*

Now, let every reasonable Person judge, whether it be an equal Display of divine *Wisdom, Justice, and Mercy*, that a Man of extraordinary Goodness appear in the World to lead Men to God, as a *perfect Example* of a *holy Life*, and a patient *Death*, which is the *Socinian Hypothesis*; or that *God himself*, in the Person of his *Eternal S O N*, unite the Soul and Body of Man into a personal Union with the Deity, and in this *Divine Person* becomes a *Sacrifice* of infinite Merit to *redeem* the lost Race of Men, and to be a *Fountain* of spiritual *Life* to them, which is the plain Gospel Account of the Matter? Whether of these two Suppositions, I say, do most truly answer the *Divine Characters* given of the Messiah, by all the *Prophets that have been since the World began*? And whether of the Two doth most fitly accomplish

him to be a *Mediator between God and Man*? And in which of the two Schemes do infinite *Justice* and infinite *Mercy* shine most gloriously together? The *Socinians* give us only a View of God's great *Mercy* herein, but the *Apostles* represent at the same Time to us, GOD's perfect *Righteousness* in our Redemption. For, since *God hath redeemed us with his own Blood*, (Act. XX. 28.) His *Justice* hath nothing further to demand, and his *Mercy* nothing more to crave. The Pleas of the *strictest* Justice are *satisfied* in Punishing; and the Pleas of the most *extensive* Mercy are gratified in Pardoning. We behold on the Cross of Christ the most awful *Act* of Justice that was ever seen in the World, and in the same View, the *richest* Mercy. For the *Just* dies for the *Unjust*, that he might bring us to GOD; and this through a most *righteous* Mercy, and a most *merciful* Justice. And therefore,

III. This lays the greatest *Obligations* on all Men to *love* and *serve* God *faithfully* for the Future: Which

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was the last End of Christ's *Messiahship* proposed to be spoken to.

Nothing in the World speaks such *Terror* to Sinners, as the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ: For it is here natural for the *Sinner* to say in his own Breast; "If G O D spared not his own Son, how can I think he will spare me? Yea, if his beloved Son, who never offended him, groaned, bled, and agoniz'd under the Weight of *imputed* Guilt, how shall I bear the *Indignation* of Almighty G O D, who have so heinouly and habitually *provoked* him? On the other Hand, here is the greatest Argument and Inducement to bring us to the Love and Service of G O D. For we may reasonably conclude, that our good Creator will receive us with great Delight, when we forsake our Sins, and turn to him, since he sacrificed his only SON to make Way for this very Thing. And how can we but love and serve such an infinite Lover of Men? For if when we were yet Sinners, God so *pitied* us as to give such a *Ransom* for us; who can conceive what *Glories* he has prepared for those that shall  
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be reconciled to him thereby? For he that spared not his only Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all Things?

This fixes the Consolation of the Penitent who believes in Jesus; and fully answers that gracious Part of his mediatorial Office, in which he was to *heal the broken in Heart, and bind up the bruised Spirit*, (Luk. IV. 18.)

Such as converse with Persons convinced of the *infinite Evil* of Sin, have often heard their mournful Expressions, full of Despondency and Darkness on this Subject. Let us then here suppose a *Socinian* approaching to visit and comfort such a Person. The *bleeding* Conscience complains of many *Sins* highly aggravated, lying on it as a Burden too heavy to be born; and perhaps, thro' *Ignorance* or great *Darkness* on his Spirit, has not a sufficient View of the proper Way of *Healing*; and therefore cries out with Bitterness and Horror, *How can I stand before the Holy LORD GOD? Tell me, Men and Brethren, what must I do to be saved?* To this the *Socinian* would reply, *God is infinitely merciful; you must rely*

on that. But how vehemently would the convicted Person retort the Argument, and say; I believe that God is infinitely *merciful*; but I am sure, he is infinitely *just* too. How can he be a righteous GOD, and yet forgive such a *sinful Wretch* as I am? How is his *Honour* provided for as a *Lawgiver* and *Governour*? What satisfies his perfect *Justice*, and equally declares his *Hatred* of Sin, but my *Eternal Sufferings*? My Soul can be satisfied with nothing but what *glorifies* God's *Mercy* in forgiving, without *eclipsing* the *Glory* of his *Purity* and *Justice* in so doing.

Truly, I cannot conceive, how such reasonable Doubts of Conscience can be solved by any *Socinian Principles*. They cry, God is plenteous in *Mercy*, but do not shew, how he can with *Justice* dispence it to the *Guilty*.

But in the Christian Doctrine of the *Word made Flesh*, and our *Pas-sover sacrifice'd for us*; the whole Matter is perfectly adjusted, to the infinite *Glory* of God, and the great *Comfort* of every penitent believing *Sinner*. God herein appears perfectly *Just*,

*Just*, and yet the *gracious Justifier* of them that believe, *Rom. III. 25.*

This is also great Consolation to every sincere Christian that groans under many Infirmities, and the Imperfection of his best Performances. The Son of God is made unto us *Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption.* He will help the *Infirmities* of sincere Christians, and assist their sincere *Endeavours*, and pardon their unavoidable *Frailties*, and plead their *Cause* in the last Day.

Now, these Promises of divine Grace in the Scriptures, must not *slacken*, but *quicken* our utmost Endeavours; which is the End for which they are granted. God is pleased to promise to *work in us to will and to do* according to his *good Pleasure*; that we might hereby be encouraged to *work out our Salvation*; not with a presumptive Heedlessness, but *with Fear and Trembling*, (*Phil. II. 12, 13.*)

Let us then bless GOD with the utmost Fervency of Spirit, for his infinite Mercy to Sinners in his only begotten Son *Jesus Christ*, and for his great Love in bringing us to the Knowledge

ledge of it by the *Apostolick* Doctrine, which shines gloriously amongst us. Let us beseech G O D to keep us *steadfast* in this Faith, in the midst of those Swarms of *Errors* and *Heresies* that are permitted for our Trial. And may our Orthodox Faith be ever plentiful of *genuine* Fruits, like those produced among the primitive Embracers of it; that living by Faith, we may rejoice in Hope, and at last attain the *End of our Faith, the Salvation of our Souls*, through Jesus Christ our only Mediator and Redeemer; to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all Glory and Praise for Ever and Ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

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# SERMON VI.

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## Causes of the Modern Infidelity.

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R O M. I. Ver. 28.

*And even as they did not like to retain GOD in their Knowledge, GOD gave them over to a reprobate Mind, to do those Things which are not convenient.*

**H**AVING endeavour'd in the former Discourses to shew, that the Denial of the *Being* of GOD, is a Thing perfectly monstrous and abhorrent to Reason; and that Unbelief

belief of the *Christian Revelation*, is altogether unworthy of a serious and discerning Mind: I come now to inquire, whence these impious Absurdities (which cast such Shame on humane Nature, and bring everlasting Ruine on the Souls of Men) took their Rise; and how they came to be nursed up to such a Bulk and Height of Stature, as we have seen them in our Days. And here, upon a due Inquiry, we shall find them principally owing, I conceive, to these *Five* general Causes.

I. The Violence of Mens carnal and worldly Inclinations.

II. The Want of careful Instruction and Restraint in the Time of Youth.

III. Undue Conceits of Humane Sufficiency.

IV. Gross Abuses of Prosperity.

V. The Impudence and Impunity of Persons scandalously Vicious and Prophane.

By these unhappy Steps, Men first come to a *Dislike* of Religion, then to a *Contempt* of it, and at last to an utter *Renouncing* of it; razing even  
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the Foundations of *Religion* and *Virtue*, by denying the Being of GOD, and the Difference betwixt moral Good and Evil. The first Rise of which, I conceive, to be owing,

I. To the Violence of Mens *carnal* and *worldly* Inclinations. These, when they grow impetuous, and are unguarded, bear down all Opposition, whether made from Honour, Prudence, or Religion: It breaks thro' the Intreaties of Friends, the Fear of GOD, and the Remonstrances of their own Consciences; and makes a Sacrifice of all these to the *Idol-Lust*. Hence arises the obstinate Warfare betwixt the Law in the Members and the Law in the Mind. The Mind of many a carnal Person testifies and remonstrates against the Inroads of sinful Concupiscence, especially in their first Irruptions and Indulgences. The Mind protests against them as evil, shameful, and dangerous: But then the Mind loses Ground by every wilful Act of Sin: And as the Mind waxes dim, the Heart grows insensible, and the Fear of GOD abates; the Conscience too, like a Spring long over-



over-born by a Weight upon it, grows weak, and is less and less apt to exert it's relucting and resisting Power. Till at last *Lust* and *Vice* triumph and carry all at their Will; like Thieves in the Night that have gagg'd the Family, bound the Watch, and put out the Candles, who then live at Discretion. Thus the People that *do not like to retain GOD in their Knowledge*, set themselves against every Thing that is on GOD's Side; against all the Ordinances of GOD, and Workings of his Spirit, and against that very Light of their Minds which approves them. Till at last their Darknes becomes gross, their Prejudices strong, and their Case in a manner desperate. For now they are, as it were, equip'd with the whole Armour of Darknes, and their Desire and Design is, to oppose the Light.

Thus *Jannes* and *Jambres* opposed *Moses*, having the Reverse of *Moses's* Choice in their View, namely, preferring the *Treasures of Egypt* before the *Promises* of the People of GOD. Thus we read of *Balaam* led by the inordinate Desire of King *Balak's* Rewards, against the Dictates and Re-

monstrances of his Conscience; which was indeed the *Madness of that Prophet*. Thus the *Jews*, in their Fondness to *carnal Ordinances*, and *ambitious Conceits* of the *Earthly Sovereignty* of their *Messiah*, rejected and murder'd the *Lord of Life*; hardening their *Hearts* against the Things which *belong'd to their Peace*, till *Wrath* came upon them to the uttermost. The *Pharisees* being prejudiced against the *spiritual* and *intrinsic Holiness* of *Christ's Doctrine*, and the *Sadducees* bent against the *Doctrine of the Resurrection* and a *future State*; they both rejected the *Counsel of God* against themselves, and maliciously and unpardonably blasphemed against the *Holy Ghost*.

In *Summ*, it was this Aversion to *spiritual Instruction* that the *Apostle* in the *Text* assigns as the principal *Cause* of those *uncommon* and *unnatural Heights*, to which *Impiety* and *Vice* had ascended among the *Romans* at that *Time*. *They did not like*, says he, *to retain GOD in their Knowledge*. *Non probarunt, immo improbarunt*, says *Zegerius* on the *Text*. They dislik'd that *Knowledge of GOD* which was the

the Issue of natural Light. The primitive *Fathers* generally understand this as spoken of the *Heathens*, tho' a late *Expositor*, of great Worth, understands it of the *Gnosticks*. Now those wise Men, says the Apostle, among the *Heathens*, beholding the wonderful Frame of all Things in Heaven and Earth, could not but infer the glorious Attributes of the invisible Maker of all these; and did with good Reason conclude, that none could be *before* or *above* this wise and mighty *Conditor* or *Builder* (tho' they did not know him to be the *Creator*) of all Things; so that they came, by natural Light, to the Knowledge of his *eternal Power and Godhead*, (Rom. I. 20.) Yet after all, they disliked these Notions of GOD and Religion, finding it troublesome to them in the Practice of their Vices, and therefore they discarded them.

Some of them set their Minds against the Being of GOD, as *Diagoras*, *Theodorus*, and others: Other-some denied his Providence and Cognizance of sublunary Affairs, as *Democritus*, *Epicurus*, and the rest of that

Sect; embracing the senseless Dream of the World's being formed by *Chance*, in the desultory Play of *Atoms*; of whose first *Make* or *Motion*, they could give no Account. A Phancy so perfectly groundless and incoherent, that no Person, that is awake and in his Wits, can bring his Mind to think, that any one Creature was thus made: No, not a *Gnat* or an *Ant*.

But what will not a vicious Inclination impose on Mens Minds? What idle Stories do they embrace as an Expedient to thrust GOD out of their Thoughts, and if they could, out of the World? For the Thought of a Righteous GOD is very troublesome to a Mind disposed to offend him, and provoke his Vengeance.

How justly then does GOD give up such Obstimates to a *reprobate Mind*; (*ὡς τὸν ἀδόκιμον*) to a *distorted* Judgment and a *perverse* Temper? permitting them to abound in the Delusions to which they desire to be abandoned. So that from henceforth they adored *senseless Idols*, and indulged *unnatural Lusts*; (Rom. I. 25.) and *did Things that were not convenient*; which is spoken

spoken by a *Miosis*, in the Words of my Text : in which more is meant than is expressed ; for it implies that they did Things that were contrary to *natural Inclination*, and to *Reason* and *common Sense* ; as they are related in the Context, and by their own Writers.

*Suetonius* and *Tacitus*, the Roman Historians of those Times, give a dismal Account of the Vices which then over-ran the whole Roman Empire : They relate such Things of the *Arbiter Neroniana libidinis* ; and of the Pranks of *Messalina*, and such studied Improvements of Vice as are only fit to be express'd by the *τα μὴ ἠγασθησαν* in the Text. Their Philosophers, *Cicero* and *Seneca*, exclaimed against them ; and their Poets, *Juvenal* and *Persius*, lash'd them with their Satyrs. But it was only *St. Paul* and the *Christian Writers* that could discover the true Causes of these Enormities, and prescribe a Method of an effectual Cure. The Cause was, *their Dislike to retain GOD in their Knowledge* ; and the only Cure was, their penitent Return to GOD thro' Faith in *Jesus Christ*.

WE have just Reason to impute the Overflowings of Impiety in our Days to the same Cause. Multitudes give their Hearts to *worldly and fleshly Lusts*, and therefore do *not like to retain GOD in their Knowledge*. They shut their Eyes against the glorious Light of *Divine Revelation*, and against the Light of *Nature* it self. They draw the thick Curtains of *Prejudice* and *Carnality* as close as they can, because their Heart is fully set in them to do Evil, and to do it with as little Interruption from Conscience as they can.

And now, into what deep and ruinous Pits are they likely to fall, who are resolved not to open their Eyes to look before them? Especially considering, that a judicial Blindness and Hardness from GOD, is the Judgment often threaten'd in the Gospel to such as *will not see* with their Eyes, or *understand* with their Hearts. For, that most dreadful Threatning denounced by the Prophet *Isaiah*, (Chap. VI. 9.) is six Times repeated in the New-Testament. I shall only recite that Quotation of it which we find, *Act. XXVIII. 25, 26. Well spake the*

*the Holy Ghost by Esaias the Prophet unto our Fathers; saying, Go to this People, and say: Hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and not perceive; For the Heart of this People is waxed gross, and their Ears are dull of Hearing, and their Eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them, i. e. save them.*

This is one of the most terrible Texts in the whole Book of G O D, and ought to strike Terror on every One who finds his Heart cool and heedless under the Gospel-Ministration. Yet how terrible soever the Judgment of a *closed Eye* and a *hardened Heart* is; it is, we see, of Mens own making and inflicting; *their Heart is waxed gross, and their Eyes have they closed*: So that the whole of this Judgment, as from G O D, is his giving them over to their affected *Blindness* and *Insensibleness*.

This, I conceive, fully accounts for the *Infidelity* and *Atheism* of the grossly immoral Part of Men; it is the Depth of their Mire and Dung that

casts forth such rank Weeds, and occasions them to strike such deep Roots. They will not be taught of GOD, or controlled by the Fear of Invisibles, because *they do not like to retain GOD in their Knowledge*, and are fond of their Vices. The Notion of a just and holy GOD strikes a Damp upon their Appetites and Pleasures, and therefore they first cast it out of their *Thoughts*, and then out of their *Creed*. The ancient Observation of *Plotinus* will, I conceive, hold good in all Ages; namely, *that he never knew a virtuous Man pleading against the Being of GOD, or the Immortality of the Soul*. This Absurdity seems to be the daring and desperate Effort of such as have made it their Interest, that there should be no GOD, nor World to come: Of such who, considering the Righteousness of GOD's Nature and Government, cannot but conclude themselves undone for ever, if there be such a Being. This brings the Fool to say in his Heart, (in his secret Wishes) *there is no GOD*; (or, O! that there was none,) and at length his *Wish* slips into his *Fancy*, and then passes for his *Faith*.



*Faith.* And for ought we know, he may, in the more airy and jocund Part of his Life, think as he says, if GOD gives him up to his strong *Delusions* to believe so gross a *Lie*. But after all, it will be a very difficult Task to be a *steady Atheist* in long Sickness, or in any Train of heavy Afflictions. When the sick *Atheist* is, by the Necessity of his languishing Condition, separated from his worldly Affairs and carnal Pleasures, and from his Partners in Vice and Folly; and is now, by Fasting and Retirement, made capable of thinking like a Man; he cannot but be convinced of the Vanity of all Things in this World, and the Necessity of looking out for something higher and better than what the *Brutes* enjoy, with a Fear of something worse than *Brutes* can suffer. Now, the Thoughts of an Almighty Creator, a holy Governour, and a righteous Judge, break in upon him; and the Terrors of *infinite Wrath* to come make him tremble. So that as the Steams of Lust go off, the Light of Reason and Religion return to the Soul: Which verifies the Observation of a Learned and  
pious

pious Author, *That it is Uncleaness of Spirit, not Distance of Place, that dissevers us from G O D.* The Father of Lights would make our Bodies the *Temples* of his Spirit, did we not defile them by odious Impurities. Young Persons that are devoted to GOD in *Baptism*, are more especially intitl'd to these Impressions of divine Wisdom; if they seek them in G O D's appointed Way, with due Preparation of Soul. *They that seek me early, shall find me,* (Prov. VIII. 17.) as it was eminently verified in King *Solomon*, King *Josiah*, and others.

This leads me to consider the *Second Cause of Atheism and Infidelity, namely,*

II. The Want of careful *Instruction* and *Restraint* in the Time of Youth. When the young Person comes to enter on the Scene of rational Action, and is fixing Principles, and taking Measures for the Conduct of his Life; what can be a more seasonable Kindness, and consequently a more binding Duty on Parents and Governours, than to set young People right at the Beginning of their Course,

Course, by convincing them of the infinite Advantages of serving GOD.

This is the proper Duty and Designation of Spiritual Parents, call'd *God-Fathers* and *God-Mothers*, who join with the Natural Parents to promote and cultivate the new Birth of the Child, and to nourish and strengthen that *spiritual Life*, under GOD, which has the Promise of *Life eternal*. Of what invaluable Use would this be, would the *Ghostly Undertakers* answer their Obligations! We should then reap such visible Benefits from this ancient Usage of the Church, as would silence the Objections made against it. But in the Want of this spiritual Cultivation, what can the corrupt Soil bring forth but *Briars* and *Thorns*, Things to wound and grieve all that have to do with them? The Youth is weak in his Judgment, and violent in his Appetites. Temptations crowd in upon him, and infernal Spirits blow up the Flame. He has but little or no Experience of Things, and therefore has made few or no Observations about them. Now, what will become of this poor forlorn Youth, if no Body stirs to succour

cour him? What can be the Issue, in the common Course of Things, but that he will first fall into Vice, and then into Hardness of Heart? Then to Scoffing, and thence to Atheism, or an Atheistical sort of Life, as *without GOD in the World*. A Sight very afflicting, but too common!

Much of this, I am persuaded, might be prevented by a due Regard to the Fourth Commandment, which is a Guard, (as many *Divines* observe) not only to the first Table, but to all the Laws that follow in the Second. Would Parents and Masters strictly inspect their Children and Servants on that Day, as they are commanded of GOD, it would prevent much of that infidel and *belial* Spirit that abounds. It is an Observation of long and general Credit, and it is founded on Reason as well as Experience, *That more young People have been debauch'd on the Lord's Day, than on all the rest of the Week*: And my Text gives us the Reason of it. The Lord's Day is design'd to improve Men in the Knowledge and Fear of GOD; such then as decline the due Observance of this Sacred Day,

Day, do not like to retain G O D in their Knowledge, and so he gives them up to vile Affections.

May this awaken Parents, Masters, and spiritual Sponsors, to a just Exercise of their respective Duties, to which the faithful Pastor cannot but excite them by Example as well as Counsel; and may it induce every Christian to contribute, according to his Ability, to those blessed *Schools of Charity*, which are one of the Ornaments and Bulwarks of this *City and Nation*, and afford us Ground to hope, that G O D will not utterly abandon us to our Sin and Folly. Though we, of this Generation, have been too barren, these young Plants may bring forth better Fruit, and enjoy better Times; which G O D grant.

III. Another Cause of Atheism and Infidelity, is an undue Conceit of *Humane Sufficiency*. The Man that fancies he is able of himself to know and do every Thing that concerns his Salvation, comes naturally to despise Divine Revelation, with the *Deists* and *Humanists*; or to bring all Revelation

lation to a Level with his own Notions, as the *Arians* and *Socinians*. Now, both of these proceed from a Pride of Spirit, whereby Men come to idolize their own Understanding. The same may be said of many Persons, who have overvalued their crude Notions in Philosophy, which has betray'd some to Atheistical Notions. But that Philosophy is falsely so call'd, which separates the Effect from the prime Cause. This is no better than *vain Deceit*. The Pride and Vanity of *Pomponatius* and *Vaninus*, and those other *Aristotelian Atheists*, who attributed the Agency of all Things, to the Influences of the Heavenly Bodies, are fully detected and exploded by the Learned Dr. *Henry More* in his *Theological Works*. The Pride of *Julian*, *Porphyrie*, and *Celsus*, appears in their many Objections against the Meanness of our Saviour's *Birth* and *Rank*, and against the Self-Abasement of his Doctrine: And the ingenious Dr. *Scott* conceives, that he can trace the Effects of the same Pride and Ostentation of Knowledge from *Democritus* to *Protagoras*, and from him to *Epicurus*, and thence to Mr. *Hobbs*, with

with a Sort of Transmigration of *Temper*, tho' not of *Soul*. And who can justify *Sotinus* from this Charge, who, in Disgust to some Doctrines then taught by the Church of *Rome*, formed out of his own Brain, a Scheme of Doctrine, Worship, and Discipline, which he calls *Christian*, tho' contrary to the Tenure of the Gospel, and unknown before in the Christian World?

So then, if there appears in the Unbelievers of the Gospel, such a *Confidence* in their own Understanding, as renders them incapable of submitting their Minds to the superiour Dictates of Divine Revelation; if for this Reason they are not disposed to *look unto Jesus*, with an humble craving Faith, as the *Source* of *Divine* Light; if they have not such serious Convictions of the Want of supernatural Knowledge as makes them *cry after Wisdom*, and *lift up their Voice for Understanding*, and to *search for it as for hid Treasure*: In a Word, if, with the *Pharisees*, they say, *We see*; and with the *Laodiceans* they boast, that they are in *Want of nothing*, tho' at the same Time they are  
*poor,*

*poor, and blind, and naked:* And if, under these Misperfwasions, they slight or difuse the Ordinances of the Gospel, which are God's establish'd Methods of teaching, renewing, and saving Men: It is no Wonder at all, if they not only remain in Infidelity, but are more and more hardened therein. And after this, it will be natural to them to scoff and mock at others, even for their revering those Mysteries, which the Holy Ghost assures us, *were made known to all Nations by Jesus Christ, for the Obedience of Faith,* (Rom. XVI. 26.) In this Case surely, the *Mind of Man* should yield an entire Deference to the *Voice of GOD*; which is the most reasonable Thing in the World, because nothing can be more infallibly true, than that which is spoken by *Him that cannot lie.*

Nothing is more evident, than that the Gospel every where speaks of Man, in his natural Estate, as dark and ignorant of Spiritual Things, (1 Cor. III.) and acquaints us, that this came on us by our Descent from the First *Adam*, who, by departing from the Foun-



Fountain of Light, fell under the Power of Darkness. And the same Gospel directs us to Jesus Christ, the *Wisdom of GOD, and the Power of God*, to regain our spiritual Sight and Sense. And on this Account it is said, that *the first Man Adam was made a living Soul, the last Adam a quickening Spirit*, (1 Cor. XV. 45.) Πνεῦμα Ζωοποιούν, *a Life-making Spirit*. And thus it was prophesied, that *Men should be taught of GOD*, (Isa. LIV. 13.) And our Saviour expressly applies these Words of *Isaiah* to his Followers, saying, *It is written in the Prophets, they shall all be taught of GOD*, (Joh. VI. 45.) Such then as are too proud to seek Divine Instruction, or too *unserious* to apply it, are likely to *die without Knowledge*, and to be condemn'd of themselves, in their last Moments, as *undone* by their own Folly and Untractableness.

IV. Another Cause of Atheism and Infidelity, is the Abuse of *Prosperity*. For by the Affluence of outward Things, the Heart and Mind are often slacken'd and drawn away from GOD and spiritual Things; for we *cannot serve GOD and Mammon*. So that

in this the Wisdom of *Agur* appear'd, that he fear'd to ask Riches and Prosperity of G O D, lest *he should be full, and deny God, and say, who is the Lord?* (Prov. XXX. 9.) There are indeed but few Heads strong enough to bear the Height of worldly Exaltation without Giddiness. *Solomon* himself fell dreadfully under this Temptation; he laid aside his Armour and his Watch when there was *no Adversary nor evil Occurrent*, and so received many dangerous Wounds. Atheism scarce ever grows but in a fat and luxuriant Soil. The afflicted Person cannot forget G O D, his Misery drives him to his Benefactor, and he cannot restrain Prayer before him: *But the Prosperity of Fools destroys them.*

V. *Lastly*, The Impudence and Impunity of Persons scandalously vicious and prophane, contribute to the Advancement of Atheism and Unbelief.

Whenever Things come to such Extremity, that the Laws of G O D are trampled on with Insolence and Boasting, and the Mysteries of our Holy Faith are made the Scorn and Laugh-

Laughter of prophane Men: If Blasphemy and Obscenity come into Credit; and Religion and Virtue are pointed at as ridiculous: If it be thought a vain and mean Thing to fear GOD, and to make serious Mention of his *Name*: If it even become unfashionable to praise our infinite Benefactor at our *Tables*, or to appear serious and devout in our Churches: If the holy and tremendous Name of the Great and Glorious GOD be not only *vainly* used, but *vilely* treated, his *Sacred Day* levell'd in common with the rest, and his *holy Sacraments* rejected by some, and slighted by others: If these crying Enormities are publick and common, and there be no Power or Authority in *Church* or *State* put forth to stem or control them: Such a Nation or People will, without a Miracle, first become a horrible Scene of *Atheism* and *Impiety*, and then of *Misery* and *Desolation*. That one Sin of *Perjury*, where it is apparent and common, opens the ready Way to *Atheism* and all *Impiety*; because it not only lays the Conscience waste in the perjured Person, but tends to lessen the awful

Fear of GOD in others. *Diagoras* is said to have broke forth into professed *Atheism*, for that a Person whom he knew to be *perjur'd*, went off from the Place without a *Mark* of Divine Vengeance.

Here, alas! We cannot but take Notice of the great Pains some Persons take to disarm the Christian Church of that Discipline which its Divine Author instituted, and the primitive Church exercised; and without which, no Society can be supposed to subsist with any Strength or Reputation; *viz.* the Power of censuring the *Faulty*, chastizing the *Dissolute*, and casting out the *Incorrigible*. Till this Power be restored and revered in the Church of Christ, it will be infirm and inglorious. The vigorous Exercise of it, being no more than what Christ himself hath instituted; (*Matth. XVIII. 17.*) would not interfere with the Office of the Civil Magistrate, but they would justly harmonize in discouraging and correcting scandalous Offenders; to the Glory of GOD, and the Repute of the Christian Religion, which is now reproached

proached in the World for Want of it.

Whereas therefore the prudent *Legislature* of this Nation hath decreed various *Penalties* to sundry Acts of *Impiety* and *Vice*, we acknowledge it always with all Thankfulness; and we cannot but think those excellent Persons deserve uncommon Honours, especially from the Ministers of our Church and State, who have nobly exerted their Endeavours to make these Laws effectual to the good Ends for which they were made, by a due Execution of them. This, blessed be GOD, hath in a great Measure abated the Insolence of Vice, and given new Spirits to languishing Virtue and Religion, and made some Amends for the want of Discipline in the Church.

But then we must also say with a late ingenious Author, that the *Laws* of the *State* are not the *Discipline* of the *Church*. The Things of *Cesar* and the Things of GOD are of quite different Natures, and have their proper Boundaries and Restrictions.

It is vainly said by some, that this would too much advance the Power of

the Ecclesiastic Body ; and it is very indecently and unfairly suggested by others, that it would favour the Craft of the *Priest*. For, as nothing is here demanded but what Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, hath instituted and appointed ; so by this Discipline the Negligence and ill Examples of Ministers would be censured and corrected no less than those of the People : And thus the whole Body of Christians would be more firmly kept up to the Rules of the Holy Gospel, which is the most desirable Thing in the World.

Others argue with as little Judgment who say, that these Powers of the Church and State are two *Sovereign Independent Powers*, and are therefore inconsistent and irreconcilable in the same political Body : For, as the holy *Bible* does no Way lessen the Authority of the civil *Statute-Book* ; but on the contrary, does manifestly strengthen and enforce it : So the just Discipline of the Church, does no way interfere with the proper Rights or Power of the State ; for it does not intermeddle with them. *It touches neither Life nor Limb (says one) nor*  
civil

*civil Property; it does not disable any one from being a Member of the Common-Wealth, and therefore is not, in its own Nature, prejudicial to the Authority of the Civil Power. Yea, it is useful and subservient to it; because the better Christian any one is, the better Subject he must of Necessity be; and he that does not fear GOD, will never duly honour his Sovereign.*

Thus have I laid before you some of the trodden Paths which lead to *Atheism* and *Infidelity*. Vain Men do not like to retain the awful Thoughts of GOD in their Minds, because it hinders the free Indulgence of their carnal and worldly Lusts; like those who put out the Candles when they do those Things which will not bear the Light. Others magnify their own *Comprehension* and *Sufficiency*, and despise supernatural Light and Assistance. And where these Maladies are not corrected by Christian *Instruction* and *Correction* in the Time of Youth; and where they grow insolent and heady by the Means of outward *Wealth* and *Prosperity*, and are hardened by reason of the *Impudence* and *Impunity* of others in the

same Enormities, the Case too often ends in *Atheism* and *Infidelity*.

There are sundry other Things which contribute to carry Men on in these Falsities, thro' the Vanity of their Minds. Such are the *Hypocrisy* of some who have been esteemed for Religion, and the carnal *Divisions* and Strivings among Christians, commonly so call'd. The Passions of Theological *Writers*, and the building our Faith on *Man*, or any *Sett* of Men: A superficial View of *Natural Philosophy*, without coming to the first Cause of all Things; and a general *Diffidence* and Distrust of every Thing: The Prosperity of profligate and prophane Men, and the common Falshood in Dealing, and even in Appeals to the Almighty G O D: The burlesquing of the Holy Scriptures, mocking at holy Offices and Persons, and jesting on the awful Concerns of the World to come; with other too common, and too little resented, *Insults* on Religion and the Author of it: These, and many such Things, are many Times Irritations of an *Atheistical Humour*, tho' without any Colour of Reason. And infernal Spirits,



rits, whose Business it is to destroy Men, are not wanting to push on the Mischief. He that put it into the Heart of *Judas* to *betray* his Master, and into the Mouth of *Peter* to *deny* him, will not be slack in prompting others to *blaspheme* and *renounce* him.

Upon the whole Matter, we have seen, that tho' it be most certain, that GOD hath given us such Evidence of the Divine Authority of the Christian Religion, as is abundantly sufficient to establish a rational Assent and Belief to it; yet this is to take Place upon us, as upon Rational and free Agents; such as are rightly disposed to make a free Inquiry into the Matter, and to take advised Resolutions thereupon.

We have seen also, that GOD is ready to assist the *ignorant* and *weak* by his holy Spirit, that they may judge and choose aright in these important Concerns; if they duly seek and attend on him for it in the Method he has prescrib'd: And on the contrary, it is most evident, that the proud and prejudic'd, and the unserious and indevout, are not rightly dispos'd  
for

for the Knowledge of these divine Truths, nor intitl'd to the Promise of divine Assistance. So that the neglected Soul is led first by its own Blindness and Perverseness to a Custom of flighting and forgetting GOD, and at last to an Obstinacy of Mind and Heart against Him. For *as they like not to retain GOD in their Knowledge, he gives them up to vile Affections.*

We may learn from this not only the Reasonableness, but the Necessity of *walking humbly with our GOD.* Our whole Dependance is on him continually, for *in him we live*; and his Aids are administred thro' Jesus Christ his Son, *without whom we can do nothing.*

Let us then esteem all the Means and Opportunities of Divine Communications as the most advantageous Enjoyments of humane Life, and learn to live by *Faith*, and not by *Sense.*

Let the Word of GOD be ever precious to us, and his sacred Day and Ordinances our chief Delight. Let us rejoyce to meet together to worship GOD, and to unite our Prayers for publick and private Blessings:

sings: And let us resolve that *we, and our Houses will serve the Lord.*

*Lastly,* Let us manifest such a constant Regard to the Will of GOD in all our Actions, that we may be truly said to *walk with GOD,* and to have *Fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

These are sure Methods to keep Atheistical Thoughts out of our own Breasts, and to banish such monstrous Imaginations out of the World: Which GOD Almighty grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

SERMON

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# SERMON VII.

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## The Reasonableness of the Christian Hope.

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TITUS I. Ver. 2, 3.

*In Hope of Eternal Life, which GOD  
that cannot lie, promised before  
the World began; but hath in  
due Time manifested his Word  
thro' Preaching.*

**H**AVING endeavour'd to wipe off  
the Dust which the Adversaries  
of the *Christian Faith* have thrown  
upon it, to obscure its Glory; I come  
now to consider the infinite Advan-  
tages

tages that our Faith secures to us, which are so Great and God-like, that they can only be surely known by *Divine Revelation*. So that the very Rewards proposed by the Christian Religion, make one great Proof of its divine Original; for who but the *Eternal G O D* can offer *Eternal Life* to his Servants.

We may here observe this infinite Difference betwixt the *Christian* and the *Infidel* at the first View; namely, that it is the principal Design and Labour of the *Infidel*, to rase out all Notions and Fears of a *Life to come*, tho' in this they run counter to the Sentiments and Desires of Mankind, and to the Honour of Humane Nature: Whilst, on the other Hand, the *Christian* and the best and most serious Part of Mankind live in Expectation of a future State, to commence after Death, and to be the Time of Recompence to all Men, *according to what they do in the Flesh*.

The *Atheists* and *Epicureans* affirm, that the Soul of Man evaporates in the Instant of Death, and is extinct. *It vanishes into soft Air*, said they, in the Days of the Son of *Syrach*, which  
are

are the very Words of their favourite Author *Lucretius*, *Tenuēs evanescit in Auras*. And *Cecilius*, in *Minutius Felix*, affirms, that Man, and every Animal, are but the *spontaneous Concretion of the Elements*, into which, says he, they are again dissolv'd and dispers'd.

The *Christian*, on the contrary, with good Reason depends on the infallible Truth of the Word of GOD, who hath said, *The Wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment; but the Righteous into Life eternal*, (*Matth. XXV. ult.*) So that the *Christian* affirms, not only that there is a Life to come after Death, which most of the *Heathens* in all Ages supposed, but also that it will be *Eternal*, which could only be certainly known by divine Revelation; for this glorious *immortal Life is brought to Light by the Gospel*, (*2 Tim. I. 10.*) The best *Heathens* seem'd to wish it, and to have something of Hope concerning it; but they wanted the Assurance that *Christians* have of this glorious Reversion, much more of the Infinity of it. *Socrates* himself confessed his Uncertainty of it to his Friends, the  
Night

Night before his Execution, tho' he died a Martyr for the Unity of the Deity. For his Support at the Approach of Death in this Cause was evidently this, (as we have it from his own Words) *That if there was no future Life, he could not then be unhappy after Death: but if there was such a State, he expected Comfort in it.* And therefore *Tertullian* remarks of him, *Nil liquido sapuit Anima Socratis; Socrates, tho' one of the wisest and best of the Heathens, saw nothing clearly as to a future State.*

How happy then is the Case of every Christian in this Respect! namely, that he hath a plain and particular Description of the invisible State after Death, drawn up for his Use by GOD himself; penn'd by a Hand that cannot err, and declared by a Mouth that cannot lie: As the Apostle shews us in the Text, *In Hope of Eternal Life, which GOD, that cannot lie, promised before the World began; but hath in due Time manifested his Word thro' Preaching.*

We have in these Words,

I. A Declaration of that glorious Article of the Christian Faith, *the Life Ever-*

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*Everlasting. In Hope of ETERNAL LIFE.*

II. The sure *Foundation* upon which the Christian builds his Faith and Hope of this Article; that is, upon the Certainty of *Divine Revelation*; which GOD, that cannot lie, promised before the World began.

As to the Article it self, it is vast and amazing; it strikes our Mind at once with *Pleasure* and with *Wonder*.

By *Eternal Life*, we mean a Life of perfect Happiness for ever: And when this is applied to Man, we comprehend the Body of Man as well as his Soul: which makes the Case still more shocking to Reason and Humane Comprehension.

What Wonder does it create in us to think of these frail Bodies of ours, which we see and feel to be of a very crazy and decaying Frame, even so as to sink, if deprived of a Meal; to be cast down by a Blast of ill Air; and sometimes to be cut off by a mere Phancy; so that it may be said to be *crush'd before the Moth*: Yet, that after Death these very Bodies shall arise in a perfect and immortal State;



State; and that *this Corruptible shall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal shall put on Immortality*: No more to be subject to Weariness or Wounds, or to any Distemper or Pain. How surprizing is it to us to think, that our present short-liv'd State shall be changed into a State of Perpetuity, and our little Summ of *Three-Score Years and Ten* devolved into *Ages of Ages!*

But tho' this amazes humane Reason, it does not invalidate the Christian Faith. The *Foundation* being of GOD, *standeth sure*. For the Matter is not what we can do or conceive, but what infinite Power can do for us, and what infinite Truth has declared that he will do. *Who shall change our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the Working, whereby he is able to subdue all Things to himself, Phil. III. 21.*

The Man that sees every Thing in this World *shifting and changing, withering and decaying*, finds it difficult to conceive a State *whose Foundations can never be shaken, and whose Glory will never wear away*: And he that is sensible of his Corruption and Offences,

ces, will be apt to think such a State too good for him: And the poor crazy *Valetudinarian*, that by all his Care and Caution, with all the Help of Medicine and Advice he can take, finds it hard to *prop up* his distemper'd Body for a few Years, can scarce raise his Mind to contemplate perpetual *Youth*, and an indolent *Immortality*. We must therefore in our Minds quit this present State of Things, and resolve all into the infinite *Wisdom* and *Power* of GOD, keeping his *Truth* and *Faithfulness* as our Stay; and then we shall think better of the *Invisibles* of his holy Word. GOD thinks it best that his Church should at present endure the Tryals of Affliction, many Times even to Blood, in its State of *Warfare*; and he has as certainly prepared better Things for that State of *Triumph*, in which he will *make known the Riches of his Glory on the Vessels of Mercy*.

The *Jerusalem* above, is that *City* that has *Foundations*; there are the *Riches* which no Man takes from the Possessors; there are the *Mansions* truly so call'd; and there the *far*  
*more*

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*more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

This glorious Life is declared in the Text to be Eternal: 'Επ' ἑλπίδι ζωῆς αἰώνης; which, tho' it may be render'd a *Life of Ages*, and so would denote a numberless Revolution of Years, yet this comes not up to the Fulness of the Promise. For the same Apostle renders it in other Terms in his Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, (1 Theff. IV. 17) *So shall we be* (says he) *ever with the LORD*; πάντα ὄντως μετ' αὐτοῦ: Ever happy in his Presence, ever fill'd with his Goodness, ever blessed in his Kingdom; for *his Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom*, (Psal. CXLV. 13.)

This is the glorious Article of the Christian Faith, laid open to Men in the blessed Gospel, as a leading Motive to engage all Men in the Vows of the Christian Religion: It was for this End laid before *Titus*, the Bishop of *Crete*, by *St. Paul* in the Text; that he might acquit himself faithfully and couragiously in his Master's Cause, having such an immortal Crown of Glory in View.

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Now, he that thus fights the good Fight of Faith, will certainly lay hold on *eternal Life*. He does not strive for Uncertainties, the Reward is sure and unquestionable; for we have for it the Word of GOD *that cannot lie*: Which leads us to consider the *Second Particular, viz.*

II. The sure Foundation upon which a Christian builds his Faith and Hope of *Eternal Life*; that is, upon the Certainty of Divine Revelation; for it is promised by GOD *that cannot lie*.

This implies these *Three Propositions*.

1. That the State of *Eternal Life* in the World to come, is declared in Books which Christians call the *Holy Scriptures*,

2. That these Books of the *Holy Scriptures* are revealed by GOD, and contain his Will.

3. That GOD, who hath reveal'd these Things to Men, cannot lie: He is, as the Text says, *the true and unfalsifying* GOD.

As to the *First*, That the Holy Scriptures affirm, that there will be a *Resurrection* of all Men after their *Natural Death*, whether *Just* or *Unjust*; and that the *Wicked* shall go away from the Judgment-Seat of Jesus Christ, *into everlasting Punishment*, but the *Righteous* into *Life Eternal*, is plain and undeniable, (*Act. XXIV. 15. Matth. XXV. 46.*) Every One that reads the *New-Testament* sees the Brightness of this Truth breaking forth in many Pages of it. But it has been question'd by many learned Men, whether the *Old-Testament* gave the *Jews* sufficient Light to discover it. To this Question the Words of our Blessed Saviour seem to give full Satisfaction, (*Joh. V. 39.*) *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think that ye have Eternal Life.* They might see there, that the *Kingdom of the Messiah* was to be *Eternal*. (*Isa. IX. 7. ----*) *Of his Kingdom there will be no End.* They might see that *GOD's Covenant* with them was an *Everlasting Covenant*, (*Isa. LV. 3.*) They might see how the *Patriarchs* despised this World, with all its Riches and Enjoyments, for the sake of *invisible*

*Glories* promised them. *Abraham* had a better *Land of Promise* in View than the *Earthly Canaan*: And *Moses* despis'd the Splendor of *Pharaoh's Court* and Family, having an Eye to a superior *Recompence of Reward*. But yet this great Truth of a future State, was not so clearly manifested to the *Jews* as to convince the *Sadducees*, who were a numerous and powerful Sect among them, and held that there is no such Thing as the *Resurrection* of the Body, and no such Being as a *Spirit* to live without a Body, (*Act. XXIII. 8.*) But this is so fully and frequently declared in the Gospel, that he that runneth may read it: So that it is most truly said, that *Life and Immortality are brought to Light by the Gospel*, (*2 Tim. I. 10.*) For here we see, not only the plain Assertion of the State of eternal Life, but the very Manner and Means of restoring Men to the Hope of it, when they had lost it. For as they lost the Happiness of eternal Life by their Apostacy from *GOD*, the *Fountain of Life and Bliss*; so they are restored to it by *Jesus Christ*, in whom is *Life*, yea, who is *eternal Life*, or *Vitality*, *1 Joh. I. 2.*

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We are taught in the holy Gospel, that true Christians are begotten again by GOD, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his abundant Mercy, to a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead; to an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for them; who are kept by the Power of GOD thro' Faith unto Salvation, (1 Pet. I. 2, 3, 4.) And to make this spiritual Birth more clear, the Apostle adds, (Ver. 23.) Being born again, not of corruptible Seed, but of incorruptible; even by the Word of GOD which liveth and abideth for ever. Such as are born of GOD, that is, are truly renewed in their Hearts and Lives by the Principles and Grace of the Gospel; these are the Children of GOD, and if Children, then Heirs, Heirs of GOD, and joint Heirs with Christ: Being new born of that spiritual and incorruptible Seed, which actuateth and enliveneth them to Eternity, being incorruptible.

It is not therefore owing to our being rightly baptiz'd, that we become immortal; as has been lately suggested; for there will be a Resur-

rection of all the *Unjust* in the World, as well as of the *Just*, (Acts XXIV. 15.) and the *Wicked* shall go away into *Everlasting Punishment*, (Matth. XXV. ult.) But it is by our *Spiritual Washing* in this *Laver of Regeneration*, thro' the *Grace and Mercy* of the *Gospel-Covenant*, that we become *new Creatures*, and are prepar'd for, and intitl'd to that *Kingdom* of our *LORD* above, which is *Incorruptible and Eternal*.

It is therefore, we see, undeniable, that *Eternal Life is promised in the holy Scriptures*: And that these *Writings* are the *Word of GOD*, and contain his *Will*, is the next *Thing* to be consider'd.

2. The *Holy Scriptures* are revealed by *GOD*, and are in a proper *Sense*, his *Word*.

Now, this appears in that *GOD gave evident Testimony to this Word of his Grace*, spoken by his *Apostles*, granting *Signs and Wonders to be done by their Hands*. It is not in the *Power* of *Men* or *Devils* to cure *inveterate Diseases* by the *Shadow* of a *Man* passing by, as *GOD* did by the *Shadow of St. Peter*, (Act. V. 15.)  
Nor



Nor to make the Sick and Lame whole, and to dispossess Devils by Handkerchiefs, and Aprons carried from the Body of a Man, as in the Case of St. Paul, (Act. XIX. 12.) This can only be done by the Power of the Almighty G O D ; who hereby, and by innumerable other Miracles, demonstrated his Presence with these his Servants, and that the Word in their Mouths, was the Word of G O D.

The Lives also of these Holy Prophets and Apostles shone with a divine Brightness, like the Doctrine they taught; and tended no less to destroy the Kingdom of Darkness. No other Persons, as far as we can know it, did ever manifest such an eminent and unfeigned Pitch of Piety and Charity. We appeal to all the World, Did ever Men glorify G O D in such an absolute Deference to his Will, and so entire a Submission of their own, as these holy Prophets and Apostles did? Were ever Men so truly and effectually crucified to the World and the Flesh? Did ever so many wise and good Men offer up their Lives so willingly for the Glory of their Maker? Were evil Spirits ever

ever so subject to any others, tho' the last Interests of their Kingdom lay at Stake? Did any humane Eloquence ever reform so many *Thousands* of notorious Sinners, as the Preaching of the Apostles did in one Day? (*Act. II. 41.*) *And the same Day were added to them Three Thousand Souls.* Their Doctrine prevail'd by the mere *Truth* and *Goodness* of it, over the Minds and Hearts of *Princes* and *Philosophers*; over the *Great* and *Wise*, the *Greeks* and *Barbarians*; notwithstanding all their Prejudices and Corruptions, and made them *new Creatures*. And every Convert manifested such a divine Change of Heart and Life, that he was a living Witness of the glorious Power of the holy Gospel.

And this was not brought about by the Violence of the Sword, or the Gratification of the Flesh, as the Success of the Doctrine of *Mahomet* was; nor by the Force of humane Laws, or the Craft of Sophistry, or the Charms of Oratory; for all the *Laws*, and *Learning*, and *Power* of the World, were against it. The Apostles could propose nothing (as they freely own'd)

more

more likely to come upon their Converts in this World, than the Trials of *cruel Mockings*, and of *Bonds* and *Imprisonments*: They told them plainly, that they must take up the *Cross* of Christ here, if they would enjoy his *Crown* hereafter. And this Hope of *Eternal Life*, proposed by GOD that *cannot lie*, won their Hearts thro' the mighty Grace of GOD: And they *endur'd the Cross, and despis'd the Shame, looking unto Jesus*, and to the Rewards at his Right Hand.

All these Things put together, make as full a *Demonstration* as the Thing is capable of, that the Writings which Christians call the *Holy Scriptures*, are the Will of GOD, reveal'd for the *Salvation* of Men.

So then, there remains but one Thing more to clear the Truth of an Eternal State to come, as asserted in the Text; and that is,

3. That GOD *cannot lie*: He is *ἀψευδὴς Θεός*, incapable of *admitting* or *advancing* Falshood.

It is the very Nature of GOD, to be a *Being infinitely perfect*; and therefore it is His very Nature to be *infallible* and *Unfalse*. He *cannot lie*.  
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Could he prevaricate or falsify, he would not be morally perfect, and consequently would not be GOD. It denotes either the *Darkness* of Mens Understandings, or the *Corruption* of their Wills, and the *Faultiness* of their Intention, that they utter Lies. But in a *Being of all Perfection*, nothing of this can be imagined: A *false God* is a full Contradiction.

So then, if the holy Scriptures affirm, that the State of Recompences will be to all Men *Everlasting* after Death: If these Scriptures are the *true Will* and Word of GOD: And if GOD, who affirms these Things, *cannot lie*: Here is a sound and unshaken Foundation of the good Man's Hope, and the ill Man's Fear. For tho' the Text only touches on the bright Side of the Article, to encourage Christians in their pious Labours and Sufferings: Yet the eternal Sufferings of all wicked People, are as certain and indisputable. For it is a Part of the same Revelation from GOD; and the same Righteous Judge who hath pronounced, that the *Faithful shall go away from his Judgment-Seat to Life Eternal*, hath de-

declared, *that the Wicked shall go away to everlasting Punishment,* (Matt. XXV. 46.)

So then, as to the Ground of our Belief of the Eternal State of Men after Death, we place it wholly on the Truth of the *Christian Revelation*: It is declared by *G O D* that cannot lie.

As to the Date of the Promise of Eternal Life, it is said to be made *before the World began*: In the Original, (*Πρὸς ἄρχην αἰώνων*) which, if it be taken in the largest Sense, (as our Translators seem to express it) must be meant of the *secret Will and Purpose* of *G O D*, even before he made Man, or this visible World for him; that he would give to Man an *immortal Soul*, capable of *eternal Happiness*. But if the Words be render'd, as they will bear, in *ancient Times*, or *many Ages ago*, then they relate to the Promise of Man's Restoration to the Hope of Eternal Life by the *Seed of the Woman*, (Gen. III. 15.) which was afterwards made plain and clear by the *Preaching of the Gospel*, according to the *Commandment of G O D our Saviour*, as it follows the Words of the Text.

But

But tho' this Article of our Faith, can only be duly asserted by the Authority of Revelation, yet there are many solid Arguments in Reason for it, worthy of our Consideration. For Instance,

I. According to the Principles of such as ascribe all Things to the Mechanism of *Matter* and *Motion*, there must be a perpetual Continuation of all Things in *Being*; because no *Being* can be brought to *nothing* but by a supernatural Omnipotent Power. The proper Sphere and utmost Power of natural Action and Production, is to pass from one *Term* to another, and from one *Thing* to another: And therefore there can be no Action, in the Course of *Nature*, where there is nothing to *act for*, as surely as where there is nothing to *act from*. So that it requires the same infinite Power to *annihilate*, as to *create*; and no *Being* passes *naturally* from a State of *Being* to *Nothing*, any more than from *Nothing* to *Being*. This plainly refutes the *Atheist*, who must confess a *GOD*, or deny *Annihilation*, which is his poor Hope concerning his *Soul*.

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If he pleads, that Men will be changed into other Beings by Death, and so made incapable of future Rewards and Punishments, tho' not annihilated: This comes to be considered in the *Third Particular*.

As to such who own the *Being* of G O D, but deny his *Providence*; affirming, that all Things proceed according to the Course of Nature, without any Divine Interposition: These Assertors of the Course of Nature ought to consider, that nothing is more vehemently and more universally pursued in all the natural Course of Things, than to preserve every Being in its proper Order and Subsistence. For every Place is full, and the absolute Loss of any one Being, would break the *Continuation* and *Perfection* of the Compages of the Universe. We see, that when the Air is drawn or forc'd out of any Place, even heavy Bodies are thrust up to supply the Defect, by an Effort so wonderful, that the Force of *Natural Agency* is scarce any where so powerfully exerted. And as to the Preservation of the Being of every material Thing, we may observe a  
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very strong and wise Concourse of Things to serve this End, which is one principal Tendency of Nature.

II. GOD, the prime Cause of all Things, will have his Being for Ever; and will be infinitely Wise, Just, and Good to Eternity. Nothing can limit or controul the Cause of all Things. He that had his perfect Being before the Existence of any other Being, cannot be obstructed or incommoded in his Being by any Thing: So that the Fountain of *Life* and *Being* will flow for Ever; because nothing can stop it.

So then, whether GOD will continue *Life* and *Being* to Men in another World, is the only remaining Question. As to which, let us further remark.

III. GOD has put into the Nature of Man a perfect Aversion to *Annihilation*, or the being reduc'd to nothing: We can scarce bear the Thought, or allow the Notion of it.

Yea further, we generally find, that the wiser and better Men grow, the more they advance in the Vehemency of this Desire: And we find that in such Persons, their Desire is prin-



principally carried forth towards God, whom they earnestly desire, as their *Portion for ever.*

Now, if this Desire of *immortal Happiness* (which the Text calls *Eternal Life*) be in all *Men*, it is implanted in their Nature: And if it prevails chiefly upon *good and wise Men*, it is a *right* and honourable Desire, and tends to a proper and satisfactory End. Christians may say truly and philosophically, that this *Desire of Immortality* was implanted in Man by his *Creator*, and is invigorated by his *Redeemer*. *Nature* impress'd it, and *Religion* improves it. For GOD made Man for himself, as the suitable *Eternal Happiness* of Man; and his *Divine Grace* fits Man for this Enjoyment. Let us therefore carry the Argument yet further.

IV. It is highly agreeable to Reason, that as an infinitely good GOD hath given *Being* to many reasonable Creatures which he has made capable of Knowing Him, and acknowledging his Benefits: And as he hath brought many of them, by his Goodness, to delight in their GOD, and to love his Commands: It is, I say,

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highly agreeable to this infinite Goodness to preserve, not to destroy these his pious and faithful Servants; yea, these his dear and dutiful Children, that they may feel themselves happy in his Love, replenish'd out of his Stores, and made perfect in his Kingdom; where they will praise his Goodness, and extol his Mercy for ever.

All the visible Works of GOD declare his immense Goodness. We cannot behold the Glory of the Heavens, or the Fruitfulness of the Earth, or the Supplies of his bountiful Providence to all his Creatures, without enlarged Ideas of the infinite Goodness of the *Lord of All*. We cannot therefore, in Reason, think otherwise of GOD's Dealing with Men in another World. He is too good to forsake such as cleave to Him: He is not as the cruel *Ostrich*, that forgeteth and forsaketh her Offspring. He cannot but love his own Image. It is demonstrably clear, that infinite Goodness will communicate it self, and that very plentifully, to such as are capable of it, and where his great Name will be glorified in it.

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We see daily the great Goodness of GOD to wicked Men: He bears long with his professed Enemies; he fills the Cup of the *Drunkard*, and spreads the Table of the *Glutton*: And has he not prepared better Things for them that serve him? Will not he that is patient towards the Man that blasphemes his Name, be bountiful to him that exalts his Praise? If there be such present Indulgence to the *Wicked*, will there not verily be a Reward for the *Righteous*?

This Argument will be further advanced, if we consider what exalted Affection and eminent Service, some holy Men and Women have render'd to their Creator, thro' his Grace. They have offer'd up their Goods and Lives with Joy, as a Sacrifice to his Glory. They have chosen the *Rack*, the *Saw*, and the *Grid-Iron*, rather than offend their GOD. Their Love to GOD has transcend'd all other Affections, and could not be diverted, much less extinguish'd, by all the Malice of Men and Devils. And now, how can it enter into the Heart of a sober Man to imagine, that when their infinitely good GOD

has seen them pass all these sharp Trials of their Faith and Integrity, and that they have acquitted themselves with the truest Honour; that he will then rob these his Servants of their very *Being*, and not suffer them to have *Place* in the World?

Moreover, Does the wise and good GOD ever put an *Appetite* into any of his Creatures, without preparing a suitable *Object* to satisfy it? This would not suit the infinite Goodness of GOD; because then there would be Matter of Dissatisfaction and of Torment to the Creature, interwoven with his very Nature. Since then there is a strong Desire of *Eternal Life* in the Nature of Man, placed in it by his Creator; and since it is the Aim and Business of Religion, and the leading Principle of it, to cherish and invigorate this Hope, as we see in the Text, who can doubt of the Certainty of the Enjoyment of the Thing hoped for?

Where Men are, by fix'd Habits of Mortification and Self-Denial, wean'd from all inordinate Affection to sublunary Things, and are, by a long Train of religious Exercises, brought

brought to the highest Esteem of GOD, and a most ardent Desire of Him, (which was the End for which they were made) will infinite Goodness disappoint these good Dispositions at the last? Will he tear these his Children from the Breast? Will he *for Bread, give them a Stone,* and for *a Fish, give them a Serpent?* Can infinite Love cast off his faithful Servants for Ever? This is a Thought so unsuitable to the Divine Nature, and so unworthy of his infinite Perfections, that such as have but the Light of Nature, can never admit it.

I will only add one Point more, to push on this Argument to its just Height; which is, That it cannot but be a true Pleasure to infinite Goodness to find Objects meet for his Bounty and Beneficence. This is so agreeable to a truly bountiful Being, that we cannot but conclude it to be highly so in GOD; for indeed we see it eminently so in Men of *singular Goodness and Liberality, who are glad to distribute, willing to communicate.*

Thus, we see, there are in common Reason many solid Pleas for the *Immortality* of Man on the other Side of the Grave; whilst the *Atheistical* Person has not one solid Argument to refute it. But if the Arguments on both Sides were equal, and it were as probable that there is no Life to come, as that there is: In this Case, the Consequence is so vastly disproportionable, that every prudent Person must choose the safest Side. For if there be no Life to come, the *virtuous* Man has lost nothing but Vice and Vanity, with that inward Regret and Vexation, and that those Reproaches and Diseases which attend them in this Life, which is his great Advantage; and he cannot possibly be unhappy after Death.

But if the *Atheist* be mistaken in his Notions of Things, as there is all the Reason in the World to conclude he is, then he is the most *wretched* of all Men in his Death, and is *undone* for Ever. Wherefore let all the World judge, whether the Life of the lewd *Atheist*, or the devout *Christian*, be the most wise and safe, and the most honourable and pleasant.

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There remain somewhat to be spoken to, relating to the *Resurrection of the Body*, and the *Equitableness of Everlasting Punishments*; which must be referr'd to the next Discourse.

In the mean Time, let every One of us fix his Heart on the Divine Glories of our Heavenly Religion; which, if compar'd with other Religions, shines as the *SUN* in the Firmament amidst other little *Luminaries*, which have no Lustre but what they borrow from it. It is therefore evident, that we must live better than others, or be cover'd with greater Shame, and fall under a more terrible *Condemnation*. Every Thing is *Divine, Glorious, and Immortal* in our Religion; wherefore let nothing that is *vile, base, and sordid*, appear in our Lives; for nothing less than a heavenly *Life and Temper* can suit such a heavenly *Dispensation*. It shews us, that we are always under the Eye of a most holy and righteous *G O D*, and are every Moment passing on to *Everlasting Bliss or Misery*. With what Care therefore ought we to take every Step; and with what

Diligence should we press after that Hope of Eternal Life, which GOD, that cannot lie, hath promised.

Which GOD grant, &c.

*[The following text is extremely faint and largely illegible, appearing to be bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. It contains several lines of text, including the word "SER-" in the middle.]*

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## SERMON VIII.

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**The due Practice of the  
Christian Religion, a  
good Refutation of  
Infidels and Scoffers.**

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**2 P E T. III. Ver. 14.**

*Wherefore, Beloved, seeing that ye  
look for such Things; be diligent,  
that ye may be found of him in  
Peace, without Spot and Blameless.*

**W**E find both St. Peter and St. Jude  
carried forth with a Veho-  
mency of holy Zeal against fundry  
vicious

*The Practice of Christianity, Ser. VIII.*

*World to come, reveal'd in the Holy Scriptures ; it is the Property of Christians to reverence them, and to frame their whole Lives suitably to them. Seeing that ye look for such Things, be diligent.*

II. That no Person can find Acceptance with the LORD *Jesus Christ* at his coming, or Happiness in his Eternal Kingdom, without a *pure and peaceable* Disposition and Deportment. *Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in Peace, without Spot and Blameless.*

The first Remark is, That *Christians* reverence and principally regard those Things which are revealed in the Holy Scriptures concerning a *World to come*, tho' *Infidels* and *Atheists* mock at them. The Apostle describes his beloved Brethren in the Text, as those who look'd for these Things. Yea, as those who looked for, and hasted to the Coming of the Day of GOD, wherein the Heavens being on Fire, shall be dissolved, the Earth also, and the Works that are therein, shall be burnt up, (1 Pet. III. 12.) They hasten their Work, and in their Longings antedate that Day of their LORD, which is as immensely comfortable to them, as terrible to all wicked Men. The Faith of a  
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Christian takes frequent Views of this *Great Day*, and speaks of it, as of a Thing present and in *Sight*; saying, *Behold he cometh with Clouds, and every Eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him, (Rev. I. 7.)* The Enemies of the Blessed Jesus, even those who *crucified* him of Old, and those who *crucify* him *afresh* now, shall see Him with their fleshly Eyes, to their unspeakable Terror, at his Appearance, tho' only the Regenerate see him now by Faith, and will see him then to their infinite Comfort. These look for that blessed Hope, and the glorious *Appearing of the great GOD, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for them, (Tit. II. 13.)* This is their Character in the Text: The *Christian* prudently regards and prepares for those future Things which *Infidels* mock and scorn.

The Apostle instances in two Things which are thus differently treated by the serious Christian, and the wanton Scoffer.

The one is, the *End* of this present World, with the Dissolution of all Things therein, (*Ver 10.*) *The Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night,*

*in the which, the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat.* But with what Scorn has this Prediction been treated by the ancient and modern *Infidels!* *The Prophets,* say they, who foretold these Things, *are fallen asleep* by the common Fate of Men, and indeed, say they, they seem'd to us but to tell their *Dreams* when they were *awake*; for we have seen all Things proceed according to the *Course of Nature* ever since. Thus they scoff, as we read in the *Fourth Verse* of this Chapter.

The other Point revealed concerning a future State is, The Distribution of *Eternal Rewards and Punishments* by Jesus Christ at his Coming, (*Ver. 4.*) Concerning which, the *Scoffers* said then; *Where is the Promise of his Coming?* q. d. How long have these credulous *Christians* been baw'k'd of their Expectation? and how, like *Fools*, do they go on with their chimerical Amusements?

There is another Article co-incident with this, which is treated by *Infidels* with the same Scorn; that is, the

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*Resurrection of the Bodies of Men*; which the conceited *Athenians* mock'd as *Babbling*, (Act. XVII. 32.) And other Heathens of those Days fancied they had effectually refuted it, when they carried the *Ashes of Christian Martyrs* to the Top of some high Hill on a stormy Day, and there scatter'd them abroad as far as the fiercest Winds could carry them. But to this, we reply in Reason, that since Almighty G O D has given Power to the *Load-Stone*, (a little senseless Lump) to separate every Atom of the Filings of Iron out of a Heap of Sand; so that the Iron-particles will throw off a very great Weight of Sand to join themselves to that Stone: It cannot, in Reason, be thought impossible for the GOD of all Power, to re-unite the Dust of humane Bodies; or that He who gave them *Life* at first, should *revive* them. So that as their Ignorance of the *Holy Scripture* is one great Cause of their Mistake herein, so their not knowing the *Power of G O D*, is most certainly another. This is most justly determin'd by *Truth* it-self, (*Matth. XXII. 29.*) *Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power*  
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of GOD. “ We have full Expectation, says *Justin Martyr*, of being restor’d to these Bodies, after they are dead and rotten; because we know, that *with GOD nothing is impossible*. Would it not be as incredible, says that Learned Father, that the Bones, and Nerves, and Flesh of humane Bodies (in that curious and exact Mechanism that we behold them) could be spun out of a little *Seminal Drop*, if we had never known the Experience of such a Production? Had not this been verified in Fact before the Eyes of Men, how many Objections would disputatious Persons have raised against it? And how often should we have been ask’d, *How can such a strange Thing be?* And in the End, trusting to the Comprehension of their own Understanding, they would have *disbeliev’d* it, and condemn’d it as a *Notion* unworthy of the Head of a *Philosopher*.

There is, methinks, a Hint in *St. Paul’s* arguing about the Resurrection, (*1 Cor. XV. 35*) that GOD may have given a *seminal Virtue* to the Body of Man, which, at the quickening Call  
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of GOD, may arise fresh and vigorous out of the Dust, as the Body of Wheat, or any other Grain, does at the Return of the Sun's Warmth. But as I mention this only as a Hint, so all the Strefs I shall lay on it is only this, namely, to stop the Mouths of *Atheists* and *Unbelievers* by this Supposition; desiring them to produce a Reason, why he that thus restores the Body of a Grain of Corn in Millions of Instances every Spring, may not do the same Thing in the Bodies of Men at the general *Resurrection*?

We may also very well argue in the same Manner concerning the *Credibility* of all that the Great GOD has revealed concerning a *World to come*, from the Wonders we behold in the World we *now* inhabit.

Had Men been created out of this visible World, and had it been reveal'd to them by Men inspir'd of GOD, that their Maker would ere long translate them into a very glorious World, in which a vast Globe of *Earth*, of many Thousand Leagues in Diameter, hangs in the Air without any visible Support; and where Millions of glorious *Orbs of Light*, vastly

bigger than the Earth, move regularly round about it, without any visible *Mover* or *Director*. Adding to this, the true Descriptions of the *Earth*, and the *Sea*, and all the living *Creatures* therein; with the *Seasons*, and those other Wonders of the Creation which we know to be true. Would not sensual and sceptical Men have formed the very same Arguments against this Account of the present World, that they now do against the wonderful Things of the World to come? Would they not ask, How can you *demonstrate* all this? And how can you prove it is impossible that it should be otherwise? And yet we know not the Thousandth Part of GOD's Wisdom and Power that is exemplified in this visible World. Had we any competent Knowledge of the *Heavens* above us, and of the *Earth* beneath, and of the vast *Ocean*, and all the living *Creatures* in this visible World, we should see such Wonders of Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, in the Works of our glorious Creator, that there would be no *Spirit* left in us. The Wonders would exceed our Thought, and we should believe any Thing



Thing possible which the Almighty G O D, who made this World, should reveal to us concerning another.

And as to the *Eternity* of the Rewards and Punishments of that future State: It is very reasonable to grant, that as the Nature, Majesty, and Glory of G O D, are *infinite*; that he will reward and punish, in a Manner suitable to himself. The Demerit of *Sin*, against a *Being* that is *infinite in all Perfection*, is certainly *infinite*: so that the Sinner thereby contracts *infinite Guilt*, and is bound over to *infinite Punishment*. It is by this *Guilt*, that the *Angels*, who *sinned*, are bound in *everlasting Chains under Darkness*, i. e. in perfect Despair, (*Jude*, 6.) They have no Crevice of *Hope* to lighten their dark Condition, because they have no Redeemer to pay their *Ransom*. Now, if sinful Men slight their *Saviour*, they fall into the same *utter Darkness*. They will have such Matter of *everlasting Regret* on their Spirits, that the *Worm can never die*; and there being then no *Propitiation* for Sin, the *Fire* of just Vengeance *can never be quenched*. We are sensible, that the Perfection of divine Justice does not appear in

the present Dispensations of *Providence*. Many a cruel and prophane Man dies on his Bed, and many a pious Martyr in the Flames. It is therefore reasonable to conceive, that GOD will shew his Wrath in another World on the *Vessels fitted for Destruction*; as *St. Paul* assures us he will, (*Rom. IX. 22.*)

We see in the best of humane Governments, that a treasonable Word against a Prince is punished with Death; yea, and brings an Attaindure on the Posterity of the Traytor, which is as much as Man can do to perpetuate the Punishment. Yet the greatest of Men did not create us, nor do we subsist in them: Which shews, that the *Eternal Punishment* of Crimes committed against GOD, is not (all Circumstances duly considered) so severe as these Punishments of Offences against Men, which are both *Capital* and *Hereditary*.

Now, all these Arguments serve to demonstrate, how reasonable and well-grounded the good Man's Hopes and Fears are, with Reference to the infinite Retributions of another World. And how foolish and stupid they are,  
who

who mock and despise them? And now, that all serious Christians may be directed to the certain Means of finding Favour in the Sight of their Supreme Judge at his Appearance, we come next to consider the *Second* general Observation; which is,

II. That no Person can find Acceptance with the Lord *Jesus Christ* at his Coming, or Happiness in his Eternal Kingdom, without a peaceable and holy Frame and Deportment. *Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in Peace, without Spot and Blameless; that is, be peaceable and holy.*

These Two Divine Qualifications answer the Two Tables of GOD's Commands to Men; and are the most lively Transcript of the Life and Temper of *Jesus Christ*. They are the Two principal Gifts of the *Wisdom from above*; which is first *pure*, and then *peaceable*; and they are the Summ of the Blessed Gospel, which is a System of exalted Love towards GOD and Men; and a good Preparation for the State of the Blessed. For *Purity* and *Charity* will never cease, tho' *Faith* and *Hope* will.

These are also the best Means to settle the Prosperity and Safety of Families and Kingdoms: For, wherever *Uice* and *Uariance* prevail, both the *Church* and *State* are, without Doubt, in great Peril. To such therefore as are in this unhappy Case, no Advice can be more seasonable, or more kind, than that of the Text: *Be diligent, that ye may be found of your LORD in Peace, without Spot and Blameless.* Nothing can be more disagreeable to the Master of the House, than to find his Servants in *Broils* and *Riot* at his Return Home. Wherefore *be diligent*; spare no Pains, delay no Time, to compose your *Divisions*, and suppress your *Vices*. For if the *evil Servant* shall say in his Heart, *my LORD delayeth his Coming*; and shall begin to smite his *Fellow-Servants*, and to eat and drink with the *Drunken*: The Lord of that Servant shall come in a Day that he looketh not for him, and in an Hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his Portion with the *Hypocrites*: There shall be *wailing and gnashing of Teeth*, (*Matt. XXIV. 48, &c.*) To these awful Words of our LORD, I cannot but sub-

subjoin those other, (*Matth. XI. 15.*)  
*He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.*  
 The Matter is too important to be  
 wav'd or postpon'd. We must look  
 well to it, that when our Great Ma-  
 ster comes to Us, or calls for Us, we  
 be not found in the Broils of *intempe-  
 rate Passion*, or the Spots of *allowed  
 Lust*.

I come now to a general Applicati-  
 on of what has been said, not only  
 in this, but the foregoing Discourses;  
 and lest I should be too prolix on so  
 great and moving a Subject, I shall  
 confine my self to *Four* practical Con-  
 clusions.

I. Since Christians have unquesti-  
 onably the best Religion, they ought  
 to be the best of Men. Other Re-  
 ligions are but by a hard and  
 improper Use of the Word, call'd  
 by that Name. The Religions of the  
*Heathens*, as far as they are oppos'd  
 to Christianity, are like their Idols,  
*Nothing in the World*: but the Chri-  
 stian Religion is the Way of Life and  
 Everlasting Glory. But then to what  
 Purpose do we profess a holy and di-  
 vine Religion, if we have no real  
 Esteem or Regard for it? Such as

acknowledge the *Being* of Almighty GOD, and the Universal *Sovereignty* of his Son *Jesus Christ*; and yet do oftener mention these sacred and awful Names in vile Blasphemy, than in due Devotion, do but pollute the Name of the Christian Religion by their Pretences to it, and thereby harden Infidels against it; and consequently they do but prepare the Way of a more aggravated Self-Condernation, and of more piercing Regret for Ever.

It was early suggested to Christians by their LORD, even to the First that had the Honour to bear that *venerable Name*, that they must *do more than others*, (Matth. V. 47.) We have stricter Rules, better Helps, vaster Motives, brighter Examples, and are under more awful Vows, than the rest of Mankind, and are therefore fairly put to it for a brighter *Crown*, or a more *dismal Punishment*. Except Christians are pure in Heart, and unblameable in Life; except they unfeignedly love GOD and MEN, and delight in all the requisite Acts of Devotion to their Creator, and good Offices to their Fellow-  
Crea-

Creatures; they come not up to their Rules, they blemish their Character, and undermine their Hopes. It is not enough for Christians, that they be free from Scandals; they must be eminent Examples, and *shine as Lights*.

“It is impossible (says *Athenagoras* in his Apology to the Emperor) “for a Christian to be an ill Man, except he be a mere Dissembler; which is not a Christian, but the Image of One. And for a Proof of this he appeals to the Lives of the whole Body of Christians of those Days; and challenges their worst Enemies to refute it. This State of the *Church* was truly genuine and glorious; agreeable to its Author, and to its End. For the *Strength* and *Splendor* of a Christian Church do not consist in an *Arm of Flesh*, or in worldly *Pomp*; but in the whole Armour of *G O D*, and in his Protection: And wherever the *Passions* and *Lusts* of such as bear the Name of Christ, are exorbitant and epidemical, they are in a weak Condition, and the *Glory* is departed from their *Israel*. Such therefore as endeavour to assuage the  
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*Passions*, and suppress the *Scandals* that abound, are the best *Christians*, and the best *Citizens*; and such as cherish and foment them must needs be the worst, excepting the principal Actors. The *Vineyard* that brings forth nothing but *wild Grapes* will be *pluck'd up and laid waste*. Wherefore,

II. Let us esteem the *Means* and *Seasons* which God hath *sanctified* and *bles's'd* for our Purification and Salvation, as the most advantageous Enjoyments of our whole Lives. That glorious weekly *Festival* of Christians, which St. *John* calls the *Lord's-Day*, is a most joyful *Jubile*. It brings to our Mind the Foundation of our *Faith*, the Resurrection of our *Hope*, and the Perfection of our *Redemption*. It is most worthily called the *L O R D's Day*, since our blessed Saviour not only rose from the Dead upon it, but appeared twice to his Disciples in their religious Assemblies on that Day. And if we meet together in his true Faith and Fear on this sacred Day, we shall enjoy the Blessings of his *spiritual Presence* amongst us.

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He also that was *seen of his Disciples in the Breaking of Bread*, will manifest himself to such as duly celebrate the *Lord's-Supper*. What Christ purchased for Men upon the *Cross*, he seals and conveys to them by the Symbols of his Blood in *Baptism* and the *Lord's-Supper*, for *this is the New Testament in his Blood*: And such as have tasted the Sweetness and Usefulness of these Ordinances, can no more be persuaded that they are empty or needless, than that the *Breast* is of no Benefit to a *Child*, or *strong Meat* to such as are of *riper Years*.

I shall name but one *Christian Institution* more, as the Means of supernatural Light, Strength and Comfort; and that must never be omitted, namely, our Attendance on the *good Word of GOD*, that Word of his *Grace which is able to build us up, and to give us an Inheritance amongst them that are sanctified*. This is our Light, and our Food; our Medicine and our Armour. It tends so universally to the Glory of GOD and the Good of Men; It establishes such Principles of heroic Piety and Charity: It brings such a State of Serenity and Peace to our Minds  
and

and Hearts, and gives such useful Laws to Relations and Societies, that it every where shews its heavenly Nature and Original. The Reply of St. Cyril to the Emperor *Julian* was very apposite; *You may have read it, said he, but you did not understand it; for had you understood it, you could not have condemned it.* If the People of old were moved to say, *It were better that the Sun should not shine, than that Chrysofome should not Preach:* We may with good Assurance say, we can better spare the Light of our *Eyes*, than the Light of the *Gospel*: For this is the Way whereby it pleases God to *save them that believe.* So that our blessed Saviour may be supposed to say to us every Lord's-Day as to *Cornelius*; *Go to my Minister, and carry thy Family with thee, He shall tell thee Words whereby thou and thy House shall be saved.*

They are *happy*, says the inspired wise Prince, *who wait at the Doors of Wisdom*, (Prov. VIII. 34.) that attend and improve the Seasons of hearing the Word of Life, which is *the Wisdom of God unto Salvation*, (1 Cor. I. 21.) Let us therefore exert that *Diligence* in these great Concerns which the *Text* presses  
upon

upon us: Let us in the *Morning* sow our Seed; and in the *Evening*, let us not slack our Hand, as the wise Man advises, (*Eccl. XI. 6.*) we cannot spend too many of our Hours to secure a blessed and glorious Eternity.

III. Be we fully perswaded; and ever mindful, of the *Everlasting Retributions* of the Life to come. Let us not retain them as uncertain Opinions, or unexamined Notions; nor look on them as Things at a great Distance: but as certain Events that will quickly come to our View and Experience: and then all the Offers of worldly Profit, Pleasure and Honour on the one Hand, and the Threats of Racks and Flames on the other, will appear little and contemptible.

This Article is the Pilgrim's Staff, which enables him to walk uprightly in the roughest Way; and it is his Armour against all Temptations on the right Hand and on the left. This sweetens the most bitter Afflictions, and makes the Cross of Christ preferable to the Luxury of Courts. " We might, says *Justin Martyr*, by denying the Faith, escape the Torments of our Persecutors; but we scorn to  
" pur-

“ purchase our Lives with the Charge  
 “ of a *Lie*; for our Souls are  
 “ wing’d with the Desire of a Life of  
 “ perfect Purity and eternal Dura-  
 “ tion.

This Faith is the only way to overcome the Fear of Death, and it will most certainly do it: For it made *Ignatius* rejoice with uncommon Joy, when he drew nigh to the Place of his Execution; professing that *he would provoke the wild Beasts to devour him speedily.* And Thousands of others have rejoiced in Tribulation, and welcom’d Death with exalted Comfort, as the End of their Toils and Troubles, and the Beginning of their everlasting Rest. Hear one of them giving the Reason of this for all the rest: *For we look not at the Things which are seen, but Things not seen; for the Things which are seen, are Temporal; but the Things not seen are Eternal.* (2 Cor. IV. 18.)

A vigorous Faith in this Article, such as is the Evidence of things not seen, would burnish the *sullied* Lives of Christians, and to restore them to their primitive *Lustre*, making them shine as *Heavenly Lights*, for such indeed they

they are. What honourable Steps will that Person take, that has the infinite Glory and everlasting Misery of the neighbouring World continually before his Eyes! What can cast him down, or lead him wrong? His Faith is almost *Vision*: and fore-stalls in part the *Triumphs* of the Church above: And demonstrates the *divine Power* of the *Christian Religion*, by giving Joy in Tribulation, and Triumph in the Hour of Death.

IV. Be we assured, that such as in their present Delusions reject and deride the Doctrines of the blessed Gospel, will one Day confess them with unspeakable Horror. The Mirth of *Infidels* and the Triumphs of *Scorners* cannot be long. There is a *Lamp* in the Mind of Man, and the *Flashes* of the future Flames will light it, if the *Beams* of the glorious Gospel do not.

When that last most awful Hour shall come, which is not far from any of us; when we shall perceive ourselves to stand betwixt *Time* and *Eternity*, in the short Interval of a few Minutes; and shall look *backward* on what had pass'd, and *forward* on what is to come, with a piercing  
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and unbyass'd Judgment; we shall then disdain many Things as *Trifles*, or perhaps as *Follies*, which we now fondly applaud. All our superficial Religion without the *spiritual Life* and *Power* of it, our Controversies about the *Modes* of Religious Worship without a real Concern for the Thing; our intemperate Heat for *Parties*, and excessive Concern for the Accommodations of this present Life, will be Matter of Grief and piercing Regret. Then will Men look back, with Anguish of Soul, on those many precious Hours which have been lavish'd in Gaming, and idle Discourse, in polluting Plays and Romances, and in tedious dressing and feeding our Bodies; and then will those Hours appear the most comfortable, yea, the only comfortable Ones, that were spent in serious *Devotion* and true *Charity*.

Then the *witty Atheist* will apply the Words of the *Psalmist* to himself, with greater Sharpness than any One else ever did, and say, *Fool that I was*, to admit so absurd a Thought into my Heart, as that *there is no GOD*: That I did not see him who filleth  
all

all Places with his Presence; and did not know him who has impress'd the Characters of his Perfections on the Forehead of every Creature.

Then those conceited *Rationalists*, who once fancied they had engross'd the Monopoly of humane Knowledge, will stand amaz'd at their own *Stupidity*, and will upbraid themselves in the sharpest *Invectives*, for turning their Understanding against their *Maker*, which was indeed to become *Fools*. And in Truth, what greater Instances of Folly can be imagined, than to affirm, that *insensible Matter* was its own *Maker* and *Manager*; and that stupid *Materials* were their own *Builders* and *Surveyers*; that *Chance* produced the most *exact*, *steady*, and *universal Order*; and that all Things in *Nature* constantly produce the Effects of infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, by mere *Casualty*.

These Absurdities cannot long prevail on the Mind of Man, nor will the Abettors of them long vaunt themselves as the *Rabbies* and *Adepts* of *Wisdom* and *Knowledge*. For even those who have really attain'd much useful Knowledge in the *Nature*

of Things, and in humane *Literature*, will at last upbraid their own *Ignorance*, if they *know not G O D, and his S O N Jesus Christ*. Then, with wise *Agur*, they will condemn themselves, as void of the *Understanding of Man*; because they have not the *Wisdom of the Holy*: and with the *Learned Grotius*, they will reflect with Sorrow upon their *high Employments* and *hard Studies* about *Secondary Things*, as a *laborious Idleness*, if they have been too much diverted by these, from the *One Thing necessary*.

Be we all assured, that however we may be amuz'd at present by the vain Show of temporal Things, yet in our most serious Hours, nothing can truly satisfy us, but the Sense of our Return to G O D by *Jesus Christ*, and the Recovery of his *Likeness* and *Favour* by the Grace and Mercy of the blessed Gospel.

To summ up all. It is very evident, That the *Being* of the Eternal G O D, is as certain as our own *Being* and *Reason*: And that the Laws of *Moral Good* and *Evil* are as unquestionable, as that G O D made and governs the World.



It is also certain, that the infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of GOD are plainly discover'd to us, by the wise and gracious Contrivance and Management of all Things in Heaven and Earth: And therefore that the Voice of *Nature* demands our supreme *Love* and *Fear* of the Greatest and Best of *Beings*.

And since, we see the whole Frame and Course of *Nature* graciously disposed by GOD, for the *Good* of all his Creatures; this naturally prescribes a Law to us, to do all the *Good* we can, in our several Stations and Capacities; without which, we shall thwart the Will of our *Maker*, and swerve from the general Tendency of the *Universe*.

We are further assur'd, That seeing all Persons do not receive according to their *Observance* or *Contempt* of these Laws of GOD on Earth, that every One will receive according to his *Doings* in another World; because the Nature of a *Law* requires a *Sanction*, by suitable Rewards and Punishments.

It is moreover, very just and reasonable to conclude, that since the  
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Nature of GOD is *infinite*, and his Kingdom *Everlasting*; that the Rewards and Punishments of the future State will be *so* too.

We see also, and *Blessed are the Eyes that see it*, That the glorious Gospel does greatly *improve* and *enviserate* these Moral Truths: Instructing us withal in the only Way to be deliver'd from all Iniquity, through a *Divine Saviour*; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, through a *Divine Sanctifier*.

And the reasonable Conclusion from all these important Premisses is, That we must *deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts*, and live in all good *Conscience* towards GOD and Man: And that if we shall be found of our LORD *without Spot*, we shall be rewarded of him with Glory *without End*, thro' the *Mercy* of GOD the Father, the *Merit* of his only begotten SON, and the *Operations* of his Eternal Spirit: to which most glorious *Trinity*, in the perfect Unity of the *Deity*, be continual Praise, Worship, and Obedience, given by Angels and Men, for ever and ever.

*Amen.*

F I N I S.

