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T W E N T Y - F O U R
S E R M O N S

PREACH'D at the
Parish Church of *St. Mary le Bow, London,*
In the YEARS 1739, 1740, 1741,

A T T H E
L E C T U R E

Founded by the Honourable
ROBERT BOYLE, Esq;
A N D

Eight S E R M O N S

PREACH'D at the
CATHEDRAL CHURCH of *St. PAUL,*
In the YEARS 1738 and 1739,

A T T H E
L E C T U R E

Founded by the Honoured
Lady *M O Y E R.*

To which are Added,
*A VISITATION SERMON, a SERMON before the RELI-
GIOUS SOCIETIES, and a CHARITY SERMON.*

I N T W O V O L U M E S.

By *LEONARD TWELLS, D. D.*
Late RECTOR of *St. Matthew's, Friday-Street,*
PREBENDARY of *St. Paul's,* and one of the
LECTURERS of *St. Dunstan's* in the WEST.

V O L. II.

L O N D O N :
Printed in the YEAR MDCC XLIII.

S E R M O N I.

ISAIAH vii. 14.

The Lord himself shall give you a Sign. Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Immanuel.

MOST, if not all the Prophecies I have hitherto explained and defended, as rationally and pertinently applied to Christ out of the Old Testament, by the Writers of the New, have been such as those Writers built upon, and argued from, to convince the *Jews* of the Truth of Christianity in general, or of that fundamental and first Article thereof, that Jesus is the Messiah foretold by the Law and the Prophets.

VOL. II.

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But this before us, tho' expressly declared to have been fulfilled in the Birth of Jesus, by St. *Matthew*, in the first Chapter of his Gospel, is not argued from by that Evangelist, or by any other sacred Writer; but upon the Authority of his inspired Character, is affirmed to have had its Completion in the miraculous Birth of our blessed Saviour. The direct Way therefore of Inquiry into the Truth or Falseness of this Application, is to examine the Validity of St. *Matthew's* Claim to Inspiration. If he certainly wrote by the Direction of that very blessed Spirit, who dictated the Prophecy in the Text, there is no Room for questioning the Truth and Pertinency of the Completion assigned by him thereto: For the holy Spirit of God must have known the Views of his own Predictions, and would not permit any one, that wrote by his Direction, to misunderstand, or to misreport them.

But however necessary a Recourse to this Principle may be, when the Terms of a
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S E R M O N I. 3

Prediction do not evidently correspond with the Event assigned thereto by sacred Writers, the Prophecy in the Text, as applied by St. *Matthew*, needs not such a Method of Defence, but will stand on its own Bottom, having been literally compleated in the Birth of Jesus, and in that of no other Birth whatever: For in no other, save the miraculous Birth of our blessed Lord, did *a Virgin conceive and bear a Son*, either among the Descendants from *David*, or, as far as we know, from any other Patriarch whatever.

Whether, therefore, the Words of *Isaiab* had another, and an earlier, tho' less proper and full Completion in the Prophet's Son or not; whether the Birth of Jesus was an Event suitable or not to the Occasion of the Prophecy in the Text, it was most certainly and exactly fulfilled in that miraculous Incident. And will the *Jews* allow it morally possible, that such a Thing could be effected by the extraordinary Interposition of divine Power, without being intended in the giving forth of

4 S E R M O N I.

the Prophecy? We grant there may be such Things as accidental Coincidencies of Events with Prophecies that had no Respect to such Events, tho' this is but barely conceivable, and is highly unlikely; but that God should create a new Thing upon Earth, and send a great Prophet into the World by a Birth without the ordinary Means of a human Father; that he should, through all the Annals of Time, have but once violated the Course of Nature in this Manner, exactly as he foretold it should happen eight hundred Years before, and yet not intend therein to compleat that Prediction; is harder to credit, and to be reconciled with the Wisdom and Goodness of God, than any Christian Mystery whatever. And yet this high Improbability, or rather Absurdity, must they maintain, whether they be *Jews* or *Deists*, who charge St. *Matthew* with impertinently applying the Prophecy of the Text to the Birth of Jesus our Saviour.

As to the latter Part of this Prediction, which concerns the Name of this wonderful

S E R M O N I. 5

ful Son of a Virgin Mother, it was not, we confess, fulfilled in Jesus according to the Letter; he was never, that we can learn, called *Immanuel*: No more was *Isaiab's* Son, whom some will have to be the immediate Subject of the Prophecy before us; nor was that Son of *Isaiab*, in any tolerable Sort, what the Name *Immanuel* implies, *i. e.* God with us. After his Birth, and the prophetick Significancy of it, which came to pass in two Years after, we hear nothing more concerning this Son of the Prophetes; he wrought no Wonders nor Deliverances, either for the Kingdom of *Judab*, or House of *David*, on Account whereof the Name *Immanuel*, in the lowest Sense of the Word, might be applicable to him, but is passed over in Silence like other common Men: Whereas Jesus Christ, not only in the Wonders of his Birth, but in the future Transactions of his Life manifested, that God was with, or had visited his People. The divine Power did never so visibly, and in so short a Time, exert itself before: For our Lord, in the three Years which

followed his shewing unto *Israel*, wrought more Wonders by the Finger of God, than had been performed throughout the *Jewish* History, from the first Foundation of that People, which was a Term of one Thousand five Hundred Years. The Wisdom also and Goodness of God did not less eminently shine forth in him, than his Power did, and all together manifested him to be the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person: He therefore, and he only, was, in the sublimest and most strict Sense, God with us, or God with our Nature, made in the Form and Fashion of a Man. Can it then be imagined or conceived, that God should, by the Prophet *Isaiab*, foretell such amazing Dispensations as these, and exactly verify them in the Birth and Life of Jesus, and mean nothing of all this by it, but something else, which, if at all brought to pass, fell infinitely short of the Terms in which the Prophecy was couched? Can *Jews*, that are not blinded by Prejudices, or rather judicial Delusion, stand out against such cogent Evidence for the Truth of the Gospel,

S E R M O N I. 7

Gospel, as this is? Nay, can even Deists, who allow the necessary Perfections, as well as the Being of God, ward off the Consequences of this Prophecy so illustriously compleated? None sure but Atheists or Fatalists, who suppose both Prophecies, and Completions of them, to be the Work of blind Chance or Destiny, can consistently maintain, that St. *Matthew* has falsely applied the Prediction in the Text to the Nativity of the blessed Jesus.

In a Word therefore, whether we can or cannot make out the Pertinence of the Sign given to the House of *David*, in the Words of *Isaiab* now before us, thus understood, to the Occasion upon which it was given, viz. the Confederacy of the two Kings of *Syria* and *Israel*, against the reigning Family in *Judab*; St. *Matthew's* Interpretation of it, as built upon the Truth and Goodness of God, as well as the natural Congruity of it, must stand impregnable against all but Atheists.

However, the learned Advocates for Christianity have offered a plausible Rationale of this Matter ; and the Exceptions taken to it by the Writers for Infidelity, when fairly considered, will be found to labour under the Charge either of Falshood or Impertinence, or both.

A learned Prelate of our own has defended St. *Matthew's* Application of the Text, on Supposition of its being a typical, or a single literal Prediction of the Birth of Jesus.

In the former Case, he supposes this miraculous Nativity to have been foretold in the Person of *Isaiab's* Son by the Prophets, and in this Supposition he affirms there is nothing incongruous or unnatural, but that it may nevertheless, with Certainty, be applied to Christ ; because literally, and in the Amplitude of the Expressed, it was fulfilled in him only ; whereas in the Type, the Words were figuratively and incompletely verified.

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In the latter Case, and taking the Words of *Isaiab* in the Text to relate solely to Messias, he supposes the Prophecy concerning him, to end with the Verse after the Text, and that the 16th Verse begins a new Promise or Prophecy, in which neither Messias, nor the Son of *Isaiab* by the Prophetess, then unborn, was concerned, but his eldest Son by her, *Shear Jashub*, who was then with him at his Meeting with *Abaz* by God's Appointment; he supposes that, pointing to this *Shear Jashub*, he pronounced the Words of the 16th Verse. *For before the Child, meaning the Child then in his Hand, shall know to refuse the Evil and chuse the Good, the Land that thou abborrest shall be forsaken of both her Kings.* Here therefore, according to our Author, were two Promises of Security; First, to the House of *David* in general, by the Assurance that God's Covenant with that Patriarch, should certainly be fulfilled by the wonderful Birth of him who was to sit upon his Throne: And Secondly, of a personal Deliverance to *Abaz*,
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from the Invasion wherewith he was threatened, the Cause of which should be removed, by the Death of the Invaders, before *Shear Jafhub* should be of Age to distinguish Good from Evil.

Against this Hypothesis, what is it that the Enemies of Christianity have to offer, that has any Appearance of Serioufness or Importance? For with the Cavils and Sneers of those Scorers, it will not be expected I should meddle.

Why, first, we are told, that the present Fears of *Abaz*, upon the Invasion of the two Kings, was the Occasion of the Sign given by the Prophet; and that in this View, the immediate Conception of a Male Child seems as proper a Sign to *Abaz*, as the Conception of a Male Child eight hundred Years after was improper.

But to this it may be answered, that the Time of Messiah's Birth and Advent, does not appear to have been known when the Prophecy of the Text was given out, it never having been revealed to any pre-
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S E R M O N I. I I

cise Degree, till the Days of *Daniel*; and of this the Writer, to whom I am now replying, was told by his Antagonist before he made this Objection: So that the miraculous Conception of Messiah might, for aught *Abaz* knew, be near enough to be no improper Sign of Delivery from the Terrors then in his View. But supposing it to be otherwise, does not the Hypothesis I defend provide against this Inconvenience, by making *Shear Jashub*, who was then born, and also present, a Sign of Security to *Abaz*, against the Confederacy which then threatened both him and his Family? Besides, there is a greater Likelihood, that *Shear Jashub* was the Sign of immediate Deliverance, because, otherwise it will scarce be possible to assign a Cause, why *Isaiab* was commanded by God to take that Child with him to this Interview with *Abaz*. Some Design there was certainly in that Appointment, and what so likely a one, as that he might be a Sign of Security to the House of *David* from their present Apprehensions.

It must not be concealed, that our Adversary affirms, that tho' *Shear Jashub* accom-

panied his Father by the exprefs Command of God on his first Application to *Abaz*, yet no fuch Command accompanied this fecond Application, of which we are treating; nor is it intimated, that *Shear Jafhub* did then accompany his Father, and confequently there is no Pretence for breaking the Prophecy into two, and for making *Ifaiab* point to *Shear Jafhub* as a Party to the Promise in the 16th Verfe.

But here we altogether deny, that two diftinct Applications to *Abaz* are fpoken of in the Chapter of the Text, the fecond taking Place at the 10th Verfe; and confequently *Shear Jafhub* accompanied his Father when he uttered the Words in the 16th Verfe, and might be pointed to as the Child then fpoken of. For it would be very abrupt, and little lefs than abfurd, to make the fecond Application of *Ifaiab* to *Abaz*, begin as the 10th Verfe does, with Offers of a Sign, in Confirmation of what had been foretold at a former Interview, unlefs he had repeated the Prediction, which is not pretended to have been done. Befides, the Foundation upon which
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our Adversary builds his Hypothesis of two Applications, made at different Times to *Abab* in the Chapter of the Text, will by no Means support it: For it resolves, at last, into no more than the equivocal Expression of our *English* Bible, in the 10th Verse, which runs thus; *Moreover, the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying.* But will this warrant any one to affirm, that this was a Message delivered to *Abaz*, at a distinct Time from that which preceded it? No surely. If the Writer in question had looked into the Margin of his Bible, he would have found another, and a more literal Rendering, *viz.* *And the Lord added to speak unto Ahab;* which surely is not only consistent with its being a Continuation of the same Discourse, but supposes it to be such. If this had seemed too servile for the Text, the Translators might have used the Turn they give to the very same Words in the Original, *Deut. Chap. xx. Ver. 8.* and have expressed it thus; *And the Lord spake further unto Ahab, saying.* Nay, I see not what Ground there would have been for blaming them, if they had put it, and the Lord *continued* or *proceeded*

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ed to speak unto *Abaz*, saying; any more than we do their Rendering in the 29th and 36th Chapters of *Job*, the former of which they make to begin thus; *Moreover Job continued his Parable, and said*; and the latter, *Eliku also proceeded and said*: Tho' in both these Passages, as in the 10th Verse of the Chapter of the Text, the Letter of the *Hebrew* is, *added to take his Parable, and added to say*. Upon the Whole then, we find that the 10th Verse was not the Beginning of a new Application to *Abaz*, but a Continuation of what went before, and delivered at one and the same Time with it: And that the Mistake of our Adversary, if it was not wilful, was chargeable upon his Ignorance or Inattention. So that *Shear Jashub*, who accompanied his Father throughout his Interview with *Abaz*, was with him when he delivered what we read in the 16th Verse, and therefore might be there pointed to according to the Hypothesis I am defending.

It is urged again, from the same Quarter, that *Isaiab* could not point to *Shear Jashub*

Jashub and say, *Before he*, viz. *Shear Jashub*, should know to refuse the Evil and choose the Good, the Land should be forsaken of both her Kings; because *Shear Jashub* was at that Time of Age to make such Distinction, and probably of Years of Discretion.

But what Authority can be produced, to prove this adult Age of *Shear Jashub*, at the Time the Prediction of the Text was given? All that appears, is the advanced Age of the Prophet, which indeed will evince, that he might have a Son then at Years of Discretion, but not that he certainly and actually had such a Son. All his elder Children might be dead, and *Shear Jashub*, who alone was left to him, might be then an Infant in Arms, or just on his Feet, and able to walk in his Father's Hand. And that this was really the Case, we have some Reason to conclude from his Name, which, according to the Lxx and *Jerom*, was only *Jashub Shear*, they both agreed in rendering participially: And where our *English Bible*, in the third
Verse

Verse of the Chapter of the Text, makes God say to *Isaiab*, *Go forth now to meet Ahab, thou, and Shear Jashub thy Son*; those ancient Interpreters make him say, thou, and *Jashub* thy Son, that is left to thee. Another, and a considerable Advantage arising to us from this Interpretation is, that admitting it to be true, *Jashub* was never a Sign unto the *Jews*, if we exclude him from being such in the 16th Verse of the Chapter of the Text. But *Isaiab* himself, in the following Chapter, at the 18th Verse, assures us, *that he, and the Children whom the Lord hath given him, are for Signs, and for Wonders in Israel*. Now we know, that his younger Son *Maber-Sbalal-Hashbaz*, is spoken of as a Sign in the 4th Verse of this Chapter: But where to find *Jashub* a Sign or a Wonder in *Israel*, if he was not pointed out for such in the 16th Verse of the 7th Chapter, I see not. *Grotius*, indeed, makes him to be a Sign by Virtue of his prophetick Name, which, with our *English*, and most other Interpreters, he will have to be at large *Shear Jashub*; which being, by Interpretation, the

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S E R M O N I. 17

Remnant shall return, is supposed to have presignified the Return of those *Jews*, which the Kings of *Syria* and *Israel* had carried away Captives, in an Invasion they separately made upon *Judea* two or three Years before, which accordingly happened soon after. But by this Account, the Birth of *Shear Jashub* must have fallen out during, or else immediately after, that Invasion, and consequently he was but in the second or third Year of his Age, when he accompanied his Father to go and meet *Abaz*, and to deliver the Prophecy of the Text. On either Supposition, therefore, our present Point is secure, that *Shear Jashub* was then far from being at Years of Discretion, and consequently might be the Person meant or pointed to in the 16th Verse, *before whose knowing to refuse the Evil and chuse the Good, the Land would be forsaken of both her Kings.*

Another Objection against the Completion of the Prophecy of the Text in the Birth of Jesus, as we find it applied by *St. Matthew*, is, that the Virgin *Mary*, his

Mother, does not appear to have been of the Line of *David*, but rather of some Line in the Tribe of *Levi*; and that Jesus could not be of the Line of *David*, as descended from her, seems plain, since *St. Matthew* makes him to be of the Line of *David*, only on Account of *Joseph*, who was not his Father, and at the Time of Jesus's Birth, only betrothed to the Virgin *Mary* (which should seem an extraordinary Method of proceeding in *St. Matthew*, if Jesus had been of the Line of *David* by *Mary*) and since the *Jews* never reckoned Families by Females.

Here our Adversary condescends to reason against a Fact attested to by Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles, who lived in the very Age of it, and all agree, that Jesus was the Son, the Seed of *David*, and the Fruit of his Loins. His Proofs are old, and impertinent Cavils, which have been frequently detected and answered. The learned *Grotius* in particular, to whose Writings our Man was no Stranger, has shewn that *Mary's* Kindred with

Elizabeth, who was one of the Daughters of *Aaron*, does not prove her (*i. e.*) *Mary*) to have been of that Family; seeing that this Consanguinity was probably owing to *Mary's* Father, or Grandfather's having married a Levitical Virgin. He has also accounted for *Mary's* Pedigree not being deduced from *David*, but rather *Joseph's*; by shewing that Heiresses, according to the Levitical Law, were obliged to marry to their nearest Kindred by their Father. This, therefore, being the Case of the blessed Virgin, her's and *Joseph's* Pedigree must have been one and the same; so that the Proof of *Joseph's* Descent from *David*, included likewise that of *Mary's* Descent from him. His last Pretence, that *Jesus* could not be of the Line of *David*, as descended from *Mary*, because the *Jews* never reckoned Families by Females, is a mere Equivocation. For the Birth of *Jesus*, without a human Father, was a singular Case, in which his immediate Descent must take its first Rise from a Female; and tho' such a Reckoning may be against the ordinary Rules of *Jew-*

if Genealogy, it is agreeable to Nature ; and therefore Jesus was undoubtedly of the Line of *David*, because his Mother was so.

The last material Objection urged against *St. Matthew's* Application of the Prophecy in the Text is, that the Term in *Hebrew* translated a Virgin, has not that precise Meaning, but signifies only in general a young Woman.

But what Proof, what Authority does he produce for the general Signification of the *Hebrew* Word *Alemah* ? Does he find, that it ever signifies a young Woman, who was not a Virgin, in all the *Hebrew* Scriptures ? No : For there, in seven Passages, which are all in which it occurs, it constantly signifies a Virgin. Does he give us the Authority of early Interpreters, who, living before Christ, might be supposed void of all Prejudices for or against the Cause of the Gospel ? No ; this was impossible : Because the *Seventy*, as they are called, or the oldest *Greek* Translators, who lived

three hundred Years before Christ, and are the only disinterested Judges in the present Case, render the *Hebrew Alemab* by *Virgin*, just as all *Christian* Interpreters do. In short, therefore, we have only this Infidel Writer's Word for the Assertion, that *Alemab* signifies only in general a young Woman, whether she be a Virgin or not. He knew that *Aquila*, *Symmachus*, and *Theodotion*, had given the same lax Turn to that Word, but was ashamed to produce such Vouchers; because they were *Jews* or Jewishly inclined, who translated the *Hebrew* Scriptures after Christ, and merely to serve the Purposes of a Party.

Thus it appears, after all the iniquitous Pains taken by the Enemies of our holy Faith to deprive us of the Evidence for it, from the illustrious Completion of the Prophecy before us, in the Birth of Jesus our Lord, that it was truly and strictly fulfilled by that Event. For *Mary* was the only Virgin Mother recorded in all the Annals of Time, since the giving forth of that

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Prophecy, and her blessed Son, the only Male Child in all that Period, who could justly claim the Title of *Immanuel*, or God, with us.

Of the Strength and Pertinency of this Prediction, none seem more sensible than our Adversaries themselves. And, I think, they virtually confess as much, by the strenuous Endeavours of late used by them to prove the spuriousness of the two first Chapters in the present Gospel of *St. Matthew*. And tho' their chief Spite is at the former of these two, because therein is applied the formidable Prophecy of the Text, and the History of *Mary's* Virgin Pregnancy is there set down, yet they are forced to extend their Censure to the second Chapter also; because their chief Evidence is, that both were wanting in the Gospel of the *E-bionites*, which they give out was the original *Hebrew* of *St. Matthew*. If this had not been the Case, the second Chapter of *St. Matthew* would certainly have escaped their Censure; because it contains two Prophecies, which they have made much Use of,

S E R M O N I. 23

of, in order to depreciate the Evidence for Christianity from that Topick. That same Chapter also contains the History of *Herod's* Murder of the *Betlehemite* Infants; on which they descant with great Airs of Confidence, as a false Fact, utterly unsupported by all concurrent Historians: So that their Willingness to give up this second Chapter, tho' with the Loss of so many Handles for Cavil, is to be resolved into no other Motive than this, that they cannot otherwise have a Pretence for expunging the first Chapter: And the first Chapter, tho' the Genealogy set down in it is very opportune for their Purpose, of playing one Gospel against another, becomes insupportable to them; because the Evangelist therein applies a Prophecy, as fulfilled in the Birth of our Lord, which their utmost Skill and Malice is not, blessed be God for it, able to defeat.

S E R M O N II.

M I C A H v. 2.

But thou, Bethlehem^a Ephrata, though thou be little among the Thousands of Juda, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler of Israel : Whose goings forth have been of Old, from Everlasting.

THIS Prophecy is not applied expressly to the Birth of Christ, by Jesus himself, nor by any of the New Testament Writers : But, as St. *Matthew* relates, it was so applied by the Chief Priests and Scribes of the People, in their Answer to *Herod's* Question, who convened them, demanding to know, where Christ should

26 S E R M O N I I.

should be born. The Evangelist tell us of no Difference in the Opinions of the *Sanbedrim*, upon the Question put to them, but seems to make them answer unanimously, *In Bethlehem of Judea*: For thus it is written by the Prophet. *And thou Bethlehem, in the Land of Judah, art not the least among the Princes of Judah: For out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my People Israel.* As therefore the sacred Writers have neither expressly cited, nor urged this Prophecy in Favour of Jesus: So it should seem not greatly to concern the Merits of the Christian Cause, whether the *Jewish Sanbedrim* made a pertinent Application of the Prophecy in the Text to the Birth of Messias, or not. For admitting them to have made a wrong Judgment in this Case, *St. Matthew* is not necessarily concerned in this Affair, further than as a Relator of the Fact. The Unbelievers therefore, on no Supposition whatever, have any Right to say of the Prophecy before us, as they do of some others, that it is weakly alledged from the Old Testament in the Writings of the New, to support the Pretensions of
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S E R M O N II. 27

Jesus to the Messiahship. However, as St. *Matthew* relates, the Application of this Prophecy to the Place of Christ's Nativity, without the least Intimation that the Chief Priests and Scribes of the People erred in that Point; and as some Exceptions have been made to the Pertinency of the Allegation in the Text, tho' the Event has most exactly and wonderfully answered thereto; I have thought it by no Means foreign to the Scheme I have hitherto pursued in these Lectures, to defend the Propriety of this Prediction, and to shew its Importance to the Christian Cause, against the unjust Exceptions of the unbelieving Writer, so oft spoken of in the Course of the Argument before us. And this in the following Method.

First, I shall shew, that Messiah's native Place is a Subject better suited to the Letter of this Prediction, than any other that has been assigned.

Secondly, That the Birth of Jesus our Lord, in the very Place foretold by *Micah*,
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happening against all Likelihood, and by the special Interposition of Providence, could only be intended to fulfill this Prophecy, and therefore strongly attests the Truth of Jesus being the Christ.

Thirdly, I shall answer the Objections that have been raised against either the Application of this Prediction, or its Serviceableness to the Cause of Christianity.

First then, I am to shew, that Messiah's native Place is a Subject better suited to the Letter of the Prophecy, now under Consideration, than any other that has been assigned.

Two Things are evidently foretold concerning the Ruler of *Israel*, who is the Subject of the Prophecy in the Text. *1st*. That he was to be born at *Bethlehem Ephrata*: And *2dly*. That his Birth was to do signal Honour to that City. As to the former of these, it is the natural and obvious Meaning of the Expression, that he should come out of *Bethlehem Ephrata*.
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S E R M O N II. 29

But what Ruler of *Israel* was born there after the giving out of this Prophecy, except Jesus our Lord, who, tho' his Kingdom was not of this World, was, in a spiritual Sense, the King and Saviour of *Israel* ?

Secondly, *Micah* predicts concerning this Ruler of *Israel*, that he should do signal Honour to *Bethlehem Ephrata*, his native Place. Why else is the Promise introduced with saying, *Though thou be little among the Thousands of Judah* ; but to intimate, that extraordinary Honour was thereby conferred on the Place. Whereas, there had been nothing uncommon, if a Place of no Note in itself should produce a Ruler, who had nothing in him that was extraordinary. But if the Prophet meant to foretell, that the Birth of this Ruler at *Bethlehem* should greatly distinguish it among the Thousands of *Judah*, and make it thenceforward not to be esteemed an obscure City, as the original Words will very well admit, and as the Chief Priests and Scribes in *St. Matthew's Gospel* represent the

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the Sense of the Prophecy; surely he must be a Ruler of an extraordinary Character, whose Nativity was to ennoble a small and inconsiderable Place, and set it high in the Rank of *Jewish* Cities. This was in Effect to say, that *that new Native of Bethlehem Ephrata* should prove so considerable a Ruler of *Israel*, as to do remarkable Honour to the Place of his Birth. And indeed he had need be a Ruler of uncommon Merit and Dignity, who was to be capable of doing any additional Honour of this Sort to what had been already done to *Bethlehem*, by its having given Birth to *David*. This was already the prime Glory and Distinction of that little City, that it gave a Beginning to the Royal House of *Judah*; and what must he be, the Splendor of whose Birth was to Outshine and Eclipse that of *David*, and give *Bethlehem* an Advantage beyond what it had ever received before? In vain shall we look for this considerable Person in the Annals of the *Jewish* History, unless we fix on our Saviour Christ, the Son of *David*, whom *David* himself acknowledged for his Superior, by calling
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S E R M O N II. 31

him Lord in the Spirit of Prophecy, His goings forth were literally from Everlasting, and he was the Glory, not of *Bethlehem* only, but of his entire People *Israel*. Indeed the Description of the Ruler in my Text is so full of Magnificence, and is so disproportionate to any Ruler besides him, that it was no Wonder the Scribes of our Saviour's Days should so unanimously explain it of Messiah, and thence deliver it as their confirmed Judgment to *Herod* the King, that he was to be born at *Bethlehem* in *Judea*. Not that we build the Certainty of their Opinion upon this Point, on the single Authority of *St. Matthew's* Gospel. The *Chaldee* Paraphrases, made but little later than the Birth of our Saviour, bear ample Testimony, that the Judgment of the *Jewish* Church in those Days accorded with this Interpretation: For He on the Prophets explains the Ruler, who was to come forth out of *Bethlehem*, of the Messiah. Nay, as is truly observed by a learned Prelate of our Church, the Paraphrast was so full of this Notion, that *Bethlehem* seldom comes in his Way, but he hath some Observation
upon

upon it concerning the Messias. And tho' the *Jews*, for many Ages last past, have been irresolute upon this Article, plainly because they have but little Hope, that the Messiah they expect will be born at *Bethlehem*, yet in one of their Prayers this ancient traditionary Notion yet subsists. For therein they call Messias *Ben Jesse*, the *Bethlehemite*.

Thus we see how well this Prophecy suits with the Event to which it is applied in the Gospel of *St. Matthew*, *viz.* Messias's Birth at *Bethlehem*; and consequently that there is no Weakness or Absurdity in the Allegation. But can the like be said of any other Event, to which that Prophecy has been thought to have Relation? By no Means. For *Zorobabel* (whom, out of his Fondness for secondary Senses of Prophecy, *Grotius* supposes to have been the primary Intention of that in the Text) did not come out of *Bethlehem*, in the usual Scripture Meaning of that Phrase; he was not born there, but at *Babylon*, as his Name imports: Nor had he any Relation to the
Place,

Place, except that distant one, of being a very remote Descendent from *David*, who was born in that City near 500 Years before. He might, indeed, on this Account, be called the Son of *David*, but could never be predicted, as coming out of the Town of *Bethlehem*, where *David* was. Again, He, of whom *Micah* speaks, was to be a Ruler of *Israel*, which *Zorobabel* never was, who had not either the Power, or the Name of Ruler. He was no more than one of the Heads of the Captivity, being indeed first named out of Regard to his Royal Descent, but is never named singly in any Act of Jurisdiction: Nor do we hear any Thing more of him, save that he laid the Foundation-Stone of the second Temple, which for that Reason has frequently gone by his Name.

Further, the Ruler of *Israel*, foretold in the Text, is spoken of in other Terms, that are by much too high and magnificent for *Zorobabel*. His goings forth are declared by the Prophet to have been from Everlasting. How frigid is the Expositi-

tion given of these strong Words by *Grotius*, viz. that he was descended from a Family, which had swayed the Sceptre of *Judab* for many hundred Years: For Antiquity of Descent, without the Circumstance of Splendor, is the only thing meant by the Words we are speaking of. And yet if we exclude the Notion of Royalty, there was nothing peculiar to *Zorobabel's* Descent that would distinguish him above others, as one whose goings forth were from Everlasting. The Genealogies of Families among the *Jews* were so exactly and faithfully preserved in the Days of *Zorobabel*, that every one could, as well as he, trace his Pedigree, not only as high as *David's* Days, but even to those of *Abraham*. Earthly Pedigree, therefore, being an Advantage, which was shared equally by all *Jews*, could be no special Note of him that was to come forth a Ruler of *Israel*; but a divine, an everlasting Original, was the Thing meant; which no Ways suits with *Zorobabel*, nor any other Descendent from *David*, but Christ our Lord, who, in his
 other

other Nature, was in the Beginning with God, and was God.

Lastly, How unfuitable to the general Scope of this Prophecy is it to suppose, that *Zorobabel* was any Part of its Intention. For the great Design of it evidently was to predict something that should greatly redound to the Honour of *Bethlehem Ephrata*; something that should give it a greater Dignity, than any Thing which had ever befallen it from its first Foundation. But even supposing *Zorobabel* to have been born there, would that have been an Incident of this Sort? *Bethlehem* had for many Ages been distinguished for the native Place of *David*, the Founder of the Royal Line of *Judab*; and if it still needed some other happy Event to make it considerable among the Thousands of *Judab*, must it not in all Reason have been somewhat more illustrious, than the Birth of a remote Descendent of *David's*; one that was neither King nor Ruler, but only joined with others in conducting a miserable

Captivity to its former Settlement then in Ruins? On the other Hand, how apposite is it to conclude, that if aught was wanting to compleat the Glory of *Bethlehem*, as the Mother of great and extraordinary Persons, which had already produced one, who was a Man after God's own Heart, it should be the Birth of him, who was in the Bosom of the Father, who was the only begotten Son of God: One who was not only the Ruler of *Israel*, but who had likewise the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts of the Earth for his Possession. The Birth of such a one only could ennoble *Bethlehem*, and do for it more than *David*, with all his Power and Royalty, had done for his native Place before. But for *Zorobabel*, who was neither King of *Judah*, nor Native of *Bethlehem*, to suppose that, merely on Account of his Descent from *David*, he was capable of adding aught to the Splendor that City had acquired by giving Birth to so great a Prince, would be not only unreasonable, but also absurd. Thus I trust it now appears, that the Birth-place of Messias is a
Subject

S E R M O N II. 37

Subject which suits with the Letter of the Prophecy in the Text, better than any other that has been yet assigned. I therefore proceed to shew,

Secondly, That the Birth of Jesus our Lord, in the very Place foretold by *Micah*, coming to pass against all Likelihood, and happening, not thro' Choice, but of Necessity, seems evidently intended by Providence for the Completion of the Prophecy before us, and thereby to evince that Jesus was the Christ.

That Jesus was born at *Bethlehem*, is a Fact attested by two of the Evangelists, and not to be denied: And yet certain it is, that, in the ordinary Course of Things, this was not likely to have happened. For till within a short Time before *Mary* his Mother was delivered of him, her Residence was at *Nazareth*, a City of *Galilee*, and at a great Distance from *Bethlehem*. If therefore she had followed the Inclinations of Nature, or of Prudence, she would have stayed, and been delivered at home, rather

than travel to fo remote a Place as *Bethlehem*, to the Hazard of her Health, to her own Uneafinefs, and at an Expence which ſhe and *Joſeph*, her eſpouſed Husband, were ill able to ſupport. And had ſhe, notwithstanding all theſe Reaſons to the contrary, choſe to lay her Burden at *Bethlehem*, it might have been ſaid her View was, that in Caſe ſhe was delivered of a Son, he might claim to be acknowledged for the Chriſt, in Virtue of *Micah's* Prophecy. But ſuch a Completion as this would have been but a weak Support to ſuch a Claim: Becauſe it would have been in the Power of many to qualify their Males for entering their Pretenſions in the ſame Manner. And thoſe, whoſe Birth at *Bethlehem* happened in the ordinary Courſe of Things, would have had a better Title to be conſidered, as ſpoken of by *Micah*, than Jeſus, if his Nativity there had been ſtudiouſly brought about, and againſt all the Rules of Prudence and Convenience. But this was by no Means the Caſe: For, by the ſpecial Appointment of God, an unforeſeen Incident laid the Mother of Jeſus, under

S E R M O N II. 39

under a Necessity of travelling to *Bethlehem*, at so unseasonable a Time, and of bringing forth a Son there. At this very Juncture comes out a Decree from *Cesar Augustus*, that all the World should be taxed, or rather enrolled, in order to a future Taxation: And all went to be taxed every one into his own City. And *Joseph* also went up from *Galilee* out of the City of *Nazareth* into *Judea*, unto the City of *David*, which is called *Bethlehem*, because he was of the House and Lineage of *David*, to be taxed with *Mary* his espoused Wife, being great with Child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the Days were accomplished that she should be delivered: And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped him in Swadling-Clothes, and laid him in a Manger, because there was no Room for them in the Inn. He must be blind who cannot see the Traces of an extraordinary Providence in this Affair: For nothing but evident Compulsion could have justified the blessed Virgin's going to *Bethlehem* so out of Time as this was. To clear her from all Suspicion of Design, the

40 S E R M O N II.

Cause of her Journey must have been something that was neither of her own seeking, nor within her Power to prevent: And just such an Occasion as this offered itself, to wit, the Decree of *Cæsar Augustus*. A Decree the more remarkable, because it was the first of the Kind that had ever been issued out with Relation to *Judea*, which had then not long been Tributary to the *Romans*. And thus it was, the Mother of Jesus became undesignedly accessary to the fullfilling of *Micah's* Prophecy in the Birth of her Son at *Betlehem*, the Wisdom of God having contrived the only conceivable Means of bringing it about contrary to her Intention, that so the Event might appear to be no human Device, but the Counsel of Heaven; and the Prophecy of the Text being completed in so extraordinary a Manner, might be a more effectual Proof that Jesus was the Christ, which was the second Point I proposed to speak to. I go on therefore,

Thirdly, and Lastly, To answer such Objections as have been offered against Un-

S E R M O N II. 41

derstanding the Prophecy in the Text of
Messias, or the Completion of it in the
Person of Jesus our Lord.

As to the former of these, that Messias
is predicted in the Text, the Thing is so
very clear, that the Writer, who undertook
to answer the Argument for Christianity
from Prophecy, has in a Manner given up
the Point. The latter, *viz.* the Applica-
tion of *Micah's* Words to Jesus the Savi-
our, he does oppose, pretending that it is
in the fullest Manner confuted by the Con-
text, which describes the Ruler in Terms
perfectly inconsistent with the Character of
Jesus: Particularly when it says. *He shall
be the Peace, when the Assyrians shall come
into our Land: And when he shall tread in
our Palaces, then shall we raise against him
seven Shepherds, and eight principal Men.
And they shall waste the Land of Assyria
with the Sword, and the Land of Nimrod
with the Entrances thereof: Thus shall he
deliver us from the Assyrian, when he
cometh into our Land, and when he tread-
eth within our Borders.* Which Words,
adds

42 S E R M O N I I.

adds the Writer aforesaid, are so plain, as not to need the least Comment to shew them to be inapplicable to the peaceable Times and to the Person of Jesus.

In answer to all which, it will suffice to reply, by granting that, in the literal Acceptation, these Words are not applicable to the Person of Jesus, and yet insisting that there is a Sense, in which he compleated all that is here promised. For the State of Christianity, in the prophetick Writings, is frequently spoken of under *Jewish* Images; and, in Consequence of this Method, the spiritual Enemies of Christians are denoted under the Names of the known Adversaries to the *Jewish* People. And as the *Assyrians* were the capital Foes to *Judah*; so it is no Wonder that all the Enemies of the Christian Name should here be called by their Name, or that the Conquests of our Lord, over the Adversaries of our Church, should be prefignified by his delivering them from the *Assyrian*. To this Solution the Objector would probably reply as he does on another similar Occasion, by asking

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ing, how that can be a literal Prophecy, wherein the *Assyrians*, the known common Invaders of the *Jews*, are mentioned by Name, and not meant, but other Invaders meant under their Name. And yet he himself, at another Time, calls such a Suggestion playing upon Words. “ For, says he, the literal Sense, in the present Controversy, signifies the Sense intended by the Writer, the primary Sense, in Opposition to a typical, or allegorical, or secondary Sense; which literal Sense may be signified as well and as obviously by a figurative, as by the most simple and literal Expression.” He must therefore give us leave to apply this Reasoning to the present Occasion, and to tell him in his own Words, that the Sense we put upon the Prophecy in the Text, may be the literal Sense, because it is the primary Sense, tho’ signified by a figurative Expression.

Against the Prophecy of *Micah* being understood of Messias, it is further objected, that since Jesus’s Time it has been deemed among the *Jews* a Matter of no
Conse-

Consequence where the Messias was born, since they have set up many Messias's, who they knew were not born at *Bethlehem*. But which ought we most to regard, the ancient and most authentick Interpretations of the learned *Jews*, or the Actions of a mad and desperate Populacy, deprived of their Country, and banished thence, and consequently out of all Hopes of a Messias, who should be born in the Place foretold by the Prophet *Micah* ?

Lastly, The Application of the Prophecy in the Text to Messias's native Place is found Fault with, because some *Jews* deny the Truth of *Herod's* sending to know of the Chief Priests, where the Messias was to be born, and of the Answer made by them to him, saying, that Jesus was not born in *Herod's* Time, but in *Cyrenius's* Time, eleven Years after the Death of *Herod*. But how came these Men to know that Jesus was born in *Cyrenius's* Time ? Did they not plainly learn that from *St. Luke's* Gospel ? And does not the same *St. Luke* nevertheless inform us, that Jesus was
born

S E R M O N II. 45

born in the Days of *Herod* the King of *Ju-
dea*? If therefore these Facts are inconsi-
sistent, no Assertion from such an Historian,
that contradicts any other Writer of Cre-
dit, ought to have any Weight with us:
Nor ought any one to think the worse of
St. Matthew for his Relation concerning
Herod's consulting the Chief Priests at the
Time of *Jesus's* Birth, because another Hi-
storian, of no Consideration, makes *Jesus*
to have been born eleven Years after the
Death of *Herod*. In short, *St. Matthew* is
every Way consistent with himself, who
relates the Application objected to: And if
St. Luke affirms what is incompatible there-
with, and in so doing contradicts himself,
as well as his Brother Evangelist, must *St.*
Matthew suffer for the Faults of *St. Luke*?
How partial is this, first to make *St. Luke*
contradict himself, and then to make use of
him as an Authority against *St. Matthew*,
whose Account is consistent throughout.
This I say on a Supposition, that *St. Luke*,
when he affirms, that our Saviour was born
when *Cyrenius* was Governor of *Syria*, had
really contradicted both himself and *St.*
Matthew.

Matthew. But learned Christians have thoroughly reconciled every seeming Difficulty in this Subject, and shewn, that Jesus might be born while *Cyrenius* had Power in *Syria*, and yet be born in the Days of *Herod* the King : So that *St. Luke* in affirming these two Facts is perfectly of a Piece with himself, and his Brother Evangelist. And consequently the Objection before us, which is built on the Truth of the contrary Supposition, has no Foundation.

And now upon the whole we find, that if *St. Matthew*, besides relating the Application made by the Chief Priests and Scribes of the Prophecy in the Text to the Birth-place of Messiah, had argued from its Completion in the Nativity of Jesus, for his being the true Christ, Logick and good Sense would have bore him out in so doing. Neither *Jews* nor *Gentiles*, in such a Case, could have taxed him with supporting his Master's Claim to the Messiahship, by a weak and impertinent Allegation from the Old Testament. For tho' there was nothing glaring or miraculous in the general View
of

S E R M O N II. 47

of a Person's being born at *Betlehem*, yet the Providence, to which the Birth of Jesus in that Place is to be ascribed, was so singular, as might raise a just Expectation of something extraordinary to be produced thereby. When therefore he set up to be acknowledged as Messiah, it was a Particular worthy to be insisted on, that without, and even contrary to all Design or Likelihood, he was providentially born, where the Prophet *Micah*, as explained by the best *Jewish* Interpreters, had foretold Messiah should come forth. For which, and other eminent Completions of Prophecies, that confirm our Faith in Christ our Lord, to him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, &c.

S E R M O N III.

J O H N iv. 48.

Then said Jesus unto him, except ye see Signs and Wonders, ye will not believe !

IN many former Lectures, I have considered the most eminent of the Prophecies in the Old Testament, which are applied to Christ by himself and the Writers of the New ; and have shewn, that there is nothing, to say the least of this Matter, absurd, weak, or even improbable in such Applications : But that they are always plausible, and often unanswerable, especially by *Jews*, to whom alone such Proofs are addressed by Jesus, and the inspired Authors of the New Testa-

50 S E R M O N III.

ment Scriptures. The Consequence of which is, that the other Proof from Miracles is thereby discharged of every Incapacity laid upon it, by the unbelieving Writer against Christianity, with whom I am principally concerned. For, since the Old Testament, so far as the New is founded thereon, appears to be no invalid Foundation; since the Inferences made from thence, by inspired Writers, are not false; since the Prophecies of the Old Testament, said by them to have been fulfilled, have been accordingly fulfilled; since a *Messias* has been expressly marked out by the Prophets of the Old Testament, and the Events of Jesus have corresponded with all the Characters, by which *Messias* is there distinguished; Miracles may still avail the Christian Cause, and be an unanswerable Argument to all but Atheists, for the divine Mission of Jesus to be the Saviour of the World. We want them not, therefore, to reconcile Contradictions, in as much as no such Thing appears in the Proof for Christianity from Prophecy, as it stands in the New Testament, but only to remove Doubts,
and

S E R M O N III. 51

and to get the better of Prejudices. For, admitting the Applications, made by Christ and his Apostles from the Old Testament, not to have been always clear and obvious; yet, so long as they were not apparently weak or false, the *Jews* were without Excuse for not being convinced by them: For it is a Maxim, little less than self-evident, that divinely inspired Books are best understood, and best explained, by divinely inspired Interpreters: But that Christ and his Apostles were of this Sort, was evident to every one they conversed withal, from the many and wonderful Miracles done by them. The bare Affirmation therefore of such Persons, in Favour of Christianity from the Old Testament, if not obviously shocking or absurd, without strict Reasoning, or logical Illation, ought to have been believed by the *Jews* of those Days, and of our own also; and whatever different traditionary Interpretations they might before have entertained, they should thenceforward have utterly rejected them, if they contradicted the Senses of the Prophets declared, by such as gave undoubted Evi-

dence, that they were Prophets themselves.

These plain and strong Suggestions had been urged by the learned Defenders of Christianity, against a former Attempt of my present Adversary: But he, instead of a direct Answer, amuses us with a wrong State of the Importance of Prophecy to the Truth of Christianity, which, when rightly understood, no one denies, and with a Series of Propositions, all which are either false or impertinent, or both.

With amazing Confidence he begins thus. “ Had Jesus Christ come into the
 “ World, as a Person sent with a Revela-
 “ tion from God of a new Religion; and
 “ had he performed Miracles as the Cre-
 “ dentials of his Mission, he would have
 “ had a Right to be attended to, and tried
 “ upon that Foot.” As if this was not the very State of the Case: For did he ever make any open, express, and avowed Claim before the unbelieving *Jews*, to be any Thing but a Person sent with a Revelation
 of

S E R M O N III. 53

of a new Religion from God ; and did he not directly urge Miracles, as the Credentials of his Mission, for that Purpose: And has he not therefore a Right to be tried, upon this Writer's own Principles, on that Foot? No, says he, for he claims to be the Son of God, or Messias of the *Jews*, foretold by the Prophets, and therefore it is requisite that Claim should be made out. Now, supposing this to be true, Does not he, who makes out that he is a Person sent from God to reveal a new Religion, at the same Time virtually prove whatever else he claims to be? For had Jesus abused his Commission, and, in Virtue of that, claimed to be somewhat more than he really was, it is incredible that God should continue the miraculous Credentials of a Mission so unworthily performed. He, therefore, that should try Jesus's Claim to be the Son of God, or the Messias of the *Jews*, foretold by the Prophets, entirely upon the Foot of Miracles, would act neither unreasonably nor unjustly ; would not take his Religion upon Trust, as is falsely suggested by our Adversary ; but proceed

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upon

54 S E R M O N III.

upon a Proof, which, tho' indirect, is sufficient. For, by this one Argument, the Messiahship of Jesus is made out to be morally certain, and one thousand Arguments would prove no more: By this Medium, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and indeed all Mankind, except Atheists, and the Followers of *Epicurus*, may arrive at a rational Belief in Jesus. Admitting therefore the Messiahship of Jesus to be the fundamental Article of the Christian Religion, there is no Necessity for that Point to be made out by a direct Appeal to the Old Testament; but it may, to all reasonable Intents and Purposes, be made out from the Miracles recorded in the Gospels. Herein we have likewise the concurrent Testimony of *St. John the Evangelist*, who, after having mentioned the Miracles wrought by Jesus after his Resurrection, tells us, that *he did many other Signs in the Presence of his Disciples, which are not written in his Gospel, and that those he had mentioned were written, that Men might believe Jesus to be the Christ the Son of God.* So that the Sufficiency of the Argument

S E R M O N III. 55

gument from Miracles to prove these Points, is not only the Voice of Reason, but also the Doctrine of the Gospel.

In vain then is it for our Adversary to urge the Claim to the Messiahship, as if it was necessarily to be tried and examined by the Old Testament, from the Nature of it. For the Nature of all Claims is so far one and the same, that they require no more than effectual Proof, and whosoever rejects this, under any Pretence whatever, is utterly unreasonable.

Nor is he more pertinent, when he puts us in Mind, that Jesus appeals to the Old Testament, and directs Men to search for him there; and that the Author of the Acts commends Men for searching the Old Testament, to see after the Things of Jesus; unless it follows from thence, that no other Proof, particularly not that of Miracles, was to be admitted of our Lord's Claim to be Messiah. But this is by no Means the Case: For, by recommending one Method of Proof, no one is ever un-

E 4 derstood

stood to supersede all Methods besides. And this would be a Construction more particularly absurd in the present Question; because, as our Lord is presumed sometimes to appeal to the Old Testament for the Truth of his Messiahship, so does he often, for the same Purpose, and in much stronger Terms, appeal to Miracles, desiring no Belief, if they were not sufficient to convince. From these Things, therefore, laid and considered together, it follows, that our Lord was of Opinion, that Prophecy and Miracles were either of them valid Proofs of the Claim he laid to the Messiahship; and consequently, that if we try it the latter Way only, we set up a Standard which is every Way competent, trying his Pretensions by a Method, to which he himself voluntarily submitted them.

Our Adversary, the Writer so oft mentioned, further observes, that the Prophecies of the Old Testament were urged in the New, not only as Tests to try the Messias Jesus by, but also as Proofs to per-

S E R M O N III. 57

suade, and to convince Men, that Jesus is the Messiah. All which we grant to be true, with one Limitation, that Prophecies were so urged to convince *Jews* only: For the New Testament does not afford a single Instance of a *Gentile*, to whom the Argument from Prophecy was used, in order to make him a Christian. From whence it should seem to follow, that this was not so absolute a Proof as our Man represents it. For then it would have been applied indiscriminately to *Gentiles*, as well as to *Jews*, which it plainly is not.

But this limited Application of Prophecy in the New Testament, tho' a Fact, and only to be contradicted by counter Evidence, is attempted to be disproved from Reason. In order to which we are told, " that, at this Rate, Prophecies in the
 " New Testament are mere Proofs *ad*
 " *Hominem* to the *Jews*; that if they are
 " only urged by the Apostles as Proofs to
 " the *Jews*, and intended only as Proofs
 " founded on the mistaken Meanings of
 " the Old Testament of some *Jews* of
 " their

58 S E R M O N III.

“ their Time ; what Sense is there in appealing upon all Occasions, and recommending the Reading and Search thereof, for the Trial and Proof of what was preached ? For that was to proceed on Weakness itself, knowing it to be so.”

But where did our Antagonist learn, that in relative Proofs, or Proofs *ad Hominem*, he who uses such Proofs, always and necessarily proceeds upon the mistaken Principles of those whom he would convince. That it is an utter Mistake I will make out by a plain Instance. The Advocates for Christianity, evidently consider Miracles as a Proof of their Religion, not absolute in itself, and therefore not applicable to all Sorts of Men, but relative only to such as own the Being and Attributes of God : So that Miracles, are in the Use and Application of them, Arguments *ad Hominem*, for the Truth of the Christian Religion : And yet every one knows, that the Defenders of Christianity believe the Being and Attributes of God, as firmly as Deists do ; and therefore argue not with them *ad Hominem*,

S E R M O N III. 59

minem, from any mistaken Principles of theirs, as our Adversary would persuade us is always done in relative Proofs: But such Proofs are sometimes built on real Truths, allowed to be such by both Sides in the Dispute. And particularly the Argument *ad Hominem* before us, that from Prophecy, is urged by the Apostles to *Jews* only; not because they mistook the Old Testament in certain Points favourable to the Christian Cause, (for the Apostles and they were agreed in the Meaning of most Prophecies, and differed only about the Application of them) but because the *Jews* believed the divine Authority of the Old Testament as well as they (the Apostles) did: Whereas the *Gentiles*, not acknowledging the inspired Character of those Books, nor perhaps so much as their just Antiquity, could not be so well convinced by the Prophecies therein contained.

Another Argument with our Adversary, for the Importance of Prophecy to the Conversion of *Gentiles*, superior to that of the Proof from Miracles, is, that Prophecies

60 S E R M O N I I I .

phesies are a more plain and convincing Evidence than Miracles : And for this he reasons as follows.

“ What, says he, can be more easy to
 “ know, and more plain and convincing,
 “ than a Prophecy fulfilled, in the Que-
 “ stion before us ; who can have such un-
 “ doubted Evidence of the Existence of
 “ the Books of the Old Testament [sup-
 “ posed to contain numerous Prophecies
 “ fulfilled in the New Testament] long
 “ before the Books of the New were writ-
 “ ten, and have therefore very little to
 “ do, but to compare the one with the
 “ other, the Prophecies in the Old with
 “ the Completions in the New ? They are
 “ perpetual and standing Miracles, and do
 “ not disappear, like other Miracles, on
 “ their Performance. And how much
 “ short of such plain miraculous Evidence,
 “ as are Prophecies, recorded before the
 “ Events foretold and fulfilled, must be
 “ any Reports of Miracles, whereof Men
 “ in all Ages and Countries have generally
 “ been the Inventors ?”

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S E R M O N III. 61

This Reasoning, if it were otherwise valid, would be quite foreign to the present Question, which is the superior Importance of the Evidence of Prophecy to that of Miracles, in the Times of the Apostles, and its being then as applicable to *Gentiles* as to *Jews*. For the Books of the New Testament were not then written, and therefore the Completions of the antient Prophecies in the Events of Jesus, were known to the *Gentiles* then only by Report, as well as the Miracles wrought by him. So that these two Evidences were then, with Respect to the *Gentiles*, exactly on the same Footing, and consequently were equally plain and convincing. And as for Miracles wrought by the Apostles, the *Gentiles* were often Eye-witnesses themselves to their Reality, and when this was not the Case, received the Truths of those Facts from the Testimony of their Fellow *Gentiles*. So that the Evidence of Miracles was to them plainer and more convincing than Prophecies. But the Distinction, upon which our Author here reasons, has no real Foundation. For we now believe
the

62 S E R M O N I I I .

the Evidence of Prophecy upon the Credit and Authority of the Gospel Writers, who relate those Facts whereby the Predictions of the Old Testament were fulfilled: And on this very Bottom we likewise believe the Fact of Miracles, *viz.* because we find them on Record in Books that are worthy of Belief. As therefore Prophecies are standing and perpetual, and do not disappear, because registered in authentick Books of publick Recourse; the same may be said for Miracles, which no more disappear on their Performance, as this Man falsely affirms, than the Completions of Prophecy do, but are both preserved in the same venerable Repositories *viz.* the inspired Writings of the New Testament: And consequently the Reasoning of our Adversary in the present Case, is built on a Distinction without a Difference: Inasmuch as both Prophecy and Miracles are standing and perpetual Evidences, or else neither of them are such. *Lastly,* As for what he says by Way of Disparagement to Miracles, that Men, in all Ages and Countries, have generally been the Inventors of them;

S E R M O N III. 63

them; the very same Objection will lye against Ptophecies: For Men have as frequently, and as generally invented Prophecies, as they have Reports of Miracles.

Of this Point, the superior Importance of Prophecies to the Proof of Christianity from Miracles, our Author is so confident, as to make Jesus himself declare for it. “ Jesus, says he, himself declares so far
 “ against Miracles, as to suppose Prophe-
 “ cies of more Weight, than Miracles
 “ wrought in our Presence, even than rais-
 “ ing a dead Person. If, says he, Men
 “ will not hear *Moses* and the Prophets,
 “ neither will they be persuaded, tho’ one
 “ rose from the Dead”.

But I deny that Jesus, in saying this, made Prophecies of more Weight than Miracles: At most he makes the Weight of the two Evidences to be but equal. For if he had argued *a fortiori*, as the Schools call it, he must have expressed himself thus. If Men will not hear *Moses* and the Prophets, much less will they

64 S E R M O N I I I .

be persuaded, tho' one rose from the Dead. But from the Saying of our Lord, as he uttered it, no other Consequence can fairly be drawn than this ; that he thought if one sufficient Argument would not persuade Men, neither would another of equal Sufficiency effect the Business. But after all, what were these Men to be persuaded of ; was it of the Truth of Christianity ; and is it of unbelieving Men in general that our Lord speaks ? Thus, doubtless, the Author intended that Readers should apprehend the Thing ; because, otherwise our Lord's Saying declares and supposes nothing of what he makes it declare and suppose. And yet he himself very well knew, that the Persons of whom our Lord spake, were not unbelieving Men in general, and that what they were to be persuaded to, was not the Belief of Christianity, but the Practice of Virtue and Sobriety. In short, they were the Brethren of *Dives* in the Parable, who did not live up to the Doctrine of *Moses* and the Prophets, tho' they had them, or believed them ; and therefore, in our Lord's Judgment, would
not

S E R M O N III. 65

not have been persuaded to leave off their Libertin Courses, tho' one had rose from the Dead, and told them what Misery their Brother had brought upon himself in the other World by the same Vices. Had not our Author meant to deceive, the Reader should have been apprized of all these Circumstances: But he knew, that in so doing he should defeat his own Purposes, and that every one well informed of the Occasion of our Lord's Saying, would immediately see, that our Lord declared nothing against Miracles, nor in Favour of Prophecy, as he supposes. So that *Moses* and the Prophets being here considered, not as Foretellers of Events, but as inspired Teachers of Morality only; the Passage has no Relation to Prophecies, and therefore is quite foreign to the Question in Hand. Besides, he has not fairly cited our Lord's Words, which are, *if they, i. e. the Brethren of Dives* abovementioned, *bear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, tho' one rose from the Dead*: Whereas our Adversary makes Jesus to say, *if Men believe not Moses and*

66 S E R M O N I I I .

the Prophets, and thereby practices a pre-meditated Fraud upon his Readers, intending they should believe, that these Words were not spoken on a particular Occasion, nor related to the Doctrines of *Moses* and the Prophets, but to their Predictions, as Evidences for Christianity, superior to that of Miracles. Were a Man to chicanery at this Rate in his Worldly Dealings, Infamy, if not Punishment, must attend him. But the most scandalous Acts against revealed Religion may, it seems, be practised with Safety and Impunity.

But to return : Not content with making Jesus suppose Prophecies of more Weight than Miracles, our Author adds.

That “ Jesus plainly makes Miracles no “ conclusive Proofs of a Messiahship, when “ he says, *There shall arise false Christs and false Prophets, and shall shew great Signs or Miracles, and cautions Men not to believe in them.* Now, if this could be made out, it must at once silence all Advocates for the Messiahship of Jesus from Miracles,

S E R M O N III. 67

acles, and himself among the Number, who frequently appeals to his Miracles as conclusive for that Point. For whatsoever Proof is inconclusive against a Claim in general, can never be conclusive for any Claimant in particular. This Argument therefore can never be right, because it proves too much, and destroys the Testimony on which it rests, by making the Witness contradict himself. But, indeed, it requires no great Acuteness to detect the Faults of this Reasoning: For it is plainly built on this wrong Supposition, that we make Miracles, in their general Nature, and as Miracles, conclusive for Jesus's being the Christ. Whereas we do not argue, that he is the Messias, because he did Miracles, but because he performed more and greater Miracles, than any other Competitor for that Title ever did. And we learn thus to distinguish from our Lord himself, who never requires Belief, merely because he wrought wonderful or miraculous Works, but because the Multitude, and Greatness of his Miracles, bespoke them to be done by the Finger of God. *If I do*

68 S E R M O N III.

not the Works of my Father, says he, believe me not, Joh. x. 37. i. e. such Works as no Man could do, except God or the Father was with him. Again, *Job. xv. 24.* he charges the Sinfulness of Unbelief upon the *Jews*, not upon his having wrought Miracles at large, but such as no other Man had performed. *If, says he, I had not done among them the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin.* And this very Circumstance, in the Miracles of our Lord, was what gained him Converts. This in particular convinced *Nicodemus* that Jesus was a Teacher come from God, *viz.* that no Man could do the Miracles which he did, except God were with him. And those many People, who believed on our Lord in the seventh of *St. John*, said for their so doing, *When Christ cometh, will he do more Miracles than these which this Man hath done.* Lastly, our Lord in the Text declares the Necessity of Miracles to the Conversion of his Countrymen, by saying, *that except they saw Signs and Wonders, they would not believe.* Impossible therefore is it, that our Lord, after all this, should

S E R M O N III. 69

should make Miracles in no Sense conclusive for a Claim to the Messiahship, when himself had appealed to them for that Purpose, and had experienced how successful that Proof was, and had owned, that no other Proof without that would be effectual. So that when he cautions his Disciples *not to believe false Christs and false Prophets who should arise, tho' they should shew great Signs and Wonders*; the Reason must have been this, tho' it is not expressly given, *viz.* that he had shewn still greater: For by this Superiority of Miracles it appeared, that Jesus alone was the true Christ, and the true Prophet, and consequently that all who made the same Claims after him were false ones.

Besides, the Passage in which it is pretended, that Jesus makes Miracles no conclusive Proofs of a Messiahship, virtually proves the contrary: For if there had been nothing in them at all conclusive for that Point, the Caution he gives his Disciples against being deceived by them, had been altogether needless. And further, our Lord

declares, at the same Time, *that the false Christs, and false Prophets, by the great Signs and Wonders done by them, would, if it were possible, deceive the very Elect*; that, however, common Christians would be in the utmost Peril of being seduced, if he had not beforehand warned them of their Danger. Surely, then, this was making Miracles, as Miracles, in some Measure conclusive, tho' not decisive Proofs of a Messiahship, contrary to what is advanced by our Author.

Thus I hope it appears, that the Claim set up by Jesus our Lord to the Messiahship, may be made unquestionably good, by the alone Argument from his Miracles; and that there is nothing in the Nature of the Claim itself, or in the manner of our Lord's urging it, that necessarily requires it to be tried by a direct Appeal to the Old Testament. Supposing, therefore, what we are very far from granting, that the Pretensions of Jesus to the Messiahship, could not, at this Time of Day, be made out from Prophecy, Infidelity would still remain
with-

S E R M O N III. 71

without Excuse, so long as the other Evidence to the Truth of Christianity, from Miracles, continued in Force : Nor in this Case would Believers be chargeable with taking their Religion upon Trust. For a Man acts as rationally, who assents upon one good and sufficient Motive, as if he did it upon ever so many : It is not the Number, but the Weight of Arguments, which makes them convincing ; and therefore a Man, who assents to the Truth of Christianity, upon one good and sufficient Motive, acts as rationally, as he who founds his Faith upon ever so great a Multitude of Evidences.

S E R M O N I V .

2 P E T. i. 21.

*For the Prophecy came not of old Time
by the Will of Man : But holy Men
of God spake as they were moved by
the Holy Ghost.*

IT has been the entire Business of my foregoing Lectures to state and defend the two great Evidences for the Truth of the Christian Religion, *viz.* Miracles, and the Completion of ancient Prophecies. I have shewn, that Miracles so circumstanced as those related in the Gospels are, if allowed to be real Facts, afford a moral Certainty of the divine Authority of the Gospel, and that for the Reality of those Facts we have the same Degree of Certainty ;

ty ; it being utterly inconsistent with the essential Perfections of Almighty God, either to allow such mighty Attestations to so dishonest and impious an Imposture, or to suffer false Facts in support of it, to come down recommended to us with better historical Evidence, than we have for any Events whatever, that are equally remote in Time from us. So that to all but Atheists, the Argument from Miracles is a short, a clear, and an irrefragable Proof that the Christian Revelation came from God. Because, if a Religion thus confirmed may still be false, God must be held the permissive Author of the Fraud, and Mankind have been led into Error by entertaining too high an Opinion of the divine Justice, Goodness, and Truth, which would be a detestable Blasphemy for any Man to say, or even to think. The late Enemies to Christianity are very sensible that there is great Truth and Cogency in this Method of proving the divine Authority of the Gospel Religion, and that if it were once admitted, it would leave them no other Choice, but of embracing Atheism or
Christ-

S E R M O N IV. 75

Christianity. Being therefore utterly averſe to the latter of theſe Courſes, and believing the former would be attended with popular Odium and Danger, they have bent their whole Force againſt the Evidence from Prophecies fulfilled, bearing us down againſt common Senſe and plain Scripture, that this is the only Teſt by which a rational Chriſtian ought to try his Faith in Jeſus, as the Meſſias and Saviour of the World. Not that they really believe the Argument from Prophecy to be weak and inconcluſive, but becauſe from the Nature of that Proof they find Room and Opportunity for Chicane and Length of Oppoſition. Facts are plain as well as ſtubborn Things, and lead directly to a Concluſion: Whereas Prophecies depend upon Language, which is always more or leſs Equivocal, and upon prophetick Language, which is more eminently looſe and figurative than any other. Here therefore an unfair and diſputatious Adverſary may keep the Queſtion from an Iſſue for a long Time, and Controverſy become in a Manner endless. In the mean time the ignorant

rant World stands at a Gaze, and being apt to conclude, that there can be no Certainty in an Argument that admits of so long and continued Opposition, grows cool to Religion, if it does not begin to doubt the Validity of the Foundation whereon it stands. The celebrated Deviser of this battering Engine against Christianity, having affirmed those to be the only Grounds and Reasons of it, which he could best deal with; and having, as he would have the World think, demolished its only Bulwark, that of Prophecy, he then calls upon Miracles to do their worst, he insults them as of no avail, because they cannot make a Foundation good, which is naturally bad, because they cannot reconcile Contradictions, or palliate Absurdities. On the other Hand I have shewn, that this Writer gives a false Representation of the Grounds and Reasons on which the Founder of our Religion, and his Under-Labourers, the Apostles and Evangelists, build the Christian Faith. For tho' they affirm, that the Things of Jesus fulfilled Prophecy, nay, proved Jesus to be the Christ from the
Scriptures

S E R M O N IV. 77

Scriptures of the Old Testament to *Jewish* Audiences ; yet they chiefly and more frequently appeal to Miracles, as the principal Evidence of our Lord's Claim to that, and every other Title set up by him. True indeed it is, that, however strong the Evidence from Miracles may be, it cannot mend the State of the other collateral Proof from Prophecy : But if that be weak or impertinent, and much more if it be false, it must remain so, tho' joined with another Argument that is irrefragable. And then the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion would stand thus : That one of its Supports was impregnably strong, and the other indefensibly weak. But the bare mention of so medley a Foundation is sufficient to expose it as utterly improbable. For what human Schemist ever was, or ever would be so abandoned by common Sense, as, when he had one sufficient and incontestible Proof of his Point, to disgrace it, by adding another that was apparently weak or false ? Diverse Arguments tending to the same Conclusion may very properly be used, though they be not all of equal Strength, because of the Variety of Tastes
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78 S E R M O N I V.

and Capacities ; some Men being more affected by one Proof, than by another that is equally good, or perhaps better. But it is absurd at the first hearing to suppose, that Jesus, or his Apostles, who had the Seal of divine Approbation from Miracles, and who daily saw the Success of those Credentials, should join a weak or a false Attestation from Prophecy, which was neither needed nor called for ; which must do infinite Dishonour and Hurt to the Christian Cause, and not the least possible Service. For what else was this but to disparage a good Cause, by a notoriously bad Management, and to give up a certain Victory by a false Fire, when better Ammunition was at Hand ? When we further consider who was the Author of Miracles, even God himself, the Improbability that Prophecies are weakly or falsely alledged in the Writings of the New Testament becomes a moral Impossibility : For no sober Man can imagine, that God would lend the Aid of his Almighty Power to go along with other false and enthusiastick Proofs of a divine Revelation ; or that he, who inspired the first Teachers of Christianity, and communicated to them
the

S E R M O N IV. 79

the Knowledge of fo many preternatural Truths, would not, by the Affiftance of the fame Spirit, preferve them from laying a rotten or fandy Foundation of the whole. Let the Appearances therefore of Difficulty, in reconciling the Application of the Old Testament to Events in the New, be ever fo great, a rational Perfon may venture ftill to pronounce that all is Right in that Particular upon this general Maxim, that God cannot approve of and recommend a falfe Method of proving his own Truth by the Sanction of Miracles; or permit his own wife Counfels to go Hand in Hand with the Follies and Weakneffes of Men, who act in his Name, and by a real Authority from him. I very well know that the Managers for Infidelity will be as ready as we to grant, that Things can never happen thus; and from hence raife an Argument againft the Faft of Miracles, urging, that Miracles faid to have been done in Confirmation of a Religion thus weakly founded on Prophecy, ought to be deemed falfe Reports, however they may otherwife be well and properly attested. But here we may turn their own Artillery

80 S E R M O N I V .

tillery against them, and say, that if the Fact of Miracles be clearly proved, a supposed Weakness or Falshood of the other Evidence from Prophecy cannot abate the Value of what is true and undoubted. For if Jesus and his Apostles applied Prophecies to such Events, as those Prophecies had no Relation to, it will not make the Miracles they did never to have happened at all, or not to be Evidences of divine Approbation. If the Predictions, for Instance, concerning Christ's Resurrection from the Old Testament are wrong, and improperly cited for that Purpose, were the Disciples to disbelieve the Report of their own Senses, when they saw their Master alive again from the Dead? Or were succeeding Generations to give no Credit to the Testimonies of those Eye-witnesses, who sealed their Depositions with their dearest Blood? In short, nothing should induce us to deem any Report of Miracles false, but either Absurdity in the Thing reported, or Want of Veracity in the Person or Persons reporting. And as neither of these Defects are to be charged on the Fact of the Gospel-Miracles, that Fact must be credited by all reasonable

S E R M O N IV. 81

Men : And wherever the Miracles of the Gospel gain Credit, the Prophecies therein applied may be taken upon Content, for the Reasons above-mentioned. However, as Prophecies are certainly a Scripture Evidence, I have also particularly stated and defended that Topick, shewing by an Induction of many Particulars, that the Predictions of the Old Testament, applied to Christ in the New, are not falsely, or even weakly accommodated, but are often strong and unanswerable, always plausible, pertinent, and persuasive.

Upon the whole then, the two great Evidences for Christianity, Miracles and Prophecy stand clear of all Objections : Either of them are sufficient, neither of them hurt or obstruct the other, and jointly taken, they are irrefragable Arguments of the Truth and divine Original of Christianity, which was the Point I set out withall.

If any Thing more is necessary to this Argument, it must be the Genuineness and

VOL. II. G Authen-

82 S E R M O N I V .

Authenticity of the Books concerned therein. For Instance, the Predictions of the Old Testament, which we contend for as compleated in the New, cannot be accounted as Prophecies, if they had not a proper Antiquity, and were not given out by Persons divinely inspired. Again, admitting both these Things to be true, the Completions of those Prophecies are Events recorded in the Gospels, the Credit and Verity of which Books therefore should be clear from all just Exception. In the same Books also are related the Miracles of our Lord : So that unless the Characters of the sacred Historians, and their Qualifications, to write on the Subjects they took in Hand, be made apparent, and the Genuineness of the Gospels, attributed to the several Evangelists, be likewise made out ; neither Prophecies fulfilled, nor Miracles done, have any sure Foundation of Truth, and Christianity will be at once deprived of its main Supports.

The first Point therefore to be made out, is the Genuineness and Authenticity of the
Old

S E R M O N IV. 83

Old Testament Scriptures, in all its constituent Parts, *viz.* the Law of *Moses*, the Prophets, and the Psalms, in each of which Divisions our Lord himself affirms, that Things were written concerning him. *Luke* xxiv. 44.

With regard to the first of these, the five Books of *Moses*, we have for their inspired Character, and for their being the genuine Work of that great Lawgiver, the constant and unanimous Tradition of the entire *Jewish* Nation. A considerable Sect among them, the *Sadducees* rejected the two latter Divisions of Scriptural Books : But all, without Exception, admit the *Pentateuch*, or five Books of *Moses*, as Sacred and Canonical. Besides the Original of the World, and the great Changes brought upon it by the Deluge, of which other Histories gives us only faint and fabulous Imitations, those ancient Books contain the History and Descent of the Patriarchs, the Original of the *Jewish* Establishment, their religious and municipal Laws, which being in daily Use could receive no Alteration

84 S E R M O N I V.

without a Discovery, much less could they all at once be obtruded upon that People, as their ancient standing Rule of civil and religious Polity. We need but figure to ourselves how impracticable a Design it would prove, should any Man, or set of Men, at this Time of Day, attempt to persuade us, that the *Alcoran* is, and always had been the Rule of Faith and Manners to all Christendom, or that the *Romish* Breviary is, and ever was the Ritual of divine Service in the Reformed Church of *England*: I say, we need but figure to ourselves the Impossibility of obtruding such a Persuasion upon us in these Times, and we must be convinced how absurd a Supposition it must be, that a Plan of Religion, like that contained in the five Books of *Moses*, which was to take Place in and from his own Time, could afterwards be received among the *Jews* for his, unless it had been genuine. Because that whole Nation must have been stupid to the last Degree not to know, at the first hearing of those new Regulations, that they had never been under any such Direction before.

Corrupt

S E R M O N IV. 85

rupt Variations in Doctrine and Worship may obtain, and have obtained, both among *Jews* and Christians: But that an entirely new System of Religion should be received for one of old and standing Use, could never happen, but to a People utterly and universally deprived of Memory and common Sense.

It has indeed been alledged against the Genuineness of the five Books of *Moses*, and upon the Authority of the sacred History itself, that those Books were twice lost; and that therefore allowing them once to have had a real Existence, it may justly be questioned, whether those we now have were the Works of that great Legislator, or a Forgery to supply the Room of the lost *Pentateuch*.

The first pretended Loss of the Law is supposed to have happened in the Time of *Manasseh* King of *Judab*, and the Fact of this first Loss is founded on what we read in the 22d *Chap.* of the second Book of *Kings*; that in the Days of *Josiah*, *Manasseh's*

86 S E R M O N I V .

Jeſſe's Grand-Son and Succellor, *Hilkiab* the High-prieſt found the Book of the Law in the Houſe of the Lord, and ſpoke of it to *Shaphan*, and he again unto the King, who was ſurprized at the Contents of the Book, to that Degree as to rent his Clothes, to enquire of the Lord by *Huldab* the Prophetels, to cauſe the Book to be read in the Ears of the People, and to renew the Covenant with the Lord. Now from hence it appears, that during the long and wicked Reign of *Manaſſeb*, in which Idolatry had prevailed, and been encouraged beyond the Example of the worſt preceding Times, the Houſe of the Lord; and the Services of the Temple, and the Temple itſelf, had been grievouſly neglected; that the People for ſo long had not been inſtructed in the Law, nor had the Words thereof read in their Ears; that the King himſelf, tho' ſhockt at the Idolatries and Prophaneneſs of the Land, had been kept from the Sight of the Law of *Mofes* till the Original thereof, depoſited in the Temple, was brought and ſhewn to him, with a Deſign to work upon his good Diſpoſition,

S E R M O N IV. 87

tion, and to introduce a Reformation; that the High-priest had Reason to fear lest that sacred Depositum should have been lost during the Neglect and Profanation of the Temple, and therefore is said to have found it, not because it had ever been actually lost, but because it was apprehended to be in Danger. But had that divine Autograph really been lost, it is by no Means to be imagined that it was the only Copy of the Law, for many, and those, I think, unanswerable Reasons.

First, there had been, at least, from the Times of *David*, a Profession of Men called *Scribes*, whose principal Business it was to take correct Copies of the Law, as well as to explain it to the People. And at the very Time of this supposed Loss, there is one of this Function mentioned as above, *Shapban* the Scribe. This Condition of Things therefore almost necessarily supposes a great Number of sacred Copies spread abroad, all which could not be lost in the Reigns of *Manasseh* and *Amon*, unless the entire Land had become Apostates from

28 S E R M O N I V.

the Law, which was by no Means the Case. For,

Secondly, There were, during the Time in which this Loss of the Law is suspected to have happened, some inspired Prophets, such as *Hullab* abovementioned, and *Jeremiab*, to whom the Words of the Lord came before *Hilkiab* found the Book of the Law in the Temple ; besides, *Hilkiab* and *Shaphan*, and many other religious Persons, most, if not all of which, must have had Copies of the Law for their own Use, and that of their Families, *Shaphan* in particular, whose Profession obliged him to write out, and to explain the Law, must have been altogether a Stranger to it, if no Copy thereof was then known to subsist, which is absurd to imagine.

Thirdly, If *Hilkiab's* finding the Book of the Law had really been the retrieving of that Treasure, after it was presumed to be entirely lost, how comes it to pass that so little Notice was taken of so auspicious an Event ? Publick Blessings, of an inferior
Nature

S E R M O N IV. 29

Nature to this, were wont to be commemorated by anniversary Feasts ; and that no such Notice should be taken of the Recovery of their Law, had it really been lost, is by no Means credible. From the Foundation of the *Jewish* State, and the first giving of the Law, no Deliverance had ever happened to that People, which would admit of a Comparison with the Recovery of the Law by *Hilkiah*, if it had been truly such ; and yet we find not so much as one single Rejoicing for what deserved daily Triumphs and Festivities.

Upon the whole therefore, it is incredible, that the finding of the Book of the Law in the Temple, under the Reign of *Josiah*, should mean a Recovery of it after it had been lost. All we can probably collect from it is, that *Hilkiah*, upon a narrow and more particular Survey of the Temple, in order to the necessary Reparations of it, observed that Book, which he had not seen there before, and chose to lay it before the King, rather than any private Copy, only

on Account of its particular Sacredness and Authenticity.

The second Loss of the Law is pretended to have happened during the seventy Years Captivity of the *Jews* at *Babylon*: But here our Adversaries have no Countenance, even from the Sound of Scripture. For it is not said, after the Return of the People, that *Ezra* found the Book of the Law: But only that they desired him, whose Office it was, as a Scribe and a Priest too, to preserve, and to propagate that sacred Code, to bring the Book of the Law of *Moses*, and that accordingly he brought it before the Congregation. It was a Book therefore known to have subsisted all along: Only the Hardships of the Captivity, and a long Want of Opportunities to be instructed therein, had let in among the People many Corruptions, which they were desirous should then be reformed according to the Law of *Moses*, which the Lord had commanded. Indeed the only Pretence any one can have for suggesting that the Law of *Moses* was lost in the Captivity

S E R M O N IV. 91

tivity is, that such a Thing might then possibly have happened : But that no such Loss was then sustained, besides what has been already urged, appears most evident from the strict Conformity of *Daniel*, and his Brethren to Precepts of the *Mosaick* Law, during the Captivity, as well ceremonial as moral ; which could not have been the Case, if that great Rule of Behaviour had then been utterly lost. Besides, we find *Daniel*, but ten Years before the Expiration of the *Babylonish* Captivity, was actually in Possession of the Law of *Moses* ; for at that Time he appeals to what is written in that Law, which therefore must then have been extant. In a Word, the Archetypal Book of the Law, which used to be preserved in the Temple, perished together with it and the Holy City by Fire : But Copies thereof had been continued by the Providential Appointment of Officers, set up for that very Purpose, who both by Duty and Inclination took care to preserve them from Loss and from Corruption.

As

As to the *Psalms*, their Antiquity and Genuineness has not, that I know of, been denied or questioned.

Nor has any Controversy been moved in either of those Respects, against any of the prophetick Writings, save those of *Daniel*, whom it has been found no difficult Matter to defend, against the false and frivolous Cavils of Gainsayers.

Indeed the proper Antiquity of the Old Testament Prophecies, *i. e.* their Existence long before the Events foretold, is the chief Point to be settled, in order to make the Completion of them a valid Evidence for the Divinity of the Christian Religion. And of this we have one at least unquestionable Proof from the *Greek Translation* of the Old Testament Scriptures, commonly called the *Septuagint*; from whence the Prophecies, applied in the Gospels and *Acts*, are chiefly taken, which Translation was made more than 300 Years before the Times of Jesus Christ.

In a Word, the Genuineness and Antiquity of the *Jewish* sacred Writings, rests on the same Foundation with that of all other ancient Books, *viz.* the uniform Tradition of all the intermediate Times; and therefore cannot be gainsaid upon any Principles, but what will equally affect the History and Learning of all Ages, besides our own.

Thus it appears, that, to use the Words of the Text, *Prophecy came not of old Time by the Will of Man: But holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

And the Proof that the Historical Parts of the New Testament likewise, which contain the Completions of those Prophecies, and the Fact of Miracles, were genuine, and every Way worthy of Credit, must be the Subject of future Lectures.

S E R M O N V.

Second Epistle of St. Peter, Chap. i.
Verse 16.

*For we have not followed cunningly
devised Fables, when we made known
unto you the Power and Coming of
our Lord Jesus Christ; but were
Eye-witnesses of his Majesty and
Glory.*

IN former Discourses on this Occasion,
I have stated and defended the great
Proofs for the Truth and Divinity of
the Christian Religion from Miracles and
Prophecy: And in my last Lecture I ob-
served, that if any Thing else was neces-
sary to this Argument, it must be to assert
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the Genuinenefs of thofe Books, wherein the Prophecies and their Completions are fet down, and the Miracles are recorded, *i. e.* the Books of the Old Testament, and the historical Pieces of the New. And accordingly I then undertook to make good the Genuinenefs and Authenticity of the Old Testament Scripture in all its Branches, *viz.* the Law of *Mofes*, the Prophets, and the Pfalms, in each of which Divifions our Lord affirms, that *Things were written concerning him*, Luk. xxiv. 44.

I am now to do the fame by the Writings of the New Testament, efppecially the historical Ones, in which the miraculous Proofs of Chriftianity are recorded, and the Events fet down, which compleated antient Prophecies concerning the Mefiah, and which likewise are therein applied to their refpective Predictions: Or, to fpeak with St. *Peter* in the Text, that the Apoftles *have not followed cunningly devised Fables, when they made known unto the World the Power and Coming of our Lord Jefus Chrift; but were Eye-witneffes of his Majesty and Glory.*

The

The Proof of the historical Truths contained in the New Testament, is of the same Kind with that, on which we give Credit to other anciently written Facts: And Histories of all Sorts are then deemed credible,

First, When the reputed Historians were properly qualified to write on the Subject they took in Hand: *Secondly*, When it appears that the Histories in Question were really, and *bona fide*, written by the reputed Authors so properly qualified, and not by others (of whose Qualifications we know nothing) under their Names: *Thirdly*, When such Writings, as were at first confessedly credible and genuine, have been faithfully transmitted down to our Times.

And if it shall be found, as I trust it will, that these three Notes of Credibility belong to the historical Parts of the New Testament in a more eminent Manner, than they do to any the most credible an-

98 S E R M O N V.

cient History whatever, the Truth of the Gospels, and Acts of the Apostles, will remain undoubted.

First then, I am to shew, that the reputed Authors of the sacred Histories last mentioned, were Persons properly qualified to write on the Subjects they took in Hand.

Now the Qualifications which render a Writer of History credible are, I presume, these which follow.

First, he must be one, against whose general Character for Veracity no Exception can be taken : For if he be a Man notorious for speaking or writing Untruths, tho' he had every other due Qualification, no Dependance can be had on what he delivers for Fact, tho' it concern the most ordinary Occurrences.

Secondly, He must be one who had good Opportunities of knowing the Truth of the Facts he records, either by having been an
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S E R M O N V. 99

Eye-witnefs of them himfelf, or by having received them from other credible Perfons, that were. For if he was too late in Time to have feen the Events related by him, or had his Accounts of them from fuch, concerning whofe Veracity and Opportunities we know nothing, we cannot give entire Credit to what he delivers as Facts.

Thirdly, When thefe two Circumftances unite in a Hiftorian, he ought further to be a Man of Understanding fufficient to diftinguifh real Facts from Appearances: For if thofe pretended Facts are of fuch a Nature, as that a plain and uneducated Perfon may be deceived in them, we have no Security that fuch an Hiftorian has not, in fome Cafes, at leaft delivered down to Pofterity his own Mistakes for historical Certainties.

Fourthly, Thofe Hiftorians will always deferve moft Credit, who appear to have no corrupt Intereft, or private Affection to ferve, by the Matters they relate. For if their Hopes or Fears, their Love or Hate, may

be gratified by Misrelation, we cannot altogether depend upon it, that a Writer, tho' naturally honest and veracious, will mix none of his own Prejudices and Party-Judgments, in speaking to the Characters of Men and Things.

Let us then now consider, how far these four Qualifications agree with the Writers of the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles.

And first, whether their general Characters for Veracity were unexceptionable.

Their Names, as is known to every one, were *Matthew, Mark, Luke* and *John*. Of these, *John*, was a Person of mean Occupation, but, for aught that we find to the contrary, of strict Truth and Honesty. The modest Manner in which he speaks of Things, that redound to his particular Credit, is very remarkable, never at such Times speaking of himself by Name. But Modesty and Veraciousness are almost inseparable Companions,

S E R M O N V. 101

as their opposite Qualities, Lying and Vanity, also are. St. *Matthew's* first Profession as a Publican, might seem to impeach his Truth and Probity, if he had not entirely redeemed it, by giving up a gainful Employment at the first Call of our Lord. For a Knave in a gainful Office, was hardly ever known to part with it on such unpromising Conditions: And therefore we may fairly set down our first Evangelist, as one of those few Publicans, whom the Opportunities of unlawful Gain could not corrupt or warp from his natural Integrity. *Mark* was descended of the Tribe of *Levi*, and the Line of the Priesthood: His Conversion therefore to Christianity, which was so generally opposed by the Descendants of *Aaron*, is a Presumption in Favour of his natural Probity and Disinterestedness. Nor does any Objection lie against this Part of his Character, unless he was that *John*, whose Surname was *Mark*, whom St. *Paul*, even tho' desired by *Barnabas*, absolutely refused to take with him when he went to visit the Churches: Because he had before departed from them from *Pam-*

philia, and went not with them to the Work. But this last was plainly a different Person from the Evangelist, tho' he has sometimes been mistaken for him. *Lastly*, *St. Luke*, who wrote the Gospel, which goes by his Name, and the Acts of the Apostles, labours under no known Blemish. His Education had been in the Study of Physick, to which, if we may credit *Si-meon Metaphrastes*, and an Inscription said to have been dug up at *Rome*, he added the Art of Painting. And sure his having quitted those gainful Arts, for the poor and then despised Profession of Christianity, bespeaks him to have been one, with whom the Love of Truth outweighed all worldly Considerations. The Characters then of the four Evangelists, for Truth and Probity, being thus established, let us,

In the second Place enquire, what Opportunities they had of knowing the Truth of the Things they have recorded, concerning Christ and his Apostles. Two of the Evangelists, *St. Matthew* and *St. John*, were Companions of our Lord, Eye and Ear-

Ear-witnesses to what he did, said, and suffered. They also knew the blessed Virgin his Mother, from whom they had Opportunities of learning the former Part of their Master's History, from his miraculous Conception to the Time they were called to be his Disciples and constant Attendants. As for the other two, *St. Mark* and *St. Luke*, tho' we cannot with Certainty affirm, that they saw and heard the Things they have delivered, yet sure we are, that they were the Companions of *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, upon whose Recommendation they probably undertook to write, and to whose Correction doubtless they submitted what they had written. The Acts of the Apostles were penned by *St. Luke*, who was an Attendant upon *St. Paul* in his Travels, who saw the greatest Part of the Facts he mentions, and heard the Preachings of the Apostles. He therefore was an Historian above all just Exception, with Regard to the Opportunities he had of knowing the Certainty of the Things about which he wrote. And indeed, considering how few profane Historians are extant, who were

equal to the sacred ones in this Respect, we may pronounce the latter to be incomparably the most veritable and authentick. For, excepting *Cæsar*, and one or two more, who wrote Commentaries of their own Exploits, or the History of their own Times, the Generality of the ancient Historians were greatly distant, both in Age and Place, from the Events of which they treat: So that it can proceed from nothing but the utmost Partiality, when any one shall take profane History upon Content, and yet reject the Narratives of the New Testament that are delivered down to us by Persons, who, for the most Part, write from the Dictates of their own Senses.

The third Note of a credible History is, when the Facts therein spoken of are such, as a Man of Honesty and plain Sense cannot easily be deceived in. Superstition, and Credulity, and Strength of Imagination, will, in some Cases, make Appearances to pass for Realities: And of this Kind are most of the Prodigies delivered, both by *Greek* and *Roman* Writers, but especially

pecially the latter. But the Events of the Gospel History, as likewise those of the Acts of the Apostles, tho' equally strange and preternatural, were of such a Kind, as no Beholder could mistake or misapprehend. For Instance, a Person who sees a blind Man miraculously and instantaneously restored to his Sight, or a lame Man to the Use of his Feet, or a sick Man restored on a sudden to perfect Health, may as securely depend on the Information of his Senses, in all, or any of these Instances, as he can in the plainest and most ordinary Occurrences. These Things are not like uncommon Phænomena in the Heavens, just presented to the View, and then altogether withdrawn again, so as that the Spectators want Time to form a right Judgment of them, by long and careful Inspection. For the Men, on whom such wonderful Changes were wrought by Christ and his Apostles, lived and conversed, and shewed themselves to the World for several Years, affording, all that Time, Opportunities to the Curious, as well as to the Diffident and Incredulous, to inquire into
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their Case, and be satisfied, that the Alteration effected in them was both real and miraculous : In a Word, our outward Senses properly disposed and acted upon thro' a due Medium, do as certainly inform us of strange and stupendous Events, as of common ones ; and therefore an honest Man, reporting preternatural Incidents upon such Information, equally deserves to be credited, as when he tells of Things which happen every Day : So that the sacred Historians, being honest in themselves, well informed of the Subjects on which they treat, and speaking of Things, to which the Senses of Mankind rightly disposed do give infallible Testimony, are worthy of entire Credit.

Especially, if (which is the fourth and last Qualification) it shall appear, that they had no private Interest or Affection to serve by their Relations. It is an Observation too well known by frequent Experience, that Men, who are to be credited in every other Respect, are yet not entirely to be depended upon as to Points, in which Par-

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ty Prejudices and private Affections mix themselves. And doubtless, the Evangelists were warmly and zealously affected to that Cause, the History of which they have delivered to the World. But notwithstanding this, they stand clear from all Suspicion of partial Writing: For he, who strains a Point thro' private Affection, or Party Prejudice, supposing he is detected, incurs no Loss, besides that of Character; whereas the Evangelists staked their Lives, as well as their Fame, for the Truth of their Histories. Nay, indeed, to come up to the Truth of their Case, I should have said, that they wrote under a certain Expectation of being called upon to seal what they wrote with their Blood, whether it were true or false. It is therefore utterly incredible, that any Men, compiling Histories under such Circumstances, should in the least depart from the Truth, thro' the Byass of Prejudice, or Party Affection. They had seen *St. Stephen* stoned, and *James* killed with the Sword, besides many others of inferior Note, for preaching the Truths of Christ: They saw themselves

selves likewise, on the same Account, in Jeopardy every Hour, and had no Reason to believe, that by committing to Writing, and publishing the wonderful Things of God, the Danger would be at all lessened, but rather, on the contrary, that they should thereby more expose themselves to the Malice of their powerful Enemies. One of these Historians, *St. John*, if we may believe a very ancient Ecclesiastical Tradition, before he wrote the Gospel, which goes under his Name, had miraculously escaped being scalded to Death in a Cauldron of boiling Oil, to which he was sentenced under *Domitian* the Emperor, for having acted the Part only of a preaching Evangelist; and could he reasonably hope for better Treatment, after becoming the Author of a written Gospel? All these Things then being laid together, there remains no Room to doubt the Veracity of the New Testament Historians. Their Narratives may be considered, in some Measure, as the Words of dying Men, clear from the Prejudices of Party, Self-Interest, or other human Affections: And quite agree-

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able to these reasonable Presumptions is the Turn of the sacred Story. We see nothing therein artful or sophistical, but Facts delivered with the utmost Plainness and Simplicity. The Authors write like Men that were uninfluenced, either by Hopes or Fears. Truth was their perpetual Aim, whether it made for or against them. The human Fears of our Lord, on the Apprehension of his approaching Death, and his uncommon Agonies arising from thence, are honestly related, without the least Softening or Palliation. This indeed was an Infirmary without a Fault, tho', to the Eye of a carnal Reasoner, it might appear disparaging. But the Apostles, and first Followers of our Lord, had their criminal, as well as their innocent Weaknesses, some before, and others after they were admitted into the Household of Faith. Such were the sinful Courses of *Mary Magdalene*, the vindictive Spirit which appeared in the Sons of *Zebedee* towards the inhospitable *Samaritans*, and likewise the unreasonable Ambition of their Mother, expressed in that Desire of hers to our Lord,

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that her Sons might be preferred to the highest Honours of his Kingdom, which she erroneously supposed would prove merely secular. To these we may add the Disputes among the Disciples, who should be the greatest; their cowardly Desertion of our Lord at his Apprehension; the repeated Denial of him by *Peter*, attended with false Oaths and bitter Execrations; the Difficulty with which the Disciples embraced the first News of Christ's Resurrection; and the excessive Incredulity of *Thomas*, who declared that nothing short of the Testimony of all his Senses, should extort from him a Belief, that his Master was risen again according to his own clear Prediction. To this same Class also may be reduced the violent Dissention between *Paul* and *Barnabas*, concerning *John*, whose Surname was *Mark*. Lastly, the Dissimulation of *St. Peter*, on Account of which *St. Paul* withstood him to the Face at *Antioch*. But all these Things are punctually related by the sacred Writers, nor have we the least Reason to suppose, that they have concealed any Faults, or even

S E R M O N V. 111

ven Infirmities, in the Men of their own Side. But these are such Evidences of Honesty and Impartiality in the Gospel Historians, as must induce all indifferent Judges to determine in their Favour. Besides, the Characters of the Persons given by the sacred Writers, are, in some Measure, confirmed by collateral Evidence from profane History, whether they were Friends or Enemies. Thus, for Instance, the Sanctity and miraculous Power of Jesus Christ, was attested to by *Pilate*, his Judge, in Writings to the Emperor *Tiberius*, which, tho' now no longer extant, were appealed to by *Tertullian*, in less than two hundred Years after, in his Apology, as then subsisting in the Archives at *Rome*. And had this been a false or mistaken Fact, the *Roman* Government were too deeply interested in the Discovery, to have suffered it to pass, as they plainly did, without Contradiction. Indeed it would be hard to say, which of the two Suppositions would be most absurd, that *Tertullian* should expose the Christian Cause, then under a grievous Persecution, by Appeal to a Writing in
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the Hands of his Enemies, that never had a Being ; or that they, in such a Case, should be so far wanting to themselves, and the Honour of their own Proceedings against the Christians, as not to produce the genuine Acts of *Pilate*, and confront the Assurance of the Apologist, had such a Thing been in their Power : And yet, unless both these Absurdities happened, the Acts of *Pilate* must remain an Evidence for ever, that *Pontius Pilate* not only found no Fault in our Saviour Christ, as the Gospels represent him to have said at his Arraignment, but also that he thought him to be a Person of godlike Power and Perfections.

To the written Testimony of *Pilate*, now lost, tho' once undoubtedly subsisting, may be added the yet extant one of *Josephus*, the *Jewish* Historian. A more honourable Character could not have been given of Christ, by one of his Followers, than that bestowed on him in the Writings of *Josephus*. And, indeed, this is a Circumstance, which, with some even learned
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Christians, has discredited the Passage, and made it suspected for the Addition of some Christian, more zealous than honest or discreet. But this is reasoning against a plain Fact: For this disputed Passage is quoted by *Ensebins* out of *Josephus*, and is not wanting in any one known Manuscript. The Style of the Passage is also thoroughly Hellenistical; and which is more, every Phrase and Expression made use of therein, has been found in other Parts of *Josephus*, to such a Nicety and Exactness, as no Impostor ever could, or did come up to. Add to this, that the same *Josephus*, in the twentieth Book of his Antiquities, mentioning the Apostle *James the Less*, calls him the Brother of Jesus called the Christ. Which supposes that he had spoken of Jesus more fully before: Otherwise, *Josephus* must have been absurd enough to describe one unknown Person by his Relation to another, with whom his Readers were, or might be equally unacquainted. And yet, unless we allow the Passage in dispute to be genuine, this is the first Time we find Jesus mentioned by *Josephus*. A-

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gainst all this plain Evidence, the Enemies to the Passage have nothing to oppose but negative Evidence, such as the Silence of ancienter Christian Writers concerning this Testimony, and *Josephus's* continuing a *Jew* after he had given it. But neither of these can be sufficient to shake its Credit with any one that considers, that the first of these might happen thro' Causes easy to be assigned, and the Force of Prejudices will account for the latter; whilst it is utterly incredible, and altogether unaccountable, that an Interpolation like this should ever pass unobserved by either *Jews* or *Gentiles*, neither of which were Strangers to *Josephus's* Writings, and that no one Copy should come down pure to our Times.

The same *Josephus* speaks also of *John Baptist*, with the utmost Veneration, owns his Character as a Baptist, and speaks of his Death in the same Manner as the Gospel does.

He makes also honourable Mention of *James the Less*, terming him a most just or righteous Person, and making the Siege of *Jerusalem*, which followed soon after, a Judgment from God on its Inhabitants, for putting to Death so excellent a Person.

Lastly, he speaks likewise with great Commendation of *Manaen*, the Foster Brother of *Herod the Tetrarch*, of whom Mention is made, *Acts, Chap. xiii. Ver. 1.* as one of the Christian Prophets and Teachers at *Antioch*, unto whom, as they ministered and fasted, the Holy Ghost gave a Commandment to separate *Barnabas* and *Saul* for the Work whereunto he had called them.

And as the good, so likewise the bad or disadvantageous Characters given of Persons by the Historians of the New Testament, are never contradicted, and sometimes are confirmed by concurrent profane Histories.

E. G. The three *Herods*, the first of whom was surnamed *the Great*, who murdered the Infants ; the second *Herod Antipas*, who put to Death *John the Baptist*, and the third *Herod Agrippa*, who slew *James* with the Sword, have nothing said of them in the *Gospels* and *Acts*, but what suits with the Characters given to each of them in *Josephus* ; and the cruel Slaughter made of the Infants by the former of these *Herods*, is attested to by *Macrobius*, a *Pagan* Historian.

The Character also of *Felix*, the *Roman* Governor, in *Tacitus*, exactly tallies with his Behaviour to *St. Paul*.

Upon the Whole therefore, the sacred Historians appear to have given Characters of Persons and Things with the utmost Impartiality. Neither Love nor Hate, neither Hopes nor Fears, seem to have given the least Byass to the Course of the Narratives they have left behind them. And therefore upon this, as well as other Accounts,

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S E R M O N V. 117

were naturally qualified to give a just and faithful Relation of the Matters, concerning which they are said to have written.

The next Point therefore to be made good is, that the reputed Authors of the Historical Books in the New Testament, who appear so well qualified, were really, and *bona Fide*, the Authors of those Books. But this must, God willing, be the Subject of my next Lecture.

S E R M O N VI.

Second Epistle of St. Peter, Chap. i.
Verse 16.

*For we have not followed cunningly
devised Fables, when we made known
unto you the Power and Coming of
our Lord Jesus Christ; but were
Eye-witnesses of his Majesty and
Glory.*

ON Occasion of these Words in my
last Discourse, I propos'd to de-
fend the Historical Part of the
New Testament, in which the two great
Evidences for Christianity, *viz.* Miracles
and Prophecies fulfilled, are contained.

And I then told you, that Histories of all Kinds were then deemed worthy of Credit: *First*, When their reputed Authors were properly qualified to do Justice to the Subject they took in Hand. *Secondly*, When it appears out of Doubt, that the Histories in Question were really, and *bona fide*, written by the reputed Authors so properly qualified. *Thirdly*, When such Histories, as were at first confessedly both credible and genuine, have been in the main faithfully transmitted down to our Times.

The first of these Marks or Notes of credible History, I then proved to belong to the four Gospels, and to the *Acts* of the Apostles, *viz.* that *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John* were properly qualified to write true Histories of the Subjects they took in Hand.

I now therefore proceed in the second Place to make it appear, that the sacred Histories, above specified, were really, and
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S E R M O N VI. 121

bona fide, written by the Authors whose Names they carry, and whose Qualifications for writing truly have already been amply set forth.

I conceive it will be allowed me, that the Question concerning the Genuineness of the New Testament Histories, must be determined upon the very same Principles on which we decide for the Genuineness of other ancient Books.

Now we never question the Genuineness of such Books.

First, When they contain nothing which happened in Times later than those wherein their reputed Authors lived.

Secondly, When the Style of the Books agrees with the Circumstances of the Persons whose Names they bear.

Thirdly, and above all, When such Writers, as live in or nearest to the Times in which they were written, invariably, or
however

122 S E R M O N VI.

however generally ascribe them to the Persons whose Names they at present go under, or at least adjudge them to no other Authors.

But all these Characteristicks of Genuineness belong to the four Gospels and to the *Acts* of the Apostles.

For *First*, they contain nothing which happened later than the Times therein treated of, or than those of their reputed Authors. Against this I know of but two Objections.

The first of which affects the Gospel of St. *Luke*, and is as follows: That Evangelist makes our Lord's Birth to have happened in the Days of *Herod* the King of *Judab*, i. e. of *Herod* the Great. At the same Time he gives us another Æra of this Event, making it to have fallen out in the Days of the Taxing, which Taxing is said to have been made when *Cyrenius* was Governor of *Syria*. But the Enemies to the sacred History think they have discovered,
that

that the Taxation under *Cyrenius* was imposed and gathered about twelve Years after, when, according to *Josephus Quirinius*, he was made Prefect of *Syria*, and many Years after the Death of *Herod* the Great, But it has fully been made out by learned Men, that *St. Luke* and *Josephus* speak of different Events, tho' both happened under the same *Cyrenius*. The former, spoken of by *St. Luke*, was only a Census or Enrollment of Persons and Estates, without a Demand of Tribute; the latter a Levy or Tax, actually gathered, and probably the same with what is mentioned by *Gamaliel* in the *Acts* of the Apostles, when *Judas* of *Galilee* drew so many People after him into Sedition and Rebellion, in the Days of the Taxing.

The second Objection is levelled against the Gospel of *St. Matthew*, from *Chap. xxiii. 25.* where we find these Words spoken by our Saviour in the Lamentation over *Jerusalem*. *That upon you may come all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel, unto the Blood of Zacharias the Son of Barachias, whom*

whom ye slew between the Temple and the Altar.

“ Now, say the Enemies to the Gospel,
 “ this *Zacharias*, as we learn from *Josephus*,
 “ was slain in the Commotions pre-
 “ ceding the Siege and Destruction of *Jerusalem*,
 “ which fell out *An. 70.* some
 “ Years after the Writing of this Gospel,
 “ and almost forty Years after Christ is
 “ supposed to have uttered these Words.”

But why must the *Zacharias*, spoken of by our Saviour, I say, why must he needs be the *Zacharias* of *Josephus*, and no other? Especially when we find another of this very Name, 2 *Chron. xxiv. 20.* a Prophet, whom the *Jews* put to Death in the Court of the Lord's House many hundred Years before our Lord's Time, who therefore might be, and who most probably was the *Zacharias* spoken of by him.

We shall perhaps be told, that this could not be, because the *Zacharias* in *St. Matthew* is called by Christ the Son of *Barachias* :

S E R M O N VI. 125

cbias : Whereas the *Zacharias* of the *Chronicles* is said therein to have been, not the Son of *Barachias*, but of *Jebojada*, who therefore must have been a different Person.

But how do the Objectors know, that the Father of *Zacharias*, of whom we read in the second Book of *Chronicles*, besides the Name of *Jebojada*, might also have that of *Barachias* ?

Nothing is more common in Scripture, than for the same Person to be spoken of under different Names, and therefore, till the Objectors can shew that this was not the Case of *Jebojada*, he may be the very Person whom our Saviour mentions under the Name of *Barachias*, and then the Objection falls of Course.

Besides, as the *Zacharias*, in the Book of *Chronicles*, is not affirmed to be the Son of *Barachias*, but of *Jebojada* : So the *Zacharias* of *Josephus* is not called by him the Son of *Barachias*, but of *Baruchus*,
which

126 S E R M O N VI.

which, tho' somewhat alike in Sound, are quite different Names.

Lastly, There is one Circumstance which attended the Death of *Zacharias*, in the History of the *Chronicles*, which no Man can compare with the Occasion of our Lord's Words, in the 23d *Chap.* of *St. Matthew*, without perceiving him to be the *Zacharias* there spoken of: For Christ mentions a *Zacharias*, the shedding of whose Blood, as well as that of *Abel's*, was emphatically to be required. But as *Abel's* Blood cried from the Earth for Vengeance against his Murderer: So when *Zacharias* the Prophet was put to Death by the *Jews*, the Author of the second Book of *Chronicles* informs us, that he left this Burden upon his Murderers. *The Lord look upon it, and require it.* He therefore was the *Zacharias* proper to the Words of our Lord, and exactly answering the Design of them. And thus the second Cavil against the Genuineness of the Gospels is effectually removed out of our Way. And the Evangelists appear to have written nothing but

but what falls within the Time assigned by them, or later than the Time in which they are supposed to have lived and written.

Let us now consider, *Secondly*, How far the second Mark of Genuineness is applicable to the sacred Histories, by examining whether the Style, in the Language and Manner of it, be such as the reputed Authors of them might be supposed to make use of.

Three of the sacred Writers were *Jews* born, *viz.* *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *John*. It was natural therefore to expect that they writing in *Greek*, which was not their native Language, should not always express themselves with the same Purity, which is found in the Writings of such as were *Greeks* by Birth. Men under the Circumstances of these three Evangelists, if left to the Choice of their own Expressions, would introduce frequently the Idiom of their own native Speech, and sometimes of other Languages, to which they had been accustomed.

128 S E R M O N V I.

stomed. As to the fourth Evangelist, St. *Luke*, he was not a *Jew* born, but became such by Profelytism, and was a Native of *Antioch*, a City of *Syria*, and an University, where probably he improved himself in the Language and the Arts of *Greece*. Such a Person therefore would in all Likelihood express himself in purer *Greek* than the *Hebrew* Evangelists, and yet his Language could not be supposed to be wholly free from *Syriack* Idioms, thro' the Prejudices of his native Place and Language. And agreeable to all this is the real State of the sacred Histories: St. *Matthew*, who never left the Holy Land till the Writing of the Gospel, which goes by his Name, writes like a *Hebrew* of the *Hebrews*, who at that Time had never visited any foreign Climate, generally clothing *Hebrew* and *Syriack* Modes of Speech in a *Greek* Garb, and citing the Old Testament, principally according to the *Hebrew* Original, rather than the *Greek* Version, which goes by the Name of the *Septuagint*.

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St. *Mark*, who wrote his Gospel after some stay made at *Rome*, abounds less with *Hebraisms* and *Syriasm*s, than St. *Matthew*, tho' still retaining a sufficient Number of them; and having by his Abode at *Rome* learnt in some Measure the *Latin* Tongue, now and then expresses the Military Affairs of the *Roman* Soldiers at *Jerusalem* in their own Words, written according to the *Greek* Spelling and Termination.

St. *John* wrote his Gospel after many Years Absence from his native Country, and tho' probably, on that Account, he has fewer Mixtures of the *Eastern* Idiom in his Style, than either of the former Evangelists, yet has enough of this Kind to bespeak and point out his Extraction. Besides this, the Writer of the Gospel, which goes under the Name of St. *John*, does, towards the latter End of it, point himself to be that very Person. For plain it is, that the Person who in this Gospel is frequently spoken of under the Periphrasis of being the Disciple whom Jesus loved, was

John. Having therefore related St. *Peter's* Question to our Lord concerning the beloved Disciple, together with our Lord's Answer, he immediately subjoins, *This is the Disciple which testifieth of these Things, and wrote these Things, and we know that his Testimony is true.*

Lastly, the Gospel according to St. *Luke* exactly tallies with the Circumstances of his Birth, Religion, and Education, being just such a one as might be expected from all these. It is remarkable for greater Purity of Style, than the other sacred Writings, and for abounding less with *Hebraisms*, and for closely following the *Septuagint* Translation of the Old Testament, which was used by the Hellenist *Jews*. And yet there are in it plain Indications of a Writer, who was no *Greek* by Birth, but who was conversant in the *Greek* of the Synagogue, and whose native Tongue was *Syriack*.

Thus we see that the very Imperfections, as they are by some accounted, in the Style of the sacred Histories, prove to their Advantage,

vantage, supplying us with indubitable Proofs of their Genuinenefs; whereas had they been penned in the chafte *Athenian* Taffe, we fhould have been harder put to it to afcertain them to their reputed Authors, who naturally had not Talents for compofing elegantly in that noble and copious Language. And I cannot therefore but hope, that the Lovers of *Greek* Propriety will be lefs follicitous to vindicate the Purity of the Style of the *Greek* Teftament; both becaufe it is a Defign which never can wholly fucceed, and becaufe, if it fhould, Religion would rather fuffer, than be benefited thereby.

The third, the laft, and principal Note of the Genuinenefs of ancient Books is, when fuch Writers, as live in or neareft the Times in which thofe Books were written, invariably, or, however, generally afcribe them to the Perfons whofe Names they at prefent go under, or at leaft adjudge them to no other. The Reason of this Mark is obvious, *viz.* that the nearer a Writer is in Time to the Piece, whofe Ge-

132 S E R M O N VI.

nuineness we inquire after, the better Opportunities he must have of informing himself concerning its Authors; and where the Generality of such Writers agree in their Report, their Evidence is irresistible.

But this Note also, in the strongest Manner, belongs to the four Gospels, and to the *Acts* of the blessed Apostles.

For that St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* were the Authors of Gospels, we learn from *Papias*, who flourished within fifty Years after those Gospels came abroad, and who lived in the Apostolical Age itself. A little later than the Middle of the second Age, and within about one hundred Years after the earliest of the Church's Gospels, flourished *Irenæus*, the first who cites the four Gospels by Name. He had been instructed by *Polycarp*, who had conversed with St. *John*: So that his Evidence for the Genuineness of the four Gospels, may be resolved into that of the Apostolical Age itself. Later, but still in the second Century, *Clemens* of *Alexandria*, and *Tertulian*

lian concur in the same Testimony. For the Truth of which it is worth remarking, that these three eminent and early Fathers do in the strongest Manner appeal, not to their Predecessors singly, but to the Tradition of Churches, nor to those of lesser Note, but even to the Apostolical Sees, traced up to the Apostles their Founders. They affirm of the four Gospels, that they, under their present Titles, were with the Church *a primordio, i. e.* from the Beginning, or from their first Publication. Every succeeding Bishop, in those Churches, respectively received this Tradition from his Predecessor, and handed it down to him that came after. And on these unshaken Principles do the Writers of the third Century ascribe the Gospels and *Acts* of the Apostles to their respective Authors: Nor does any one Catholick Writer, from those early Days to our own Times, question the Genuineness of those sacred Histories. Some Parts of the New Testament Canon were later received into the Code of the Church than others, being doubted of by some particular Churches. But as to the Historical

Books, with which we are now concerned, no Catalogue of Scriptures wanted them, but they were read and received throughout the Christian World for genuine and inspired. And certainly the Doubts and Demurs of particular Churches to some of the New Testament Scriptures, greatly strengthens their Evidence to the Genuineness of those in which the Church Universal was agreed. For it shews, that in those Days Christians were not implicit Believers in such Points, but judged for themselves; receiving no Book as Genuine and Canonical, upon the mere Authority of Churches, how great or ancient soever they might be. From whence we may justly conclude, that if the Authenticity of the four Gospels and the *Acts* of the Apostles had not been established beyond all reasonable Contradiction, they would no more have met with an universal Reception from the Beginning, than the doubted Part of the Canon did. If any one therefore has thought it strange, that ever the divine Providence should suffer any Part of the Primitive Church to have been doubtful concerning some Books
of

S E R M O N VI. 135

of unquestionable Inspiration, he must now be convinced, that it was done for the greater Confirmation of those, wherein the entire Body of Christians were agreed; which was an End worthy of Providence, which at the same Time took care at last to remove all Prejudices, and to make way for the Reception of the whole Canon of Scripture, as it now stands.

But to return to my main Subject. Having shewn, that the Catholick Writers, nearest in Time to the Age of the Gospels, have unanimously ascribed them to the Authors whose Names they bear, and that no sound Christian has since pretended to dispute their Genuineness, I might now conclude the present Head, but that it may perhaps be expected I should give some Account, what were the Sentiments of the Enemies to the Christian Name, and likewise those of heretical Christians on this Subject.

As to the former of these then, we do not find that any one ancient Antichristian

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Writer

Writer ever attempted to call in Question the Genuineness of the Gospels or *Acts*. It should be remembered, at the same Time, that *Celsus*, *Porphry*, and *Julian the Apostate* had too much Zeal against Christianity to omit any Method of Argumentation, that would distress or disparage it; and that they had too much Sagacity not to perceive that nothing could hurt it more, than to render its principal Writings of doubtful Credit and Genuineness. That they therefore should never make the least Attempt this Way, is an invincible Presumption, that the Thing was utterly impracticable; that not the least Suspicion of Spuriousness could be fixed on the Holy Gospels, and that their Genuineness was unquestionable.

More than this, the last of the above-named Antichristian Writers, and on many Accounts the most considerable of them, gives a positive Evidence in favour of the four Gospels, admitting them to have been written by the very Persons to whom the Church has always justly ascribed them: I mean
Julian;

S E R M O N VI. 137

Julian the Apostate. He knew the utmost that could be said for and against the Genuineness of these and all other Canonical Books, having, in shew at least, professed Christianity, and even officiated in one of the lower Orders of the Church: For such a one, therefore, writing professedly against the Religion of our Lord, with all the Rage and Malice that Apostacy could inspire, to own that *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* were the Authors of the Gospels, which go under their respective Names, is an Evidence above all Exception or Contradiction.

As to Hereticks, ancient and modern, tho' some of the former Kind denied the Authority of all the Church's Gospels, yet none of them questioned their Genuineness, save *Manes* and his Followers in the third Century. And these pretended to no Sort of Evidence of the Spuriousness of the Gospels, either internal or external, but only affirmed the Thing as revealed to them by their Paraclet, by whom they gave out that they were inspired. Nor did any, after these mad-brained Enthusiasts, question the Genuineness of the Gospels, till the
sixteenth

138 S E R M O N VI.

fixteenth Century, when the *Anabaptists* in *Germany*, on much the same weak and enthusiastick Pretences, denied that they were written by the four reputed Evangelists.

What makes the Concessions of the early Hereticks, in this Point, the more important is, that they were constrained to deny the Authority of the Gospels, whilst they admitted them to be genuine : Whereas, if the Truth would have permitted it, the more rational Way had been to have founded their Rejection of the Gospels on their being spurious. But this being not controvertible, the Hereticks were forced to excuse their setting aside the Church's Gospels, upon Pretences that were equally immodest and absurd. They gave out that the Apostles preached before they had a perfect Knowledge : They denied that the Truth could be learned from the Scriptures, without the Help of a Tradition, whereof they alone had the Custody. They boasted themselves to be wiser than the Apostles, and that they alone found out the
sincere

S E R M O N VI. 139

fincere Truth, whilst the Apostles blended the Law with the Doctrines of our Saviour, with more to the same Purpose. If then these Hereticks, most of whom lived in the next Succession to the Apostles, for want of Objections to the Genuineness of the received Gospels, were forced to set aside their Authority upon the monstrous Principles above specified; no one surely, at this Distance of Time, can rationally account them spurious.

It must not be concealed that an Attempt has of late Years been made to set aside the Genuineness of the first Gospel, that, according to St. *Matthew*, under a Pretence that it went under many other different Titles in the first Age of Christianity; which would evince, that the Ancients were utterly at a Loss to whom to ascribe this Gospel.

But upon Inquiry the Fact is found to be false, no Evidence appearing for the first Gospel's being ascribed to any one but St. *Matthew*, in the first, second, or third Age of Christianity. In the fourth Age indeed

Jerom

140 S E R M O N VI.

Jerom and *Epiphanius* supposed the Gospel according to the *Hebrews*, and the *Nazarene* Gospel, with some Variations, to have been the *Hebrew* of *St. Matthew*: But all the while those Fathers believed it, tho' going under the other Names, to have been the genuine Work of *St. Matthew*.

However, plain it is, from the Fragments of the Gospel, according to the *Hebrews*, yet preserved, that both those Fathers mistook, when they spake of it as the *Hebrew* of *St. Matthew*. For from those Fragments it appears widely different from *St. Matthew's* Gospel, and to have come much nearer to that of *St. Luke*, than to any of the other four.

Thus I think it appears, that the sacred History of the New Testament, contained in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, have all the Notes and Characteristicks of Genuineness, which use to ascertain ancient Writings to the Authors whose Names they bear. As

First,

S E R M O N VI. 141

First, They contain nothing later in Time than the Age of their reputed Authors.

Secondly, That the Style is such as those Authors would naturally use, when they should undertake to write in *Greek*.

Thirdly, That the Writers, who lived nearest to the Times in which those Histories were written, invariably ascribe them to the Persons whose Names they now go under, or at least adjudge them to no others. The Conclusion from whence is, that the sacred Histories, when first written, were credible and genuine Narratives.

And nothing is now wanting to evince, that they are yet such, but a Proof, that those Writings have been, in the main, faithfully transmitted down to the present Times.

But that must be deferred to the next Opportunity.

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S E R M O N VII.

Second Epistle of St. Peter, Chap. i.
Verse 16.

*For we have not followed cunningly
devised Fables, when we made known
unto you the Power and Coming of
our Lord Jesus Christ; but were
Eye-witnesses of his Majesty and
Glory.*

I HAVE, in the Course of former Lectures, shewn,

First, That the reputed Authors of the four *Gospels*, and of the *Acts* of the Apostles, were properly qualified to write the Histories that are contained in those Books.

Secondly,

Secondly, That those reputed Authors, so well qualified to do Justice to the Subjects concerning which they wrote, were really the Compilers of the Histories respectively ascribed to them.

Nothing therefore remains to be done, for establishing the Credibility of those Histories, as now extant, but to prove, in the third and last Place, that those Histories, which, in their first Estate were thus credible and genuine, have been, in the Main, faithfully transmitted and conveyed down to the present Times.

And of this we have infinitely better Evidence, than we have for the Conveyance of any other Histories whatever.

For first, whereas other ancient Histories were but of little Concern to the several Ages, thro' which they have passed to us, and consequently we have, by no Means, an Assurance, that no material Alterations have been made therein: The sacred

cred Histories of the New Testament were of the utmost Consequence to every Age of Christians, and therefore all imaginable Care may be presumed to have been employed to preserve them, in the Main, pure and unaltered. Besides, they were Books to which daily Recourse were had, either for the Conduct of private Christians, or for publick Instruction in their solemn Assemblies ; so that no Additions or Defalcations could be made in them, but what must have been immediately perceived and remedied. Such also was the Zeal of Christians in all Ages for those holy Books, and so great their Reverence for the Authors of them, that they would have parted with their Lives, rather than have permitted any known Changes to have been made therein. Indeed it is scarce credible, how jealous the early Christians were of Variations in the minutest Instances, from what they had been used to hear as Part of Scripture. One remarkable Example of which I shall here give you. You must know then, that St. *Jerom* corrected the old *Latin* Translation of the Old Testament,

VOL. II. L ment,

ment, or rather made a new One, that should be more conformable to the *Hebrew* Original, than the *Latin* Version then in Use, which had exactly followed the *Greek* of the *Septuagint*. Now, among other Differences, which hence arose between the old and new *Latin* Version, one happened in the Prophet *Jonab*; where, for what in our *English* Translation is read a *Gourd*, the old *Latin* rendered *Cucurbita*, which *Jerom's Latin* changed into *Hædera*: Which of these was the more proper Version, is not our present Business to determine, nor did it concern any Point of Doctrine or Morality, which was to be preferred to the other. But yet this Alteration had like to have produced great Mischiefs in the Church; an Account whereof we have in an Epistle from *Austin* to *Jerom*. A certain Bishop, says he, had a Mind to introduce, into his Church, the Reading of *Jerom's Latin* Version of the Old Testament, instead of that formerly used therein: But the People finding, in the Prophecy of *Jonab*, a new Word *Hædera*, instead of *Cucurbita*, to which they and their Forefathers had been for some Ages accustomed, made so great an Outcry

S E R M O N VII. 147

and Disturbance, that they were upon the Point of leaving their Bishop, on Account of the Alteration: Nor had he any other Means to keep his Flock from Desertion, but by replacing the old Word *Cucurbita*, and erasing *Hædera*. Now, the Use I would make of this Story in the present Argument should be, to make you sensible of the Difficulty, or rather Impossibility of making any Changes of Moment in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. For if the ancient Christians were so tenacious of their old *Latin* Version, as to raise a Tumult upon the Change of but one single Word, which made no material Difference in the Sense of a Prophet; how tragical, how clamorous, how out of all Patience would an old Christian Audience have been, upon hearing Facts added in the Histories of the New Testament, or Passages omitted, to the Recital of which they and their Fathers had been accustomed their whole Lives before. Besides, how improbable, if not impossible, it is, that an Attempt to deprave the Gospels and other received Books of the New Testament, should suc-

148 S E R M O N VII.

ceed, must appear to every one, who considers how widely dispersed the Copies of those Books were, both in their original Languages, and in the Versions early made from them for the Use of such Churches as were Strangers to the *Greek* Tongue. He therefore that would to purpose have corrupted the holy Books, must have done it at once all the World over, and have persuaded the Bishops and Clergy of the Church to have surrendered their Bibles to be altered, as the Designs of Hereticks, or the Malice of unbelieving Men, should require. He must, moreover, have prevailed with private Christians, to have given up their Copies of Scripture for the same wicked Purpose. And those very Men, who often, in Time of Persecution, refused to surrender their Bibles to be burnt, at the Expence of their own Lives, must be supposed easily to have consented to a still greater Mischief and Dishonour of the Christian Religion. For, better had it been for the Church of God entirely to have lost her written Rule of Faith and Manners, than to have submitted to a false
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S E R M O N VII. 149

and fallacious one. But neither are these all the Difficulties, which would have lain in the Way of any one, that should early have attempted the depraving of the Church's Gospels. For besides what has been already mentioned, he must have gone to work with the Creeds, that were received and agreed to throughout the Christian World: For they contain a Summary of our Lord's History, and, without undergoing some material Alterations, would have been perpetual and standing Evidences against depraved Gospels. The same may be said of the ancient Liturgies; in which doubtless, as well as in our own, were inserted, or at least alluded to, many Sayings and Actions of our blessed Saviour: All which must have been new formed, to make them correspond with the corrupted Records of Christianity. A suitable Change also must have been made in the Festivals of the Church, instituted as Memorials of the great Events mentioned in the genuine Gospels, which must have been put down, and others appointed, that would be more agreeable to the new fangled Memoirs of

150 S E R M O N VII.

the Life and Doctrines of our blessed Saviour.

Lastly, to mention no more, the Writings of the Apostolical and other early Fathers, dispersed throughout the Christian World, must have been called in, and made conformable to the new modelled Gospels, in Doctrines, in historical Facts, and literal Citations from those holy Books: And if this was not practicable, as it hardly was, they must have been utterly suppressed; that so no Remains might be left of the Gospels and other historical Books in their first Purity. And he who can believe, that all these Difficulties could possibly be got over by any Man, or by any Set of Men, must have it entirely in his Power to believe whatever he wishes to be true, tho' ever so ridiculous and impracticable.

But, *Secondly*, Besides the seeming Impossibility of such a Depravation in the Nature and Reason of the Thing, we have such unquestionable Evidences, and Monuments

S E R M O N VII. 151

numents of the Gospels having been faithfully conveyed down to us, as no other History ever had. For what extant profane History is there, of any Antiquity, from which any competent Portions have been cited by the Writers of every Age, since those Histories were published, from which it may appear, upon comparing them, that the Copies we now have, in the Main, are pure and uncorrupted? Whereas, in every Century, since the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles appeared in the World, many Ecclesiastical Writers have cited largely from them, and for the greater Part conformably to each other, and to the Copies we now possess. Besides occasional Citations, in most of the intervening Ages, some, or all the Gospels, have been explained and commented upon, and the entire Text has been recited, as is usually done by Scholiasts and Expositors. Add to all this the ancient Versions of the Gospels and Acts yet extant, as the *Syriack*, probably composed in the second Century, and *Jerom's vulgar Latin* in the fourth, besides others of a later Date; all which,

152 S E R M O N VII.

excepting some inconsiderable Variations, perfectly agree together.

Upon the Whole, therefore, the sacred Histories of the New Testament have incomparably more and stronger Vouchers for their Integrity, than any profane Books of equal Antiquity whatever: So that, either the Uncorruptness of the former must be allowed us, or the latter must be entirely given up, as unworthy of the least Credit. For few profane Historians have been cited by Writers of the intermediate Ages, fewer still have been translated, and none, that I know of, have been commented upon.

I shall add only one Argument more for the Incorruptness of the New Testament Scriptures, especially of the Historical Parts of them, which, tho' a negative one, is to me very convincing; and that is, the Silence of Hereticks and Apostates as to any Falsification of those Books. Frauds of this Kind might probably have been kept secret, if Christians had been all along u-
nanimous

S E R M O N VII. 153

unanimous in other Respects; and if no considerable Men had at any Time revolted from them to the *Pagan* Superstition. But this was by no Means the Cause of *Christianity* in the early Ages: It was split by Schisms and various Heresies, the Heads whereof would have been glad of any Handle for vilifying the Orthodox Church, with so black a Charge, as that of corrupting and altering the original Records of Christianity, and who thereby might have screened their own Errors from the Imputation of being unscriptural. And yet among the soberer and more rational Hereticks, we hear not so much as a Suspicion of any such Thing as Scriptures falsified: But Hereticks, as well as *Catholicks*, appeal to the same Gospels, &c. as authentic and unquestionable. And as the Church was early exercised by the Hostilities of Heretical Adversaries, so was it sometimes vexed and harassed by Apostates: But neither did any of these pretend to tax the Christian Church, after they had deserted her, with altering the written Charter of her
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her Religion. Particularly *Julian* the Emperor, who, whilst in Pretence a Christian, had probably seen Copies of the Gospels and Acts, as old as the Apostolical Age itself, had yet observed no Variations between *them*, and those current in his own Time. For he complains of none in his Writings, after he became an Apostate, and a most bitter Enemy to the Christian Name, as he certainly would have done, if Cause had been given for it.

But against all this it is objected by the Adversaries to the Gospel, that the ancient Copies, Versions, Commentaries and Citations, made from thence by ancient Fathers, to which we appeal for the Integrity and Uniformity of the New Testament History in all Ages, prove the direct contrary. For, from all these, say they, learned and zealous Christians have collected no less than thirty Thousand various Readings; which shews, that since the Text of those Books is so precarious, no Proof can be built thereon for the Truth and divine Authority of the Christian Religion.

To

To which I shall reply, first, in Respect to the Number of the various Readings so much complained of ; and,

Secondly, With Regard to the Importance of those Readings.

First, The great Number of the various Readings in the Gospels, and Acts of the Apostles, is what we freely confess : But then we say, that this is not peculiar to the Books of the New Testament, but is common to all Writings of equal Antiquity. The first Transcribers of Books usually made Slips of this Kind, and their Successors continued and added to the Mistakes : So that the Objection from various Readings in general, affects all ancient Books alike : And if they, nevertheless, are conceived not to affect the faithful Conveyance of profane Books, neither ought they to be urged against that of sacred ones. If they say further, that no profane Book, of equal Size and Antiquity with the New Testament, has so many various

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156 S E R M O N VII.

rious Readings as are collected in a late celebrated Edition, which yet is denied, by a very learned and every Way competent Judge of such Matters, the Reason of the Difference is evident, *viz.* that no one Book of the same Age has been near so often transcribed, translated, commented on, and cited from, as the New Testament hath been. From which Circumstances an uncommon Number of various Readings must arise, without a Miracle to prevent it. So that if the Transcribers of sacred and Ecclesiastical Books, had not been more accurate than the Copists of ancient *Greek* and *Latin* Writers, the Disproportion between the various Readings of each must probably have been much greater, than it now is. Besides, they who complain of the excessive Number of various Readings in the New Testament, as rendering the Text precarious, betray either great Ignorance, or Malice: For a very learned Person, if Infidels had Room for Conviction, has evinced, that by how much the greater the Number of various Readings on any old Book are, by so much a
better

better and more exact Text may be compiled from them: So that, if instead of thirty Thousand various Readings in the New Testament, Criticks could have supplied us with sixty Thousand, the sacred Text thereof might have been rendered more perfect, than it now is. So that the comparative small Number of various Readings in ancient secular Writings, is a Disadvantage, rather than a Happiness to them. Here, therefore, the Artillery of our Enemies turns upon themselves, and their very Objections prove what they were intended to gainsay, *viz.* the Integrity and Purity of the sacred Text of the New Testament. But, *Secondly*, Supposing the Number of various Readings in the New Testament, *ceteris paribus*, to exceed that of other ancient Histories, and that such various Readings might possibly have affected the Credit of the four Gospels and Acts of the Apostles; yet, unless it has really and actually done them this Mischief, the Number of them is no Objection at all to the faithful Conveyance of those Books. And upon the exactest Inquiry we find, that we may safely

158 S E R M O N VII.

safely leave it to the Enemies of Revelation, to make their utmost Advantage of all the Varieties that can be collected from Manuscripts, Versions, Commentaries, and Citations. They have often been defied to make up a Text out of all these, that will alter the Christian System in any one important Particular whatever. They have been told, that when this has been done, every Article of Faith, and every Rule of good Living, will be found in their new compacted Text, which appears at present in our current ones. And which is more to the present Purpose, we may defy them, by the Use of such Means, to deprive us of any one Evidence for the Truth of the Christian Religion, from Miracles performed, or Prophecies fulfilled. They will not be able to strike out one of either Sort from the Number of them, as they stand at present. To what Purpose then is it, to charge the History of the New Testament with Defects of so little Importance, as do not affect either its Usefulness, or its Veracity. We own, that the *Greek* Testament has suffered by Length of Time, as
well

S E R M O N VII. 159

well as other old Books; but the good Providence of God over the sacred Contents of it, has therein remarkably appeared, that neither the Fraud of Heretical Transcribers, nor the Carelessness and human Inadvertency of *Catholick* ones, have produced various Readings, that affect Christianity in its Fundamentals of Doctrine and Practice, or that weaken the great Evidences of Truth and Divinity therein contained.

And thus I have shewn, that the Historical Books of the New Testament, wherein the Facts of Miracles and Prophecies fulfilled are set down, deserve to be credited on the Strength of those very Maxims, which induce all reasonable Men to believe other ancient Narratives, *viz.* that they were unquestionably committed to Writing at first, by Hands that were capable and willing to speak the Truth, and that their Writings have been, in the Main, faithfully conveyed down to the present Times.

But

160 S E R M O N VII.

But before I conclude, permit me to recapitulate, and present you, at once, with what I have been doing for some Years in the Course of these Lectures.

The great Point laboured throughout, has been to state and defend the two grand Evidences of Christianity, Miracles and Prophecies fulfilled.

As to the former of these, the Evidence of Miracles, two Difficulties have generally attended the Use of it.

First, How to make a right and good Definition of them ; and,

Secondly, To bring the Evidence from them within a moderate Compass: Because it has been thought by some necessary, first to prove a Revelation good and right in its Internals, before we can use the Argument from Miracles in its Favour.

I therefore proposed a Method in treating of Miracles, by which both these Incumbrances might be removed, and much both of Time and Perplexity be saved in the Use of this grand Evidence.

In order to which I affirmed, and, as I verily think, have proved, that Miracles, so circumstanced as those of the Gospel are, do singly and directly prove the Revelation by them attested to come from God, to every one that owns his Being, and admits his essential Perfections, And those Circumstances are, *first*, that the Miracles so attesting were single, unrivalled, and unopposed by others, in Favour of a different Religion, pretending likewise to have come from God. Or, *Secondly*, In Case there was a Rivalship or Opposition, the Miracles done for the Gospel were most in Number, and strangest in Kind. I first shewed in general, that these Rules for distinguishing when Miracles prove a Revelation to be divine, were good and sufficient in themselves; and, secondly, That the Religions of *Moses* and *Christ* were confirmed by Mi-
 VOL. II. M racles,

162 S E R M O N VII.

acles exactly answerable to these Rules, Miracles that were either unopposed, or else superior to all Opposition.

By considering the Gospel Miracles in this Light, both the Ends proposed were fully answered. For, first, hereby was precluded all Nicety about the Definition of a Miracle ; it being sufficient to our Purpose, that an Effect distinguished by that Name, be such a one as exceeds human Power and Art to bring about. Hereby also, secondly, we were relieved from the Toil of proving the Internals of the Gospel to be sound and worthy of God ; about which, tho' an evident Point, Unbelievers may raise Cavils without End : For if the Miracles of the Gospel, according to the Rules laid down, prove the Revelation therein contained to have come from God, the Internals of the Revelation must be good and worthy of its Author, any Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding.

Having

Having shewn, that the Miracles of the Gospel absolutely and directly proved it to be a divine Revelation, to them who beheld those Miracles, the next Step was to shew the Certainty of those Facts, to all who have lived in the Ages following. In order to which, I shewed, that the Tradition or Conveyance of those miraculous Facts, has been as regular and unquestionable, as the Nature of distant and past Events can possibly admit of. From whence I argued, that as it is inconsistent with the divine Perfections, and therefore impossible, that God should do, or suffer to be done, unopposed or superior Miracles, in Behalf of any pretended Revelation, that really came not from him: So, for the same Reason, it is morally impossible, that he should give Leave for a false Account of Miracles to descend to us, with all the Marks and Appearances of Truth, as he must have done, if the Gospel History be a Narrative of Facts which never happened. The Enemies of Revelation, knowing the Force of the Argument from

Miracles, have endeavoured to fet it aside two Ways: First, by a Pretence that it is beside the Question: Jesus and his Apostles having founded Christianity on a different Bottom, to wit, Prophecies fulfilled. And, secondly, they pretend, that, as Miracles are not an original and essential Proof of Christianity, so they are not a good subsidiary one: Because, if the Scripture Argument from Prophecy be invalid, Miracles cannot alter its Nature, so as to make it a valid one. In answer to which, I have endeavoured to demonstrate, that Jesus and his Apostles have, at least, laid as much Strefs on Miracles, as Proofs of the Gospel Religion, as they have done on Prophecy: And that consequently, Miracles are a pertinent and original Proof of Christianity.

Secondly, That Prophecies cited in the New Testament, as fulfilled by Christ, are no invalid Foundation of Christianity, and therefore need not the Aid of Miracles to make it good.

S E R M O N VII. 165

In the Prosecution of this latter Point, I ran thro' most of the Prophecies made use of by the Writers of the New Testament, and shewed of each, as I went along, that there was nothing weak or absurd in the Accommodation of it, by the sacred Writers, to the Person and the Times of Jesus Christ. This was all that the Method of our Adversaries required to be said, in Behalf of the Scripture Evidence from Prophecy; though I took Occasion to shew frequently, that a great deal more might be said for it, if Need were; and that the Completion of those Prophecies, to the *Jews* especially, for whose Use, and to whom they were principally applied, were irrefragable Proofs of Jesus's being the Christ.

After I had done this, nothing further seemed necessary to the Vindication of the two grand Foundations of Christianity, Miracles and Prophecy, but to defend the Canon of the Old Testament, in which the Prophecies were to be found, and likewise

166 S E R M O N VII.

the Historical Parts of the New, which contained the Events, by which ancient Predictions were fulfilled; and also the many and wonderful Miracles, by which God confirmed the Religion of his Son Jesus, against the Cavils of Gainfayers.

And having done all this, I may now be at Liberty to pronounce, upon the Whole, that as sure as God is holy, just, and good, as sure as he is jealous of his own Honour, and an Enemy to religious Imposture; so sure is it, that the Gospel of Christ came from Heaven, and is worthy to be believed and obeyed.

It has often been observed, that the Enemies to our holy Faith, though assuming the Name of Deists, do still, on some Occasion or other, drop that Mask, and shew, that it was only a Cover for the odious Face of Atheism. Not, perhaps, that these wretched Men were originally Atheists, but finding it impossible to maintain their Ground against divine Revelation, on the Foot of Deism, they are obliged, in the
End,

S E R M O N VII. 167

End, to retreat to Atheism, as the grand Fort and Citadel of their Cause. Rather than admit the Title of Christ to rule over them, they are contented to renounce God: And thus they exactly verify the Saying of St. *John*, *Ep. I. Chap. ii. ver. 23. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.*

What remaineth therefore, my beloved Brethren, but that we, who are firm and persuaded Christians, do bless God for having built his Church on such invincible Foundations, as neither the Gates of Hell, nor the Malice and Cunning of Atheistical Men, will ever be capable of undermining. The Christian Religion is a Cause common to us all, and every one is bound to contribute to its Defence, by all Means, that are within his Reach. Would the most illiterate Believer then know, what Service is required of him in this spiritual Warfare; the Answer will be, let him live up to the Rules of Religion, and maintain the Doctrine of God, by adorning it. Let us all, then, be living Apo-

168 S E R M O N VII.

logists for our holy Faith, that, by the Light of our good Works, we may draw Unbelievers out of the Darknes and Shadow of Death, into the Sunshine of God's glorious Gospel.

EIGHT

EIGHT
SERMONS

PREACH'D at the

Cathedral Church of St. PAUL,
In the YEARS 1738 and 1739;

AT THE

LECTURE

Founded by the Honoured

Lady MOYER.

By LEONARD TWELLS, D. D.
Late RECTOR of St. *Matthew's*, *Friday-Street*,
PREBENDARY of St. *Paul's*, and
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in the WEST.

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S E R M O N I.

R E V. iii. 14.

And unto the Angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, write, These Things, saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness; the Beginning of the Creation of God.

THE learned Persons, who have, for near twenty Years, gone before me in this Lecture, (set up for the Defence of our blessed Lord's real and essential Divinity,) have considered that Argument under almost every Method conceivable: So as to leave but little Room for advancing any thing new and considerable on that Subject. If any thing remains
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of this Kind, it should seem to be a particular Discussion of some Texts, on which the *Arians* build their Denial of the Son's Co-eternity and Co-equality with the Father in all essential Perfections. This therefore I purpose to do in the main of my future Discourses, hoping to shew, that *Arianism*, which has been given out as the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, has no real Support from that great Rule of Faith, but is as unscriptural as it is uncatholick.

I have chosen to begin with the Passage of my Text : Because, if we attend only to the Sound of the Words, it is perhaps the strongest Authority for the *Arian* Hypothesis, that is to be met withall in the whole New Testament : For in the latter End of it, the Apocalyptick Writer, *St. John the Evangelist*, calls Christ $\text{Ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς κτίσεως τῆς οὐρίας}$, which in our *English* Bible is rendered *the Beginning of the Creation of God*. If this be the necessary, or the probable Meaning of *St. John's* Words, the plain and immediate Consequence of the Passage would be this, that *Christ* is a Creature of
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S E R M O N I. 173

the Father's, tho' the first Work of his Hands; that he is a finite and precarious Being, altogether distinct from the Father, and therefore not one God with him, nor God at all in the proper Sense of the Word: But called so in the Scripture by the same Figure, which accounts for Angels and Magistrates, and the false Objects of Worship amongst the Heathens, being so named in Holy Writ.

For as Christ's human Nature had its Beginning some Thousand Years after God's Creation: So that human Nature of his could not be spoken of in the Text, as the Beginning of the Creation of God, but his earliest and most excellent Principle; and consequently the Son, in his highest Capacity and Condition of Being, is there stiled the Beginning of the Creation of God, or the first of God's Creatures.

Those indeed who maintain the Pre-existence of Christ's human Soul, could they satisfy the World of the Truth and Certainty of that Opinion, might enable us in
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some Sort, to avoid the Force of this Consequence : For then we might say, that *St. John* might not call Christ, in his divine Nature, the Beginning of the Creation of God, but spake thus with Respect only of his human Soul, which, for aught we know, might be the first Thing which God called into Being.

But without denying or calling in Question the Truth of this Opinion, concerning the Pre-existence of Christ's human Soul, we may modestly say, that the Truth of it is not evident enough for us to build upon it the Solution of the present Difficulty. And sure I am, we have no Occasion for Recourse to Hypotheses, in order to give the Words of the Text a sound Explication.

For the Word *Beginning*, which is what chiefly gives an *Arian* Turn to the disputed Part of my Text, is by no Means the necessary rendering of ἀρχὴ in the *Greek* ; which is a very equivocal Word, and may as well be rendered here the *Head* of the
Creation

Creation of God, as the *Beginning*. And if we put this Interpretation upon it, which is full as warrantable as the other, it becomes utterly unserviceable to the *Arian* Cause, or rather makes against it. For then it conveys to us a Notion of Christ, as the Ruler and Governor of God's entire Creation: A Title too sublime to be applied to a Creature.

But not to insist on any Advantage in the Behalf of our blessed Lord's Divinity, from a particular Sense of a Word that is capable of various Acceptations, let us try if we cannot fix the Sense of *ἀρχῆ* in the Text, so as that it may appear certainly to denote some high Character and Dignity belonging to the Son of God, and not, as the *Arians* explain it, a Priority of Creation before all things else.

In order to this let it first be observed, that the Messages to the seven Churches of *Asia*, contained in the second and third Chapters of the *Revelations*, are directed in the Name of Christ, and constantly under

some Character or Epithet, which had been given of or to him, in the first Chapter of that Book. And because a good deal depends on the Truth and Exactness of this Remark, I must beg your Patience and Attention, whilst I prove this of each of those Directions in particular.

The first of these is found to the Angel of the Church of *Ephesus*, *Rev. ii. 1.* and runs thus :

These Things, saith He, that holdeth the seven Stars in his Right-hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden Candlesticks. The former Part of this Description is found in the 16th ver. of the first Chapter, where it is said of the Son of Man, that appeared unto John, that He had in his Right-hand seven Stars. The latter Part occurs in the 12th and 13th Verses of the same Chapter. I saw, says the Apocalyp-tick Writer, seven Golden Candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven Candlesticks, one like unto the Son of Man.

The second Message, that to the Church of *Smyrna*, *ver.* 8. of the second Chapter, is sent in the Name of him that is *the first and the last, which was dead and is alive*: Which are our Lord's own Sayings of himself in the first Chapter. For in the 11th *ver.* he says, *I am the first and the last.* And in the 18th *ver.* *I am he that liveth, and was dead.*

In the third Message, that to the Church in *Pergamos*, *Chap.* ii. 12. we have the following Description. *These Things, saith he, which hath the sharp Sword with two Edges.* This also is the very Characteristick of the Son of Man in the 16th *ver.* of the first Chapter, wherein it is laid, that *out of his Mouth went a sharp two-edged Sword.*

The fourth Message, unto the Angel of the Church at *Thyatira*, in the 18th *ver.* of the second Chapter, proceeds in the Name of *the Son of God, who hath his Eyes like unto a Flame of Fire, and whose Feet are*
 VOL. II. N like

178 S E R M O N I.

like fine Brass. But this very Delineation of the same divine Person, we meet with in the 14th and 15th Verses of the first Chapter. *His Eyes were like a Flame of Fire, and his Feet like unto fine Brass.*

The fifth Message, unto the Church in *Sardis*, in the first Verse of the third Chapter, is ushered in thus. *These Things, saith he, that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven Stars.* Now, of the seven Spirits of God mention is made in the 4th ver. of the first Chapter, and of the seven Stars, as I have observed already in the 16th ver.

The sixth Message, that to the Church in *Philadelphia* is directed thus, in the 7th ver. of the third Chapter. *These Things, saith he, that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the Key of David: He that openeth, and no Man shutteth; and shutteth, and no Man openeth.* All this Description is implied in those Words of the 18th ver. of the first Chapter; *And I have the Keys of Hell and Death:* For the saying immediately

S E R M O N I. 179

diately preceding is, *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive forevermore, i. e.* I am risen again from the Dead to die no more. By thus returning from *Hades* and from Death, in Vertue of his own Power, Christ manifested, that he had the Keys of both those Abodes. This is more fully expressed at the Head of the Message to the Church in *Philadelphia*, where the Keys of Death and Hell are called *the Keys of David*; probably because he so clearly foretold the illustrious Event of our Lord's Resurrection, speaking as in his own Person; which evinced, that he, of whom he spake, had the Keys of Hell and of Death. On the same Account also it should seem the Epithet of he that is holy, was made Part of Christ's Character, *viz.* because *David* foretold that God *would not suffer his Holy One to see Corruption*. As for what followeth, *He that openeth, and no Man shutteth, and shutteth, and no Man openeth*; it is only a farther Illustration of our Lord's having the Key of *David*, or the Keys of Hell and of Death.

The seventh and last Message is introduced with the Words of my Text. *And unto the Angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, write, These Things, saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the Creation of God.*

Now the first of these Expressions, *the Amen*, is the same Sense, in a different Language, with what follows of *faithful and true*: And Jesus Christ is expressly called *the faithful Witness*, in the 5th ver. of the first Chapter. And thus we come to the grand Question, where the remaining Part of his Character, who sent the seventh Message, *viz. the Beginning of the Creation of God*, is to be found in the first Chapter of the *Revelations*. For as all the Descriptions of Christ, previous to the other six Messages, and to the former Part of the seventh, are found there, either in express or in similar Words, it is surely right to conclude, that the Words in Dispute, *the Beginning of the Creation of God*, are in Sense, tho' not in Sound, to be met with there also.

If then the *Arians* can shew us any thing in the first Chapter of the *Revelations* which countenances their Notion, that the *Logos* or Word, which afterwards became incarnate, was the first Creature that God made, they are wellcome to apply the Remark I have made, and to insist upon such a Passage as parallel to, and explanatory of the latter Part of my Text, wherein Jesus Christ is said to be *the Beginning of the Creation of God*. For tho' the *Greek* Word ἀρχὴ be equivocal, and by no means necessarily signifies the Beginning: Yet if any thing which imports that the *Logos* had a Beginning, was to be met with in the first Chapter, which we find to have been a Kind of Storehouse of Images and Characters, under which Christ is represented in the second and third Chapters, there would be good Reason to understand ἀρχὴ in the *ver.* of my Text, as properly rendered by the Beginning.

But if nothing in all that Chapter can be made to look the least that Way, it will

be a strong Presumption against so rendering that Word; and some other Acceptation of the Word *ἀρχὴ*, must be sought for.

Further still, if the first Chapter of the *Revelation* does not only, not supply us with Authorities for Christ's being the first made of God's Creatures, but, on the other Hand, contains Testimonies of his having existed from all Eternity; then *ἀρχὴ* in my Text cannot possibly mean Beginning. Both because it would destroy the Congruity of Character every where-else so exactly observed between the first Chapter, and the second and third; and also because that Supposition would make our Lord speak contradictory Things of himself: It makes him set up for Eternity in the first Chapter of the *Revelation*, and own that he had a Beginning in the third: But Testimonies there are of the Son's Eternity in the first Chapter of that Book, above all Exception. I shall at present principally insist on that, from the 11th *ver.* because it is on all Hands allowed that

S E R M O N I. 183

it belongs to the Son of Man. *I am*, says that divine Person, *Alpha and Omega, the first and the last*. Now the former of these Characters, *Alpha and Omega*, if we are to believe the *Arians*, is applied to the Father three Verses higher. And what is there meant by it? They themselves admit that it denotes his Eternity. If therefore *Alpha and Omega*, predicated of the Father by himself, in the 8th *ver.* denotes his Eternity, will not the same Expressions predicated of the Son by himself in the 11th *ver.* denote likewise his Eternity? Again, the Son says of himself in the 11th *ver.* that he is *the first and the last*. Just as God asserting his own Eternity, *Isaiab xlvi. 6.* says, *I am the first, and I am the last*.

Upon the whole then, whatever else is meant by Christ's being called $\text{ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τῆς οὐρανόθεν}$ in my Text, we have all imaginable Reason to affirm, that this Predicate does not denote what the *Arians* gather from thence, *viz.* that Christ, in his superior Nature, had a Beginning, being the first Handywork of God.

We shall perhaps be asked, if the obvious Meaning of these Words is to be set aside, what other Sense we have to offer in its Stead. To which we might Reply, that we are not obliged to assign any. It is sufficient for my present Purpose, if I have disarmed the Enemies to our Lord's real Divinity of a Testimony, to which they often refer, when they mean to derogate from his Perfections of Consubstantiality, and Co-eternity with his Father. Having therefore no farther Service for my Text, than what is already performed, I might leave the farther Discussion of it, to those whom it more immediately concerns. But I shall wave this Right at present, as for many other Reasons, so more especially for this; that, as I shewed from what Parts of the first Chapter of the *Revelations*, the Titles of our Lord, introductory to his Messages to six of the *Asiatick* Churches, were taken, I may do the same by that to the seventh, the Church of *Laodicea*, in the Verse of my Text. *These Things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness,*

S E R M O N I. 185

ness, the Beginning of the Creation of God.

These Characters then, or Predicates, are to be found, tho' not all of them, under the same Expressions in the former Part of the 5th *ver.* of the first Chapter, as follows. *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the Dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth.* In accommodating the first Words of each Passage there will be no Difficulty. *Amen, the Faithful and true Witness,* being neither more nor less, than saying of Christ, as St. *John* does in the 5th *ver.* of the first Chapter, that *he is the faithful Witness.* But the main Quære is, where we shall find any Thing in that Verse which corresponds with the latter Words of my Text, in which our Lord is called Ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ ἡ πρώτη γενεὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ, and according to our Bible Translation, *the Beginning of the Creation of God.* The Greek is strong and emphatical, every Word having an Article, the usual Note of Eminence, prefixed to it. For which Reason, was there
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no other, we might conclude, that our *English* Translation in this Place is too low and too general. The Words in the 5th *ver.* of the first Chapter, to which *St. John*, in the latter Part of my Text, most probably has respect, are these: *The first-begotten of the Dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth.* As to the former of these Expressions we meet with it but once elsewhere in the whole New Testament, *viz.* 1 *Col.* xviii. and there it is accompanied with clearer but equipollent Titles of Christ, all describing him as the Head and Governor of his Church. *And he is*, says the Apostle, *the Head of the Body, the Church: Who is the Beginning, the first-begotten of the Dead, that in all Things he might have the Pre-eminence.* *First-begotten* here signifies a Ruler in general, not one that becomes so by Primogeniture: So that *first-begotten of the Dead*, both here and in the first Chapter of the *Revelations*, denotes a Governor of such as, in some particular Sense, were dead; and what Sense that was, no one will doubt, who remembers that *St. Paul* reckons all Christians,

S E R M O N I. 187

rians to be dead in their Sins, till they were quickened by Christ. *First-begotten*, then, *of the Dead*, is the same Title with *the Head of his Body the Church*, only differently expressed. And it would be no Strain of Language, or Propriety, to understand, in the very same Sense, St. *John's* Words in the latter Part of my Text, Ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆ κτίσεως τῆ θεῶ, the Head or Chief of God's Spiritual Creation. Very agreeably hereto St. *Paul* calls a good Christian *καὶνὴ κτίσις*, a new Creation, and makes it the great Distinction of Christianity at large, that it is a new Creation; and the serious Profession of the Gospel is, by the same Apostle, called *putting on the new Man, who is created of God*. This spiritual Creation of God is truly greater and more glorious than his material Creation, and deserved the emphatical Distinction it meets with in the Text. It was truly *ἡ κτίσις*, the great, the eminent Creation of God. And to be the Moderator and Governor of so wonderful a Work was the Title becoming the divine Person, of whom it is predicated in my Text. Thus I have shewn that

188 S E R M O N I.

that ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ, *the Head of the Creation of God*, as it should be rendered, is the same as *the first-begotten of the Dead*, in the 5th ver. of the first Chapter, and that they both denote Christ to be the Head of the Church.

It follows in the same Verse, and spoken of the same Person, *and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth*. That Christ, as God, is really so, needs no Proof. But that here also is signified Christ's Supremacy over his Church, tho' at first it seems very unlikely, may be made appear not improbable.

In order then to that, let it be observed, that the Church of Christ sometimes stands for the whole aggregate Body of the Faithful, united to Christ their Head, and that, at other Times, it stands for the Governors of that spiritual Society, deriving their Power from, and exercising it under the Direction of Christ, the Sovereign thereof. And in the later of these Senses, I take it that Christ's Supremacy over his Church is
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spoken of, when he is stiled *the Prince of the Kings of the Earth*. But to this there is a most obvious Objection, that to make *Kings of the Earth* stand for Church Governors, is direct Impropriety. But then it should be remembered, that the Language of Visions is not to be judged of like that of other Writings: That bold Figures and Expressions, strained beyond their usual Import, are no uncommon Things in the Writer before us: Lastly, that this Interpretation, harsh as it appears, may be justified from St. *John* himself in this very Book. In the very next, *ver.* the 6th, he calls Christians in general Kings, saying, He, *i. e.* *Christ hath made us Kings*. And in the fifth Chapter of the *Revelations*, *ver.* 10. he represents the four Beasts and twenty Elders, by whom both *Grotius* and *Hammond* understand the Governors of the Church; he makes these to say of the Lamb: *Thou hast made us unto our God, Kings and Priests; and we shall reign on the Earth*. Let therefore the Apocalyptick Writer explain himself, and we see that *the Prince of the Kings of the Earth*, is in

his Stile the same as Head and Governor of the Christian Hierarchy.

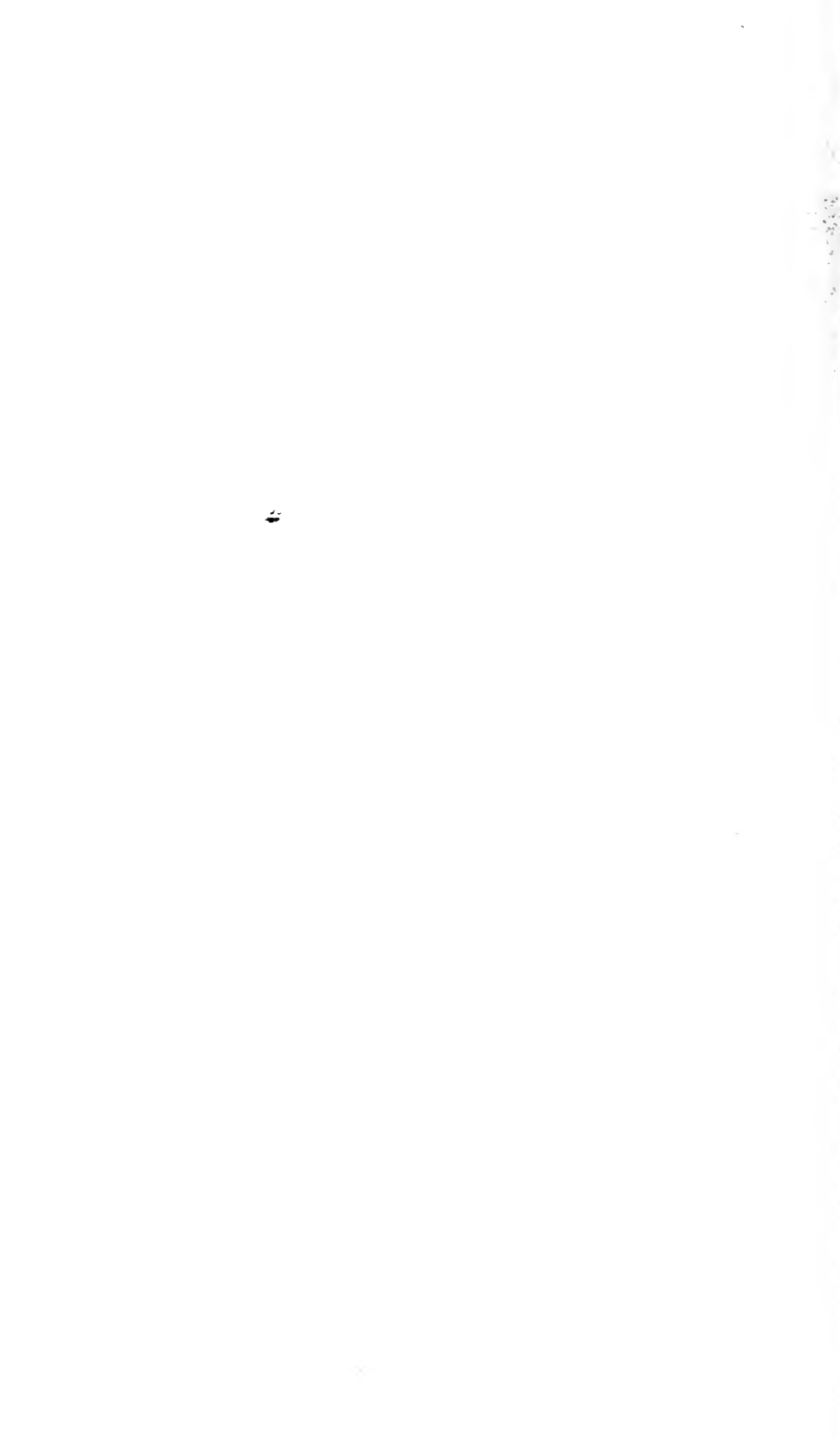
The only thing remaining, is to make this Sense of our Lord's Title of *Prince of the Kings of the Earth*, to coincide with what is said of him in my Text, that he is Ἦ ἀρχὴ τῶν κλητικῶν τῶν Θεῶν.

Now we have an undoubted Authority for ἀνθρωπίνῃ κλησίᾳ, signifying secular Power in Scripture. St. Peter says, first Epistle, Chap. ii. ver. 13. *Submit yourselves πᾶσι ἀνθρωπίνῃ κλησίᾳ, to every worldly Magistrate.* What follows plainly shews this to be the right rendering: For he adds, *Whether it be unto the King as Supreme, or to Governors, as to those that are appointed by him.* If then ἀνθρωπίνῃ κλησίᾳ stands in Scripture for secular Governors, what can be more natural than to explain κλησίᾳ Θεῶν in my Text of Spiritual, i. e. Ecclesiastical Governors.

Upon the whole then we find. by a thorough Consideration of my Text, that
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S E R M O N I. 191

the Sense of it to be looked for in the 5th *ver.* of the first Chapter ; that it is utterly unserviceable to *Arian* Purposes, because *St. John* speaks not at all therein of what Christ our Lord is originally, and by Nature, but of what he is by Prerogative of Office and Oeconomy, the Head of his Church, the Fountain of all Graces and Blessings to his People in general, and of every spiritual Power in particular: Giving some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers ; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ.



S E R M O N II.

J O H N i. 14.

And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.

TH E R E is not a Point in the whole *Arian* Controversy, more necessary to be determined, than the Meaning of the Word *Flesh* in my Text. For if, as the *Arians* and *Apollinarians* maintain, St. *John* thereby affirms, that the Word took a human Body only, without a rational human Soul; then Christ had but one Nature, and consequently, whatever is said of him in Scripture, though ever so low, must be understood of him in his highest Capacity. At this Rate, he could not be truly and essentially God: Because

VOL. II.

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God,

God, in the strict Sense of the Word, cannot be born, nor dye, nor exert human Passions, nor be subject to human Infirmities. He cannot increase in Wisdom and Knowledge, nor in Favour with the other divine Persons in the Godhead; all which Things are predicated of Jesus in the New Testament. But if, on the other Hand, our Evangelist, by the *Word's* being made Flesh, meant what the Church of God has all along understood to be his Meaning, that the Word was united to an entire human Nature, consisting of Body and Soul; then all these Objections to his real Divinity vanish at once: The low Things said of Christ in Scripture, are obviously applied to that human Nature which he assumed, when he became incarnate; and the sublime Names and Characters given him by the sacred Writers, have also a proper Subject to which they belong, *viz.* the *Word*, of whom the Evangelist in the first Verse of his Gospel says, *that he was God.* By this Distinction of the two Natures in the Person of Christ, the New Testament is made consistent with itself, which

S E R M O N II. 195

which is utterly impracticable upon the *Arian*, or indeed on any other Hypothesis. Those who deny the human Nature of Christ, take great Advantage from the Text, in which they observe it is said that *the Word was made*, not Man, but *Flesh*, i. e. say they, obviously, a human Body: So that in Christ there was but one Nature, made up of a human Body, and the *Word* united to it and actuating it, instead of a human Soul. And truly, if the Word *Flesh*, in Scripture, was never put for the entire man, but constantly signified his Body only, this Observation would have great Strength and Force. But, upon Enquiry we find, that by *Flesh* in holy Writ, is frequently meant human Nature, or Man, in both his Integrals of Soul and Body. Thus *Gen. vi. 12.* it is said, *that all Flesh had corrupted his Way upon Earth*, i. e. All Men had. So also *Psal. lvi. 4.* *I will not fear*, says holy David, *what Flesh can do unto me*, i. e. I will not fear what Man can do unto me. For so he expressly says in Verse 11. of the same Psalm. Again, *Jeremy vii. 5.* *The Prophet declares him*
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196 S E R M O N II.

*curfed, that trusteth in Man and maketh
Flesh his Arm:* Where Flesh has plainly
the same Extent of Meaning with Man.
St. *Matthew* also uses Flesh to the like
Purpose; *Matt. xxiv. 23.* where he intro-
duces our Lord saying, *Except those Days
should be shortened, there should no Flesh be
saved.* And so does St. *Paul, Rom. iii. 20.*
when he assures us, *that by the Deeds of
the Law, there shall no Flesh be justified in
the Sight of God.* So in the Text, where
St. *John* tells us, *That the Word was made
Flesh;* his Meaning might be, that it was
made or united to a compleat human Na-
ture, consisting of Soul and Body. If,
therefore, it can be made out, that this is
the certain Sense of Scripture in other Pla-
ces, this possible Meaning of the Evange-
list in the Text must be looked on as the
actual one. The first Passage I shall pro-
duce for this Purpose, is *Heb. ii. 17.* where
the Apostle assures us, *That it beloved our
Lord, in all Things, to be made like unto
his Brethren,* i. e. to other Men. An Af-
sertion every Way consistent with the Ca-
tholick Doctrine of the Incarnation, which
teaches

S E R M O N II. 197

teaches that Christ, as Man, was in all natural Respects what other Men are, a Compound of Soul and Body, and, like them, subject to all innocent Infirmities, [by which he might be qualified to be a merciful and faithful High Priest.] But would the Apostle have said all this, if the *Arian* Hypothesis, concerning the Incarnation, had been true? For according to that, Christ was unlike his Brethren in the very principal Thing of all, having no human Soul, but, instead thereof, a Principle, which the *Arians* themselves account to be prior in Time, and incomparably superior in Nature, not only to the Mind of Man, but to Angels and Archangels; a Principle, which at first created, and at present sustains all Things. *Lastly*, a Principle, not to be wrought upon by Temptations from the World, the Flesh, or the Devil; and consequently, such as could have no Feeling of our Infirmities in the Way of Sympathy. Goodness of Nature might incline him to be a merciful and faithful High Priest, but not Similitude of Condition; which yet is the Topick from which the

198 S E R M O N I I.

Apostle to the *Hebrews* argues in the Case before us.

A second Argument from Scripture for the perfect Manhood of Christ, may be formed from the 2d Chapter of *St. Luke*, and the 57th Verse. There the Evangelist giving an Account of our Lord, after his Return from *Jerusalem*, in the twelfth Year of his Age, saith, *that Jesus increased in Wisdom and Knowledge, and in Favour with God and Man.* All which is easy and intelligible, according to the Church's Account of the Incarnation. For the human Nature of Christ, consisting of Body and Soul, must have received Improvements, as others of the same Species do, from ripening Age and gradual Experience. But I am utterly at a Loss to conceive, how the *Arians* should be able to reconcile the Remark of the Evangelist, with their Scheme of the Incarnation: For the *Word*, which, according to them, was the only intelligent Principle in the Person of Jesus, that *Word*, I say, when he became incarnate, they suppose to have had the
utmost

S E R M O N II. 199

utmost Perfection in Wisdom and Knowledge, that any Creature was capable of receiving or attaining to. Could he therefore, when veiled in the Flesh, possibly increase in Wisdom and Knowledge? It must surely be the most flagrant of all Absurdities to imagine, that the *Word*, by whom all Things were at first made, and who gave us all those Faculties, whereby we acquire Wisdom and Knowledge, could be himself ignorant of any Thing that comes into the human Mind, in the Ways of Sensation and Reflection. And yet, without supposing Ignorance of this Kind in some Degree, there can be no possible Room for an Increase of Wisdom and Knowledge in Christ. Had, indeed, St. *Luke* said this of our Lord more early in his Infancy, at that Age, when Children first become capable of speaking their Sentiments, it might have been imagined the Evangelist meant no more thereby, than that the Wisdom of Jesus, which, for Want of Speech, could not before display itself, then first began to appear in his Words and Actions. But as the Æra of this Re-

200 S E R M O N II.

mark is the 12th Year of our Lord's Age, long before which all bodily Impediments to the Display of intellectual Abilities are fully removed, *St. Luke* cannot reasonably be understood otherwise, than of an actual and discernible Improvement in the Understanding of the blessed Child, whose Body therefore must have been actuated by a human Mind that was capable of such Improvement, and not, as the *Arians* say, by the *Logos*, or *Word*, in whom, long before this, were hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.

A third Reason why the Church affirms our Lord, in one of his Natures, to have been a perfect Man, made up of a reasonable Soul and human Flesh, is, that the Scriptures assure us, that the Power whereby he wrought Miracles, was conferred upon him at his Baptism; which necessarily supposes, that before this he had no such wonderful Gift. Now the Subject in which this Power resided, must have been the Mind of Jesus: And we find no Difficulty in apprehending, how a human Soul should be incapable

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ble of performing miraculous Operations, till God should vest such a Power in it; and therefore think it highly reasonable to believe, that Christ, together with the Flesh, assumed such a Soul, and in this entire human Nature was anointed by God, after his Baptism, with Power and the Holy Ghost. But when we consider this Matter in the *Arian* View of the incarnation, we find the highest Perplexity, or rather Absurdity, therein. For, according to their Scheme, it was needful for God to confer the Power of working Miracles on the *Word*, whom they make to be the only rational Principle in the Person of Christ. But at this Rate, what was become of that supereminent Power, by which this divine *Word* at the Beginning made all Things? He whom the Scriptures represents as God and the Author of Nature, could he possibly need additional Powers for breaking in upon the Course of Nature by miraculous Interpositions? To such Absurdities are Men reduced, who are resolved, at all Events, to defend Hypotheses in Religion, that have no Foundation in Holy Writ.

A fourth Proof of the Catholick Faith concerning the Incarnation of Christ, is drawn from the human Passions and Infirmities ascribed to him; which make it necessary to believe that he had a real and entire human Nature, which, without Reproach or any Inconsistency, might be the Subject of such Passions and innocent Infirmities. The most remarkable of these was the Fear of Death, which appeared in our Lord to an uncommon Degree. Immediately before his Apprehension, *My Soul*, says he to his Disciples, *is exceeding sorrowful, even unto Death.* St. Luke relates, that *he was in an Agony, and prayed more earnestly, and that his Sweat was, as it were, great Drops of Blood falling down to the Ground.* In this there was no Sin; but surely there was, in this Behaviour of our Lord, Infirmity enough to argue that he was perfect Man. And perhaps one End of the blessed Spirit in dictating to the sacred Penmen the History of our Saviour's Fears, so fully and so particularly, was to ascertain our Faith in this great Article

S E R M O N II. 203

ticle of revealed Religion, that Christ, as Man, was in all Things as we are, Sin only excepted. But would it have been thus, if, instead of a human Soul, the Body of our Lord had been animated by the *Word*? Can it be conceived, that so exalted a Being, however inclosed or imprisoned in a human Body, would not more strongly have supported itself under the Prospect of Suffering and Death? Whatever Influence a particular Complexion of Body may have upon a human Soul, common Sense forbids us to think it would have the like Effect upon a Being, whom the *Arians* themselves allow to have had all the Perfection of Wisdom and Power, that God can possibly communicate.

Thus I have shewn, that the *Word* which took Flesh, must, together with a human Body, have taken also a human Soul, that is, an entire and perfect Manhood; and that the Scriptures make such a Supposition necessary.

And

And in this Opinion we are the more confirmed, by observing, that the early Fathers made the same Conclusion from these Scriptures, unanimously affirming, that Christ had two distinct Natures, and that his inferior one consisted of a human Soul, as well as a human Body, always distinguishing between the *Word* and the Manhood, to which it was united at the Incarnation. I shall begin with *Clemens Romanus*, a Writer Contemporary with the Apostles, and mentioned by *St. Paul* with the honourable Testimony that his Name is in the Book of Life: His Words are these, *Christ our Lord, for the Love he bare towards us, by the Will of God, gave his Flesh for our Flesh, and his Soul for our Souls.*

Of this Number also may be reckoned *Ignatius*, a Companion of the Apostles, who, in his Epistle to the Church of *Smyrna*, calls Christ a perfect Man; which he never could have done, had not he believed, that, together with a human Body, he had likewise a human Soul.

After

After him, *Justin Martyr*, in the same Age, in his first Apology, speaking of what Christ was after his Incarnation, besides his being the *Word*, makes him also to consist of a Body and Soul.

Irenæus, a most eminent Writer in the second Century, says of Christ, that in himself he united Man with God; and that by Man he did not mean the human Body, or Flesh only, is plain from his Definition of Man on another Occasion, *viz.* that he is a Compound or Mixture of Soul and Flesh.

Tertullian, in the End of the same Century, in his Book against *Praxeas* says of the *Word*, that at the Incarnation he intended to assume the very Substances of Man, the Flesh and the Soul.

The learned *Origen*, about the Middle of the third Century, in very many Places of his Book against *Celsus* strongly asserts, that Christ had a human Soul, and exactly distinguishes between the human and the
divine

divine Nature in the Person of Christ. One or two Instances from him may suffice. He calls him then God, who came in a human Soul and Body. Again, upon *Celsus's* objecting against the Christian Doctrine of Christ's coming down upon Earth, in order to his Incarnation, that it was impossible God should undergo so great a Change as that Supposition implied, *Origen* admits the Change objected, to mean Christ's taking upon him a mortal Body, and a human Soul; he admits the Fact, and in Answer to it, desires *Celsus* to observe, that the *Word*, after the Incarnation, still continued a distinct Nature or Substance as before, and that it suffered none of those Things which his Body and Soul, *i. e.* his human Nature suffered. [*Origen's* Testimony is the more valuable, because he delivers the known Doctrine of the Church in this Point; and because he was a Person of great Acuteness, as well as Eminence, for Biblical Learning. And it may be justly hoped, that his Opinion will have its due Weight with the *Arians* our Adversaries, who, on many Occasions, though

unjustly, boast of him, as concurring with them in the Denial of the real and essential Divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghost.]

I might have gone down lower among the Fathers for Testimonies, concerning the two Natures in the Person of Christ, and his taking a human Soul, as well as Body, at the Incarnation : But I chose to confine my Inquiries within the three first Centuries ; because the Writers nearest the Apostolical Times, are confessedly of greatest Moment in witnessing to the Primitive Doctrines ; and also because they wrote long before the Rise of *Arianism* ; and for that Reason stand free from all Suspicion of having invented Distinctions to serve the Orthodox Cause against that Heresy.

And now, upon the Whole, we are not to wonder, that the *Arians*, both ancient and modern, should contend against the two distinct Natures in the Person of Christ, or make that to consist only of the *Word* united to, and animating a human Body.

We

208 S E R M O N II.

We see, that could they have carried this Point, they would never have been at a Loss for ample Testimonies from Scripture, for the Son's being a Creature. For the many low Things said of him, such as are incompatible with all just Notions of the supreme Being, having then no other Subject to relate to besides the *Word*, would have concluded against his real Divinity. And yet, it would have been as true as ever, that the Names, and Attributes, and Worship given to the Son, in common with the Father, were demonstrative that he was likewise God in the true and proper Sense of the *Word*. So that whatever Ground *Arianism* might gain, by the Disproof of Christ's being a compound Person, the Event would prove fatal to Christianity itself: Because, on that Supposition, the Scriptures would be found to give clear Evidence for both Sides of a Contradiction, *viz.* that the *Logos*, or *Word*, was and was not a Creature, and consequently must lose all Authority, as a Rule of Faith to Mankind.

But

But God be thanked, the Church's Doctrine of Christ's two distinct and perfect Natures, which I hope I have shewn to be both Scriptural and Catholick, prevents every Mischief that the adverse Opinion would bring upon Orthodoxy, and its sacred Text, the Word of God: For thereby we are enabled to assign every Thing that is therein predicated of the Person of Christ to its proper and distinct Nature, the human Attributes to his assumed Manhood, and the sublime ones to his original Godhead. Thus *Arianism* is deprived of its main Support, and Scripture is found to bear uniform and consistent Testimony, to what the holy Church throughout the Work acknowledges, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is perfect God and perfect Man. To whom, &c.



S E R M O N III.

M A R K XIII. 32.

But of that Day and that Hour knoweth no Man: No not the Angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

SCARCE any one Text in the whole New Testament hath been offer, or more strenuously urged against the real and proper Divinity of Christ by the Enemies of that Doctrine, than that from *St. Mark* now read to you. Here we are told, whenever this Point is the Subject in Debate, that our Lord owns his own Knowledge to be limited, and that as to the Day and Hour of his Coming to Judgment, it was a Secret to Men, to Angels,

212 S E R M O N III.

and even to himself, known to no one save the Father only. Since then, say the *Arians*, this is confessedly the Case; since it is a ruled Point in Scripture Theology, that the Son is not omniscient, and natural Reason assures us, that whatever Being is truly God, must have that and every other infinite Perfection, it follows, that not the Son, but the Father only is originally and essentially God.

There would be much both of Strength and Pertinence in this Kind of Reasoning, if the Son, said in the Text not to have known the Day and Hour of his own Coming to Judgment, had not been a compound Person made up of two Natures, in one of which he might be ignorant of the Point in Question, whilst he was omniscient, and consequently God in the other: Or if, from any Circumstance in the Text, the Confession of Ignorance necessarily related to the Son in his highest Capacity and Condition of Being. But I hope to make it appear, that neither of these is the Case; the Consequence of which will be, that the
 Passage

S E R M O N III. 213

Passage of the Text is no just Authority against the real and proper Godhead of Christ.

First, the Person of Christ consisted of two Natures, one of which being perfectly human, our Lord's Confession of Ignorance in the Text might relate to that only, whilst his other Nature might still be omniscient, and consequently divine. The Truth of the Proposition concerning the real and entire Manhood of Christ, was, I hope, fully established in my last Discourse on this Occasion, and therefore need not be repeated. We may therefore conclude in general, that the Objection to our Lord's Divinity from his avowed Confession of Ignorance, as to the Time of his last Coming to Judgment, will not affect his Title thereto, unless it likewise appears, from any Circumstances in the Text itself, that this Confession did necessarily relate to Christ in his highest Capacity and Condition of Being, not only as the Son of Man, but also as he was the only begotten Son of God, which is the second and main Point which I am to guard against.

The *Arians*, not confiding altogether in their Denial of the two Natures in the Person of Christ, labour to shew, from internal Evidence in the Text itself, that Christ must have owned Ignorance in every of his Natures and Capacities.

And *First*, They tell us, that had Christ in the Text spoken of his own Ignorance, as he was the Son of Man, or Man only, he would have said, *But of that Day and that Hour knoweth no Man: No not the Son, neither the Angels which are in Heaven, but the Father.* For the Son of Man, as such, being made a little lower than the Angels, must naturally know less than they do, and therefore, in the Scale of intelligent Beings, would be placed below them: Whereas, in the Order of the Text, the Son is mentioned as next in Knowledge to the Father, and above the Angels which are in Heaven. So that by the Son, there must necessarily be understood Christ in his highest Capacity, as he is the Word and the Wisdom of God, in which respect he is
superior

superior to Angels in Knowledge, and in every other Perfection.

But to this we may reply, that the Knowledge here spoken of is not a Part of natural Science, but a Matter of mere Revelation. And therefore, tho' Christ, as Man, was naturally less knowing than the Angels, yet as he was the Messenger of God's revealed Will, and particularly in a Point wherein he was principally to be concerned, the Judgment of the last Day, it might be presumed that Christ, as the Son of Man, might have the Time of that Solemnity communicated to him, tho' it remained as yet a Secret to the Angels which are in Heaven. Certain it is, that those celestial Spirits, good and favourite Beings as they are, had but an imperfect Knowledge of the Gospel Dispensation, even after it was committed into the Hands of Men; otherwise they would not have desired to look into the Things of it, as *St. Peter* assures us they did, even at the Time when he wrote his first general Epistle, *Chap. i. ver. 12.* It being therefore, in

216 S E R M O N III.

the Nature of the Thing, more wonderful that Christ, as Man, should be ignorant of the Day and Hour in which he was to judge the World, than that the Angels of Heaven were so, Order and Perspicuity both required, that Christ, as Man, should in this Respect be placed above the Angels.

I hope it will be forgiven me, if I here repeat the Remark of the great and the good *Athanasius* [tho' it has been already observed by a most able Hand, which opened the Lectures of this Foundation.] That admirable Person, with great Judgment, insinuates, that if by the Son in the Text, had been meant the second Person in the Trinity, the Ignorance of the Holy Ghost also, as to the Day of Judgment, would probably have been mentioned in order to compleat the Climax; and that therefore the Want of this shews, that the Scale of Beings, who were ignorant of the precise Time when Christ was to come in Judgment, extended no farther than to the Bounds between Creature and Creator, not taking in any of the divine Persons in the ever-blessed Trinity.

Secondly,

Secondly, The *Arians* say, that whether Christ is mentioned here as Son of God, or only as Son of Man, it matters little; because both he and every other Being is excluded from all Share of Knowledge concerning the Day and Hour of the last Judgment, by the Words of the Text, compared with the parallel Place in St. *Matthew*, who represents our Saviour as saying, that this Point was known to his Father only. It could not therefore, say they, be known to the Son in the highest Character, unless we suppose what is absurd, that he called his divine Nature his Father.

But in Reply to every Pretence of this Kind, these Men have often been told, that they ought not too rigidly to insist on exclusive Particles in Scripture, which oftentimes are not intended to preclude universally, but within certain Limits only, to be fixed by the Reason and Nature of the Things spoken of. Thus *Matthew* xi. 27. our Lord saith, that *no one knoweth the*
Father

218 S E R M O N III.

Father but the Son. What mad Work would an Expositor make, who should insist upon it, that every Person, divine or human, is here excepted from knowing the Father but the Son, and that consequently the Father, as well as the rest, is ignorant of himself? Does not plain Sense tell us, that the exclusive Terms in this Passage affect only Creatures, and concern no divine Persons at all; that our Saviour's Design was only to affirm that the Father never so fully manifested himself to Mankind, as he did in the Revelation published to the World by his Son? Many other like Passages have been and might be insisted on, which shew the Vanity of stretching exclusive Expressions to the utmost of their natural Extent. In all such Cases, the Reason of the Thing, and the Analogy of Scripture, must be our Rule of Limitation. Thus in the Passage of the Text, wherein the Father, according to the Letter, seems to stand single in the Knowledge of the precise Time of our Lord's second Coming; if in the Nature of the Thing, it be impossible for any one but the Father to know that

that

that Point ; or supposing this possible, as it unquestionably is, if in Scripture the Father is still described as alone omniscient, and every other Person limited in that Perfection, Reason good would it be to understand my Text, as to the exclusive Terms of it, in the strictest Sense, and to admit it as a Proof, that the Son, in his highest Character, was not omniscient. But if, on the other Hand, Holy Writ plainly ascribes every other divine Perfection to Christ, as he is the Son and the *Word*, and particularly that of infinite or unbounded Knowledge ; then is it most reasonable to imagine, that when the Father alone is said to know the Day and Hour of the last Judgment, it was not Christ's Intent to exclude his own divine Nature, or that of the Holy Ghost, but only every Species of intelligent Creatures : It was only saying, that the Father had not as then revealed the punctual Time of his Son's second Coming, neither to Prophets, nor to Angels, nor to the Man Christ Jesus. Now nothing is more clearly laid down in Scripture, than the absolute Omniscience of Christ in one of his Natures.

220 S E R M O N III.

tures. His Disciples in his Life-time say unto him, *John* xvi. 29. *We are sure that thou knowest all Things*: By this, add they, *We believe that thou camest forth from God*. For which Confession our Lord does not in the least blame his Followers, as if they ascribed too much to him, or entrenched upon his Father's sole Perfection, but approves of their Faith as built, tho' professedly built on his supposed Omniscience. After his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, the Disciples, about to elect one into the Apostolical College in *Judas's* Room, pray unto our Lord, saying, *Thou Lord, who knowest the Hearts of all Men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen*. An Expression in other Parts of Scripture, distinctive of the One God. Long after this, *St. John the Evangelist*, an inspired Writer, in the second Chapter of his Gospel, *ver.* 24. affirms of Christ that *he knew all Men*. Lastly, our Saviour himself, in the second Chapter of the *Revelation*, and the 23d *ver.* saith of himself, *I am he which searcheth the Reins and Hearts*. Just such Language as that wherein the one God proclaims his
own

S E R M O N III. 221

own Omniscience in the Prophet *Jeremy*, Chap. xvii. ver. 10. *I the Lord search the Heart, I try the Reins.* Thus it appears, that Omniscience is an Attribute frequently given to the Son of God in Scripture, and that in as absolute Terms as to the Father. We see no Foundation for the Distinction made use of by *Arians* between derived and underived, or original Omniscience; but the plain Voice of Revelation is, that this Perfection is common to the Father and the Son. Whatever therefore the former knoweth, the latter also knoweth, and neither of them can possibly have Secrets, exclusive of the other: So that when our Lord affirmeth, that the Son knoweth not the last Day and Hour, but the Father only, he must speak of himself in that Nature, to which Ignorance is compatible, *viz.* his human one, and could never design to exalt the Knowledge of any one divine Person above that of another, who all agree in one Nature and Essence, the common Center of all possible Perfections.

Another

Another Topick from which, by clear Consequence, may be deduced the Omniscience of the *Word* or Son of God, is his Right to Adoration. I think it is agreed upon, both by *Arian* and Orthodox, that religious Worship and Invocation is due to him from Men upon Earth, as well as from Angels in Heaven. The former indeed distinguish the Worship due to the Son, by the Name of Mediatorial: For which, tho' they have no Warrant from Scripture, yet need we not to controvert it in the present Argument, because, when admitted, it makes no difference in the Case: For the Worship of Christ, whether Mediatorial or Absolute, is and must be a reasonable Service. And yet the Worship of Christ, by the Church dispersed throughout the World, can never be a reasonable Service, if his Omniscience be not allowed, or rather supposed. For without this he cannot know the Petitions that are offered to him by an infinite Number of Votaries at the same Time, from an immense Variety of Places throughout the vast Extent of the Christian World.

S E R M O N III. 223

World. He is therefore, and must be one, from whom no Secrets are hid, either present or future.

Hitherto I have argued against fixing the Confession made by Christ in my Text, of his own Ignorance, on his superior Nature, as he was God, by shewing the Weakness of the *Arian* Reasonings on that Point, and from the Attribute of Omniscience given to him in Scripture expressly, as well as consequentially. Let us now see what further Light the Text, compared with the Context, will supply us withall.

In the Text it is only said, that the Son knoweth neither the Day nor the Hour of our Lord's Coming. Now when Christ, in the New Testament, is barely called the Son, when no Addition is made to that Expression, is sometimes signified his human Nature alone, and at other Times his entire [complex] Person, as he is both God and Man. But if the Context is to be our Guide, as it is never allowed to be in other Difficulties arising from equivocal Expressions,

ons, it will certainly direct us to understand by the Son in the Text, the Son of Man, or Christ in his human Nature. For in neither St. *Matthew's* Gospel, nor St. *Mark's*, where alone our Text is found, either before or after it, do those Evangelists speak at all of Christ as the Son of God, but on both Hands, in a long and famous Discourse, still mention him under the express Appellation of the Son of Man. So that to explain the Son, spoken of in the Text, of a different Nature of Christ from what is the Subject of Discourse before and after, is to proceed arbitrarily and unreasonably; it is to set aside all the received and allowed Rules of Interpretation, merely to serve an Hypothesis. Whereas Truth wants no such unnatural Aids; but finds a Support in the easy and obvious Way.

After all it may admit of a Dispute, whether our Lord in the Text meant that himself, as the Son of Man, was really ignorant of the Day and Hour of his own Coming to Judgment. He might possibly intend no more than that he was not commissioned

S E R M O N III. 225

missioned by the Father to reveal that Mystery, among the other preternatural Truths of the Gospel. The strong Words which follow, that the Father alone knew this, will not conclude with any Certainty against such a Meaning; any more than a parallel Saying of our Saviour's, on an Occasion very like this, does in the 1st Chap. of *Acts*, and the 7th *ver.* where in Answer to this Question, put to him by the Apostles immediately before his Ascension, *viz.* *Lord wilt thou at this Time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?* He Replies, *It does not belong to you to know the Times and the Seasons, which the Father hath put*

ἐν τῷ ἰδίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ *in his own peculiar Power.*

No Words can more emphatically express a Reserve of Knowledge, as to the Time here inquired after, to the Father, exclusive of all other Beings, than these do. But shall we therefore expound them rigorously, as the *Arians* do by those of my Text? Shall we conclude, that Christ, even as he was the Son of God, was ignorant that he was not then about to restore again the Kingdom to *Israel* in any Sense of those

226 S E R M O N III.

Words? Nay shall we affirm, that, as the Son of Man, he was not able to have answered this Quære of the Apostles in the Negative? Did not he know that neither then, nor at any other Time, was he to restore a temporal Kingdom to *Israel*, who had himself declared not long before, that his Kingdom was not of this World? Did not he know that the true Sense of those Prophecies, on which the *Jews* built their mistaken Hopes of a secular Kingdom under Messiah the Prince, had been already in Part fulfilled in him, and that what remained to be compleated, were not immediately ripe for the Event intended by them? And yet our Lord assures the Apostles, according to the Letter of his Reply, that the Knowledge necessary for the Solution of their Quære, was what the Father had reserved *in seipso* in his own proper or peculiar Power: Meaning thereby no more than this, that the Father had not yet given it in Commission to any one, fully to explain the Time and other Circumstances of his Son's Kingdom, spoken of by the Prophets. Why then may we not in like
Manner

Manner explain the strong Words of my Text, and suppose that the Knowledge of the Day and Hour in which the Son of Man comes to Judgment, may in Strictness be no Part of the Question, but that our Saviour meant only to affirm, that the Father had not given the Charge of revealing that Day, either to Men or Angels, or even to the Son of Man himself?

I do not pretend to say, that this was the certain Meaning of my Text. Sufficient it is for the Purposes of Orthodoxy, that it is a possible, and in some Sort a plausible Interpretation: And till the Enemies to our Lord's Divinity shall prove the Contrary to be true, which they will find, if I am not much mistaken, no easy Task, they will have no Right to urge the Text any more, as a Testimony against the Omniscience of the Son of God, and consequently against his Divinity.

To him therefore, as well as to the other divine Persons in the Trinity, be ascribed, &c.



S E R M O N I V .

I C O R . X V . 28 .

When all Things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all Things under him, that God may be all in all.

IN these Words, the Apostle plainly affirms two Things of the Son. *First*, That all Things were put under him; the Consequence of which is, that originally, and by Nature, he was not Lord of all Things, but received his Kingdom by Investiture, from some superior Being. *Secondly*, That when this Son shall, by the

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Power

230 S E R M O N IV.

Power lodged with him, have subdued all his Enemies, and shall have, as *St. Paul* before expressed himself, put down all Rule, and all Authority and Power, then shall he, the Son himself, be subject unto him, from whom he received his Power and kingly Authority. It is no less plain likewise, that by the Son in my Text, is meant Christ our Lord, and our Redeemer.

But the great Question is, whether, by the Son, concerning the Original and Duration of whose Kingdom my Text speaks, be meant Christ in both, or in one of his Natures only? If the former, if Christ, as he was the Word and Son of God, had originally no Power or Dominion, but was in Time vested therewith, and is hereafter to surrender, or give it up again, and to become like other Beings, subject to the one supreme Lord of all Beings, then he cannot be truly and essentially God: For supreme Power and Dominion are inseparable to Divinity, they can neither be con-

ferred

S E R M O N IV. 231

ferred upon it, nor taken from it, nor absolutely resigned by it.

But if by the Son in the Text, is meant the Son of Man, or Christ in his human Nature, then by the Things that were put under him, will easily be understood his mediatorial Kingdom, commencing upon his Resurrection; at which Time, as himself declares, *Matt. xxviii. 18. All Power was given to him in Heaven and in Earth.* This Kingdom, and this Power, will subsist no longer than till its Uses have all been fully answered, till the End of all Things, when the Son of Man shall have subdued all the Powers of Death and Hell, and his Subjects, both good and bad, shall be consigned over to their final and unalterable State.

But then the Text, thus understood, will be no valid Testimony, indeed no Testimony at all against the real and essential Deity of Christ; because it will not hinder, but that, besides the Power and Dominion conferred on the human Nature

232 S E R M O N IV.

of Christ before his Ascension, and which hereafter is to be given up again to the original Donor, he might likewise, as God, have had from Everlasting all Power, Might, Majesty and Dominion, which he never will, nor can resign, but ever execute jointly, with the other divine Persons, in the adorable Trinity.

In order therefore to resolve so important a Question, as whether my Text hurts the Catholick Doctrine of our blessed Saviour's real and consubstantial Divinity or no, let us carefully examine both Sides of the Question before us, and first inquire, whether the Kingdom of Christ, and his future Subjection spoken of in the Text, can or may be understood relatively to him, as he is the Son of God, or God the Word.

And here I think it may safely be affirmed, that if Scripture be uniform and consistent with itself, this cannot possibly be *St. Paul's* Meaning in the Words of my Text. For in the first Place, *St. John* affirms

S E R M O N IV. 233

firms of the Word, *that is*, the superior Nature of Christ, *that in the Beginning he was God*. But will any one suppose, that a Being, who is God, should be destitute of Power and Dominion, and should need to have any Thing put under him. Is it not absurd, at first Hearing, to be told, that God, as God, had Sovereignty conferred upon him, and at an assigned Period must deliver it up; and like other Beings, divested of a delegated Authority, must thenceforward remain under precarious Subjection?

Secondly, St. John affirms likewise, that *this God, the Word, and Son of God, made all Things*. Nay, St. Paul himself also asserts, Col. i. 16. *That by him were all Things created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible*. Has not then the Potter Power over his own Clay; or did this divine Architect ever transfer the Power, belonging to him in Right of Creation, over the Works of his own Hands, so as to need a new Investiture of Dominion within his own Creation?

The

234 S E R M O N IV.

The World was his from the Beginning, and all that is therein, by the clearest and most undoubted of all Titles; and therefore of him, in his divine and creative Capacity, *St. Paul* could not speak, in my Text, when he supposes, that all Things were put under him gradually, and in Process of Time. And as his Right to Dominion over his own Creatures was original and underived, so he can never surrender it up to another. As well may he resign his Relation to all Things as their Creator, as that of being their King and Lord; and till he ceases to have been their Maker, he can never cease to be their Governor. We are therefore under an apparent Necessity of understanding the Apostle to speak in the Text, of a Kingdom of Christ which had a Beginning, and was defeasible, and not of that Dominion, which accrued to him, as the God and Maker of all Things.

Thirdly, The same Apostle, who, in the Words of my Text, mentions a Kingdom of Christ to be delivered up to the Father, from whom it was originally a Grant, does else-

S E R M O N IV. 235

elsewhere ascribe Worship, and consequently Dominion to him, before his mediatorial Power and Kingdom was conferred upon him, and as extended to Beings, who had no Concern of their own in that gracious Office of his, being no Subjects to him in his mediatorial Sovereignty. For in his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, *Again*, saith he, *when he*, i. e. God, *bringeth the first Begotten into the World*, he saith, *And let all the Angels of God worship him*, i. e. his Son considered in the highest Character and Capacity, that Son by whom he made the Worlds, and who upholdeth all Things by the Word of his Power. Christ therefore, in one of his Natures, had a Title to the Worship of Angels, and consequently to Dominion over them, long before the Commencement of his mediatorial Kingdom, long before all Power in Heaven and in Earth was given unto him. I make a Right to worship, necessarily to imply a Right to Dominion over the Worshipers; and in so doing, I think I have the concurrent Sense of Mankind. For Worship, in the Nature of the Act, supposes a Dependance
upon

236 S E R M O N I V.

upon the Object worshipped. Christ then was the Lord and King of heavenly Creatures before his Incarnation, and that he was then also the Owner of the lower World, is plain from the Apostle St. *John*, who describes the Word, as coming to his own, when he came down below and took Flesh. *He came to his own, and his own received him not.* Not his own by Grant or Donation from another, but by Right of Creation, mentioned by St. *John* in the Verse immediately foregoing. But of this Dominion St. *Paul* could not speak in the Text, when he says, *The Son is to be subject unto him that put all Things under him.* For if the Son, in no Nature or Capacity of his, is henceforward to have Dominion, he must then entirely cease to be an Object of Worship, both to Angels and Men, contrary to the plainest Intimations of Scripture. For thus St. *Paul*, *Rom. ix. 5.* affirms of Christ, *that he is over all, God blessed; that is, worshipped and adored for ever.* I shall not rest the Proof of this Point singly on this Passage, because the Application of it to Christ, as God, is con-

S E R M O N IV. 237

troverted by the *Arians*, but shall subjoin another, against which no Exception is or can be offered, from *Rev. v. 13.* *And every Creature which is in Heaven, and on the Earth, and under the Earth, and such as are in the Sea, and all that are in them heard I, saying, Blessing, Honour, Glory and Power be unto him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.* The Lamb therefore, that is, the Word and Son of God, will never be without Power, Honour and Glory, any more than he that sitteth upon the Throne, he Father himself, will be. Of his Kingdom and Glory there will be no End. So that whatever else the Subjection spoken of in my Text may mean, it is nothing that can affect the divine Nature or Prerogative of the Son: But after he has delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, jointly with him will he be entitled to, and possessed of Blessing, Honour, Glory and Power, for ever and ever.

Fourthly, The Subjection of the Son, at the End of all Things, to him who put them

238 S E R M O N IV.

them all under him, cannot imply any future Inequality in Power between these two divine Persons, without proving more than the *Arians* would be willing to admit; and therefore ought not in Prudence, at least, to be urged by them to any such Purpose: For if the Son, after delivering up the Kingdom to his Father, becomes thenceforward subject unto him, will it not follow by necessary Consequence, that before such Delivery, and so long as the Son reigned, the Father was not superior to him in Power, but that he was equal with, and independent of the Father? Will the *Arians*, or indeed can they, consistently with their own Principles, admit of such a periodical Equality, commencing and commensurate with the Son's mediatorial Kingdom? If this be the Case, as it plainly is, they are as much interested against the Conclusion they would draw from this Passage, as the Orthodox themselves are or can be. They are as much concerned as we are, to look out for a different Interpretation, and can no more stand their Ground, upon a Supposition that *St. Paul*
meant

S E R M O N IV. 239

meant the Son will be subject to the Father, so as to become absolutely and entirely unequal with and inferior to him, than we can. For if once they grant, that the Son might, during any assignable Period, have been co-equal with the Father in Power or Dominion, they will have no Pretence for arguing against a perpetual Co-equality in that Respect, from the Reason and Nature of Things. And if the Father could possibly make the Son an equal Sharer of his own infinite Power after his Resurrection, what should hinder, but that he might have communicated to him in like Manner, that and every other divine Perfection from all Eternity?

Fifthly, If the Subjection of the Son at the End of all Things, had respected his divine Nature, how comes it to pass, that we hear nothing of the Holy Ghost likewise delivering up his Power, and becoming subject to him that sent him? That blessed Spirit had a mighty Share in the Oeconomy of Man's Redemption, and by him the whole Body of the Church is governed,

vernal, as well as sanctified. Must the Son therefore, whom the *Arians* make much superior to the Holy Ghost, surrender up his high Honours, whilst the Holy Ghost is permitted to retain his. And if he likewise is to become subject, how comes it to pass, the Scripture is altogether silent about such Surrendry? The best Solution of this Quære is, that the Son will deliver up no Power hereafter, but what was vested in him as he was Man, nor become subject in any other Capacity; and the Holy Ghost having no Powers, but what belonged to him as true and essential God, neither will, nor can surrender, or become subject. Upon the whole then, it appears that the Subjection of the Son to the Father, spoken of in my Text, cannot, for many Reasons, be understood of Christ in his superior Nature, in which he was in the Beginning with God, and was God, in which he made all Things visible and invisible; and consequently, that such Subjection relating only to him, as the Son of Man, cannot affect that other Nature of his

S E R M O N IV. 241

his, in which he ever was, and ever will be, equal with the Father.

But besides this, the Context seems to make it little less than necessary, that by the Son himself, who hereafter is to be subject, should be meant the Son of Man, or the human Nature of Christ. For in this Nature it was that he became our Mediator and our High Priest; in this he ascended into Heaven, and sat on the right Hand of the Majesty on high, there to reign, as was foretold in the 110th *Psalms*, *Till God should make his Enemies his Footstool*. There also God declared him by Oath a Priest for ever, after the Order of *Melchisedech*. To this famous Prediction, which relates thus evidently to the human Nature of Christ, *St. Paul* alludes throughout his whole Discourse, concerning the Reign and subsequent Subjection of Christ, and therefore assuredly spake therein, as *David* before him did, of the Messiah, as he was Man. To make this plainer, in the 24th Verse of this Chapter, in which the Delivery of a Kingdom to God is first

242 S E R M O N I V.

mentioned, it is to be noted, that he, by whom this Surrendry is to be made, is Christ, just before distinguished in a Character entirely human, Christ at his coming or last Appearance.

In vain therefore is it, that the Enemies to our blessed Lord's Divinity, endeavour to prove his Inferiority to the Father, from a Passage which makes him subject to the Father, in such a Sense only, as may be admitted without any Impeachment of that fundamental Truth. For whilst we assert that he was equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead, we freely admit, that he was inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood: And while we earnestly contend, that of his Kingdom, as he is the one Supreme God with the Father, there is no End; so we readily own, that his Reign, as he is the Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus, may and will be determined by that God, who first vested him therewith, and at the same Time limited the Duration of his Reign, when he said unto him, *Sit thou on my right*

S E R M O N IV. 243

right Hand, till I make thine Enemies thy Footstool.

But here probably we shall be asked, since Christ, as the Son of Man, even during his Reign, was subject unto God, and as the Son of God was always equal with him, what Sense is there in St. Paul's Expression, *That the Son himself shall be subject unto him that put all Things under him, that God may be all in all.* The obvious Meaning of the Word is, that thereby is made an Alteration in the Son's Condition, from being independent to a State of Subjection, which Meaning, upon the Catholick Hypothesis, seems quite explained away.

To which I answer, that the very same original Word, which the Interpreters here render subject, is, in the Beginning of the Verse of my Text, when applied to the Enemies of Christ, translated, *shall be subdued*: Though there also it might with equal Propriety have been said, when all Things shall be subject unto him. Now

244 S E R M O N IV.

in right, all these Things, all the Enemies of Christ were subject unto him, that is, they owed him Obedience from the Commencement of his Reign, from the first Moment that all Power was given unto him in Heaven and in Earth. Only, in Fact, they were permitted to exercise an Authority for some Time longer, and particularly Death, the last of them, was not actually put out of Power till the general Resurrection had taken Effect. To become subject therefore to another, in the Language of St. Paul, does not denote, that before such Subjection the Parties were equal to each other, and that neither owed the other any Obedience or Subjection; but his Meaning only is by Subjection, that the Party subjected is divested of that Power which he before actually exercised. To apply this then to the Case before us, when the Apostle says, *that the Son himself*, meaning Christ as Man, *shall be subject unto God*, he was far from meaning, that before this Event he owed no Submission to him, in that Capacity, only he chuses to express the Surrendry of his
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S E R M O N IV. 245

Kingdom, and the Cessation of his mediatorial Power, by that Phrase, as immediately before he had, in like Manner, expressed the Cessation and Abolition of that Dominion, which the Enemies of Christ had before exercised. The only Difference in the two Cases was, that the Enemies of Christ's Kingdom unwillingly parted with their Power, he extorted it from them, and therefore they were properly subdued by him or to him; whereas Christ surrenders his Kingdom to God voluntarily, and could not strictly be said to be subdued. Only the Apostle continues the Use of the Expression to denote that, wherein the two Cases were alike, *viz.* that in both there was a Cessation, and a final End of that Power which had been exercised before. In short, he did not mean, that the Son, before his Subjection to God, owed or paid him less Submission than afterwards; but that, whereas, before he had an actual Kingdom and exercised Authority and Jurisdiction, at the End of all Things he will do so no more, but *God will be all in all*, i. e. all Power and Dominion, before exercised,

246 S E R M O N IV.

under other Names, will then cease, and every Distinction of Sovereignty will thenceforward be swallowed up in that of God, ruling alone without Delegates over his Creatures. This seems to be the natural Sense of the Apostle's Words, as it is the necessary Consequence of what goes immediately before: For Christ was not to deliver up the Kingdom to God, till he had put down all Rule, Authority, and Power. So that when he had further surrendered up his own likewise, nothing of this Kind could remain or subsist, but the indefeasible and eternal Empire of God over his moral and intelligent Creatures. *That God may be all in all*, therefore, is the same as if St. Paul had said, and thus it will come to pass, that God will be the only Sovereign in Nature. To this Sense of God's being *all in all*, we are also led by another Passage in the Writings of St. Paul, which is nearly parallel to it, *viz. Col. iii. II.* where meaning to say, that among those who were converted to Christianity, all worldly Distinctions should cease. He expresses himself thus, *There is neither*
Greek

S E R M O N IV. 247

Greek nor Jew, Circumcision nor Uncircumcision, Scythian, Barbarian, Bond nor Free, but Christ is all and in all, i. e. In the new Life, all other Names shall be lost or buried in that of Christian. So when God is *all in all*, we shall hear no more of the Servants of Men, nor of the Tyranny of Sin and Death, nor even of the mediatorial Sovereignty of Christ, nor of any other Subjection, besides that of intelligent Creatures to God their Maker. But who then is this God, who, in Strictness of Speech, hereafter, will be the only Potentate? Not the Father only, nor he jointly with the Son, and exclusive of the Holy Ghost, but the whole three Persons in the undivided Essence of the Deity. To whom therefore be given, as is most due, all Honour, Glory, &c.



S E R M O N V.

J O H N xiv. 28.

Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father : For my Father is greater than I.

OUR blessed Lord well knowing that his Death would extremely terrify his Disciples, and that his entire bodily Absence from them after his Ascension was an Event, the Prospect of which would give them no small Uneasiness, makes it his Business to prepare them for both these Incidents in the Chapter of my

my Text. And the better to do this, upon the mention of each he adds some consolatory Promise, that should support their Spirits under the unexpected Tidings. Thus, in the 12th *ver.* he introduces his going to the Father as a Reason why they, the Apostles, should afterwards do the same, and greater Works than he had done. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the Works that I do, shall he do also: And greater Works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.* To which he immediately subjoins a repeated Declaration, that whatsoever they should ask in his Name he will do. Over and above all this, he gives them the Assurance of another Comforter, who, after his entire Departure, and going to the Father, should take his Place among them, and abide with them forever, even the Spirit of Truth. Again, in the 18th *ver.* to relieve them under the Sorrows that his first Departure from them by his Death would occasion, he says, *I will not leave you comfortless; or, as the Greek might more strongly be rendered, I will not leave you Orphans, I will come*

S E R M O N V. 251

come unto you, meaning his Resurrection, and the Abode that he would continue for some time after to make with them. But finding that this Method of Address, the Promise of personal Advantages, and equal Comforts in another Way, had little or no Effect upon his Hearers, but that their Heart was still troubled, and they were afraid for his Departure from them, especially for his final One, when he should go to the Father; he alters his Manner of Application in the Words of my Text, trying to shame them out of their Fears and Concern, from the Principles of Love and Gratitude, which they ought, and did profess for him. *Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice; because I said, I go unto the Father: For my Father is greater than I.*

From the last Words of the Text, *viz. For my Father is greater than I*, the Arians, and other Enemies to our Lord's substantial Divinity, argue strongly for their own Opinions. An Inequality, in some Sense

Sense or other, between Christ and the Father, is here asserted in direct Terms. And nothing will serve the Men above-mentioned, but that our Lord meant an Inferiority of his own highest Nature to that of the Father, such an Inferiority, as will make him distinct in Substance, as well as Person, from the Father, and that consequently he cannot be one God with him.

Certain it is, that the Words themselves are general, and, taken a-part, may relate either to the human or divine Nature of our Lord. But to which of these two they most probably belong, can only be determined by the Analogy of Scripture Doctrine, concerning the Equality or Inequality of the Son's divine Nature with that of the Father, together with the Scope and Intent of our Lord's Words, about which the present Contest is raised. If our Lord, or the Evangelists, and other Penmen of the New Testament, speak of Christ in such a Manner as to give us Reason to think that, in his highest Capacity, he was essentially inferior to the Father; then it may be concluded,

S E R M O N V. 253

cluded, that in this Sense also the Words of the Text are to be understood : Especially if such a Sense agrees likewise with the Occasion and View, wherewith our Lord spake them. But if, on the other Hand, the Analogy of the whole New Testament points quite another Way ; if both Christ and his Apostles speak of the Son in his superior Nature, in such a Manner, as that it would be absurd to admit of any essential Inequality between him, thus considered, and the Father ; then is he by no Means to be understood, in my Text, as declaring, that his Father was greater than he in his divine Nature, in any essential Respect. And, in such a Case, 'tis a great Chance but we find, that the *Arian* Sense of those Words is as foreign, and as inconsistent with the Design of them, as it is with the Tenour and Analogy of the New Testament in general.

Let us then, *First*, consider, what the Writings of the new Covenant deliver concerning the superior or divine Nature of Christ ; and whether from thence we can
collect,

collect, that the Father is essentially greater than his only begotten Son.

And *First*, Those Scriptures are clear in asserting, that the Father and Son are one, not in Will and voluntary Consent only, but also in a natural Respect, one in Substance, *e. g.* *John* x. 30. our Lord says, *I and the Father are one.* An Expression so clearly implying Unity of divine Substance, and Sameness of Nature with the Father, that, upon the first hearing of it, the *Jews* took up Stones to stone him as a Blasphemer, alledging, that, by the Saying above-mentioned, he who was but Man, made himself God. Now if the Father and Son are one God, neither of them, in respect of Essence, can be greater or less than the other. Unity, in the Nature of Things, excludes all Possibility of Comparison, because the same Substance cannot be greater or less than itself. When therefore our Lord, in the Text, admits the Father to be greater than he, sure we are, that, whatever else he meant, he intended no Contradiction to his other Saying, that
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S E R M O N V. 255

he and the Father were one : But contradictory those Sayings must be, if understood in the same Sense : If our Lord in both spake of himself, as he was God. For as God he must be one in Nature and Substance with the Father ; unless we will run into the absurd Opinion of many Gods : And if the Father and Son, being each God, are yet but one God, neither of them can be greater, nor less than the other. So that when our Lord said, *I and the Father are one* ; it was, by Necessity, and immediate Consequence, the same as if he had said, *I and the Father are equal*. Impossible therefore is it that Christ, speaking of himself and his Father, in the same Respect, should say, *My Father is greater than I*.

Secondly, The Scriptures of the New Testament ascribe the very same essential Attributes to the Son, that they ascribe unto the Father. As first in general, *John* xvi. 15. our Lord saith, *All things that the Father hath are mine*. And again, *Chap.* xvii. ver. 10. *All mine are thine, and thine are mine*. We cannot hereby under-

256 S E R M O N V.

stand less than that, whatever essential Perfections the Father hath, these the Son hath also. And accordingly, in the second Place, every particular Attribute, that either the Light of Reason or Revelation discovers, as necessarily belonging to the Deity, is, in the New Testament, given to the Son. *e. g.* Is the Father eternal? Is he *Alpha* and *Omega*, the first and the last? So also is the Son, *Rev. i. 11.* Was the Father in the Beginning God? So also was the Son or Word. He was in the Beginning with God, and even then he was God. Is the Father immutable, who changes not, and one in whom is no Variableness, nor Shadow of Turning? So also is the Son. For to him the inspired Writer to the *Hebrews* applies what the *Psalmist* saith unto God, *viz. They, [the Heavens and the Earth,] shall perish; but thou remainest; they shall be changed, but thou art the same. (Heb. i. 10, 11, 12.)* Again, is the Father omniscient? Does he even search the Heart, and try the Reins? So also does the Son. *All Things*, saith the Author to the *Hebrews, Chap. iv. are naked*
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ed and opened unto the Eyes of him; he is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart. And to the same Purpose Christ speaks of himself, *Rev. ii. 23. I am he that searcheth the Reins and the Heart.* Is God the Father Omnipresent? So likewise is God the Son. How else could he fulfill his Promise to the Church, dispersed throughout the World, and be with them always? How could he create all things, and how by him could all things consist, *i. e.* be preserved and sustained, if he was not present with all things in Heaven, in Earth, and under the Earth, *i. e.* if he was not omnipresent? *Lastly,* Is the Father Almighty? So is the Son, the *ὁ παντοκράτωρ* the Almighty. *Rev. i. 8.* I know the *Arians* contend, that this Title is there given to the Father. But their true Reason for saying so is, that the contrary Supposition would be ruinous to their Scheme: They are forced therefore to beg the Question, and arbitrarily give away from the Son what the Scripture, according to the allowed Rule of Interpretation, predicates of him, For the *ver. immediately*

VOL. II. S diately

diately preceding, indisputably belongs to the Son. For which Reason the *ver.* in Dispute, without evident Necessity, which is not the Case here, must and should refer to the same Antecedent. I might add, that the *Arians* introduce the Father, as speaking of himself, which is by no Means likely to be the Truth: Because throughout the *Revelations* there is no clear Instance of any divine Interlocutor, besides the Son: But I need insist no longer on this Passage; because, tho' it be a very strong and pertinent one, we have others sufficient for the Purpose, particularly *Phil. iii. 21.* where *St. Paul* speaks of *the working* or Energy, *whereby* Christ is able to *subdue all things to himself.* Christ, therefore, seeing he has every Attribute essential to the Deity in common with the Father, must be equal with him. For what is it that makes any one Being superior to another, but higher Attributes or Powers? And since the natural and necessary Prerogatives of these divine Persons are the same, neither of them, as God, can be greater than the other.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The New Testament Writers, in one or two Passages, expressly assert the Equality of the Son to the Father. St. Paul, *Phil.* ii. 6. affirms, that Christ Jesus *thought it not Robbery to be equal with God*. I very well know that the Propriety of this Rendering is much questioned by the Adversaries, with whom at present we have to do. But what in a good Measure justifies the current Version is, that it was not taken up to serve a Turn, or to favour the Orthodox Cause against *Arianism*, but stood in the oldest *Latin* Version, and as such is cited even in the second Century, above an Age before *Arius* was heard of in the World: Nor did *Jerom*, when he reformed this ancient Version, see any Cause to alter it in the Instance before us. And after all, what Advantage would it be to our Adversaries, if instead of the present Rendering, *be thought it not Robbery to be equal with God*, we should admit theirs, and make St. Paul say, that Christ Jesus thought it not Robbery to be *as* God. They do not consider, that upon Scripture Principles it is equally

S 2 blasphemous

blasphemous and piacular to say, that any other Being is as God *לֹא כִּי יִשָׁא אֱלֹהִים*, as to say he is *יִשָׁא אֱלֹהִים* equal with God. *There is none like thee*, says Holy David. *1 Chron. xvii. 21.* And again, *Psal. lxxxvi. 8.* *Among the Gods is none like unto thee, O Lord, neither are there any Works like unto thy Works.* Many more such sayings we find in the Prophets. So jealous are the sacred Writings of the Honour of God, that they will not endure any Comparison between other Beings and him. And no Wonder: For in their Language, to be like God, or as God was the same, as to be equal with him: And Works like his, were Works equal to, *i. e.* as wonderful as his. It is one of the Characters of Antichrist, that he sitteth in the Temple *שָׁמַע אֱלֹהִים*, as God. Angels, and Magistrates, on Account of distant and general Resemblances, are called Gods in Holy Writ: But to forbid all formal Comparison between God and the highest of his Creatures, *Michael*, the chief of the Angels, had his Name given him, importing that none is as God. Since therefore to be as God in the Idiom of

Scripture,

S E R M O N V. 261

Scripture, is not applicable to any Being who is not God, and is to all Intents and Purposes the same as being equal with God; the Point in View of the Son's being equal with the Father, is effectually made good from this Passage of the *Philippians*, which way soever it be rendered.

But farther, St. *John*, Chap. v. 18. of his Gospel, tells us, that *the Jews sought the more to kill Jesus, because he not only had broken the Sabbath: But said also, that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.* This Passage is the more remarkable, because it is the Evangelist's own Conclusion, that Christ saying God was his Father, made himself equal with God. Upon the whole then, as Christ in Scripture is declared to be equal with the Father, in Consequence of his being in the Form of God, and also of his being, in a strict Sense, the Son of God: So when he affirms in my Text, that the *Father is greater than He*, we must understand him to mean it not with Respect to his divine Nature, as such.

We are in the next Place to consider the true Import of our Lord's Saying in my Text, that his Father was greater than He. And since it appears, contrary to the Tenor of the New Testament Writings, to apply it to Christ in his divine Nature, we must necessarily explain it with Relation to his Humanity.

The Truth is, that if the Analogy of Scripture had permitted us to do otherwise, the Context, and the Scope of the Passage, would almost force us into this Interpretation. For the human Nature of Christ, upon every Supposition, was to gain infinitely more by his Exaltation into Heaven, than his pre-existent or divine One. The Love therefore of the Disciples for our Lord, which rightly directed should have made them rejoice, because he went unto the Father, was the Love of that Nature of his, which was most honoured and magnified by this Removal from the World below to that above, *i. e.* his human One. And to convince them, that the Exchange of
Earth

Earth for Heaven was an Advantage to him, at which whosoever loved him ought to rejoice, he had only occasion to put them in Mind, that in the Nature, wherein he went to the Father, he was inferior to him, and consequently in that Nature capable of receiving high Honours and Prerogatives from him. In such an Argument, if the Thing had been possible, it is scarce to be supposed, that our Lord would look out for a Medium of Proof, stronger than the present Exigence required; that to demonstrate the Advantages accruing to his human Nature by ascending to his Father, he should assert the Superiority of his Father to himself in both his Natures, where his Superiority, in the lowest of them, was abundantly sufficient.

In a Word, our Saviour's Reasoning with his Disciples in the Text seems plainly this. Your Concern for my leaving you, and going to my Father, is not out of Love to me, but to yourselves, and your own Interests: For I should suffer by staying here with you. For so long a Time shall

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I lose

I lose the Glories and Beatitudes which the Father is able to bestow on me when I go unto him. For whether you know and consider it or not, the Father is greater than I; and consequently you ought to rejoice at my leaving you, to dwell with one that is capable of advancing me to a higher Dignity than I am at present possessed of. This, I say, seems to be the plain and natural Force of our Saviour's Argument in the Text.

But still some will tell us, that our Lord in asserting that the Father was greater than He, as he was Man, would have said no more than what was self-evident and known to every one, and owned by every one; that such Assertions are jejune, and unworthy of him, who spake as never Man spake; and that therefore this could never be all his Meaning.

In Answer to which I shall only put the Objectors in Mind, that self-evident, and, as they call them, jejune Assertions, are frequent in Scripture, and have their Use on such Occasions as that in my Text.

Thus

Thus the Spirit of God, to shame Men out of a vain Hope, that they shall escape the Vengeance of God denounced against impenitent Sinners, makes no Scruple of leaving this very plain Truth upon sacred Record, that God is not a Man. *God is not a Man that he should lie, nor the Son of Man that he should repent.* Again, the Prophet *Isaiab*, in order to set the Folly of those *Israelites* in the liveliest Colours, who, against express Precept, went in his Days to *Egypt* for Help, puts them in Mind of what they and every one else knew as well as he, that the *Egyptians* are Men, and not God, and their *Horses* Flesh, and not Spirit. *Jer.* xxxi. 3. In both Cases the Design of Scripture is not directly to inform and instruct, but to reproach wicked and unreasonable Men with acting, as if the contrary to these self-evident Propositions had been the Truth. So likewise, in the Case before us, our Lord in affirming, that the Father was greater than he in his human Nature, meant not to instruct them in a Point that they misunderstand-

understood, or were ignorant of before; but only fix a Brand on their unreasonable Concern for his Person at Departure from them into Heaven, as seemingly founded on the grossest Mistake, *viz*, that the Father could not exalt his human Nature higher than it was already, not being greater than he. For on the contrary Supposition they grieved and sorrowed for his Advancement, which was very far from being an Argument that they loved him.

Thus it appears upon the whole, that the Passage of my Text, wherein our Saviour says, *My Father is greater than I*, affords no Countenance to the *Arian* Hypothesis of Christ's being in both his Natures inferior to the Father.

To him therefore it is warrantable, every Way just and right, that we give, jointly with the Father and the Holy Ghost, all Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty, &c.

S E R M O N VI.

I COR. viii. 5, 6.

For tho' there be that are called Gods, whether in Heaven or in Earth (as there be Gods many and Lords many) but to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all Things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all Things, and we by him.

TWO Things in these Words are observed by the *Arians*, as favouring their Scheme. The first is, that the Father, in Contradistinction to all others, is declared to be the one, or only God of the Christians. The second is the Difference of Expression, concerning the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, with
Rela-

268 S E R M O N VI.

Relation to the Share which each of them had in producing of all Things. The Father is said to be he, of whom $\epsilon\iota\ \delta\epsilon$ are all Things: The Lord Jesus Christ is the one Lord, by whom $\delta\iota\ \delta\epsilon$ are all Things.

That there is a Difference made by the Apostle, between these two divine Persons, is too evident to be denied. But the Question between us and the *Arians* is, whether the Distinction will prove, as they would have it, that the Father is, exclusive of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one true essential God, and the first Cause of all Things. This we entirely deny, and the Negative is what I hope fully to make out at this Time.

But before I enter upon this Point, it will be proper to consider what gave Occasion to these Words of the Apostle, in Hopes that the Context may give us, as in some Cases it does, some Light into his Meaning.

It

It appears then, that this first Epistle of St. Paul to the *Corinthians* was framed on two Occasions. The first was some private Intelligence he had received from the Household of *Chloe*, concerning some Diffentions and Irregularities that had sprung up in the Church of *Corinth*. The second was a Letter he had received from that Church at large, desiring his Information in some dubious Cases of Conscience and Discipline. With answering the first of these he begins this Epistle, and speaks entirely to it in the six first Chapters. The 7th Chapter begins with these Words, *Now concerning the Things whereof ye write unto me.* Which plainly shews, that he was then entering upon a Consideration of the Letter, which the Church of *Corinth*, at large, had sent unto him. The first of their Queries, as appears from the first Verse of the seventh Chapter, was concerning the Expediency of Marriage, and of Cohabitation in Wedlock, where one of the Parties was an Unbeliever. And to this St. Paul speaks fully and solely throughout

270 S E R M O N VI.

that Chapter. The second Query, wherewith the Chapter of the Text begins, related to the Lawfulness of eating or touching those Things that are offered in Sacrifice unto Idols. It should seem, that some in the Church of *Corinth* eat such Things as oft as Occasion offered, and without any Distinction of Cases, urging in their Defence, that they knew Idols to be nothing, *i. e.* to have no real, nor so much as relative Divinity in them, but to be the mere Creatures of Pagan Ignorance and Superstition. From whence they concluded, that in eating Meats offered unto them, without the least Intention of doing Honour, or paying any Kind of religious Worship, they acted nothing sinful, or unworthy of their Christian Profession. They did not at such Times feast upon a Sacrifice, but regarded what was before them as common Meat, and partook of it to serve the natural Ends of Eating only. And this Defence of theirs, our Apostle allows to be so far good as the Principle goes on which it is built. He allows that an Idol is nothing in the World, there being

S E R M O N VI. 271

ing none other God but one. He declares in the Words of my Text, that tho' in the vulgar Account, and according to common Language, there are many celestial and terrestrial Gods, many, who under the Name of Gods and Lords, receive divine Honours and Oblations; yet to Christians, who are competently instructed in their Religion, there is but one Object of Worship, eminently called God, *i. e.* the Father, and with equal Emphasis called the Lord, that is, Jesus Christ. But tho' this Christian Knowledge secured the Owners of it from sinning against their own Conscience and Conviction, when they ate of those Things which were offered unto Idols, yet, in so doing, they might err sometimes against the great Law of Charity. All had not the necessary Knowledge concerning the Vanity and Futility of *Heathen* Idols, for want of which, as oft as they ate of such Things as were offered to them, they did, or intended to do, religious Honour to them, and thereby sinned. He adds, that weak or ignorant Christians would be emboldened to proceed in such

272 S E R M O N VI.

unlawful Practices, if they observed the more Knowing to sit at Meat in the Idol's Temple : They would judge from their Actions, and thereby be misled for want of knowing their inward Principle or Motive of Action. He concludes therefore, that tho' the intelligent Christian might safely eat of such Things as were offered unto Idols, as to his own Particular, yet, if thereby he knowingly led others to do the same Thing sinfully, he wounded their weak Consciences, and in so doing, sinned against Christ. The Sum of this Advice is, then, that a Man had better never eat Flesh at all on such Occasions, however lawful in itself, than make his Brother offend thereby.

It appears then, that in the Words of my Text, the one God, the Father, is not opposed to, or contradistinguished from the other divine Persons in the Trinity, any more than the one Lord Jesus Christ is, but only to false Objects of religious Worship, to the Gods many and Lords many, whose Images were set up in Temples, and addressed

S E R M O N VI. 273

dressed to by Prayers and Sacrifices all the *Heathen* World over. In Opposition to these Nothings, as they are called in the Old Testament, *St. Paul* declares what is the Object of Christian Worship, the Father, eminently stiled God, and one only in Nature and Substance, not many, like the Pagan Deities; and Jesus Christ, the one Lord, not many Lords, like the *Baalim*, among the *Zidonian* and *Syrian* Idolaters. In a Word, *St. Paul's* Argument to prove, that an intelligent Christian partaking of Meat offered unto Idols, carried no religious Meaning along with it, is this; that such a one never directed Worship, nor any Act of Religion towards any Object, that was not strictly and properly God or Lord; whereas, he reposes the Gods and Lords of the *Heathen*, to have neither Divinity nor Dominion, nor so much as conscious Being. But of what Use in such an Argument, could the Contradistinction between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, contended for by our *Arian* Adversaries, possibly prove; There certainly was no Opposition intended by the Apostle, between

the Gods many and the Lords many among the *Heathen*: Those were both equally Objects of false Worship, tho' under different Denominations. Why, then, should it be apprehended, that in his Description of the true or Christian Worship, the one true God should be understood exclusive of the one true Lord.

But notwithstanding all this, the Men we have to do with rigidly adhere to the Letter of the Text, which they say affirms, that the Father is the one, *i. e.* the only God of the Christians. In Consequence of which, they would persuade us, that if the Son be God at all, it must be in a subordinate, or improper Sense; so that he cannot be one with the Father, or equal to him. They have often been told, but without Effect, that this Argument will prove too much, and bring them under inextricable Difficulties: For if the exclusive Term one God, when predicated of the Father, must be expounded in the utmost Degree of Strictness, it will follow, that one Lord also, immediately after applied to Jesus Christ,

Christ, must have the self-same rigorous Explication. The Consequence of which will be this, that as *St. Paul* excludes Jesus Christ from being properly God, so he excludes the Father from being properly the Lord of Christians. But is such a Notion rational, scriptural, or pious? Is it not rather absurd and blasphemous? Must not the *Arians* themselves be compelled therefore to explain the one Lord with some Degree of Latitude, so as not to make *St. Paul* exclude the Father from being, to us Christians, the Lord as well as Jesus Christ. It is therefore incumbent upon them to devise some Expedient or Salvo in this Case; and yet it will be impossible for them to find such a one as will effectually serve their Turn, and not at the same Time prove, that the Apostle no more intended to exclude Jesus Christ from being God, than God the Father from being Lord. But one Rule of Interpretation can be admitted, and the exclusive Phrase must be softened in both Cases, or in neither. The *Arians*, of all others, are most concerned to assert the Father's Title to Lordship or

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276 S E R M O N V I.

Dominion, because some of their most considerable Writers have affirmed, that God denotes Dominion only, and not Substance or Nature. If therefore Jesus Christ be the one Lord, exclusive of the Father, upon the Strength of their Maxim he must, exclusively also of him, be the one God. If ever, then, they should seriously enter upon the Defence of the Father's being Lord, or undertake to shew the Necessity of understanding *St. Paul* in a qualified Sense, when he declares Jesus Christ to be the One, or only Lord, they would doubtless do it by shewing from many Instances, that otherwise Scripture could not be made consistent with itself. They would particularly observe, that Jesus Christ industriously, and on all Occasions, avoided the Imputation of being independent of the Father, referring on the other Hand every Thing up to him, as the Original of all Power and Perfection. For nothing can give any divine Person a surer Right to Lordship and Authority than Creation. But the Creation of all Things, tho' ascribed by *St. Paul* to the Son, is more frequently,

S E R M O N VI. 277

as well as more eminently, attributed by him to the Father: Nay, in the very Words of the Text, it is made the distinguishing Attribute of the Father, *that of him are all Things*: Shall the Potter then have Power over his own Clay, and shall not the Sovereign Maker of the Universe be Lord of his own Creation? And from hence they would be led to argue, that the Apostle, in my Text, when he declares Jesus Christ to be the one Lord, meant it not in Opposition to, or exclusive of the Father, but of the Lords many, whom the *Heathen* worshipped under bodily Figures, such as *Baal Peor*, *Baal Berith*, and *Baalzebub*. And doubtless in such a Case, they would be thought by Orthodox Christians, as well as by their own Friends, to argue right. But then we, in our Turns, should have the Benefit of Reasoning in like Manner, and shewing that *St. Paul*, when he says, *that to us there is one God*, the Father, had no Design to exclude Jesus Christ from real and essential Divinity; because, in so doing, he would contradict not only the other inspired Writers of the New Testa-

278 S E R M O N VI.

ment, but himself also. For nothing higher, nothing more strongly declarative of strict and natural Godhead could be affirmed of the Father, than that *He is over all, God blessed for ever*. And this the Apostle of my Text declares undoubtedly of Christ, *Rom. ix. 5*. The *Arians* indeed have, by various Methods, endeavoured to wrest this glorious Testimony of Christ's Divinity from us; but they have all been attended with palpable Defects: Their Constructions of the Passage have not only been forced, but ungrammatical: Their critical Emendation has nothing to support it, but is against all Rules of good Writing, and scarce agreeable to common Sense. As long therefore as sober Interpretation shall continue in Use, and the plain Rudiments of the *Greek* be known, so long will the Authority of *St. Paul*, for Christ's *being over all, God blessed for ever*, bar *Arianism* from being the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity. So long also will this Passage be an Argument, that the same Apostle could not possibly intend to exclude Jesus Christ from being with the Father

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ther the one God. That the Father and the Son are contradistinguished from each other by different and personal Characters in the Text, we allow; but still insist upon it, that as the Father's essential Title to be our Lord is not precluded, by the Apostle's calling the Son the only Lord; so the Son's Claim to be the God of the Christians, is not precluded by the Stile of the Father, when he is declared to be the one God. And as the Character of the one Lord and the only Lord, when used as distinctive of the Son, does not imply that he is Lord in a higher Degree than the Father; so, on the other Hand, the seemingly exclusive Title of one God and only true God, given to the Father, does by no Means imply, that he is God in a superior Sense to the Son. The whole Mystery of these Expressions is no more than this, that the Son, probably as being our Lord by a double Title, that of Creation, in which he is joint with the Father, and another peculiar to himself, the Right arising from Redemption, is therefore generally and emphatically stiled the Lord in

the New Testament, when he is personally mentioned. The Father likewise being the Head and Fountain of the Deity, and the only one of the three divine Persons who is self-existent and underived, being also the first in Order, as well as in our Conceptions, in the Scale of the Trinity, is therefore emphatically denoted by the Name of the one God, and the only true God. But essentially considered, the whole sacred Triad are one God, and the only true God, they are equally to us one and the only Lord. In this Respect, none of the three Persons are greater or less than the other, but the Whole are equal in Power, Majesty, and every other divine Perfection. By this Account the Analogy of Scripture is preserved, and all Confusion and Inconsistency is prevented: Whereas, if, with the *Arians*, we understand the exclusive Phrases rigorously, the sacred Oracles become utterly irreconcilable. St. *Paul*, according to their Scheme, makes the Father, essentially considered, the one God; and yet elsewhere, in the same Respect, proclaims Christ to be supreme God.

St.

S E R M O N VI. 281

St. *John*, in his Gospel, introduces our Lord speaking to his Father, as the only true God; and yet the same St. *John*, in the End of his first Epistle, scruples not to call Jesus Christ $\delta \alpha \lambda \theta \acute{\iota} \nu \omicron \varsigma \Theta \epsilon \acute{\iota} \omicron \varsigma$, the true God. To salve and reconcile these seeming Repugnancies, the Orthodox have Recourse to no other Distinction than what the Scriptures supply them with, which plainly speak of the Father sometimes in his personal, and at other Times in his essential Character: Whereas our Adversaries introduce a Distinction, not only unknown to Scripture, but contrary to the entire Tenour of it, *i. e.* of a supreme and subordinate Deity. A Distinction so unlikely to reconcile the seeming Disagreements in the sacred Writings, that it destroys and subverts the ruling Principle, which animates and runs entirely thro' that venerable Book, *The Unity of the Godhead*. Deity divided into supreme and subordinate, was the great and leading Error of *Paganism*. To suppose, therefore, that the Christian Revelation, while it steadily avows a Principle direct contrary to this, should yet be expressed

282 S E R M O N VI.

expressed in such a Manner, as not to be made consistent without admitting Polytheism, is a Conceit too extravagant to be seriously admitted or defended. The *Arians* appear to be more sensible of the Weight of this Charge, than able to remove it. For to set up more Objects of Worship, however it be diversified, than one, is the most criminal Part of Polytheism. Barely to believe more Gods than one, is an Error in Speculation; but to make any Being, besides the one God, a Sharer in our religious Services, is to rob him of the Honour which he has taught us is due to himself only. And to inculcate this Lesson to us, he has taken Care to inform us, as well that there is but one Object of Worship, as that there is but one God; *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* To serve therefore any other Being in a religious Sense, call it mediatorial Worship, or by any other Name, it matters not, is contrary to the Command of God. To set up two distinct Objects of Worship, is to set up two Gods, is to have another God besides the true one. Indeed, our
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S E R M O N VI. 283

present Adversaries do this expressly, as well as by Consequence. The plain Testimonies of Scripture compel them to admit that Christ is God, and as they will not allow him to be the one or supreme God with the Father, nor to be entitled to the same Kind and Degree of Worship, they plainly maintain two Gods, both in Theory and Practice. The Distinction of the Son's being God in a subordinate Sense, by which they hope to evade the Charge of contradicting that Fundamental of revealed Religion, the Unity of the Godhead, as if thereby was meant supreme Godhead only, is vain and irrational: For it does not appear, that the idolatrous Nations, against whose Practices God guarded his Church by so many strong Declarations of the divine Unity, did hold a Plurality of supreme Gods, but rather, on the contrary, a Scale of Deities, all subaltern to one Supreme. And since this was the Case, it is against common Sense, as well as Piety, to suppose that God, in Scripture, should forbid only a Plurality of supreme Gods, which was an Error that never had prevailed,

284 S E R M O N VI.

ed, nor was ever likely to prevail. Doubtless, therefore, the Scripture Notion of the divine Unity was levelled against a Plurality of Gods in general, against multiplying Objects of religious Worship, and worshipping the Creature as well as the Creator. The *Arians* therefore, who do all this, after all their Pretences of holding the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, are found utterly unscriptural.

I must, tho' but briefly, before I conclude this Discourse, touch on the different Modes of Expression used in my Text, concerning the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Of the former *St. Paul* says, $\epsilon\gamma\ \epsilon\ \pi\alpha\tau\epsilon\rho\varsigma$, of whom are all Things; but the latter $\epsilon\gamma\ \epsilon\ \pi\alpha\tau\epsilon\rho\varsigma$, by whom are all Things. But does this imply any essential Difference between these two divine Persons? God forbid: For if it should, the Father must essentially differ from himself, of whom it is said, *Rom. xi. 36. That thro' him, as well as of him, are all Things.* Some Difference, however, we are free to allow in the Text, between these blessed and adorable

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S E R M O N. VI. 285

ble Persons, relating to Priority of Order; the Father being the Fountain and underrived Origin of all Things, whilst the Son, tho' joined in the Act of Creation with the Father, not as a bare Instrument, but a voluntary Agent, was from all Eternity begotten by him. More than this cannot justly be demanded of us; and of this our Adversaries are welcome to make what Advantage they can. Personal Differences or Distinctions are necessary to discriminate the Father from the Son; but whoever attempts to divide their Nature and Essence, departs from the Scripture Rule, and pronounces those to be two, whom Jesus Christ himself declares are one. Now to these two, in divine Unity with the Holy Ghost, be ascribed as is most due, &c.

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S E R M O N VII.

H E B. i. latter Part of the second
Verse.

By whom also he made the Worlds.

OF all the Arguments for the Being of a God, which natural Reason supplies us withall, none is so convincing as that which is drawn from the vast Extent, the great Variety, the compleat Harmony and Beauty of the visible World. For to suppose, that such a System had no Beginning, no efficient Cause at all, is to make a Deity of the Universe, by attributing Self-existence to it: It is absurdly making God to be, instead of the Simplest of all Beings, an infinite Complication of mixed and dissimilar Parts. On

288 S E R M O N VII.

the other Hand, to say with *Epicurus*, that Chance produced the Material World, large and beautiful as it now is, had still less of Reason and Probability in it. That Casualty, which never yet effected any thing comparable to the lowest Performances of Art, should blunder out the stupendous Frame of the Universe, was a Conceit altogether wild and romantick. The only Result therefore of sober Inquiry about the Origin of the World, was, that it had a Beginning, and that not owing to Accident, but Design. The next Question was, what Kind of intelligent Being that was, which could form something out of nothing, which could not only Project, but perfect so vast a Fabrick with the greatest Wisdom and Symmetry. And the only Resolution of this must be, that this Architect of the World was infinite in Power, Knowledge, and every other Perfection requisite to carry on and finish so mighty and glorious a Work. Thus, as *St. Paul* expresses it, the invisible Things or Properties of this first Cause, from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood

derstood by the Things that were made, even his eternal Power and Godhead. We find then, that Creation, upon the Principles of natural Religion, was a Proof of the Deity of him that created. And the very same Medium of Proof is made use of in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The Divinity of the God of *Israel*, in Opposition to all Pretenders to that Character, is established upon this Foundation, that he alone is the Creator of the Universe, and of every Part thereof. To this Purpose speaks *Hezekiah* in his Prayer to God upon the Receipt of *Rabshakeh's* haughty Message: *O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the Cherubim: Thou hast made Heaven and Earth.* So also *David*, *Psal. xcvi. 5.* *All the Gods of the Nations are Idols, but the Lord made the Heavens.* Again, in the *Psalms* preceding this: *The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all Gods.* After which follows, as a Reason of this Preference: *The Sea is his, and he made it, and his Hands formed the dry Land.* So likewise, *Neb. ix. 6.* *Thou, even thou art Lord alone, thou hast made*
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290 S E R M O N VII.

Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens with all their Host, the Earth and all Things that are therein, the Seas and all that is therein. To this Effect also God himself argues in the Prophets in Defence of his own divine Unity. *I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the Light, and create Dark-ness.* *Iſaiah* xlv. 5, 6. Again, *Jer.* x. 11, 12. *Thus ſhall ye ſay unto them: The Gods that have not made the Heavens and the Earth, even they ſhall periſh from the Earth, and from under theſe Heavens. He hath made the Earth by his Power, he hath eſta- bliſhed the World by his Wiſdom, and hath ſtretched out the Heavens by his Diſcretion.* If we deſcend lower to the Writings of the New Teſtament, we find this Maxim ſtill preſerved and inſiſted on. There alſo, Crea- tion is the Characteriſtick of Divinity. Thus, *Rom.* i. 25. of the Creator *St. Paul* pronounces, that *He is bleſſed for ever. Amen, i. e.* He is God: For to none other does that Apoſtle ever give this Doxology. But in his *Epistle to the Hebrews, Chap. iii. ver. 4.* he more directly lays it down as an Axiom. *He that built all Things is God.*
 Since

S E R M O N VII. 291

Since then it is the Dictate of Reason, and the Voice of God, throughout his revealed Will, that the Creator of all Things is God, should it not seem demonstrably evident, that whoever is dignified with that august Title in the New Testament, is truly and properly God? But this is the Style of the Son in very many Passages thereof. *All Things*, says St. *John*, in the Beginning of his Gospel, *were made by him, and without him was not any Thing made that was made*. What Words can be more general or strong than these? None sure, unless we shall except the famous Testimony of St. *Paul*, *Col. i. 15, 16, 17. For by him (i. e. Christ) were all Things 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 created by him, and for him. And he is before all Things, and by him all things consist*. Here the whole Universe, in all its distinct Regions, is declared to be the Creature of the Son. Nothing was produced without his Agency, be it visible or invisible, human or angeli-

cal : But he is pronounced both the final and efficient Cause of them all. Nor does the Apostle stop here : But besides Creation, to him he ascribes the Preservation of all Things. And to prove that this was likewise the occult Doctrine of the Old Testament, the same St. Paul applies the following Passage out of the 102d Psalm, as spoken of the Son. *Thou, Lord, in the Beginning hast laid the Foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Works of thine Hands : They shall perish, but thou remainest : And they all shall wax old, as doth a Garment, and as a Vesture shalt thou fold up, and they shall be changed : But thou art the same, and thy Years shall not fail.* Here, in as plain Words as human Language can afford, the Creation of the Earth and the Heavens are ascribed unto *Jehovah*, or the true God ; and we have the Word of an inspired Writer, that the Almighty Creator, addressed to in this Passage, was the Son. Various have been the Attempts of Misbelievers, to elude the Force of this illustrious Testimony. One while these Words, with the two foregoing

ing Verses, have been pronounced an Interpolation, tho' they are wanting in no one MS. found in every Version, and owned by the most ancient Commentators. Another Time we are bore down that these Words, in the 102d *Psalms*, are spoken of the Father, and applied to Christ by the Author to the *Hebrews*, not so much in the Way of Argument, as of Accommodation. Which is serving the *Arian* Hypothesis at the Expence of St. *Paul's* Character. For the Subject he is upon required Argument, and not Flourish, being a professed Essay to prove the Son's Superiority to Angels from the Things respectively said of each in the Old Testament. In order to this a Comparison is drawn at full Length between the Characters of the one and the other, and every Appearance of strict and sober Inquiry into the Merits on both Sides, appears to be preserved. But the Scheme of Accommodation spoils all this seeming Equity: It represents St. *Paul* as grossly partial in Favour of the Son, and applying sublime Characters to him out of the Old Testament, which really belonged to another.

Language, in some Ways of Writing, is not only allowable, but beautiful : But Accommodation of Characters, that are foreign to the Subject concerned, is both unfair and trifling. A third and a more consistent Method used by the Enemies of our Lord's Divinity, to discard this and other Testimonies from the Epistle to the *Hebrews* to our Lord's Divinity, is utterly to reject it as uncanonical, written neither by *St. Paul*, nor by any other inspired Author. For to allow either of these, and at the same time represent the Reasonings of the Book weak or fallacious, is giving up the main Point to Infidels, and supporting *Arianism* to the Ruin of Christianity. But the Genuineness, as well as the inspired Authority of this Epistle to the *Hebrews*, has been clearly and abundantly made out, and we are not without Hopes, that the successful Attempts of Misbelievers, by such dangerous Expedients to make good their Cause, will in Time convince them that they cannot be consistent Christians, without being, at the same Time, Orthodox Ones.

Since

S E R M O N VII, 295

Since then, Creation, upon the Foot both of natural and revealed Religion, is the standing Proof of the Divinity of that Being who creates; and since the Creation of all Things, as well as the Preservation of them, is, in the Scriptures of the New Testament, both frequently and absolutely ascribed to the Son, what should hinder the apparent Consequence from these Premises, that the Son is naturally and truly God? If he was the first Cause of the Universe, must he not be infinite in Power and Wisdom, and can he be both these, and yet a Creature? If he that formed the Light, and created Darkness, be the Lord, and none but he can pretend to that Title, shall the Son be allowed the Glory of Creation, and yet be excluded from sharing in the divine Unity? Is the Father, as Creator, and in Opposition to the Creature, *blessed for ever, Amen, i. e. God?* And shall the Son, who is Creator likewise, not be God, but only an exalted and deified Creature? *Lastly,* Shall we readily subscribe to St. Paul's Maxim, *He that built*

296 S E R M O N VII.

things is God; and allowing that the Son built all things, yet deny his proper and essential Deity?

To all this the *Arians* reply, that the Son is not strictly and properly the Creator of all things, and consequently on that Account cannot be strictly and properly God. This Assertion they pretend to support chiefly from the Passage of my Text, and another Parallel one out of the Epistle to the *Ephesians*. In the former of these it is said, *that God by his Son made the Worlds*. In the latter, *that God created all things by Jesus Christ*. From these Scriptures our Adversaries infer, that God, or the Father alone, is properly Creator, and that the Son was only ministerial in the great Work of Building all Things.

Now if by being ministerial, they mean that the Son created all things, just as ordinary Prophets and Apostles worked Miracles, not by any Power or Efficiency of his own, but by a Commission which was made good entirely by his Father's Agency; then

then indeed, if this could be made appear, it would certainly follow, that the Son was not properly Creator, and, on that Score, having no Claim to joint Creatorship with the Father, could have no Pretensions to joint Divinity with him. But this can never be made out from the Texts above-mentioned, and is directly contrary to the plain Language of other Scriptures. Every Word denoting strict and proper Efficiency, is employed by the sacred Writers when they ascribe the Act of Creation to the Son : Particularly the Words of the 102d *Psalms*, applied to the Son by the Author to the *Hebrews*, acknowledge that he *laid the Foundation of the Earth, and that the Heavens are the Work of his Hands*. Who could rationally infer less from hence, than that the Son created these things by a Power inherent in himself ; especially considering, that the Words are made use of to prove the Superiority of the Son to the Angels. For an Angel was naturally as capable as any other Being of executing that Part in the Creation, which the Son performed, if he did nothing therein by

his own Power, but spake the Word only, and the rest was effected entirely by the Father's Omnipotence. Besides, had this been the utmost Meaning of those strong Words of the *Psalmist*, so far from the obvious Sense of them, is it credible, that the Apostle should insert no explanatory Clause to save the Father's Claim to proper Creatorship, exclusive of all others; but leave us to conclude the thing from the Use of a Preposition of doubtful and equivocal Meaning six Verses higher? St. *Peter* and St. *John* behaved very differently on an Occasion of less Importance: For in the second Chapter of *Acts*, after they had healed the lame Man, tho' they had not assumed, even in Appearance, the Efficiency of the Cure to themselves, but commanded him to rise and walk, avowedly and expressly in the Name of Jesus Christ of *Nazareth*; yet when they apprehended, only from the earnest Manner in which the People looked upon them, that they might surmise as if this Cure had been wrought by their own Power, they openly and absolutely disclaim the thing, denying, that by their
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S E R M O N VII. 299

own Power they made the Man to walk, and referring the miraculous Cure to Faith in the Name of Christ. If then, in Reality, the Son had no more created the World, than the Apostles above-mentioned cured the lame Man, by his own Power, can we conceive, that St. *Paul* would not plainly have told us so, as they did? Can we imagine, on the other Hand, that he would have used such Expressions, as must naturally lead us into the contrary Persuasion, without explaining himself, or guarding against Misapprehension? By no Means. A late Writer gives it us as the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, that the Son created the World by the Power of the Father. But if he meant that the Son's own Power was not employed therein, we may fairly challenge him, or any one else, to prove that Point from Scripture. No such thing is therein affirmed expressly, or deducible from thence by any necessary Consequence. The Father, according to Scripture, made the World: The same is said of the Son: And when their joint Concern in that great Work is spoken of, God, or the
 Father

300 S E R M O N VII.

Father, is said to have made the World by the Son ; but from the latter saying it does not follow, that the Son did not create the World by his own Power. The only necessary Corollary from thence is, that both the divine Persons concurred in the Creation ; the Father was more eminently, but the Son nevertheless was really and strictly the Creator of the World.

I need spend no more time in proving the Son to be the efficient Cause of all Things, because it does not certainly appear, that the *Arians* deny it. But if it be once admitted, that the Son created the World by his own proper Efficiency, his infinite Power and Wisdom therein employed, is also admitted, and in Consequence of that his Divinity will be undeniable. For could a Creature possibly arrive at those Perfections, to use the sublime Language of *Job* on this Occasion ; could a Creature, however dignified or advanced, Measure the Waters in the Hollow of his Hands ? Could such a one meet out the Heavens with a Span ? Could he comprehend the Dust of the Earth in a Measure ?
 Could

S E R M O N VII. 301

Could he weigh the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Ballance? In vain is the Declaration of the *Psalmist*, *That the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handywork*, if those wonderful Phenomena might be produced by a Power short of infinite and divine. In vain also is the Reasoning of the Apostle St. Paul to the *Romans*, *That the invisible Things of God from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead*; if the Son who created the Universe be himself a Creature, neither eternal, nor essentially divine. Lastly, Every Argument above-mentioned in the Old Testament, by which the inspired Men, and even God himself asserts the divine Existence and Unity from the Work of Creation, is faulty and inconclusive, if the Son, who created all things, be not both truly God, and one in Substance and Perfections with the Father.

Against all these shocking Consequences the *Arians* stand out upon the Strength of
a single

302 S E R M O N VII.

a single *Greek* Particle $\delta\iota\alpha$ in my Text, and the parallel Place to it. Neither the plain Passages of Scripture, which absolutely ascribe the Creation of the World to the Son, nor the concurrent Testimony of all Antiquity to the same Point, can prevail with them to allow that he was properly Creator, because it is twice said in the New Testament, that God made or created by him. They cannot deny that the Particle $\delta\iota\alpha$ denotes Efficiency, because in two Passages all things are said to be $\delta\iota\alpha$ by the Father. And would they but admit that the Father made all things by the Efficiency of the Son, we should have no farther Controversy with them on this Head. Let them say, that the Son made the World at the Command of the Father, provided they allow him to have a creative Power properly his own, it will serve all the Purposes of the Catholick Doctrine, because such Power must be inseparable from true and proper Divinity. And sure it is but decent to conclude from the Father's laying his Commands upon his Son to create, that he knew he was equal to the Work.

But

Bnt if laying aside the Reason of the thing, the Analogy of Scripture and Primitive Tradition, our Adversaries will have recourse to Criticism only, and because the Particle *διὰ* sometimes stands before a Cause merely ministerial and instrumental, which serves their present Occasions, therefore insist on that Sense here; to let them see that Criticism is a Weapon with two Edges, and how little their Cause will gain by the Use of it, it may not be improper to put them in Mind, that among other Significations of *διὰ*, with a *Genitive* Case in the *Greek* Scriptures, we ought to reckon that of Society or Fellowship. I will give a few Instances of this out of many that might be assigned. St. Paul, *Gal.* iv. having explained how we receive the Adoption of Sons by God's sending forth his Son to redeem us, argues thus, in the 7th ver. *Wherefore thou art no more a Servant, but a Son; and if a Son, then an Heir of God διὰ Χριστοῦ, together with Christ.* That thus it ought to be rendered, and *not by Christ*, as in our *English Bible*, will ap-

304 S E R M O N VII.

pear evident, if we compare this with the parallel Reasoning of the same Apostle, *Chap. viii. to the Romans*, where having in like Manner proved, that Christians are the Sons of God by receiving the Spirit of Adoption, whereby they cry, *Abba Father*. He adds, in the 17th ver. *And if Sons, then Heirs of God*, συγκατανοήμοι ὁ χριστοῦ, and *joint Heirs with Christ*. Again, *Heb. ix. 12.* speaking of Christ entering into Heaven to perform there the Office of an High Priest for us, the Apostle says, Ὁυδὲ δι αἵματος τερῶν ἢ μόχων ἀλλὰ δι ἰδίου αἵματος εἰσῆλθεν. *Neither with the Blood of Goats and Calves, but by his own Blood he entered into the holy Place.* The Priesthood of Christ is here preferred to that of the Law on this Account, that whereas the Jewish High Priest went Yearly into the Holy of Holies, taking with him the Blood of Goats and of Calves, Christ entered into the heavenly Sanctuary with no other Offering than that of his own Blood, *i. e.* the Merits thereof, to obtain eternal Redemption for us. Once more *St. Paul*, in his second Epistle to *Timothy, Chap. ii. ver. 2.* thus exhorts

exhorts him : *The things that thou hast heard of me, δια πολλῶν μαρτύρων, together with many Witnesses, i. e. and from other Apostles, the same commit thou to faithful Men, &c.* Since therefore the Preposition, which is commonly rendered *by*, may and does also signify *together with*, suppose we should insist on that Signification in the Passage under Consideration, and instead of the Rendering in the Text, *by whom also he, i. e. God made the Worlds*, should translate, *Together with whom also he made the Worlds* : And whereas we now read in our Bibles, that *God created all things by Jesus Christ*, we should say it ought to be rendered, *God created all things together with Christ Jesus* : How full and decisive would this be for the Orthodox Notion of the Father and Son's being jointly Creator of the Universe ?

I do not mention this, as if it was really the Apostle's Sense, but only to shew, that our Adversaries would not benefit themselves by appealing from Scripture, explained by Catholick Tradition, to the Bar

306 S E R M O N VII.

of Criticism. Sufficient it is for us, that the obvious Rendering of Scripture, and the Sense of those who lived nearest to the New Testament Times, support our Belief that as the Son jointly with the Father, including also the Holy Ghost, is Creator of all things, so are they jointly the one God. To whom, &c.

S E R M O N VIII.

ACTS v. 3, 4.

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine Heart to lye to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back Part of the Price of the Land? Whilst it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own Power? Why hast thou conceived this Thing in thine Heart? Thou hast not lied unto Men, but unto God.

HAVING, in the former Discourses, vindicated the real and essential Divinity of the second Person in the ever blessed Trinity, I propose to conclude

308 S E R M O N VIII.

this Course of Lectures, with vindicating also the Deity of the Holy Ghost, against the same Adversaries, the *Arian* Opposers of the Catholick Doctrine, concerning a Trinity in Unity.

The Passages of Holy Writ, from which the Church has, in all Ages, deduced the Belief of the Holy Ghost's Divinity, and on Account of which she has paid him joint Worship with the Father and the Son, are almost innumerable. There is scarce a single Act or Attribute spoken of in the inspired Writings, as peculiar to the supreme Being, but what, some where or other in the same Books, is ascribed to the blessed Spirit. He is not indeed expressly called God in Scripture, as the Father and the Son frequently are; but by Consequence and necessary Deduction, even this incommunicable Name appears sometimes to be given to the Holy Ghost in the Word of God: But no where so plainly, and at one View, is this to be seen, as in my Text: For in the first Verse, the Crime of *Ananias*, who fraudulently retained Part of the
Price

S E R M O N VIII. 309

Price of his Land, while he pretended to have laid the whole at the Apostle's Feet, is called by *St. Peter*, *lying to the Holy Ghost*; and in the second Verse of the Text, the Apostle calls the self-same Crime, *lying unto God*, without mentioning the Holy Ghost. If therefore we are not under a Necessity of concluding from hence, that *St. Peter*, in Effect, gives to the Holy Ghost the Appellation of God, no consequential Proof from Scripture ought ever to be admitted. Which yet to say, would be to impeach a Method used by our Lord himself, who, more than once, in this very Way of Deduction, argues from the Books of the Old Testament.

But however plain and cogent this Proof of the Holy Ghost's being virtually called God by the Apostle in my Text may seem, it has been treated with great Contempt, as deserving very little Consideration from the *Arian* Quarter. Whether it be, that Prejudice has hindered the Effect of this very clear Argument, or whether an Air of Scorn has been affected on this Occa-

310 S E R M O N VIII.

sion, for want of a grave and pertinent Reply; so it is, that, without being vouchsafed a direct Answer, we have been sent for Satisfaction to another Passage in the *Acts*, viz. to the 23d Chap. ver. 9. where, upon a Dissention between the *Pharisees* and the *Sadducees* concerning Paul's Defence, the *Scribes*, who sided with the former, say, *We find no Evil in this Man; but if a Spirit or an Angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.* We are told then, that if ever any Set of Men had, or should, set up the Divinity of Spirits and Angels as an Article of Faith, this latter Passage in the *Acts* would be just such another Proof for them, that Spirits and Angels are by Scripture Consequence called God, as my Text is for us, that the Holy Ghost by the like Method is so called. The Application is left to ourselves, viz. that as the former is no Proof at all, so neither is the latter. They would hereby insinuate, that, as in the former Case, the *Scribes* when they call opposing a Doctrine received from a Spirit or an Angel fighting against God, did not virtually call either
of

S E R M O N VIII. 311

of those Beings God, but only intimate, that Doctrines so received, must come originally from God, and so cannot be gain-said, without ultimately resisting or fighting against him: So St. *Peter* in the Text, when he makes lying to the Holy Ghost the same as lying unto God, did not intend to suggest, that these were one and the same Being, but only that the Holy Ghost being God's Representative in the Government of his Church, whatever Fraud or Indignity was put upon his Vicegerent, in the End affected or terminated in God, whose Vicegerent the Holy Ghost was.

But 'tis really wonderful, that ever it should be in the Power of Prejudice itself, to keep Men of Sense and Learning from seeing how great a Disparity there is between these two Cases.

For, *first*, the former was the Saying of the *Scribes*, who were unconverted *Jews*, and therefore could never be used to establish any Article of Christian Faith: At most it could only serve to shew the Belief

of the Learned in the *Jewish* Church of our Saviour's Time: Whereas, the latter was the Speech of an inspired Apostle, and, as such, carries with it the highest Authority for deciding disputed Christian Doctrines.

Secondly, Admitting the Speakers in the two Cases to be of equal Weight considered in themselves, the former of the Sayings is short and elliptical, and thereby the Intention of the Speaker becomes dubious, and liable to great Variety of possible Constructions: Whereas, what *St. Peter* says to *Ananias* is mostly full and clear, as well as emphatical, and consequently may more easily be reduced to a determinate Sense.

Thirdly, When the *Scribes* say of *St. Paul*, *If a Spirit or an Angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God*; the Words neither necessarily nor probably imply, that to oppose him, was directly to fight against God, but only constructively. They certainly may mean no more, than
that

S E R M O N VIII. 313

that as Angels and good Spirits deliver no Messages but from God; so to contradict Doctrines thus delivered, is to set ourselves against God, from whom they originally come. And that this was all the *Scribes* intended is next to certain, because the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which was their Rule of Faith, taught them to make a wide Difference between Angels or Spirits, and the God of *Israel*. Their own *Moses* told them, *Deut. vi. 4.* that *the Lord their God was one Lord*: Whereas, from the Psalmist they learnt, that *there were thousands of Angels*. Nor do we ever find in the Sects or Heresies among the *Jews*, any that were absurd enough to believe, that Angels or Spirits were God. And should any such Heterodoxy as this hereafter arise, the Advocates for it could possibly have no Relief or Benefit from the Saying of the *Scribes* before us; because, to suppose that they there call a Spirit or an Angel God, would be to suppose a learned Body of Men (for such the *Scribes* were) contradicting, in the openest Manner, their own avowed Principles, and furnishing
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314 S E R M O N VIII.

the *Sadducees*, their Adversaries, in the very Instant of their Debate with them, with an undeniable Charge of Blasphemy and Self-contradiction. But can any Thing like this be urged against the Construction put by us on *St. Peter's* Words in my Text? If when he makes lying to the Holy Ghost to be lying unto God, we suppose that he does it directly, is there Room for saying as in the other Case, that he would thereby offer manifest Violence to his own Principles or religious Belief? Is it as evident, upon the Footing of Christianity, that the Holy Ghost is a Creature, as it was on the Basis of Judaism, that Spirits and Angels were such? No one can or will affirm it. There is not the least Intimation of any such Thing in the New Testament: But, on the contrary, so many magnificent Things are said of the Holy Ghost, and so many Wonderful Operations are ascribed to him, that no Character, short of Divinity, can possibly suit him. His Power, both over the natural and moral World, is celebrated and declared in frequent and in plain Terms. To him the working of Miracles is imputed

S E R M O N VIII. 315

ted, not only as that Gift was exercised by the Apostles, but also by Christ himself, who vouchsafed to own, *that by the Spirit of God he cast out Devils, Mat. xii. 28.* And this Spirit of God, in the parallel Place of *St. Luke's Gospel*, is called *the Finger of God.* Nor less extraordinary were the Powers exerted by the Holy Ghost over the Minds of Men. His sanctifying Graces, whereby, without offering Violence to the Freedom of the human Will, he leads Men to will, and to do of his good Pleasure, seem to require a Donor, that is of infinite Power and Wisdom. Compared with these, Miracles in the natural World, however wonderful they may be, when considered alone, lose much of the Marvellous. We find but little Difficulty in conceiving, that passive and inanimate Matter should yield to any Directions, that come from its Almighty Creator; nor that even intelligent Beings should, by the same irresistible Means, be compelled to an involuntary Obedience; but the Methods whereby the blessed Spirit orders the unruly Wills and Affections of sinful Men,
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316 S E R M O N VIII.

fo as to make them willingly good and holy againft the Bent of depraved Nature, are the greateft of all Miracles and Myfteries, and loudly proclaim him to be wife and powerful beyond all Expression. From the sanctifying Graces beftowed by the Holy Ghof, let us turn our Eyes to his fpiritual Gifts, and therein alfo we fhall fee the fame plain Traces of Divinity. Prophecy, in the Old Testament, is ftill faid to be the Word of the Lord, and to fhew that it came not in old Time by the Will of Man, the infpired Messengers frequently preface their Errand with, *Thus faith the Lord.* But in the New we are informed, that the Holy Ghof was that Lord, by whom thofe Men of God were moved to fpeak as they did. And accordingly the Style of Prophecy is therein altered from *Thus faith the Lord,* to, *Thus faith the Holy Ghof.* As the Prophetick, fo the Priestly Office under the Law was beftowed by divine and fpecial Designation, no one taking that Employ, but he that was called thereto by God, as was *Aaron.* Under the Gofpel likewise no one preach-

ed, except he was sent; Men were divinely called to be Apostles, and extraordinarily separated unto the Gospel of God. But it appears from the New Testament, that both the *Jewish* and the Christian Hierarchy was under the special Direction of the Holy Ghost: For the Knowledge of this, with respect to the former, we are indebted to the inspired Writer to the *Hebrews*, who at once informs us, that the most solemn Services of the Tabernacle were appointed by the blessed Spirit, and what he signified, or typically prefigured thereby. As to the Concern of the Holy Ghost in the Choice of the first Christian Clergy, the New Testament is full of it. Thus *Paul* and *Barnabas* were separated unto the Holy Ghost by his special Command, and afterwards sent forth by him to perform the Office of Evangelists. And the Elders of *Ephesus* are, by *St. Paul*, declared to have been made Overseers of the Flock there, by the Holy Ghost; just in the same authoritative Sense, as the same Apostle elsewhere declares of himself and his Brethren, that God had made them able

318 S E R M O N VIII.

ble Ministers of the New Testament. And no Wonder that the Holy Ghost should commission Apostles and Evangelists for the Work of the Ministry, since even the great High Priest of our Profession himself, in his human and sacerdotal Capacity, was authorized and assisted by the same blessed Spirit. He descended upon him after his Baptism, by which glorious Manifestation he was inaugurated into the Office of baptizing with the Holy Ghost. By the Holy Ghost likewise was it, that he gave his last Commandments unto the Apostles whom he had chosen, concerning the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. *Lastly*, When this our High Priest offered himself without Spot unto God, whether thereby be meant the Sacrifice of himself upon the Cross, or his subsequent Intercession for us in Heaven, by Virtue of that All-sufficient Sacrifice, this great Propitiation is described, as made thro' the eternal Spirit. Surely, then, he whose Energy gave Power and Efficacy to every holy Service of God, and under both Dispensations, must himself be God. Angels and holy Women might

S E R M O N VIII. 319

minister unto him under temporal Wants and Distresses; but to consecrate the Son of God, to add Weight unto his Counsels, Merit and Strength unto his Sufferings and Intercessions, exceeds the Measure of all created Power or infused Holiness. Again, How comes it to pass, that the Honour of the blessed Spirit should be guarded against Blasphemy and Violation in so strong a Manner, as our Lord assures us it is, if he be no more than a Creature; whilst all other Sin and Blasphemy, whether respecting the Father or the Son, shall have Forgiveness, speaking against the Holy Ghost remains unpardonable: Can he then be inferior to either of them? Once more, if the Holy Ghost be not truly and properly God, how comes *St. Paul* to mention his having Temples; for so he calls the Bodies of Christians, just as he elsewhere makes them to be the Temples of God. And lest we should mistake his Meaning thereby, to be no more than that those Temples are built or consecrated by the Holy Ghost, and thence to be called his Temples, as that built and consecrated by *Solomon* might
 be,

320 S E R M O N VIII.

be, and is for that Reason called his, the Apostle assures his *Corinthians*, *not only that their Bodies are the Temples of the Holy Ghost, but that he is in them*, i. e. he is the Deity which dwells there. Besides, it is worthy of Observation, that the sacred Penmen, both of the Old and New Testament, constantly avoid calling the Temple of *Solomon* at large, his Temple, but still speak of it as the Temple, or the House which *Solomon* built; whilst the Temple of *Dagon*, and the Temple of the Lord, are Expressions for a House, erected in Honour of *Dagon*, or of the true God. From hence also it follows, that the Holy Ghost being the Proprietor of Temples, must be entitled to worship, that being the sole End for which Temples are set up. Thus, which Way soever we view the Argument before us, we see plain Proofs of the Spirit's true and proper Divinity. To this I might add, that the Holy Ghost, as well as the Father and the Son, is specified in the Form of Baptism, appealed to by the Apostle *St. Paul* in an Act of Religion, a solemn Oath, and addressed to jointly with
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S E R M O N VIII. 321

the Father and the Son, in some Scripture Modes of Benediction. But have Angels all or any of these Characteristicks of Divinity? Wherever therefore they seem by Consequence to be honoured with the Appellation of God, that Consequence can neither be necessary nor probable; whilst with Regard to the Holy Ghost, whose Properties, Attributes, and Operations are the very same which Scripture ascribes to God himself, wherever, in holy Writ, he is by obvious Consequence termed God, we may justly deem it to be actually so intended.

Fourthly, In the Saying of *St. Peter* to *Ananias* in the Text, there are some Circumstances, which make it in a Manner necessary to understand, that by God, in the second Verse of the Text, he meant the Holy Ghost, mentioned by him in the first Verse, whom therefore by direct Consequence he calls God.

For, *First,* The Heinousness of *Ananias's* Crime is mentioned in the strongest

322 S E R M O N VII.

Terms, at the Beginning of our Apostle's Expostulation with him, and while he is only charged with lying to the Holy Ghost; which surely implies, that the utmost of his Guilt consisted therein, and that there was no superior Being, against whom he had offended by so foul a Prevarication.

When the Scripture designs to express a full and firm Persuasion and Resolution in Men to commit Wickedness, their Hearts are said to be *filled to do Evil, and to be filled with Wickedness*. This therefore is a Phrase, which alone emphatically denotes a strong and rooted Habit of ill Living. But in the Text, the Crime charged on *Ananias* is further exaggerated: For it is not barely said, why hast thou filled thine Heart, or why is thy Heart filled to lye to the Holy Ghost; but *Why hath Satan filled thine Heart to lye to the Holy Ghost*. It seems from hence, as if the Heart of Man, corrupt and naughty as it sometimes is, was hardly impure enough of itself, and without diabolical Instigation, to conceive the Perpetration of so horrid a Crime,

S E R M O N VIII. 323

as is that of lying to the Holy Ghost. But what Reason can be assigned for the peculiar Aggravation of this Fault, but that it was committed directly against God, the greatest and best of Beings. Certainly, if lying to the Holy Ghost, bad as it was, had a still worse Circumstance attending it, and lying to God was an Offence more heinous than lying to the Holy Ghost, (as it must be, if the Holy Ghost himself was not God) those high Terms of Aggravation, bestowed by St. Peter on *Ananias* for lying to the Holy Ghost, would have been reserved for the worst Circumstance of the Fault, his lying to God. Whereas, when he speaks of that, there is not the least Note of any additional Guilt, but the Crime is barely mentioned. How shall we account for this, otherwise than by the Catholick Interpretation of the Passage, and saying, that as the Holy Ghost was God, lying to him was the utmost of *Ananias's* Fault, the Heinousness of which being sufficiently noted upon the first Mention of it, it was sufficient afterwards barely to repeat it.

But, *Secondly*, If by lying to God, in the latter Verse of the Text, *St. Peter* meant any Thing distinct from *Ananias's* lying to the Holy Ghost, then, in the summing up of his Crime, the Apostle has made a defective Gradation; he imperfectly enumerates the Steps, by which he was to arrive at the just Description of his Guilt. *Thou hast not*, saith he, *lied unto Men, but unto God*. Now, no one supposes it to be here denied, that *Ananias* had lied unto Men; because the Fact plainly proves the contrary, which was, that he laid only a certain Part of the Price of his Possession at the Apostle's Feet, pretending, and probably affirming it to be the Whole. *St. Peter's* Meaning therefore must be, *thou hast not lied unto Men only, but also unto God*: And if by God in this Place he denoted the Holy Ghost, this was the entire Detail of *Ananias's* Fault. But if by God, he meant a Being differing from, and superior to the Holy Ghost, he would certainly have said, *Thou hast not lied unto Men, nor unto the Holy Ghost, but unto God*:
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S E R M O N VIII. 325

Otherwise, he had left out one main Branch of the Charge, and that, on which he laid the whole Strefs upon his first Expostulation with him.

Thirdly, If lying to the Holy Ghost had been lying unto God constructively only, and not directly, as the Holy Ghost himself is God, how came it to pass, that St. *Peter*, in his Speech to *Sapphira*, immediately before he inflicted on her the Vengeance of sudden Death, should content himself with calling her's and her Husband's Crime, only an Agreement between them, to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Decency, as well as Justice, required, that before Sentence of Death was pronounced upon her, the Flagitioufness of her Fault should be fully set forth. And this was done by him upon the Catholick Hypothesis, that the Spirit of the Lord was truly God. But if the *Arians* are right, who affirm the Holy Ghost to be a Creature, to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, was not the worst of their Fault, and the high Aggravation of it, *viz.* that by tempting the Spirit of

326 S E R M O N VIII.

the Lord, they constructively tempted the Lord himself, was concealed, tho' it was necessary to justify the Severity of the Sentence which immediately followed, and to deter others from the like Practices.

Thus it appears, from the only plausible Construction of St. *Peter's* Words in the Text, that he virtually calls the Holy Ghost God; it appears likewise from other Parts of Scripture, where he has not the Name, that he has the Attributes, and performs such Operations, as are peculiar to the Deity: From which the Church rightly deduces this Consequence, that the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity, is, together with the Father and the Son, the one true God.

And now, having finished my Course of Lectures in Defence of Christ's Divinity and that of the blessed Spirit, against the Scripture Arguments of Misbelievers, I shall only add a few Words concerning the Outcry about Mysteries, and imposing Tests of Orthodoxy in these Points. As to the
first,

S E R M O N VIII. 327

first, the Church makes no Mysteries; but finding such in the Word of God, only preserves and inculcates them among the other preternatural Truths of revealed Religion. The Governors of it are as tender of the just Prerogatives of Reason as the rest of their Species are, and as jealous that no real Violence be done thereto, under any Colour whatever. But they think it no Disparagement to that noble Faculty, that some Truths should be above its Grasp. It is confessed, that in some Ages of the Church, religious Opinions, which contradict the Evidence of common Sense, have been advanced into Articles of Faith: But then, this proceeded not from the Love of Paradox and Mystery in the governing Part of the Church, but from Avarice or Ambition, one or both of which found its Account in every Error of Popery: Whereas, neither of those Motives could be at the Bottom of those Mysteries which our Church has retained. For the Belief of a Co-essential and Co-eternal Trinity, has plainly added

328 S E R M O N VIII.

nothing to the Emoluments or Immunities of its Clergy, nor been attended with any one lucrative Consequence, which they might not as well have expected, if the *Unitarian* or *Arian* Scheme had prevailed. We have indeed been told, with as much Assurance, as if human Intentions were visible, that Zeal for Orthodoxy proceeds only from the Love of Dominion, and a Desire of lording it over the Consciences of our Brethren: But this is a Censure as unjust as it is uncharitable; for our own Church innovates in nothing, but in all Points of Faith adheres to the good old Ways of Scripture and early Antiquity. Besides, Tyrants always affect to be lawless in their own Persons, whilst they encroach on the Liberties of others; whereas our spiritual Governors submit to all they require, and bear every Burden they impose: And if this be Tyranny, there can be no such Thing as just Government. What remains therefore, but that despising the Calumnies of foolish

S E R M O N VIII. 329

ish and unreasonable Men, we continue
stedfast in that Faith, which teaches us to
give to the ever-blessed Trinity in Unity,
all Honour and Glory, &c.

SER.

A
S E R M O N
PREACH'D at the
V I S I T A T I O N
Of the Right Reverend the
Lord Bishop of *London*,
I N T H E
Cathedral Church of St. *PAUL*,
October 13, 1738.

1901

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D at the
V I S I T A T I O N, &c.

MATTHEW, Chap. x. latter Part
of the 16th Verse.

*Be ye therefore Wise as Serpents, and
Harmless as Doves.*

THIS Advice, which our Lord gave
to his Apostles when he first sent
them out to preach, will not, I
hope, be deemed an improper Subject of
Discourse

Discourse before those, who, by Virtue of a Commission originally given out by the same great Bishop of Souls, are appointed to be standing Preachers of the Christian Religion. Sure I am, that the Circumstances of their Times and ours being duly considered and compared, Prudence and Innocence in the Christian Pastors are, at least, as necessary to the Success of Religion now, as they were when the Command of my Text was first promulged. It is true, that the Prejudices against Christianity, at present, are far from being so general, or so violently pursued, as when the Apostles received the Directions in my Text. But then, together with these, they had also a Power given them over unclean Spirits to cast them out, and to heal all Manner of Sicknes, and all Manner of Disease, *Chap. x. ver. 1.* Had therefore the Personal Conduct of these first Preachers been less discreet and innocent, their wonderful Credentials might alone have supported, in some Measure, the Credit of their Mission. Whereas we have no miraculous Certificates of a Call from Heaven: So that the
Efficacy

Efficacy of our Ministry, under the Grace of God, rests chiefly on the Prudence and Piety of our Behaviour. Great and evident is the intrinsic Goodness of the Christian System: But still, had it no authorized Supporters, or were those it has generally without Discretion and Virtue, the Excellency of the Plan would either be unobserved and unattended to, or at least to such a Degree, that, in all human Views, it would never generally be acknowledged as the indispensable Rule of Faith and Morality in the World. I speak not this to inform, and much less to correct any of this Reverend Audience, which I dare say is before-hand with me, both in making, and in acting up to this Observation: But there are other, and those very signal, Uses to be made of it. For the Sake of which give me leave briefly to illustrate the Necessity of the Advice given to all Christian Clergy in my Text; that they be *wise as Serpents, and Harmless as Doves.*

And, *First*, as to Wisdom or Prudence, whether we consider the Difficulties of the

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Ministerial

Ministerial Work in itself, or the Prejudices we have to encounter in the Execution of it, it must appear, that Caution and Wariness are peculiarly requisite thereto, and that without these no Man, however otherwise well qualified, can be sufficient for these Things.

Other Professions labour to preserve Men secure in the Possession of favourite Advantages, and therefore have less trouble in procuring all necessary Attention and Deference from those, with whom they are concerned. But it is our Lot to be employed for the Good of an unseen Principle, the Soul, for which Nature gives no Tenderesses; and concerning Dangers, to which Grace supplies them with Apprehensions, which are commonly considered as at a Distance. And what is more, our Method for promoting the Security of this invisible Treasure, sometimes crosses the darling Pursuits of Men after Pleasure and Profit. They that would Profit by our Counsels, are to chain up their Passions; in many Cases to refuse the warmest Solli-

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citations of Flesh and Blood, and to be deaf to the Promptings of Youth and bodily Complexion. They must, on some Emergencies, be prepared to resign Wealth and Power, and those Advantages which set Men highest in the Distinctions of Life, if not Life itself, in hopes of distant and unseen Reversions. In this Sense must the Disciples of Christ take up their Cross: Comparatively speaking they must hate many Things to which Nature gives them strong Propensities, and be anxiously fond of a Part, that is inaccessible to all the Powers of Sense, and that is discoverable chiefly by the Aids of Religion and Philosophy. Having therefore Messages to impart, so unwelcome to Mankind in their present corrupt State, how great Need have the Embassadors of God for Prudence in the Discharge of their Commission? And how requisite is it that, by all honest Methods, they should render their Persons and Characters acceptable to those, whom they would win over to Proposals of so much Self-denial.

Another Circumstance of our holy Function, which makes Discretion and Address more peculiarly desirable, is this: That we are to make our Way to the Affections, or at least to the good Opinion of Men, under a vast Variety of Capacities and Conditions. Had the Wise or the Noble alone been called to the Knowledge of God and Religion, a more moderate Degree of Pains and Observation would have let us into the Methods which are necessary to open the Affections of the Great and the Polite: Or had God literally hid the Mysteries of his Kingdom from the Wise and Prudent, and revealed them only unto Babes, we could without much Difficulty have descended to their Level. But our present Province is to become all things to all Men, that so we may save some out of every Distinction. This was the Practice and the Glory of the blessed *St. Paul*; who, tho' he was free from all Men, became the Servant of all, that he might gain the more. Thus when it was his Lot to encounter the ignorant *Lycaonians*, he could let himself down to
 their

their Capacities : And yet when the Cause of God called him before the awful Court of *Areopagus*, he knew how to raise his Expression, and refine his Sentiment, beating down Idolatry, with the Assistances of that Learning and good Sense, for which the Judges of that Tribunal were so eminently distinguished. At another Time, when summoned to make his Defence before King *Agrippa* and *Festus*, the Roman Governor, how ready, and yet how polite are all his Answers to those great Personages. In that excellent Speech, one knows not which to admire most, the Apostle's Eloquence, or his Address. And perhaps if the Beauties of this Apology had been found in the Writings of a *Greek* or *Roman* Orator; the Masters of Rhetorick would have preferred them to whatever is now most celebrated in that Way. It is indeed rather to be wished, than expected, that every Man of God should be thus thoroughly furnished for the good Work. But as it will always fare best with Religion when its Interests are in such Hands; so every Endeavour after this useful Wisdom, how

short soever it may fall of the Apostle's Pattern, will have Merit with Men, and most certainly find Acceptance and Reward from God. In short, there is no Image, under which the Duty of a Clergyman is represented in Scripture, not even the lowest and most familiar ones, but what easily and naturally suggest to them the Necessity of Caution and Prudence: They are sometimes compared to Sowers: Under which Resemblance the Wisdom of the Serpent will alone enable them to distinguish what Seed is properest for that Part of God's Husbandry, which falls to every particular Man's Cultivation; to hit the kindest Seasons for that Work, and to preserve the Seed sown from being choaked by secular Cares, or over-run by the Weeds of Error and Heresy. At other Times the Officers of Christ's Church are considered as Builders, whose Wisdom it is, first to lay a firm Foundation, and upon that to raise the Superstructure of sound Faith and unblameable Practice. But here, thro' the unhappy Circumstances of the present Age, they are greatly hindered, and called off from
 this

this blessed Work. Whilst they are building up the City and Temple of God, they suffer continual Interruption from the Enemies to the Christian Name. As it was in *Nebemial's* Days, so is it in ours. The *Sanballats* and the *Tobiaks* of the Times mock our spiritual Labours: They scoff at Christianity, as an Edifice without a Foundation, saying, that *if a Fox go up he shall break down our Stone-Wall*. We are constrained therefore, like *Nebemial's* Builders, with one Hand to work, and with another to hold a Weapon. In such a Situation there is Room for the utmost Exercise of Wisdom and Prudence, in the Choice of proper Methods for the Defence of the common Faith.

Under this Head I shall only add, that we have a special Call for Prudence and Circumspection in the common Actions of Life, as well as in those which immediately relate to our holy Profession. The Eyes of the World are upon us in every Part of our Conduct: And if we do at any time remarkably transgress the Rules of Discre-

tion, tho' the first bad Impressions reach no further than our Persons, they never fail in the End to affect the Credit of Religion. So long as we carry our Treasures in *Eartben Vessels*, it will perhaps be impossible always to guard against little Slips and Inadvertencies: But the Habit of Care and Caution, if once contracted, will preserve any Man from frequent and gross Indecencies.

But however necessary human Prudence may be to those who act in Things pertaining to God, yet unless it be accompanied with Integrity and Virtue, it is capable of serving the worst Purposes, and is seldom applied otherwise: For which Reason, after our Lord had recommended to his Apostles the Wisdom of the Serpent, he immediately qualifies it, by farther requiring that they *be Harmless as Doves*. He knew that when Wisdom is not restrained by Uprightness and Innocence, it could not safely be trusted with the Stewardship of the Mysteries of God: And certain it is, that this Observation has been but too well verified
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in the Church of *Rome*, whose Guides, by a Series of Stratagem, and in Order to gratify their own Avarice and Ambition, have made Christianity so enormous, that they have been compelled to secrete the Standard of its original Purity. She has banished the Dove entirely out of her Composition, and with the Wisdom of the Serpent has united its noxiousness. But in the Reformed Church of *England* those two Properties, which Christ hath joined together in my Text, are still happily mixt. There Religion keeps its native Harmlessness, and God, as of old out of *Sion*, appears in perfect Beauty. Never sure did any Church defer more to the Civil Magistrate, or carry a milder Hand towards the People. Claims indeed she has to Obedience in Spirituals, not founded on supposititious Decretals, or forged Donations of Princes, like the Pontificate of *Rome*, but built upon the Word of God, and necessary in the Nature of the Thing to the Church, as a visible Society. Happy therefore are the Clergy in such a Communion, where no Services nor Declarations are required from

them, but what they may punctually Discharge, and yet continue *Harmless as Doves*. Under such Encouragement, how inexcusable must they be, who do not earnestly and chearfully apply themselves to all the Duties of their high and holy Calling? If Industry be Praise-worthy in every other Profession, surely a perfunctory Performance of Duty cannot be held sufficient in ours: And whilst it is recorded in Scripture, as the bright and distinguishing Character of our Master, that he went about doing Good, we his Servants must be stupid or partial to the last Degree before we can persuade ourselves, that we shall be accepted if we sit still and do no Hurt. How glorious a Periphrasis in Scripture-Style is that, which expresses the first Christian Clergy, under the Character of Persons who laboured in the Lord: Who laboured in the Word and Doctrine? And whoever expects the World should esteem him very highly in Love for his Work's Sake, will certainly be disappointed, unless he first convinces them, that he is diligent therein. For a Loyerer in any Way

is justly a Character of Contempt: But none meet with it so deservedly, as those who do the Work of the Lord negligently. I speak not this to condemn any Man, but to stir up myself and others to Zeal and Activity in that Service, which is our Glory, and our Crown of Rejoicing. The Account we have to give of the Souls committed to our Care, is a Consideration that will ever affect the most industrious Servant of the Lord with Dread and awful Concern: And nothing would relieve him from the Perplexities, occasioned by such Contemplations, but the Remembrance that he has a gracious Master, who is not in any Case extreme to mark what is done amiss. But tho' God is so merciful, as to make all just Allowances for Omissions, which proceed from Infirmary, we have no Reason to expect Forgiveness at his Hands for Neglects, that owe their Rise to habitual Sloth, or needless and studied Avocations.

Sure I am, that could I otherwise be just to my Subject I need not say before my present Audience, how necessary it is for
those,

those, who in a holy Function would be *Harmless as Doves*, to stand clear of Immorality. A vicious Clergyman is a Character so absurd, that it is impossible that he, to whom it belongs, should do any Good, and so odious, that he cannot fail of doing unspeakable Mischiefs. Certain it is, that no Man's personal Faults ought to be objected to his Profession: But in Fact they too generally are, and have been at all Times. How much then is it to be wished, that every spiritual Guide may be indued with Innocency of Life, that neither the Cause of Virtue nor Religion may be wounded thro' their Sides? Indeed, if we may be allowed to form a Judgment from the Silence of our Enemies upon this Head, such Scandals have not for a long time been more infrequent, than they are at present. Their Rage has of late spent itself rather upon the Faults of the Church, than its Ministers. Creeds, Confessions, and other Tests of Conformity, tho' as old as Christianity itself, and hitherto practised by all Parties of sober Christians, are now discovered to be rank Oppression and Persecution.

tion. Nay, if we are to believe some Men, we have had Popery and the Inquisition amongst us ever since the Reformation, without perceiving either. It would be Loss of Time, and an Abuse of this Reverend Audience, to enter upon a serious Refutation of such senseless Calumny. I shall only wish, what naturally occurs upon the mention of it, that so wanton an Application of real and dreadful Grievances in the *Romish* Communion, to the innocent and moderate Provisions made by the Church of *England*, may not wear off those popular Aversions to Popery, which have hitherto been a considerable Means of preventing its Return amongst us.

There is another Point yet behind, which it behoves all to regard, who would preserve a due Decorum in the Clerical Life, and support the Honour of Religion in a wicked and unbelieving Age. We all know, that one great Aim of Christianity is, to wean Men from too close an Attachment to this World, and the Things thereof, in order to make them naturally, as
4 well

well as meritoriously qualified for that which is to come. We know likewise that the Decay of Religion at present is in nothing more visible, than in the universal Prevalence of worldly Views and Affections. Pride, Luxury, Sensuality, and Avarice engross the Thoughts, and employ the Hours, which, in better Times, used to be bestowed on Provision for the Soul, and its future Well-being. I take it therefore for granted, that none of us are wanting in earnest Endeavours to recover those under our Care, from such inconsiderate and fatal Courses. But in vain will our Labours prove, unless our Admonitions be seconded by a suitable Example: For if the World, which always scrutinizes the Actions of Clergymen with the most particular Exactness, shall observe them to engage as deeply in the Pursuits and Pleasures of Life, as the Carnal and the Voluptuous do, they will naturally doubt, whether we ourselves have those heavenly Views, wherewith it is our Business and our Practice to inspire others. I am far from thinking either the Acquirement of Wealth, or a sober Enjoyment

ment of it, inconsistent with the spiritual Views of a Christian. Only that it behoves all Mankind, and especially Clergymen, to convince the World, as well by their Methods of obtaining Riches, as using them, that they are verily persuaded they shall be accountable for both. The Denial of Ungodliness and wordly Lust has always appeared a hard Lesson to the Earthly and the Sensual; and will seem doubly so, if it be found, that those who lay such heavy Burdens upon the Shoulders of others, will not move them with one of their Fingers themselves.

Since then, so many and great are the Difficulties that attend the right Discharge of the sacred Function: Since the most consummate Prudence and Sanctity of Manners is required therein, how important a Trust is that of Patronage, and how strict ought to be the Care of those concerned therewith, to free their own Souls by a most diligent Search after Persons properly qualified with Wisdom and Innocence for the Pastoral Charge? Such as are most

forward to note the Defects of the Clergy, would do well to consider how easily most of these Scandals might be prevented, if Patrons would be open to no Sollicitations, but the modest ones of eminent Merit. I am however persuaded, that whoever observes how little Regard is paid to this, by many in the Disposal of Benefices, will rather see Cause to wonder at the Number of Men in the Church, that are excellently qualified for the Ministrations of it, and to ascribe it to the Blessing of God on our laudable Methods of Education, and the Care of our Ecclesiastical Governors.

Where therefore the greater and weightier Matters of Morality are carefully attended to, the Arduousness and Delicacy of the Clerical Character ought easily to obtain Pardon for little Slips and Errors against Prudence, from which the best and wisest of Men cannot hope to be always exempt. Especially considering that we live in Times, when Candour and Benevolence are so recommended, as if on them alone did hang all the Law and the Prophets. Infidelity,

delity, Heresy, and Schism were once reckoned grievous Sins; but they are of late covered, or rather sanctified by the Charms of Benevolence. Religious Establishments were formerly accounted, in the human View of them, to be wise Provisions for the Peace and Purity of the Church; but touched by this modern Test, they are cried down for tyrannical Appointments, calculated only for the Promotion of Slavery and Bigotry. Nay, so extensive is this pretended Philanthropy, that not contented with lessening the Number of Sins here, it has proceeded to contract the Duration of their Punishment hereafter. Now tho' we cannot approve of this *Laodicean* Spirit, we may so far modestly claim the Benefit of it, as to expect that mere Indiscretions may be as pardonable in us, as real Crimes are in other Men. But whether we can prevail for so reasonable an Indulgence or no, it will certainly be our Interest and our Prudence, to stand as little in need of it as may be. And as the only effectual Way to secure Honour and Reverence to our Profession, is to shew

shew that we revere it ourselves; so that Regard must be expressed in a constant Watchfulness over our Words and Actions, that nothing out of Character may be seen in us, or heard from us. But above all, we shall best promote the Dignity of our Calling, by our Usefulness and Industry in it, and by a steady Adherence to those holy Truths, which God has committed to our especial Custody, however contrary they may be to the Passions and Prejudices of Men, who have not the Faith, or who hold it not in Sincerity. Let us diligently employ every Gift of God, and every Means that he shall put into our Hands, to his Honour, and the Advancement of his Kingdom amongst Men. Thus if we shall behave, when our Master comes to take Account of his Servants, whatever Usage we may meet withall in the World, we may be sure of entering into the Joy of our Lord.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

Religious Societies

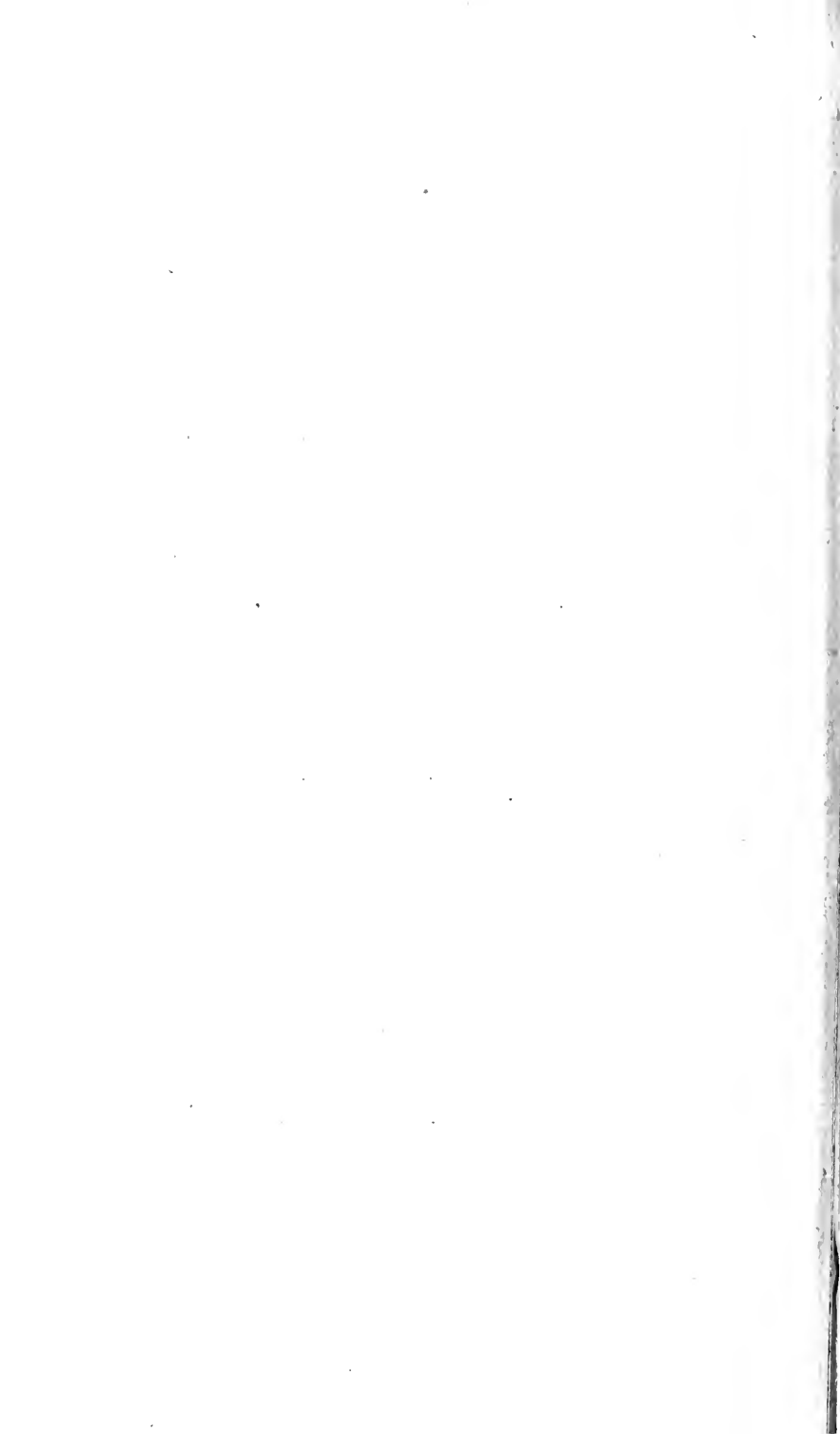
I N T H E

Church of St. *Mary le Bow*,
L O N D O N.

VOL. II.

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A
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the
Religious Societies, &c.

I THES. V. II.

*Wherefore comfort yourselves together,
and edify one another, as also ye
do.*

THESSE Words are a Consequence
from what our Apostle had declared
in the two foregoing Verses, *viz.*
*That God hath not appointed us to Wrath,
but to obtain Salvation by our Lord Jesus*
A 2 *Christ,*

356 *A Sermon preach'd before*
Christ, who died for us, that whether we
wake or sleep, we should live together with
him. Indeed, had Things been otherwise,
had far the greater Part of Mankind been
appointed to Wrath, either by any Decree
of Reprobation, or by withholding from
them the Benefits of Christ's Redemption,
there would have been no Room for Chri-
stians mutually to comfort, or to edify each
the other: For, at this Rate, each Man,
who was not satisfied of his own Salvabili-
ty, would himself continue inconsolable,
and would grow remiss about his own par-
ticular Edification; so far would he be
from comforting and edifying his Christian
Brethren. But since we are assured, by
no less an Authority than that of *St. Paul,*
that God hath appointed no one to Wrath,
but that all may obtain Salvation by our
Lord Jesus Christ, the End of whose dying
for us was, that at his second coming, all
who are his, whether then quick or dead,
should live together with him; this gives
every Christian Comfort in himself, and
encourages him to impart the same Conso-
lation unto others: This satisfies him, that
his

his Labour for his own proper Salvation is not in vain in the Lord, and that he may effectually bestow his charitable Endeavours to edify others also.

It is further observable, that the Exhortation in the Text is addressed to the *Thessalonians*, in their private and Lay Capacities, and not as a Society made up of Governors and Governed. For the Verse immediately following it, recommends a Duty, which concerned them only as private Christians, *viz. To know them which labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, and admonish them, and to esteem them very highly in Love for their Works sake.* It does not appear, that our Apostle exhorted his Lay *Thessalonians* to comfort and to edify one another, from their Neglect or Remissness in these Particulars; but on the contrary, he owns in the Conclusion of the Text, *that they did it already.* So that he is to be understood rather as encouraging them to persevere in that laudable Course, than as now first recommending the Practice to them.

And indeed, this Forwardness of the first Christians to promote each others Salvation, remarkably answered St. Paul's frequent Instructions upon that Head. They then *looked not on their own Things only, but also on the Things of others*; they exhorted one another daily, and followed the Things wherewith one might edify another; they warned them that were unruly, comforted the feeble-minded, supported the weak, and were patient towards all Men. They considered themselves as the Members of Christ's mystical Body, and as such had the same Care one for another. Whenever any the most inconsiderable Particular in that Community behaved unworthy of his Christian Calling, it was a common Concern to reduce him to Order and Decency, and till that was done, all the Members thought themselves to suffer Disgrace with him. And on the other Hand, if any the meanest of that holy Calling adorned the Doctrine of God by a Life of Virtue and true Religion, and was honourable on that Account, every Fellow-
Member

Member rejoiced with him, accounting it a common Glory and Benefit to the Christian Cause. In those Days, Believers looked on each other as Fellow-Soldiers in a spiritual Warfare, and every Man strove, both by Exhortation and Example, to animate his Brethren with Zeal, Courage, and Perseverance against the Enemies of the Cross of Christ: And by such Conduct as this, with the Blessing of God upon it, the Gospel triumphed over all Opposition, and prevailed against every evil Work, till it became the Profession, as well as the Praise of the whole Earth.

But for many Ages has this Love of the Brethren been waxing colder, till it is in a Manner extinguished in the Christian World. The seamless Garment of Christ is now rent into innumerable Shreds, each denying and disavowing the other, and regardless of whatever happens to Christians of a different Communion: Nay, even among Believers of the same Denomination, where do we see any Remains of that Care for each other, which formerly obtained in

360 *A Sermon preach'd before*
every Member of that Body whereof
Christ is the Head? Nor, as Things go, is
this to be wondered at. For the Ground
of that invariable Regard, which the Pri-
mitive Christians had to each other's Sal-
vation, was their Sollicitude for their own
Souls. It ought not therefore to be Matter
of much Astonishment to us, that in an
Age, when the Generality of Men so la-
zily set about working out their own Sal-
vation, they should become utterly careless
about the eternal Welfare of others.

In some Degree to remedy this sad Su-
pineness, and to stir up others to greater
Diligence about their own and the common
Salvation, the religious Societies, to which
I am now addressing myself, were origi-
nally instituted; and doubtless many ex-
cellent and useful Purposes may be served
thereby. It gives us an edifying Taste of
the early and pure Ages of Christianity,
when Believers were zealous for one ano-
ther's spiritual Welfare, and thought no-
thing foreign to them, that concerned the
Honour of Religion, and the everlasting
Interest

Interest of every Soul for which Christ died. Every one that is engaged in these Fraternities, finds himself obliged to be watchful over his own Ways, from Motives peculiar to his present Situation, or such at least as become thereby more interesting and cogent. He that purposes to quicken others in the Ways of Virtue and Piety, must, above all Things, be exemplary and unblameable in his own Conduct. And hence it will come to pass, that a set and serious Purpose of reforming our Brethren, will naturally, as well as meritoriously, promote our own Salvation: Besides, Societies like these, are wonderfully adapted to do Service in such an Age as ours, wherein the Enemies to Christianity have done more Mischief to it by Scoffing, than by any other Method whatever. It is therefore a seasonable and instructive Lesson to all, on whom Ridicule would otherwise make bad Impressions, to see so many Bodies of Men avowing themselves not to be ashamed of the Cross of Christ, but openly and zealously acting to promote Goodness, neither fearing the Gates of Hell,

Hell, nor the Seats of the Scornful. For these Reasons, and many others that might be enumerated, all that wish well to the Cause of God and Christ, must join in saying, The Lord prosper you, we wish you good Luck in the Name of the Lord.

But the more useful these Societies are when properly regulated, so much the greater Care ought to be taken, that no Root of Bitterness may spring up amongst them. It is natural to suppose, that the grand Enemy to the Truth will set on Foot all his Devices, in order to bereave Religion of so useful an Assistance; and that ill Men, his Accomplices, will spy out and improve every the smallest Defect or Obliquity observable amongst them. Altho', therefore, I have nothing to charge upon these Societies in general, but believe them, for the most Part, steadily to adhere to the Rules of their Institution, yet suffer me to be jealous over you with a Godly Jealousy; and since I have no Exercise for that Passion, from any present Misconducts,
permit

permit me, by proper Cautions, to anticipate future ones.

I do with great Pleasure observe, that by the original Plan of these Societies, and also by the present standing Orders, no Addition or Alteration is to be made in your Methods, without the Consent of some pious or learned Divine of the Church of *England*, especially of the President for the Time being, who is always to be taken out of the Clergy of the Establishment: And I take it for granted, that hereby were intended such Clergymen only, as live orderly under the Direction of the Bishops their Superiors, and have a stated Residence, in which they discharge the Offices of their sacred Function. If these Circumstances are not expressly set down by those who drew up the Orders of your Societies, it was because those pious Men did not imagine the Time would come, when Men, who call themselves Priests or Presbyters of the Church of *England*, would break through the Laws of Church and State, defy the pastoral Admonitions of their proper

364 *A Sermon preach'd before*

per Superiors, and cast perpetual Reproach upon all their Brethren who are Friends to Order and good Government, and who dislike their tumultuous and itinerant Assemblies. Were you to believe the Accusations they bring against us, you would be at a Loss for pious Ministers to preside over and direct you upon Emergencies; and for learned ones, that any of us are such, they make it our Vice and our Reproach. If ever, therefore, the Advice of the Apostle, not to believe every Spirit, but to try the Spirits, whether they be of God, was feasible, this is the Time. Above all Things therefore, Brethren, be careful whom you chuse as the spiritual Directors of these religious Societies: Let them be such as are not only pious, but peaceable and modest; Men that are really, and, at the same Time, soberly religious.

It is the avowed Design of your Institution (and no better, or more important one, can be pursued by mortal Man) to promote real Holiness of Heart and Life, in the Use of such Means as the Word of
God

God directs us to, and in Reliance on the Assistance of God's Grace, and the Aid of his blessed Spirit. But it is the declared Opinion of these new Religionists, against whom I am desirous to warn and to guard you, that when you have done all these Things, you may still be as far from the Kingdom of Heaven as ever: For to this Effect they speak of one, who, till he resigned himself over to their Singularities, was a zealous Promoter of these religious Societies, and unblameably pursued every Method for attaining to Christian Perfection, that Scripture, soberly interpreted, points out to us. If ever therefore you hearken to these mistaken Men, they will put you utterly out of Conceit with all those laudable Rules, by which your religious Conduct has been hitherto formed, and in which you have found so much Joy, Peace, and Improvement. Instead of working out your Salvation with Fear and Trembling, which, at present, you conceive is to be the Employment of all your Days, they will direct you to build your Salvation on Assurance thereof; which, whoever cannot

366 *A Sermon preach'd before*

attain unto, must utterly Despair of Heaven. Instead of founding your Hopes of Happiness on the Covenant of Baptism, whereby you became Members of Christ, Children or Sons of God, and Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven, and which will be most certainly made good to all, who honestly endeavour to live up to the Conditions of it; they will persuade you to expect a subsequent Regeneration, unknown to the Scriptures and primitive Antiquity. *St. Peter, 1 Ep. Chap. iii. ver. 21.* assures us, *that Baptism saves us, when accompanied by the Answer of a good Conscience.* But these Refiners make all this of little Signification towards our becoming Children of God, or fit Vessels for the Holy Ghost; but, as if we were, notwithstanding, yet Children of Wrath, that blessed Spirit must afterwards beget us again, or else, it seems, we can have no Claim to our heavenly Inheritance.

But you, my Beloved, have not so learned Christ, and I trust will never so learn him, especially whilst you take the plain
Word

Word of God for your Rule, and continue under the Direction of our Church, which submits all her Doctrines to be tried by that infallible Touchstone.

It was early foreseen, that, as Portions of Scripture were necessarily to be read in the Meetings of these Societies, as a principal Means of promoting Holiness of Life, and these again would become more effectual by the Assistance of Expositors; so it would be of great Importance to have proper ones recommended to them, lest for want of Knowledge in these Matters, Choice might be made of such as would mislead them. And to this Method, I presume, most of these Societies have invariably adhered: And I am sorry to find there have been any Exceptions to this excellent Rule. But it should seem that in some, such especially wherein the Men of the new Way have presided, *Hammond* and *Burket*, and every other approved Expositor, has been laid aside to make Way for the *extempore* Thoughts of these great Pretenders to Illumination. How they succeed

ceed in this Work, we may partly guess, from the Contempt usually put by them on literal Interpretation of Scripture: For if this latter Method be not constantly observed, except where the Letter conveys an absurd Sense, or breaks in upon the Analogy of Faith, the good Word of God will be no longer a Lanthorn unto our Feet, or a Light unto our Paths; we shall lose all Benefit from it as a Rule of Faith and Manners, and must receive instead thereof any Sense, that a wicked or weak Antagonist shall put upon it. By which Means it may so happen, that Heresy, Popery, and even Infidelity itself, may be recommended to us as the hidden and spiritual Meaning of those sacred Oracles: And the least Mischief to be expected from such Interpretation, will be a fluctuating and uncertain Direction, instead of an uniform Standard of Christian Duty. In short, it will open a Door for endless Variety of Opinion, and let in Fanaticism upon us, as happened from much the same Causes about a Century ago.

I intimated above, that there are nevertheless Circumstances, under which it becomes the Duty of a sound Interpreter to recede from the Letter of Scripture, in order to qualify an absurd or plainly erroneous Meaning, which may be conveyed by an obvious Acceptation of the Words. And hence likewise appears the Expediency, if not the Necessity, of select and approved Commentators, to be consulted as Occasion shall require, in all your religious Conferences; on whose Judgment you may safely rely, as oft as any Doubt arises, whether judging according to Appearances, will be to form a righteous Judgment of any particular Scripture Passage. For, sometimes a too rigorous Adherence to the obvious Meaning, has set the Bible at Variance with itself, and been the Source of grievous Errors in practical, as well as in speculative Points of Religion. Thro' the Want of due Attention to Considerations of this Nature, the *Quakers* have been led into a Mistake, which they are still very fond of, as if Oaths of all Kinds were ab-

folutely unlawful. It has been in vain to remonstrate to them, that holy Men, in both Testaments, have, on solemn and serious Occasions, called God to witness the Truths they had delivered; and that the inspired Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, mentions the Use of judiciary Oaths, which to Men are an End of all Strife, with a seeming Approbation of their Usefulness, and without the least Reprehension of the Practice; and this many Years after our Saviour had commanded his Disciples not to swear at all. But the Sound of these Words fills the Heads of those unhappy and stubborn People, and they determine to abide by the literal Sense of them, without reconciling it to other Scriptures, or regarding the great Uses of solemn Oaths in civil and social Life.

But I have in my Eye another Instance of the Mischiefs arising from unqualified Men's expounding Scriptures, and that even in religious Societies; which shews how wisely it has been recommended to them, to consult approved Commentators
upon

upon every Difficulty that occurs in reading the Bible : For if the publick Accounts deceive us not, there is, or at least lately was, an Assembly for religious Purposes in this City, the Members whereof think themselves indispensibly obliged to confess their Sins before the whole Society ; and for so believing, they vouch the Authority of the Apostle St. *James*, who, *Chap. v. ver. 16.* of his general Epistle, has these Words, *Confess your Faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much.* These Words are, to the Members of the above-mentioned Society, a Kind of spiritual Charter of Incorporation, for the Purposes of receiving each other's Confessions, and praying for each other. Now, true it is, that these Words of St. *James*, taken apart from the Context, and without attending to the Meaning of the Expression *one to another* in other Places of the New Testament, do obviously signify a Command to Christians to confess their Sins to each other ; and the following Words

372 *A Sermon preach'd before*

pray one for another, seem to point out a common Assembly as the proper Scene of such Confessions, that the Persons confessing may, by that Means, have the Benefit of more, and those likewise joint Intercessions on their Behalf. But had this Society taken the Sense of *Dr. Hammond*, or any other approved Commentator on this Passage, they would have been told, that it does by no Means authorize the Practice set up amongst them, of confessing their Sins at their religious Meetings, and much less require it. The two preceding Verses run thus, *-Is any Sick among you, let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with Oil in the Name of the Lord. And the Prayer of Faith shall save the Sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed Sins, they shall be forgiven him.* Then follow the Words in question, *Confess your Sins one to another, and pray one for another, &c.* These Words, therefore, connected with what goes before, most probably mean only, that sick Christians should confess their Sins to the Elders that

visited them, who should pray for them, and is no Direction to Christians in general for their Behaviour to each other at all Times, when they assemble for religious Purposes. Nor is it any Objection to this limited Acceptation of the Words before us, that Christians are not therein required to confess their Sins to the Elders of the Church only, but to each other : For after the very same general and indefinite Manner, Duties to particular Men are elsewhere delivered and required in the New Testament; particularly 1 *Pet.* v. 5. where the Apostle after saying, *Likewise ye Younger submit yourselves to the Elder,* adds, *Yea, all of you be subject one to another.* But these last Words, in their obvious Acceptation, require an impossible Thing: For if all Christians were to be subject one to another, there could be no Superiors among them; but all Degrees and Ranks must be lost and confounded in this reciprocal Submission. *St. Peter's* Meaning therefore must be, what we find in the Paraphrase of the learned *Dr. Hammond* upon the Place; all of you must be

subject unto those that are set over you. And so likewise in the Passage of St. *James*, tho' Christians seem to be called upon to a Confession of Faults one to another, yet the Meaning might be, and most probably was, that in Time of Sicknes they should confes their Faults unto the Elders of the Church, whom, in the Verses preceding, they are required to send for at such Seasons, with an Assurance, that, by their Prayers, if the Sick have committed Sins, they shall be forgiven him; and not that it was to be a Duty of standing and perpetual Obligation among Christians, for them to confes their Faults to one another, when they meet together to promote their common Edification and Salvation.

I speak not after this Manner to you, dearly beloved in the Lord, as if I apprehended you in Danger of running into this, or the like Errors; but rather to shew the Happiness and Prudence of those Regulations, by which you are preserved from mistaken Methods of Religion, and to make you set a just Value on those
Rules,

Rules, which have hitherto, next to the Grace of God, secured you from the present reigning Delusions. It is the great Duty and Privilege of Believers to search the Scriptures: But since there are many Things in them hard to be understood, which ignorant and unstable Men wrest to their own Destruction, and that of those who hearken to them; it is sure a high Point of Christian Prudence to make a fit Choice of proper Guides and Helps for the right Understanding of them. But this is done to your Hands, in the original Plan of your Societies, and by the pious Care of those Ministers of the Establishment, who have successively presided over you.

What remains therefore, but that I intreat and exhort you to proceed, without wavering, in this, and every other laudable Method, that has hitherto obtained amongst you. You have now had many Years Trial and Experience, how conducive they have been to promote true Religion amongst you: And therefore I assure

376 *A Sermon preach'd before*

myself you will reject every Attempt, that shall be made to put you out of Conceit with them, by such as are given to change. Go on therefore to walk orderly, as well as warily, in these dangerous Days, submitting yourselves to, and attending upon in every publick Ordinance, your proper and authorized Pastors: Let who will say unto you, see here or see there, go not after them, nor follow them. It matters not what those Men's Pretences are, nor whether they are sincere in their Ways, or wilful Deceivers: Sufficient it is, that theirs is not the Way of Modesty, Peace, and Submission to Superiors, and that manifold Mischiefs have arisen, and daily do arise, by their Means. The good Word of God is evil spoken of, his Ministers more generally evil intreated, the Minds of many ignorant, but well-meaning Persons, have been unsettled and driven to incurable Distraction. It can never therefore be a good Tree, which bringeth forth such corrupt Fruit.

In a Word, the Miscarriages of these, and all other Enthusiasts, should convince us all, that Religion and Piety themselves stand in need of Prudence and Sobriety to guard them against dangerous Excesses, and that we have never more Occasion to take Heed lest we fall, than when we think we tread the firmest. Whilst therefore we are instructing others, let us take Care that we ourselves become not Castaways; and whilst we study, by united Methods, to stem the Torrent of Impiety, that distinguishes the present licentious Age, let us take Care to evidence the Power, as well as the Form of Godliness, in our single and separate Capacities.

In Hands so holy and disinterested, the Word of God will surely prosper: The Light of such Examples will shine before Men, and prevail with them to bring forth good Works, and to glorify our Father which is in Heaven. Which blessed End of all religious Societies and Combinations of Men, God of his infinite Mercy promote and prosper. To whom, &c.

S E R.



A
C H A R I T Y
S E R M O N.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that this is essential for ensuring the integrity of the financial statements and for providing a clear audit trail.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze data. It describes how different types of information are gathered and how they are processed to identify trends and anomalies.

3. The third part of the document focuses on the results of the analysis. It presents the findings in a clear and concise manner, highlighting the key areas of concern and the potential risks involved.

4. The fourth part of the document provides a detailed overview of the current state of the organization. It includes information on the company's performance, its financial position, and its overall health. This section is designed to give stakeholders a comprehensive understanding of the company's situation.

5. The fifth part of the document discusses the future outlook for the organization. It outlines the company's strategic goals and the steps it plans to take to achieve them. This section is intended to provide a clear vision of the company's future and to inspire confidence in its leadership.

6. The sixth part of the document contains a summary of the key findings and recommendations. It provides a clear and concise overview of the most important points discussed in the document and offers practical advice on how to address the identified issues.

7. The seventh part of the document is a conclusion. It summarizes the main points of the document and reiterates the importance of the findings. It also expresses the confidence of the authors in the company's ability to overcome the challenges ahead.

A
C H A R I T Y
S E R M O N.

M A R K X. 13, 14.

And they brought young Children to him, that he should touch them: And his Disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeas'd, and said unto them, Suffer the little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not: For of such is the Kingdom of God.

THE Pertinence of these Words to one principal End of my Discourse appears, I suppose, to every one upon the first Hearing. But before

fore I apply them thereto, it will be proper to explain them.

The 13th *ver.* then begins thus: *And they brought young Children to Christ, that he should touch them.* St. Matthew, Chap. x. 13. explains what the *Jews* meant by touching these Children, saying, It was that he should put his Hands on them, and pray. And accordingly Jesus took them up in his Arms, put his Hands on them, and blessed them: As we learn from the 16th *ver.* of the Chapter of my Text. All this therefore seems to be implied under the Expression of Touching, which elsewhere in Scripture sometimes means laying hold of, and embracing.

Our Text proceeds, saying, that the *Disciples rebuked those* who brought these Children; and that *when Jesus saw it, he was much displeas'd.* Probably he shew'd, both in his Looks and Gestures, much Indignation at his Disciples for officiously keeping from him such Objects of Love and Tenderness. There cannot well be

A Charity SERMON. 383

be a surer Sign of a bad and ungenerous Disposition, than to be void of all Concern for Persons of that helpless and innocent Age. No Wonder then that our Lord, who had every other human and amiable Quality, should sharply reprehend the Mistake of his Disciples, who thought it a Trouble to him to cast his gracious Regards upon Infants. And lest the same Misapprehension should induce the Disciples, at any time afterwards, to interpose again so unseasonably, he immediately adds: *Suffer the little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not.* He concludes this Charge with a Reason, *viz. For of such is the Kingdom of God.*

How we are to understand these last Words is the grand Difficulty of the Text. Most Interpreters explain them thus: *Children thro' their Innocence and Simplicity are of all others the fittest Emblems of those of whom the Christian Church is made up here, and Heaven hereafter. It would therefore be highly unjust to keep those from me, who are naturally qualified for that Kingdom,*
4 *which*

384 *A Charity* SERMON.

which I came to set up in the World. Now the Words of our Lord thus rendered, and thus explained, afford us a considerable Presumption in favour of Infant Baptism: For tho' the Persons, who brought these young Children to Christ, might have no such Intention, his admitting them to come unto him, and blessing all such, seems to be virtually receiving them into his new Covenant. We know that the Promise of God unto *Abraham*, that all Nations should be taken into a saving Covenant by one of his Descendants, was conceived in the same Language, *viz. And in thy Seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed.* And the common Form made use of by our Lord, when he invited Men to that Covenant, was, *Come unto me.* Now when grown Persons are encouraged to come unto Christ, no one makes the least doubt but that it is in order to commence his Disciples. And why should this be a Question, when young Children are, in like Manner, encouraged to come unto him? Especially when, in the latter Case, they are moreover declared to have those very Qualifications,

tions, without which Persons of riper Age can never come unto him effectually.

Thus you see that the Reason given by our Lord, for freely admitting young Children to come unto him, as it now stands in our authorized Translation, has a most favourable Aspect to the Practice of Infant Baptism. But I think I may venture to say, that a more grammatical, and every Way properer Translation of the same Words may be had, which would be little less than decisive for that Practice. Instead therefore of rendering, *For of such is the Kingdom of God*, it should have been, *For to such the Kingdom of God belongs*. So our old *English* Translation, commonly called the Bishop's Bible, had it: And so it stands at this Day in that which has always been used by the *French* Reformed Churches. The same Construction in the *Greek* often occurs in the New Testament, for which our last Translators always give us the right and proper *English*, except unhappily in the Text. Thus, to give one Instance out of very many, when

386 *A Charity* SERMON.

our Lord says, *Matth. v. 3. Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, Ὅτι ἀνιῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν*, our last Translators do not render, as in the Passage we are examining, *For of them is the Kingdom of Heaven*, but very justly and well, *For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*. Nor is there any thing harsh, or contrary to the Analogy of Scripture, in supposing our Lord to say, that to the young Children of *Jews* in his Days, the Kingdom of God belonged: For *St. Paul* has in effect said the same thing. Thus, *Gal. iii. 16.* he says, that *to Abraham and to his Seed were the Promises of the Covenant, confirmed of God in Christ, made.* And, *Rom. ix.* and the 4th ver. *that to the Jews belonged the Promises.* If therefore the Christian Covenant belonged to the *Jews* in general by Promise, what hurt can there be in descending to greater Specialty, and saying, that the Kingdom of God, which was the Subject of those Promises, belonged to the Infant, as well as to the adult Seed of *Abraham*?

Further,

Further, as Grammar requires such a Version as I have proposed, and the Analogy of Faith is not thereby infringed, so it suits better with the Context on both Hands, than the received Translation does: For it more strongly justifies our Lord's Displeasure at the Disciples, who discouraged Infants from being brought unto him; inasmuch as their Coming unto him appears to be not a Matter of mere Expedience or Propriety, but of Right.

Again, with Relation to the *ver.* following my Text, what I call the true and grammatical Rendering makes it speak a Sense more worthy of our Saviour: For as the Words of the 14th *ver.* now stand in our Bibles, the 15th is only a Repetition of the same Sense in different Words. The 14th *ver.* teaches us, that the Kingdom of God is composed, or made up of such as Infants; and the 15th *ver.* that none who shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little Child, can enter into it. I own that in general this would be no good Objection;

Because such Repetitions are oft designedly used in Scripture, to express the greater Earnestness. Thus, in the latter Verse of my Text itself, our Saviour says, *Suffer the little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not*: Which are two Words of the same Importance. And therefore I should have made no Objection to the Repetition in the 14th and 15th Verses in the Chapter of my Text, had not the 15th *ver.* been introduced with *Verily I say unto you*. For such an Introduction never stands before a mere Repetition, but always either begins a new Sense, or else improves and explains an old one, ever conveying to the Reader at least clearer Ideas, than the Sentence immediately going before it had done. In short, the good Agreement of that Version, which I have hitherto insisted on, with the whole Context, will best appear from the following Paraphrase. *The Jews brought young Children to Christ, as to a Prophet, that they might receive his solemn Benediction; which the Disciples observing, they rebuked those that brought them. But our Lord was displeas'd at his Disciples for so doing,*

A Charity S E R M O N. 389

doing, and charged them with some Vehemency no more to forbid those young Ones access to him, who being the Seed of Abraham, and Owners of the Promises made to that Seed, had thereby a Right to that Kingdom which he was then setting up in the World. He further assures them, That besides this Right, founded on a divine Promise, Children have a natural Recommendation to it by their Innocence, which grown Persons not having, are forced to supply by Repentance: And that if they did not thus receive the Kingdom of God as little Children, they could not enter therein.

And thus you see that the true Rendering of the latter Words in my Text, gives Nerves and Strength, as well as Perspicuity to our Lord's entire Discourse. And if he has really there declared, that young Children among the *Jews* had a Right to the Kingdom of God, the same must equally hold good of the Children of Christian Parents. For the Promise, on which the Right of the former stood, was not made to them only, but also to as many others,

as the Lord our God shall call. But of this Number we are. For tho' we stand excluded by the Letter of the Promise, yet the inspired Writings of the New Testament declare us to be within the Intention of it; and consequently our young Children have the same Right with theirs to the Kingdom of God, or the Christian Church. And seeing that, as such, the Kingdom of God belongeth to them, so also does Baptism, which is the instituted Means of admitting Men thereto. They ought therefore to be baptized, and whatever pretended Disciples of Christ rebuke those who bring their young Ones to him in this Manner, do them a manifest Injury, and contradict the Charge given in the Text against forbidding them Admittance. They set themselves against the Example of our Saviour, who appears on this very Occasion a Defender of the spiritual Privileges of young Children, against the mistaken Notions of his Followers.

We therefore of the Church of *England* are not only charitable, but also just in
bringing

bringing our Infants to Christ's Holy Baptism. And were we but as generally careful to make them lead the rest of their Lives answerable to these Beginnings, how happy would it be for both?

But too few there be of any Condition, who seriously mind this important Duty. And among the poorer Sort many are found, who tho' ever so well inclined, seem to want Means and Opportunities of giving their young Ones an Education suitable to that Character which Baptism has stamp'd on them. The Consideration of these Things has induced wise and good Men for many Years last to supply so sad a Defect by publick Engagements and Contributions. And accordingly you have here before you those young Children, who have been singled out on this Footing, to be instructed in the Laws of that Kingdom of God, which Christ, in the Text, declares belongeth to them.

Now surely no Christian Audience, after hearing this, can need a further Recom-

392 *A Charity* S E R M O N.

commendation of so useful a Charity. To relieve the bodily Necessities of our Fellow-creatures only, by feeding the Hungry, clothing the Naked, and administering to the Sick, are doubtless Offices worthy of a Christian. And yet in doing this our Righteousness exceeds not that of the moral Heathen, who, as Men, had a Tenderness of Nature perpetually solliciting them for miserable Objects. But a Christian is a new Creature: And therefore besides the Compassion which belongs to him in his natural State, he hath or ought to have Bowels in Christ. And to these it is I would appeal in the Behalf of these little Ones, who, without your Assistance, must continue hungry and naked in Spirituals, and too probably may starve and perish everlastingly for want of that sincere Milk of the Word, by which alone they can grow up to Christian Perfection. If therefore there be any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies, let them now be manifested in the Labour of Love, which is before you. Think
what

A Charity S E R M O N. 393

what a Comfort it will prove to you hereafter, when you hope to see these poor Objects grown to Maturity, and honestly discharging the several Duties of Life, adorning the Doctrine of God by their wholesome Examples, and furnishing the World with noble Specimens of the Power of true Godliness; think, I say, with yourselves, how ravishing such a Sight will be, if you can say, you have in any Proportion contributed thereto. And, on the other Hand, if any Plant in this spiritual Vineyard shall hereafter bring forth four Grapes: If the Wiles of Satan, or a natural bad Disposition in some of these young Ones, should get the better of all the Provision that has been made for the Good of their Souls, you will see it without any Self-reproach, when you are conscious of having used the likeliest Means for preventing it.

The Generality of the World excuse themselves from Acts of Bounty and Charity, by recounting the ungrateful Returns of such as they have already obliged: But
in

in the Case before us we may reasonably hope for better Things. For whereas in the general Dispersion of Favours and Kindnesses, they often light on bad Ground, and produce nothing; *here* we, in some Sort, make the Soil, and therefore may be almost responsible for its Fruitfulness. Among other Branches of a Christian Education, these Children are trained up in an immoveable Reverence towards their Benefactors: And next to their Duty to God, the King, and their natural Parents, they are taught to fix their Regards on those whom Providence has raised up for the Relief of their greatest and most pressing Necessities. Another Difficulty about the Direction of Charity has been, that of finding real Objects. *Here* then they may be had or no where: For the Poor, whose Cause lies now before us, are neither lewd nor lazy; but innocent and hopeful.

It is now many Years since the monstrous Growth of open Immorality induced many pious and publick-spirited Men to join in Societies for Reformation of Man-

A Charity SERMON. 395.

ners, but not with all the Effect desired. The chief Cause whereof I apprehend to have been, that the Reformers had to deal with Sinners, whom long Habits had rendered incorrigible. They undertook to mend the Fruit of Trees that were radically corrupt. Whereas ours is a more rational Way of attaining to the same End, *viz.* by infilling good and religious Principles into the Minds of Children, whilst they are free from bad Impressions: And these we justly hope will grow up with them, and be their Security against Drunkenness, Lewdness, and profane Swearing. Each of these young Ones is trained up to be hereafter in his proper Sphere a Reformer, and being all early listed in the Cause of Virtue, they must ordinarily, at least, prove Advocates for Morality, and zealous for the Honour of the Christian Religion; the exact Knowledge and Practice whereof will so greatly distinguish them amongst their own Rank of Life.

In short the Design of these Charity Schools is so excellent, and the Effects of them

them have been visibly so good, that a Christian has Reasons for supporting them, in what Light soever of that Kind he considers himself.

As a Member of the Universal Church, and a Believer at large, he cannot more effectually consult or promote the Interest of revealed Religion, than by forwarding a Project which is the Envy of Infidels. And indeed it is high Time for the Friends of Christianity, however differing about lesser Matters, to unite in every honest Method of Defence against those common Enemies. Tho' God knows the contrary to all this is apparently the Case: The Zeal of Men, in most of our Religious Divisions, now chiefly employs itself about their distinct Notions, whilst few appear seriously to have at Heart the Interest of our common Salvation.

Again, every Friend to the Christian Religion, as it is taught and professed in the Church of *England*, has a particular Call to promote the charitable Work before

A Charity S E R M O N. 397

us. For the Children educated thereby, publickly profess their Faith and Judgment in Points of Religion in the Words of her Catechism; pray unto God, and praise him by her most excellent Forms, and are trained up, not in a bigotted, but rational Affection for her Communion, such as will be most likely to preserve them to their Lives End from going off either to Popery, or any of our home Separations. But as the prime Glory of a Church consists in the good Morals and holy Lives of its Members; so those who wish well to our established Religion, cannot more effectually convince the World that they do so, than by giving all due Encouragement to the present Undertaking. It being the main View of those, who direct and commend it, to rescue so many innocent Creatures from vicious Courses, and to make them Ornaments to the Church of *England*, who would otherwise have proved its Disgrace.

In so worthy an Affair therefore as this, let no one stand out from a Dislike to some particular

particular Methods of conducting : For Defects there will be in all Schemes, so long as they are contrived and executed by human Hands. But still, wise and thinking Men embark in them as oft as they see a Likelihood of Good arising therefrom, be it more or less. Indeed the very Appearance of a Body of Men acting as our Trustees do, with disinterested Views, and aiming only at the Increase of God's Glory, and the Good of Men's Souls, does Credit to the Cause of Religion : It keeps up the Esteem of the Christian Profession in a loose and libertine Age, when it is observed, that all its Members seek not their own, but that many are concerned for the Things that are Jesus Christ's.

Oh therefore, in order to do some certain and much probable Good, strengthen the Hands of those who labour in this Work of the Lord. What Proportion should be observed herein, must be left to every Man's Prudence, and to the Workings of God's blessed Spirit within him. Only remember that it holds an unerring
Maxim

A Charity SERMON. 399

Maxim in the Husbandry of Grace, as well as in that of Nature ; he that soweth little shall reap little, and he that soweth plenteously shall reap plenteously.

F I N I S.

EMENDATIONS in the SECOND VOLUME.

Page 83. *line 20. read give. p. 123. l. 4. r. Quinius was made. p. 201. l. 19. r. represent. p. 209. l. 17. r. World. p. 220. l. 9. dele as built. p. 237. l. 14. r. the Father. p. 266. l. 3. dele at. r. personal. p. 268. l. 9. r. whether. p. 304. l. 8. r. συγκαληγομένοι.*

