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THE WORKS

OF

JOHN BARCLAY, A.M.

GLASGOW :

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THE WORKS

OF

JOHN BARCLAY, A.M.,

PASTOR OF THE BEREAN CHURCH, EDINBURGH.

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GLASGOW:

ROBERT JACKSON, 5, ST. ENOCH SQUARE.

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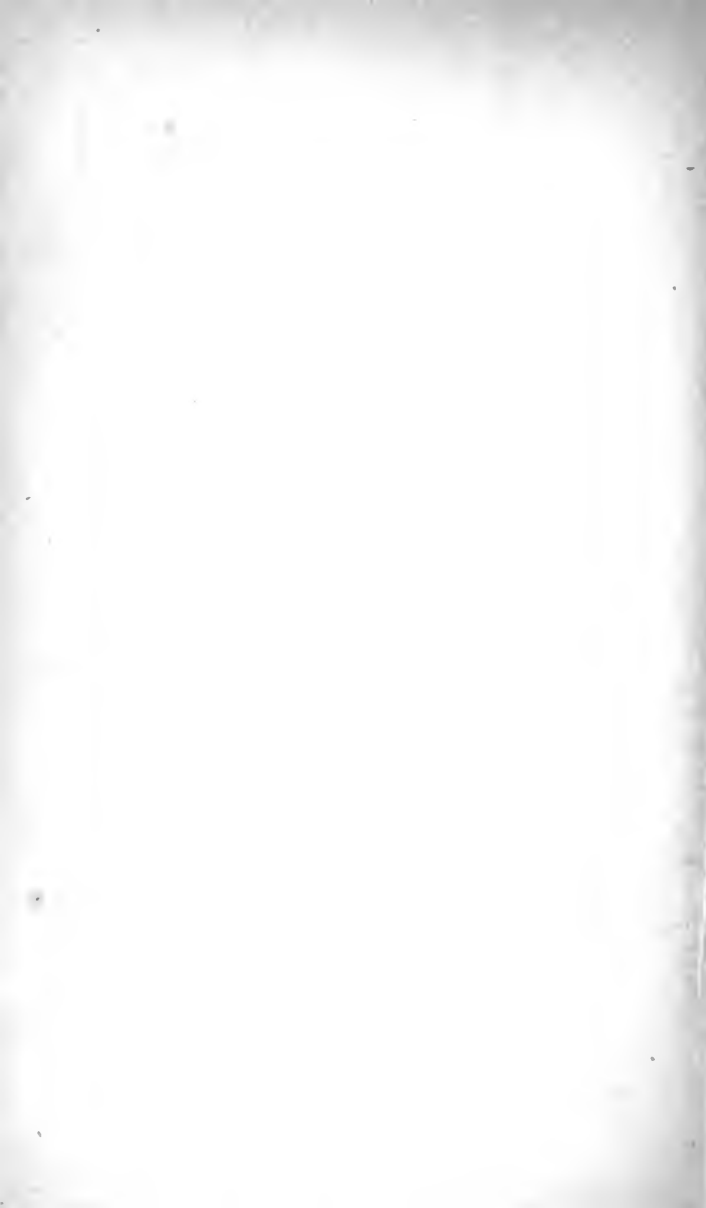
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This New Edition of part of the WORKS of the late Mr. JOHN BARCLAY, A.M., has been published with Funds left for that purpose, by the late Mr. JAMES CARSWELL, who for many years was a Deacon of the Berean Church in Glasgow.

JAMES THOMSON, PASTOR, Trustee.

DAVID M'MILLAN, Trustee.



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THE BEREANS.



## THE BEREANS.

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THE BEREANS are a sect of Protestant dissenters from the Church of Scotland, who take their title from, and profess to follow the example of, the ancient Bereans, in building their system of faith and practice upon the Scriptures alone, without regard to any human authority whatever.

As to the *origin* of this sect, we find that the Bereans first assembled, as a separate society of Christians, in the city of Edinburgh, in the autumn of 1773, and soon after in the parish of Fettercairn. The opponents of the Berean doctrines allege that this new system of faith would never have been heard of, had not Mr. Barclay, the founder of it, been disappointed of a settlement in the Church of Scotland. But the Bereans, in answer to this charge, appeal not only to Mr. Barclay's doctrine, uniformly preached in the church of Fettercairn, and many other places in that neighbourhood, for fourteen years before that benefice became vacant, but likewise to two different treatises, containing the same doctrines, published by him about ten or twelve years before that period. They admit, indeed, that previous to May, 1773, when the General Assembly, by sustaining the king's presentation in favour of Mr. Foote, excluded Mr. Barclay from succeeding to the church of Fettercairn (notwithstanding the almost unanimous desire of the parishioners), the Bereans had not left the established church, or attempted to erect themselves into a distinct society; but they add, that this was by no means neces-

sary on their part, until by the Assembly's decision they were in danger of being not only deprived of his instructions, but of being scattered as sheep without a shepherd. And they add, that it was Mr. Barclay's open and public avowal, both from the pulpit and the press, of those peculiar sentiments which now distinguish the Bereans, that was the first and principal, if not the only cause of the opposition set on foot against his settlement in Fettercairn.

The Bereans agree with the great majority of Christians respecting the doctrine of the Trinity, which they hold as a fundamental article; and they also agree, in a great measure, with the professed principles of both our established churches respecting predestination and election, though they allege that these doctrines are not consistently taught in either church. But they differ from the majority of all sects of Christians in various other important particulars such as—

1. Respecting our knowledge of the Deity. Upon this subject, they say, the majority of professed Christians stumble at the very threshold of revelation, and, by admitting the doctrine of natural religion, natural conscience, natural notices, &c., not founded upon revelation, or derived from it by tradition, they give up the cause of Christianity at once to the infidels; who may justly argue, as Mr. Paine in fact does, in his *Age of Reason*, that there is no occasion for any revelation or word of God, if man can discover his nature and perfections from his works alone. But this, the Bereans argue, is beyond the natural powers of human reason; and therefore our knowledge of God is from revelation alone, and that without revelation man would never have entertained an idea of his existence.

2. With regard to faith in Christ, and assurance of salvation through his merits, they differ from almost all other sects whatsoever. These they reckon inseparable,



or rather the same, because, say they, "God hath expressly declared, he that believeth shall be saved; and therefore it is not only absurd but impious, and in a manner calling God a liar, for a man to say, I believe the gospel, but have doubts, nevertheless, of my own salvation." With regard to the various distinctions and definitions that have been given of different kinds of faith, they argue that there is nothing incomprehensible or obscure in the meaning of this word, as used in Scripture; but that as faith, when applied to human testimony, signifies neither more nor less than the mere simple belief of that testimony as true, upon the authority of the testifier, so, when applied to the testimony of God, it signifies precisely "the belief of His testimony, and resting upon His veracity alone, without any kind of collateral support from, or concurrence of any other evidence or testimony whatever." And they insist that, as this faith is the gift of God alone, so the person to whom it is given is as conscious of possessing it, as the being to whom God gives life is of being alive; and therefore he entertains no doubts either of his faith or his consequent salvation through the merits of Christ, who died and rose again for that purpose. In a word, they argue that the gospel would not be, what it is held forth to be, glad tidings of great joy, if it did not bring full personal assurance of eternal salvation to the believer; which assurance, they insist, is the present infallible privilege and portion of every individual believer of the gospel.

3. Consistently with the above definition of faith, they say that the sin against the Holy Ghost, which has puzzled so many in all ages, is nothing else but unbelief; and that the expression, "it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come," means only that a person dying in infidelity would not be forgiven,

neither under the former dispensation by Moses (the then *present* dispensation, kingdom, or government of God), nor under the gospel dispensation, which, in respect of the Mosaic, was a kind of future world or kingdom to come.

4. The Bereans interpret a great part of the Old Testament prophecies, and, in particular, the whole of the Psalms—excepting such as are merely historical or laudatory—to be typical or prophetic of Jesus Christ, his sufferings, atonement, mediation, and kingdom; and they esteem it a gross perversion of these psalms and prophecies to apply them to the experiences of private Christians. In proof of this, they not only urge the words of the apostle, that no prophecy is of any private interpretation, but they insist that the whole of the quotations from the ancient prophecies in the New Testament, and particularly those from the Psalms, are expressly applied to Christ. In this opinion many other classes of Protestants agree with them.

5. Of the absolute, all-superintending sovereignty of the Almighty, the Bereans entertain the highest idea, as well as of the uninterrupted exertion thereof over all his works, in heaven, earth, and hell, however unsearchable by his creatures. A God without election, or choice in all his works, they argue, is a God without existence, a mere idol, a non-entity. And to deny God's election, purpose, and express will in all his works, is to make him inferior to ourselves.

As to their *practice* and *discipline*, they consider infant baptism as a Divine ordinance, instituted in the room of circumcision; and think it absurd to suppose that infants, who, all agree are admissible to the kingdom of God in heaven, should, nevertheless, be incapable of being admitted into his visible church on earth. They commemorate the Lord's Supper generally once a month; but as the words of the institution fix no particular

period, they sometimes celebrate it oftener, and sometimes at more distant periods, as it may suit their general convenience. They meet every Lord's-day for the purpose of preaching, praying, and exhorting to love and good works. With regard to admission and exclusion of members, their method is very simple:—When any person, after hearing the Berean doctrines, professes his belief and assurance of the truths of the gospel, and desires to be admitted into their communion, he is cheerfully received upon his profession, whatever may have been his former manner of life. But if such a one should afterwards draw back from his good profession or practice, they first admonish him, and, if that has no effect, they leave him to himself. They do not think that they have any power to deliver a backsliding brother to Satan; that text, and other similar passages, such as, “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven,” &c., they consider as restricted to the apostles and to the inspired testimony alone, and not to be extended to any church on earth, or any number of churches or of Christians, whether decided by a majority of votes, or by unanimous voices. Neither do they think themselves authorized, as a Christian church, to inquire into each other's political opinions, any more than to examine into each other's notions of philosophy. They both recommend and practise, as Christian duties, submission to lawful authority; but they do not think that a man, by becoming a Christian, or joining their society, is under any obligation, by the rules of the gospel, to renounce his right of private judgment upon matters of public or private importance. Upon all such subjects they allow each other to think and act as each may see it his duty: and they require nothing more of the members than a uniform and steady profession of the apostolic faith, and a suitable walk and conversation.



A SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

EARLY PART OF THE

LIFE OF MR. JOHN BARCLAY,

MINISTER OF THE BEREAN CHURCH IN EDINBURGH.



# A SHORT ACCOUNT

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MINISTER OF THE BEREAN CHURCH IN EDINBURGH.

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THE writer of the following narrative has little knowledge or information respecting Mr. JOHN BARCLAY prior to the year 1763, when, in the beginning of June that year, he became helper to Mr. Anthony Dow, the then minister of the parish of Fettercairn.

The writer was informed that Mr. Barclay was the son of a farmer who rented a farm and mill in the neighbourhood of Auchterarder, and was the first son by a second marriage of his father, who gave him a classical education, intending him for the Church of Scotland; and, as such, he set out when he had finished his education. Having passed his trials, and received his license as a preacher,\* he was engaged by Mr. Jobson, then minister of Errol, as his assistant, where he remained for some years. It was here he began to study the Scriptures in their connection; and to this he was led, by the grace of God, by means of the hard disputes that took place at that time among different Independent parties. Being, by this means, loosed from the system he had learned of men, he, from this time, preached the gospel as he had

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\* Mr. John Barclay was licensed as a preacher of the Church of Scotland, by the presbytery of Auchterarder, on September 27, 1759.

learned by the Word of Christ, in doing which he was obliged to oppose doctrines held by Mr. Jobson, and many others in his connection; on which account he was challenged by Mr. Jobson; but the more opposition he met, the more he was confirmed in his mind of their deviation from the Scriptures, and of his obligation to oppose them as such. Mr. Jobson, on account of his continued opposition to his system, then dismissed him from his service; but God had work to do by him in another place. He had declared the gospel at Errol, and no doubt some had believed to the saving of their souls, and he had now to preach it at Fettercairn, where, no doubt, there was as much need. It so happened that at the time of his leaving Errol, Mr. Anthony Dow was in need of an assistant at Fettercairn. In the year 1762, he had become, through age and infirmity, incapable to perform the duties of his office, and desired Mr. David Dow, his son, then minister of the parish of Dron, to endeavour to find an assistant for him; accordingly Mr. David Dow, knowing that Mr. Barclay had left Mr. Jobson, proposed to him to go to Fettercairn, which he accepted, and in the beginning of June 1763, as is above stated, he arrived at the house of Mr. Dow, in Fettercairn, whose servant he was now to become. Previous to this, Mr. Dow had, for some time, been assisted by the neighbouring ministers, and it happened there was one appointed to preach on the Sabbath after Mr. Barclay's arrival, Mr. Barclay being a hearer on the forenoon of that day; and it having been made public that he was to preach in the afternoon, the congregation, who generally saw him in the forenoon, were prepossessed with a very mean idea of him, his appearance being rather boyish, he being of fair complexion, they imagined they had little to expect from him, and many went home complaining of their bad fortune, that Mr. Dow had sent a boy to preach to them;



notwithstanding the greater part attended in the afternoon, and never were people more surprised than they were, both as to the matter and manner of his address. Indeed, his appearance in the pulpit, before he began to speak, was calculated to fill them with attention and reverence, so that they now found there was more in him than they had expected. His text was Heb. ii. 3, from which he described the great salvation in a manner most clear and impressive, more so than they had been accustomed to hear. He took particular notice of the character of those to whom it was addressed, that they were sinners condemned by God's holy law, and justly exposed to everlasting punishment; that the gospel is a revelation of mercy to such, declaring God's everlasting love in giving his Son to die for such characters, in order that they might be saved from their sins, and from wrath, the consequence of sin, and be brought to God's glory; that this salvation is great in respect that it saves from the greatest depth of misery, and exalts to the greatest height of happiness, and brings to God and glory, and as being the plan, purpose, and work of God, the Son of God was sent by the Father to work it out; God was manifest in the flesh to work it out, by paying the price of their redemption. He reasoned strongly on the sufficiency of the price being proved in God's raising him from the dead, by which life and immortality is brought to light; that this salvation was not only great for these reasons, but also on account of its being made known by himself, and by his apostles speaking by the Spirit, bringing all things to their remembrance, and empowering them to perform signs and wonders, for confirming their doctrines. He showed that all who have believed, or shall believe this testimony concerning him, have salvation; they are saved from sin and from wrath, and obtain it with eternal glory; he showed also the great danger of despising or neglecting

this salvation ; that there is no possibility of such escaping from the wrath to come ; that as the believers of the gospel have eternal salvation, and enjoy present peace and joy, knowing in whom they have believed, that God is both willing and faithful to fulfil his word ; so their remains nothing for them that neglect and despise this salvation, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to devour them as adversaries.

During the space of nine years, which he passed at Fetterairn, he spoke the same truth with which he began ; he knew nothing among the people but Jesus Christ and him crucified ; and he, in a great measure, imitated the great apostle in what he says to the church of Ephesus, that he taught publicly and from house to house, testifying to small and great repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. It was his earnest desire and constant endeavour that young and old should attend to the Scriptures ; he for that purpose established examinations on different days of the week through the parish, and always one day of the week in the parish kirk, at which time they behoved to be able to recite certain portions of Scripture, and it is a truth, that it was common for those who were taking care of cattle in the fields to have their Bibles with them ; indeed they were afraid (as he was constantly going about) to be without their Bibles, and both young and old feared and loved him. It was also his constant practice on Mondays to go and visit those in distress, whose names were mentioned on the preceding Lord's day, and his visit was always profitable to them, and all who heard him. He was also the means of removing the practice of swearing from the parish ; it was his common practice to converse with the people to detect this wicked practice, till it became very rare to hear the slightest oath in the whole parish, all the time of his stay there. After he had

been some time there he found many much given to singing profane ballads; he not only reprov'd this practice, but also, to put a substitute in their place, he accordingly compos'd a number of spiritual songs, on various passages of Scripture, adapted to the different tunes used in singing these ballads, and distributed various copies of them through the parish always as he compos'd them; and when he had a number of them compos'd from the Old and New Testaments, and the Psalms paraphras'd, apply'd to the person and work of Christ, his sufferings and glorification, he got them published in the year 1766. But he wrote, as a preface to the hymns, two dissertations on the use of singing; in the one he show'd the impropriety of Christians singing profane songs, and that such only should be used that promote faith and love to God, or for exhortation and comfort in the ways of God; the other one is on the book of Psalms, showing they are not the private opinions of the penmen, as David, Heman, and Asaph; that they are all expressive of the person and work of Christ, his sufferings, death, and the glory of his kingdom; or of him in connection with his people, or are historical of God's mercy to his people.

In this dissertation he particularly states the doctrines he always preach'd, namely, that the gospel believ'd, gives, as an earnest to the believer, the assurance or foretaste of his everlasting salvation; that they are justify'd by the belief of the gospel; that it gives peace and joy to the believer; that they rejoice in hope of the glory of God, because their hope being founded on the Word of God, is sure and stedfast, they know on whom they have believ'd, and they trust his word with confidence. The doctrines of doubts, and fears, desertions, &c., he consider'd as synonymous with unbelief, for none can believe God, and be at the same time doubting his promises. But, on the other hand, he never lost sight of the great

leading doctrines of the gospel, as to their immediate effects on the hearts and lives of the people of God ; that the grace of God teaches to deny ungodliness, and to live soberly and righteously at all times and places ; that God allows no time to any of his people to be unholy, but if they transgress, he chastises them ; while he teaches them repentance, he exhorts to remission of sins in the way of his appointment.

Having written somewhat warmly against those who, professing to be ministers of Christ, did yet oppose the doctrines of the gospel as to doubts, &c., and of holiness, particularly on certain occasions, giving but too much room to many to conclude that holiness on these particular occasions would make atonement for contrary practice at other times ; and the collection of *Spiritual Songs* being printed, together with the above described dissertations, it was canvassed by the ministers of the presbytery of Fordoun, who were much offended at several things in the book, particularly that he maintained the above view of the Psalms, &c., and had spoken harshly and irreverently of the ministers of the gospel. As to this he denied that ever he spoke a word against the ministers of Christ, but that he spake only against the ministers of Satan—that no one need apply this to themselves but such as maintained doctrines contrary to Scripture. However, Mr. Barclay was cited to appear before the presbytery, to answer for the above doctrines maintained in his book. He accordingly attended, and answered their objections by an appeal to the Scriptures, in such a manner as convinced one who went there, as he said, for the express purpose of hearing him refuted and exposed by the presbytery for his erroneous views, but, to his astonishment, found them unable for the task. His words were, that he could not compare them to anything more proper than to a parcel of boys talking to an experienced man. Mr.

Barclay refuted them, by express scriptures, on every point, one by one; therefore from this time this man, from being an enemy, became one of his best friends; but notwithstanding of this, the presbytery continued to persecute Mr. Barclay with the more fury, and drew up a libel to be read in the kirk of Fettercairn against the doctrine he preached, as contained in his book which bore the title of, *Rejoice Evermore, or Christ all in all.*

The libel was intended to convince the people that he was a heretic, for saying that believers have assurance given them in his Word of their salvation, and that they enjoyed it in believing his Word; that they should be holy in all places and at all times; and that the Psalms do not speak of the penman, but Christ and his church, and of the destruction of his and their enemies; and also for comparing those who pervert the gospel to swine, which, if let loose in a garden, would root up everything. The people were therefore warned against his supposed errors, and not to receive his opinions, which, in their judgment, were wrong; but as all they said was unsupported by one single Scripture proof, the people paid no respect to it. Mr. Barclay therefore continued teaching the people as formerly in the things of God, and carried on his weekly examinations, to the great profit of all who attended, until the death of Mr. Dow, which took place about the beginning of August, 1772. During the time of his stay he wrote also a treatise, showing that the knowledge of the true God does not come by nature to any one, but only by the revelation which he had given of his own character and name. But as soon as the death of Mr. Dow took place, Mr. Barclay was prohibited, by the presbytery, from preaching in the kirk of Fettercairn; of course he never preached more there, and was scarcely ever after allowed to preach in any kirk in the Mearns. He nevertheless continued in the neighbourhood until the

beginning of next summer, that is, 1773, and preached through most parts of Angus, where multitudes thronged to hear him; for although the ministers of the presbytery of Fordoun were incensed against Mr. Barclay, those in Angus remained more friendly to him, and one or other of them allowed him to preach in their pulpits every Lord's-day, during the autumn, winter, and spring following. After the death of Mr. Dow, the parish of Fettercairn joined in an unanimous call to him to be their pastor, and presented their call to the heritors of the parish; but the principal heritors being hard pressed on by the ministers of the presbytery of Fordoun to keep Mr. Barclay off, as they would not agree to the settlement of him among them, the heritors, in order to make a show to the parish that they intended to do them justice, called a meeting of the whole on a week-day, and proposed to give them a trial of six young men, and they should have whoever they might choose, but that Mr. Barclay should not be one of the number. The question being to be decided by those only who held land from the heritors, all others being excluded, whether they agreed to the proposed trial or not, they all declared that they were perfectly satisfied with Mr. Barclay as their pastor, therefore would have no trial of any other. They were therefore told by the principal heritor, that, as they refused his proposal, they should be excluded the privilege of their choice of any other. Application was then made to the heritors of the parish, by Mr. Robert Foote, then minister of Eskdale-muir, and his friends, in order to obtain a presentation for him to be minister of Fettercairn. The application had the desired success, and he soon obtained one. On the 5th of February, 1773, a presbytery was held at Fettercairn, and the inhabitants of the parish were warned to attend for the purpose of voting for Mr. Foote, notwithstanding he had already received

the presentation. The votes of the congregation being asked, there were only three that would vote for him; they, however, made out other three votes afterwards among non-jurant episcopals, who never intended to be members of the congregation. The parishioners then, by a notary public, took a protest against the settlement of Mr. Foote, with an appeal to the synod, declaring that Mr. Barclay was the man they had chosen as their pastor, and that him they ought to have. But, as might be expected, the synod was of the same mind as the presbytery, against the parish, which caused an appeal to be made to the General Assembly (but it ought to be noticed that, as the presbytery had libelled Mr. Barclay, they now refused him a certificate, and he was also now obliged to appeal to the synod, and from that to the General Assembly); but although his cause was ably defended by some members of that assembly, they sustained the decision of the presbytery, and also of the heritors, against Mr. Barclay and the parish of Fettercairn. Then was Mr. Barclay thrust out of the Church of Scotland, because he did not hold the doctrines taught in that church, at the expense of denying the doctrines of the gospel of Christ. However, as he had an opportunity of vindicating the doctrines which he taught before the assembly, and of preaching different times in Edinburgh, during his stay at the assembly, there were many who heard him who were given to believe the truth by his means, and gave him the right hand of fellowship. They then left the Establishment along with him, and joined themselves together as a church of Christ upon the very same principles for which he was libelled by the presbytery of Fordoun, and was at last expelled from the Church of Scotland, because he held them as he had learned them from the apostles of Christ. Thus, in plain truth, Mr. Barclay did not learn his principles after he left the

Church of Scotland, for it was for the doctrine's sake which he spake to the end of his life he was expelled that church.

But as Mr. Barclay had left many friends at Fettercairn, who were attached to him for the truth's sake he had so long declared to them, and being pressed by letters from them, he accordingly came about the beginning of July, the same year, and for two Sabbaths preached in the open air, to thousands of hearers, who came from every quarter; some many miles' distance. He was much pressed on to stay; but as there was no place of worship as yet procured, and as he came off abruptly from his few friends at Edinburgh, he was under the necessity of going back; but the people of Fettercairn, and other parishes in the vicinity, being still determined to have him as their pastor, they feued a piece of ground, for the purpose of erecting a place of worship, at a place called Sauchyburn, and in little more than two months they had a large place built for worship thereon—such was the alacrity with which they went to work in the matter. But, in the meantime, Mr. Barclay had fallen in with a young man, who had been schoolmaster at Crieff some time, who professed to be of one mind with Mr. Barclay in all points (his name was James M'Rae), with whom Mr. Barclay was highly pleased, as he appeared to have talents for usefulness, and accordingly sent him to the people of Fettercairn, with a recommendation to receive him as a brother, but at the same time to try his doctrine. Before he came the house was begun to be built, but not finished, so he preached in the open air, on the ground purchased, until the house was in a measure habitable. The people there were in general well satisfied with Mr. M'Rae, and content to have him as their pastor; and therefore desired to have an answer from Mr. Barclay, to say if he was to come and stay with them, or if they



should give Mr. M'Rae a formal call in his place. Mr. Barclay, viewing he might be more useful in Edinburgh, where he was, and finding they were satisfied with Mr. M'Rae, desired them by all means to call Mr. M'Rae as their pastor; consequently, all who had signed the call for Mr. Barclay allowed their names to go to a call for Mr. M'Rae; many also, who had not had a former opportunity, now added their names to the call to Mr. M'Rae, and he was set aside as their pastor early in spring, 1774, by the assistance of Mr. Barclay, who was present; and from that period till 1779, Mr. M'Rae was minister to from 1000 to 1200 communicants, all collected together by the industry of Mr. Barclay, during his nine years' labour at Fettercairn. Mr. Barclay, from this time, continued minister of the Berean Assembly in Edinburgh to the end of his life, which event took place when on his way to the chapel, on the Lord's-day, July 29, 1798, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, and thirty-ninth year of his ministry. He was interred in the Calton old burying-ground, Edinburgh, where a monument has been erected to his memory, on which is the following inscription:—

IN  
**Memory**  
 OF  
 JOHN BARCLAY,  
 A. M., PASTOR OF THE  
 BEREAN CHURCH,  
 EDINBURGH,  
 WHO DIED 29TH JULY, 1798,  
 IN THE 65TH YEAR OF HIS  
 AGE, AND 39TH OF HIS  
 MINISTRY.



WITHOUT FAITH, WITHOUT GOD;

OR,

AN APPEAL TO GOD

CONCERNING HIS OWN EXISTENCE.

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“The world by wisdom knew not God.”—“The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God.”—“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.”

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# PREFACE.

BY THE REV. DAVID THOM, LIVERPOOL.

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THE object of the following Work is to show that, for our knowledge of all that concerns God, we are indebted solely and exclusively to divine revelation; and that every particular which God hath seen meet to reveal to us, stands equally and infallibly true to our consciences. What God hath condescended to become the witness to the truth of in our minds, can no more be confirmed, than it can be weakened, by any other species of evidence.

In aiming at the establishment of these principles, the scope of the author of *Without Faith, Without God*, differs essentially from that of ordinary writers on the subject of religion. According to them, there are religious notions which owe their origin to man himself; and even views which are derived from revelation may nevertheless receive increase and confirmation from other quarters. Indeed, if those who have commonly undertaken to treat of this all-important topic are to be believed, nothing is better calculated to produce a liking to the doctrines of Christ Jesus, than demonstrations *à priori* that they must be, and *à posteriori* that they are, agreeable to the results of observation and rational inquiry. Hence, statements and views, contained in the Bible, which appear to them to be borne out by matter of fact, they profess to be themselves thoroughly convinced of, and show themselves solicitous

to bring under the notice of their followers. But in regard to points which have no other basis than divine testimony, they either preserve a total silence, or at the utmost speak doubtfully and hesitatingly. This, whenever divine testimony enters the conscience as such, Mr. Barclay shows cannot happen.

All that God hath declared, resting on one and the same authority, can only be believed by us in one and the same way. God being the only, and being also the infallible, witness to the truth of whatever He hath made known in His word, every part of it must be to us, if enlightened by Him, equally and absolutely certain. We cannot be sure of one divine truth, while we reject, or are hesitating about, another. We cannot be receiving the facts of scripture, while we are dubious as to its reasonings. While we admit as true the transmission of sin and death to us from Adam, we cannot be rejecting, or in doubt about, our possession of righteousness and life everlasting in Christ Jesus. So far from this, the Holy Spirit, testifying in our consciences equally and infallibly to the truth of all that is contained in the sacred record, whatever, through the medium of that record, is by him disclosed to us, is to us equally and infallibly certain.

This, indeed, must be. The Holy Spirit, speaking by the mouth of one of the apostles, has furnished us with an argument, in support of Mr. Barclay's leading principle, to subvert which sets all the boasted ingenuity of man completely at defiance. *If we receive the witness or testimony of man, the witness or testimony of God is greater*; 1 John v. 9. That is, if mere human testimony, confessedly inferior to that of God as in every point of view it must be, is nevertheless frequently productive in our minds of a conviction which we shall in vain attempt to distinguish from *absolute*

*certainty*, can divine testimony, when introduced into our minds as such, produce a conviction the strength of which shall be *less*? Nay, if in many cases we find it impossible to distinguish the effect of human testimony from *absolute certainty*, must not divine testimony, as superior by its nature, beget *absolute and infallible certainty itself*?—Although I have never visited Mexico, I have no doubts concerning the existence of that country. And yet, what higher testimony than that of man constitutes the basis of my conviction in this particular case? When my heavenly Father, the faithful and true witness, sees meet to reveal it to me and my fellow believers, as the import and substance of his testimony, *that he hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son* (1 John v. 11), is it possible that there should exist in our minds, believing this to be his testimony, a conviction of its truth *inferior* to that with which we believe in the existence of Mexico?

The fact is, the following work of Mr. Barclay is a bold, masterly, and scriptural, assault on the principle of *religious scepticism*.

Ordinary religion can boast of no higher source than education, custom, secular interest, human observations and reasonings, or at most a desire to satisfy the cravings of the natural conscience. In many cases, several, or perhaps all of these causes, may concur to its production. Man and the exercise of mere human faculties thus giving birth to it, a *probability* that they may be right, mingled with *much uncertainty*, is the highest point which those possessed of it can reach. For such persons to be *absolutely certain* of the correctness of their religious sentiments, is an utter impossibility: *absolute and infallible certainty* in regard to divine things, being the result of divine testimony, entering the conscience as such, and of this cause alone.

Scepticism is thus, Mr. Barclay saw, far from being confined to the irreligious merely. Nay, that species of it which obtains among the religious classes of the community is, of the two, decidedly its more dangerous form. Under the pretence of upholding divine truth, this traitorous principle is doing all that it can to sap and undermine it. To attack and oppose scepticism, especially when assuming the garb and language of piety, and thereby to put the ignorant and the unwary on their guard against it, was the grand object of the author in the composition of the following pages.

Admirably has he succeeded in demolishing what is commonly denominated *natural religion*. This is one of those idols which the apparently pious, and the openly profane—which the Unitarian and the Calvinist—curiously but consistently enough, have concurred in setting up. “God hath means of revealing himself to the conscience, over and above his written Word,” say they. “Of these means he hath in every age availed himself. Heathens, thereby, have been brought to the knowledge of his character. Nay, were it not for the existence of those natural notices of himself wherewith he hath stored abundantly the mind of man, to what,” triumphantly exclaim they, “could he address, upon what could he fasten, an express revelation of himself?” To Mr. Barclay’s inimitable method of dealing with this sophism, which is a virtual attack on the necessity, nature, and efficacy of revelation, I refer the reader. Nothing can be conceived more pointed, complete, and satisfactory, than his exposure of Clark’s celebrated *à priori* demonstration. Even Lord Brougham’s, contained in his recent work, is tame compared with it.\*

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\* See his Lordship’s late work on *Natural Theology*.



But the great excellence of the following treatise, as well as of Mr. Barclay's other works, is its thorough refutation of that all-pervading, mind-harassing, sceptical principle, *the existence of doubts and fears respecting their future state in the breasts of believers*. "One who credits the divine testimony concerning Christ Jesus may often be very uncertain, and consequently may be filled with much anxiety and many fearful forebodings, as to what shall be his own personal state and circumstances hereafter. Indeed, such fears, so far from being injurious, and therefore undesirable, are exceedingly salutary, as tending to promote watchfulness and humility; and fall to be ranked among the best evidences of his spiritual state which a child of God can possess." Such is the language of the most serious and popular of our religious hierarchy. Mr. Barclay, as the champion of divine truth, at once and boldly proclaims himself to be at issue with them. Every part of their statement he impugns, and cuts down with the sword of the Spirit. To believe and to doubt are, he shows, states of mind as opposite as light and darkness. For a man to doubt respecting his state before God, when he has nothing but human testimony or human reasonings to rely on, or when he is seeking for the grounds of a hope of eternal life in himself, is all very natural. And so far from wishing to hear from the lips of any man, while in such a state, the language of confidence and assured hope respecting futurity, Mr. Barclay deprecates his use of it with the utmost abhorrence. What our author says, and what he proves with irresistible force of evidence from scripture, is, that *a man who doubts concerning his state in the sight of God, is not a Christian*. Such a one is still in darkness. He has never yet had divine testimony carried home to his conscience by the Spirit as what it actually is; and, consequently, there

does not exist in him that principle from which alone absolute and infallible certainty can flow. A believer, on the contrary, is light in the Lord. Having had the eyes of his understanding opened from above, to behold the truth of divine testimony in itself, that is, as it shines by its own glorious intrinsic evidence, he has had the righteousness of Christ revealed to him as his own, and is enabled thereby to see himself saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. The import of divine revelation is now apprehended by him to be, not a command, or series of commands, urging him to do anything in order to his being saved, but a proclamation to him that he is saved, in virtue of the complete salvation which the Lord himself hath wrought out. "It is finished," is introduced into his conscience with divine power; superseding at once, and for ever, all works, acts, and efforts of his own. The same Word which reveals to him that he inherits death, as the wages of sin, by virtue of his connection with Adam, reveals to him likewise his inheritance of eternal life, as the gift of God to him, through Jesus Christ his Lord. Both statements, as resting upon the same infallible authority, and as opened up to his mind by the same divine and irresistible evidence, he equally and certainly believes. All his previous scepticism, whether religious or irreligious, is henceforward at an end. God now to him is love. Not that God hath undergone any change; but that his own mind is changed, by its having been enlightened and enabled to behold God *as what He is, ever hath been, and ever will be*. God is love: and to him is manifested to be so in the light of the fact, of having sent his Son into the world, that he, seeing that fact to be true, might live thereby; 1 John iv. 8, 9. In the believer's conscience there is now perfect peace, even the peace of God which passeth all *natural* understanding; and as

this peace has been produced by the testimony of the Spirit revealing to him what God is, and as God ever continues the same, and ever continues to reveal himself as the same, of course this peace remains in his conscience for ever. As to doubting and fearing with respect to God's love to us personally, it is shown by Mr. Barclay to be the result, not of humility, but of devilish pride: being neither more nor less than the creature presuming to set up its own wisdom in opposition to the wisdom of the Creator; and refusing to be comforted until, in express contradiction to what God hath declared, it shall have discovered in its own *human* righteousness, that which shall be able to satisfy the infinite demands of *divine* law! In a word, it is the creature venturing to give the lie to the Creator, by going about to establish its own righteousness, in spite of God's affirmation that this is impossible, and that *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth!* How different from this spurious humility, the humility of the gospel, as it is delineated by Mr. Barclay himself in one of his fervent and eminently spiritual hymns:—

'Tis not, humility, thy task,  
To weave a thin excuse,  
And then for worthiness to ask,  
That thou mayest grace abuse.

Thy office, O humility,  
Is frankly to receive,  
What frankly cometh from on high,  
And God the glory give.\*

Our author's system, as developed in the following sheets, and indeed in every one of his works, is this: that all knowledge of God's character and ways is exclusively the result of that revelation which he hath been

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\* No. LXI. of the *Spiritual Songs*, edition 1766.

pleased to give concerning Himself, and which we find contained in the Holy Scriptures; and that the necessary effect of this revelation being carried home to the conscience of any one by God himself is faith, or absolute and infallible certainty of the truth of what hath been made known. Can any theory of religion be imagined more agreeable to Scripture, and to the experience of all upon the hearts of whom the truths of Scripture have been inscribed by the finger of inspiration?

It will be obvious to those who have perused with care the preceding statements, and have thereby made themselves masters of Mr. Barelay's mode of argumentation, that every one who is taught from above must reject with abhorrence the ordinary practice of attempting to *confirm the dictates of revelation by human discoveries and reasonings*. What to such a person are the pretended external evidences of Christianity? What to him are the geological theories of a Cuvier or a Buekland? It may suit those whose religion has been taught by man, to crutch and confirm it by what man hath said. It may suit those who *hold the persons of men in admiration because of advantage*, to show deference to their authority even in cases where, from the nature of things, they are utterly incompetent to judge. This, however, will not be the procedure of him whose religion has emanated directly from God himself. Such an one knows that God neither does, nor can, receive testimony from man; John v. 34. The superior cannot be witnessed to by the inferior. A Christian, one I mean who is worthy of the name, so far from being ashamed of, glories in, the sneering remark of Hume,\* that "our most holy religion is founded, not on reason, but on faith;" know-

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\* In his Essay on *Miracles*.

ing, that this arch-priest of infidelity, in so saying, was, like Caiaphas of old, unintentionally giving utterance to a most valuable and blessed truth. With the theories of naturalists respecting the *megatheria*, the *ichthyosauri*, and the other extinct species of animals which are supposed to have existed in a long since bygone period of the world, a believer may, if of a scientific turn of mind, occasionally amuse himself. But he will never be found exposing himself to the censures of infidels, or semi-infidels, by pretending to confirm the testimony of God by the shifting, inconsistent, and baseless theories of man.\*

A Christian is perfectly aware that there can exist no contradiction between what God *hath done*, and what God *hath said*. But he is well aware, also, that from the Word of God alone is a sufficient and satisfactory explanation of what God *hath done* to be obtained. In looking at, and judging from, outward appearances, by his own natural faculties, he may commit mistakes; for his at the utmost is a limited understanding, drawing its conclusions from necessarily imperfect premises. But in listening to what God hath declared concerning these appearances, he knows that the explanation which he receives and acquiesces in is infallible. It is the judgment of one who is perfectly competent to pronounce respecting the subject, and whose veracity affords proof positive that whatever he says may be relied on with implicit confidence. Hence the believer's constant preference of the declarations of the Word of God, to the most brilliant theories of man. It is true that the pride

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\* The remarks of a writer in the *Quarterly Review*, for April, 1836, No. CXI., contained in a note to the article on Buckland's *Bridge-water Treatise*, are well worth considering by all who, in the folly of their minds, are attempting to prove or corroborate the Word of God by the discoveries, real or pretended, of man. The note occurs at page 34.

of human reason is not thereby gratified; nay, is assailed in its tenderest part, by the deposition of its idol from the sovereign authority wherewith her votaries would invest her: but if pride be wounded, safety is ensured. The testimony of the superior, being brought to bear upon the discoveries of the inferior, things appear as they really are, occupying their proper positions, and preserving their due relative importance; and we are guided to the right conclusions by the light of heaven itself, instead of being liable to go astray continually by following after an *ignis fatuus* of our own imaginations.

Thus Mr. Barclay's system is not, like other theories of religion with which we are conversant, partly gold, but chiefly clay. On the contrary, of his leading principles it may with truth be averred—and of the fundamental tenets of how few besides can this be said?—that they are all gold.

Not the least curious and interesting circumstance connected with the following work, is the coincidence of many of its principles with those of the celebrated David Hume; that is, the most decided and successful assailant of religious scepticism is actually found fighting side by side with the prince of modern sceptics! How is this to be accounted for? Simply by the fact, that Barclay, taught from above, was enabled to discover in Hume an auxiliary—an unintentional one, I admit—of the Christian cause; and to turn a battery of arguments, originally intended for *its* destruction, against its besotted or treacherous allies. Hume, the acuteness of whose intellect no one acquainted with and able to appreciate his writings will venture to call in question, found no difficulty in making his way through the specious, but flimsy, argumentation of his ordinary antagonists. The Blairs, the Campbells, the Robertsons, of his time, could never succeed in fettering with their

green withes this Samson of infidelity. He laughed, and well he might, at every attempt of theirs *to prove the testimony of God, by the testimony of man*. Some of them produced very ingenious works\*—works which may well make the infidel stagger—but none of them produced any which could meet Hume's challenge. "Show me how you can demonstrate the truth of *superior* testimony, by testimony which is confessedly *inferior*," was still his bold, and, in so far as they were concerned, his triumphant outcry. At last Barclay arose. Rather, let me say, was raised up. He encumbered not himself with the armour of his predecessors, but went forth against this defier of the armies of the living God, with the sling and stone of revelation only. Admitting to Hume what is true, that *divine testimony* can never be proved by *that which is human*,† and that *human testimony* consequently can never conduct to *faith*; and yet proposing *the certainty of the truth of divine testimony* possessed by himself and his fellow-believers as *a matter of fact*; he smote this Goliath right on the forehead. A fact, every philosopher, indeed every man of sense, knows, is at any time better than ten thousand negative reasonings. "In proclaiming to you our conviction of the existence and truth of divine testimony, and this as having been produced in our minds by its own intrinsic light and evidence, we tell you a fact," said Barclay; "get over it

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\* Such as Dr. George Campbell's work on *Miracles*.

† *Positively*, is here meant: for it was admitted by Barclay, and it is admitted by the writer of this preface, that *negatively* the arguments of the infidel may be confuted, and he himself driven into a corner, by human statements and reasonings. But *confutation* is not *conviction*: and, therefore, the principle of infidelity, how oft soever its objections may be refuted, is nevertheless, hydra-like, continually devising new ones, to give employment to its assailants. There is no way of slaying the monster; or, dropping the figure, there is nothing capable of carrying conviction home to the mind *positively*, except divine testimony.

as you best can. All that you are entitled to say, is, 'that you yourself have never experienced any such conviction, and that consequently you are totally unable to conceive how it can take place,'—and we believe you. Nay, we go farther. We admire as well your candour in making the admission which you do, as your acuteness in detecting the fallacy of all attempts to satisfy you by mere human reasonings. But, at the same time, you must be aware, that the argument which you allege—the only argument, indeed, which you can allege, in opposition to our assertion—is really worth nothing. All that you can say, is, 'that you have never had divine truth revealed to you.' What is this *negative statement*, and what are the *negative reasonings* founded upon it, when brought to bear against a *positive fact*?—We proclaim to you, that we have been enlightened by divine testimony. And we proclaim to you farther, that, in the light of divine testimony itself, we have discovered the perfect consistency subsisting between it and all that is correct in the observations and reasonings of man. In other words, in the light of the *superior*, we have been enabled to see and appreciate what is true in the *inferior*. Now, what can you say to this? The only answer which Hume and his followers, aided and abetted by the majority of nominal Christians, have ever returned to Barclay, is a sneer—and a sneer has passed current with them for a conclusive argument.

It must be allowed, that our author does sometimes express himself, with regard to his religious opponents, in terms of severity, which, at first sight, appear to be uncalled for and unjustifiable. This was in part the offspring of his keen and ardent temperament. A man like him is not to be tried by the standard of cool and calculating men of the world. He had the soul of a seraph, and no wonder, therefore, if he glowed like one.



I know no human being, indeed, in whom, judging from his writings, and from what I have learned of him otherwise, the

Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn,\*

formed more decidedly the very staple of his mental constitution and ordinary converse. Feeling intensely, he expressed himself intently. Can we be astonished to find such a man occasionally transgressing in language the bounds of conventional decorum?

But Barclay needs not this apology. He spoke strongly of perverters of the gospel, because strong language was, by the circumstances of the case, required. His mind had too deep a sense of the value and importance of divine things, to allow him to measure his words, concerning those who, under the garb and mask of religion, were trifling with the eternal interests of their fellow-men, by the tame and compromising rules of ordinary courtesy. A well-known heathen poet, when defending his satirical treatment of certain base characters belonging to his time and country, claims a perfect right to speak of the vicious and profligate in the severest terms which their conduct might deserve, and the language in which he wrote might afford:—

Cur non

Ponderibus modulisque suis ratio utitur? Ac, res

Ut quæque est, ita supplicii delicta coercet? †

And shall we deny to the Christian, who is exposing tricks and subterfuges by which the salvation of men is endangered, a privilege which we willingly concede to him whose business it is to bring to light artifices of a much less perilous description? But the writer of *Without Faith, Without God*, had far higher authority to

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\* Gray's *Ode on the Progress of Poesy*.

† Horat. *Sat. Lib. 1. Sat. 3. 11, 77-79.*

plead, in vindication of himself, than that of Horace. When the meek and lowly Son of God was addressing the religious tricksters of his time, he hesitated not to say to them, *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?\** Dealing with similar characters, and possessed of no small portion of his Divine Master's spirit, shall we blame our author for having occasionally had recourse to similar language?

Some may be ready to allege in opposition to Mr. Barclay's system—and this by them may be regarded as the weightiest of all arguments against it—that, if true, the number of believers of the gospel must be extremely small indeed; but a mere sprinkling; one here and another there. And what, pray, though the charge should be admitted? Is the conclusion imputed at variance with Scripture? It militates, to be sure, against the principle upon which all religious establishments are founded; and it is scarcely reconcilable with the Quixotic expectations of those who anticipate, during the subsistence of this present world, a conversion of the whole, or at all events of a majority of the human race, to the belief of the truth. But what if it shall be found to square exactly with the inspired record? The highest of all authorities hath declared, that “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be which find it.”† And elsewhere he has addressed his disciples as “*a little flock,*” to whom it is their “Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom.”‡ Are Mr. Barclay's antagonists prepared to call in question the truth of these statements?

A few remarks with regard to the history of the following work, and some points which, unless adverted to

\* Matt. xxiii. 33.

† Matt. vii. 14.

‡ Luke xii. 32.

and explained, might create difficulty to the reader, will conclude this preface.

Mr. Barclay's *Without Faith, Without God*, seems to have been the result of several concurring causes. The ground-work of its leading doctrines was, I have reason to think, laid during the time when he was prosecuting his studies at the University of St. Andrew's. The prelections of the learned and persecuted professor Campbell,\* and the controversy excited among the clergy of the Church of Scotland by that gentleman's once famous but now almost forgotten treatises,† seem to have first suggested to the youthful mind of our author the incompatibility of the claims of *Revelation* with those of what is commonly denominated *Natural Religion*, or *notices of God supposed to exist in the conscience independently of the Divine Word*. What Campbell began, the dispute between Hervey, the author of the *Meditations among the Tombs*, and Robert Sandeman, carried on. John Barclay had not quite finished his academical career when, in 1756 and 1757, the *Dialogues of Theron and Aspasio* of the former, and the *Letters on these Dialogues* of the latter made their appearance. To the astonishment of our author, some of the leading principles of *Natural Religion*, which he had heard so ably confuted by his theological preceptor, were found by him to be assumed and proceeded on, as de-

\* Not George Campbell, the translator of the Gospels, who was principal of one of the Aberdeen Colleges; but Archibald Campbell, a man of equal, if not superior, acuteness to his talented namesake.

† Such as his *Enquiry into the Original of Moral Virtue*; Edinburgh, 1733; *Remarks on some books published by him, with his Explications*; Edinburgh, 1735; *Farther Explications, &c.*; Edinburgh, 1736; *The Necessity of Revelation; or, An Inquiry into the Extent of Human Powers, with respect to Matters of Religion, especially the Being of God, and the Immortality of the Soul*. London, 1739, octavo.

monstrably true, by both parties in this new controversy. A more searching examination of the whole subject, on his part, was the result. At last, to his God-taught mind stood out fully and gloriously those sweet, satisfying, and scripturally-consistent views of divine truth which he has developed in the following pages, as well as in his masterly treatise on *The Assurance of Faith*.\* The first edition of his *Without Faith, Without God*, appeared in 1769. He was then engaged in proclaiming *the completeness of Christ's work, the perfect peace which, wherever believed in, that work speaks to the conscience, and the all-sufficiency of divine revelation*, in connection with the Established Church of Scotland, to the inhabitants of the parish of Fettercairn, near Montrose. Views so decidedly scriptural as those which he had espoused, and zeal so great as that with which he supported them, were not likely to recommend him to lukewarm and time-serving churchmen. Accordingly, after enduring many annoyances from his ecclesiastical superiors, he was finally cast out of the communion of the Scottish Establishment, by a sentence of the General Assembly, pronounced in May, 1773.† His reward from men was thus an enrolment among the number of those illustrious *αποσυναγωγοι*,‡ who can look up to the Son of God himself as their pattern and head:§ his reward from his

\* A third edition of this treatise appeared at Glasgow, in 1825.

† He was *virtually*, although not *formally*, cast out. His certificate had been refused by the Presbytery of Fordoun, whose decision had been confirmed by the Synod of Angus and Mearns. The General Assembly, by ratifying the sentence of the inferior judicatories, rendered it impossible for him thenceforward to officiate in the pulpits of the Established Church. All this usage he encountered on doctrinal grounds alone; for his moral character was unimpeached and unimpeachable.

‡ See John ix. 22, compared with verses 35th and 36th.

§ Matt. xxi. 37-42.

Heavenly Father was to have many seals of his ministry while alive; and, now that he is dead, to appear in his works as the only writer on the subject of divinity who, up to his time, had made any *real* advance on the doctrines of the Reformation.\*

In the following work there occur frequent allusions to the Scotch system of education, as it existed in Mr. Barclay's time—I may say, as it has come down to our own. A few sentences will explain these. The practice in the northern part of the island has from time immemorial been, to send young persons of respectable rank in society, especially those who are destined for the learned professions, to one or other of those grammar schools which are to be found existing in all the larger towns. After spending four or five years there, in the acquisition of Latin and the elements of Greek, they are removed to college. The *curriculum*, or course of study, in our northern universities, is generally—first year, Latin; second, Greek; third, Logic; fourth, Ethics, or Moral Philosophy, and fifth, Physics, or Natural Philosophy. When he has finished his fifth year, the student is prepared to undergo the examination for his Master's Degree; and may then direct his attention to the particular course of professional study which his destination in life may require. To what is taught in the Scotch Gymnasias, especially in the classes of Logic and Metaphysics, there are numerous references by Mr. Barclay. The impure tendency of classical literature, and the sceptical nature of the prelections delivered from many

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\* Short narratives of Mr. Barclay's life are prefixed to the edition of the *Assurance of Faith*, published at Glasgow in 1825; and to an edition of his *Essay on the Psalms*, with the Scotch version annexed, which appeared at Edinburgh in 1826. In *The Lives of Illustrious Scotsmen*, recently published, there is a brief but interesting account of him.

chairs to the future candidates for the gospel ministry, are in the following pages vividly, and, alas! but too truly, depicted. No one, but a person who had passed through the scenes of which he speaks, could have delineated them as Barclay has done. Truly could he say,

Queque ipse miserrima vidi,  
Et quorum pars magna fui.

The first edition of the following work was, as has been already stated, published in 1769. That from which the present one is printed came out in 1776. I am not aware that any has made its appearance since.

Not deeming myself justified in tampering with the writings of another, what follows has been copied, almost *verbatim*, from the edition last mentioned. A word here and there may have been altered; but no change has been made except where absolute necessity seemed to require it: nor have I in any case done more than omit a superfluous preposition or conjunction, and once or twice introduce a synonymous phrase for one which had been employed by the author. Several corrections have been made in the punctuation, and this solely with a view to perspicuity. More, I am satisfied, might have been done with advantage; but such is the peculiar structure of Mr. Barclay's sentences, that a different pointing would, in many cases, have required a complete re-casting of the phraseology. This I could by no means bring my mind to. What I have shrunk from, some bolder editor may attempt and execute.

I have only to add, that Mr. Barclay died suddenly at Edinburgh, in July, 1798.

D. THOM.

LIVERPOOL, *October 31, 1836.*

## WITHOUT FAITH, WITHOUT GOD.

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"HE THAT COMETH TO GOD MUST BELIEVE THAT HE IS."

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### INTRODUCTION.

HOLD fast! Christian, hold fast! your all is at stake. Let no man rob you of your God. Your God is your all. Without your God, though you were a king this day, you were poor. Bereaved of your God, you were bereaved indeed. If they take away your God from you, what have you more?

Hear, for it is Jehovah that calls; "Hear, O Israel, I am the Lord thy God. I am one. There is none besides me. My glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Little children, keep yourselves in the love of God. Keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

For why should they spoil you with their vain philosophy, and beguile you with enticing words, to the entangling of your hearts withal among the briers and thorns of their vain babblings and oppositions of science, falsely so called; which some professing, have erred concerning the faith, and drowned themselves, with their deluded followers, in perdition.

But that your hearts, beloved of God, may be established in the present truth, and secured against the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness of them who lie in wait to deceive you, with regard to that grand indispensable and prime article, *the Being of God*, which is undoubtedly the foundation of all religion, pure and undefiled, cou-

sider and bear about with you the meaning of the Holy Ghost in these words, *He that cometh to God must believe that he is.*——

#### THE WORDS EXPLAINED.

Now when a person is spoken of as coming to God, no man can be so foolish and absurd as to think of bodily motion from one place to another: for God, you know, is equally and essentially present in all places and times; neither can you go any whither from his presence, nor approach nearer to him, throw your bodies into what kind soever of motions or postures you please.

So, when we hear such expressions as these, looking to God; coming to him; drawing near to him; flying to him for refuge; cleaving to him; running to him as to a high tower; hiding one's self under his wings; taking hold of him; leaning, depending, and resting upon him; and other like forms of speech, we all know they are not literally to be understood of bodily motions or actions; but only as figurative resemblances and signs, which the Holy Ghost hath chosen, to express his own invisible workings in the spirits of those men whom he maketh willing in the day of his power, working in them both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

Thus, we may condescend upon an instance or two; "Looking to the Lord, fleeing from the wrath to come, and laying hold upon eternal life," we find explained by "believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may be saved."

And as to the meaning of that particular expression, "coming to God," the Lord hath spoken full to the point, John vi. 35, where, comparing himself to bread and water, affording eternal life to the eater and drinker thereof, he says, "he that *cometh to me* shall never hunger, and he that *believeth on me* shall never thirst."



Now, surely we come to him as the bread of life in the same manner that we come to him as the water of life. And here you may perceive, with your own eyes, that we come to him and receive everlasting life, when we believe him, or believe on him, for to *believe him*, and to *believe on him*, do signify precisely the same thing ; as is evident from John iii. 36. “ He that *believeth on the Son*, hath everlasting life ; and he that *believeth not the Son*, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Hence, it is evident, that *coming to God* signifies to *believe God* ; and in the text it signifies also to approach God in worship under the influence of this faith : so that the meaning of the sentence will appear to be as if it had been written, “ He that really worshippeth God must ” of necessity “ believe that he is.”

The word *believing*, among men, plainly signifies, “ Our holding of a thing for truth which is told us by another person, merely on account of that person’s credibility or authority.” If the authority or testimony on which we believe be only human, as when a man declares a matter to his neighbour, the belief arising from thence is merely *a human* belief, credit, persuasion, assurance, faith, or inward evidence, communicated to the mind by means of the outward testimony : for all these are only different names for the same thing, which is the belief of a truth or a falsehood, according to the truth or falsehood of the testimony supporting it.

When we believe on the testimony or authority of God, this is *divine* faith, assurance, or certainty, in which there can be no falsehood ; but only all pure truth, because God himself is the Testifier, with whom it is impossible to lie or deceive.

Now, it having pleased the Father of spirits, who knows the frame of every heart which he hath created, to speak to us of the heavenly and spiritual things in

the forms of human language, which he himself hath given us for the mutual communication of our thoughts, and which we naturally understand; when he useth any of our well-known terms, such as *believing* and *hoping*, for instance, thereby to discover to our apprehensions his own hitherto and otherwise unknown and eternal truths, it is manifest he would have us to take up his meaning in these words, according to their plain natural use and common acceptance, in the ordinary course of life and conversation among mankind. Otherwise, we behoved to say (which God forbid!) that the Spirit of truth deceiveth and mocketh the world, when he crieth aloud by the mouth of all his inspired ambassadors, and saith to every creature under heaven, "Be it known to you, O men, that through Jesus Christ is proclaimed to you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified—and saved. Except ye believe—ye shall die in your sins."

It is true, indeed, that though divine faith, considered in itself, resembles in all respects that which is human; yet it differs in these following peculiar and essential circumstances: for divine faith is not only distinguished from human, as said before, because it rests upon the testimony and authority of God alone, but also because God, the author of the testimony, is equally and solely, in his own special manner, the author of its manifestation as a truth in the conscience of the believer; and also, because it amounts to absolute certainty of assurance, without any mixture of doubt, in the nature of it, being universally, wherever it is, without any exception, distinguished from a mere probability, or matter of doubtful disputation, by having God himself manifested in the conscience for its evidence. In proof whereof it is written, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee, but my Father which is in heaven—We believe

and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God—I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus—If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater—Ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things—I have not written to you because you know not the truth ; but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth—he that believeth hath the witness in himself—faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Here then, we may rest upon it, that divine faith does not come by human researches and reasonings ; unless it should be said that these and the word of God are the same thing, which were a direct contradiction to the Holy Ghost, as shall afterwards more fully appear.

Wherefore let every man look to the ground of his faith, and see if it be the very record of God, imprinted by the finger of God upon his heart, and if his heart continue to bear a pure impression of the words of truth. For the truth of God, believed in the heart, bears the same relation and proportion to the truth declared in the Word of God, as the figure and graving upon the wax to the same figure and graving upon the impressing seal.

Thus, O believers, God, even your Father, fulfils his covenant, manifests himself, and writes his laws of love in your hearts, and seals you by his Spirit to the day of redemption. So God hath spoken, and so have ye believed, that your faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the demonstration of the Holy Ghost, and the power of God. Even as an apostle hath said (and all believers have like precious and equally honourable faith with the apostles), “ I know whom I have believed. And he that believeth God hath set to his seal that God is true.” Thus, unless he hath set his seal to a blank, to a nothing, and believeth not that which in very deed he believeth, and knoweth not what he actually knoweth, we must be

allowed to say, that every believer of God hath in himself, and not in another—which were impossible—undoubted certainty, and that by means of the divine testimony, of that which he believeth, the reality whereof, while he believes it, he can no more hesitate about than he can hesitate about the reality of his own existence. “For he that cometh to God must believe,” or be assured on the testimony of God himself, “that he,” this God whom he hath believed, “is,” even what he hath declared himself in his word to be.

#### THE METHOD.

For the further illustration of these words, that we may have in readiness to stop the mouths of gainsayers, for they are many, and an answer to give every one that asketh us concerning our faith in the *Being of God*, let us now, having explained in some measure the meaning of *coming* and *believing*, through the directing Spirit of grace and truth upon our hearts, proceed, with meekness and wisdom, boldly to search the Scriptures, that we may receive nothing upon trust but only that which cometh out of the mouth of God, and see with our own eyes, what it hath pleased him to discover of himself by the light of his own everlasting Word of revelation, and so have all our zeal according to knowledge: observing, as we go along, the use of the doctrine, and the utter impossibility of our having this knowledge of God, more or less, in any other way but in the revelation which cometh from God himself: which revelation to us is wholly contained in his Word; and then, after confirming the point by answering the objections of adversaries, conclude with a general improvement of the whole subject.

May the Lord help, and, by his own good hand upon us, safely conduct and pilot us through all those hidden

or manifest rocks of perdition, whereupon so many thousands who have gone before us, of professed inquirers into the Divine Nature, have so miserably struck and foundered. Would to God we may reap the advantage of their ruin ! For why should not the remains of their wreck, so to speak, floating as it were before our eyes in the history of all ages, serve as fire-beacons to prevent the ruin of us and those who shall come after : “ For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain.”

## THE SUBJECT OPENED UP.

When we speak therefore of the *Being of God*, let us beware of deceiving ourselves with a name without an idea, a shadow without a substance, a sound without sense ; with the babblings of an echo, or the prattlings of a parrot, without the understanding of the heart ; as those men most assuredly do who talk so seriously to us of (that mysterious jargon, or rather incomprehensible—nothing) a First underived Cause, Being, or Existence, separate from the revealed, and only true character, attributes, properties, or perfections of the Divine Nature—which being only one, and not manifold, can admit only of one, and by no means of a manifold character ; so that, if the revealed character of God be the true one, those who miss that miss God and his character altogether : which is a point to be proved against all opposers, who, like the Babylonish king, in the pride of their foolishness, which they would have you to receive as the very soul and perfection of wisdom, set up to themselves a monstrous image of their own creation and garnishing, which they fondly call *God* ; and are also absurd enough to expect that all tongues, nations, kindreds, and languages should fall down and worship it, under the pain of being cast, as atheists and rebels against

reason, and it, and them, into the fiery furnace of their indignation.

How Antichrist lavishes out all the treasures of his own in-bred falsehood and vain conceit, to dress forth with all the whorish arts and trickery of an apostate church, a most hideous abomination of an idol! And lo, how they bow down unto it, and humble themselves before it! What brutish doings, to worship a devil instead of God! But, leaving general declamation, will the Holy Ghost, who leadeth into all truth, say Amen, think you, to the following particulars (by whomsoever uttered makes no difference), which contain the substance of what we now propose, with God's help, to impugn, as being, in our view, both by reason of their own nature, and by reason of their unavoidable consequences, as experience daily shows, of the most dreadful tendency and operation on all the subsequent articles of religion. We need not quote authors, Protestant or Popish, for they may be all comprehended under one name, even *Legion*, for they are many.

Recollect a moment. How often have you heard it in the most confident manner asserted, "That the knowledge of God is (what they call) an *innate idea*; that is to say, a notion naturally implanted, and growing up in the soul from the moment of its creation, or an original impression of the *Being of God* made by the hand of God himself, without the Word, upon the conscience, and even wrought into the very frame and essence of every human creature, which, by all the efforts of wickedness, they are never afterwards able to erase or obliterate; so that they are no more able to doubt of God's Being than of their own; especially when the books of creation and Providence are so openly displayed before them; and he who runs cannot but read the being of God, independent of, and antecedent to, all revelation: wherefore (pro-

ceed they), there neither is, nor can be such a thing as an absolute atheist, at least in heart, to be found in the world." And yet the fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.* But, if you believe them, "All nations in the world, and every individual of those nations endowed with a reasonable soul, when arrived at the age of manhood, both know and acknowledge that God is, and that merely by the force of their own unassisted reason, or (according to others) common sense, sensation, feeling, or intuition (as they will have it) absolutely of themselves, without any manner of revelation from without, or faith which comes by hearing." In opposition to all which, it is presumed that——

The whole testimony of Jesus, from Moses to John, will prove such doctrines (whatever the authors may be) no friends to the eternal and ever-blessed Godhead, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, who are One.

#### DOCTRINES, AND NOT MEN, ATTACKED.

But, let the authors alone: we have only to do with the doctrines: the men must stand or fall to their own Master, who knows how to judge his creatures, making what difference he pleases, as it is written, "He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth."

But, though it be his to judge souls, it is ours to observe and judge, according to his Word, of fruits or doctrines of men who come in his name; or if we do not, from a pretence of delicacy, inability, or whatever else, we disobey our Lord. And here, before the Lord, I declare I have no quarrel with any man alive or dead, nor do I mean to hurt any one. Sorry, however, to find many, otherwise eminent persons, advancing the things I am obliged in conscience to oppose; with such weapons as the Scripture affords me, unequal as I am to

the combat, I am compelled by the force of conviction to essay it, which I ought and hope to do without the dread of any fellow-creature's name or power, however great.

It was Aaron, the Lord's high priest, that made the golden calf.

If I mention a few names of the living or dead, it is out of necessity, that I may not be understood to bring a false accusation, nor charge upon the innocent the faults of other men. Thus, I have made bold to mention Dr. Clarke, whose name and argument generally go together—and his very name, with many, gives incredible weight to his doctrines in more points than one, full of the most consummate absurdities and blasphemies.

Moreover, it is impossible to point out many things, or it were to no purpose, without distinguishing the author, who to us has no existence but in his works; and when we say, "such an author," we mean no personal reflection against any man's name or memory, but merely to show what he has advanced; which, when advanced, is every man's property, and must be examined by the Word, and declared true or false; otherwise we hold not God, but the persons of men in admiration; which is a most universal and crying abomination! Lord, deliver me and all whom thou lovest from falling into such a horrible gulf! "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch: for every plant which our heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."

#### AN ADDRESS TO THE READERS.

To the law, therefore, and to the testimony, O noble Bereans! search the Scriptures, and see if these things be so or not.

As Moses addressed the host after the sin of the golden



calf, methinks I hear, or seem to hear, the only true God and eternal Life calling to his followers aloud—"Who is on the Lord's side? Who? Let him come over to me—Let him stand forth with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, in his hand—let him run along the camp from gate to gate, and sanctify himself through the truth, every man upon his father, and upon his brother, and upon his child, yea, every man upon himself, and cut off without mercy every cause of offence in the matter of a strange god; let not thine eye spare, but remember the word of the Lord, 'If thy right hand offend thee (or cause thee to offend), cut it off, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than,' having all thy unmortified members about thee, 'to be cast into hell fire?'"

Why, O why, ye good soldiers of Jesus Christ, who is the Captain of your salvation, whose Spirit reigns within you, tell your God, if your hearts will allow you, why any *Achan*, any *Agag* should remain unslain in all your camp? why any strange god should possess a corner with the Lord in all your heart? Strange gods, be assured, wherever they are harboured, will draw down vengeance and fire from the Lord out of heaven upon themselves and their harbourers: for our God is a jealous God, and a consuming fire.

Away, away therefore with strange gods! and so away with all the fear of wrath! If the following questions shall be duly determined by the authority and power of the Holy Ghost in our consciences, we shall be in danger neither of—wrath nor fear; for we shall be delivered from strange gods.

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## QUESTIONS

## CONCERNING THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD;

WITH

SCRIPTURAL ANSWERS, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND USES, SUBJOINED.

## THE NECESSITY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

Q. 1. *Can any person escape from the wrath to come, and attain to eternal life, without the knowledge of God?*

A. No. For it is written, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on *them that know not God*, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you," say the apostles, "was believed) in that day."

*Observe.* Those who know not God are described by their not obeying the gospel; the obeying of the gospel of God being a necessary consequence of the knowing of God; without which there remaineth no salvation, but a certain fearful looking for of wrath and fiery indignation to devour the adversaries. *Observe also,* That believing of the apostles' testimony is opposed to the not knowing of God; so that those who believe God's testimony know God, and are glorified through their knowledge of God; those who believe not that testimony know not God, and are destroyed through their ignorance of God.—Thy knowledge, therefore, of God, is evidently the hinge of thy eternal state; a hinge visible to all

men who believe the revealed counsels of God : for “ as many as were ordained to eternal life believed the gospel, and the Lord added to the assembly daily ” (and through the knowledge of himself justified) “ such as should be saved.”

*Note.* By the knowledge of God we do not mean knowledge equal to his boundless perfections as he is in himself, and known only to himself ; in which sense he is equally incomprehensible by all his creatures, by the angel of light, and by the worm of the earth, for “ who by searching can find out God ? Who can find out the Almighty to perfection ? Behold, he is great, and we know him not ; and the thunder of his power who can understand ? ” But what we are concerned with, is, how to know and trace out those discoveries, which it hath pleased God himself to favour us with, of his own eternal Godhead, attributes, properties, qualities, or perfections ; with his complex character and invariable manner of acting, with respect to his creatures, resulting from the whole : without which knowledge there is nothing but utter darkness, where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

#### HOW WE COME BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

*Q. 2. Do men come by this knowledge of God without any foregoing train of reasonings to introduce it, merely by a sovereign act of God's own power, revealing himself in their hearts ?*

*A.* Yes : for is it not written, “ God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” Unless then we

shall say, that the darkness reasoned itself into light, we dare not say, that men can reason themselves into the knowledge of God: for, to them who know God, it is elsewhere expressly said, "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as the children of the light and of the day—and howbeit when ye knew not God, ye did service to them which by nature are no gods; but now that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements" of this world, "whereunto ye desire to be in bondage?—Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free."

*Note.* Those Gentiles to whom the apostle speaks, before their receiving of the gospel, are said not to have known God; howbeit they acknowledged and served those which by nature were no gods.

Except then our adversaries will take upon them to prove, that *no gods* are *God*—except, I say, they will take upon them to prove *this*, and make good their point, they must hold us excused, if we still believe God rather than them, and confess that neither these, nor (consequently) any other people in the world, either did, or could, or can know God at all, until their conversion and belief of the gospel.

#### UNITY ESSENTIAL TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

Q. 3. *Is it absolutely essential to the knowledge of God, to believe that there is but one God, so that there can be no knowledge of God without this belief, that God is one?*

A. Yes: for God must be true, who says, "I am the Lord, and there is none else. There is no God besides me." And again, by the mouth of his servant, "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all

things that are therein, the sea and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and all the host of heaven worshippeth thee.”

Here I cannot hinder my flesh from shuddering, and my bones from shaking, at the strange assertions of those men who are perpetually ringing in your ears, “How the heathens of old, and all pagan nations to this day, believe and acknowledge some great and invisible Power or Being, Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor; which Being,” say they, “is none other but God, whom they all adore.” And these are all produced as incontestable evidences of the universal knowledge of God.

Strange! according to such men, a poor blinded idolater happening, some way or other, to meet with the above fine address in Nehemiah’s prayer to the most high God, and applying it, after the manner of his own blinded heart, to Jupiter the king, or to Juno his wife, the queen of heaven, would be as good a demonstration, that the same idolater knew and worshipped the one true God, as that the holy man of God did so; or the Indians praying to the devil, that he would not wound or kill them, would be as sure an evidence, that the Indians believed and worshipped God, as that any of the saints do, when they ascribe to God his own prerogatives of wounding and healing, killing and making alive! So it seems, provided a man but devoutly worship somewhat, suppose a devil, and call that same devil whom he worships, God, “It would,” according to some of our antagonists, “be overturning all the foundations of God’s judgment, holiness, and good behaviour among mankind, to hold that man for an atheist, that is, a person without God.” For why—what shall we say? a devil is a God! and better such a God, no doubt, than none at all! For how could the world be governed, or our adversaries’ argument and honour be maintained, if

the devil were not admitted for a god? And verily a god he is, even the god of this world, "the spirit that ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience.—Cry aloud, and spare not; for he is a god!" 1 Kings xviii. 27; 1 Cor. x. 20.

But let us return to the consideration of God his being One: Thus it is written, "That men may know that thou, whose name is *Jehovah*, art the most high God over all the earth—Know ye, that the Lord he is the God—it is he that made us—Who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy name, O Lord; for thou only art holy—But it is the same God that worketh all in all—For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

Now, pray *remark*, that to call upon the Lord, and to call upon an idol, are two different things; as different as the Lord and an idol. Another necessary conclusion from all those passages, which, with innumerable others, agree in proving God to be One, and only One, is, that no nation or person whatsoever, acknowledging a plurality of gods, hath the knowledge of the One God at all: for it is not more certain, that one is but one, than that the notion of One God absolutely excludes the being of more gods than one; and the notion of more gods than one absolutely excludes the being of One God; these two ideas being in their own nature really incompatible things, which can by no means be conceived as existing together.

Moreover, the One God hath declared, that there are no such things in being, as subordinate or lower kinds of gods by nature.

Hence it is equally evident, that every nation under heaven, spoken of by Moses and all the prophets, with every idolater among the Jews, and every person since those days, who did not know and acknowledge the One only living and true God for God alone, were all

rank atheists, not only in heart, but in profession also; as they universally acknowledged and worshipped, not only things of another character and quality, but also in number more gods than one; as the One God hath testified, saying, "Hath a nation changed her gods, which yet are no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit—Pass over to the isles of the Gentiles, and see, and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing: for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the Fountain of living waters, and they have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water—Can any of the gods of the heathens give rain? Let them do good, or do evil, that we may know them, and confess unto them."

So all these had gods many; and therefore, none of them had the true God; consequently, their gods, whom they called such, were not God. "But to us there is but One God." His way is also one; and all we have to do in time and eternity is to know, love, worship, serve, adore, and enjoy this one God alone, as God and our God, in heart, in lip, in life, faithfully and fervently without intermission.

#### THREE PERSONS OR NO GOD.

Q. 4. *Is it not one essential ingredient in the knowledge of God, without which there can be no knowledge of God, to believe that in this one God there are Three Persons, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that these Three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power, and glory?*

A. Yes: for so it is written, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, and the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One—Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,

of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen." Thus it appears, that the Trinity in Unity is included in the idea of God; and, God being one, that these three are equal in substance, power, and glory. And so, accordingly, the scriptures universally ascribe the same attributes, words, and works of the one Jehovah, equally to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Now, it is allowed on all hands, that the idea of Trinity, in the unity of the Godhead, is a matter of pure revelation; even an idea which could never have entered into the heart of man, but by means of the word alone; but the idea of Trinity being necessarily implied, if the testimony of God be true, in the idea of God, they are plainly condemned of themselves, and condemned of God, who maintain, that we can attain to the knowledge of God by some other means, besides the word of revelation: seeing God has declared, and they themselves allow, that the Trinity cannot be known, but by that word; and if the Trinity is not known, God is not known; for God is that Trinity, and that Trinity is God, the one Lord or Jehovah.

Where are now your pretended investigations, and boasted demonstrations of the *Being of God*; wherein ye have left out the distinct personality of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? Go, ye wise men in your own conceit, ye scribes and disputers of this world, who by all your wisdom have not known God, and learn to become fools for Christ's sake, that ye may be wise to salvation; and confess to your own shame, and God's glory, the foolishness of your wisdom, when you thought you had found out God without finding out the Father, or the Father without the Son, or the Father and Son without the Spirit.



How vain man would be wise, wise even about God, yea, even wise without what is written! No doubt, ye are the people! and wisdom shall die with you! in the compass of your enlarged hearts, ye can comprehend what ye never found out, and find out what ye yourselves allow can only be known by the revelation which cometh from God himself! Such, all men allow, is the doctrine of the Trinity.

So the doctrine of the Trinity stands or falls with the doctrine maintained in this essay. A point to be considered this by all the advocates for the natural knowledge of God, who yet do not mean to renounce the Son and the Spirit; which if they do, they renounce the Father also. What gross inconsistency! to pretend you hold the conclusion, while ye destroy and deny the premises! to pretend you uphold the superstructure, when you blow up the foundations! you may defy anti-christ, with all hell, to overmatch your absurdity and falsehood, in pretending to hold these three points together.

1. That there is a Trinity of persons in the one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

2. That this matter of Trinity is a matter of pure revelation, and impossible to be known otherwise.

3. That, at the same time you are able to attain, and have attained, to the knowledge of that same God, without the revelation of God, and consequently without the knowledge of the Trinity; which Trinity is not only essential to, but even the whole (so to speak) of that very Godhead which you pretend to know. How hard it is to knit those points together will farther appear in the sequel.

THEY ARE ATHEISTS, ANTICHRISTS, AND LIARS, WHO DENY  
THE SON.

Q. 5. *Does not the Scripture, in express terms, hold them out for atheists, that is, persons who deny God, antichrists, and liars against God, who do not know and acknowledge, but deny the Son; and do they not also deny the Spirit, and, consequently, the Father also?*

A. Yes. For it is written, "That all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father, which sent him.—Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.—Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also."

Now it appears from the whole scripture, and these contexts in particular, that we cannot have the knowledge of the Father, nor of the Son, in any other way but by the knowledge or belief of their own word or testimony concerning themselves, dwelling in us; by which we continue in the fellowship of the Father and of the Son, and without which we are in no fellowship, as we are in no knowledge of the Father and of the Son. For "Christ dwelleth in the hearts of his saints by faith—Behold he stands at the door and knocks, if any man hear his voice, and open to him, he comes in and sups with him and he with him.—And Jesus said, If a man love me he will keep my words: and my Father

will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him. Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall abide in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father. And even as the anointing hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

What shameless assertors, then, are those men who affirm, that a person may and does attain to the knowledge of God without the word of revelation; that is, though he attain not to the knowledge of the Son, which is attainable only by means of revelation! and if one know not the Son, the Holy Ghost stands good for it, you see, that he knows not the Father; nor (by the same consequence) does he know the Holy Ghost himself. What God is that, pray, which they talk of knowing, the knowledge of whom is neither the knowledge of the Son, nor of the Father, nor of the Holy Ghost? Is there indeed any other God but these Three, who are One?

How remarkable to this purpose is that declaration of the apostle, that the devil himself is the god of those men from whose view he has hid the gospel, even the knowledge of the glory of God, shining in the face, or rather person (*προσωπον*) of Jesus! O the energy of that Spirit who ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience! What need have we of this inscription on our hearts, "Avoid thee, Satan!" Beware of men, who lie in wait to deceive, deceiving and being deceived, who privily bring in damnable heresies among the people, even denying (or, which is the same thing, explaining away) the Lord that bought them, viz., the people.

Yet, evil though they be, let us wish them no worse than that the Lord would open their eyes, that they may see the Son, and know the Father: as it is written

from the mouth of the Son, "He that hath seen me, hath seen my Father—and if ye had known me, ye had known my Father also—for I and my Father are One."

As concerning the necessity of including the knowledge of the Spirit, as an essential in the idea of God, it is further proved thus from the Lord's words; "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

By the world here, who knoweth not the Spirit of truth, we are plainly to understand the whole multitude of unbelievers in the world, who are lying in wickedness, or rather, as the words may be rendered, *in the wicked one* (*ἐν τῷ πονήρῳ*), without God, without Christ, without hope in the world; whereby they are distinguished from believers, who are given to Christ out of the world; who are not of the world, though they be in the world, but are sanctified through the belief of the truth, justified and washed in the name of the Lord Jesus, and through the Spirit of their God, given to them, and dwelling in them; as it is written, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?"

Hence, upon the whole, we may perceive that all those men, of whatever name or profession, who believe not as the apostles of God have preached by the Holy Ghost, are evidently of the world, sensual, not having the Spirit; consequently, all their pretended knowledge of God, without the Spirit, and without the word, by what they call the mere light of nature, or, as they explain it, their reason, is a lie—and they in that respect are atheists, antichrists, and liars against God;

and it would be to become so ourselves, to call or think them anything else, than what the Holy Ghost hath called them, who hold it for a truth, that we, according to our present circumstances, under sin and misery in this world, can come to any knowledge of God at all, save by means of the Word alone, and that which is inseparably connected therewith, even the operation of the Spirit, opening the heart to understand the Scriptures; seeing it is in this way alone, as we have already proved, that we can have any knowledge of the Son, and of the Spirit, and of the Father, besides whom there is no God. All which, if the Lord will, shall more fully be evinced by the demonstration of the Holy Ghost, and the power of God; I mean by Scripture evidence, in the answers to the next and following questions.

FATHER AND SON REVEAL ONE ANOTHER.

Q. 6. *The knowledge of the Son being essential to the knowledge of God, and included in the knowledge of the Father, can any man come to the knowledge of the Son, save by the Father revealing him?*

A. No. For thus saith the Son, "No one knoweth the Son but the Father—No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." So it is evident, that, if any man has known the Father, he has been taught of the Father to believe also on the Son. Therefore, every one saying he knows the Father, without believing on the Son of the Father, is a liar, and the truth, even the knowledge of God, is not in him.

Q. 7. *The knowledge of the Father being essential to the knowledge of God, and included in the knowledge of the*

*Son, can any man come to the knowledge of the Father, who hath revealed the Son, save by the Son revealing to him the Father?*

A. No. For the Son saith, "All things are delivered to me of my Father. And no man knoweth who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him—Not that any man hath seen the Father at any time; but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh to the Father but by me." Again, it is written, "The Son is the Image of the invisible God—the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the express Image of his person."

Hence you may see how multitudes are proved atheists, persons, in fact, without the knowledge of God, even all your *deists* or *freethinkers*, as they affect to call themselves, your pretended pure natural-religion men, who profess to believe in God, but deny revelation, and count the Old and New Testaments no better than cunningly-devised fables, forged to keep the people in awe; as bugbears are used by nurses to frighten froward children into peace. To these you may add, all your rotten-hearted claimers of kindred with revelation, who seem, if we judge by the New Testament, to be the far greater number of professors in every sect or persuasion; who make a show of founding faith upon reason, and, as if such kind of props were needful, of shoring up the eternal truths of revelation with the hollow timbers of natural religion.

But, nevertheless, "the Foundation of God standeth sure. The Stone despised by the builders is made the Head-stone of the corner." Let those look to themselves who build with such untempered mortar, lest their destruction be like the bursting out of a wall upon them.

Can a greater insult be offered to the Son of God, than to maintain in his face, contrary to his express word, as the bulk of those called by his name most certainly do, that they can and do know the Father, that is, God, without the Son's declaration of him! O the energy of Satan on the hearts of men, to cause them to fix a lie upon the eternal Truth, under the cloak of doing honour to God! The eternal Truth verily says, "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." "No," say the sons of natural religion, "we know the Father, even God, without the revelation of the Son; and if we come to acknowledge the Son at all, or his revelation, it is because we ourselves have first known God, antecedently to, and independently of, the knowledge of the Son, and of his revelation of the Father: for all the belief of revelation is built upon that knowledge of God which every man has naturally in himself, and by which he is enabled and authorised to try, and so accordingly receive with approbation, or reject with contempt, every word pretending to proceed from the mouth of God, as Reason, absolute Reason, the supreme judge in all such matters, shall see cause to determine and pronounce." So have they said; and boldly is it said, but saith the Holy Ghost, "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD THE ONLY MEANS OF THIS  
KNOWLEDGE.

*Q. S. Since it is the Son who came forth from the bosom of the Father, that giveth, and only he that giveth, this knowledge of God to man, does he use any other means for conveying the same into the hearts but the Spirit and the Word? or is the natural man in a capacity to receive*

*this knowledge of God, and of his things, without the Spirit and the Word?*

A. No verily. For thus it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us" the apostles, and by us to them who have believed as we have preached, "by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man, which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now, we have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God—which things also we," the apostles, and our brethren who believe according to our word, "speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned: for he that is spiritual judgeth" or discerneth "all" those "things; yet he himself is judged," or discerned to be a discernor of those spiritual things, "by no" natural "man." "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

And saith the Lord to his disciples, "The Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." And in the prophets it is written, "Where there is no vision, the people perish—perish for lack of knowledge." And what knowledge, pray, is that, for lack of which



the people perish, but the knowledge of God? But of this in the next question.

But is not the whole stream of divine testimony full to the purpose of proving, that all the knowledge in this world, which man can receive concerning God, comes only from God himself, through the hands of Jesus Christ, by the ministration of the Holy Ghost in the Word?

If the passages here adduced, are alleged by our adversaries to be inconclusive, let them prove full to the point, that the attributes or perfections of God are none of the things of God—and that these, with the whole complex character of God, can be known, without knowing the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

#### THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE.

Q. 9. *Now, what is it to know God? or what do men receive in receiving the knowledge of God?*

A. Take the answer of this also from the mouth of him who is Truth itself: "Jesus spake and said—Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*" And the Holy Ghost beareth witness, that this request and word of the Lord is fulfilled in the comfortable experience of as many as have believed the gospel: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. **THIS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE.** Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

Here it is plainly intimated, that all those who have not the understanding given them to know him that is true, even the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, according to the doctrine of the apostles, as they are without eternal life for their portion, so they are without the true God as the object of their knowledge and worship; and without the former, because without the latter. What then do they know and worship instead of God, who is but One? *Ans.* The apostolic charge intimates, that idols are the object of their adorations—which is farther confirmed by the foregoing context, which shows, that the wicked one is their god, in whose power they are.

Hence, then, we have leave of God to call them, and we must consider them, as mere idolaters, and nothing better, even notorious atheists, who esteem any other thing as God, besides that one only living and true God, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; who by his own power revealeth himself, only through his Word, in the conscience of the saints, to their eternal life. So that eternal life, or the reverse of it, which is eternal death, is the consequence infallible, of our being right or wrong in this doctrine about the knowledge of God.

#### IDOLS NOTHING IN THE WORLD.

Q. 10. *Hath God created any such kind of beings, as those which are called idols? or, have idols, in themselves or otherwise, any kind of being whatsoever, save in the imagination or vain conceit of their deluded worshippers?*

A. No. For saith the apostle, “Now this I say, That an idol is nothing in the world.” What have they to answer for, then, who dress and deck out a dream, a fancy, a mere vagary of their own foolish hearts, with some one or other of the incommunicable attributes or peculiar properties of essential Truth, min-

gled with their own corruptions, every one according to his own taste, and call that ideal monster *God!* Hear their doom; except they be turned from the error of their way, it must be fulfilled; “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself, and did approve thy sin; but I will sharply rebuke thee, and set thy sins in order before thee. Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver—When thou criest let thy companies,” the idols, thy gods with whom thou hast been inflaming thyself, let them “deliver thee: but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shalt take them: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain.” Thus saith the Lord.

Q. 11. *By what general names does God call those same idols of theirs, their forged or counterfeit gods?*

A. By names expressing the highest contempt and indignation; such as *shame, abominations, dunghill gods, dungy gods, no gods, stocks, stones, vanities, devils*—“And their worshippers are like unto them.” Of this bear witness all the holy prophets and apostles.

Q. 12. *Whatever are the names, general or particular, of those same idols or no gods, acknowledged and worshipped in the world, is not the god or object which the idolaters (even all who know not the true God) worship, upon the matter, and in effect, the very same precise thing, god, or object, even the devil?*

A. Yes. “For the whole world,” that is, all who know not the true God, “lieth in wickedness,” in the power of Satan, who is “the god of this world, the spirit that ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience,” or unbelief—“whose glory is in their shame, whose end is destruction, who are enemies of the cross of Christ, who mind earthly things, and who are of their father

the devil, whose lusts they will do;" as the Holy Ghost hath abundantly testified.

"What say I then? that an idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But this I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are ye stronger than he?—He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad—No man can serve two masters; for either he will love the one, and hate the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other—Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Thus saith the Lord.

It is manifest from all this, that idolaters (even all who believe not in the Three who bear record in heaven, who are One), of every nation and denomination under the sun, whatever name of things, animate or inanimate, description, or definition, they give to that which they call their god, are, in the account of God, *worshippers of the devil*—and it is the devil who sets up those same abominations in their heart, and inclines them to adore himself under the very form and character of their respective idols as if it were the form and character of the true God, whose name, and some of whose attributes, that father of lies so subtilely and audaciously, through divine permission, for holy purposes, usurps and assumes to himself, whensoever he finds means to take away the word of God from the heart, whereby alone the true God can be known—and so the gospel of the knowledge of the glory of God is hid from the eyes of them who believe not—who, being blinded by Satan, are lost.

## IDOLATERS GIVE THE GLORY OF GOD TO DEVILS.

Q. 13. *Did the idolaters of old, whether Jewish or heathenish, universally ascribe to what they called their gods, several of those works and attributes which the Word of God assures us are only the peculiar works and attributes of the One true God?*

A. Yes. For they said of the *golden calf*, for instance, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." They sacrificed and prayed to Baal, saying, "Baal, Baal, hear us." They said to a stock, "thou hast begotten me," to a stone, "thou art my father." They poured out drink-offerings to the *king* and *queen* of heaven, with all their host, and thanked them for giving corn, wine, and oil, and making it well with them. For proof of this, witness all the prophets of the Lord; to whom you may add all the prophets of the hill and grove, with every idol-worshipper under the sun—all, all of the same spirit, then, and now; there is no difference, ancient and modern just the same!

Q. 14. *Since then they acknowledged and attributed to their idols many of the works and attributes that belong only to the True God, did they not really and truly know and worship the True God, under the name, form, and character of their own peculiar idols?*

A. The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of all his inspired servants, says, No. For it must be eternally and universally true what Jehovah saith: "I am God and there is none else. There is no God besides me. My glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images." Particularly and expressly the idolaters of Israel are upbraided, "Have ye offered *unto me* sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness, for the space of forty years, O house of Israel? but ye have borne the tabernacle of your Molech and Chium, your images, the

star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity—saith the Lord, whose name is the *God of Hosts*.” Here observe, The only judge of such matters, the Lord God, has given his verdict against such false worshippers. Their devotion is whoredom with idols; and whoredom with idols can never be the knowledge and love of God. What! was it indeed the *golden calf*, because the idolaters lied, and said so, that brought up the children of Israel, with an outstretched hand, and a mighty arm? And when they proclaimed a feast, and said, “These be thy gods, O Israel”—were they indeed in the knowledge and praise of the Lord God of Israel? For shame! who but a devil, or a child of the devil, will say it? Was it verily a matter of truth, that Baal, Ithobaal, Jupiter, Bel, Nebo, Molech, or Beelzebub, who preserved and governed the world, because the devil taught some one or other, or all of the nations at times to believe and say so? and they worshipped accordingly. Or shall we say, that they who acknowledged such names for God, were actually acknowledging the One True God? If they say, they acknowledged *a god*, though not the *True God Jehovah*, and from thence infer, that they had the knowledge of God; they are arrant triflers and blasphemers, seeing God is One. And what *a god* is that, which is not *the God*?

O eternal God, how these men blaspheme, who say, that men can know thee of themselves, by their own reason and philosophical pride, without thy Word, in some shape or other, communicating such knowledge! How have they taken thy own revealed character and majesty, and attributed the same to devils; and yet would have us to believe, that they still are attributing them to thee! Lord, vindicate thy own name, and preserve thy own elect from idols! Amen.

## THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTER OR NAME OF GOD.

Q. 15. *Seeing there is only One God, and all others called by his name are not God, but lies and impostures, what are those revealed, essential, peculiar, and distinguishing properties, attributes, qualities, or perfections, the complex idea or notion whereof taken together, gives us the only true and incommunicable CHARACTER of the One God, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, according to the Scriptures; whereby, upon a comparison, we may be able to discover every pretended deity or idol, with a Mene mene tekel written upon the forehead thereof, that so we may not unawares be betrayed into the worship and service of an idol or devil, instead of the living and true God?*

A. Fully to answer this question would be to transcribe the whole Book of God; and thither every noble Berean will repair. But the following select particulars, and every one of them separately, all of Scripture verity, are sufficient, if they are kept uncorrupted, and clear of any foreign mixture, infallibly to characterize, ascertain, and distinguish the one living and true God from every possible counterfeit or pretender to that holy and ever-blessed name. Namely, 1. God is one. 2. This One is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. From everlasting to everlasting; who was, and is, and is to come; the First and the Last. 4. Unchangeable, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without any variableness or shadow of turning. 5. Incomprehensible and infinite in himself, independent, self-existent, self-sufficient, whose name is, I AM. 6. Everywhere present, filling all things. 7. Knowing all things. 8. Able to do all things; who can stay his working hand, or say unto him, What dost thou? 9. The only living and true. 10. Perfectly and only wise. 11. Perfectly and only holy. 12. Perfectly

and only just. 13. Perfectly and only good and merciful. 14. Perfectly and only faithful. 15. Absolute and sovereign. 16. The just God and the Saviour, besides whom there is no God—Of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Here *observe*, That these now mentioned, and every other attribute or property of the divine nature, being absolutely perfect, infinite, and eternal in themselves, are not like so many separate and distinct qualities, or virtues, in a creature; though it hath pleased infinite wisdom to condescend to our capacities, and accommodate himself to our apprehension, by speaking to us of himself after the manner of men: so that wisdom and power, which, to our apprehension, in their own nature, and by any faint resemblance of them which may be found in a creature, seem to be different, are by no means different in God, but precisely the same; God being all wisdom; wisdom all power; each of those perfections which in our language we call attributes, qualities, or properties, being fully commensurable, or rather the same, with the whole uncompounded, indivisible, and one divine essence.

Thus also, holiness and eternity, justice and goodness, or mercy, omniscience and omnipresence, self-existence and life, unchangeableness and truth, are not, if we may be allowed so to speak, so many different ingredients or essential parts entering into the composition of the divine nature, which is absolutely without parts or composition; but only so many different modes of expression, giving as many distinct and separate views of the same precise individual object, the One God, who is wholly and essentially wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, with every other attribute of his incommunicable name JEHOVAH. Wherefore, there is



nothing in God, which is not verily, wholly, essentially, and so infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, God himself.

Hence it is demonstrably true, that though a person were to admit the reality and combination of all these, with every other attribute or essential property of the divine nature, save only any single one of these same attributes or properties, and say, that he knew God, while he were ignorant of that one single revealed attribute or property, he were but a liar, and the truth of God, even the knowledge of the true God, were not in him; and what he esteemed to be God would be only an idol, a pure chimera, a romance, a fable, a thing of no existence, a vision of Satan's forging, pretendedly adorned with much of the divine character; while, at the same time, there were none of the divine nature and character there at all, but only a vizard or mask, instead of God's substantial glory: inasmuch as one single essential attribute, property, or perfection of the divine nature being subtracted, the whole divine nature, at the same time, were subtracted or taken away, and nothing left remaining of the truth behind: because the divine nature being perfectly pure and unmixed, indivisible and un compounded, even absolute simplicity of essence, without parts, if any one essential is taken away, the whole essence is taken away.

Now, to make application of this remark to the point in hand—Which of all the race of Adam, uninstructed by the Word of God, communicated in some form or other, attained, by study and deep research of investigating reason, to the knowledge, for instance, of any one of these three attributes of God, *holiness, justice, and mercy*, as these are brought to light with life and immortality by the gospel? And the gospel light and manifestation is, undoubtedly, the only true light and manifestation. It was, by insisting with Scripture evi-

dence and weapons upon this point, that Lactantius of old, with all the noble train of his fellow-advocates and martyrs of the Christian faith, so gloriously triumphed over the fiercest attacks of heathen infidelity, by demonstrating, to the shame and conviction of their adversaries, that their gods were not God, neither in whole nor in part (for the Godhead cannot be divided into parts), because their gods were notoriously and universally, even by the adversaries' own confession, without the (revealed) attributes of *holiness*, *justice*, and *mercy*; which now in the face of Jesus shine forth with heavenly majesty, to the eternal manifestation of the otherwise unknown harmony, union, glory, oneness, and perfection of all the attributes in the divine character——Thus the sword of the Spirit prevailed, and drove the enemies of the cross to confusion. No wonder, for their gods were proved to be idols, and not God. Great is the truth! and let the truth prevail!

Now, in defiance of idols, and idol-votaries all, the least experienced child of God, depending on the truth, may venture to challenge every advocate upon earth for the natural knowledge of God, to show but one single instance whereby it shall appear, that the Scripture (and that is the only true) discovery of God, his *holiness*, *justice*, and *mercy*, or any one of these three perfections, were ever so much as guessed at, without the mediation of the Word; and the cause, for ought appears to the contrary, may be safely yielded to them. What! will they say a figment of fancy, the froth of self-conceit, the spawn of human pride, bred in the corrupt sinks and fens of atheistical absurdity, trained up and fed by the sophistry of hell, in their accursed academical schools and systems of falsehood, and called by them, in all the pompous parade of their infidelity, a *Deity*—will they say? Yes, they do indeed say and insist upon

it.—But will you believe them, that this is very God indeed? A—What shall I call it?—*without holiness, without justice, without mercy*—Is this the God—the God in very deed who cannot lie? who hath said, “The world by wisdom knew not God? but it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching,” as they reckoned it, “to save them that believe,” through the knowledge of himself in the Gospel; “which is a stumbling-block to the” truth-perverting “Jew, and foolishness to the” god-forging, demon-worshipping “Greek; but unto them that believe, whether of the Jews or of the Greeks, it is the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation?”

THE PECULIAR WAYS AND WORKS OF GOD.

Q. 16. *Are the works of creation, preservation, and of providence ruling, governing, disposing, redeeming, justifying, sanctifying, glorifying, condemning, punishing, judging, and executing of judgment, with the decrees and purposes concerning all those things that come to pass, both as to the matter and manner of them, the works, decrees, and purposes of that One only living and true God, who hath manifested himself in his own incommunicable Being and Character in his Word? and is it only by the Word we understand these things to be so, and no otherwise?*

A. Yes. For it is written, “He that cometh to God must *believe* that he is,” even what he hath declared himself to be, and nothing else; “and that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him.” Now, it is remarkable, that the expression here used, is not barely *know*, but *believe* that he is; intimating, that our knowledge of God must be of that kind, which comes, not by reasoning upon what we see, nor intuition, as they call it, or looking at a visible object, and so immediately perceiving it; but of that kind only which comes purely

by believing the testimony of God: which testimony is the only mean in the Spirit's hand of conveying the knowledge of God into our minds. So that if there were no *Word* of God, there could be no *believing* of God: since believing cometh by hearing the *Word* of God. And again, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." If then you take away the *Word* of God, you take away my faith, you take away my God.—Ah! where is the glory hoped for? The faith, the evidence of it, is gone—the substance (to me) is no more. I know, I can know nothing about the matter. Who can perceive colours without light.

Put yourself in my place, and I will ask you—let your conscience give a true answer—no shuffling, no evasion, no referring to other people—speak out, the case is home to your heart and spirit, it concerns you there—When did you see the world called by sovereign power out of nothing into being? And light springing out of darkness at the Almighty word, *Light be thou?* and light there was; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. When did you see the formation of Adam's body? God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, and man becoming a living soul? Did you see the commandment given; the covenant broken; the death denounced; the glory departing; the nakedness discovered; the man fleeing; the Lord calling, reproving, comforting, and promising the seed of the woman?

Where wast thou when the law was given, fulfilled, magnified in the death of the Lawgiver himself, made of a woman, made under the law, made a curse, to redeem them that were under the curse; that they might receive the blessing, even the adoption of sons, from the hands of God their Lord, who for them died, was

buried, arose, ascended, and was glorified at the Father's right hand, from whence he poured down the Holy Ghost, to declare the only true God and eternal life; that many may be saved through the knowledge of that truth, and blessed in the kingdom of their Father, for ever and ever; while all the rest of mankind, who know not God, and obey not the Gospel, taking no pleasure in the truth, but taking pleasure in unrighteousness, are condemned already, and shall have the vengeance due executed upon them by the Lord himself, when he shall come, who is the only Redeemer, Saviour, and Judge, who shall say to them on his left hand, who knew him not, and consequently heard not his word, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

When, how, or where did you see or find out all these things, whether past, present, or to come? They are not seen, they cannot be seen, but by their own proper light and evidence, even the faith of God's record concerning his own proper works. Deny the evidence, and you deny the deeds; acknowledge the evidence, and you acknowledge the deeds: these two, the evidences and the deeds evidenced, stand or fall together.

So that, save by faith, we have no evidence of God whom we never saw; nor of the connection of any works whatever with him; which connection also, as of effects flowing from a certain adequate cause, we never saw, nor was it possible we could, except we had seen (which was impossible) *that cause* in the very act of producing *those effects*, and the manner how they were produced—Nay, though we had actually been present (and if we had, how could we have accounted for our own existence?) and seen with our own eyes, the heavens and the earth, with all their hosts, rising into being, and continuing

before us in their being, and order, and manner, to this very day, we might indeed have been amazed, and perhaps might have conjectured (though even that seems very doubtful too) that possibly there was something or other at the bottom, unseen by us, producing those things; but what that same unseen and supposed thing were, if it really existed, or supposing it did exist, what were the character and manner of its nature, we never could have discovered by our most narrow inspection into the seen things.

Our conceptions could have gone no farther than our common perceptions and observations of the creature which we saw, if we had even been left without the instruction by the ear, or revelation communicated from another who knew the matter: for except we had been told, how could a seen, created, finite, various, changeable thing, such as this present world is in our eye (not to speak at present of the unaccountable embarrassments arising from sin and death), have suggested to our corrupt, blind, sensual, devilish minds, as the minds of all merely natural men are, the idea or notion of an unseen, uncreated, infinite, one, unchangeable, eternal God?

As the strength of their argument seems to lie in this Samson's lock, let us try it by an instance to our purpose, thus: a greater, or a more amazing scene in itself, was never exhibited by divine power upon the stage of time, not even at the creation of the worlds, than the miraculous works, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, considered in all the visible foregoing, concurring, and following circumstances thereof; yet it was not by what they saw with their eyes, but only by the faith or believing of his own word, concerning himself and all those things, that either the disciples or any other people, came to understand that he was the very

Messiah, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world.  
But of this more afterwards.

FAITH ALONE THE EVIDENCE OF CREATION.

Faith, faith alone is all the evidence man can have of the things not seen. "By faith the elders obtained a good report"—They pleased God; they walked with God. By faith they endured as seeing the invisible God, and looked for a city to come. Nor were they ashamed of their faith and hope: for by faith they knew, their God would have been ashamed to have been called their God, if he had not provided for them the promised rest, whereinto they are now entered to inherit the promises. So it was with the prophets and their fellow-believers from the beginning, while God spake to the fathers at divers times, and in sundry manners. How did the apostles and their fellow-believers come to understand and enjoy the same things? Say they, even "by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. He said, and it was done. He commanded, and they stood fast. He established his ordinance in the heavens. He gave to the sea his decree. He set his compass upon the face of the deep. He laid the foundations of the earth. He spread out the heavens like a curtain. He sent forth his Spirit and the living things were created. He gathereth to him his spirit, and they die. He ruleth among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. He hath done whatsoever pleased him in the sea, and all deep places. He prepared his kingdom from the foundations of the world. Tophet was ordained of old. He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. His is the kingdom, the

power, and the glory for ever, amen. He is the just God, the Saviour, the Judge of all; faithful and just in justifying the ungodly who believeth in Jesus. If God be for us, who can be against us? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father; from whence he shall come to render to every one according to his works, whether they have been good, or whether they have been evil. All that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

"Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him. He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." Nay, "He that believeth is not condemned; but is justified, and hath life; neither shall he come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. And he that believeth not shall not see life," while he believeth not; "but the wrath of God abideth upon him."

"And now also the axe is laid at the root of the tree—every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewed down and cast into the fire, and shall be burned. But to those on his right hand, his sheep, who have heard his voice, the King shall say, Come to me, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, before the foundation of the world—As the tree falls, so will it lie."



## HE ONLY KNOWS GOD WHO KNOWS HIS CHARACTER.

Now, to ascribe all these, or any of these works, or exertions of sovereign and almighty power, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, to any thing, or fiction of a thing, by whatever name you call it, whose nature and character is not the nature and character of the One true God; what is it, let prejudice itself say, but an avowed and open-faced blasphemy and idolatry—a presumptuous tearing of God's undivided name, majesty, glory, character, and peculiar prerogatives, to pieces, and scattering abroad the fragments, by the influence and ministration of devils, to the bewitching and destroying of the nations, by the belief and worship of that which is *not God!*—

But why should not we be content with the same knowledge of God, and that in the same way ministered, of his works and ways, as his inspired servants were blessed withal, even by faith in his word?

Would it be razing the foundations of morality and good life, (so some love to speak, as was before hinted,) to have neither more nor less precious and honourable faith than the apostles of our Lord, who do so very solemnly declare, that what they knew of those things, as being of God, was not by reason, but by faith in his Word?

Behold, how jealous our God is of his glory in the creation and government of the world—strongly intimating that woeful bias in our nature to ascribe the works of God to idols; as they plainly do who say, that those who ascribe such works to Jupiter, for example, know, and believe, and acknowledge God in so doing.—But hear Jehovah,—“Behold I, even I, created the heavens alone—I form the light, and I create darkness;

I the Lord do all these things. Let your gods do good, or do evil; let them tell what shall come to pass, and I will confess to them. Woe unto them who pray unto a god that cannot save."

But, in opposition to Jehovah, how many (alas! how few exceptions) most zealously affirm, that, if a person but see the creation, he cannot but discover the God that made it, by his own reason or natural light, without the word or any more ado! and that, if he ascribe the same creation to something as the author thereof, no matter what, though it be Baal, he shows thereby that he believes God, at least that God is!

Is not that resting the knowledge of God, with all the following consequences, upon a false foundation, since the word of God is the only true one? Woe's me! how they delude the people! Is the notion of a Creator, considered by itself, the notion of God?

The nature and character of God, as described in part, and distinguished above, is only to be found in the Word, and by the Word proved to be the true nature and character of God, exclusive of all other natures and characters, which are not real, but imaginary ones of *no gods*.

If creation, then, preservation, and providence, are ascribed to something of a different character, a character not to be found in the Word, they are not ascribed to God, to whom alone such works belong; but rather his works and character are torn from his name, and that name given to an absolute imposture and falsehood.

If you say, creation, preservation, and providence, are works peculiar to the Most High God, as indeed they are, and therefore, he who acknowledgeth these works as done by some, acknowledgeth the Most High God for the object of his worship, by whatever name he call that same object whom he owns for his god—it is

replied, you are grievously mistaken ; because the works when produced, though they are peculiar only to God, yet are by no means essential or absolutely necessary to the very being of his divine nature ; otherwise he could not have been God before these works had been produced ; which were absurd.

Hence, such works not being absolutely included in the idea or knowledge of God, nor the idea or knowledge of God, being included in that of those works, the known existence of the works can never infer the knowledge of the existence of God in the beholder's heart, even of Jehovah in all his character revealed in the Word ; nor can the ascription of those works to something of a foreign character, which they call god, infer their ascription of those works to God.

A scripture instance or two, as hinted before, will set this matter in a clear light, though many examples, equally proper for illustration of the point, might be found.

#### OF THE GOLDEN CALF AND MOLECH.

It is manifest it was the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all, even Jehovah, who brought up Israel out of Egypt—So far agreed—Yet when they had made their image, proclaimed a feast to the Lord, offered sacrifice to the idol, and rejoiced in the work of their own hands—did the Lord, who said to Moses, “The people have corrupted themselves ; they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them ; they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped IT, and sacrificed THEREUNTO, and said, THESE BE THY GODS, O ISRAEL, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt”—did the Lord, by all these words mean to say, that they were only worshipping himself, and that he acknowledged the service as done

to himself, though they mistook in a name, and called it a *golden calf*? Will the greatest calf of a water-dipt or sprinkled atheist say so? If this was to know, acknowledge, and worship God, what is idolatry? What were they punished for? For worshipping the true God! What then is required and forbidden in the first, second, and third commandments?

Moreover, who gave them sons and daughters? Was it not God? You allow it—Well, when they made them pass for an offering by fire, through the fire unto Molech or Malcham, their king, as the name signifies, from whom they said they had received them—how comes Jehovah to upbraid them, by telling them, “That they offered his children, his sons and his daughters, to devils; which he commanded them not.—They served the idols of the nations, which were a snare unto them.—Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils—unto the idols of Canaan—And the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled.”—Wherefore kindled? Will this account of the matter persuade us that it was for worshipping and serving the true God, whom they knew and acknowledged under the name of Molech, and other sounds of abomination? None but a devil will say so in this instance.

Yet, how are men so blinded, that they shall scarce have time to turn a page of the book of God, before you shall find them at the same absurdity again, labouring tooth and nail to convince you, “That all men, of all nations, who are worshippers of something, whatever it be, are worshippers of God—the same *One living and true God*”—(unless they say this, they say nothing to the purpose; for who ever denied that blinded nations worship idols, shame for glory?) “under various names

and characters, suitable to the various genius, language, and fashion of their own country, people, and age of the world wherein they live."

If you will indeed be so kind as believe some of the heathen philosophers themselves upon occasions, or those who recommend and hold them forth for true worshippers, at the expense of flatly contradicting Jehovah, they were all acknowledgers and worshippers of the one true God, notwithstanding all that monstrous multiplicity and endless diversity of their strange gods.

#### A PASSAGE FROM THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAGANS.

To show that this doctrine of theirs, which we are attacking, is not like their gods, a mere nothing, or man of straw; will the reader be pleased to see a passage or two transcribed from the well-known *theology* or divinity of the pagans.

Says one of their chief divines, or philosophers, if you please; you may perceive by his wisdom, notwithstanding his words, that he knew not God—however, hear him with his brethren—"This universe is a great commonwealth, of which Jupiter is the prince and common father."

Says another, "It is of very little consequence by what name you call *the first nature and divine reason*, that presides over the universe, and fills all the parts of it. He is still the *same God*. He is called *Jupiter the Upholder*, because he is the constant *upholder* and *support* of all beings. They may call him *Fate*, because he is the *first cause* on whom all others depend. We call him sometimes *Father Bacchus*, because he is the universal *life that animates nature*; *Hercules*, because *his power is invincible*; *Mercury*, because he is *eternal reason*

and *wisdom*: you may give him as many names as you please, provided you allow but *one sole principle everywhere present.*”

Again, to the same purport, “By *Jupiter*, the ancients meant *the guardian and governor of the universe, the understanding and the mind, the master and the architect of this great machine, the world.* All names belong to him. You are not in the wrong if you call him *Fate*; for he is the *cause of causes*, and everything depends upon him.” (And may not I add in a parenthesis, You may call him *Baal* also; *for he is a god*, and Elijah meant, in sober sadness, to join his priests in acknowledging his undoubted godship, without any irony or mockery in the world!) “Would you call him *Providence*, you fall into no mistake; it is by his wisdom that this world is governed.” (The god of this world—the spirit that ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience, said to the Son of God, “All the kingdoms of the world, and all this power, and the glory of them, will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me—for that is delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will I give it.”—And so the blinded nations were taught by the devil to worship himself as god—ascribing to him the kingdom, the power, and the glory, due to God alone.—But did they, who thus worshipped the devil, believe and know God?) “Would you call him *Nature*, you will not offend in doing so; it is from him all beings derive their origin; it is by him they live and breathe.”

These were mere pagans; but now hear professed Christians giving the same account of the pagan gods and worship, and some of them with approbation too—“It is a mere calumny,” say the heathens, “to charge us with such a crime, as the denying of the supreme God; we call him *Jupiter*, the *supremely great, and sovereignly good*; we dedicate our most magnificent

structures and our capitols to him, to show that we exalt him above all other deities.”

Says another, in his own words and sentiments, “St. Paul” (he calls him Peter), “preaching to the Greeks, insinuates, that they had a knowledge of God at Athens. He supposes, that those people adore the same God as we do, though not in the same manner. He does not forbid us to adore the same god as the Greeks, but he forbids us to adore him in the same way. He orders us to change the manner, and not the object of our worship.” Says another, “The heathens own that there is but one only God, who fills, pervades, and presides over universal nature.”

Lastly, another great divine says, “Jupiter, according to the philosophers, is the soul of the world, who takes different names, according to the different effects which he produces. In the higher regions he is called Jupiter, in the air Juno, in the sea Neptune, in the earth Pluto, in hell Proserpina, in the fire Vulcan, in the sun Phœbus, in fortune-telling Apollo, in war Mars, in the vintage Bacchus, in the harvest Ceres, in the forest Diana, and in the sciences Minerva. All that crowd of gods and goddesses, are only the same Jupiter, whose different powers and attributes are expressed by the different names.”

Upon the whole, if you will receive the concurring testimony of these, and of thousands more who might be added, of pagans, poets, philosophers, and historians; and of church divines, fathers, papists, and protestants — I say, if you will receive such witnesses as these for solid and substantial proof, you must of necessity allow that the pagans universally acknowledged but one sole supreme God, the living and the true; and that the Persians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Scythians, with all nations under the cope of heaven,

universally agreed in holding and teaching *this truth*;—and that Diana of the Ephesians was great, and that they were right in worshipping her, and the image which fell from Jupiter out of heaven; and that Baal was indeed, without any irony or figure of speech, in good, sad earnest, *very God*; and that Ashtaroth, the king and queen of heaven, and Pluto, or Mammon, were but other names for Jupiter; and Jupiter (O monstrous!) but another name for JEHIOVAH; in a word, that the Holy Ghost was—even without any mincing—a *liar*, when he said, “The things which the heathen sacrifice, they sacrifice *to devils*, and *not to God!*”

It is high time now to pause awhile upon our principles, before we bring ourselves or lead others into such conclusions as these. Yet, from the above premises, which are of their own framing, the consequences already spoken of, and many others of the same goodly appearance, are natural and unavoidable. But let every man see to his own foundations. The unbelief of some (though it were, as in the days of Noah, all the world to one) can neither make the truth of God, nor the belief of other men, of none effect.

#### THE WORSHIP OF LYSTRA.

But to insist yet a little farther on Scripture argument—When the people of Lystra would have done sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, under the notion that they were Jupiter and Mercurius, who, as they supposed, had come down to men, and restored a cripple to soundness of feet, were they knowing, acknowledging, and worshipping the living and true God, who undoubtedly had done among them the good work which they saw and acknowledged? If so, the apostles (not to speak of the Spirit that moved them) were impertinent when



they ran in among the people, and rent their garments, and cried, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We preach unto you, that ye should turn from *these vanities* to the *living God*, who made the heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are therein; who in time past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways: nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

These works God did. These works were his witnesses, the evidences of his goodness; and the heathens most devoutly, to our shame, acknowledged the benefit in all the excessive superstition of their worship—but to whom—even to their Jupiter, and all the inferior rabble of their dunghill gods, numerous as their nations, cities, houses, persons, and opinions.

Make it appear that Jupiter was Jehovah, and then Jupiter was no vanity, and the apostles were blasphemers and liars who called him so, and the men of Lystra were perfectly right, and turned to the living God before the apostles came into their coasts, and the apostles, in the very worst sense, turners of the world upside down, and doing the very office of Satan, in turning people away from their Jupiter, especially people so prodigiously devout towards their god, if in very deed their god Jupiter was GOD, and no vanity!

#### THE WORSHIP OF ATHENS.

At Athens, likewise, if the God whom Paul preached was the true God, the Athenians knew him not; for he says, "When I passed by and beheld your devotions," (the word signifies, *the gods whom ye worship*), "I found an altar with this inscription, To THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him

declare I unto you: the God that made the world"—whom he farther describes by his peculiar works, quoting a poet of their own, who falsely ascribed those works of the true God to that supreme idol, vanity, or devil of theirs, whom in their language they styled Jupiter Olympus, from a hill whereon they supposed he dwelt.

Now it is evident the apostle here, in the abundance of his inspired eloquence, addresses those idolaters, who took him, when he preached Jesus, for a setter forth of strange gods, according to their own folly and monstrous superstition, or attachment to false gods and worship, as appears by their inscribing an altar to an unknown god; when, at the same time, he endeavours to turn them to the wisdom of the *Just*, by speaking to them in the style and spirit of eternal Wisdom; not in the least humouring their madness and folly, but only taking occasion of a most pertinent and proper introduction to his doctrine of Jesus, from the circumstances of time and place, remembering the holy proverb, which saith, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit:" and again, "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou be like unto him;" without giving any countenance to their worship of the unknown god, as if it really had been the worship of that God whom the apostles preached—For how can you grant and hold the Scriptures true, that there can be any such thing in existence (whatever men may profess, as the Athenians did) as true, real (and, if so, it behoved also to be acceptable) worship to God unknown? For is it not written, "How shall they call upon," or worship, "him on whom they have not believed?" A question of this kind put by the Holy Ghost, who knows all things, plainly implies the impossibility of answering it.

## SAMARITAN WORSHIP.

Thus the Lord said to the Samaritans, "Ye worship, ye know not what." The meaning, by the context, appears clearly to be, that though they pretended to worship something which they called god, as they took Simon Magus for the great power of God, yet it was not the true god, and consequently no god, which was the object of their worship and devotion; and so, as the *matter* was evil which they worshipped, the *manner* could be no better. If the *matter* of worship is naught, the *manner* is naught also. If the *manner* is naught, the *matter* or *object* of worship is also naught. The *true object* and the *true manner*, are both equally and essentially required to the worship of God. Both stand or fall together. So that the separating of the *matter and manner* of worship, as if the one could exist without the other, is fully as ridiculous as it is mischievous.

Thus it is said of the Samaritan nation in the book of Kings, "That they served," that is, made a fashion or pretence of serving "the Lord with their own gods;" but that they "feared not the Lord, nor obeyed his commandments." So they knew not God.

## REASON STEALS FROM REVELATION.

You will allege, perhaps, that though the heathens failed in attaining to the knowledge of the true God by reason, or the light of nature without the Word, yet we, now-a-days, may succeed better in our researches— It is answered, Not so; unless you allege that the human nature is now more capable and better disposed than it was of old. You will not insist upon this ground, which you know you cannot maintain; for what is natural

to man is equally so in all ages and circumstances; and to determine what human nature of itself, without external aid, *can* know of such high things, we have no more to do for common use and benefit of man, but inquire what human nature *hath* known.

But it may be you allege that our reason, or the light of nature, may borrow some discovery of God from revelation, so as to talk, at least, pretty well and plausibly of his names, titles, attributes, properties, qualities, or perfections.

A. No doubt; every thing that reason now-a-days, or any former time, pretends to have found out concerning God, is stolen or usurped from revelation; so that, when the reasoning pride of man struts and swells, and boasts of its innate and in-born, or of its acquired knowledge of God, it only lies, and exposes itself to the derision of the wise, being stuck round, like the foolish bird in the fable, with borrowed feathers. But then, if you insist on this, you must give up the cause of the natural knowledge of God, and, consequently, natural religion into the bargain; for let your great *Diana, Reason*, restore her borrowed clothing, and her nakedness is discovered.

Moreover, all idolaters or worshippers of false, that is, no gods, since the beginning of the world, have always had the same opportunities in more or less, as well as Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius, Belshazzar, and others mentioned in Scripture, of adorning and trimming out their *mock divinityships* and temples with the usurped glories, and peculiar things belonging, and dedicated only to, the Lord God of Israel; for God, at divers times, and in sundry manners, spake to the fathers, in all ages and nations, by his prophets—And so men were permitted all along—as unbelievers and hypocrites to this hour, for the trial of the saints, in the holy counsels of eternal Sovereignty—to encroach upon several of the revealed

attributes, properties, and works of God, by seizing, or rather manufacturing and counterfeiting, and then attributing them every one to his own favourite idol, saying in his heart, "This is my God, and let all the world worship it."

A PRETENDED VINDICATION OF THE NATURAL KNOWLEDGE  
OF GOD.

Now to unbend a moment—for we are allowed to laugh at idolatry——Would you hear a little of the eloquence and fine reasoning (by way of interlude) of your true genuine kind of philosophical divines, who glory in that gallant maxim of theirs, that "Philosophy is the handmaid of divinity." They seem to be most enamoured with the handmaid at present, who is fruitful enough in her way too. But passing that, let us hear them in vindication of their own peculiar and favourite modes of—what shall I call it? What you please, if you neither call it gospel nor truth.

Well, methinks I see one of your right old Ciceronian-spirited pulpiter-men, new-fashioned, modernized, and accommodated at all points to the very height of the reigning mode of the times, stepping forth as the mouth of any circle or congregation, where it may be expected he should give you a cast of his office in the clergy way:—

"What arrogant turning of the world upside down is this? Is it not evident blasphemy, good people, to say, that we can have no knowledge of God at all, not even as Creator, but by the Word only? What shall become of reason then, and of the natural conscience, wherein is imprinted the knowledge of God in every man's own breast, without the Word?" "Do you mean a strange god, Sir?" "No; I mean the true God the Creator; and, for proof of what I say, suppose a man were to be

born, and bred in a cave all his days, without hearing or seeing anything but the said cave and its things, till he grew up, and then all at once were introduced into the broad world, to see the sun by day, and the moon and stars by night, with all that beautiful and harmonious arrangement and revolution of the heavenly and earthly bodies; would he not, think you, if he were not a fool," (well, what if he were a fool? is not every man by nature a fool? and what hath the fool said in his heart?) "immediately be led to suspect that there was some first Cause of these things, which set them all in order and motion? and what could that be but God?"

"Again, if you were to see a beautiful, convenient, and well-contrived house, would you not conjecture that there behoved to be some artist for the builder, and that he were eminent in his way too; you would not imagine that it came by chance, would you?"

A. There is no argument here. We know men, and we know houses are their works, from experience and observation; but we have had no access for experience or observation in the framing of worlds. Neither can we know by a man's workmanship, except we antecedently know his manner by some former known works of his, who the workman is, so as to be able to say, This is he; and these show you nothing of his moral character. But we are obliged to revelation for telling us, that "He who built all things is God."

But, proceeds the man of the natural knowledge of God, "Were you to cast thousands of thousands of all the letters in the alphabet together promiseously, into a large dice-box, and then shake, and jumble, and tumble them forth upon a board, would they by chance arrange themselves into the form of that grand and elegant poem, *Paradise Lost*?" Alas for the poor man, and those who are deceived by such cobweb sophistries!

But cobwebs entangle flies, and spiders devour them, and grow still more poisonous the older they grow; and it may be added that Beelzebub, as the name signifies, is the god of flies and vermin.

Is not their paradise, think you, in a fair way of being for ever lost, who have the god of paradise to forge out for themselves, the best way they may, from such unlikely-like masses as the arguments, or similies rather, of the *cave*, the *house*, the *dice-box*, and such like doughty demonstrations! For such, my plain, honest, country friends, really is their way and manner, and spirit of argumentation, and their very expressions too, which I daresay you may have heard in their doctrines, and read in their systems (if you have been so unhappy as to know such depths of Satan) of natural religion, a hundred times over and over; and which, as to the main substance, they have only retailed and hawked about from a few stale heathen authors.

One of these last, called Cicero, or Tully the orator, has left us a precious treatise *about the nature of the gods* (for the very title says he acknowledged many), whose authority and opinion, ever since, have been powerfully boasted of as decisive in this case:—That there is no nation or people under heaven so barbarous, as not to have worshipped some god, gods, goddess, or goddesses; either he-gods, or she-gods, you must know, of some kind or other, according to their humour—for it seems a humour of that kind they had; and so the universal consent of all nations is brought in for a proof of the being of God—and that he is discoverable, and has actually been discovered, by natural reason; for, in this case, the voice of the people must be the voice of God! and, instead of God making the people for himself, the people must needs be trying their hand at making for themselves a god or gods, goddess or goddesses! O sweet doctrine

to the enemy of God and man! Nay, the very notion or apprehension of the people, however come by, that there is such a sort of being or beings, which they call god or gods, *he* or *she* (for the sex makes no difference), though as unlike in character and power as Satan to the Holy Ghost, must needs, with some masters of reason, pass for a notable demonstration of the being of God!

Thus, like silly school-boys, they get their lesson from their book, as their master has prescribed their task; and then having conned it over a sufficient time by themselves, away they go like men of abilities, and set up for noble champions of natural religion, redoubted wights! the very oracles of reason, to be sure!

Yet how come men, owning revelation, to set up heathen philosophers, modern gazetteers, or travellers, or human reason, and the grossest lies, in opposition to the Word of God, which expressly asserts, That though all nations worshipped their own gods, as they had gods many, and lords many, yet not one of any nation either knew or worshipped God, even the living and true God, besides whom there is no god, but only those who were taught of himself by his own Word and Spirit, as has been already abundantly made out by that Word.

DR. CLARKE'S DEMONSTRATION OF THE BEING AND  
ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

But see! here comes an able reasoner indeed—even the famous Dr. Clarke, surpassing all who have gone before him on the topics of his handling! And now for demonstration—Yes, yes, a very plain and rational “Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God.”

As for the Being of God, that is, of a first, original, unoriginated cause of all things, independent of all, and existent of himself alone, nothing is more plain in the



eye of reason, according to this author; nay, revelation cannot prove it, nor be received as a revelation before it be proved; nor does revelation attempt to prove it. So that if reason cannot demonstrate to itself the being of God, the being of God must remain unknown for ever, for all that revelation can do; seeing it is a business only to be made out by the dint of reasoning itself, if you will be so kind as credit the philosophers. "What!" say they, "revelation attempt to prove an impossibility!" But the good doctor (O self-denied, unself-sufficient man!), he shall do it presently, thus—attend to the process of the argument:—

"No being can produce another being or thing before itself exist." Very true. "But the world exists; therefore the world behoved to be produced by some other being, which must have existed before the world; and what can that being, which must have existed before the world, to produce it, be, but God?"

But here, if any one ask, How came that First Being itself, which is called God, so necessary for the production of the world, to exist? for if the Doctor and his familiar, Reason, are to set revelation aside, and take the proof in their own hands, they must account for that too—and nothing more easily done, if you make no unhappy reply, thus—by confining the argument, like a river within its proper banks, to one species of things, and expressing yourself by the noted simile of a chain consisting of many thousand links; you begin at the link nearest you, which is yourself, and you reason with yourself—for as yet you have nothing to do with revelation; though, if you go on climbing your chain aright, after you have come to the uppermost link, that is, the First Cause, you may perhaps arrive at revelation in the sequel before all be over, provided always you make no mistake or false step in your progress, but argue with

your own bosom after this clear and demonstrative manner following:—"Well, here I am, with all my powers, members, and faculties of body and mind about me; but how came I to be this being that I am? Aye, there is the question. I could not be the cause of my own being, that is certain; for, as already agreed upon, nothing can act, or cause another thing *to be*, before itself be first caused *to be*—and that for this plain reason, that a thing cannot *be* and *not be* at the same time, and in the same respect; *existence* and *non-existence* being a contradiction in terms, which, however, behoved to agree before a thing could exist to act as the cause of its own existence—for the cause, in the nature of things, must be before the thing caused. Who acted then as the immediate cause of my being? Why, my parents. Now, my parents could not be the cause of their own being, more than I am of mine; and for the same reason, because they could not act as the causes of another being before they themselves existed, as the effects of some former cause or causes, which behoved to be their parents, who also must have sprung from parents before them, and they from theirs; till at the last and long-run, mounting, in a rising progression, by what I may call a numberless flight of genealogical stairs, from son to father, I come up to the first man that ever in the world I can suppose to have existed. Well, shall I stop now? I have done my utmost in this way of subordinate and successive causes; I have exhausted all my reasoning powers; I have run to the end of my metaphysical line; I am lost in amazement, confusion, and absolute ignorance. Farther than this first man I have no knowledge—no understanding at all, nor conception. How he should have been able to have caused his own being, or to have been at all more than I, or any other man or creature, without some certain first cause, to have caused his existence, it is downrightly

impossible for me to conceive; and, therefore, upon this very account, because it is impossible for me either to believe or conceive this, I do believe, and conceive, and conclude, that there must of necessity be *something* which had no cause at all of its existence; which, therefore, behoves to be the original cause of all things, which can be nothing else but God." Whose necessary existence the grave and good divine has found means, as you have seen, to un hinge from its own proper evidence, the demonstration of the Holy Ghost, and the power of God himself in his Word, and to fix it again in a way more satisfactory to himself and thousands of others, by the pure dint and force of his own great and unassisted genius, altogether without the Word!

But, without irony, which the Scripture has exemplified as lawful to be used in cases of this kind, if you were not compelled by matter of fact (as the book and argument are tossed about everywhere in the academical schools, and not seldom advanced in the pulpit and common conversation, by your natural-religion men), would you deem it possible that any man in his right mind, who has not a design against the Godhead, can think of adopting this for a demonstration of the being of a God?

Here, I confess, it is with the highest reluctance and regret that I have been obliged, for the sake of injured truth, to particularize this or any other author, and endeavour to expose his capital argument, which I take to be a wicked speech for God, even a lie laid for a foundation to truth; the natural and unavoidable tendency of which is, slyly to undo the universal existence, character, and revelation of God, which it pretends to support. Not that I think the author, or espousers of his principles, meant so—no; but I believe them to have been first seduced and deceived themselves before they set

about, with the kindest intention in the world, the drawing of others over into their own opinions.

If I have spoken, or may yet speak, with some bitterness of such doctrines, those will know how to forgive me, if I need forgiveness for the most charitably meant thing I can do, the attempting to undeceive my fellow-creatures. Those, I daresay, will know how to forgive me, who have any experience of such remorse and horrors as I have felt, since conviction, for my having been of the same sentiments as are contained in the before-cited book, with multitudes more written on the same plan, and of the same spirit, all maintaining, with a high hand, the natural knowledge of God, and, in course, natural religion; and so the subjection of revelation to reason—that is, the subjection of God and his will to the caprice, fancy, pride, passion, or folly of man, which every one will sanctify with the name of right reason.

Thus this author, with his reason, will not allow the revealed will of God to be the rule of righteousness, but the antecedent, independent, and eternal fitness of things; nor Jesus Christ, God over all, blessed for ever, to be any other than an inferior, subordinate kind of being. Lord preserve his children from such blasphemies!

But, to inspect a little more narrowly the force of the foregoing argument, that no person may give it more credit than it has worth, nor receive an assassin for a friend, which, like the doctrine of the Mass, destroys itself and all other doctrines.

If it does anything decisive at all, it evidently cuts its own throat and ruins you—is a mere *jelo de se*, and proves, like a suicide or self-murderer as it is, its evil intentions against life, all life and being whatsoever, and him who is THE LIFE and THE BEING; it being in reality a demonstration, if it be one at all (and the matter must needs rest upon such a footing), that there can be

no such thing possible, or possible to be conceived, as the existence of God, an original Cause which had no cause, and which you must believe to be, because (according to the author's own account of the matter), it is impossible and absurd to believe it *can* be; for whatever supposition or consideration militates against the possibility of the existence of any lesser thing, without having an antecedent cause to produce it, must of necessity militate with equal, if not greater force, against the possibility of the existence of that same supposed First Cause of all things—for how could IT exist more than other things, without some antecedent cause to produce it?

A glorious argument, indeed, and demonstration this, of our knowledge of a thing, which is founded in a demonstration of *our ignorance* thereof, or rather (according to the supposition and consideration on which we go), in the absolute impossibility of our knowing it—or even so much as conceiving the possibility of its existence, if we regard that very reason of ours, whereby we pretend to establish the necessity of its existence—by undermining and removing even the bare possibility thereof.

Thus the Scripture is fulfilled, “Men, professing themselves to be wise, become fools,” and lose themselves in the inextricable mazes, and intricacies of their own philosophising pride—like that ancient brother of theirs, who, standing one day on the sea-shore, musing and wondering at the ebbing and flowing of the tides, was so carried away with the current of his own thoughts, that, his head being turned, he forgot himself with his standing, and threw himself headlong from the rocks into the sea, to find out that mystery in the deep which he could not fathom upon the dry. But a word to the wise, and he will be yet wiser; but fools pass on and are punished.

If, then, we are wise, and would grow yet wiser, we will do well to cease from men altogether in this as well

as every other matter, and leave the evidences of God's Being to the demonstration of the Holy Ghost, and to the power of God, according to the manner of his own operation by means of the Word; for that man never played with the old serpent but was stung, nor followed another guide, savè the Guide into all truth, in the matters of God, but was betrayed. Witness the process and issue of the just-now-mentioned argument for the bare existence of God—which, without a *character*, by the bye, were but an absolute chimera or creature of mere imagination.

HOW THE PHILOSOPHERS FURNISH OUT A CHARACTER  
FOR GOD:

But let the philosophers alone for a character too; they will presently let you see here also, how little need they have of revelation for discovering the character, more than the bare existence, of God.

How successful they are, you may see, when they begin to spin out of their own bowels, and, spider-like, fall a weaving, by means of their reasoning faculties, a superficial, flimsy, and, I will venture to say, *poisoned* web (take it upon the whole) of attributes, for the clothing of this same existence, which they have found out, and call *God*, with what appear in their eyes suitable perfections.

They go the same way to work as above. They first begin with some virtues or good things which they fancy they see in the world, or in its frame and administration. These virtues or good things they run up to as high perfection as they can, sifting from them the apparent vices or ill things as well as they may, and then make a compliment of them all to the god they have found, whom they endeavour to adorn with some kind of a character.

“Thus,” say they, to give a little further scantling of their measures, “we observe some goodness, wisdom, justice, truth, stability, &c., in the world; and, therefore, we infer, there must be some original fountain of these virtues, which in *itself* is good, just, wise, true, stable,” &c. As for the sins, vices, or ill things, they say, “Those are either someway good in themselves, or, upon the whole, with regard to the universal system; or, that God could not have made a better of them, nor rewarded virtue without them; nor, in a word, maintained this universe in proper poise and government without *vice*, and the punishment thereof.” For the illustration of all which points one has no more to do but peruse their systems of natural religion; suppose Tindal, the professed deist, his system of *Christianity as old as the Creation*, and the most part of the sermons, at Boyle’s lectures, for the defence of natural religion.

And thus also, altogether without the Word, they fancy themselves well able and qualified to provide God of a character. Well, to join issue with them here too, let us also try the same way of arguing, carefully setting aside revelation all the while, as they also do—for revelation would quite spoil this kind of reasoning; but to proceed—

Do we not observe, moderately speaking, rather fully more of evil, folly, injustice, falsehood, changeableness, &c., than of their opposite virtues, in the world.

If, then (for their account of the vices will scarce satisfy everybody, and we shall suppose so for the present, as if it had not been given at all), we are to argue from the existence of the finite streams (as they speak) which we see, to the existence of an infinite, original, unseen fountain, from whence those streams or vices must flow (seeing, by supposition, we know nothing of the fountain but by the streams), it is easy to perceive our God now will turn out to be of a quite different kind of character from

wisdom, goodness, justice, truth, &c.; and at least we must admit the old Persian or Manichean scheme, which maintained (I suppose by the same way of reasoning which our philosophers have adopted) the necessary existence of *two* gods—the one good, and the other evil. The consequence, on this plan, is most natural and unavoidable; for if light, to our apprehension, infer a principle of light, what will darkness infer? If life, and the preservation of life to the sixtieth or seventieth year, infer a principle or fountain of life for so long, what will death in the end of all infer? Surely if preservation infer a preserving power, destruction must, for the same reason, infer a destroying power. If virtue must have its principle in God, where must vice have its principle? and vice is, at least in appearance (from which only the ease will allow us to argue), equal to virtue. If constancy or unchangeableness, apparent in things, suppose a principle constant and unchangeable, what must changeableness and inconstancy suppose? If the qualities of wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, in some measure apparent among the creatures, are to pass for a demonstration of an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, self-existing in a Creator called God—what will a much greater and more glaring appearance of the contrary, and directly opposite qualities of folly, profaneness, injustice, maliciousness, falsehood, pass for a demonstration of?

#### SIN AND DEATH UNACCOUNTED FOR BY PHILOSOPHERS.

INFALLIBLY, our God, if we reason right and true from such principles, must turn out like ourselves (as exemplified in the gods of old), adulterers, liars, thieves, murderers, tyrants, whimsical and ridiculous, with a vast



of sounding attributes, usurped from the true God, and attributed by us, in our blind zeal, to our figments, idols, devils.

Now, reader, if thou expectest an apology from me for endeavouring to expose the nakedness of this *Fairyland* in divinity, or rather, as I would express it, for pointing out the weakness and fallacy of those arguments, which have been laid by church divines for a foundation, to the being of God, and, consequently, of all religion; take it in these words—I do freely, and honestly, as in the presence of God, and under a sense of his revealed name, declare, that in studying and perusing, for years together, the systems, defences, delineations, and demonstrations, as they will have them to be, of natural religion, particularly the sermons at Boyle's lectures, I found myself betrayed into; *first*, absolute *scepticism* in religion—then downright *deism* at heart, till, in the reading of Tindal, whose system (as the most consistent, in my opinion, I had seen), I had implicitly embraced, it pleased God to awaken me, and make me to attend to the Scriptures, after I had found that subtle author proving to a demonstration, that he had advanced nothing but in the very words, or direct consequences, of my favourite church divines and philosophers. As it was with me, and perhaps with Tindal himself at the beginning, so, for aught I know, it may be with thousands. It is dangerous walking on such a surface, as, if it fail under you, will transmit you down into eternal fire, and in a moment drown you, soul and body, in the bottomless pit.

Hence see the egregious folly and absurdity of offering to steal from revelation—for all the noise and stir of the philosophical divines, in this business, is nothing else but a gross attempt at stealing from revelation, a character for God, to make a present of the same to blind corrupt reason, that she may try her manufacturing abilities upon

it, and dress out for us a divinity of her own framing—without accounting for the entry and reigning of sin and death in the world, in a consistency with, and for the illustration of, all the attributes of God, which can be accounted for only by the Word of God itself; and which, if unaccounted for, will render all such curious theories, fine-spun reasoning, and metaphysical inquiries, but a reckoning without the host; or, as if a doctor should issue forth his prescriptions, without considering the circumstances, disease, and condition of his patient—a mere windmill rencounter, and arrant Quixotism.

A NOTE FROM MR. SANDEMAN.

But here, perhaps, they will shift hands, change their ground, and endeavour to fight the cause of infidelity with spiritual weapons, deeming themselves sufficient to maintain, even from the Word of God itself, as before-hinted:—“That we both can, and must know God, without the Word, otherwise we can never know Him at all; for the Word itself (according to them) can only be admitted to be the Word of God on the evidence of our natural knowledge of God, which,” say they, “we have without the Word, and before we know any thing thereof at all.”

Thus, one of their latest and most sanguine advocates has boasted so much of his natural knowledge of God, that he has not scrupled to assert, that it is not possible for a revelation to be ascertained (even by God himself—for in this case he must mean that, or nothing to his purpose, or indeed any purpose), as coming from God, without the help of *some natural notices of God in the conscience*, which he speaks of, and by which he tells you he himself and all other men are distinguished from the brutes; for all other distinctions, it seems with him,

between man and beast, drawn from the human soul, its operations and passions, are precarious and deceitful; it is the knowledge of God in the conscience of the natural man that distinguishes him from the brutes that perish!

O Sandeman, a sharp disputant thou! But who, pray, ascertains to thee those same applauded natural notices of thine? Do they more for themselves than God's Word and Spirit, according to thy own account, can attain to—even ascertain themselves in thy conscience without any help from abroad?

May we ask you, Would not some earlier natural notices, which also behoved to be ascertained by some other notices earlier still, be as necessary to ascertain these same last natural notices, as they to ascertain God's Word to thee? Why take the first impressions for granted, which come without any previous recommendations, and refuse future impressions from the Word, because they require nothing but their own manifestation to recommend them, without making any appeal to the first notices more than the first did to the last? What inconsistencies are not you and all your friends (who, in this matter, are indeed the bulk of mankind) guilty of? But what worse than bedlamite ravings about God are not all men guilty of, when once they have left his Word to run riot in their own conceits?

NOWHERE TOLD IN SCRIPTURE THAT THERE IS A GOD—  
DENIED.

But let us hear them out. For a preamble, perhaps, they will lay it down for a matter of incontestible fact, as they have done a score of times before, "That we are nowhere in all the Scripture told, that there is a God; but that the being of God is a postulate," as they call it, "in revelation, even a point all along taken for granted

and supposed, as an inwrought and essential character in the frame of all human creatures incorporated with their very being—or, at least, as a matter lying so very near them, and within the reach of their natural inquiries, that the Scriptures meddle nothing with telling them that there is a God, but proceed to instruct them about other affairs, leaving them to themselves about that point.”

Amazing! what unaccountable lengths in the assertion way will not men go, rather than be without saying something! Is not the whole sum-total of revelation the sum of this argument, *That there is a God?* Does not the very first sentence in the Bible begin with a declaration that there is a God (Elohim, the Eternal Three, who are one, as afterwards illustrated and explained through the whole Scriptures), the Creator of the heavens and the earth? But this is nothing to stop their mouths; in spite of God's testimony they will insist in their own note, and have it their own way.

Yet they will perhaps grant you, at least some of them, “That the true and saving knowledge of God and his attributes is indeed to be had only from the Word, but not a declaration of his Being, which is supposed as already known, and upon the knowledge whereof the Word itself can only be received.” Is there no juggle here?

Well, all this is as if they should say, “The works, the ways, the attributes, and perfections of God can be discovered in a true and saving way only by the Word; yet the very being itself of God is not discovered thereby, but is supposed as already known. By which supposition of the antecedent knowledge of God's being, all the wheels of revelation are set a-going, and without which they behoved to stop.” Nay, believe Mr. Sandeman, and God himself, as you have heard, could not make them go forward.

Well, will they have us to make a separation between the being of God and his attributes? And were not that a separation of God from God? How absurd! For what kind of God or being is left behind, when you take away not only his works and ways, but also his very attributes and perfections? These last, methinks, exhaust the whole of his being and character; and where these are taken away, there can be no knowledge nor traces left behind of his existence.

So, by the most favourable interpretation, their meaning lands in this glaring absurdity, "That the shining of the essential uncreated light, which is God, is indeed only manifested in the Word. But it is not by the shining thereof that the very being of that light is manifested; for by us the light cannot be known for light by its own evidence, but only by that which we can have no evidence for, even the abstract being of it, without light, without revelation—which being of the light must be taken for granted, as a thing known and perceived to have an existence, before it can be known or perceived, or seen by us through its own shining evidence to have that same existence!!!"

Well is the Scripture fulfilled which saith, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." For the ways, works, attributes, perfections, and whole revealed character of God, what are they all but the eternal, essential, uncreated, self-existent Light breaking out, *the Sun of Righteousness and glory*, in the firmament of his power, and tabernacling in his Word, and from thence shining forth upon all the children of his love? How absurd, then, is it to allow what cannot be denied, "That God discovers his ways and perfections only in his Word, for the salvation of men; and yet at the same time to maintain that he never once tells you in that Word that he hath a being, but supposes you

know he hath a being before you can know he hath a being; or, which is the same thing, before you discover by his Word his perfections, which are his very essence or being!"

But how expressly, as if he had been guarding us against this very error, does he say, "I, even I, Jehovah, am the God alone, and there is none besides me. Know ye that the Lord he is God. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Would the words, *there is a God*, have been a more sure and certain declaration of the being of God than what we have already? And, indeed, if that will suffice, these very words are written, "Verily there is a God." It will not, I hope, be said, that these words are less to the purpose because it is added, "He judgeth in the earth."

NECESSITY OF KNOWING GOD BEFORE REVELATION—  
DENIED.

But you have seen nothing as yet. They will even prove from Scripture, provided you will take the Scripture in their sense, "That you *can* have, and *do* have, and *must* have the knowledge of God from the works of creation and providence, without the Word, or go utterly without it." For this purpose they produce passages from Psalms viii. and xix.; to which it is answered—That the glory of God's power, wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, and other perfections, no doubt, are displayed in all the works of his hand; but that does not say we have eyes to perceive that same glory without the enlightening Word.

Without the enlightening Word, the glory of God, which is indeed always the same in itself, without addition or diminution, would be to us, or to our apprehen-

sion—like the created glory of the earth, while it was yet without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep—a mere *non-appearance*, of whose harmony, order, proportion, and beauty, though all there, nothing could have been said or thought by man till the Lord God said, “Let there be light, and there was light. The morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy.” It is the “entrance of God’s Word” alone that “gives light and understanding” of God “to the simple; and it is by faith,” or the believed Word, says the Holy Ghost, “that we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear”—that is, they were not made of any fore-existing matter, but absolutely of nothing.

Now, suppose reason, or the light of nature, could make something of the existing and appearing things, what could it make of non-appearance or non-existence? The idea of both are equally and essentially included in the idea of creation. And it is certain none of the heathens, Easterns, Greeks or Romans, had any idea of the world’s being produced out of nothing, which is the scriptural idea of creation, notwithstanding of all the cavilling of philosophical fools to the contrary. Some of them thought the worlds had been eternal; others, that the matter or chaos from whence they were produced had been eternal—some one thing and some another, but none the thing as the Scripture says it was. “Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory and honour, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

Now, why has the Scripture insisted so much upon this point, assuring us a thousand of times over and over, that it is God who made all things? Why in particular, to Cyrus the heathen, does God preface his commission

with, "I created the heavens alone; I form the light and I create the darkness—I the Lord do all these things?" Why, if a man with his eyes open, especially a man of sense, understanding, learning, observation, travelling, and spirit, as Cyrus, were as able of himself to perceive and discern by the made things, God the Creator, as he is to perceive and discern those things themselves?—Is it not rather manifest to any unprejudiced reader of the Scriptures, or even of the heathen writings, that all the multitude of nations, even with the assistance of particular, occasional, and above all general and traditional revelation, came short of discovering (I speak of the bulk, considered as nations), and confessing the being and glory of the One True God, from the things that are made? which things, without the Word, could no more have pointed out a God (a God of such a character as Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who are One, besides whom there is no God, and whom the Word alone describes), than the miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus, with all the following glory, would of themselves have pointed out Jesus for the promised Messiah. For suppose all had been acted in dumb show, and suppose the same of all the miracles that ever were wrought by the Holy Ghost, men might have been amazed, but no more edified and instructed in the nature and meaning of what they saw, than a poor pagan Chinese, by seeing a lively popish puppet-show, representing the birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ—which, without the explanation of words, and hearing of faith, would be only a Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar's dream without a Joseph and Daniel to reveal, by the Spirit of the Holy God, the secret things and purposes of God.

Even so, God's Word and God's works are like tallies or cyphers the one to the other. The Word first shows



the works to be God's; and the works, when once discovered to be God's by the Word, serve in his appointment for a true comment (so to speak) or divine illustration of the divine Word. Neither is there any circle or deceit here, but only that harmony and agreement manifested, which God hath established between his Word and his works, for the mutual display of both—the knowledge of which, according to their nature in the heart of him who knows to purpose either the one or the other, hath no separate existence. The works, indeed, may be seen where the Word was never heard, and then the Author cannot be known. But the knowledge of the Word can never shine into any heart without manifesting both the Author and his works.

## PSALMS VIII. AND XIX. CONSIDERED.

But as to Psalms viii. and xix., they are both applied in the New Testament by the Holy Ghost, who behoves best to know his own meaning, as descriptive of the personal glory, humiliation, and exaltation of Emmanuel, God over all, blessed for ever, Amen. So that those texts say nothing to the point in hand, of proving from Scripture the natural knowledge which men have of God without the Scriptures, more than those texts do which say of the Son, that "All things were made by him—he upholdeth all things by the Word of his power—was God—in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God—shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory—and judge the world—and then the heavens shall declare his righteousness abroad—and all flesh shall see his glory—every knee bow, and every tongue confess, that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."——

## OF INTERPRETING THE SCRIPTURES.

But the texts they most insist upon, and indeed the only ones that seem to have any shadow of argument in them to their purpose, in the whole compass of revelation, are these two much-talked of, but little understood passages in the first and second chapters of the Epistle to the Romans; yet, surely, whatever be the meaning of those passages, they cannot give the lie to the whole divine Word besides—the Spirit of inspiration cannot contradict himself. And it will be good for us to be aware that we make not a breach in the glass of revelation, by dashing one part against another, lest we ourselves, and not revelation, shall be the only thing that shall be grinded to powder—for our God is a jealous God. And you have already seen how plainly, how perpetually, God hath affirmed that the knowledge of God comes only from himself by his Word; except it shall be made appear that those two places speak to the contrary.

Now, it is a good and wise rule of interpretation, suggested in Scripture, which is the only infallible interpretation of Scripture, that where one passage or two, or even many, are seemingly of a doubtful sense as to our apprehension, we ought always to read the darker by the light of the clearer texts. But really, in the present case, the impartial and careful consideration of the words, in their own plain, natural, and grammatical sense, and connection with themselves, and with the apostle's scope and argument, will show, that the objections pretended to be drawn from them against the scheme advanced, in conformity I believe with the whole Word of God, in this essay, are entirely of the adversaries' own framing and manufacturing, without the least jot or tittle of foundation in the texts which have been mangled and perverted,

(alas, a very common case!) and wrested utterly, not only from their own sense, but even absolutely from all sense (if the apostolic sense and connection are to be regarded), by a subtlety or two, a quibble, and a pun, or double meaning, imposed upon some of the leading words therein; as I now mean, by God's help, to show.

#### ROMANS I. 18-24, CONSIDERED.

As to Romans i. 18-24, the meaning is easy to be understood, in conformity with the whole Scripture, thus:—

The apostle, declaring to them the necessity of salvation by the righteousness of Jesus, revealed in the gospel, which is the word of faith, and imputed to them who believe, gives them to understand that, “in this gospel, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold,” that is, smother, hold down, or detain (for so the word, *κατεχόντων*, rendered *hold*, signifies) “the truth in unrighteousness,” or unrighteously.

So the heathens, with their lying vanities and self-conceited professions of wisdom, made a prisoner of the truth, and buried the talent given them, even the revealed truth, in the earth, having wrapt it up in a covering of superstition; or, as briars and thorns, even the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the seed and it becometh unfruitful; or as ashes and rubbish bear down and extinguish a fire, even so the flame of divine truth was borne down and extinguished among them, with their corruptions and endless perversions of the truth.

If they should have objected and replied to the apostle, saying, “God had never sowed or scattered any truth or revelation of himself and laws among them; and, there-

fore, he had no reason to expect any increase, or to reveal his wrath against them for ungodliness or unrighteousness, since they had no discoveries made them of God and of his will; and you will allow where there is no law there is no transgression, and where there is no God revealed, no man can be justly charged with ungodliness, or punished for disobedience to that unknown unrevealed God." This charge, or some such as this, if true, had been unanswerable; therefore the apostle directly denies the foundation thereof, and disproves all such kind of contradictions thus—"Because," says he, "that which may be known of God," τὸ γνωστὸν τῷ Θεῷ, that which is known or knowable, or ought to be known of God, "is manifest," not *in them*, for then they had been believers unto righteousness and salvation, and not hearers only, as they were, unto condemnation; but as the margin reads, "to them," or "among them," as the same word (ἐν) is of necessity rendered, to preserve the sense, in hundreds of places; as Mary is said to be blessed (ἐν) *among* women—the kingdom of heaven to be (ἐν) *among* the unbelieving Jews, not in them, or in their hearts, which would have been absurd.

But how came this manifestation of the knowledge of God to be made among those heathens? was it by their own reasonings upon what they saw? The contrary may be presumed; for then, when they had hunted for it, and found it upon the scent, they would not afterwards so readily have reasoned themselves out of it again, and turned their God into a *worm*. How was it then? Hear the apostle, who adds, "For God showed," or manifested "it to them." The word here rendered *showed*, is ἐφάνηρωσε, answering to the word immediately before, φανερόν, rendered *manifest*; the same word which is used, 1 John iv. 9, where it is said, "In this was manifested, ἐφανερωθη, the love of God, that he sent his Son into the world;"

and 1 Tim. iii. 16, "God was *manifest*," or *showed*, ἐφανερωθη, "in the flesh;" and Micah vi. 8, "He hath *showed*" (ἐφανερώσε, Gr. Trans.) "to thee, O man, what is good." The knowledge of all which manifestations of the same object, which is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, comes only by faith through the Word, and not by the things done discovering themselves to the mind, much less by the reason of man, forming syllogisms and chopping of logic upon them.

Verse 20. "For the invisible things of him, even his eternal power and Godhead," which Godhead certainly must comprehend the whole revealed perfections of the Divine Nature, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, &c., these are "clearly seen," like the shining light, by those who have eyes to perceive it; or, whether they perceive it or not, yet the light shines to the condemnation of them who walk in darkness, and to the justification of them who, like Moses, endured as seeing the invisible, while they looked not at the things which were seen, but at the things which were not seen, even the eternal.

Thus, as Jesus Christ was, by preaching, evidently set forth to the Galatians, though some were bewitched, and understood not; and as Christ the light came to his own and they knew him not, because it was their hour and power of darkness, though some always believed, and condemned the ungodly, by their chaste conversation in the light;—even so, the invisible things of God "from the creation of the word," that is, from the time or date of the world's creation, "are clearly seen;" not because they are made visible to the bodily eye, which were impossible; for how could the fleshly eye see the Godhead? but because God hath showed them, as in the last verse, by his word; so that the mind may perceive them—*being understood*, minded, remembered,

daily suggested to and pressed upon the mind, as the word *ροσμενα* signifies, *by the things that are made*, now that God has manifested and declared himself, by his Word, to be the Creator and Preserver of the world, even from the foundation thereof.

Though the words thus paraphrased, according to the common translation, make a good consistent sense; yet it must not be denied, but ought rather to be carefully remarked, that the original words *τοῖς ποιήμασι*, rendered, *by the things that are made*, may as justly and properly, in all respects, be translated thus: *by the things that are done, or have been done*, even by God the Lord, for the manifestation of himself, his character, and manner of acting towards the children of men, as now in these last days declared in the gospel, according to all that God spake and did by Moses and all his prophets, by Jesus his only begotten Son and all his apostles; God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. Thus “the times of former ignorance God winked at; but now in the gospel commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”

This, indeed, I take to be the meaning of the text, which at once will cut off all difficulty from the place, and all pretence of cavilling about the knowledge of God from the works of creation without the Word; which seems to be a mere pretence, as founded only upon a mistranslation—which is the more probable from the apostle’s scope, which is to charge the Romans, to whom he then wrote, rather with their own personal guilt and condemnation, if they rejected the gospel now preached to them with the Holy Ghost from heaven, than to charge their consciences with the sins and punishment of their ancestors; though he seems directed to use a figure of speech and address very common with him, by seeming to trans-

fer to others what he means directly to charge home upon the conscience of his immediate bearer, till he can conclude directly with a *Thou art the man*. But, as to this, every man will judge—as he ought—for himself.

There is also another (by no means unlikely) interpretation, which has been oftentimes suggested, that by these words in the Greek, *τοῖς ποιήμασι*, we may understand those holy and divinely inspired *poems* or *songs* of record (for the words undoubtedly will bear that rendering), wherein the Holy Ghost chose to preserve the everlasting remembrance of the glorious things of God from the beginning, till the Scriptures should be written and published to every creature. For God, from the beginning of time, inspired his servants, and spake at divers times, and in sundry manners, to the ancients by his prophets. And that of registering the heavenly transactions and records by songs and poems, was one way which God chose: witness the song of Deborah and Barak, and that of Moses at the Red Sea, and Miriam with the women in the dance, and the daughters of Israel who met David and Saul. Were these things recorded and the creation unrecorded? And many of those inspired songs are spoken of which are now lost; such as that of Jasher, for instance; and Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied: and they seem always to have uttered their prophecies of old in the way of song or poem, the style being universally exalted above that of common discourse. And how many others might have been employed in the same service with Enoch, the Lord knows. One thing is certain to us, that God never left himself without witness; and that, if he did them good by giving them rain and fruitful seasons, and filling their hearts with food and gladness, he behoved to have told them at the same time that he was their bountiful Preserver and Benefactor, and not their own idols; other-

wise, how could they have been charged with sin and ingratitude for not knowing and worshipping an unrevealed God? And to those songs concerning the creation, the Lord seems to allude, when he says to Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? when the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy;" which might have been such a song for the consolation and praise of the church in the ancient days of old before the flood, as Gabriel's salutation of Mary, and the song of the angels at the birth of Jesus, when the multitude of the heavenly host, in the light shining around, sang, "Peace on earth, good-will towards men," for the everlasting joy and praise of the Christian church: for in such things the angels, as being all ministering spirits to them who shall be heirs of salvation, have fellowship with the saints, and desire to look into them, and behold the manifold wisdom of God, learning it from the church. Now it is evident, from the inspired history of the first times, that believers are called also the sons of God, and idolators or unbelievers are called the children of men.

A fragment of one of those poems or songs, which God at first had bestowed on the heathen world, which they indeed (like Belshazzar with the vessels of the Lord's house in another case) had prostituted, and turned into a ballad of praise to one of their idols, called *Jupiter the Olympian*, the apostle quotes from one of their own poets (whom he calls by a figure *prophet*, as others of them were called *priests*), and applies it to its true and original purpose, "We are all his offspring," &c.

And, moreover, that such revelations from God, concerning himself and his ways, were as universal as the race of Adam upon earth from the first times, appears even from the publicly established idolatry in all nations—their priests, temples, sacrifices, worship, and devo-



tions; not to speak of circumcision, washings, purifications, and other customs, which afterwards obtained, in imitation of God's way towards his chosen Israel. All which customs, we know from the Scriptures, God ordained, in favour to mankind, for signs, which he declared the meaning of, and appointed till the times of refreshing by Jesus Christ: the nations seized greedily upon the signs, the outward things; the Devil took away the meaning, stupified them, bewitched them, enslaved them, and taught them, like dogs, to fetch and carry, and fawn upon himself; having quite corrupted them and their worship, and even drenched them in brutishness and devilishness, till they became quite ignorant, and so regardless of God, whose names, titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works, they horribly profaned, as dogs with holy things, and swine with pearls, and yielded up themselves, with all those things which originally came from and belonged to God, even unto the Devil, whom they worshipped, adored, and served as God, under a thousand names, in every nation under heaven, and in various manners, according to all the deeps of Satan, and working mysteries of iniquity in their hearts and temples, where he dwelt and reigned absolute, like a viper in his hole, a scorpion in his nest, or a cockatrice in his den—deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; a cage full of all unclean birds; a mother of abominations; the spirit that ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience, leading them captive at his pleasure; the God of this world, the Devil and Satan. Lord God of peace, bruise him shortly under the feet of all thy children, and cast him, with death and hell, into the lake of fire and brimstone, that he may deceive the nations no more.

If any person is so ignorant of the Scriptures as to think this account aggravated concerning the reign of

Satan as God, under innumerable names and forms of superstition among the nations; or that, if it were so as here represented, there could have been no such thing as a standing revelation (whatever might have been at the beginning), witness, or saint amongst them all, continuing to appear for God in the world, seeing all public things were fallen into such universal corruption.

A. No doubt there was a continued revelation for all that on the part of God maintained among them (as shall shortly appear), and many saints and wise men in the east, west, south and north, witnesses for God, whose names we know not, but which are written in the Lamb's book of life, who have undergone martyrdom for his sake, and are now inheriting the promises in the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and to deny this were as absurd as to say now, or a thousand years hence, that, since the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ down to the year 1776, there was no such thing as a kingdom of Christ, or a Christian revelation, maintained, believed, loved, and obeyed, in the world, because no one kingdom, nation, tongue, kindred, language, city, civil society, considerable body, or corporation of men together in the world, have, to this precious moment of time, according to Christ's own account of his kingdom and subjects, appeared to be what deserves to be, or will be called, by those who know what Christ's kingdom is, a CHRISTIAN kingdom, nation, tongue, kindred, language, city, civil society, considerable body, or corporation of men together in the world—though individuals of all these, gathered out and separated to the Lord by his Spirit, through means of the revealed truth, make up an immense multitude upon the whole, which no man can number.

But, to finish this digression, and that which introduced it—which every one must be left to his own con-

sideration to follow out, or let alone, according to his inclination and ability.

As for those words in the text, *From the creation* (κρίσεως) *of the world*, which our adversaries would have by all means to signify the visible *fabric, constitution, and workmanship*, or the *construction and curious mechanical handicraftmanship and contrivance* of the world; and here rests the main, if not the whole stress of their cause; and what a castle in the air it is, you may see by the light of the parallel places of Scripture, which speak of time or date, and not of workmanship, thus—we read of parables kept secret *from the foundation of the world*, and of those whose names were written in the book of the slain Lamb *from the foundation of the world*; and yet more expressly, where the same word is used, it is said, *from the beginning of the creation* (κρίσεως), God made them male and female; and again the scoffers say, all things continue as they were *from the beginning of the creation* (κρίσεως); here too, Is that from the *fabric, workmanship, construction, and handicraftmanship* of the creation? What an insult upon common sense, not to speak of the Scriptures!

Are we poor, blinded, sensual, sinful creatures, since the entrance of sin and death into the world? whatever man in innoency and perfection might have done, we neither know, nor need we be careful about the matter; but even then, he neither knew his food, nor his dwelling, till the Lord God told him of all; but, taking things as they are with us ever since the *fall*, can we, evil, finite, foolish, false, unjust, weak, blind creatures, as we are; can we, in such deplorable circumstances, in very deed, be able to learn that sublime and divine knowledge of God, his being and perfections, without any master but the bare visible book of creation, spread out before us, and of that even no more than that very small spot of it within our ken?

When would we learn to understand Hebrew, or Dutch, or even English on such terms? I am sure 60 or 80 years' study would lay us all in our graves, just as wise as when we began to consider the letters and various characters of those languages.

But we, O proud worms! cased in a small circumference of dust, how wise would we be thought! we see a diminutive spot of a finite, changeable, temporary, vanishing, cursed world, (and, since sin and death came into it, we can see it in no other light), whereof ourselves appear to be so considerable a part; and, from our seeing of this portion of such a vain, visible, fluctuating, perishing thing, can we arrive at the knowledge of an invisible, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, almighty, wise, just, good, and holy God? What so striking likeness is there betwixt finite and infinite, changeableness and unchangeableness, folly and wisdom, weakness and power, time and eternity, that, from the being of *such effects*, we should infer the being of *such a cause*; or that *such a cause* could be the author of *such effects*: effects, in all appearance, so unlike to himself?

But, praise to the Eternal! what we could not find out by searching, nor see in all his works; not by reason of their imperfection in themselves, abating the *curse* inflicted on the world for *sin*, but by reason of our own natural blindness by sin—he, even he himself, who is all perfection, who can be represented by no imperfect thing, so as that the *original* should be found out by the *imperfect image*; he to whom nothing can be likened or compared; whom nothing that is not God can exhibit—he hath showed his invisible Godhead in his word, to the end that we may believe, and cry out with holy rapture, “O Jehovah, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: sought out they are of all them who take pleasure in them.” *So that*, now the

true light of the Word shineth, enlightening the works of God, *they*, those sons of darkness who believe not, but fly from the light, *are without excuse* for not glorifying him; *because that when they knew God*, that is, when they had the revelation of the knowledge of God given them in the words of God, which they did not understand, because Satan, the god of this world, had blinded their minds, *they glorified him not as God*, that is, as explained below, *they liked not to retain God in their knowledge*, or rather, with the margin, *to acknowledge him, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened: professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into that which is by nature no god.* Thus they changed their glory into them. *They changed the truth of God, even the God of truth, into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature (παρα τον κτισαντα), passing by (as Beza and others render the original words) the Creator, who is blessed for ever: amen.*

If any still object, that it is said in the 21st verse, that *they knew God*. A. That expression is already accounted for in respect of the revelation which had been made and maintained among them from the beginning of the creation, though Satan had pre-occupied their minds, and kept them, by means of his accursed sophistries, through the natural corruption of their own deceived hearts, from understanding the meaning thereof. The light is not to blame, nor to be declared darkness, if the workers of iniquity will needs shut their eyes, and turn day into night, with regard to themselves, by hiding themselves in caves and dens. A similar expression the Lord uses to the unbelieving Jews, intimating to them the revelation he had made of himself by Moses and all the prophets, and then, last of all, by his own personal appearance, preaching and doing miracles among

them: when they had said, *No man knoweth whence he is.* "Then" (John vii. 28) "cried Jesus in the temple, as he taught, saying, *Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself; but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.*" But again, with respect to their misunderstanding of his revelation and meaning, he saith (chap. viii. 19) to the same, or same kind of persons, "*Ye neither know me nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; for I and my Father are one.*"

And again Jesus said unto them, when they had said, "Are we blind also?" (chap. ix. 41), "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth." And again, because it was *their hour and power of darkness*, the Lord, who had shined forth the true Light amongst them, though their darkness comprehended not the Light, said (chap. xv. 21), "These things will they do, because *they know not him that sent me.* If I had not come and spoken, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak," or excuse, "for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have seen" (with regard only to the manifestation of the Light, and not the discerning thereof; for he, the true Light, was in the world, and shined—but the world knew him not—and so he says, *They have, in this sense, seen*) "and hated both me and my Father. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Now, the objections from this place, I hope, are totally and fairly removed, without using any far-fetched criticisms, but only by comparing one part of the Word with another, and considering the genuine sense and scope of

the passages; which we ought always to do without prejudice or partiality, lest, if we sacrifice one portion of holy writ for what we fancy the establishment of another, we lose the benefit of the whole Word of Life, and ourselves into the bargain.

ROM. ii. 14—16, CONSIDERED.

As to the other place in Rom. ii. 14—16, if what is above suggested were admitted, little would need to be added here. But as many fearful consequences, to the overturning in the hearts of many the whole plan of salvation, seem to me to take their rise from the misunderstanding of this, with a few other passages nearly parallel, besides the particular absurdity of building upon it natural religion, as a consequence of the supposed natural knowledge of God and his laws in the hearts of all men; which fancy, wherever it shall take place, and be fully followed out in its consequences, I doubt not, will be utterly subversive of the whole revealed system of Christianity, and so introduce utter darkness, instead of the clearest light of God.

Wherefore, in the first place, let us carefully observe the apostle's scope. Is it to prove that the Gentiles, naturally of themselves without the word of revelation, know the law, and consequently God the Author of it: or, which is to the same purpose, do by nature fulfil the things contained in the law? How absurd the supposition! How diametrically contrary to the whole Word of God—particularly the whole first chapter, whereto he refers when he says (chap. iii. 9), "We have already charged and proved both Jew and Gentile, that they are under sin—all gone out of the way—there is none that doeth good, no not one—destruction and misery are in their ways—and the way of peace have they not known!"

By which he means, that they neither knew God naturally nor spiritually, though God had showed both himself, and his law, from the beginning, to all nations by his communicated word, in such manner as seemed good in his own sight; whence, after enumerating a formidable multitude of their enormous abominations, he concludes upon them, that, though they knew and severely felt the judgment of God, and could not be ignorant that the same judgment came from God, if they had attended to what was showed them, and that they who committed such things were worthy of death; for death in dreadful and signal shapes came upon them, bearing the marks of their sin upon it; and they themselves, in a practical manner, showed the justice thereof, by enacting criminal laws, and inflicting death upon the offenders for their own preservation; and, in doing so, they could not but think themselves right: yet in other cases, when they thought they could do the same things with profit and safety to themselves, they not only took the liberty of doing them, but also consented with and took pleasure in those others who did the same things, when they could not so much as plead the plea of temptation, as an excuse for taking pleasure in the sins of other men.

Well, so was it with the Gentiles: Was it better with the Jews? Not a whit. What the apostle had done for the Gentiles in the former chapter, he undertakes to do (the kindest office in the world) for the Jews in this second chapter; namely, to prove that they are equally under sin also, and that, as their light or manifested law was clearer, so their condemnation for disobedience should be proportionably greater.

But here, having another kind of people to deal with, he must needs go another way to work, and use means to convince them of sin, and so of wrath, by that very



law, wherein they foolishly apprehended their great strength of righteousness and life lay, even in their own written law, which, as they acknowledged and gloried, God had given, explained, and upheld among them by the hand of Moses, and all the prophets.

Well, he gives them to understand that, if they kept that law, by that law they should live; for life is the reward of obedience; but, if they sinned against that law, by that law they should perish; for death is the wages of sin.

And lest they should fancy, as indeed they fancied, that some allowance, nay even eternal life, should be yielded and awarded to them, because their bodies were come of Abraham's blood, and that they should be accepted for that; and especially because the law was given to their fathers, solemnly delivered and established among them, and they were, throughout all their generations, appointed the keepers and guardians thereof; and many of them could say, that at least as to the letter of it, viz., in their own sense, with regard to outward observation (and they seemed to have had no other view), they had actually from their youth up kept it all, and so trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, and thanked God that they were not like other men.

No such pleas! no such pleas! away with your sham pretences! O vain men! If you have any expectations through the law, they must be through obedience to the law—pure, perfect, personal, constant, eternal, unreprouchable, unsinning obedience; submission, regard, adherence absolute to the full meaning, extent, and spirit of the law, reaching and commanding your very heart and conscience, in all instances and respects—through this, through this channel alone of unspotted perfection, your pretences and claims by the law can be sustained;

and not through any peculiar kind of predilections, or fond partialities.

The law knows no faces; for God is no respecter of persons. Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified: and every man according to the law which he has received; the Jews by that law which was delivered to the Jews; and the Gentiles—not by that peculiar form of Moses' law, which was not delivered to the Gentiles—but without the Mosaic form of law altogether, by that universal declaration concerning God and his will, which God himself, according to his own good pleasure, had seen good to bestow upon the Gentiles, at divers times, and in sundry manners, or forms, and circumstances, and ceremonies; by dreams, by visions, by voices from heaven, by angels, by prophets, priests, patriarchs, and holy men of old times, such as Job and his kindred, Jethro, Melchisedee, and even all the fathers, from Adam down to the three wise men of the east, who came to worship the Lord at Bethlehem, guided by a star; not to speak of innumerable multitudes of true worshippers from all nations sojourning among the Jews, and returning again to their own countries; nor of the Jews scattered by wars, famines, captivities, and a thousand other ways, over all the earth, spreading the knowledge of the true God and his revealed will wherever they went. Why mention Daniel and his brethren, set over all the wise men, or schools of learning, through the best part of the known world in their days? Why insist upon the numberless edicts, decrees, commands, and royal mandates—awful, peremptory, severe, and decisive—of all, or almost all, the universal kings of Daniel's times, to worship and fear the God of Daniel? Does not that imply that Daniel was to see the subjects of those empires, which filled the whole earth, universally taught and instructed in the ways

of God? Was Daniel, in God's providence, and by the king's commandment, set over all the provinces and their princes, and over all the universities? And was Daniel a man of no zeal or spirit, for doing good according to his power and opportunities?

We need not here go back to Joseph and his power and spirit for the Lord: but we may observe the conversion of Naaman the Syrian; the greatness and influence of Mordecai the Jew among the nations; the preaching of Jonah, with the repentance of Nineveh, that great city; the zeal and profiting of the Queen of the South by the wisdom of Solomon; the messages and prophecies, threatenings and promises, sent by the prophets of the Lord to the nations around, as the Lord commanded. And did not the Lord bear home his own doctrines and declarations of his will to all men, upon the consciences of many, without all peradventure, of those who were blessed to hear and see such things—signs and miracles in heaven, earth, and sea, confirming, stamping, and sealing the truths of God—truths from time to time delivered from above, and handed down by tradition from generation to generation—truths refreshed also and supplied daily, like the gladdening rivers of God, with tributary streams of additional and new discoveries by clearer and clearer revelations, in such ways and methods of infinite wisdom and prudence as seemed good to the one God both of the Gentiles and Jews to employ; and all this in a continued and uninterrupted course, since the forming of man upon the earth, to show forth his praise who divided the world among the sons of Adam for their habitation, and who made of one blood all the nations of the earth. To him be all the glory of his works ascribed for ever. Amen.

So it was with the Gentiles. And now, to put a case for the conviction of the Jews, on a comparison of

them with the Gentiles, to show the absolute justice and impartiality of God, who deals in the purest spirit of equity with all his subjects, who never gathers where he has not strawed, nor reaps where he has not sowed—we may suppose the apostle of God addressing the Jews thus:—

Find you out the persons who shall stand the test and fiery trial of those very laws or rules whereby they shall be judged; not only of the Jews, who are so highly privileged, and value themselves so much on knowing the law and keeping the law; but also of those very Gentiles whom you Jews despise and treat with the highest disdain, as neither having nor acknowledging your law; yet even they, “the Gentiles which have not the law,” or that rule of obedience to be observed according to that certain particular mode and order of rites and ceremonies, written and committed to the Jews by the hand of Moses; whensoever, or if, “they DO by nature” or custom, that is, according to the matter and manner of all that manifested will of God which they have access to know naturally, or without becoming Jews, even in their natural state of uncircumcision, whether that will of God be handed down from father to son by tradition, or given by immediate revelation, as God appeared to Laban, Abimelech, and Balaam, or in whatever other fashion discovered by infinite wisdom in every tongue, kindred, nation, and language in the world; if they are obedient to that which is manifested, and required at their hands—and so DO, upon the matter, “the things contained in the law,” even the works of universal obedience according to the spirit and extent of that particular law or rule delivered to them; for obedience is the whole end and fulfilment of every law whatsoever; and the peculiar circumstances of obedience, after the manner thereof enjoined, to the Jews,

for example, are all enjoined only for the purpose of determining and fixing of the required obedience according to God's good pleasure. So, if those Gentiles, without your Jewish law, fulfil that obedience which is demanded of them in their own circumstances, as they are situated by nature, though God has made their natural circumstances as heathens, and your natural circumstances as Jews, to differ, and accordingly has in like manner accommodated his ways to you and to them, yet they are nothing behind you, if they have done what answers to their law: they are surely on an equal footing with every Jew keeping the Jewish law, for acceptance and justification with God; and are infinitely before every Jew that does not come up to the perfection of his law, whom they condemn. For *these* supposed obedient and perfect Gentiles *having not the Jewish law*, are not without having a law or rule of what they are to believe and do, absolutely and altogether, which were absurd on the present supposition of their yielding obedience, or doing the things of the law; for what is obedience but conformity to a law? And how could they do by nature, or custom, or education, or any other way, what they did not know as contained in a law or rule of doing? or would that supposed doing of theirs be reckoned obedience, if they had no law to be the rule or standard of that same doing or obedience? But in such a case they *are*, or serve for, *a law unto themselves*: not that every man is left to do what seemeth right in his own eyes, or that the doing of this would be obedience to God, as the supposition of our adversaries on this place says, leaving every man in his doings to be guided by his own reason, natural opinion, inclination, mind, understanding, conscience, lust, or will, and calling the result of the whole a doing of the things contained in the law; which, instead of obedience to God, would

be downright lawlessness and rebellion against God—or it were hard to say what lawlessness and rebellion against God were. But they are to observe that law which is given to themselves, who are Gentiles by nature, and to educate their children in the same self-denial and submission to the revealed will of God, in whatever manner he may have been pleased to favour them with the knowledge thereof among themselves, without having any trouble or encumbrance given them from that which they have not, by reason of their natural birth and circumstances as heathens, made known to them, even the particularly circumstanced Jewish law.

Find out such persons among the Gentiles as have been just now described, who are blameless according to the duty required of them in their own natural circumstances, who are called Gentiles by nature on account of their original birth and education among the Gentiles, even as the Jews are called Jews by nature on account of their original birth and education in the Jewish line and manner.

Find out such patterns of perfect obedience according to their rule among the Gentiles; and, if you do so, no doubt but you will find them as blessed as any Jew who shall be found blameless and perfect according to his Jewish law—for what do such perfect Gentiles lack of the glory of God *which show the work of the law*, the power, love, and obedience, or righteousness of the law *written* on their hearts, as God wrote upon the tables of stone, with his own finger, the law delivered at Sinai; which law was not in the nature of the stone, nor upon the stone in any shape, till the Lord God spake the ten words, and then engraved them for everlasting remembrance upon the stone.

Thus obedient Gentiles, by our supposition, would be in a condition, as well as obedient Jews, to show, by

their obedience, the law, their own law, *written*, or, as the meaning is, revealed, believed, loved, and obeyed, not in show and profession only, but in deed and in truth, even *in their hearts, their conscience also*, in such a case as we have supposed for argument's sake, *bearing witness*, or rather as the margin reads, *witnessing with or unto them, and their thoughts the meanwhile*, or rather, with the margin here also, *between themselves*, namely, the thoughts, exercised under the prescribed rule, standard, or law of conduct and behaviour, mutually disapproving, hating, and rejecting those evil things which are forbidden; or, on the other hand, approving, loving, embracing, pursuing, and perfecting those good things which are required; as it is expressed in the text, *accusing or else excusing one another*; not one another's persons or actions, as some perhaps may imagine—for Mr. Glas, with his party, explain it by “heartily scolding one another;” but it is the very thoughts themselves (*κατηγορέειντων*) *condemning*, according to the law, on whose side the man of righteousness will always stand, not only evil words and other outward acts of wickedness, but also the very conceptions, buds, and beginnings of sin, evil thoughts, motions, propensities, and temptations to sin; or (*ἀπολογουμένων*) *pleading for*, vindicating and justifying, contending and insisting for, not only external good words and actions, but also good, perfectly good thoughts, motions, and steadfast purposes and desires, constantly, without intermission or failure in the least *iota*, as being essentially and indispensably necessary to obedience, according to the spirit and demands of the law.

Here earnestly observe, that the above case of Gentiles fulfilling the law, or *doing* by nature, or any way, the things contained in the law, is merely, as before hinted, a case supposed for the sake of the argument—which

is to convince the Jews of sin by their own law, and to obviate and remove their mistakes about their state and condition under it, even to stop their vain-glorious mouths, and show them that they were not to be accepted, justified, and saved by having and hearing, and extolling their law with the breath of their mouth, but by the *doing* of the works required.

Thus John the Baptist, in like manner, makes his address to the Pharisees, people of the same spirit and condition, who gloried in being Abraham's children—"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits, therefore, meet for repentance; for now also the axe is laid at the root of the tree; every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewed down and cast into the fire—and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father; for I say unto you, that God is able even of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham:" not that God meant to turn stones unto men; but only that God would rather do so than admit those same Jews to Abraham's privileges without Abraham's faith.

The case *there*, of turning stones into children for Abraham, rather than that a generation of vipers, without repentance, and fruits meet for repentance, should be admitted into heaven, is most assuredly a case formed for illustration of the doctrine of the kingdom, to show the absurdity of Jews expecting salvation by any other way besides that whereby the Gentiles might have the same ground of expectation: for "is God the God of the Jews only, and not of the Gentiles also?"

Even so *here* the supposition is evidently framed on the same design, and by no means a real case, that ever happened, or possibly can happen in human nature, in this corrupted fallen state——

Otherwise, the Gentiles should be allowed better,



and in better circumstances than the Jews, which were absurd (for the Jew hath much advantage every way), and would utterly destroy the apostle's argument for convincing the Gentiles of sin; which is by showing them their transgressions of that law which they had received, *and not their obedience to it*—a point this which the advocates of natural religion would do well to consider when they gloss upon the text in hand.

The Jews indeed are proved to be no better, nor in better circumstances, by reason of their disobedience, than the Gentiles: whatever advantages the Jews had, or might have had, by having the oracles of God committed to them, these were all lost, and their sin, moreover, highly aggravated, by their continuing in the breach of such a manifest law, wherein they boasted.

But still at the same time it must be granted that the Gentiles are set forth as the very monsters of wickedness, arrived at the most flagrant and crying pitch of corruption—so far are they from being recommended and held out, even any one of them, for examples of holiness and perfection.

Moreover, if the Gentiles really *did* by nature the things contained in the law, *Jehovah* hath sworn by himself, and pawned his life for theirs, that they should by their own doings be saved, and live eternally—for no man has any more in the world *to do*, that he may enter into life, but to keep the commandments; if the Teacher come from God, the good Master, know anything about the matter—for “the man” (Jew or Gentile makes no odds) “that doth those things, shall even live by them”—Yea, and the Gospel of grace, declaring justification and salvation only by the righteousness of God, were all a fable—the coming of Jesus for a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel—with the whole testimony of God, concerning

the *fall*, universal corruption and enmity of the human nature, all a falsehood—and, in particular, the inspired apostle in this whole connection, but, as the Athenians said, a babbler, or mere word-scatterer—if there be indeed any one man of God's creation, Gentile or Jew, except the *man* Christ Jesus *Emmanuel*, that ever *did*, *doth*, or shall do the things contained in the law, naturally or spiritually, or any other way at all whatsoever, so as to be justified before God (for justification before God is the point in hand), and so obtain the infallible consequence, life, glory, honour, and immortality, by *so doing*.

For it is evidently in this sense, I say, to prevent cavilling, of *doing* the things contained in the law, that the apostle speaks when he is declaring the righteous judgment of God, who, he asserts, will render to every man according to his deeds—"Tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, upon every soul of man that *doeth* evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory and honour, immortality and peace, to every man that *worketh* good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for as many as have sinned in the law," even in a state of circumcision, being naturally Jews, under their own peculiar dispensation or law, "*shall be judged by the law;*" that is, be condemned and perish by that law under which they had sinned.

But *for as many as have sinned without* that just-  
now-mentioned Jewish *law* in a state of uncircumcision, being naturally Gentiles, *shall also* (as well as sinning Jews by the Jewish law) *perish without* that Jewish *law*; because that said law was never given in its peculiar form to Gentiles; but they shall be judged, and condemned, and destroyed, only by their own law or rule of life, which, instead of observing, they had trampled upon by their transgressions against it: "For neither

circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but the keeping of the commandments of God.”

But all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is no difference. Therefore every mouth is stopped by the law, and the whole world become guilty before God; not one exception of Gentile or Jew: therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified in the sight of God—for by the law is the knowledge of sin, and of wrath: for the law, every broken law, worketh wrath—as it is declared to the Galatians, who had believed through grace, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to *do them*. And he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all.” And “that no man is justified by the deeds of the law, it is evident; for it is written, *The just*,” that is, the man of righteousness, “*shall live*,” not by what he doth or suffereth in obedience to the law, but “*by faith*,” even by what he believeth, which is the object of his faith, namely, the righteousness of God, the righteousness of Christ, “which is to all, and upon all, that believe; for there is no difference between Jew and Gentle. Now, the law is not of faith, but the man that doeth the things contained in the law shall live in them.” So that it is only the just, or the righteous, not by his doing, but by his faith, that shall live; for it is Christ alone that is the end, fulfilment, and perfection of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth. So Jews and Gentiles both, according to the apostle’s doctrine, are equally *shut up by the respective law* which each are under (which is in effect the same, though differing in circumstances and ceremonies), *unto the faith*, Gal. iii.

But not one of all the just-now-mentioned abominable consequences can be avoided by those who believe the apostle’s supposition of Gentiles doing by nature the

things contained in the law, a real matter of fact that ever existed, existeth, or shall exist, if so be the divine testimony be a matter of fact.

If, however, opposers will still insist, and say, "That the very supposition of itself, beginning with a *when* or an *if*, supposeth the *reality*, or *possibility* at least, of the case supposed, as of a thing that hath happened, or may happen, and that frequently; otherwise, it were absurd to put an impossible thing for a case, and to argue from it." The objection, I think, is put in its full strength; an objection which has been so often made. To which it is answered, Let them account to us how it was possible for the Lord to lie; for he supposeth and saith, "*If* it were not so, I would have told you;" and, "*If* I go not away, the Holy Ghost will not come;" and, "*If* I should deny that I know the Father, I should be a liar like unto you." Let them also give an account how Jehovah should swear by himself, *That the man who doth these things, even the things contained in the law, shall even live by them, as I live, saith the Lord;* and yet with equal faithfulness declare, *That by the deeds of the law, or by doing of the things contained in the law, shall no man be justified;* for as many as are under the law are under the curse. Here an impossibility, according to the present condition of human nature, is supposed and declared with the oath of God, even to reduce us to despair of being saved in that impossible way, that we may believe, and be saved by Christ Jesus, who is the end of that law (which bears witness against us, and to him) for righteousness to every one that believeth—who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the only way to the Father, and the kingdom of the Father: for no man entereth in but by Christ the Door.

I pray God to deliver the people from such errors, especially their teachers, who, *if* they are false, (would

to God that this were an impossible *if* also), poison the world worse than the frogs of Egypt, when they were gathered together into heaps and stank, and the whole land was poisoned with their stench; and who, like the frogs of the bottomless pit, if not themselves the very creatures that are meant, corrupt the people, from the sceptred kings to the dunghill beggars, by crawling and breathing upon them, and insinuating themselves by hellish ways into their very bosoms and hearts. But may the Lord deliver all his election, people and pastors, from the dreadful and fatal wrestings which have been made (as the apostle Peter speaks) of the Scriptures—and of this we see, as well as of other places, especially when an *if* or a *when*, in a certain connection, comes in their way, witness their perversion of Heb. vi. 6, with its context, to the overthrowing, in the minds of some, the perseverance of the saints—or, what is as absurd, to the establishing in others a persuasion that they are unbelievers; persons without an union with, and interest in, Christ; of whom it may be said, that they have been “once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,” and consequently that such may fall away. If this be not one description of saints in reality, it will be hard to produce another in the Scriptures. And so have others dreamed, from an *if* or two, Rom. xi., that the Jews shall be restored as a national body, and brought back from all the corners of the earth to their own land, and former government and laws; and that the temple shall be built again in an exceedingly glorious manner at Jerusalem, which shall again become the glory of the whole world. And for further proof and illustration of this favourite point, thousands of passages from Moses and all the prophets

(in direct opposition to the apostolic interpretation) are made to speak. And this they call the *restoration* and *conversion* of the Jews; for which, in the above sense, they pray, and plead the promises. It is not here meant, by the author of this, that all of the Jewish nation belonging to the election of grace, the true Israel, shall not be called and converted, in God's own time and manner, just precisely, and in no otherwise, than the Gentiles; God forbid! for thus we (too) pray for the *conversion of Jews and Gentiles both*, according to what we take to be the New Testament sense of the matter: believing that we have no ground upon such slippery foundations as the *ifs* and *whens* spoken of, to build such expectations as the general doctrine to be found in hundreds of authors professedly does, more than we can depend upon the carnal glosses of men about that *millennium*, as they call it, of theirs. The Scripture indeed says, "that Christ shall reign with his saints a thousand years;" which we believe shall be fulfilled, or is just now fulfilling, in Christ's own sense and manner; which, like the fulfilment of all the foregoing prophecies, absolutely escape the sagacity of man, till the Spirit and the event declared the meaning; the reality and certainty of which we can believe on our Lord's word, as well as the whole Book of Revelation, though we can say nothing as to the manner till the Lord show it. And it is to be apprehended that all your fine cobweb theories, expositions, and speculations—bold, curious, amusing, and ingenious, as sometimes they may be in the eyes of sympathetic dreamers of future things pretended to be founded in the dark and parabolical places of Scripture—have little more solidity in them, though the consequences may be more fatal, than that saying that went abroad among the disciples concerning John, founded on a mistake of the Lord's words, "that that disciple should not

die;" though it is added, for a caution about the doctrine of *ifs*—"yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die: but, *if* I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." How good were it for us, in all things and times, to follow the Lord, and never the imaginations, *whenings* and *ifings*, of own vain foolish hearts!

Now, I shall conclude these observations in summing up what appears to be the Scripture truth of those in the Epistle to the Romans, and other like passages of the inspired page, in the words of one who has been long and justly esteemed by many for his works' sake. I would say it was Calvin of Geneva, if it were not for that most pernicious custom so common among men, who suppose (for what will they not suppose?) that a man's name gives weight, sanction, and authority to his doctrines; though the name of an angel from heaven prefixed to a doctrine, except the doctrine were ratified and sealed with a *Thus saith the Lord*—would be no more to the purpose of confirming it, than the name of the devil from hell. Nay, the latter bears his own testimonial that he is a liar; wherefore his subtlety lies in transforming himself into an angel of light, which is the most dangerous form (as it were of truth) for that enemy to appear in. But thanks be to the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good gift and every perfect gift, our reformers, whose names are dear to us for their works of faith and labours of love, universally profess to carry their appeal to the Word of God; and let us, in this respect, walk in the same steps with them, among whom Calvin was chief; who says—and judge you if he says not the very words of truth—"Those discoveries which God has made of himself, by rendering his glory conspicuous in his creatures, are evident enough with regard to their own light; but, with respect to our

blindness, *they are not sufficient to make us apprehend his Being and perfections.*” Thus God, in himself and his works, may be compared to that great light which he hath made, the sun, which is equally clear in itself, neither receiving nor losing light, whether men have eyes to perceive it or have none; and the truth of this the apostle proves when he gives all men to know, that from the wisdom of God displayed in the works of creation and providence, the world by all their learning and wisdom could not discern God. (See 1 Cor. i. 21, &c.) But through what they reckoned the foolishness of preaching or revelation, which is just the publishing and declaring of the True God, and eternal life, it pleased him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, to save them that believe; and this believing being both his gift and his working, to him be all the glory. Amen.

#### HUMAN CREEDS, OR CONFESSIONS OF FAITH, CONSIDERED.

Now, as for another kind of objections to this doctrine, That the knowledge of God is only by faith, drawn from *human creeds, or confessions of faith, or articles agreed upon by men.*—Though I would regard the truth when I hear it, confess it who will, though on no account for the sake of the confessors, but for the Lord’s sake alone; as the men of the Samaritan city said to the woman, who had said to them, Come and see, after they had gone to the Lord themselves, “Now we believe, not because of thy words, but because we ourselves have seen and heard.” So say I, with respect to human creeds, confessions, and articles of faith. If objections from Scripture are removed, and a doctrine built upon a *Thus saith the Lord*, the objections drawn from the creeds and doctrines of men need give no man in his



right mind, whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, any manner of trouble; for they can neither add nor diminish.

However, a few words may be bestowed here also, for the sake of the more ignorant. As to every Protestant confession upon earth (and Popish have as little ground), I reckon they will not confess that they allow us to receive themselves, or any one article of theirs, upon any authority whatsoever—of the church, of themselves, of the king, or of any one created thing in the universe; but only upon the pure, naked, unqualified authority of the Scriptures of the eternal God alone; absolutely without all regard to the confessions of the creatures in heaven, earth, or hell; as the sole ground of our belief and confession——

For do they not all unanimously agree in declaring with one mouth, “That, save the written Word of God, which is now come to us, *the only rule which God hath given us to direct us* how we may glorify and enjoy him, there is nothing in all the universal world done, or seen, or known, under whatever name it be described, call it the works of creation and providence (for of redemption, it is granted by all, nothing can be known but by revelation——what ground had they for excepting other things, as little known, as being of, or belonging to, God otherwise), the light of nature, reason, creeds, or whatever else you please, *which is sufficient* to instruct us, and give us that knowledge of God and of his will which is necessary to salvation.” And that is, because no other thing but the Word alone can give us the *true* knowledge (that is, *any*; for false knowledge is *no* knowledge, but ignorance under the form and appearance of knowledge) of God and of his will; for where the true knowledge, or rather the knowledge of the True (and there is no other) God is given, there and then,

salvation is given; where this knowledge is wanting, there the salvation is wanting.

I mention this article of confessions of faith, not for a proof of any point, for they can prove nothing to be true or false, but only that the writers of them have professed to believe so or so; but I mention them only to prevent malicious and slanderous accusations; and also the throwing of stumbling-blocks in the way of the blind—who are so ready to be imposed upon by the arts and traditions of their elders—who know how to make use both of the Scriptures, and of everything else that is in estimation among the people, whether right or wrong, no matter to them who want an occasion, provided it will afford a handle for distressing the object of their envy, and for the propagating of more ungodliness among the multitude of their besotted admirers—though they themselves (like Judas with his bag, who regarded neither the Lord nor the poor, though he was moved with indignation at the woman who anointed the Lord with what he thought to have stole both from the Lord and the poor), despise, as appears by thousands of instances, or rather by only one complex instance, *even their whole way*, despise, I say, both *the Scriptures* and *the confessions* which they have subscribed and sworn to, as containing the real belief of their hearts, for certain *real* and *visible* reasons of their own, as all the world may observe. Is this a slander? O Britain, wipe it off if thou canst from hundreds of thy degenerate sons! Would to God it were a slander!

But it is needful not to be ignorant of Satan's devices, nor of those his ministers of his own spirit, though like their father in Job's case, sometimes appearing as angels of light, as if they were the sons of God, among whom they shew themselves, assuming a mighty zeal for God and his glory, to promote *their own designs*! So Jezebel

in the churches taught and seduced the servants of God; that is, used her endeavours in that way.

Now, Jezebel of old—the name-mother of this latter sorceress, whose real features, feats, lineaments, and spirit you may see with amazing evidence in the surviving brood of her posterity, and successors in office, to this day—*she herself*, you know, habitually blasphemed and defied the Lord God of Israel, and was a main hand also in helping her husband the king, with all his friends and partizans, to the devil, and the place of torments; yet, when a turn was to be served against an *honest man*, who would not part with the inheritance given him by the God of himself and his fathers, for the sake of any authority or idolater whatsoever, though the king was willing to barter even his best vineyards with him—but all would not do—the man was just, and one that feared God, and so resolved in his God's strength, not fearing the wrath of the king, to hold fast the inheritance of his fathers, his sacred possession, the pledge of his God. But who can stand before envy? “Suborn witnesses,” says the subtle sorceress to the elders of the city, knowing how to accomplish her business, when other means failed her, in the name of the Lord; “when the man is *exalted* in the midst of you, and suspecting no evil, and let them rise up against him and swear, That he hath blasphemed God and the king, that he may die.” Come, see Jezebel's zeal for God and the king!

So in this age of the world also, if a man be found in the way of God, resolved not to part with the truth, his everlasting portion, they will not be found wanting, who shall be ready enough to stretch their chain its full length, towards adding in their way an appendix and supplement to the tragedy of Naboth—for they will think it no sin to kill, as much as the civil law will allow them to kill, even a man's whole name, character, and

usefulness, with all his worldly support and comfort, at one blow, if they can take possession withal; and, if possible, to wrest the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, with whatever other weapon they shall be able to lay hold of—to rid their hands, by all means, fair or foul, of any one whom they may be set against—and no way is ever found so effectual as a colour of justice, and zeal for God.

The Lord of glory was never crucified till the priests could cry, with some *shew* and plausible pretence, to the people, “Ye have heard the blasphemy, what need we any further witnesses? Away with him, crucify him—This fellow is unworthy to live!” And why? Why, he witnessed a good confession before Pilate and many witnesses—averred, proved, and persevered to the last, maintaining that he was the Son of God—and died in the cause.

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” Let every friend therefore of the Lamb that was slain expect the enmity of the world, and bear it, too, with joy and triumph, glorying in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and pressing to the crown.

Though the truth neither needs nor can receive any evidence or enforcement from men and their confessions, the truth of the Scripture being like sun-light, which though any man may shut his windows against it, and live in the dark, no man can brighten and improve to greater clearness; yet we may put to a hand also towards the loosing and disentangling of those happy ones whom Christ has quickened by his Word, that they may arise and go away free, like Lazarus when his dead-clothes were unbound, from every bondage and prejudice of education; and in particular, that the Protestant confes-

sions of faith which our forefathers have left, according to their light, constantly appealing to the Word of God, may not be hung out, contrary to their honest design, for false lights to lead their Protestant posterity astray, till, after a few winding courses, they return again, and dash themselves among the very rocks and quicksands of Popery.

Let an advocate in this point for the truth, and Protestant churches, be heard:—"I would only beg to be informed whether is it the doctrine of the Protestant churches, in their confessions of faith, that we must interpret and understand the Scriptures of God as their meaning is fixed by the authority of the public compositions of men? If this be the case, the church of Rome may well justify all her principles, and condemn the Reformation. Besides, I am not able to understand, nor have I sagacity enough to conjecture, with what truth and propriety any such confession of faith declares, *That the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full meaning of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other Scriptures that speak more clearly.* Such, I confess, has been my education, that I have been trained up to believe, That it is high presumption in any set of men to propose their own composition, or any of their kind, as the rule or standard whereby one must judge of the oracles of God. And indeed I always thought it our duty, not only to interpret the Scripture by itself, but to judge and explain all human confessions whatsoever, and catechisms larger or shorter, by the infallible rule of God's Word; especially when all these churches maintain *that the purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error.*"

Now, search all the Scriptures, and see if they will

allow, search all the Protestant churches, and their well-known confessions, and see if they will confess, any other *standard* whatsoever of faith and manners, but the Word of God alone—which (whether they or any of them be condemned in that which they allow, or not, is another question) they all with open mouth *protest* and proclaim loudly to the world (and this is to be understood of every single article of their confessions, as they shew you by alleging proofs for every single article from Scripture only), that the Word of God is the *only standard* or *rule*, and not they themselves, or their confessions, which God hath given to direct men.

Here observe the glaring and crying absurdity, not to speak of the folly and wickedness of those men, who, in spite of the Word of God, in spite of their own confessions, oaths, and subscriptions, and in spite of common sense, most zealously maintain, that *their human confessions are, and ought to be, the standards or rules to direct Christian churches*: and yet withal would have you to believe that they themselves embrace and acknowledge the *same standard*, or rule of faith and obedience, with those confessions!

Those confessions acknowledge and maintain the Word of God to be the *only standard or rule*—And multitudes of those confessors died martyrs for the truth of such a good confession. But they, of whom we speak, call those very confessions themselves the standard or rule! Do such men believe the Word of God and those confessions to be the same thing; so that what is said of the one may be said of the other, and that, if the Word of God can be called the standard, so may these confessions?

If so, be aware of them; they are open blasphemers—and, moreover, have denied their own confessions, as well as the Word of God.—So that there is no *truth* in

them; and they are worse than Turks, who, though they blaspheme Jesus, may be even believed when they swear to you by the *beard*\* of their father.

The confessors appealed from every created thing to the Word of God alone, and thither, after their appeal, they went directly, without calling at any of men's confessions by the way.—And what are all their written confessions, but so many avowed *minutes, journals, or memoirs* (so to speak), of their honest procedure in the course of their appeal; searching, every one for himself, and the instruction of others, the heavenly registers of eternal truth; subscribing what they wrote, and joining altogether in a body, and crying, “We know nothing as of ourselves; we judge nothing as of ourselves: he that judgeth us is the Lord: we will allow ourselves to be judged of no man: let God be true, and every man a liar: we appeal to Jesus.” Go thou, and do thou likewise; and thou mayest boldly say, Thou hast the only rule or standard which God hath given. As for any other rule or standard (if thou hast God's), which men or devils would give, thou needest not to care; neither can any church of Christ, and particularly any Protestant church upon earth, especially the churches of England and Scotland, condemn thee, without first condemning themselves: for they all say to the same effect, *The Word of God is the only rule which God hath given*—And so sayest thou.

And herein I join issue with the foremost, and declare my agreement with them in acknowledging, that not in any *human* confession or creed, though you call it the apostles' creed, which is as human and defective as any of them, but, exclusively of such things altogether, in

\* The Turks swear by the beard of their father, when they would give the most solemn assurance by oath.

the *Bible*, in the *Bible* *allearly* and *alone*, is contained the religion which is pure and undefiled; the religion from above, the religion of Christians, which is of God—and all other religions, standards, and rules about them, are even of their father the devil—and to him they lead.

Wherefore, I do here also, praying that the reader may join me, publicly before God and the world *disavow*, *renounce*, and *abjure* every confession, and every article thereof, under heaven this day, directly or indirectly denying, and not maintaining the Lord's good confession, when he prayed to the Father, and said, *Sanctify them through thy truth.* **THY WORD IS TRUTH.**

#### PRETENDED NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD RUINS ALL.

Instead of attending to this sanctifying truth, to make it their confession, see what innumerable shoals from all quarters around you, even of those who would give themselves out for followers of the Lamb too, are coming with the short lines of their reason, natural notions, notions, and ideas, evident and innate, as they call their chimerical dreams and reveries about what they call God, and what, in their apprehensions, is becoming for him to do, and what is not! These come to search and measure out to the world, as they please, the unsearchable and incomprehensible God, with his ways, which can only be discovered to us by his own light shining in the Word, and enlightening the heart.

Are not those men, their methods and doings in this matter, like a company of hostile engineers, pretended friends, but real spies and traitors, taking their surveys and plans, measurements and dimensions, of some royal tower and fortification, with a design to betray and



blow up the place? With a design, did I say? No; I retract—they are only *dupes* and *cats-paws* in the business. The design is not theirs so properly as that of the enemy of all truth, who makes use of their papers and maps for his own mischievous ends and purposes. But alas! are we the better for this? Eve did not eat till she was beguiled. O then, why so bitter against those men, who are so wise, and good, and good-like, and such great scholars, too, some of them, when they do not mean to deceive us, being only mistaken at the worst, and meaning us no harm in the world, more than they do to themselves? In answer to all this, and volumes more of what has been said and written in the same strain, it is replied, that the persons of the men, as before averred, are absolutely out of the question; and, for as many of them as are living, we do, and ought to pray, that they may be recovered out of the snare of the devil; but it mainly concerns all men living to tear off all such cloaks and palliations as have been artfully thrown over false doctrines, when the names and characters of great, or seemingly great, and good men, have in all ages of the world, or at this day, been held up for screens and veils, till, under their shadow and protection, the name and character of the GREAT and GOOD GOD has been even torn to pieces, and abominably blasphemed, among the nations. If we think matters are all everywhere going well on, where there is no noise nor open outcry against, but rather all fair and smooth zeal, and good speech about the blessed name and ways of God; while, at the same time, there remains deceit and falsehood under such plausible appearances—so much the worse, for us, say I, if we think all is well, when nothing is so in reality, but only in semblance and show; for in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird. Damnable lies and heresies, like

contraband merchandise, are most successfully brought in privily.

The designs of men may be something to themselves; but the mere designs or intentions of men (like those of the priests in administering the sacraments), whether good or bad, are very little to us—it is the nature and spirit of the doings that we have to attend unto. Verily a serpent will bite without echantment, though it be a beautiful, plausible-like, and wise creature, and a child may lay hold upon it, and seize it for a plaything; a viper is a viper still, however introduced into your bosom; and poison is poison still, though administered perhaps through mistake, if in confusion or in the dark, for a cordial in a faint, by the very darling of your heart; and though you and they both should never open your eyes till you open them (which God forbid) in torment—the error will be not the less fatal though (like the rich man in the parable, who heard not Moses and the prophets), you perceive it for the first time only by the flames of hell. But why should you be deceived with the appearances of officious zeal, except you discern truth and safety therein? In worldly things you are wise. If your own little children, in their eagerness to warm you, when you were starving with cold, should, in their ignorance and blind zeal for your welfare, with the kind and pious design of quickly kindling a fire to warm you, run for a bag of gunpowder, and throw it all in before you on the burning hearth—would your danger or hurt be the less; or, if you escaped with life and safety, your cause of caution less for the future, because the dear creatures, for whom you could have died yourself, meant you no harm in the world, but, on the contrary, all the good in their power? O when will men be wise, take the Lord's account of all things, and not condemn themselves in that which they allow in worldly respects,

wherein they are wise, wiser than the children of light: for these former go all one way, without any drawback from the *Spirit*; but the children of light are drawn towards the contrary by the *flesh*. Even Peter, when he savoured the things that were of men, rather than the things that were of God, and said, "Far be this from thee, Master," deserved but the name and reproof which he got from his Lord, saying, *Get thee behind me, Satan! thou art an offence unto me!* And if a false kind of shame, modesty, and humility should be the pretence of any one for tolerating in his heart false doctrines, from reverence to the number or quality of the persons that spread them, it may be answered, That it is the very spirit, quintessence, and consummation of impudence, arrogance, and pride, to say to the creature, *God speed thee*—and to GOD the Creator, *Stand thou by, or sit thou here, at this creature's footstool.*" What would you think of that prince's servant whom shame and humility should hinder from pulling a rebel, a slave, from his master's imperial throne, especially if his master, the king, were present? How easily men can divest themselves of the reverence due to God alone, and a sense of *his* presence, who is present everywhere, and every moment. How they scatter firebrands, arrows, and death, and think themselves well employed and excused, if they can say, "Are we not in good humour, and full of the social affections; and, though we should be wrong, who has a title to find fault with us? It is our way—and men cannot all be of one mind; and what though we should kindle our own houses, to enjoy the flame?" You may, Sirs; but you must allow us, who dwell in the adjoining houses, to cry, *Fire! Fire!* and ring the alarm-bell. For my own part, I confess I am one myself who have been sore scorched by such hell-fire principles—snatched as a brand out of the burnings by the hand of sovereign

Grace, which called Abram from the idolatries and fires of the Chaldees.—I speak from experience, as one escaped only with the skin of my teeth—and well escaped so: glory to him who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy! May he also have compassion on such of my poor deceived deceivers as are within the reach of mercy! for the worst I can say of them is, that they only suckled me and my brethren with that infernal venom (instead of the sincere milk of the Word), wherewith they themselves were all over bloated.

A COLLEGE LECTURE.

BUT, whatever they may say for themselves, so it was with me. I leave every man to his own master, and declare that, whatever other things I drank in along from the systems and regulators of my reading, the spirit of deceit, under the mask of sundry persons and forms, never failed to inculcate, with a variety of terms, and, alas! too successfully, “That all revealed religion is founded upon, and must be tried and judged if it be meet, and every article of it meet, to come from God, by natural religion; and natural religion is founded in reason, and weighed in the balances of reason:” (and wherein is reason now founded, pray? thou fool; where but in thyself?) “and reason shews to us the being and attributes of God, and what it is reasonable to expect that a God should do for his reasonable creatures. Read the great Dr. Samuel Clarke on this subject; the unparalleled Tillotson in all his works—his sermons above all for sentiment and style of language, all in a good taste of manly masculine religion; Abernethy on the Attributes is a good author; Turnbull’s Principles are much to be commended and studied; and, in a word, all the English philosophical divines, those true sons of sterling worth,

and of ingenious inquiry, especially all the sermons at Boyle's lectures.—Add to these that noble author, Lord Shaftsbury's fine writings, and our own eminent countryman Hutchison's Ethics—all of the same spirit; and the incomparable Locke, and Father Mallebranche's Research after Truth; but especially Cicero's Offices, and Tusculan Questions, and that jewel of a thing, of the Nature of the Gods; and, above all, go to the pure Greek unsophisticated fountains of true learning, and rational inquiry, where you may drink to the full, and satiate your mind with the true, genuine sentiments of benevolence, piety, and virtue—I mean principally the divine Plato, and the much diviner Socrates, his master in philosophy, who died a martyr for the unity of God. What an amazing length these patriarchs of Grecian learning went in knowledge!"——

Now, were it not for being ill-bred to interrupt such a fine and blessed lecture, one might observe, that this same Socrates defended himself to the last, by alleging and proving that he constantly attended the public worship as well as his neighbours, and daily sacrificed with them in the temples to the gods of his country; and that, in his last words, he recommended it to his friends to sacrifice a cock to Esculapius, the god of physic, that he might preserve them, no doubt, from poison, whereof he himself, upon a pique of his rivals, had been condemned to die.—“These authors will improve your style, and give you a true taste for composition; nothing like them for that; insomuch that it was truly said that, if the gods were to come down, they would speak in Plato's style. O rare Greeks! What mines of gentlemanly writing and true wisdom! Dig into these mines by night, and dig into them by day. For true morality you may go promiscuously to the Greeks and Latins; they are all excellent, the most excellent of all for mo-

rality. Arrian, Epictetus, Simplicius, Seneca, and that good and great emperor, Marcus Antoninus, are immortal names, and have outdone all later performances on ethië; or at least, we may say, the moderns would not have shined so bright without having borrowed light from those ancients. As for poets, there are excellent maxims of morality in Homer, their prince, and of divinity also; likewise in Virgil, his imitator; Horace also, in his epistles and satires, excels; but none more than Juvenal in his tenth satire."

"I cannot help exclaiming again, what an amazing length those great and good men have gone, by the mere force of their own penetrating genius and study, into the knowledge and worship of the gods, as well as in the principles of civil life: nothing like them for forming the man, the philosopher, and even indeed the divine, as to the first and main principles of divinity. Therefore, by the devouring and digesting of these authors, till they be all your own, get yourself well principled and founded in the nature and obligation of natural religion, especially in those first and great fundamentals—the being of a God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments. These, these are the principal supporters of natural religion; they must be supported by reason, and established for a pedestal to all the rest; for if you fail in a rational establishment in these now-mentioned grand points, in which revelation cannot help you, your religion will be only a baseless fabric of a vision in the air: therefore, in the *first* place, see well to your grounds, see well to your grounds of natural religion, upon which all the building depends. But remember, natural religion will not wholly answer your purposes neither, now in the happier days and places of revelation; for revelation is not only a republication and recommendation of natural religion, but there are

many improvements also, and additions therein, perfectly agreeable to reason, but which reason of herself could not have found out." (Here it is, you may remark, that the grand deceit of their doctrine takes place, by giving an artful side-wind kind of a compliment to revelation, which ought to possess the whole heart, without any partnership with that corrupted whorish thing they call their reason, wherewith they pollute, debase, and destroy revelation, while they would seem to praise and extol it to the skies.) "Natural religion is no more than the foundation, which is indeed the main and absolutely essential point; but, at the same time, revelation must be allowed to be the fair and glorious superstructure, which gives us the full benefit and use of the foundation; and this also is a dictate of natural religion itself, that revealed religion is a necessary super-addition to the natural: hence it is that you find that divine and almost Christian heathen," (he is much belied by the by, if he was not a son of Sodom,) "in one of his lecturing dialogues between himself and a pupil of his, crying out for some divine teacher to come, whose character and condition he describes. This some learned men have thought no contemptible argument and proof of Christ's character and mission; and so they have applied Socrates's prophecy as no small help, to help along with the evangelists, to Christ, as an eminent philosopher sent of God to explain, enforce, and perfect the good old Socratic and Platonic doctrines concerning the being of the gods." (I shall add a few more of those same precious points which are so much admired in their divine Plato, viz., the Elysian fields; the nature and business of the eternal intelligences; some to carry the lights of heaven about the world; others to conduct rivers; and others to manage the air and the clouds: by all which it appears that he thought the world eternal also.)

“ Does not the admirable Tully also, after his far more admirable and illustrious masters, the Greeks, exclaim with a noble and almost inspired enthusiasm, that no man was ever a great man, poet, philosopher, statesman, or warrior, without the inspiration of the immortal gods;” (that is, without the breathing of Jupiter, or some of your kindlier sort of genii or demons upon him; such sort of gods those as the Holy Ghost uniformly calls devils.) “ And pray, now, what can that same inspiration or breathing be, but the unction which John speaks of, even the supernatural revelation in the Scriptures; and how exactly have their conjectures and wishes been fulfilled, in the superabundance of revelation bestowed upon us concerning all those distinguishing and peculiar tenets and doctrines—common both to the Jewish and Christian religions—about the Trinity; the coming, life, death, and resurrection of the Messiah; the raising of the dead, and judging of the world by the Son; and several other things of lesser moment, which do not affect the vitals and essential fundamentals of natural religion; which yet are necessary to be believed by us, in our present dispensation, for the perfecting of our natures, and that religion of Jesus, which behaved to be strange to the good men and philosophers of ancient times, by reason of their circumstances: and—— ” Hold, hold; enough! Be it so.—

## GRAMMAR-SCHOOL EDUCATION.

Here, I declare, I do not mean the person of any one particular man, as if he alone, in distinction from hundreds of his brethren, were chargeable with inculcating as above; but rather the strain and spirit of my own thoughts and studies, imbibed from the authors I have mentioned, with others of the same complexion; which, indeed, as far as I understand, according to the reigning



mode of education, are generally much in the same manner recommended to people in my circumstances, entering upon life and study almost together. First, at school you get the grossest abominations, exceeding even those of Sodom and Gomorrah, laid upon your heart for a seasoning—a hashy of fornications, adulteries, murders, battles, and unutterable impurities of gods with gods and goddesses, giants and incredibilities, frivolosities and lies, endless genealogies of gods, male and female, and—But time and patience would fail both to relate and hear the thousandth part of those paganish, devilish things we have been obliged to swallow and overlay our minds and consciences with; our only safeguard at the beginning, from the contagion of such poisoned fruit, being our childishness, and natural ignorance of ourselves and all things; till life, opening upon us in various views, and drawing forth all the latent corruptions within, the chaos begins to ferment and operate in all manner of ungodliness; when, at length—to give us a religious character, such as it is, and so (except Sovereignty interpose) to complete our ruin, by plunging us all at once into a gulf of perdition, we are made to enter under the influence of what you have heard.

Thus—to omit all but a mere sample, which I have given, of such abominations of doctrine (practice comes of course)—those emissaries of hell who possessed me, whose name was *legion*, who very early in life obtained the prepossession of my heart, and maintained their ground and possession, with the direction of my studies (till it pleased the Lord to cast them out), found means to tutor and cajole me, with an applauding conscience all the while, into the very snares of Satan and falsehood, whereinto they themselves were first fallen, who abode not in the truth, but broke loose, through God's holy permission, like an overflowing flood, spreading abroad

their heresies and blasphemies, to their own everlasting confusion and shame, but to the everlasting manifestation and glory of those who shall be found approved in the truth.

SPECIMEN OF ART IN THE NATURAL RELIGION WAY.

Now for a specimen of art and proficiency in the natural religion way—that every one may judge for himself, whether it be proper for him to embrace or reject it—under the reigning influence and triumphant power of this very spirit of sophistry and self-deceit, as described abundantly by the apostle, under the name of *vain philosophy, and oppositions of knowledge or science, falsely so called*—

In the first place, according to form, one of your head scholars in the natural religion school, meaning to entertain you with an exercise of his genius and improvement of parts, sets out *a god-creating*—and his reason is to every one the creator of his own proper god, unless now and then he dexterously steal an attribute or two from a neighbour. Well, having found out to his satisfaction something which is well enough to be erected on the front of *a complete body of divinity*, for a god to grace it withal, he bows before the godship which he has made, and most profoundly adores his own invention. Then, in a trice, under the next head, sacred Reason, as chief tire-woman and mistress of the whole affair, is called in again to provide and furnish out of her stores a set of honest-like and well-becoming attributes, suitable to such an august and tremendous object of worship as this same new-formed, or rather perhaps only new-repaired, *divinity*.

Now, *observe*, everything must be gone about with great gravity; *prolegomena* and *preliminaries, first principles, data, and corollaries*: the farce would be spoilt

else, and lose its solemnity.—So, a god such as reason can afford and approve—a reasonable kind of a god that will *be* and *do* for you just what you please—such a god must not be denied. No, no; an atheist is a monster in nature—so he is. But will our sage doctor of divinity now allow of a revelation coming from this said god of his? Yes, yes, by all means; but not hand over head neither. Let revelation be brought to the bar of reason, and tried before its peers, even the foresaid attributes, which reason has been pleased graciously to bestow upon the foresaid god. (I say graciously to bestow; for, to tell the truth, holiness and justice are but somewhat reluctantly cast in, and, as it were for fashion's sake, with a grudge and a sparing hand; however there is no great matter if both these attributes are given; they are so tamed and qualified in the system, that they shall be but broken teeth and pulled claws; so that they shall do no kind of mischief to any creature in the world.) For here is the mystery—reason is the infallible standard, oracle, and judge. According to the decisions of imperial reason, revelation must even be content to stand or fall. Who shall tell us what reason says? Why, let every man interpret for himself; or, for the present, let our divinity doctor be heard as the high-priest, prophet, and king of his own reason. What report then from the doctor and his reason? “Why, let the letter of revelation stand as it is.” But excuse the pious divine if he use a little holy fraud and guile for the better accommodating of things; that is, a little trifling freedom with the sense, and prune away some few of the superfluous rambling branches, which cannot be so easily disposed of about the walls of his divinity fabric. In plain language, there are a few articles in the Scriptures which cannot so well accord with the god of this system; or, in other words, with the reason or natural notions of this man, from

which he hewed out for himself a god of such a character as seemed good in his own eyes. Of this kind of disagreeing things, between the God of the Scriptures and the system god of natural religion, we shall suppose are the scripture doctrines concerning the fall; the universal corruption of human nature; its total inability to recover itself; the divinity of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; the sovereignty of God; justification by grace through the blood of Jesus by faith only, without works, before God. In a word, these, and everything belonging to imputed sin and imputed righteousness, seem to such a man as this, with his deluded followers, not rational, but foolish, pernicious, absurd; therefore they must altogether be rejected, or quite explained away, or eaten off by means of some *caustic* or other, as pestilential blots and sores on the face of divine revelation! If any are offended at such freedom being used with such doctrines, I say again, once for all, that Jerubaal, Elijah, and JEHOVAH, their God, are all examples for laughing at Baal and his worship—whoever are the worshippers and priests makes no material difference. And even such in general—for I have no particular person or system in my eye which will not, with a few variations and allowances, answer equally well for forty of them at the same time—is the strain, scope, spirit, and substance of the whole category, adding or abating a few articles of your systems of natural theology, or divinity, or religion; whether Popish, Arian, Socinian, Pelagian, Semi-pelagian, Arminian, or those which are much about the same in effect, your avowed and professed systems of what men call *Deism*, but God calls *Atheism*.

PRETENDED REASON MURDERS FAITH.

And all this comes of that raging and epidemical madness of the schools, *the indulging of what they will have*

*to be reason*, in spite of all sense and Scripture, *in her freaks and humours of god-making!*

What a melancholy scene! Ye friends of God and man, consider it, mourn over it; and pray that, by the light of truth, it may vanish away and be no more! See, some men can see no reason for—that is, don't like the Scripture doctrine of the equality and sameness in substance, power, and glory of the Son and Holy Ghost with the Father; and, therefore, though they allow them to comply with the mere sound and letter of the word in some sense to be God, they say, “It is only in a lower and subordinate way that they are so;” witness all your Arian and Socinian divines, almost innumerable.

Others, again, point blank, deny *election* and *reprobation*, though ever so plainly revealed; because reason has no knowledge (and is too proud to be informed by the word) of such matters, and cannot see them consistent with, but rather destructive of, its natural notions of God.

For the same reason, justification before God by the righteousness of Christ alone is discarded and quite expunged out of their systems; and, instead thereof, justification by your sincere (as they most absurdly talk), though imperfect obedience or endeavours, is maintained, at the expense of all justification whatsoever, but that of God's justifying of himself in their condemnation who continue to the death in such a manner, calling him to his face, according to his own interpretation, *a liar*. And this doctrine of theirs, in their way perhaps, shall be called (that stranger to the Scriptures) *a second* justification before God: for the question is not at all about showing one's faith by works; nor of those works being brought as evidences or memorials for the faithful in the day of judgment: the question is not about external

declarations here or hereafter; but about the ground of a sinner's acceptance in the sight of God, and not of the external evidence thereof.

Others deny that men are bound by the laws of God to be equally and universally holy at all times, and in all places, and in all actions; though it is written, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation, for I am holy, saith the Lord.—Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God; and whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," &c. Why is this denied, but because men cannot see reason for allowing it; and so men must have a god of their own mind. Why else is it that you will find the same men also *denying*, "That he who believeth not God, universally and always, makes God a liar, if he be put professing to pray or praise;" though it is everlastingly true, on the testimony of God, if he be true, "That he who believeth not God hath made him a liar, profess or do what he will, because he hath not believed the record which God hath given concerning his Son?"

Others can have no conception how it is reasonable for God to punish sin in hell for ever; and so eternal torments are rejected, as inconsistent with the character which reason has allowed to God.

For much the same reason, the atonement by the blood of Jesus, through a vicarious substitution of himself under the law, instead of his people, is also rejected as an idle dream by others; as also the effectual and irresistible operations of the Holy Ghost, communicating to the elect alone the things of the Son and of the Father, is denied; and the connection of what they call moral seriousness in a natural man, with regeneration or conversion, is maintained, contrary to what is written,

that "whatsoever is born of the flesh is flesh; so then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God:" so that the connection spoken of is as loose as that of sand with the body of the sun, or of light with darkness, or of Christ with Belial.

But time would fail to number up the one hundredth part of the horrible consequences of subjecting (so to phrase it) God and his revelation to corrupt human reason; that boasted bauble! as unmeet for such purposes, as the serpent's tail in the fable, for leading and directing the head.

Man, even in innocence, was as little made to live by his reason as by his food; his life was to be by observing, not his reason, but every word proceeding out of the mouth of God: the business of reason in this case was only to perceive and obey, and not to prescribe, nor judge about the fitness of God's words. Whenever the serpent perceived the woman at her reasoning work, he had her sure in his snare, and no more to do but to triumph in her fall. Alas! so may we say of revelation, when once practised upon and corrupted by the subtlety of the serpent, appearing to every man in the form of his own reason, nearly in the words of Adam (as the poet supposeth), when he who was not deceived saw the woman beguiled, and all gone, "O thou best and fairest gift of God to man, *how art thou lost?*"

And thus, to this day, innumerable multitudes in all parts of the gospelized world, true sons of Eve and the serpent, must needs be reasoning themselves out of all the sense, spirit, and benefit of God's Word, to make way more and more for the works of the devil, by using all the light within them, which is but darkness,—ah, how great the darkness!—to show themselves and others the way to utter darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. For, ask every one of those

heretics and corrupters, or of the absolute deniers of revelation, who yet pretend a reverence for the name of God, ask them one by one, and will they not all tell you—at least you may perceive in a moment by their answers, as clear as the sun,—that the ground of their denying of revelation, or of denying and explaining away such and such doctrines therein (which amounts frequently to a total denial thereof), is because they do not appear agreeable to what they call their natural notions and notices of God, in their conscience, or their reason. This reason of theirs, you may observe, is set up by them all upon the pinnacle-tops of their respective systems of falsehood, as a standard displayed in the wind of their own vanity; and flying, in their own conceit, most gloriously paramount over all; like the Roman eagle, or abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing on the walls of the now-accursed and perishing temple. Happy is the man who takes his flight in time, and worships it not.

For indeed those men, with their reason, or pride rather, trying and judging upon God and his revealed truths, are like the Gileadites at the fords of Jordan, with the Ephraimites, finding out and murdering, in cold blood, every article of revelation, without exception, as it comes up, that cannot frame to pronounce their *Shibboleth*; and so, of old, the rulers of the people condemned and murdered the Prince of Life, because he did not answer to their *Shibboleth*, or notion of a Messiah; and so the Spirit of God, speaking in his own word, what and how he pleaseth, for the manifestation of the whole counsel of God is considered, not as the Lord of the conscience, but only as a slave or parrot to human vanity, folly, pride, and self-conceit, just to do and say, what every fool may think it reasonable for him to do and say! O the self-sufficient arrogancy of reasoning worms!



Thus every hypocritical fool perseveres, saying in his heart, *there is no God*; that is, no such thing as the living and true God hath declared himself to be; for when men have once gone out a *god-making*, and a characterizing of this god, and then pretending to bring all the doctrines of revelation to *this creature of their own contrivance*, to see what name and meaning it will give them, no doubt the puppet-deity or wooden god that cannot save, to which they pray, will even learn to speak after the master of the show. Every one's god thus made or imagined, (though there may be some jarrings now and then, as between parent and child, husband and wife,) will be, upon the main, just an exact image of himself who made or contrived it: thus the idolators of old were like their gods, and their gods like them; and thus to-day.

#### HISTORY OF HEATHEN GODS AND THEIR WORSHIPPERS.

To this very purpose you may hear and apply an old story concerning the heathen gods, from one who knew very well how to speak upon this subject—a story which will defy all the universe to disprove it. Says the historian, and no enemy of the heathens neither, though he was a Jew, “Where is that wise man who can forbear heartily to exclaim against that poisoning impious doctrine, the plurality of gods? They have their subterranean gods, their sea-gods; and the eldest of the race or family they keep up in chains in hell. As for their celestial gods, they give Jupiter, it is true, the name of Father,” (to which you may add, Preserver of all, Benefactor, and immortal King,) “but with the heart and practice of a tyrant, a monster; insomuch that his wife, his brother, and the daughter of his own brain, entered into a conspiracy, according to the fiction, to

destroy him, as he himself had served his father." (A rare set of gentry those same gods indeed!) "Some of their gods behoved to be striplings, others in the prime of life, others again, your graver sort of seniors with long swinging beards. They have their gods also of the mechanic arts, of the virtues, and of the vices also; as, the god of theft, the god of lust, the god of revenge, the god of covetousness, the god of obscenity. Why should one mention their feuds and factions among themselves? Who can speak of their whoredoms, and adulteries, and rapes, and nameless abominations among themselves, gods with gods and goddesses; yea, with men, beasts, birds, creeping things, and monsters of the deep?" But one must forbear. And who so guilty of such unutterable abominations, as their fancied almighty father, the supreme Jupiter himself, their great god, whom they impiously stiled *God the wise, the just, the good*, in the superlative degree, the holy, thundering, heavenly king!

O what gross prostitution this! In a word, that scandal, or monstrous degree of profligacy, never yet entered into the human heart, but they have made to enter into the very substantial form and essence of their gods, whom they devoutly worshipped. Who worshipped those same swarming vermin for gods? Was it only the ignorant brutish rabble? and were the lawyers, the sage philosophers, the heroes, the statesmen and rulers, free? No, no—no such matter, I assure ye—these last were the very ringleaders in the affair. Socrates, reckoned the wisest of them all, you know how he pleaded his neighbour-like devotion to the gods of Athens, where he lived and also died; so far from being a martyr for the unity of God, as some allege, that he even desired them, I suppose by way of a pagan mass (and the Romish is much about it) for his soul, to offer a sacrifice to the god of physic. Plato, his disciple, was equally devout in the

same way; and so all the philosophers, statesmen, benefactors, and heroes, that are known—Grecians, Seythians, or Persians, to a man. Were the Romans better? No; Titus, called the Darling of mankind, on his successes at Jerusalem, erected a temple and offered sacrifices to his good fortune, and dedicated all the spoils to Jupiter Olympius, into whose temple he went with his father the emperor, as soon as he got back to Rome, and returned thanks. In his country superstition no man keener than Cicero, the famous Marcus Tullius Cicero, of whose religion, or idolatry, as it was, all your succeeding natural religionists, who have set up in the haberdashery way, have been little more than mere hawkers and pitiful retailers.

Marcus Antoninus *the Pious*, and Trajan *the Just*, as they are surnamed, emperors of Rome, how ardently did they flame with zeal for the same pagan worship, when, contrary to their known moderation and philosophy in other matters, they made the streets of Rome, and all the provinces, to stream with the blood, and blaze with the burnings, of the Christians, who were butchered, massacred, and burnt by thousands, because they would not acknowledge the gods of the heathens to be God; nor worship the images, statues, and pictures, of the good emperors. And who in all the empire more besotted and bigotted to the same absurdities than the two most gentlemanly statesmen, courtiers, and philosophers of their time—the two Plinys?

And now, to come to later times or nations; were, or are, those of America, North and South, better provided with a god for the object of their worship? Let travellers, on whose testimony so much stress at times is laid, declare. If thou sayest, “they had no god, and how then shall they be judged?” Art thou God the judge to concern thyself about that matter? Shall not the

Judge of all the earth do righteously? God knows what he has given, and what withholden, and can do all without thee.

However, it was never said by us that God did not reveal himself where, when, and how, he pleased; but the contrary maintained.

#### STRANGE INFATUATION OF NATURAL-RELIGION MEN.

But how absurd art thou, O man of natural religion, an advocate for the natural knowledge of God! how unutterable thy infatuation! For——

Let a man but describe the character of an onion, of a fire, of a serpent, of an ox, of a dog, of a dragon, of an adulterer, of a murderer, of a Sodomite, of a confuser of kinds, of a devil, or of what he will, and call the same a god, and show you that all the nations under heaven have worshipped, or do worship these, some one of these, or some other equally gracious thing, calling it by its name, according to the proper sound and expression of their own mother tongue, their *god*; yet, strange to tell! you shall hardly meet with one of a thousand reasoners upon the subject, *clergy* or *laity*, (ridiculous distinction! though we must use common terms, as if the *clergy* were God's heritage, as the word signifies, and the *laity* or people mere refuse; why don't these clergy consistently, as their Roman brethren, keep back the cup from the people?) who will not make an argument of such kind of gods, and worship of gods, to prove, "That all men naturally have, and have had, the knowledge of God his Being—and that there neither is, nor can be, an atheist in the world—and that God his Being is a thing taken for granted by revelation—and that the Being of God cannot be discovered by revelation—nor revelation be received as such, except a man know God without the

said revelation, and altogether before it, by his own reason." The contrary of all which is evident even from their own premises or arguments drawn from the heathen gods and worship, as well as from the whole concurrent testimony of Scripture. May the Lord pity the deceived, and the men too, who are instrumental in deceiving others.

What ! is an onion, a fire, a serpent, an ox, a dog, a dragon, a devil, GOD ? or an argument that those who worship such things know GOD ?

I profess, before God and the world, that the stupidity of Egyptians, Persians, Greeks and Romans, and Scythians of old—or Hottentots, Japanese, and Laplanders, at this day, appears to me a sort of wisdom and true discernment, compared with the monstrous stupidity and blasphemous impiety of those men who argue, now-a-days, in the midst of gospel revelation, from such objects of worship towards the establishment of *what they call natural religion*, and that which is required as the main article and foundation thereof, *the natural knowledge of God in the world, without the Word*.

If those men who use such kind of arguments for proving the natural knowledge of God, drawn from the heathen multiplicity of gods, have anything to say for their own vindication, it seems to be such an apology as Charles V., who was no friend to the formidable power and monarchy of France, is reported to have made in jest for himself, saying to his courtiers one day, that he had been falsely accused of *hating the king of France*; "for," says he, "instead of the *one king* which they have, I wish they had *twenty*;" meaning, that they might be divided all into so many factions and separate parties, and so have no union among themselves, power, government, nor *king*, at all, capable of alarming him and his people; and, indeed, in their case also, if wishes

would do it, they who live and die in opposition to the one God and his ways, would find themselves interested in wishing, that instead of that one God, there were ten thousand of such gods as blinded nations worship. But with them I have done.

## IMPROVEMENT.

Now, upon the whole, if this doctrine, that the knowledge of God, his being and perfections, and consequently of all his character undivided and one—ways, and works, and will, is only to be had by the very Word of God himself, through the power and ministration of his Spirit, and no otherwise whatsoever—if this doctrine, I say, be true, as I believe it is, and proven so by truth itself; and if it be received as the very truth of God in the conscience of any man, he cannot fail at once to perceive the use of it.

He will rejoice in the discovery, as a most precious truth of God's giving; he will be delivered (which is no small thing) from that temptation, so fatal to thousands, of rejecting or explaining away any point of revelation, from a pretence of its disagreement with some supposed kind of natural notices, or notions of God and his ways, either in heart or conscience, or anywhere else. If he understand the matter well, he will be disposed to lay aside all malice and guile, envies and hypocrisies, all superfluity of naughtiness, and evil-speaking against the truth, that, as a new-born babe, he may drink in the sincere milk of the Word from those two breasts of eternal consolation, *the Old and New Testaments*, and grow thereby, through the nourishing influences of the Holy Ghost, up to the full stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

He will see no ground for cavilling and contending against the truth; but rather, like a meek and humble

little one, will be inclined to receive into his heart, with a passive conscious joy, whatever his God, through the quickening power of his Word, shall be pleased to infuse therein.

He will be freed from pretending, like a self-condemned hypocrite, to believe one part, and yet doubt or deny another part, of the same revelation, which is equally plain and evident, in the declared Word of the same One true God.

For instance, if he hold fast the belief and confession of this truth in connection and consistency with it and himself, you will never hear him saying, "He believes and confesses himself a sinner, and that he cannot satisfy divine justice by fulfilling the law, and that Christ has fulfilled the law, and that innumerable multitudes shall be saved by the merits of the Saviour; but that, as for himself, *he does not know if he has obtained, or shall obtain, an interest or lot in this salvation; but that he will lie at the pool of gospel-ordinances, and pray and strive, that God would enable him to do something which may make him differ from other men; something whereby he may be accepted; something by which he may attain to a saving interest in Christ, be installed into the covenant of grace, and enjoy eternal life, which he is afraid he is yet without a title unto; which title, he thinks, can only be made out to him by his success in his good endeavours, prayers, inclinations, dispositions, wrestlings, and works.*" There is no ground, I say, in the principles of that man, who believes the knowledge of God, his being, character, and ways, is to be obtained only by the Word, and whose knowledge is actually founded in that Word, or whose knowledge is that very Word believed by him, for talking at such an idle, absurd, inconsistent, self-destroying, God-affronting, God-denying rate; supposing one part of the revelation true, and another false.

For since, O believer of God, you know God, his being, his character, his ways, only by himself shining into your hearts by the revelation of his Word (his Word in itself, and to your apprehension who believe it, being all equally certain), you have just as much assurance, and ground of assurance, given you in that Word, for one thing declared in it, as for another; as much assurance given you, ground and evidence to believe, and to know that you do believe what you do believe, or know for certain, on God's testimony revealed in yourself, the present subject of his love, and not another for you, that you have an interest and lot in Christ's righteousness, and eternal salvation thereby, when you do believe the testimony corresponding and agreeing thereto in the Word; as that there is a salvation, a righteousness, a Christ, a law, sin, death, eternal judgment, Adam, Paradise, a tree of knowledge of good and evil, a commandment about it, the sinning and dying of Adam and of all men in him, a hell to the unbeliever, a heaven to the believer, a Holy Ghost, a Providence, a revelation revealing all those things, a creation, or a God.

In one word, to conclude, may the Holy Ghost himself give the full improvement and use of this eternal truth. That all the knowledge that man, in his present circumstances, and state of sin and misery since the fall of Adam, either has or can have, is only to be had by the faith of God's Word alone.

He that believeth, useth and improveth this doctrine aright, being directed by the Holy Ghost himself, the Spirit of faith, love, and humility, before God in the saints, will neither need nor desire to turn aside any whither, in quest of refreshment for his spirit, to the broken and empty cisterns of human systems, and compositions of ignorance, vanity, and pride, reasoning and confounding all truth with their vaunted demonstrations,



delineations, and what not, of the being and perfections of God, and the religion of nature, with all the articles and appendages thereof following. No, no; such a one will find the one living and true God, the fountain of living waters, near at hand—yes, Christian, to the law, to the testimony. The Word is nigh thee; thy Lord is within thee, dwelling in thy heart by faith, and filling thee with the Holy Ghost, who is the well of living water springing up in thee to eternal life. The Lord keep thee, with all thy brethren, who have the understanding given them to know him that is true, and who are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ, who is the true God and eternal life. The Lord keep thee, with all his own elect, from idols. Amen.

#### CONCLUSION.

Now, reader, whosoever thou art, farewell; and remember that eternity will be equally long to all men, and that the truths of God equally concern all men. Away with prejudice, and search the Scriptures. Prepare to meet thy God—behold he cometh! His decisions, and not men's, shall stand. If Jehovah be God, serve Jehovah—if Baal be God, serve Baal. Thus stands the issue of the whole matter—a man must either wholly receive the revelation of God as it is, without adding or diminishing, and so be saved; or wholly reject revelation, and so be damned—for the words which our Lord hath spoken, these same shall judge us, and not our natural notions. “No man can serve two masters.” Neither God, nor his Word, nor his ways, nor his attributes, nor his character, resulting from the whole, can be divided. Hold or lose all; all, all is at stake! If the Word of God be good for anything, it is good for everything; if not

for everything, for nothing at all. Believe and know God, believe and please God, believe and be saved. O how plain it is to him that understandeth, that without faith it is impossible to know God, to please God, to be saved. "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

THE

ASSURANCE OF FAITH

VINDICATED,

IN A

LETTER TO A FRIEND.



THE

ASSURANCE OF FAITH VINDICATED.

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SIR,

ALTHOUGH our friend had not told me, I would have easily discovered, from the whole strain of your letter, that you are of the same sentiments concerning *the assurance of faith*, with your late friend Mr. Cudworth, whose very strenuous and laboured defence of *the appropriating act*, I have just now before me, with the no less eager and spirited opposition of the late Mr. Sandeman. They were doubtless both men of true blood in their way, and well skilled in their weapons; real sons of fire, who, like Joab and Abner's young men, seem to me to have been so very equally matched, that they have fairly foiled one another, and fallen by mutual strokes, without leaving a possibility of arising up again a second time to the combat; so that neither the one nor the other party of their surviving admirers need to glory in having obtained a victory by their hands; unless it be deemed a victory, as indeed it is a victory to the TRUTH, that each of the assailants has demolished the fortress and high tower of the other; and that so thoroughly, that whosoever shall attempt to set up again the gates of either *system* shall, I am not afraid to say it, undoubtedly find, to his own confusion, that he has been bestowing his unhallowed labour in the rebuilding of an accursed

*Jericho*, with the peril of the curse of God upon him for his reward; and if he be saved, it shall be so as by fire, with the loss of all his building.

What I mean is, that Sandeman, who began the attack, hath, by the force of Scripture truth, been able to lay flat in the dust, with an irreparable overthrow, that which has been so warmly contended for by Cudworth, with all its other well known patrons and abettors, of older or later fame, as Marshall, *The Marrow*, Boston, E. and R. Erskines, Hervey, &c. &c., under the famous name of “the APPROPRIATING ACT of faith,” founded upon that sandy foundation, which is called, “God’s UNIVERSAL GRANT of a Redeemer to the world, or DEED OF GIFT, whereby Jesus Christ is supposed to have been eternally designed and appointed of the Father for a Saviour by *office* to all mankind sinners indefinitely—a *gift*,” say they, “equally and originally belonging to the man now in torments, and to him in Abraham’s bosom.” Could the former, unhappy man! but have appropriated as *stoutly* as the latter—by exerting a certain act of his mind, whereby if he had believed that he was to be saved, *saved infallibly* by that very *act*, he would have been.—So all the sons of the appropriation bear witness: what a pity then he did not *exert* that act!

But every man in this matter ought to judge for himself. The arguments upon both sides are open to the inspection of all. And no occasion being left here for saying the same things over again, I need only declare my own persuasion with the grounds of it, candidly and freely, as you certainly expect; entering no further into the cause of either party than I judge necessary for setting forth their respective distinguishing conclusions and leading principles, in the light of their own words, that we may have access impartially to examine them in the light of God’s Word.

And here, I must confess, justice to the truth, as I have already said, obliges me to acknowledge that *Cudworth*, with the same irresistible armour of God which had been used against himself, hath as effectually prevailed towards the entire subversion of those weak and pitiful establishments which his keen adversary so vain-gloriously seems to vaunt of, such as his “Justifying faith and comfort of love”—vain-glorious vaunts indeed! mere refuges of lies, as stated by him and his party. Truth compels me thus to express my heart with indignation and grief. For where have the apostles laid any foundation for defining, *justifying*, and *saving faith*, to be merely as Sandeman affirms, “a persuasion that there is an atonement, and that through this atonement there is now for the first time brought to the person’s view, who is so persuaded, a bare possibility of justification and salvation to sinners, founded in the sovereignty, holiness, and justice of God; and therefore he himself as one of the chief of sinners may have hope, and so may draw near to the mercy-seat, because he hears there is an atonement for such as he is, not that he is conscious of having actually received the atonement, but only conscious that there is an atonement, whether he receive it or not.” For, according to those uncertain worshippers, “a justified person would never be a whit the worse to suppose himself a reprobate or hypocrite at any time; nay, instead of doing him evil, it might do him good, by awakening his diligence in working, and keeping him humble, dependent, and self-denied withal.” And if so, say I, why not, the longer he believes himself a reprobate so *much the better for him?*—And then, as for the comfort of love: “After this justifying faith, or persuasion that there is an atonement, and through that atonement a bare possibility of the person’s own salvation, if saved at all, has wrought for a space, perhaps a long space,

or even during the whole course of life, or near it, towards the producing of self-denied obedience and the labour of love, the person who has been so exercised may expect to meet with this consolation, that he himself, and not another for him, had been indeed a believer of the truth, and so a justified person, even from the beginning of his operations, although he behaved to be ignorant of the blessedness of his state all the preceding part of his way, until he arrived at this last and crowning period.

“ His joy in the atonement, which he was supposed to have had from the first moment of believing till now, is compared to that of a man perishing with famine upon his hearing of an importation of corn for the use of his city and people, who are all in the like woeful and pitiable condition with himself, and who is now revived and gladdened, not by any means because he has already tasted, or because he is already certain that he ever shall taste any of the corn ; but purely because he is assured there is corn in the port, and that there shall be a free distribution thereof, without money, and without price, according to the good pleasure of the importer, not indeed to all, nor yet to the most part of the miserable citizens ; but only to those for whom it is appointed——perhaps for you, perhaps for me, perhaps for both, or perhaps, which is as likely, for neither of us. All are equally destitute of merit ; consequently there is no respect of persons—one may have as well as another. Therefore I will rejoice, and desire, and hope, and labour, and deny myself, and imitate the goodness of him who bestows the corn, in giving generously to my neighbours, until my continued progress and success, in all those virtues and good works, shall in the event assure me that my labour has not been in vain.” This success or prize bestowed by the Lord in acknowledgment of such uncommon goodness and godlike virtue, is the very consolation



which they call *the assurance of hope*: whereby the receiver of it becomes assured that he has not believed a lie; seeing he has now begun to enjoy the benefit of his faith in such a well-earned reward.

Thus he now concludes the certainty of his own personal acceptance with God; having been hitherto exercised with a painful desire and fear, altogether unconscious, uncertain of having any interest in the finished work, as one who could not rejoice in assured confidence of enjoying the hope set before him, through the pure unsupported evidence of the Lord's Word, until the Lord behoved actually to gratify him with the wages of some self-denied work and labour.

And thus the man of the self-denied obedience and labour of love, having obtained his hire, even the assurance of hope, as they think proper to interpret Scripture, has obtained ground to glory in his own personal assurance of the friendship of God towards him. Just as Leah, we shall suppose, who said, Now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons; now I know that God hath endowed me with a good dowry: and they call the name of this dowry *the assurance of hope*.—Not so, however, reasoned the apostles of God; for they say, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.—We love him, because he first loved us.—This commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God, love his brother also.—By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments.—And this is his commandment, that we should believe on his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment," 1 John.

Observe the process and order of the Spirit's work in this passage: 1. The assurance of God's love towards the persons themselves. 2. Their love towards God,

upon account of his love manifested towards them. 3. Their love towards the brethren, as the effect of the whole, according to the commandment, which is not grievous, being a commandment only to love, because of love, which the Spirit also fulfils in every heart where he dwells.

But the persons we are speaking of reverse this order, and argue in this manner: "We minister to the brethren; therefore we conclude that we love them.—If we love them, we may conclude that we love God.—If we love God, we may conclude that God loves us.—And if God loves us, we may conclude he has justified us and will save us."

If this be not building a steeple upon a spire, or a tower upon a tulip-stalk, as Hervey speaks, I know not what it is. It may indeed please a superficial observer while it is only in the plan upon paper, but it never will do in practice; nor, consequently, be approved of by the wise Master-builder of all things, even God; if so be the New Testament stands good, and be sufficient to prove the falsehood of Bellarmine's anti-christian establishment of works,—works of any kind, save the work of Christ alone, evidenced to the conscience by the Holy Ghost, for the ground of a person's assurance of justification before God. As for that extraordinary kind of proof, and illustration of their doctrine, concerning this same comfort of love and assurance of hope, bestowed as a premium upon the worthy deservers thereof, in consequence of their good works, which Mr. Glass also, the father and founder of that keen party, pretends to allege from the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ, who first finished his work, and then entered into his rest, and was comforted with the light of his Father's countenance, lifted upon him according to promise, it is, in my eyes, so far from being to the purpose, that it is pure un-

mingled blasphemy, as if Christ the Lord had been wavering in his mind, and hovering in the painful uncertainty of an anxious suspense whether he were the Son of God or not, and whether his service was accepted of, till he entered into paradise with his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption, and was made glad with the light of his Father's countenance !

But such a notion is very consistent with that other opinion of theirs, which, while I repeat, I tremble, that he began to learn from his mother, who would not fail to be telling him of the angel's salutation to her, and from the heavenly voice at his baptism, and at his transfiguration, that he was the Son of God ; and from the Old Testament writings, what manner of persons his kingdom was to consist of ; and that Moses and Elias talking with him upon the mount gave him certain information of his sufferings, death, resurrection, and following glory ! How would they pity or sneer at the person whom they should hear censuring those their darling tenets ! And yet, was there ever anything uttered by the mouth of man more injurious to the Son of God than this ? What ! did he put off his Godhead and knowledge of himself by putting on the manhood, that he had need one should inform him who he was ? Did he inspire Moses and all the prophets to prophesy beforehand of himself and of his kingdom, and then need to receive information from them what was to happen to himself and to his people ? *Credat Judæus !* Let them renounce Christianity who can believe this.

I should be loth, however, to have it here imagined that I mean to disparage the *whole* labours of those two most celebrated champions for their party, more than those of your equally indefatigable, and, in many respects, well-deserving friend. They have all, I do indeed allow as I have said, in many respects done eminent service in

the church, and long, I hope, shall continue so to do by their works, which remain and speak when they are removed from the field. They have, doubtless, upon both sides of the question, been highly useful, and in so far blessed instruments in demolishing the unsafe, weak, and ill-founded parts of each other's systems. They have awakened, to search the Scriptures, the attention of multitudes, who, at first going forth like Saul to seek lost things of lesser value, have lighted, by the special direction of Providence, upon the inspired servants of the Lord, have received his Word with joy, and returned again, triumphing in the infallibly-assured hope of a kingdom that fadeth not away.

Such, I am not ashamed to confess, has been the effect of Glass and Sandeman's writings upon myself, and I doubt not, upon many thousands besides me, who have never had freedom to join their party. Nevertheless, good cause we have, while we detest the horrible part of their creed, to bless the Lord, who hath been pleased to rouse us sluggards by the means which seemed good to himself, when we were sleeping, and turning ourselves at our ease upon our beds of anti-christian security, and slumber worse than death, even like to the door upon its hinges; or, if we are compared to a company of people in a ship, stranded in the mud, or sticking fast upon a rock, a figure whereunto the generality of professors in all churches may too justly be likened. Such rough and alarming applications have, by the blessing of God, a tendency to loosen and set us afloat again, that we may escape the destruction which is inevitable if we continue satisfied with the opinions and practices received by tradition from our fathers, our priests, and our country, without inquiring, and seeing with our own eyes, whether or not they be the very doctrines of God.

Blessed be the Lord who knows how to deliver them

that are his, and to pilot all the vessels of his mercy, however frail and weather-beaten, into the heavenly harbour of eternal truth and love. No man ever sought the Lord till the Lord first found him. And as for the battles of the Lord, he will not have them all fought by one hand, nor by one party, nor even wholly by friends. For we need not here say what is most undoubtedly true, that Antichrist himself, and the father of him, whose name is Apollyon, the destroyer, through the unsearchable sovereignty, wisdom, and power of God, are, notwithstanding of all their own inbred malice and guile, only conspiring, as one spirit, for the promotion of Emmanuel's cause, and the manifestation of the sons of God: even as Pharaoh thrust Israel altogether out of the house of their bondage, and pursued them fiercely away—to their salvation—and to his own destruction.

Thus you may see, excusing the small digression I have made, that I have no manner of ill-will against the persons of the men, nor the sterling parts of their creed; some of whose most material articles, an impartial regard to the truth, and to the salvation of my own soul, as well as those of other men, which I suppose are not a little endangered thereby, obliges me earnestly to oppose.

You have desired me, which is very reasonable, to account for my seeming agreement with you upon the head of assurance; which is indeed more than seeming, even real, as to the persuasion and confession of our own personal and assured interest in Christ, upon our very first believing the divine record, whereof this assurance is a part, and in its own nature before all works whatsoever; although indeed we differ widely as to the means, premises, or arguments, whereby we both come to the same confession and conclusion in our minds.—And also to account how I come really to agree with Sandeman, as our friend truly informed you I do, in his sentiments,

which I take to be scriptural, in opposition to your supposed deed of gift, &c., and universal extent of Christ's death, which you have been taught to hold as a warrant for your *appropriating act*. Now, if I shall not be able fairly to reconcile those apparent contradictions which you imagine I have fallen into, I shall readily grant that I am indeed, as you say, more chargeable with inconsistency and self-contradiction than Sandeman and his sect.

For illustration of my own belief concerning the point in controversy, whereof I mean to lay before you as clear a scheme as I am able, but in my present circumstances give me leave impartially to declare, at some length, my apprehensions of the utter insufficiency of certain main grounds, or first principles, which both parties have assumed to themselves, as points taken for granted, and proper to proceed upon in their respective arguments, though they have come to very distant conclusions. I never in my life desired to speak face to face with my correspondents more than at this present moment, being sensible of the weighty task I am going to undertake, which is no less than to essay the overturning of a hundred *systems* (called *religious*) at once, particularly yours and theirs, which, in my conscience, I believe to be built upon false bottoms.

Mr. Sandeman, I apprehend, although, after the example of his friend Mr. Glass, he has been able to arise and shake himself free from the powerful entanglements of innumerable prejudices and false judgments, wherein he had found himself so miserably involved when he first began to awake to the voice of the Scriptures, and found how many Philistines (so to speak) were upon him — yet he has not prevailed wholly to disentangle himself in his future reasonings from the power and influence of the whole of those pestilential and deadly impressions, and *Delilah-like* principles of corruption, which he beloved,

as most other children in a protestant land, to have drunk in from the good old women and others who have had the charge of his childhood and early youth.—And how close such impressions of every sort cleave to us, like the shadows and weight of our bodies, even to our last breath, is in many instances felt and acknowledged by all who have thought and spoken upon the subject with honesty and candour, insomuch that many of those impressions, if they appear any thing sensible-like, are really allowed to pass in the mind for original and innate ideas, essentially interwoven and figured by the Creator's power and skill into the very frame and texture of the human soul in its first formation. So that to destroy these, would, in the opinion of many, be to destroy and part with the mind itself. A vain imagination, founded in mere ignorance! Thus, the sources of the river Nile have been supposed by some to have flowed from heaven, or from the moon, for this doughty reason, because nobody remembered to have seen the mountains, so remote, from whence they sprung.—And thus those impressions have been so early and insensibly, though indeed powerfully struck upon the mind, that nobody being able to recollect when or how they first came by them, the minute philosophers (and most of the great names are among the number), have fancied them to be all essential and divine, the very workmanship of JEHOVAH'S hand, like the written laws upon the tables of stone. Thus also our grandmothers were wont to conceive divinity in their dreams, and thus those grandfathers, no less *wise*, tremble at the ghosts and all the bugbears of the dark, which they trembled at when young!

Of this kind I take Sandeman's *natural notices* of God to be, and of his voice in the conscience (whereof he talks such high things), as independent of, and antecedent to all revelation, and without the aid whereof there could

be no ascertaining of any revelation at all as coming from God. So that if we wanted those same natural notices of his, we behoved even to die and perish like the brutes, without any benefit from a revelation, which it seems we could not possibly know, save only by the means of said natural notices of God, and of his voice in the conscience, to attest, no doubt, and recommend the last arrived guest! *A glorious rock* for revelation to found upon indeed! God grant it may not be a rock of perdition to many, not only of its admirers, but also of all the sects in Christendom. For is not natural religion the religion of the devil, the great Diana, which all the world goeth a-whoring after, and worshippeth, every one taking liberty therefrom to do what seemeth right in his own eyes, as if there were no king in heaven to control the conscience by his Word! or as if he left them to the dictates of their own mind and conscience, impure and defiled as they are, which yet men would needs have to be filled with the notices of God and of his voice! But disputants and reasoners for nature's light, who must needs be allowed to take their own way, must also be allowed to take their own chance, for who but the just God and the Saviour can help them? And **THIS** GOD nature never traced, nor could; for we know he is only revealed by himself in the Holy Scriptures. But although it is certain, as the Scriptures are true, that the natural mind and conscience is blinded by the devil, seared as with a hot iron, and defiled, without God and the knowledge of him, yet this our advocate (and O how zealous he is)! for the voice of God naturally sounding in the conscience of the natural man, and clearing up to him the reasons of duty, and also, if he attend a little more carefully, the reasons of despair; under the power and burden of such poor and partial, false and delusory impressions of what he calls holiness, justice, law, duty, sin, obedience, judgment, reward, &c.,



not willing to ascribe the beginnings of those things (the horrors whereof he now feels in the very heart of him) to his *nurse*, nor to his catechism, *Father's* or *Mother's*, or *Larger* or *Shorter*, for she taught him some one or other of these, I'll warrant her; and a hundred to one, by the bye, if she did not forget to reckon upon the Scripture proofs, which the compilers have sometimes made a fashion of tacking to their said summaries of doctrine; however, be that as it may, he is now fully persuaded that those impressions, in whatever manner come by, are the immediate work and stamp of God upon his conscience. And this favour also he generously extends to all mankind; for it would have been *narrow-hearted*, you know, to have confined it wholly to himself. And as he is not willing to ascribe such strong and active impressions to the natural power of nurses and catechisms upon a childish mind, much less is he inclined directly to attribute the honour, if honour it may be *called*, to the *Prince of the power of the air*, who hath the natural mind and conscience wholly in his power and direction, to lead the same captive whithersoever it pleaseth him; nor yet, which I daresay would little mend the matter, to the influence of the popular ministers, under whom (as well as your humble servant), he had been trained up and soundly terrified and alarmed, even almost to madness, with a—

“Will ye do nothing for yourselves, ere you be damned, in order to obtain a saving interest in Christ! and to be reinstated into the favour of God, and to escape the wrath and curse of God, due to you for sin—according to the terms of the covenant of grace? Will ye not accept of the offer? And of the covenant-conditions! and has not mercy provided you in a kinsman-Redeemer? An official Saviour, given by a deed of gift to mankind sinners indefinitely—to sinners as sinners—no exception in

the covenant, nor in the grant of Christ in the covenant—why will ye except yourselves? Are not ye sinners? Have ye not a title? Why will ye not appropriate? Behold the official Saviour at hand, just waiting till you apply to him—nay, and what is more, to render you utterly inexcusable, have you not a *godly* Guturie and a *blessed* Boston, both burning and shining lights, to be helps and guides unto you in this great work, giving you directions how to attain to a saving interest, and to be reinstated in the favour of God? Prayer is the instrument to draw down faith, and faith is the instrument to unite you to Christ. O pray! pray! pray with faith! pray without faith! pray any way! pray as ye can pray! pray for justification; give him no rest till he give you the saving interest—stretch forth the withered hand—lie at the pool of ordinances; and when you have done all you can—and all this, and more also is in your own power, and may be done without grace, even by sinners in a state of utter depravation, unregeneracy, and enmity against God—yes all this may be done without faith, only use you the appointed means of salvation. There is no other way but this of your earnest application to the Saviour, that he may convert you and beget you again, and then it may be God will do for you what you cannot do for yourselves. Go a little further, and you will find him whom your soul loveth. God is registering your groans and bottling your tears; you are now sick of your sins, labouring under a sense of your guilt—you are the very persons to whom the gospel-calls are directed—poor, unregenerate, sin-sick souls! Says your Saviour, come unto me all ye that are labouring and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. But if you stifle your convictions, it will be harder work to repent afterwards, and overcome your ill habits; and you will be awakened in hell. O therefore, rise up and be doing

all that is in your heart, and the Lord be with you ; nature begins the work, and grace strikes in and carries it on, &c.”—(Boston, E. and R. Erskine, Willison, Marrow, R. Walker. D.D., *Assembly's Shorter Catechism*.)

Such is our way in Scotland. And thus our ministers, you see, when they are set for it, can tell us what the Holy Ghost cannot—for he cannot lie, nor deny himself; and therefore he says, “How then shall they call on him on whom they have not believed?” Rom. x. 14. So then, faith is required before prayer, as life before breath. But our spiritual guides reverse this order, and make prayer, with other actions of the natural man, who is utterly without the spirit and the truth, consequently without the very essence and possibility of prayer, to be the appointed means and way to obtain saving and justifying faith. So they would engraft the tree by means of its own engrafted fruit! They would raise the spring, by bestowing labour upon the streams; they would lay the foundation by means of the superstructure; they would have the son to beget the father! the effect to become the cause of its own cause! Rare logic! charming divinity!

Now, my countryman, Sandeman, not seeing this absurdity of these men and their way all at once, which afterwards he came clearly to perceive, and expose to shame and everlasting contempt, and that by means of the Scripture light; being, no doubt, as well as all of us at times, when in such circumstances, sore pinched, after hearing in the above strain a flaming high-toned discourse from some of our almost adored high-priests; and seeing death and hell set a-raging and a-roaring before his face, and already seeming in the very act of devouring his poor soul, comes to be well nigh terrified out of his wits, while divine vengeance, with all the terrors of a fiery law, pursue him hard behind; justice

and holiness standing as insurmountable rocks, in the way of his escape from the wrath to come, hemming him in on all quarters, and preventing on every hand his entrance into the kingdom, while he continues in his natural estate, under sin, under wrath. The Scriptures indeed are at hand, and show a safe opening how to escape from death to life. But, alas! our would-be spiritual guides have carried off the keys, that we might be the more beholden to them; and so lying at their mercy (no matter how mercifully they intend, being themselves deceived as well as we), we in fact are horribly tyrannized over by the cruelty and falsehood of the spirit of error: and who, by these means, is not locked out from the meaning of the Scriptures for a good part of his life, if not for ever? if so be Antichrist can prevail in Britain as well as in Rome.

In such a woeful plight (and many a doleful day it has been mine, while I slept and wak'd upon *Alleine's Alarm*, *Bunyan's Grace Abounding*, and *Willison's Balm*, &c., with a thousand other such top-masts of perdition) it was, I fancy, very natural for a person thoroughly awakened to look forwards with an anxious and wishful eye, like a weary worn-out traveller, journeying heavily through some waste mountainous country, towards the summit of the nearest eminence, and to flatter himself, if that were once surmounted and over-passed, then all would be safe down-hill, easy pleasant way, without any invincible impediment for the future, to the end of the journey; though, alas! when that first object of desire is gained, if strength hold out to gain it, lo! still he sees new hills on hills, and mountains over other mountain-tops arise!

Thus, I cannot restrain my fancy from representing Sandeman as faring on, and labouring in a mist, under partial views of things, when he sees, or thinks he sees, the divine holiness and justice presenting to his mind,

as the nearest, greatest, or rather the only obstacles standing in the way, and interposing between him and the divine favour and acceptance; he is ready to imagine, if he saw these not only removed out of the way of his justification, but also favouring that desirable event, then all would be well, and he would be certain of the safety of his condition. Certain, did I say? Nay, I am not yet allowed to say so much for him; but he is glad when he sees himself in the midst of a shadow of the mere possibility of salvation and acceptance with God, when those attributes, which appeared so averse and terrible at first, now seem not only to be safe and uninjured, but even magnified and made honourable, as well as mercy and the law, in his justification. So mighty jealous he supposes the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and wholly in Satan's power, to be, lest the majesty and character of God (whom, by-the-bye, if God be true, such a mind never knew, nor can know), should suffer detriment in the justification of a sinner! For so he fancies the conscience of every unbeliever as well as his own, in the supposed circumstances which I have described, mainly exercised and puzzled about ways and means, how holiness and justice could be able to justify a sinner! And if that could appear, he fondly hopes he has gained the highest summit of his most sanguine wishes, and in a rapture breaks out, and cries, AN ATONEMENT! AN ATONEMENT! A FINISHED WORK! insomuch, that one at first hearing is apt to rejoice along with him, giving thanks on his behalf, taking him indeed for a man of apostolic faith, hope, and joy; triumphing as he goes on his way, being assured that he is now, by the sovereign good pleasure of God, possessed of the pearl of great price, and so that he is passed from death unto life, and shall never more come into condemnation again.

But alas! for all this seeming joy, there is but one step between his soul and death: he sees but one single difficulty as yet removed out of the way; which, upon better recollection, I dare say, (whatever, for argument's sake, being willing if possible to account for such an absurdity in a sensible person, we may have allowed,) not one of a thousand, and perhaps, if the matter were better considered, not one of the whole number of unconverted sinners ever troubled themselves with, in the smallest degree. Apprehensive of punishment they may indeed be, for they feel much pain, or observe it, and see death, the end of all their pleasures, approaching. But to suppose them afraid lest the character of God should suffer in bettering their state if he were so disposed, is quite beyond my comprehension, not to speak of experience, which I never had; so that, after all his supposed possibility of salvation for him in the character of God, and after all he has yet attained to, of joy and peace upon that account, (alas! how little ground has he for joy and peace!) there may be yet still ten thousand chances, so to speak, in the sovereignty of God against him; for, does not he himself allow, "that many are called, and few chosen." Eight persons, (and perhaps only one saved from eternal fire,) to a world besides, who were left to perish at the flood—one Lot was delivered, and five cities suffered the vengeance of hell. So shall it be at the end of the world. Faith shall be far from being universal. And may not the Son of Man come, or death, which equally declares the eternal state of every individual, to-morrow, to-night, or now? And is this all the consideration that believers of the gospel have by it?

"That (as they say) if the Lord will he can make me clean—sovereignty can work wonders—and therefore I, even I, the chief of sinners, the vilest of the vile, may

also hope; for there is a propitiation: that is, I may entertain some fallible degree of expectation, which just keeps my head above water, my heart above despair, which sets me a-working, and exerting myself with vigour, animating me, just as the word of a king encourages a military genius to plant a standard on the wall, or bravely to die in the breach: but this hope must be considered only as the most powerful of all stimulations to heroical ardour, and must by no means as yet arise to certainty till I have wrought for it, and that to some purpose, I assure you, and in a very strange way too; for my grand evidenee, that I have not deceived myself, but have been indeed a believer of the *truth* is, that I have firmly believed every member of my church or society, a member of Christ (and have dealt by them as such), save only myself; my own being a member of Christ is a point only to be gathered from my belief concerning my neighbours, and from my corresponding behaviour towards them, in consequence of said belief. Now, pray observe, I ought to be delivered up to Satan by my brethren if I should utter any suspicion that any of them were not believers. But as for myself, it will be as good to think myself a hypocrite as anything else." So far in the person of a Glassite.

But to return, woes me! Is this it all? all the ground of joy! There were many widows in Israel in the days of the prophet Elijah; but to none of them was he sent but to a widow woman in Sarepta, a city of Sidon: and there were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha; but none of them were healed, but only Naaman, a Syrian. The certainty that there was a prophet, and that some few were to be healed and relieved by miracles, would have been cold comfort divided among such an innumerable multitude of widows and lepers! A battalion of soldiers are become traitors, seized, and con-

demned: they hear their sovereign may, in consistency with his justice and royal government, save certain of them, and that he is actually determined so to do, and has issued out his proclamation that his royal pleasure is such, suppose one of a hundred is to be saved, still I have ninety and nine chances against me, which brings my hope and joy down to little more than absolute despair, which was my former standard. The comparison may be followed out, and fear, pain, anxiety, and desire abundance, may have full play, but little joy to animate one in the field of action, if, after all, when the retreat was sounded, ninety and nine out of every hundred were to be dealt with according to the former sentence! Is this indeed the peace and joy in believing to animate in fighting the good fight of faith, and in running the race set before us, which the Scriptures speak of as being given for a principle of action, and a present enjoyment, and fund of thankfulness and praise, to all the justified ones who are all good soldiers of Christ?

“A trust to be saved by Christ, if saved at all; and a thought that a believer of the truth, even a justified person, cannot be the worse at any time sincerely to believe himself a reprobate, or condemned sinner in the flesh!”

A wholesome thought truly! wherein there is room abundance, not only for fear, but even absolute despair, for aught I can see. But we must hear them out, for much of the antidote will consist in the knowledge of the poison and its operation.

“My own particular interest in the atonement, which I believe is provided for sinners, is to be made out to me; I mean the knowledge of it as belonging to me, by my works of faith, and labours of love, and self-denied obedience, working in the way of painful desire, anxiety, and fear.”



To this doctrine of uncertainty, methinks we may say, a miserable comforter art thou! a physieian of no value, *Egyptian reed* is thy name. For is it not the very poison and *spirit* of the fashionable and popular doctrine mingled together, and *double distilled* into one? And, as Cudworth speaks of Whitefield's refined idolatry, so much the worse for its increased subtilty, by passing through so many ingenious hands and trieks of art. For, after all the fine things that are said about the atonement, the finished work, the one requisite, the grand point of justification, faith, peace, hope, joy, consolation of the Holy Ghost, &c., does it not answer, to a tittle, unto all the justly-exploded popular blasphemy? For blasphemy certainly it is as they apply it, crying out to us continually, to encourage us in some self-righteous labour, and then to expect, and rejoice in the fruit of the same.

“Up, and be doing,” say the popular ministers; “take with you words and ropes, like Benhadad's servants, and say, The king of Israel is a merciful king, catch what comes out of his mouth; say with the leper, If we stay here we perish, and if we go we but perish. Take your life in your hand, like Esther, and say, If we perish, we perish—we perish at thy foot, O mercy! where never poor sinner yet perished: never despair, sinner, continue your applications at the throne of grace; like Jacob, hold him, and never let him go, till he bless thee with the intimations of his justifying love; tell him, for he loves to be importuned for righteousness and eternal life, tell him, justification ye must have, and will have, and away without it ye will not go. And though ye have waited long, ye have no other venture for life eternal. But while there is life there is hope, and may be ye have got the blessing already. Try your marks of grace; review all your evidences, and reason upon them thus. If you have felt your hearts, after much labour and

painful seeking of the Lord, enlarged in prayer, or in the exercise of any other duty, if you can say your moral endeavours have been serious and sincere, that you have not rested in the use of means, more than you have neglected them, and that you really long to be in Christ. All this is a very hopeful sign, and a promising token for good. You may even conclude you have obtained a portion and acceptance with the king; even the petition and request you asked, an interest in Christ. You are no hypocrite, but a real believer. Is not Christ precious to you? then you believe. Do you not love the children of God? then you may be sure you love God. Cannot you say with Peter, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee? conclude then that your sins are forgiven you. Hail to the highly favoured of the Lord. The King has come, and left a blessing behind him. And you may say with Jacob, God was in this place, and I knew it not. Therefore, I say, take heart, never fear, man, thy state is safe. The Master is come, and hath called thee, and sealed thee for his own. His love is an everlasting love, and thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, for thou hast works, and therefore be assured of thy faith."

The fashionable gentlemen, the polite, the elegant sons of Apollo, I mean the sons of the *Delphian god*, not the imitators of the eloquent Apollos, speak in somewhat a different strain of words, but entirely in the same spirit of error, telling us that "Our kind creator and bountiful benefactor has put every man's salvation in his own hand. To suppose otherwise would be an imputation upon his justice. God is just, and kind, and good. And if thou be not wanting to thyself, thou mayest arise and seize the glorious crown, and triumph in eternal life. Know, O man! thy dignity of nature, assert thy character and rank before thy God. Let ambition, all godlike,

all divine, fire thee in thy course towards perfection. Throw away the pitiful encumbrances of vice, divest thyself of every vicious habit; acquire, and clothe thyself with the habits of virtue, and virtue shall have her own reward. Marry virtue, and thou shalt inherit her dowry. Yes, the favour of God, her father and thine, through the merits, I say, of our bountiful Redeemer, who deserves our warmest thanks for making clear our way to virtue and to God. Has he not assured us our labour shall not be in vain? His universal law is love: love is the fulfilling of the law, and O how reasonable is love! love to God and love to men. For God is love, and men the children of his love. Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, &c., and thou shalt inherit eternal life." Thus they conclude their harangues, and very modestly pray for a blessing upon what has been said, through the merits of a Saviour (whom they politely and ceremoniously introduce in the end of their speech, like *Dear Sir and Humble Servant*, in the conclusion of a letter), and so the half hour is run, and the people glad to go home to their dinner in season.

Now, I here appeal to every serious, disengaged, and unprejudiced reviewer of this *corrector's* doctrine, if he himself be not as deeply sunk in the mire from which he would endeavour to raise others; and if he be not as really convicted, by his own words, of high treason against the just God the *Saviour*, as any of all those *fashionable* or *popular* ringleaders, both of whom he has so justly chastised, I do not say with whips, but with scorpions. A salutary dispensation! and the Lord grant it may more and more effectually work towards the purpose of alarming and awakening many poor bewitched souls, who are led captive by the devil in the form and unsuspected appearance of their respective teachers, before both fall into the ditch, and be delivered over to

the tormenters. How happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth!

Let us now turn your eyes towards our hero Cudworth. He seems not, for aught I see, to dispute, or even suspect, the reality of any of Sandeman's natural notices of God, in the unbeliever's conscience, of law, of duty, of sin, &c., all tending, as he says, to despair, till revelation open a door of hope, and bestow enlargement upon the straitened and terrified conscience; but uniformly and calmly proceeds hitherto as one agreed with his adversary as to those imaginary foundation-points of natural knowledge of God, and, consequently, of religion; yet greatly withal, and God knows justly, at a loss to comprehend what mighty consolation can arise to me, a sinner, from the persuasion of God's mere ability, without any assurance of his willingness, to save; and that, not only some certain select objects of his sovereign favour, whom he may have reserved in his own unsearchable decrees, but me, even me, my own very individual self, personally and particularly. For what, pray, were it to me, though all the universe, besides myself, were to be saved, and known by me to be saved, if I myself were to be damned, or did not know but I might be damned as readily as any of them, notwithstanding my belief aforesaid; seeing it is allowed I am in myself no better than the very worst of men? Would the joys of the saints in heaven solace my poor sinful soul in hell? *Son, remember*, has a very particular sound with it.

Now seeing it is granted, that without any maybe or peradventure, even absolutely, certainly, and universally, every individual mouth of man is stopt, and the whole world become guilty before God, condemned by the law; and seeing every one in person (for proxies, or leaders for their followers, will not be admitted) must give an account of himself at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, well

might Cudworth, well might every one who allowed such articles as fixed points in his creed, if he were not absolutely mad, and infatuated beyond the ordinary rate of insanity and delusion, look also for some equally fixed and particular personal standing for himself in the atonement, to render him as personally certain of his justification, without any possible hazard of his coming short of eternal life, as he ever was of his former state of enmity and wrath under the law. For what occasion, I beseech you, I cannot but insist on it, or ground is there for that joy unspeakable and full of glory, which the Scripture mentions, before God, in all who have received the atonement, as inseparably connected with that receiving of it, which is justification, if the knowledge of this justification be not as certain to the justified person as the justification itself is certain in the sight of God? Nay, what is justification at all, (as to our apprehension of God's act in justifying the ungodly,) as your friend well says, but a person's being rendered certain that he is actually justified by the righteousness of God, which the Holy Ghost shows him to be finished, and imputed to him when he comes to understand what Christ finished; and so the Scripture is fulfilled which says, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities;" and thus he gives the knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins; that is, by their justification, Acts xiii. 38. But to what purpose use words to prove this, after reading the Scriptures? As fruitless a business as to argue with a lunatic!

If we had not been forewarned of lying wonders that were to come in the latter days, which were to deceive, if possible, even the very elect, one not totally drunk, drenched, and stupified himself with the spirit of a party, would think it almost absolutely incredible that men of

such distinguished sense, discernment, and quick understanding in other things, as Glass and Sandeman, with a numerous body of uncommonly shrewd and sagacious people in connection with them, should be so far infatuated and hood-winked by the fancied greatness and wisdom of their own way, as not to perceive the most glaring absurdity, in pretending to maintain their boasted account of possible justification, instead of real justification—with a present joy on account of a salvation merely possible—not certain, no—by no means certain, as to their own apprehension (and we are not speaking of God's unrevealed acts) until, as the reward of their long and painful self-denied labours, and obedience, particularly their love of the brethren—that is, of their own party only—they receive, when their work is finished, the smiles of their Father's countenance, and the comfortable assurance of their own personal interest in Christ; or, to express it otherwise, when their obedience has been well advanced, their pain, fear, and patience sufficiently exercised, they begin to be assured that they have not believed in vain, that is, that they have not believed a lie instead of truth. Strange! to believe all this, and not first renounce the scriptures! But stranger still, to appeal to them on every point, and to land in such unscriptural conclusions!

On the other hand, one would think that Cudworth, by much poring upon, and guarding against such dangerous principles as those of his adversary, (which at first view seem to promise every thing, yet in the issue leave us possessed of nothing, but the most pestilent part of popery, even no ground for personal and particular consolation in Christ, but what springs from our own good works), had been reduced to a state of absolute blindness and unconsciousness, with regard to the no less dangerous, palpable, and astonishing absurdity, of

his own *universal gift, &c.*, and that which follows thereupon, *the appropriating act.*

But here it will be best to let the matter as it stands in controversy between them drop,—Sandeman has confuted Cudworth, and Cudworth has confuted Sandeman. Both champions have now finished their warfare, and gone to their own place. To find out the truth we need appeal to neither of them, nor to any of their kind. We shall also be numbered with the dead, and lie every one in our own fixed and silent habitation, till the heavens be no more. Eternity is at stake. Eternity is before us, and while we yet speak, our change may come. Let us be determined, and fully persuaded in our own minds, and that neither by the sentiments of living men nor dead; but by the Lord alone, seeing the Lord alone, without a rival, and without a partner, without any subordinate power, is the Lord of the conscience. Let us appeal to the book of eternal judgment, and to it alone with a single heart. And let, *Thus saith the Scripture* settle, and finally determine every point. *Amen.*

Now, then, for a third scheme, which sets both the former ones aside, with every other human system I know; and which, as boldly as any of them all, appeals to the scripture. Who is in the right, or if any of them at all, every man ought to judge for himself, and still to keep his appeal open to the word of infallible truth and certainty. He that judgeth every man is the Lord. And now, O my soul! hast thou not appealed to the Lord? For to the Lord thou shalt go.

The process and connection of my present belief, as appearing to me in every article supported by the word of God, you will find as follows,—and I beg you will observe the grounds upon which I proceed, both with regard to the general plan, and the several particulars thereof. I would still be understood as speaking only

concerning the one point here in controversy; namely, the ASSURANCE OF FAITH with its foundation. As to other things, I do not here meddle with them, save perhaps by the bye.

In the first place, being conscious of much systematic rubbish and school divinity to be shovelled out of the way, before we come to the true foundation and rock of eternal truth; I consider with myself, and take it as an incontestible maxim, that it is impossible for the mind of man to remain without forming some kind of idea, notion, or fancy of everything whatsoever, whereabout we hear much talking, especially if such things are represented as very much concerning ourselves. This disposition, so natural to us, as I formerly hinted, seems to me the grand sources of Sandeman's mistakes and gross oversights—and perhaps, of most other misapprehensions in religion.

Now, as we hear of all the things of God, and frequently much disguised, and wholly unconnected, by some means or other, before we are capable of forming any tolerable judgment of the most ordinary and plain things in life, it comes to pass, that even from our very infancy, we will be framing in our minds, ideas of what we call God. But now, if we be not children still, we must be sensible that our childish fancies, of an old man sitting on a seat above the clouds, were ridiculous, and in themselves blasphemous delusions, when applied to God. What better could we succeed in our notions of law, sin, duty, judgment, justification, &c.? For it was not to be expected, and seldom I dare say has been experienced, that persons in such circumstances, scarce capable of knowing the right hand from the left, should have been able to form just and true conceptions of such high and invisible things, (whatever the Father of all spirits, by immediate inspiration, or some uncommon



influence, may bestow, of which I do not speak), until they receive them upon mature and deliberate consideration of the holy scriptures, comparing one thing with another,—which surely we are not then capable of doing, but must of necessity think (whatever we are taught to talk, as parrots, or as blind men do of colours), as foolishly and falsely every whit as Nicodemus, a master of Israel, did of being born again.

For instance, now while I am writing to you in London, I cannot help having some idea or other of what I call London, and also of your face, person, and appearance; but if I should set about drawing a map of London, and a picture of your person by such imaginations as I have formed to myself, I should be found grossly mistaken in my measures, and no mortal could recognize the man, or the city by my representations. Yet if any one should most accurately describe to me both the man and the city, I might perhaps talk of both to a stranger, with as great fluency and appearance of real knowledge and understanding, as if I had been most thoroughly acquainted with them, while in my heart or mind I continued still an absolute stranger to both.

Such I take the case to be with respect to all our first notions of religion, which we find ourselves possessed of since our first remembrance of things—and these generally leaven the whole future mass, and continue predominant in the mind; like the roots of vegetables assimilating all the juices they imbibe to their own original nature.

Here I am aware you may think I have run myself upon a horrible rock and deadly error. As if I meant to assert that all early religion is false and null, as being only in appearance, and that it is by the strength of our maturer judgment, when we grow up, that we come to understand the things of God,

without the operation of the Holy Ghost upon our minds by means of the word. God forbid I should assert, insinuate, or think so, in the most distant manner! What I mean is only, that it is not every, nor any impression whatsoever, or idea in our minds, whether we be old or young, of what we call the things of God, that is true, and from God; but those only which we perceive the Holy Ghost bestowing upon us, by means of the written word. For, without perceiving the connection of certainty between God the testifier and the thing testified and believed, upon account of that very testimony of God, and his authority alone, without that of any other, in my mind, whatever I may pretend to believe concerning God and his things, it is nothing better than a mere fancy or dream of my own, a false impression from man, or, what is just the same in this matter, a delusion of SATAN, who is the god of this world, from whom indeed we receive all such ideas, or perceptions of those things we call divine, concerning which we dare not boldly say that they are true, as God is true, and for this single reason, that we perceive God himself to be the discoverer of them to us, sealing them upon our hearts by his own immovable word—who holds the hearts of all flesh in his hand; to teach them in all stages of human life, according to his own infallible manner, when and where it pleaseth him, sanctifying them through the truth. His word is truth—and it alone is truth to me. And what does not manifest itself to be his word, it is not truth—but falsehood to me—whatever name or appearance it may otherwise assume.

Therefore, when I read the scriptures, my business is to divest myself of every former, and otherwise derived idea, and to receive no impression, to admit no conviction from any other quarter whatsoever, but only from that word of his, whereby, according to his purpose, my

eternal state shall be fixed. Since the Lord alone is the Lord of the conscience, who has right to approach to my conscience but the Lord himself? Let my conscience, therefore, be to him a fountain sealed, and a garden enclosed. As the scripture, only the scripture reveals to me the things of God, even all the thoughts and ways of God towards me, which none but God can know, I now laugh with a pleasant disdain and sovereign contempt at all my former notions, at all the doctrines of men, as pertaining to those things. I cast myself, with all my thoughts and notions at the feet of Jesus; desiring him to blot out all my natural impressions, and to give me to hear his words, and none but his. Why should I say, what saith this, or what saith that author? But what saith the author and finisher of faith? "I'll hear what God the Lord will speak." If they said of old, Let the counsel of Abel make an end of the matter—The Lord is my ABEL—I'll ask counsel of the Lord—The word of the Lord shall decide every controversy to me—Let all other counsels (whoever, or however many, may have sounded the trumpet in their praise), be thrown out of my heart, like Sheba the son of Bichri's head over the wall.

"If any man will become wise, let him become a fool for Christ's sake, that he may be wise to salvation." Hence I know, I ought to know and acknowledge no title, commission, authority, or power of any creature in heaven, earth, or hell, to instruct me, or form notions for me, more than I have for them; seeing we must be all equally ignorant of such things, but from God's teaching—and God condescends to teach me, as plainly and immediately by the scriptures, as any of them can pretend to, by their devised forms—neither does this destroy the use of preaching, writing or exhorting, according to the word. God forbid: For if a man

preach, write, or exhort according to the word, (and according to anything else is according to the devil), it is the word itself, the pure doctrine of the word declared, that ought to move me, and not the person of the preacher, writer, or exhorter, who is only my friend putting me in mind of what is written in the word.

If any one ask me, how I know the scriptures to be the word of God? And how I know the meaning of God in them? I answer, that God himself speaking in that very word, is the only witness I have, or can have for those particulars. For the purity, majesty, harmony, antiquity, &c. of the scriptures, however real in themselves, are no arguments to me of their divine original, unless I perceive those attributes as belonging to them—which I confess I cannot do, but by that very light which I feel infused into my heart, through the *medium* of the scriptures themselves, by the power and skill of their (now for the first time manifested) author, in that precise manner enlightening me, without any manner of antecedent knowledge of himself, or of them, in me. And now that I believe, why should I doubt? How is it possible for me to doubt, that he who now manifests himself the creator of my spirit, is as able to persuade me, and actually does persuade me, of his speaking to me in the scriptures, and by them, makes me as conscious of his truth declared in them, as I am of light, hearing, pleasure, pain, life, or existence, when I am awake, and so affected? If any man dispute my consciousness of these, I despise his arguments, and think myself entitled to answer him with silence.

Here, I believe, the most part of those who are not spoiled by vain philosophy, will agree with me. At least, I am sure all Protestant Confessions of Faith allow, that it is the Spirit of God only that gives a man to believe that the scriptures are the word of God, and

to understand the meaning—So that there seems to be no ground of controversy with me upon this head.

But suppose I were in general to admit the scriptures to be the word of God, and yet doubts and scruples were suggested to my mind concerning the reasonableness, and consequently the reality of certain important things contained in them—I answer, The grounds and reasons of such doubts, whatever they are supposed to be, must, in my judgment, equally affect the whole scripture, and every part thereof. Consequently, they are nothing to me, who am already a believer of the scriptures, and that upon the infallible ground of God's testimony—which, if it be good to ascertain me of the whole, must certainly be as good to ascertain me of every particular, without more ado, for I acknowledge no reason assignable, why anything in the scriptures should be more or less reasonable, or probable, than any other thing therein published; because I allow, either in myself, or anywhere else, no standard, or touchstone of credibility, respecting such things, save only the scriptures themselves. And if I did otherwise, I made that credibility, and not the evidence, or authority of God, the ground of my believing the scriptures—which, in my conscience, I believe were blasphemous and absurd—making myself, and not God, the standard of credibility. Far be it from me, that I should do such a thing! So there is no ground known to me, why I should admit the conviction of one thing from the scriptures, rather than any other thing therein declared—all being of equal verity and certainty, all being equally testified, and solely depending upon the single unspotted authority of God the *testifier*, who cannot lie, and whom I must consider as the *Amen*, Faithful and True witness, when I receive any one article as true upon his bare word. *God himself hath said*, determines all with me—and I am not obliged to have any know-

ledge of God, and of his things otherwise, and really I have none, nor can have, nor ought to have, but what is derived from this single source.

For illustration of what I say, I cannot allow any evidence of the world's creation by ONE, whom the scripture alone describes, and calls JEHOVAH, and of man's creation in his image—or of the fall—of the law—of sin—of death, as the wages thereof—of Christ—of judgment—of heaven—or of hell, but only that equal and infallible evidence thereof, which God affords me in his word. Why then should I, with almost all Christendom besides, confess my having a conviction of certain articles, as infallible and divinely certain truths, and yet, at the same time, entertain and confess doubts and scruples concerning the truth and existence of other things which are equally revealed?

To speak explicitly, why should I allow and confess that I was lost in Adam, that I am condemned by the law, that Christ fulfilled the law, that he rose from the dead, that by him there is salvation for men, and by none but him—and yet allowing and confessing all this upon the authority of the scriptures, at the same time, and in consequence of such confession, think myself obliged to pray, or needing to pray, for an interest in Christ, and to do as they suppose, by God's help, which I am advised to ask, certain things, under the name of striving for justification, or acceptance of my person with God?

How came I to know that there was a Christ, or that I needed an interest in him, &c.? If you say, by reason; I don't believe you: What, did reason reveal the fall, the law, Christ, and his cross and judgment by him, &c.? He who says so, lies against God. If you say, by the word. Well, the word says also, "Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness," to whom? "to every one that believeth." Believeth, what does he believe?

A. That he is the Son of God who fulfilled the law. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe with thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x.

Now, if the witness concerning sin, death, and condemnation by the law, be held for a true witness, why doubt concerning the same witness being true, concerning righteousness and justification? and that I who believe the record, am as certainly justified through that righteousness imputed unto me, as I am certain of the record's being true? For it is assuredly contained in the scripture, that all who believe this record are justified. I believe the record; therefore I believe I am justified. The latter is as certainly true as the former. If the latter is not true, and held true by me; why, pray, should the former? I know no reason; for why do not both stand or fall together?

Such is my view of these things. Adopt it, if you see it good; disprove it if you can. If you find it truth, all objections fall at once to the ground, and vanish like smoke in the air, and you, by the good hand of God upon you, are happy in your mind, and established in perfect certainty of your being accepted of God in Christ. Thus to me, the word of God is good for all, or good for nothing at all. If sufficient to charge my conscience with sin and death, so also in like manner, to discharge my conscience from both. I am not to answer for God, and give a reason for my Maker, why his ways should be *these*, rather than *those*, or *those*, rather than *these*.

If I am told, that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; am I not also, and in the same breath told, that by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous? If I am assured, that by nature all

men were equally children of wrath; am I not equally assured, that by faith all who believe are now become the children of God? for it is written, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." I John v. Wherefore I cannot believe that Jesus is the Christ, without believing as certainly that I am born of God; unless indeed I believe God to be a liar in the latter clause of the sentence, whom I hold to be true in the former. His word is equally pledged to me for both. Without the word it is as hard to account for the one as the other. Without the word we know nothing of either. If you admit the word, both are equally certain; as it is certain that there was a creation, or a creator—God, the fall, or the Sinai law.

So, then, to insist upon this favourite and important head, the elements, or A, B, C, of my creed, you may conceive in general, over and above what has been said, in this manner following: "Faith is the substance," ground, confidence, discovery, knowledge, manifestation, or assurance "of things hoped for, and the evidence," or conviction "of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report." Heb. xi. And if by faith, then, by nothing else; for nothing else is spoken of, and if the elders, why not you and I also, disregarding all other evidence? seeing the good report we want is from God, and not from the world. For God loves those whom by his grace he has given to believe, and the world hates them. "By faith we understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God," &c. And if by faith we understand these things, even by faith only, as the apostles did, even so all other things which are written in the scripture, that we may believe all alike, without murmuring, without disputing, with the same equal certainty of infallible divine assurance in the Holy Ghost. For we must still remember, that what the



Scripture saith is the only manifestation, criterion, and touchstone of the things of God to us. "For faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom. x.

Thus, it is clear, that all knowledge of God, and of his ways, cometh only by hearing the Word of God; and not otherwise. "There are three who bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." 1 John v. One only God, whose one only word we have to do with. "Hear, and your soul shall live." Isa. xlv. If I hear then I live. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Matt. xvii. Why then should I go away, more than the eleven, seeing I also believe, and am sure that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God? "Lord, to whom else can we go but to thee? for thou alone hast the words of eternal life." John vi. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." 1 John v. Men may be imposed upon themselves; men may design, and endeavour to impose upon us; and further, men cannot furnish us with an understanding to believe their testimony, although ever so true and certain in itself, but the witness of God is greater in every respect: God cannot be imposed upon himself; God can as little impose upon us: "Is he a man that he should lie? or the son of man that he should repent? Nay, let God be true, and every man a liar." God is the witness, not in our ear only, but also in our very heart, which he opens, and enters by his word. For "He that believeth God hath the witness in himself." He hath God within him, manifesting himself to be the *Amen*, faithful and true witness. He hath given such an one to believe. "Now we know, that the whole world lieth together in wickedness even until now. But we know that the Son of God is come; and he hath given us an understanding

to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." I John v.

So then, if God be once manifested in my conscience as the witness or evidence of any matter, and particularly of the record concerning his Son, the truth or meaning whereof he hath given me to understand, I must be perfectly persuaded, even infallibly certain (and certainty admits of no degrees, no more, no less, no doubt, or possibility of doubt) thereof, as I am certain that God is the witness of it; or that I myself do exist. For he that believeth, hath the witness in himself, as he hath consciousness in himself of life and being, while he is alive and awake.

I am not therefore obliged to furnish a doubting adversary with this internal evidence, or witness; nor ought I to suspect the truth thereof in the least, because another man affirms he has it not himself, nor can possibly comprehend how it can be so as I assert and feel. One is not obliged nor able to explain, or show to an insensible person, what sensibility is: God alone can do this. So another man's doubting, or denying of anything, whereof I have God manifested in my conscience for the witness, is no stumbling-block at all to me. I may set the outward evidence, the word whereby God communicates conviction to myself, before him. More I cannot do. But it would be madness, it would be blasphemy, to call in question the truth and veracity of God my witness, because other men do so, and still continue in unbelief. What, "shall the unbelief of some make the faith (or faithfulness) of God of none effect? God forbid." Rom. iii.

Shall I then doubt, or deny, that I certainly see, and exactly distinguish colours and objects with my own eyes, because another man is unhappy enough to be

blind, or must needs be so perverse as to shut his eyes, and then affirm, that he cannot see the objects which I see, and confess I do see? Is his blindness, or perverseness, any argument against my sight, and my pleasure therein? I would indeed gladly open the windows of his chamber to let in light. I would set before him all the agreeable objects I myself perceive; but alas! I cannot open the eyes of the blind, nor convert the perverse.

Shall I in very deed question my own living and breathing, because the dead are round about me? And what though it were the whole world besides, as it was to Noah and his few in the ark? Their death is no evidence of mine: For they are not the life of my life, nor the length of my days, like God, in whom I live, move, and have my being. Nor would their life be any evidence to me of my being alive, if that were possible to be called in question by myself, or seriously disputed by others.

I have insisted the more upon this plain point, because I apprehend the whole amount of all the objections that can be brought against this personal and perfect assurance in every believer, of his own particular acceptance with God, is just this, That those who have it to say, and say truly, that they have no experience nor comprehension of such a thing, and therefore, very *modestly* indeed! they must needs deny that it is in me, because they find it is not in themselves. And what is that to the purpose? Did ever the Holy Ghost undertake to bear witness to unbelievers, who are the children of the devil, that they were the children of God?

“He that believeth God hath set to his seal that God is true.” John iii. Neither is this a coming and going kind of certainty, like a summer brook. For the Lord, comparing the Holy Ghost to water, saith, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never

thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life." John iv. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." Why? "Because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son." *Giving eternal life*, To whom? Shall we say, to mankind sinners, as such? To all the race of Adam, indefinitely, universally, whether they believe or believe not. Strange giving indeed to *all*, where nothing is received, nothing conveyed to, nothing possessed by, the greater part of those to whom it is given! Why do you say so? Is not the Apostle in the passage here evidently speaking only concerning himself, with his fellow-believers, and asserting, that God, in giving them to believe the record concerning his son, hath given to them eternal life? even as he gives us the benefit of light, by giving us to see it, so that to see light, is to enjoy light. If any man dispute this, or other similar expressions, how can I dispute with him? For he unhinges the word, and takes that in an universal sense, which is plainly limited by the connexion, and restrained to the particular sort of persons there spoken of. "He that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." He does not say, He that *appropriates* the Son, or believes that he shall be saved by the Son, hath life, upon that account; or that he shall be saved by that appropriation of his. What he means by a believer's having the Son, is plain from his 2d epistle, 9th verse, namely, the having of the doctrine or knowledge of the record concerning the Son of God. See also I John ii. 20, &c.

Now these things being so (or which is the same to me, appearing so in my eyes), I sit down to my Bible, and read, void of prepossessions, as if I were but this

very instant created, desiring to have no bias or prejudice from former impressions of any kind, as if there were not another thinking creature comprehended within the immensity of JEHOVAH my God, besides myself, single and detached without regard to anything known, or thought of by me, but only Jehovah my God speaking to me, and giving me to understand his own words, concerning all his own thoughts and ways necessary for me to know. In such a posture and frame of spirit, like softened wax, actually receiving the impressing seal, when I read and understand, that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, with all their host, and man in his own image, male and female, all good; that the commandment was given by God the Lord, and broken by man, the original glory lost by the one offence of the one man; that in Adam all sinned, and all died; that Adam was a figure of one to come; that as by Adam's one offence all men were made sinners, even so by Christ's one righteousness, all believers are made righteous; that moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound, and sin appear exceeding sinful; that every mouth might be stopt, and the whole world become guilty before God; and that by the deeds of the law, there should no flesh be justified in his sight, seeing by the law is the knowledge of sin.

To all these, and every other thing recorded in the Scripture, my heart says, Amen, before my God, Amen to the creation, Amen to the fall, Amen to the law, Amen to every charge exhibited against me, in whatever form exhibited against me, and against all mankind, as, John, chap. iii., Rom. chap. i. 2, 3, Gal. chap. ii. and iii., or any where else in the whole divine record. If I am wounded, I am healed. If I am lost, I am found again. If I am killed, I am made alive. I

acknowledge all, I say Amen to all, perfectly satisfied with the truth of all, perfectly well pleased that everything is just as God would have it. Just is he in all his ways, holy is he in all his works, who is the king of saints. I rejoice in my spirit to know that God is God, whose name is *I AM THAT I AM*; that man is man; that the law is the law; that sin is sin; that death is death; that hell is hell; that heaven is heaven; and that the gospel is the gospel. This is good news which brings gladness to my heart.

I see indeed a heavy charge brought against me, and against all my kind, by nature all children of wrath, enemies of God in our minds, and much more by wicked works, and all accursed by the fiery law. Behold the charge! I see it, yea, and consider it with pleasure. It was Adam, and not I that first sinned. By him alone, and not by any other man, sin was introduced into the world, and death entered in by sin; and so death passed upon all, for that all have sinned, in that one Adam. It was not in my power to prevent what happened, according to all the manner recorded, more than it was in my power to prevent the creation, or to prevent my own being; for then I had none. Why should I be sorry, and repine? *repine!* Repine at God's eternal decree fulfilled! God forbid! For did those things happen, think you, without the sovereign, holy, benevolent, kind design and purpose of God? If so, then how could the eternal wisdom, before the world was formed, rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth, and have his delights with the sons of men, before they were created. Who in respect of this purpose, and fore-ordained grace, are said, to have been saved in Christ Jesus before the world began. 2 Tim. i. 9. How could they be saved, if they had not been lost, and as lost considered by their Lord and Saviour, who says,

he loved them with an everlasting love, and therefore draws and constrains them by his loving-kindness.

It was not I who sent myself into the world, a child of wrath by nature, as all others. The Lord hath made us, and not we ourselves. And this we are called upon particularly to know and consider, as that wherein a peculiar display is made of his being God the Lord. Psalm e. "Yet whatsoever is born of flesh is flesh." And when man is said to be *flesh* (so called Gen. vi. because void of the Holy Spirit, as a man is nothing but a carcase or mass of corrupt flesh without the living soul), every imagination and purpose of his heart is called by him who knows it, evil, only evil, and that continually. We go astray from the womb. "The carnal mind is enmity against God (and other mind naturally we have none), and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Whence it is evident, that it never was intended, that I, or any of Adam's fallen race, should ever in this life fulfil the law, and live by personal obedience. The law was given for another end, even because of transgression, to manifest sin in us, and righteousness in Christ. Even to bear witness against us, and to bear witness to him, who is the end and perfection of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth.

Neither do I charge sin upon my Maker, nor folly upon the Holy One of Israel; God forbid! Nay, I ascribe wisdom and righteousness to my God. But indeed, I do take things just as they are revealed, and think it meet for me to be all ear, to hear what saith the Lord. This is becoming the station of a creature. Known to God are all his own works, from the beginning of them even to the end. And I, surely, am not to be accountable for God, nor for what he keeps secret, but I am accountable to him for what he reveals to me. He

worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. And now, O creature! whoever or whatever thou art, that repliest against God; who made thee or me an inspector and supervisor of God, and of his affairs? Does he indeed stand in need of thee, and of thy protection, friendship, and defences for him? Thou fool! know thy place, and adore thy God. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Or who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be the glory for ever. Amen. Rom. ii.

O but the counsel of the Lord  
Doth stand for ever sure,  
And of his heart the purposes  
For evermore endure!—1's. xxxiii.

Thus I find myself authorised to glory in the darkness of the shade (so to speak) for the sake of the fairness of the picture——sufferings and death are attended with following glory. Though clouds and darkness are round about Jehovah's throne, justice and judgment are the habitation thereof. "I'll sing of mercy in the midst of judgment. For mercy shall be built (said I), Grace, grace unto it." Psalm lxxxix.——Then I, a believer, am warranted evermore to sing *Hallelujah!* Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed be He who came in the name of the Lord to save us! Have I seen any charge written against me, I see it now only written for the sake of the discharge following thereupon, and in connection inseparable therewith, as both stand in the divine record, and now in my believing heart, both ministered by the Holy Ghost, who shows me my free, my full, and my eternal discharge from all



my sins, and from death, the wages of them, written in my heart, fair and legible as light and truth, by God's own finger, in the divine characters of Emmanuel's blood.

And now, why, since He, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the end of all things, hath uttered his voice, and spoken *this* as well as *that*. Why (I say it over and over again), why should I call in question his veracity in *THIS* thing, more than in *THAT* thing? In his justifying me, now become a believer of his word, from sin, more than in his former charging of me while I continued an unbeliever, under sin, the sin of Adam imputed to me, unto my condemnation and death, with all my own actual transgressions thence proceeding, and manifested by his law, so holy, just, and good? Tell me men, or tell me devils, if you can, why I should doubt at all?

*I AM* hath spoken; let the universe of his power be dumb before him. My soul is struck with reverence. My soul is all AMEN. AMEN to the *Eternal Word*, in all he says and does!

I hear him say, "I come to do thy will, O my God! Thy law is within my heart," &c. Psalm xl. "By which will (done by him), we (who believe him to be the Son of God, who fulfilled his Father's law), through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, at once are sanctified. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them who are sanctified, sanctified through the belief of the truth, which is by the Spirit." Heb. x. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John i. "Moses lifted up the serpent," &c. John iii. "When the fullness of time was come." Gal, iv. &c. "But now the righteousness of God," &c. Rom. iii. "For what the law could not do," &c. Rom. viii. "For Christ is the end of the law," &c. Rom. x. "We declare unto you

glad tidings, God hath raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and by him all who believe those glad tidings to be true;" (for what else can be meant, unless God be supposed to perform the work of *Satan*, first to deceive with a lie, and then to mock, which God forbid!) "are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." By that law they were in all things condemned; therefore they are, now that they believe that law fulfilled, in all things, justified in the sight of God, by the righteousness of Jesus imputed to them, when they believe him to be raised from the dead. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." Acts xiii. Even so, O Father! Lord of heaven and earth, because it hath seemed good in thy sight!

Now from these, and such like passages of Scripture innumerable, in their plain direct sense, or by infallible consequence, which is the same to the purpose of proof and certainty of conclusion, yea, from the whole tenor of the Scripture, as the one voice of the one God, I have communicated to me by the author of the Scripture an uniform, undoubted, and perfect PERSONAL conviction. I am obliged by the most ridiculous absurdity of our opponents, who are for ever dunning and pestering us with their general nonsense of a GENERAL FAITH, which they talk of as so common, to say PERSONAL conviction or certainty: for it is a self-evident truth, that there neither is, nor possibly can be, any other kind of conviction, certainty, or faith at all, but what is purely and absolutely PERSONAL, and particular, as to the subject wherein it resides, having no being but in a person's own very individual self. PERSONAL conviction therefore, I say, by the above means, I have in very deed, communicated and thoroughly ascertained to me. As

on the one hand, of sin and death, according to the manner of their entrance, reign, and destruction. So also, on the other hand, of righteousness and life, according to the manner of their entrance and eternal reign by Jesus Christ the Lord. As sin and death were transferred and conveyed to me, without any agency or concurrency on my part, from Adam, the figure or type of Him that was to come, through the natural generation; so in like manner, righteousness and life, with the destruction of sin, all sin and all death, as pertaining to me, are transferred and conveyed to me, without any agency or concurrence upon my part, by the glorious and eternally adored Antitype, Jesus Christ (who is God over all, blessed for ever, Amen), through the faith or knowledge of himself, freely given to me; for it is his own gift and work, the spiritual regeneration, whereby I am born of God, a child of God, and heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ, a partaker for ever of Christ and all the benefits of redemption.

Thus it is written (as above cited in part Rom. iii.) in immediate connection with the finished proof of all flesh being under sin and death. "But now without the law, the righteousness of God," that is of Emanuel, God manifested in the flesh, "is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by the faith," that is, as explained Heb. xi., the evidence, discovery, knowledge, or conviction "of Christ to all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." So all that believe the apostolic record concerning that righteousness to be true, are justified freely by the love of God through the redemption that is in Jesus. "To declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be JUST, and the JUSTIFIER of him who believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then?

It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore, we conclude, that a man is justified by faith" (even the righteousness believed, called faith as being the object of faith, in opposition to all works whatsoever, in this business of justification, but the finished work of the Son of God), "without the deeds of the law. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law." Establish the law! how? In the blood of God, wherein it was fulfilled; sprinkled, that is to say, manifested in the believer's conscience, by the Holy Ghost, and become the spring of all our love, gratitude, and obedience to God, and the source of all our peace and joy before God. So the Scripture is fulfilled, which saith, "by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many." Fulfilled, I say, with regard to me, in whom that knowledge or evidence is given.

Hence being justified in the Lord, *and knowing it*, which is the same thing, I glory even in the Lord, and in the cross of the Lord, whose righteousness completed on the cross is conveyed to me in my receiving the knowledge of it, like the sweetness of a pleasant fruit, in my tasting of it; or like a joyful sound, which is music in my heart and ears as soon as I hear it; or even like the sweetness and pleasantness of life, the very existence whereof is communicated to me, and maintained in my own proper possession and enjoyment, during the whole currency thereof in that very consciousness which my kind Creator and Preserver continually bestows upon me, that I do live.

Thus Abraham, a father, or pattern, to all who afterwards should believe, believed in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness. That is, the righteousness of the SEED, CHRIST, who, he believed would come according to the promise, was imputed unto him, without

any works of his own going before, or even concurring therewith, in order to his justification in the sight of God, Rom. iv. 6. Abraham's believing is explained, verse 21, by his being fully persuaded.

But alas! say they, a bare persuasion of the bare truth is but a small thing, that will never do! There is more, a vast deal more, meant by saving, justifying faith, besides a bare belief, a mere knowledge of the truth, though it were the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, a simple assent of the mind to matter of fact, or (as Mr. Cudworth in the same strain expresseth himself), "a pure, passive conviction of the truth. There must even," says he, "above and beyond this pure passive conviction of the truth, in order to our justification, be put forth by us an *active appropriating act of faith*, wherein, he supposes, we put forth or elicit some very strenuous and vigorous exertion of our minds, on purpose to appropriate Christ and his righteousness to ourselves." And then when we have sufficiently laboured at this *stubborn oar*, we believe that Christ shed his blood for us, and that we in particular shall be saved by his death. And this is his saving and justifying faith.

*Vigorous and strenuous*, I confess such exertions of mind, and appropriating acts, would need to be, seeing so much depends upon the strength of them, even the *manufacturing* to ourselves the only truth in the world which is absolutely needful to us, and without which we are eternally undone, viz., that we ourselves shall be saved: such a labour is certainly worse than the making of bricks without straw, a labour to be effected without any evidence at all furnished upon the part of God, but only conjured up, like a fool's paradise, into a fancied kind of temporary existence, by the mere dint, forcible vigour, and strenuous exertion of an *appropriating act*!

Thus your appropriating minds consider the pure pas-

sive conviction of God's truth, only as a kind of ground, or stage, whereupon you are to exhibit certain appropriating acts, through the right performance of which, by God's grace, you expect to meet with acceptance, and the applause of "Well done, good and faithful servants!"

Yet after all, methinks, a mere passive conviction of God's works, counsels, thoughts, and ways, relating to his own one invariable method of justifying and saving lost sinners, and that same conviction ministered by God himself in the conscience of sinners, by means of his Word, might indeed be even something to a poor sinner so convinced, so believing, and certainly knowing that whosoever so believeth and knoweth, is justified, more than to a mere downright hypocrite and unbeliever or reprobate; who, instead of being convinced by God's testimony of such things, makes even God a liar, by not believing his record, that is, by not being merely and passively convinced of the truth thereof.

Reprobates or unbelievers, therefore, are not condemned for want of an appropriating act of any kind; but for not believing God's bare record to be true, even for want of what your friend hath spoken so slightly of, as if it were nothing, namely, the pure passive conviction or persuasion of the truth of God's record. O that he could retract his words! But ah! that is past as to him. Yet why may not surviving friends take away their seal from a lie, and set it to the truth of the living God?

That the necessity of such a step may further appear, it may not be amiss to observe the mutual arguings of both sides a little further.

Utterly to discard the faith of God's elect out of the world, under the odious names of *a mere pure passive conviction, simple knowledge, bare belief of the bare truth,*

the friends of the appropriation have joined the other enemies of the precious faith once delivered to the saints, which the apostles enjoyed and preached, by calling it (ignorantly indeed, not maliciously I do believe, as I am willing to ascribe the ignorance to the men, and the malice to the devil) and stigmatizing it thus, *The faith of devils*. What then! We are not speaking of the salvation of devils, but that of men. The Lord came to save men, by destroying death and the devil. Accordingly, devils believed that Jesus was the SON of God, who came to torment them, and therefore they trembled. Peter believed that Jesus was the SON of God, who came to justify men, by giving them the knowledge of himself, their righteousness; and therefore Peter, with all who had obtained like precious faith, rejoiced. The work of gratitude in men for justification, whereby faith, as James speaks, is shewed, or evidenced to the world, is quite a different matter, and has nothing to do to be hauled in here, where the speech is not about the consequences of justification (as Abraham's offering up of his son Isaac, full thirty years at least after he was justified), but of justification itself, antecedent to, and consequently independent of all good works whatsoever.

Your friend has always most honestly and openly spoken out his mind. And in that, and many other respects, I dearly love his memory, but must beg leave, point-blank, to deny his assertions. For I never can perceive the least shadow of proof in all he has advanced; and much, indeed, has he advanced, in support of his present tenet concerning faith. How I am astonished, that a man of his penetration, simplicity of spirit, and scriptural sagacity in many other respects, did not perceive the absurdity in supposing that there was something more, even that wherein all the benefit lies, meant

by these words *believing* IN, or *believing* ON GOD, than merely the pure BELIEVING, or CREDITING OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

Boston, even Boston himself, who was well skilled in the original tongues, and who would not willingly have omitted any argument in vindication of his own way, zealous advocate as he was for the *appropriating act*, and for the *official Saviour*, &c., even he, I say, is obliged to allow, that by those phrases, *believing* IN, or *believing* ON, nay, and even by these, *trusting* IN, or *trusting* ON the Lord, there is no more meant, but merely GIVING CREDIT TO THE LORD, or BELIEVING HIS WORD, holding it TRUE, and this he also proves very clearly. So that to believe IN, ON, or UPON CHRIST the LORD GOD, is neither more nor less, but just simply to believe the Word of God, or to hold God true and not a liar in his testimony, according to the common use of such expressions among men, which is precisely a passive conviction in itself, from which passive conviction (in receiving whereof, like receiving of life from the dead, the person who is the subject thereof is justified or quickened together with Christ), all the other fruits of the Spirit do follow, as all actions do flow from life.

But that this is the very sense of BELIEVING IN the Lord, we need no other proof but the HOLY GHOST'S own interpretation of his own words; for Gen. xv. 6. Abraham is said to have BELIEVED IN the Lord, which is interpreted, Rom. iv. 6, Gal. iii. 6, by these words, Abraham BELIEVED GOD, was fully persuaded of the truth of God's word, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.

And yet upon such a silly mistake, a good part, if not the whole stress of the appropriating activity is made to rest, as if it were an advance upon the bare conviction, or passive knowledge, as if this same *ap-*



*propriating act* were a noble step from the passive conviction, as from eternal ruin and despair, unto eternal salvation, and all the glory of assured hope.

Of this passive conviction, or bare knowledge of salvation (by the remission of sins, which yet the Lord blesses his people with), how contemptuously and disdainfully do they think themselves authorised to speak. Thus the Jews, looking for a higher and grander sort of a Messiah, than they could see in the carpenter, the supposed son of a carpenter, murdered the Lord of Glory, the Prince of Life, in whom they discerned no comeliness nor beauty why he should be desired; and set him at nought, as a vile person, and a madman, and held him in detestation as a blasphemer, and a devil, because he said he was the Son of God, and wrought among them the works that proved him to be the Son of God. Thus they rejected the counsel of God against themselves.

And thus, ah me! even thus to this day, the faith of the glorious gospel, the faith of God's elect, the very same precious and equally honourable faith of God's apostles, which they enjoyed, professed, and preached to the world, the only justifying and saving faith, the only fountain of every good work, even of every work that is better than a lust of the devil; this very faith, the gift, the work, the act, the saving grace of GOD, is despised, abhorred, detested, abominated, trodden under foot, and well nigh banished out of the world, falsely called Christian, under the odious and infamous names of *notional, speculative, historical, general, and dead faith*, or *head knowledge*, in a word, the faith of reprobates, hypocrites, all unbelievers, all the world, and last of all, what can they say more? THE FAITH OF DEVILS.

But thanks be to GOD! the remnant shall be saved. The election shall obtain it, even when the rest are blinded. Who is bold, therefore, very bold in his GOD,

let him join the prophet, and acquiesce in the words of Jehovah, "I was found of them that sought me not; I was manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long have I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." Rom. x. Isaiah's GOD, even the JUST GOD and the SAVIOUR, besides whom there is no GOD, will allow no other account of conversion but this. According to these other words, "Thou shalt hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way; walk ye in it."

Whereas the way of the appropriating act entirely reverses this order and way of GOD. *The act* supposes unconverted sinners, as laudably and successfully employed in pursuing and appropriating GOD and his salvation; in consequence whereof, they are to become united to GOD, and accepted of him in Christ. But GOD's way is quite the contrary of this. HE pursues, and appropriates us to himself, for a peculiar people, in a manner as unsought for, unforeseen, unthought of by us, as the life given to the dry bones, was by the bones; an emblem of our regeneration, when he gives us to believe the report concerning his Son.

So that he appropriates us, apprehends us, justifies us, and saves us; wherein we are wholly passive, as we were in our first receiving of life, or as Lazarus was in being quickened in his grave, when we receive by the Holy Ghost, through the Word, the conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

But further to this purpose, for the controversy seems to hinge here, we may somewhat more narrowly review two or three particular places more in the New Testament, whereby it will appear manifest, that there is nothing in the universe meant by justifying and saving faith, but only a pure, unmingled, and passive conviction, evidence, or manifestation of the alone justifying and

saving righteousness of the Son of God, introduced into the conscience by the Holy Spirit of truth, through the medium of the Word; and that all who have this faith, or passive conviction, of the justifying righteousness, are not only justified and saved thereby, but also perfectly assured of there being so.

Here, by way of introduction, we may observe that the Spirit of truth, in discoursing to us of the things of God, never wrests a word that he uses, out of the ordinary sense wherein the same is used among men, in plain and ordinary conversation about things which they know, but he takes these words just as he finds them, and applies them in their own proper and ordinary meaning to the things that are heavenly and divine: and this will appear to be his invariable method, even when using the most highly animated and figurative style; much more when merely reporting a plain narrative of certain most important matters of fact, to all, the most simple, unlearned, and ordinary people in the world, as well as to the mighty disputers and scribes, never varying his manner of speech.

Now if this observation be well-founded, which I leave to every man's own conscience and observation at this time; though, if it shall be controverted, I doubt not but they shall be obliged to deny the Scriptures, or else to allow it; if this single observation, I say, were attended to, I appeal to yourselves, if it would not utterly and eternally overthrow the appropriating act. For where is there anything in all the use or abuse of language, that would lead a man to think of using an *appropriating act*, to obtain the benefit of any good news, that is, pleasing and interesting news, which he hears, and believes to be true upon the veracity of the reporter? If the apostles meant any such strange act should be exerted, in order to take the benefit of the

glad tidings which they preached, is it not beyond all belief, that they should never hint at any such a thing, either to Jew or Gentile? Or if they have, for the sake of God and man, let the passages be condescended upon. If they are, we may look for them in the Acts, where many of their sermons, or declarations of glad tidings, are both begun and ended, and the issue and application of the whole avowed by the Holy Ghost (who spoke by them) to be eternal life, or eternal death, to every soul of man who heard the tidings then brought to their ears. But read the *Acts of the Apostles*, read the whole testimony of God, from the alpha to the omega of revelation, no hint of the appropriating act of faith, name or thing, no such mystery, no such use.

But to come to particulars. Acts xiii. We hear the apostles, full of the Holy Ghost, open their commission in the synagogue at Antioch; and speaking to all the people, Jews and Gentiles, as the Holy Ghost gave them utterance, in a plain style, to persons promiscuously assembled, like any other congregation upon earth, who could have no notion of what they were going to hear, in order to be in readiness with their appropriating acts, so necessary to be exerted, for seizing, in a vigorous manner, and resolutely laying hold upon the benefit of the things that should be spoken, as it were with hand, with *tooth* and *nail*. No such preparation, nor activity, in the least, is required in the hearers, no apparatus, nor preliminaries at all, insisted for by the speakers, who honestly speak out what they know, and what they know God will stand by. All depths and inscrutabilities apart.

“Men and brethren, we declare unto you glad tidings, How that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written,

&c.” Now the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, implies, that he was thereby declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, Rom. i. 4. And also, That he, the promised Messiah, had fulfilled all righteousness; and that he was raised up, for a certain testimony, pledge, or token of assurance to all men, that his Father had accepted his now finished work, even the work of glorifying the Father, by becoming obedient to the death for the sake of his people, according as the Lord himself had spoken, saying, “He, even the Spirit of truth, shall convince the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more,” John xvi. And again, “I have glorified thee, O Father, upon earth; and now glorify thou me,” &c. John xvii. And again, on the cross, “It is finished,” John xix.

Well, having heard of the resurrection of Jesus (and the meaning thereof founded in the whole testimony of God) as a plain incontestable matter of fact, proven by hundreds of eye-witnesses, and miracles innumerable, as come to pass, according to all the prophecies written concerning it; the apostles proceed in their declarations still in the most perfect simplicity of speech, without any the least hint, or warning, that they were about to utter incomprehensible mysteries, as those strange ravings most certainly are (and Mr. Marshall, with all the appropriating friends, do really allow, that there is some strange unaccountable kind of mystery in appropriation), about appropriating acts, whereby people are to hammer out for themselves a *truth*, whereupon their eternal salvation is to depend, without any proper evidence given for it in the Word of God. But no such doings here, but only a plain, “BE IT KNOWN unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is PREACHED unto you the remission of sins.”

Now to suppose here, as almost all men do, that by the word *preached*, or published, as it literally signifies, is meant *offered* or *proffered*, in any sense of those words now used among men, appears to me to be even pure and unalloyed blasphemy, especially considering the use that is made of such language when applied to Christ or the gospel, being a substituting a damnable falsehood, in place of the inspired Word of God. Observe, The men who published, divulged, spread abroad, told, or reported the miracles which the Lord had charged them to conceal, and tell no man of, are said, in the first language, to have done with regard to the matter in hand, what the apostle did with regard to the gospel, even *preached* it, according to their commission: "GO PREACH THE GOSPEL." "Ye shall be my witnesses." "What ye have heard in the ear in secret, PROCLAIM YE upon the house-tops." Accordingly, they knew what they had to do, and you never find them (as our modern preachers, under the character which they have assumed, of *Reverend Ambassadors*) saying, "We *offer* unto you the gospel: We make an *offer* of Christ unto you: Will ye *accept* of *proffered* grace upon gospel terms?" No, verily. The apostles left all such kind of traffic and negotiation to the father of lies, and the other *right reverend* and *holy fathers*, Papists or Protestants, who make *merchandize* of the souls of men.'

What then say the apostles? "We preach Christ and him crucified, we declare unto you glad tidings: We *certify* you of the gospel." *Preaching, declaring, and certifying*, lead us directly to the saving TRUTH, but *offering, proffering*, and such like, lead us away FROM the TRUTH, to the doing of something under the notion of accepting terms, embracing offers, and *complying with proffers*. Whence I infer, what I think I have proven, that the former way of speaking is of God, and leads to

God; but that the latter is of the devil, and leads men away from God to the devil.

So now, we fix upon it, that preaching precisely signifies *publishing* or *spreading abroad* any matter of fact, by telling it. Preaching the gospel then, is just declaring what the gospel is; and when the apostles produced their infallible proofs, that their tidings were true, they left God to have mercy upon whom he would have mercy, and to harden whom he would harden; if men were not converted, the apostles were clear of their blood; and if men now preach the same doctrine of the apostles, without mixture, addition, or diminution, honestly as they did, those men are clear of blood, as the apostles were.

But if men must need presume to move a step beyond the apostles, and instead of leaving men with the declared truth, proceed over and above to give directions for conversion, and rules how to attain a saving interest in Christ, &c., doing as thousands have done, to set aside the truth, they must even take their chance and lot with the spirit by whom they are led. For most assuredly, except they repent, and return to the simplicity of the gospel, they must die in their sins, and poor comfort will it be to them if they perish, to find hell filled with the multitudes of those whom they have deceived, whether gone before, or following after them.

Lord in heaven! awaken the deceivers, and the deceived, whom thou wilt awaken to hear thy apostles. How sweet is the joyful sound! How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them who bring glad tidings of great joy, which are to all people!

“And by him all that believe:” What, in the name of God and truth, I beseech you, friends—What are they said to believe, but those very glad tidings spoken of above, namely, THAT GOD RAISED JESUS FROM THE

DEAD? For to speak of believing, without respecting the certain word of declared *truth*, allennarly and alone, as the matter believed, is the very soul and spirit of absurdity and nonsense. "By him all who believe," that is, hold those glad tidings to be true, or the resurrection of Jesus, for a *matter of fact*, understanding the meaning of that resurrection, "ARE," no intervention of acts of any kind, no space of time between, no delay, no suspense, even for a moment, but instantaneously and at once, are "JUSTIFIED from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Is it a certainty that there was a law of Moses, and that I was accursed thereby; then to me who believe God's testimony in these things, it is equally certain, that God raised Jesus up again from the dead, in token of his having fulfilled that law, and of his having borne away the curse of that law, in his own body upon the cross; and moreover, that I who believe that fact of the resurrection to be just as God says, AM JUSTIFIED, by that very believed righteousness, which he accomplished in his decease without the gates of Jerusalem, a righteousness freely imputed to me, without any works of any kind being produced upon my part. Nay, even the faith, or knowledge of this righteousness, is not my act; but, as said before, the gift, the act, the work of God himself in me; if so be, the cause of light to shine out of darkness, and the forming of the eyes to see that light, be the gift, the act, the work of God, according to Eph. ii. 8; Col. ii. 12; 2 Cor. iv. 6.

Observe, here is my rock; I do not build upon the sand of a heated fancy, or strong presumption in my own favours, I do not, as Sandeman in his sarcastic way, justly exposing the appropriating act, well says, rest my salvation, or the evidence of it, on a thing which is supposed to become true in my mind by my pains in



seeking to believe it. But here I stand upon my rock; a truth which to eternity would stand firm as the *basis* of JEHOVAH'S throne, whether I believed it or not; a truth which now by grace I know to be sure as the existence of my God himself; a truth which prevented me as much as the creation of the world, and of my own spirit, so far was I from being at pains to know it. It is not more certainly said, that God created the worlds, than that he raised up Jesus from the dead, nor is the latter more incredible than the former. I saw neither of those events. If God's mere assertion do not satisfy me, I must expect no other evidence. I will expect none. I stand convinced. I am certain, that Jesus is the Son of God; that God hath raised him from the dead, in testimony of his having fulfilled all righteousness. The surety is discharged; and therefore the debt is paid. Here is one certainty planted by JEHOVAH'S hand in my mind: THAT GOD HATH RAISED UP JESUS, upon which he hath grafted this other certainty also, THAT BY HIM ALL WHO BELIEVE ARE JUSTIFIED. The *former*, namely, the resurrection of Jesus, cannot stand in my mind as a truth, without the *latter*, namely, my own personal justification by that resurrection of the Son of God, which I believe.

Thus verily, before God, by whatever evidence I hold the resurrection of Jesus for a truth, by the same precise evidence, I must hold it for a truth that I am justified,\*

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\* It is necessary here to notice an attack made on the doctrine here advanced, by a Mr. Archibald M'Lean, in a note (page 92) of his book, entitled, *The Commission given by Christ to his Apostles*, (Second Edition.) Wherein he affirms, "That unless the Author can produce from the Scriptures, a declaration of the remission of his sins, addressed to him by name, it is absurd in him to maintain, that he has the assurance of his own personal justification and salvation, through faith in the direct testimony of God." With the utmost propriety, our Author grounds his affirmation on Acts xiii. 32, 33, 38. "And we

else I do verily hold God for a liar, for God himself hath equally asserted both the one and the other, in words of inseparable connection.

But if I were at all to hold God for a liar, I should

declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again. Be it known unto you therefore, Men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." Here is a direct declaration of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; to which is added, a direct declaration of the remission of sins to the persons who heard. And in opposition to the whole spirit of Mr. M'Lean's scheme, it is obvious, from the terms in which both these declarations were delivered, that by whatever evidence it was possible for the persons to whom they were addressed, TO KNOW, that God had raised up Jesus again; by the same PRECISE evidence, it became impossible for them NOT TO KNOW, that God had forgiven their sins; unless they esteemed him an unfaithful witness—and this is further evident from verse 45, where the persons who heard and did not believe the latter declaration, are expressly charged with giving GOD THE LIE in both, "speaking against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." It does not appear that the consciences of John Barclay and Archibald M'Lean would have been otherwise concerned in either of these DIRECT declarations, although their names had been substituted in place of the pronoun YOU. Neither does it appear, that the effect would have been different from what it is, the former BELIEVED the gospel, and therefore he preached it; the latter BELIEVES IT NOT, and therefore he perverts it. —There is yet another declaration added, verse 39, "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Mr. M'Lean must therefore stand assured with the believing Mr. Barclay, that he is JUSTIFIED, AND SAVED, or stand convicted with the UNBELIEVING Jews, of contradicting and blaspheming God, EVEN OF HOLDING HIM FOR A LIAR. But, upon his avowed principles, he cannot know that he is justified, for he cannot know whether his faith be genuine or spurious, the work of God, or a delusion of the devil, but only by HIS OWN WORKS, which he attempts to disguise and dignify with the novel, and pompous title of, ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE; now as a man's works terminate only with his life, and as Mr. M'Lean has fixed no time on this side the grave for winding up the grand concern, the closing and summing up of his ADDITIONAL EVIDENCES, we have no choice in concluding, that he must either CHANGE his principles, or close his eyes in DARKNESS.

rather do it at the first, in the testimony concerning imputed sin, and death the wages of sin. For if God were not to be credited in the latter matters, why, pray, should he be credited in the former? For the whole of revelation must stand or fall together. If God's word convict me of sin, and judgment, then also it must convince me of righteousness and life, if not of *these*, then neither of *those*. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die! The Scripture is all a fable, if not all equally true; and if not held as true by me, to me it behoves to be all but a fable still! Whatever it be to others, I must proceed upon my own convictions, and not upon those of other persons.

I must either admit God's hand-writing for evidence sufficient and full of my discharge, or I must deny it point blank as to the charge. For it is all in one hand and signature.

And in this way of reasoning, I am justified by the Lord God himself, saying, "I would thou were either cold or hot. How long halt you between two opinions? If the Lord be the God, follow him; but if Baal be the God, then follow Baal. But let God be true in all things, and every man a liar!"

For "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed," viz., those glad tidings. Hence, believing and being sure of the glad tidings, I am sure of my having been ordained to eternal life, as that I now believe the glad tidings. The connection is infallible, for God hath made the connection and not I. The election hath obtained it; but I am enlightened in the foresaid truth; therefore I have obtained it, and am as certain thereof, as that I was ordained to be alive at this moment.

What should tempt me now to assert with Cudworth, and his friends, that Christ died for persons, whom in the event he was not to save? That men, I fancy,

might have room for perverting the gospel by some appropriating *phantom*. But I know, if they *saw* otherwise, they would *say* otherwise, and therefore I pity, but never upbraid, but for the sake of pity, endeavouring to set before others the evidence which has given rest and satisfaction to my own soul. But as for the event, I leave the Lord to do what seemeth good in his own eyes.

I do indeed believe Providence and purposes to be particular, reaching to the present and eternal state, with all connected circumstances, of every soul which God has created, else I am persuaded I should be obliged to deny the whole Scripture.

He in whom all things consist, says, I lay down my life for my sheep, and take it up again, and I give unto them all eternal life, and none of them shall perish; he does not say, I lay down my life for the goats who shall perish; he says further, meaning his people, I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me out of the world, and I have kept them, for thine they were, and thou gavest them to me, &c.

If any man say, This bears hard upon the justice and equity of God, the answer was given long ago in these words (and what can the man do that cometh after the king?) "Nay, but O man! who art thou that repliest against God?" &c.

Am I indeed obliged to answer for God? Is not he sufficient to answer for himself? Is it for me, to take up the cause where he hath left it, to stop every gain-saying mouth? Has he need of such an advocate as I am? I am but of yesterday, what do I know? what reason can I give why I am alive, and my younger brother, stronger and healthier than I, is dead? why I am at all? why *this* is THIS, or *that* is THAT? why one

thing is white, and another black? why any thing is at all?

The Word of the Lord, which fills my heart, stops my mouth.

Here I would incline to enter into a particular consideration of every one of those texts which you hint at as being *for* you, and *against* your adversaries. But as I am sensible I could write nothing of this kind more to the purpose, though much better qualified than I am, than all the real *Calvinists* as they are called, have already wrote against those barefaced perverters of the grace of God, commonly known by the name of *Arminians*, whose writings *pro* and *con* are in all hands; I forbear at present, being persuaded, indeed, if one were upon the spot, to point out the connection, that it would be impossible for such candid appealers to the Scripture (party prejudice excepted) as you seem to be, to retain your present side of the question, and the Scriptures themselves at the same time. But that also would be as it should please God.

But passing this, let us return to our former and main argument.

Another text is, Rom. x. 9, 10, in connection with the whole chapter, which I entreat you to consider, and which I leave without a commentary, only observing that it is expressly said, "IF THOU SHALT BELIEVE IN THINE HEART THAT GOD HATH RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD, THOU SHALT BE SAVED," &c. So that one cannot be ignorant, or doubt of the certainty of his salvation, without first being ignorant, or doubting of the certainty of the resurrection of Jesus.

But if it here occur as an objection, that by *believing with the heart, there is something else, or something more meant, than merely believing in the mind*, or understanding the thing to be true upon the veracity of the testifier,

who is God; as indeed all the popular and fashionable preachers too, as far as I know, do suppose, and earnestly contend for, to the rendering void the whole divine record, making all the benefits thereof to you, to consist in your *love* and *affections* towards it; whereas that love and those affections towards it can only proceed from your antecedent knowledge thereof, and of your being saved by the eternal righteousness *imported* into your mind in your knowledge of that everlasting gospel which conveys it. As it is written, "Eternal righteousness is in thy testimonies all," Psal. exix. 144. Therefore if you have understanding given you to know these testimonies, you live by the righteousness in them, and through them, now in you believed and imputed. Here is the fountain of gratitude and love in the forgiven person, Luke vii. 37, &c.; when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them all, therefore he to whom much is forgiven, loveth much; he who loveth much, serveth much, because he loveth much; witness Mary, witness Paul.

So certainly, the forgiveness, and the certain knowledge thereof, must be antecedent to, and independent of any gratitude, or effect thereof; otherwise, because the effect and the cause are inseparably connected, you may as well say, that the Creator depends upon the creature, as say, a man's forgiveness depends upon his gratitude, affection, love, and obedience. How absurd and ridiculous, then, is their prating about believing with the heart, as if it meant, not the understanding or believing of the truth, but the *effects* of that understanding.

In answer to them, we may further observe, that *believing with the heart* is, in the forecited place, evidently distinguished from the *confession of the mouth*, and not described as a particular kind of believing, for believing is all in one kind and manner, whatever be the object or

thing believed; and by the *heart* here, is only meant what elsewhere is called the understanding or the mind, viz., the seat of knowledge, without any mention or consideration of the passions and affections; as may appear from Matt. xiii. 23, where the Son of Man explains what he meant in the parable, when he spoke of seed received in good ground; or, as elsewhere of the word received into a good and honest *heart*, by UNDERSTANDING THE WORD; which word being understood, also bringeth forth fruit. A plain intimation, that the rest who heard, and confessed with the mouth, did not believe in their *heart*, that is, if the Lord be a faithful interpreter of his own speech, they did not UNDERSTAND THE WORD; else they too would have brought forth fruit. So, I hope, we shall have no objection brought against this doctrine from the stony ground hearers, by any person who will be determined by the Lord's own interpretation of the matter. And again, Mark xi. 23, *doubting in the heart* is opposed to *believing*, or being certainly assured in one's own mind; and especially, 2 Cor. chap. iii. to chap. iv. 7, where you will find these three words, "heart, mind, conscience," all used indifferently, the one for the other, as words there fixed in such a connection with believing, which we speak of, precisely of the same meaning. So that to believe in, or with the heart, to be persuaded in one's mind, and to have truth manifested in or to one's conscience, are, in the mouth of the Holy Ghost, expressions precisely of the same very individual signification.

Now, to take occasion from this, and other like passages, so glaringly wrested and misunderstood, to confound *faith* with its *effects* or consequences, as love, peace, hope, joy, desire, &c., and other connected affections and fruits of the Spirit, which only flow by the Spirit's blessed operation from faith, but are no part of faith: Thus to

confound faith, I say, with its fruits, is as ridiculous and groundless, as it is pernicious in its consequences; bewildering poor souls, as it were in a mist, and rendering the direction of eternal truth as uncertain and useless to them, as a mere vapour, shadow, dream, conjecture, guess, or wish. Thus it is to be feared, thousands under the influence of such damnable lies, and uncertainties about faith, grope all their days in the dark; even while the true light shineth among them, though their darkness comprehends it not, until they follow their blind guides into the utter darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth! But this is a melancholy subject, which I shall no longer here insist on, but conclude with considering a passage or two more.

I John v. 1, it is written, "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." I believe and am sure, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; therefore, I must also believe and be sure that I am born of God, a child of God, an heir of God, being born of the Spirit, who, by this testimony, which is immediate and direct, witnesseth to my spirit, *That I am a child of God*; else, if I should believe that Jesus is the Christ, and not as certainly believe that I am born of God, I should most assuredly be convicted, by myself, of making God a liar. Now, it is as great guilt to make God a liar in any one point whatsoever, as in any other; for it is the TESTIFIER, and not the testimony, that the despite falls upon. Modesty, self-diffidence, or fear of presumption, though I should call it godly jealousy of myself, will not screen me here, from being guilty of making God a liar, while I boldly confess and maintain, that I do believe Jesus is the Christ, and yet at the same time, hesitate and stand in doubt, or perhaps directly deny, or say, I have no knowledge *that I am born of God*.



Thus, I find the most part of people I meet with, maintaining, and saying they will maintain to the death before God, That they do believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; that God raised him from the dead; that through him is promised to them the forgiveness of sins; and that by him all who believe are justified; till you come to ask them, Are you justified then? born of God? saved? Then they stop short. Scarce one of a thousand ever seems to think of the connection God hath established between the faith, or the knowledge of Christ, and the particular salvation of the persons in whom such faith or knowledge is. Hence they plainly appear not to understand what they so earnestly affirm. Hence they have no justification, no love, no obedience, for Satan has blinded them.

I would not be in the place of their leaders who have deceived them, with their ambiguous doctrines about faith, &c., for all the universe of God. For what would it profit me if I lost my own soul?

But surely it is as horrid presumption, to reject the counsel of God against myself, but to count myself unworthy of eternal life, whatever pretences I may have from my sins, from my unworthiness, as it is to do despite to the Holy Ghost, in holding him for a liar in his testimony concerning the Sonship, Messiahship, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nay, it is manifest from the Scripture, that whosoever does not know and acknowledge himself, by means of God's testimony believed in his heart, for a child of God, by the faith of the Son of God, for a justified person, through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, such a one does not believe; whatever he says, he does not understand that Jesus is the Son of God, that he rose again from the dead. So impossible it is, if the Holy Ghost is allowed for a good witness and true, for a man to hold

Jesus the Son of God, the surety of the better testament, risen again from the dead, and at the same time, to hold himself unjustified, or even to doubt of the latter, more than of the former; every doubt of the latter implying a doubt of the former.

If men would cease to pore upon the goodness of their own characters, and marks of grace about themselves, in order to find peace, and joy, and assurance that they are justified, and would learn to contemplate the **GLORY** and **CHARACTER OF GOD**, as displayed in that true glass, the death and resurrection of Jesus, with all the marks of divine grace that shine so brightly in his face, as discovered by the gospel light, they would instantaneously find assurance of justification, peace, and joy in believing. And an answerable change of character would take place in themselves, changed from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. For this is a lesson taught, and a change wrought only by the Lord the Spirit.

But ah! how some people think it meet, as it were to *compliment* God, for I cannot call it glorifying him, by their doubts and fears concerning their state, while they profess to believe everything that is good of him, and of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ! But to transfer this to myself, if I do not hold myself for a justified person, even born of the Spirit, now that I believe God's record concerning his Son, that he raised him from the dead, to be true; then, as Eve did, being deceived by the serpent, I hold the devil who beguiles me, for a true witness, and God, who is truth and love, I hold even for a liar and murderer.

Such horrid and frightful consequences are implied in our having wrong apprehensions in this matter of assurance, however artfully and covertly those consequences may be veiled, and kept out of our sight by Satan, under various pretences, and plausible cloaks and ap-

pearances of humility, modesty, self-diffidence, fears of presumption, godly jealousy of ourselves, dread of hypocrisy, &c., and I know not what more to the same purpose.

Lastly, John xx. 31, it is said, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."

Now, Sir, upon the whole, you and our friends here seem entirely to agree, as said before, in the same conclusion concerning *assurance*, which, nevertheless, we build upon widely different arguments or premises. And this is no uncommon thing, to meet with a most perfect coincidence and agreement in expression and confession, among different sorts of persons, when the grounds of the appearing sameness of sentiments, are the most distinct and distant things imaginable.

Thus Paul and the Pharisees agreed in confessing the resurrection of the dead; Paul believed Christ to be the resurrection and the life, and that if Christ had not risen, there would have been no resurrection:—The Pharisees took Christ for a blasphemer, a Samaritan, and a devil;—The five thousand, John vi., and the eleven disciples, agreed for a while in calling Jesus the MESSIAH, but only the eleven knew him to be the Christ, the SON OF GOD, and therefore they only continued to follow him, when the rest went away and walked no more with him, calling him *mad*, and a *Devil*, because they understood not his words, being offended in him;—The *Pharisees* called God their Father, while they were of another family, John viii.;—And the Lord taught his disciples to pray, saying, OUR FATHER, giving them to understand that they were all the children of God through faith;—The unjustified Pharisee said, "God, I thank thee, I am not like other men," &c. And an

apostle said, "I thank God, I have laboured more abundantly than they all," &c.

Thus you see, principles are frequently different, while the confessions are the same, or nearly so, which I do not here observe (God is witness) by way of invidious and odious comparison; but only for illustration of a most weighty point, that neither you nor we may rest content with an apostolic confession in our mouths, without an apostolic faith in our hearts, or thorough understanding in ourselves, that the grounds of our agreeing confessions are scriptural.

Both of us agree, that all sanctification in a person proceeds, not only from the reality and being of his justification in the sight of God, but also from his own personal knowledge and certainty thereof. At least, I suppose we do agree herein. So this will be an invariable maxim with us, That we are to judge of other people's faith, only by their known profession and external appearance: But of our own confession and external appearance, only by our faith, or inward knowledge of our principles, from whence our confession and behaviour do flow. For we know, whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Thus, unless I can say what I do, is to God, in the name of God the Lord, and by the influence of the Holy Ghost, whereby I am taught to cry ABBA FATHER, my doings most assuredly are abominable in the sight of God (however profitable they may be to men, like the murdering of Christ, and the preaching of the gospel out of envy), and a mere work of the devil, as proceeding from men.

So, in a few words, we judge of other men's faith, by their works, but of our own works, only by our faith. Consequently, if these maxims be true (and who can overturn them, without overturning the Scriptures where-

upon they are founded?) they wrest the Scriptures to their own perdition, and the perdition of those who hear them, turning the gospel upside down, who rest a person's own evidence of justification upon works wrought by the person himself. For works can be no evidence of justification except they be good works. Now, to make works good, they must be of faith and of love. Thus, if I am not conscious of faith and of love, as the spring of my works, I cannot be conscious of their *goodness*: but if I am not conscious of their goodness, they can be no evidences to me of my being in a state of grace, or a justified person.

By this reasoning, half the sermons in Christendom are worse than I can express! To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to these, it is because there is no truth in them.

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SIR,—I have written freely to you, and at great length, the very sentiments of my own heart, as they occurred to me, in a hasty writing, and as I would have uttered them in conversation, had I been present with you. Wherefore, I hope you will take the whole in good part, and kindly forgive the frequent repetitions that occur, as my circumstances will not allow me to write over a more correct copy, which otherwise I would and ought to have done.—However, as it is, I know you will not refrain to communicate your sentiments of these same presents such as they are—which cheerfully I allow to pass into the hands of a friend; being persuaded, that love which rejoiceth in the truth, thinketh no evil, and covereth a multitude of infirmities, will accept even of this well-meant mite from one who frankly bestows all that he

has at present in his hand—Who, heartily recommending you with all your friends to God, and the Word of his grace, subscribes himself with great sincerity and good-will,

SIR, yours, &c.,

JOHN BARCLAY.

*Fettercairn, near Montrose,  
October 19th, 1771.*

A LETTER

ON THE

ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE SON OF GOD.





# A LETTER, &c.,

ADDRESSED TO

MESSRS. SMITH AND FERRIER.

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FRIENDS,

IN the first article of the appendix to your late case,\* you have set a notable example of liberty, and bold independency of thought in religious matters; which I am so far from condemning in general, that I propose, with your good leave, to become your humble imitator therein, even while I find myself in conscience obliged to oppose your particular sentiments in that article, viz., concerning the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Of the eternal procession of the Spirit, I need say nothing; because if the former is allowed or refused, so must the latter.

That I may not seem to be running in vain, or beating the air by fighting with a shadow, as if I loaded you with a doctrine and its consequences, which were not yours, it will be needful carefully to ascertain what you say; and the rather, because many pious persons appear to have entirely misapprehended your meaning, and, in words at least, most heartily to have bid *God speed* to the propagation and success of a doctrine, the sense whereof, if they knew it, they would as heartily abhor.

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\* A pamphlet, containing their reasons of separation from the Established church.

Your words are, "We find not freedom in our own minds to stand to our subscription—as founded upon, and agreeable to the word of God, *That the Son is ETERNALLY begotten of the Father.* We find ourselves not at liberty to say, *that he is eternally begotten*; this mode of expression is not scriptural. Such incomprehensible mysteries in religion should be expressed in Scripture language only."

I absolutely agree with you in the next observation you make, That "these mysteries we are bound to believe, because of the authority which reveals them; but we think we are not at liberty to say more, or in another manner of them, than what is written."

Now, if this last be a just observation of yours, how come you to reject the eternal generation, or Sonship in Godhead, of the Lord Jesus Christ, merely because it is not *clear to you*, "That to be strictly eternal, and to be begotten by another, are consistent—nor that self-existence, which must be essential to him whose name is Jehovah, is consistent with being begotten?" for you have produced no Scripture light for proof or illustration of your peculiar opinion in this most important of all points, but barely your own want of clearness about it. You are, however, mighty positive upon the whole, with regard to your own negative side of the question: why have you made no appeal, directly nor indirectly, to the word of inspiration to bear you out? If other people should not hold one side of an argument without express words of Scripture, even to the very letter and sound, in their favours, why should you, of all men, think to refuse them, without bringing against them any Scripture at all, either in sound or sense?

Shall our bare apprehension of inconsistencies between points be set up against the otherwise plain and incontestible sense of passages, which on all hands are allowed

to be contained in the books of divine revelation ; such as those which in express words, and others innumerable, which, by infallible consequence, hold forth Jesus Christ as the Son of God ; his only begotten Son ; the only begotten of the Father ; who was with God, in the form of God ; who thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; who was God, in the bosom of the Father ; came from the Father ; was sent of the father ; in the Father, and the Father in him ; one with the Father ; the Image of the invisible God ; the Brightness of his Father's glory ; the express image of his person ; inso-much, that whoso seeth the Son, and knoweth him, seeth the Father also, and he who acknowledgeth the Son, acknowledgeth the Father ; but he that denieth the Son, denieth also the Father, &c. Should not we still bear our own maxim in remembrance, and consider, that if a matter be once revealed, which in that respect is no more a mystery, the authority which reveals it, should be left to stand answerable for all manner of consequences, and seeming inconsistencies thereof with other things ; and not by any means our humble conceptions about the mode or manner of things, as if we indeed were obliged to answer, how these things can be.

But, if we must have express Scripture language, the very words of Scripture, and no other, then your case is desperate ; for you have not only said nothing against the sentiment you impugn, but have also left yourselves liable to the imputation of calling divine revelation to the bar of your humble thoughts ; a thing which, I believe, you abominate in your hearts. Yet how easy and natural is it for all men, even in the midst of their utmost caution and circumspection, unwarily to condemn themselves in those very things which they allow ! May the evidence of the Lord's own testimony disperse all our thoughts of inconsistency in his words ! All things, in

themselves, are equally incomprehensible to us: and as confounding questions might be put to any one of us concerning our own soul and body, or even a pebble at our foot, can possibly be conceived concerning the ever-blessed and adorable Trinity, of whom, and of whose manner of eternal subsistence, we know nothing farther than the Scriptures reveal. Let a *Thus saith the Lord*, therefore, silence for ever all manner of objections about *hows* and *whys*. But how shall we determine what the Lord saith? By so many individual sounds and letters of certain words, which we may fancy necessary to the establishment of a doctrine, and not rather by the evident purpose, spirit, sense, and scope of whatever words it hath pleased infinite Wisdom to employ in the unveiling of hidden things? By this latter way, surely, be the words what they will; otherwise, we lay a heavy charge upon the Lord, when he re-proves the Sadducees for erring, not knowing the Scriptures touching the resurrection of the dead; whereas, in the passage adduced by him from the books of Moses, which they had among them and acknowledged, there is no mention at all made, in express words, letters, and sounds, either of the dead or their resurrection, but only in sense, by means of a few unavoidable consequences, or connections of argument, and those, too, by no means at first sight very obvious and open to every one's perception.

But you proceed and say, "We humbly think, that either his being begotten, as he is Jehovah or God, or his self-existence, must be yielded; and if he is not self-existent, if he is not what he says, the I AM—it is easy to see in what rank of beings that would place him." It is easy to see the drift of your reasonings, and that the rank of beings you mean, is creatures; and that those who say, that Jesus is the eternal Son of God,

deny that he is the self-existent Jehovah, and make him, like themselves, a mere creature, or dependent being—a grievous accusation, which had need to be well supported! For you know, *we ought to hold them in detestation, who speak of him in terms which hold him out for any thing less than Jehovah, or the Most High God, in the strictest sense of the word*; seeing mankind with everything near and dear to them, depend, absolutely depend upon his Godhead; which Godhead of the Son, if a man unhinge, he unhinges at one blow the whole creation, preservation, and redemption; yea, in one word, he unhinges at the same time the Godhead of the Father, and of the Holy Ghost, with all thereupon depending; so that there is neither God nor creature left behind, when the real and proper Godhead of the Son is taken away.

But your argument implies, that you think yourselves entitled to comprehend not only the matter revealed, but also the manner thereof, or altogether to reject the incomprehensible thing, as if you knew what self-existence or Godhead were in itself, and so were able to judge of the disagreement or inconsistency of that same Godhead or self-existence with another thing, in its own nature equally unknown and incomprehensible to all finite and created beings, even that distinction in the oneness of the same Deity, which self-existent and external Wisdom has seen good to point out to us under names, expressing the incommunicable relations of Father and Son between two persons in the one Jehovah, Godhead, or divine essence. Yet, surely, how these Three persons can be at all,—how they can be One, and yet Three (which you allow), is fully as hard to be conceived, as how they can be from everlasting: that which we believe is declared in the Scriptures by the personal and peculiar names of each, Father, Son, and Spirit, which proceedeth.

But, according to you, either the Godhead, or, which is the same thing, the self-existence of Jesus Christ, must be yielded up; or else, if you retain his Godhead, his Sonship in Godhead, or according to the divine nature, substance, or essence, or, in a word, his eternal generation and Sonship; or that he was the Son of God before he became man, must be yielded up instead thereof; which Sonship, having begun with his incarnation, is only expressive of the union of the two natures in the person of the one Emmanuel, and of his investiture with the mediatory office, and of the resurrection from the dead, having no more foundation in pure Deity or divine nature, than the hands, feet, eyes, ears, and wings, which are ascribed to God, after the manner of men, being merely names of economy, official service, and manifested relation towards the creature, and not essential to the Godhead.

And thus, constantly and universally (which all your friends and adherents, among whom you minister, should understand, and be thoroughly instructed in), in consistency with your own principles, you must deny the eternal Sonship of Christ, or that he is the eternal Son: these terms you must avoid as a sea-rock, and substitute others, which you think better, in their place; and you must on all occasions, speaking of such things, maintain, that the terms, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and Son, are not founded in any reality whatsoever in the divine nature, but are mere official terms, names of offices, holding forth some relation of God to his creatures, and not any reality of relation subsisting among these Three themselves, who are One.

So, plainly in your view, the matter comes to this, that when you use those words, the Son, Son of God, only begotten of the Father, and Spirit proceeding from the Father, you mean nothing eternal, essential, and divine,

but only some temporal relations between God and man, which for the first time began to take place, by the manifestation of an eternal decree to that very purpose, when one of the Three was made manifest in the flesh, who from thence is styled the Son of God.—And when another of those Three manifested himself in the form of flaming fire, and of a rushing mighty wind, by coming down upon the apostles, according to the Father's promise, upon the day of the first-fruits, being the fiftieth after the resurrection, who is from thence said to proceed from the Father. And to affirm of these two persons, blessed for ever, that the one is begotten, and the other proceeds, in any other and higher sense than that just now mentioned, is, by your doctrine, to affirm that they are not God, but altogether and at once to degrade them from the glory of being Jehovah, and to bring them down to the rank of mere creatures.

Now, my friends, if you are of opinion that I have not apprehended, or at least, which more concerns you, have not fairly represented your meaning, I do here, in behalf of myself and a multitude of others, who most cordially wish you well, and in many other respects highly esteem you for your work's sake, most earnestly call upon you, and beseech you, in the name of the eternal Father, and in the name of the eternal Son, and in the name of the eternal Spirit who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, to declare more plainly what your meaning is, that we may not be deceived any longer concerning your principles, nor impute to you a doctrine which you disavow: for to us it really casts up as a damnable heresy, by the weight and influence of your names and character, spreading among the people, and denying even the Lord that bought them—a doctrine, surely, which, without all peradventure, throws up to you, as if it were the very truth of God—For that we

give you credit. But neither you nor we have the consequences of our doctrine, whether we own or refuse them, in our power, after the doctrine is once published by us.

What we hold, let us hold in the most public and avowed manner: God has published no truths for us to keep private, as if they needed a mask, or were dangerous to be spoken of, or better let alone. You were honest in publishing your sentiments; if some people are yet in the dark about them, publish them full, publish them out. It were criminal for any man to be neutral in such a grand and weighty article as the Sonship of Jesus Christ; without which, indeed, in the true and only sense thereof, there is nothing at all in religion, either possessed, or worthy to be regarded. Without the truth of this, all, all is a fable to us.

Does not salvation rest on this single hinge, by which we must stand or fall for ever, according as we have the truth imported in these words, *That Jesus is the Son of God*, dwelling in our hearts or not? We have need, then, to be sure of the sense as well as the sound; for, if we miss the sense, we miss the truth—we miss the salvation—For “he that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son hath not life. Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? he is anti-christ that denieth the Father and the Son. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” So the eunuch believed; and so Peter with his brethren confessed, saying, “We believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And this, by the Lord, is sealed for the belief of the truth.

It is strange, if so be your distinction between the person and the name of the Son of God be true, and yet no hint thereof to be found in all the book of God. If



there really be in revelation any ground for such a novel distinction, produce the same, that we also may come over to yourselves, and purify our faith and profession by discarding, with you, those same alleged unscriptural, and, if so, antiscritural notions of eternal generation and Sonship out of our hearts and mouths, and, if possible, out of the church of God for ever.

But, if it appear that Jesus is the Son of God in another and higher sense than that wherein he is said to be manifested in the flesh, according to the fulness of time, by the union of his two natures, antecedently to, and independently of, that manifestation, wherein he is described as performing his mediatory office, glorifying his Father upon earth, and finishing the work which the Father gave him to do; it must of necessity be allowed, unless we add to the Scriptures, and cannot be disallowed, unless we take away from them, even their Author and Finisher, that he was, and is, and is to come, the Son of God, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without any variableness or shadow of turning, in that, as in every other respect, like the Father and Spirit, from eternity to eternity, essentially and by nature; because there is no middle way between temporal and eternal generation: for whatever took place before time, beloved to be eternal, seeing, before time began, there was nothing but a vast and boundless eternity. That this is really the case with regard to the eternal generation and Sonship, which, being correlates, imply one another, appears, in the eyes of those who on this point oppose you, from the whole light of revelation. And, if we are to go upon our own humble conceptions in such cases, we can only say, that, if we are deceived herein, it is hard for us to conceive how the spirit of falsehood himself could have more spread the mist of such grievous error over the whole horizon or face of

revelation, than (with reverence be it spoken) the Spirit of all truth hath actually done.

You know all the passages of holy writ, which are usually alleged against you in support of the point which, according to your present views, you think it your duty to impugn; and therefore it would be as needless, as impossible for me at present, to urge what has been so frequently urged, otherwise I might cite John i., Col. i., Phil. ii., Heb. i., Psalm ii., Psalm cx., Rom. i. 4, Mark xii. 35. I shall only mention one text which most readily occurs on this subject, and for a reason which shall presently appear: "The Lord possessed me," saith the Messiah, "in the beginning of his way, before his works of old—I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was—when there were no depths I was brought forth—then I was by him as one brought up." You know also that the sound of English words, or indeed of any other language, is nothing to our purpose; but only the very meaning of the Holy Ghost, which we can only know by means of his words; and you know, too, that the Targum, the Syriac, and the Septuagint versions, no bad authorities, give us the meaning of all that variety of expressions, which is plainly the same, by words which, in their respective languages, are precisely of the same import with that expression in our mother-tongue, **BEGOTTEN**. I take notice of this, because, inadvertently no doubt, you insist upon it, that *eternally begotten* is not a scriptural mode of expression—and I understand the people, I mean many of them, are deceived by this fallacy, which is also founded on another fallacy in the translation—at least, we may say, there is no ground for alleging, that the very mode of expression, *begotten eternally*, or before Jehovah's works of old, even from everlasting, is not scriptural, though the mat-

ter were to rest even upon this bottom only, seeing such weighty authorities are for us, not only in the sense, but even in the letter also.

Here, if it be replied, that the meaning of these words, *set up from everlasting, &c.*, respects not the nature of Jesus Christ as a Son in Godhead, begotten of the Father, but merely the purpose, decree, or counsel of peace, concerning his office as Mediator, in the plan of redemption, it is answered, that this is merely a machine of your own contriving, brought in without any necessity, foundation, or example, in the Scripture, to serve the present purpose, and support an hypothesis, or favourite point of human framing; by the admission whereof into the way of interpreting Scripture, all Scripture sense would be as effectually overturned, as by the admission of all the absurdities implied in the doctrine of the mass.—Who knows not, that all the decrees of God are of an equal date, even from eternity; and the decree which he gave to the sea, with the decrees concerning the mountains and hills, were as ancient as those concerning the mediatory office—nay, the world was destroyed by fire, in the decree, sooner than it was in reality created, and the kingdom delivered up to the Father, before the kingdom, abstracting from the decree, had so much as a beginning. But here affections and personal properties are ascribed—surely not to a decree, but to a person. Yet this is not all, if we were to explain those now-mentioned expressions in the book of Proverbs, by such a machine or manner, by cutting the knot which we cannot loose, as respecting only the appointment or destination to a certain future office, to be fulfilled in time, then, for the same reason, we might interpret all the similar passages, speaking of the same things, in the very same manner; and indeed the same necessity would compel us so to do, particularly these

following, to instance only in a few, where it is said, That the word was in the beginning with God; that the Son had glory with the Father, before the world began; was in the bosom of the Father; was before all things; that the worlds were created by the Son, and that he upholdeth all things by the word of his power;—for surely all those things took place before the incarnation, or union of the two natures; and it is plainly said, That by the Son all things were created.

But my limits will not allow me to enter into a particular refutation of this most confounding tenet of yours, which at present, for God's wise purposes, and the trial and manifestation of many, it seems, you are left, in his holy permission, to hold for a season; a tenet which, I hope, plainly to declare, is plainly and fully to refute—I say, to declare it, I hope, is to refute it.—And this may be the more evident, seeing the distinct personality of those Eternal Three, who are one, is only held forth to us by those very words, which hold them forth as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. So, if the Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead be eternal, which you allow, so must the Fatherhood, Sonship, and procession of the Spirit, which you deny.—But to deny this is in effect, by inevitable consequence, to deny the Godhead altogether, after which there is nothing but absolute atheism left. This consequence, though certainly you most strenuously disavow, and do not perceive it, yet, alas! you cannot prevent the operation of such a subtile poison in others, nor destroy the death it is going so big with. May the Lord open your own eyes, that you may perceive, and shake the viper from your hand into the fire, before you drop down dead!

If indeed the mediation of Jesus Christ be founded in this Godhead, as you maintain with us; and it appear by the Scripture, as we allege, that his Godhead (desir-

ing still to speak with reverence) is founded in, or rather the same with his Sonship, or that he is equal with God, and God in that same sense wherein he is the Son of God (John v.); if you deny the eternal Sonship, you also deny the eternal Godhead of Jesus Christ—and where then are we, if the eternal rock is taken away from under us? Our foundations are gone, our faith is vanished, and our hope is no more. Instead of God, an eternal blank is all the prospect in our eye!

If you allege, we have no manifestation of the Trinity, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in those their personal characters, but only as they stand related to us in those peculiar offices that arise and flow from those respective characters wherein they have manifested themselves—and therefore, that those personal properties are merely names of offices and relations to us the creatures, and not of nature or essence in the Godhead—it is answered, This is the most desperate attack that ever was made (in the form of a defence) upon the doctrine of God's existence; for it not only undoes the doctrine of the Trinity, but flies in the very face of Godhead itself, and directly murders the external existence; for it is manifest we know nothing of God, but in the light of those relations wherein he has been pleased to discover himself by his Word and Spirit to us his creatures. Shall we therefore say, that there is no reality in the Divine Nature corresponding to those discoveries, which are all relative to us—no holiness, no justice, no mercy in God, but only mere names of relation to us, because we see those attributes or perfections of God in no other view, but that wherein they bear a relation? Shall we indeed say so? God forbid! Why then say, there is nothing in Godhead corresponding to those personal names, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; because those ever-adored three, who are one, have been pleased to

manifest themselves, only as related to us creatures, each in his own respective, peculiar, and personal character ?

I am not willing to observe anything upon the representation you have given of the doctrine of eternal generation, as if it maintained or implied, that one Jehovah or Most High God begot another Jehovah or Most High God. The allegation is so gross, that it will scarce bear a repetition. Surely you know, it never was maintained or implied in the doctrine of eternal generation, that there were two or three Jehovahs. But as you also assert, that there are three persons in the Godhead, it would seem, by your representation of our doctrine, that yours implied that there were three Jehovahs, though not subsisting in your scheme, as Father, Son, and proceeding Spirit—or, perhaps, only one Jehovah, as we all allow ; but that the distinct personality, which you seem to grant and contend for, is only a distinct and threefold denomination of one God, manifested in three distinct characters, without any distinct personality at bottom at all ; as that most dubious and suspicious phrase of yours, “He who is *called* the Son is Jehovah,” would really seem to insinuate.

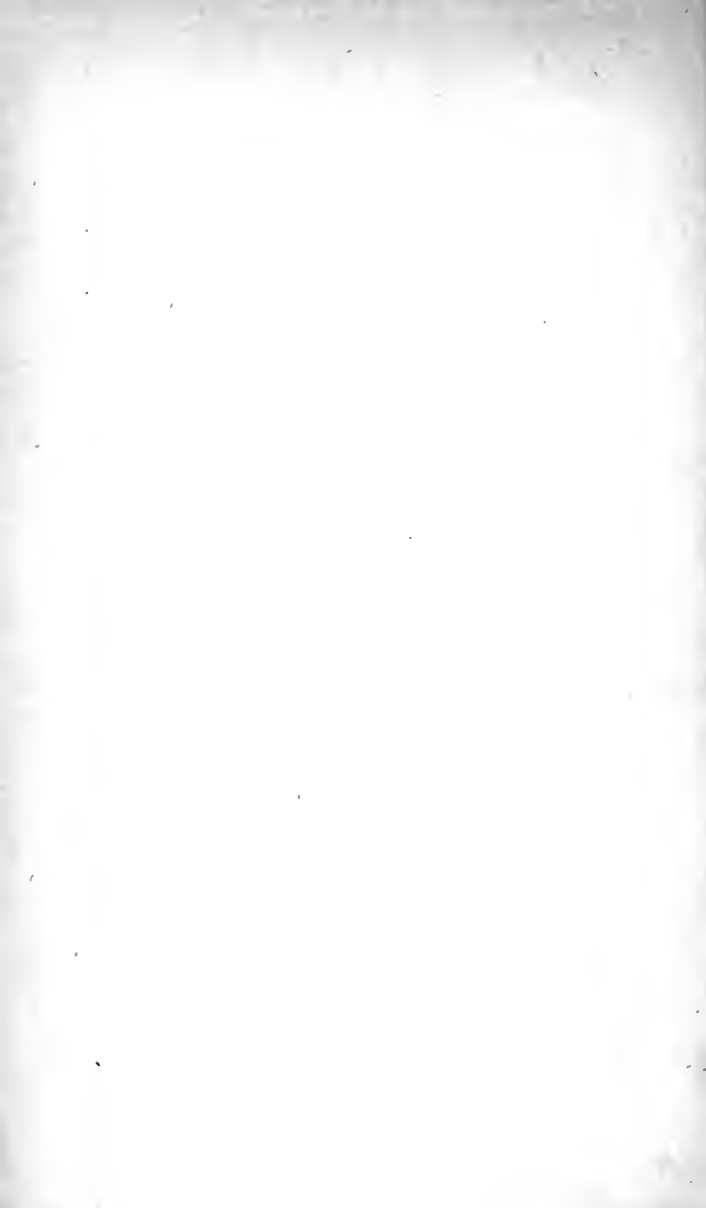
Here, that there may be no ground for charging me with evil surmisings, I earnestly beg you will take notice, I do not presume to charge such consequences upon your hearts and consciences. God forbid ! Your hearts and consciences I leave to their own judge : I judge only the doctrines, being commanded not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits, whether they be of God : because many false spirits, or doctrines, are gone abroad into the world, which, if it were possible, would deceive even the very elect.

Neither do I stand up as an advocate for this, or any article whatsoever, because it is an article in a confes-

sion of faith, which is of human composure. No; I leave such doings to those who believe in the Pope, or the church; which, if they have no more to say for their faith, will be found only a believing in that spirit who ruleth in the hearts of the children of unpersuadableness, unbelief, or disobedience to the faith; but I am compelled in my spirit, because I know of none who has considered the case in this light, to appear in vindication of my own faith, and I believe of all those who are called, according to the purpose of God, into the fellowship of his Son, as one believing in my heart, and confessing with my mouth, to the glory of God, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living and true God (even by eternal generation)—notwithstanding that the devils, who believe and tremble, with the church of Rome—and the church of Scotland, in their respective confessions of faith, have expressly asserted and professed the same.

In this faith, praying earnestly for your recovery from this snare of the devil, whereinto you have so unhappily fallen, I am, Friends, your humble servant and well-wisher in every good word and work. Adieu.

*October 21, 1769.*









R.Theol.  
B

Barclay, J.  
Works

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