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T H E *John Adams*  
W O R K S

Of the MOST REVEREND

Dr. JOHN TILLOTSON,

Late Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

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

V O L. III.

E D I N B U R G H:

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XX  
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# The CONTENTS.

- SERM. XLII. Against evil-speaking.----Tit. iii. 2. *To speak evil of no man* page 1
- SERM. XLIII. XLIV. XLV. XLVI. Concerning the divinity and incarnation of our blessed Saviour.----John i. 14. *The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father) full of grace and truth* 24. 42. 68. 83
- SERM. XLVII. Concerning the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ, &c.----Heb. ix. 26. *But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. 101
- SERM. XLVIII. Concerning the unity of the divine nature, and the blessed Trinity, &c.----1 Tim. ii. 5. *For there is one God* 122
- SERM. XLIX. Concerning resolution and steadfastness in religion.--- Josh. xxiv. 15. *But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord* 144
- SERM. L. Concerning family-religion.-----Josh. xxiv. 15. *But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord* 163
- SERM. LI. LII. LIII. Of the education of children.----- Prov. xxii. 6. *Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it* 177. 196. 212
- SERM. LIV. Of the advantages of an early piety.-----Eccles. xii. 1. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them* 230

## The RULE of FAITH.

In answer to Mr. Serjeant:

The dedication to Dr. Stillingfleet 249

### PART I.

*The explication and state of the question.*

Sect. I. The explication of the terms of the question 250

Sect. II. Mr. S.'s rule of faith 253

• •

Sect. III.

	Page.
Sect. III. The Protestant doctrine concerning the rule of faith	258
Sect. IV. How much Protestants allow to oral tradition	266
Sect. V. How much Mr. S. attributes to his rule of faith more than Protestants do to theirs	273

## P A R T II.

*Concerning the properties of the rule of faith: and whether they agree solely to oral tradition.*

Sect. I. The properties of a rule of faith	276
Sect. II. That the properties of a rule of faith belong to scripture	280
Sect. III. Mr. S.'s exceptions against scripture examined	284
Sect. IV. That scripture is a sufficient rule to the unlearned, and to the most rational doubters	306
Sect. V. That scripture is sufficient to convince the most acute adversaries, and that it is sufficiently certain	316
Sect. VI. That the properties of a rule of faith do not belong to oral tradition.	323

## P A R T III.

*In which Mr. S.'s demonstrations and corollaries are examined.*

Sect. I. Considerations touching his demonstrations in general	325
Sect. II. Mr. S.'s demonstration <i>à priori</i>	329
Sect. III. The first answer to his demonstration	331
Sect. IV. The second answer to his demonstration	339
Sect. V. The third answer to his demonstration	342
Sect. VI. Mr. S.'s demonstration <i>à posteriori</i>	350
Sect. VII. The first answer to his second demonstration	352
Sect. VIII. The second answer to his second demonstration	367
Sect. IX. The third answer to his second demonstration	369
Sect. X. The fourth answer to his second demonstration	389
Sect. XI. Concerning some other advantages of tradition, &c.	395
Sect. XII. Mr. S.'s corollaries considered	397

## P A R T IV.

*Testimonies concerning the rule of faith.*

Sect. I. Mr. S.'s testimonies examined	400
Sect. II. Testimonies on the behalf of scripture	409

# S E R M O N XLII.

## Against evil-speaking.

Preached before the King and Queen, at Whitehall, Feb.  
25. 1693-4.

T I T. iii. 2.

*To speak evil of no man.*

**G**ENERAL persuasives to repentance and a good life, and investives against sin and wickedness at large, are certainly of good use to recommend religion and virtue, and to expose the deformity and danger of a vicious course. But it must be acknowledged, on the other hand, that these general-discourses do not so immediately tend to reform the lives of men; because they fall among the crowd, but do not touch the consciences of particular persons in so sensible and awakening a manner, as when we treat of particular duties and sins, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim them from the other, by proper arguments taken from the word of God, and from the nature of particular virtues and vices.

The general way is, as if a physician, instead of applying particular remedies to the distemper of his patient, should entertain him with a long discourse of diseases in general, and of the pleasure and advantages of health; and earnestly persuade him to be well, without taking his particular disease into consideration, and prescribing remedies for it.

But if we would effectually reform men, we must take to task the great and common disorders of their lives, and represent their faults to them in such a manner, as may convince them of the evil and danger of them, and put them upon the endeavour of a cure.

And to this end I have pitched upon one of the common and reigning vices of the age, calumny and evil-speaking; by which men contract so much guilt to themselves, and create so much trouble to others; and from

which, it is to be feared, few or none are wholly free: for *who is he* (saith the son of Sirach, Eccclus xix. 16.) *that hath not offended with his tongue?* In many things (saith St. James, chap. iii. 2.) *we offend all: and if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.*

But how few have attained to this perfection? And yet unless we do endeavour after it, and in some good measure attain it, all our pretence to religion is vain. So the same apostle tells us, chap. i. 26. *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

For the more distinct handling of this argument, I shall reduce my discourse to these five heads.

1. I shall consider the nature of this vice, and where-in it consists.

2. I shall consider the due extent of this prohibition, *To speak evil of no man.*

3. I shall shew the evil of this practice, both in the causes and effects of it.

4. I shall add some further considerations to dissuade men from it.

5. I shall give some rules and directions for the prevention and cure of it.

I. I shall consider what this sin or vice of *evil-speaking* here forbidden by the apostle is: *μὴδὲνα βλασφημεῖν*, not to defame and slander any man, not to *hurt his reputation*, as the etymology of the word doth import. So that this vice consists in saying things of others which tend to their disparagement and reproach, to the taking away or lessening of their reputation and good name: and this, whether the things said be true or not. If they be false, and we know it, then it is downright calumny; and if we do not know it, but take it upon the report of others, it is however a slander; and so much the more injurious, because really groundless and undetected.

If the thing be true, and we know it to be so, yet it is a defamation, and tends to the prejudice of our neighbour's reputation: and it is a fault to say the evil of others which is true, unless there be some good reason for it besides; because it is contrary to that charity and goodness which christianity requires, to divulge the faults of others,

others, though they be really guilty of them, without necessity, or some other very good reason for it.

Again, It is *evil-speaking*, and the vice condemned in the text, whether we be the first authors of an ill report, or relate it from others; because the man that is evil spoken of is equally defamed either way.

Again, Whether we speak evil of a man to his face, or behind his back. The former way indeed seems to be the more generous, but yet is a great fault, and that which we call *reviling*; the latter is more mean and base, and that which we properly call *slander* or *backbiting*.

And, lastly, Whether it be done directly and in express terms, or more obscurely, and by way of oblique insinuation; whether by way of downright reproach, or with some crafty preface of commendation; for so it have the effect to defame, the manner of address does not much alter the case. The one may be more dextrous, but is not one jot less faulty: for many times the deepest wounds are given by these smoother and more artificial ways of slander; as by asking questions: "Have you not heard so and so of such a man? I say no more; I only ask the question:" or by general intimations, that "they are loth to say what they have heard of such a one, are very sorry for it, and do not at all believe it," if you will believe them: and this many times without telling the thing, but leaving you in the dark to suspect the worst.

These, and such like arts, though they may seem to be tenderer and gentler ways of using mens reputation; yet in truth they are the most malicious and effectual methods of slander; because they insinuate something that is much worse than is said, and yet are very apt to create in unwary men a strong belief of something that is very bad, though they know not what is. So that it matters not in what fashion a slander is dressed up; if it tend to defame a man, and to diminish his reputation, it is the sin forbidden in the text.

II. We will consider the extent of this prohibition, *To speak evil of no man*, and the due bounds and limitations of it. For it is not to be understood absolutely, to forbid us to say any thing concerning others that is bad. This in some cases may be necessary and our duty, and

in several cases very fit and reasonable. The question is, In what cases by the general rules of scripture and right reason we are warranted to say the evil of others that is true?

In general, we are not to do this without great reason and necessity; as for the prevention of some great evil, or the procuring of some considerable good to ourselves, or others. And this I take to be the meaning of that advice of the son of Sirach, Ecclus xix. 8. *Whether it be to a friend or foe, talk not of other mens lives; and if thou canst without offence, reveal them not; that is, if without hurt to any body thou canst conceal them, divulge them not.*

But because this may not be direction sufficient, I shall instance in some of the principal cases wherein men are warranted to speak evil of others, and yet in so doing do not offend against this prohibition in the text.

1. It is not only lawful, but very commendable, and many times our duty to do this, in order to the probable amendment of the person of whom evil is spoken. In such a case we may tell a man of his faults privately; or where it may not be so fit for us to use that boldness and freedom, we may reveal his faults to one who is more fit and proper to reprove him, and will probably make no other use of this discovery, but in order to his amendment. And this is so far from being a breach of charity, that it is one of the best testimonies of it. For perhaps the party may not be guilty of what hath been reported of him, and then it is a kindness to give him the opportunity of vindicating himself: or, if he be guilty, perhaps being privately and prudently told of it, he may reform. In this case the son of Sirach adviseth to reveal mens faults, Ecclus xix. 13, 14, 15. *Admonish a friend, (says he) it may be he hath not done it: and if he have done it, that he do it no more. Admonish thy friend, it may be he hath not said it: and if he have, that he speak it not again. Admonish a friend: for many times it is a slander; and believe not every tale.*

But then we must take care that this be done out of kindness, and that nothing of our own passion be mingled with it; and that under pretence of reproof and reforming men, we do not reproach and revile them, and  
tell

tell them of their faults in such a manner, as if we did it to shew our authority, rather than our charity. It requires a great deal of address and gentle application, so to manage the business of reproof, as not to irritate and exasperate the person whom we reprove, instead of curing him.

2. This likewise is not only lawful, but our duty, when we are legally called to bear witness concerning the fault and crime of another. A good man would not be an accuser, unless the public good, or the prevention of some great evil, should require it. And then the plain reason of the thing will sufficiently justify a voluntary accusation. Otherways it hath always among well-mannered people been esteemed very odious for a man to be officious in this kind, and a forward informer concerning the misdemeanor of others. Magistrates may sometimes think it fit to give encouragement to such persons, and to set one bad man to catch another, because such men are fittest for such dirty work: but they can never inwardly approve them, nor will they ever make them their friends and confidents.

But when a man is called to give testimony in this kind, in obedience to the laws, and out of reverence to the oath taken in such cases, he is so far from deserving blame for so doing, that it would be an unpardonable fault in him to conceal the truth, or any part of it.

3. It is lawful to publish the faults of others, in our own necessary defence and vindication, when a man cannot conceal another's faults, without betraying his own innocency. No charity requires a man to suffer himself to be defamed, to save the reputation of another man. Charity begins at home. And though a man had never so much goodness, he would first secure his own good name, and then be concerned for other mens. We are *to love our neighbour as ourselves*: so that the love of ourselves is the rule and measure of our love to our neighbour: and therefore first, otherways it could not be the rule. And it would be very well for the world; if our charity would rise thus high; and no man would hurt another man's reputation, but where his own is in real danger.

4. This also is lawful for caution and warning to a

third person that is in danger to be infected by the company or ill example of another; or may be greatly prejudiced by reposing too much confidence in him, having no knowledge or suspicion of his bad qualities: but even in this case we ought to take great care, that the ill character we give of any man be spread no further than is necessary to the good end we designed in it.

Besides these more obvious and remarkable cases, this prohibition doth not I think hinder, but that in ordinary conversation men may mention that ill of others which is already made as public as it well can be; or that one friend may not in freedom speak to another of the miscarriage of a third person, where he is secure no ill use will be made of it, and that it will go no further to his prejudice; provided always, that we take no delight in hearing or speaking ill of others; and the less we do it, though without any malice or design of harm, still the better; because this shews that we do not feed upon ill reports, and take pleasure in them.

These are all the usual cases in which it may be necessary for us to speak evil of other men. And these are so evidently reasonable, that the prohibition in the text cannot with reason be extended to them. And if no man would allow himself to say any thing to the prejudice of another man's good name, but in these and the like cases, the tongues of men would be very innocent, and the world would be very quiet. I proceed, in the

III. Third place, To consider the evil of this practice, both in the causes, and the consequences of it.

1. We will consider the causes of it. And it commonly springs from one or more of these evil roots.

1<sup>st</sup>, One of the deepest and most common causes of *evil-speaking*, is ill-nature, and cruelty of disposition; and, by a general mistake, ill-nature passeth for wit, as cunning doth for wisdom; though in truth they are nothing a-kin to one another, but as far distant as vice and virtue.

And there is no greater evidence of the bad temper of mankind, than the general proneness of men to this vice: for (as our Saviour says) *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*. And therefore men do commonly incline to the censorious and uncharitable side; which  
shews

shews human nature to be strangely distorted from its original rectitude and innocency. The wit of man doth more naturally vent itself in satire and censure, than in praise and panegyric. When men set themselves to commend, it comes hardly from them, and not without great force and straining; and if any thing be fitly said in that kind, it doth hardly relish with most men. But in the way of invective, the invention of men is a plentiful and never failing spring. And this kind of wit is not more easy, than it is acceptable: it is greedily entertained, and greatly applauded; and every man is glad to hear others abused, not considering how soon it may come to his own turn to lie down, and make sport for others.

To speak evil of others, is almost become the general entertainment of all companies: and the great and serious business of most meetings and visits, after the necessary ceremonies and compliments are over, is, to sit down and backbite all the world. It is the fauce of conversation; and all discourse is counted but flat and dull which hath not something of piquancy and sharpness in it against somebody. For men generally love rather to hear evil of others than good, and are secretly pleased with ill reports, and drink them in with greediness and delight: though, at the same time, they have so much justice, as to hate those that propagate them; and so much wit as to conclude, that these very persons will do the same for them in another place and company.

But especially, if it concerns one of another party, and that differs from us in matters of religion; in this case, all parties seem to be agreed, that they do God great service in blasting the reputation of their adversaries. And though they all pretend to be Christians, and the disciples of him who taught nothing but kindness, and meekness, and charity; yet it is strange to see with what a savage and murderous disposition they will fly at one another's reputation, and tear it in pieces: and whatever other scruples they may have, they make none to bespatter one another in the most bitter and slanderous manner.

But if they hear any good of their adversaries, with what nicety and caution do they receive it? how many objections

objections do they raise against it? and with what coldness do they at last admit it? "It is very well (say they) if it be true; I shall be glad to hear it confirmed: I never heard so much good of him before. You are a good man yourself, but have a care you be not deceived."

Nay, it is well, if, to balance the matter, and set things even, they do not clap some infirmity and fault into the other scale, that so the enemy may not go off with flying colours.

But, on the other side, every man is a good and substantial author of an ill report. I do not apply this to any one sort of men, though all are to blame this way: *Iliacos intra muros peccatur, et extra.* To speak impartially, the zealots of all parties have got a scurvy trick of lying for the truth.

But of all sorts of people, I have observed the priests and bigots of the church of Rome to be the ablest in this way, and to have the strongest faith for a lusty falsehood and calumny. Others will bandy a false report, and toss it from one hand to another; but I never knew any that would so hug a lie, and be so very fond of it. They seem to be described by St. John in that expression in the Revelation, *Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*

Another shrewd sign that ill-nature lies at the root of this vice, is, that we easily forget the good that is said of others, and seldom make mention of it; but the contrary sticks with us, and lies uppermost in our memories, and is ready to come out upon all occasions: and, which is yet more ill-natured and unjust, many times when we do not believe it ourselves, we tell it to others, with this charitable caution, that we hope it is not true; but, in the mean time, we give it our pass, and venture it to take its fortune to be believed or not, according to the charity of those into whose hands it comes.

2dly, Another cause of the commonness of this vice is, that many are so bad themselves in one kind or other. For to think and speak ill of others, is not only a bad thing, but a sign of a bad man. Our blessed Saviour, speaking of the evil of the last days, gives this as the reason of the great decay of charity among men, Matth. xxiv. 12. *Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall*

*shall wax cold.* When men are bad themselves, they are glad of any opportunity to censure others, and are always apt to suspect that evil of other men which they know by themselves. They cannot have a good opinion of themselves, and therefore are very unwilling to have so of any body else; and for this reason they endeavour to bring men to a level, hoping it will be some justification of them if they can but render others as bad as themselves.

3dly, Another source of this vice, is malice and revenge. When men are in heat and passion, they do not consider what is true, but what is spiteful and mischievous; and speak evil of others in revenge of some injury which they have received from them; and when they are blinded by their passions, they lay about them madly, and at a venture, not much caring whether the evil they speak be true or not. Nay, many are so devilish, as to invent and raise false reports, on purpose to blast mens reputation. This is a diabolical temper; and therefore St. James tells us, that the slanderous *tongue is set on fire of hell*: and the devil hath his very name from calumny and false accusation; and it is his nature too, for he is always ready to stir up and foment this evil spirit among men: nay, the scripture tells us, that he hath the malice and impudence to accuse good men before God, as he did Job, charging him with hypocrisy to God himself, *who (he knows) does know the hearts of all the children of men.*

4thly, Another cause of evil speaking, is envy. Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that their reputation obscures them, and that their commendable qualities do stand in their light; and therefore they do what they can to cast a cloud over them, that the bright shining of their virtues may not scorch them. This makes them greedily to entertain, and industriously to publish any thing that may serve to that purpose, thereby to raise themselves upon the ruins of other mens reputation: and therefore, as soon as they have got an ill report of any good man by the end, to work they presently go, to send it abroad by the first post; for the string is always ready upon their bow to let fly this arrow, with an incredible swiftness, through city and

and country; for fear the innocent man's justification should overtake it.

5thly, Another cause of evil-speaking, is impertinence and curiosity; an itch of talking and meddling in the affairs of other men, which do no ways concern them. Some persons love to mingle themselves in all business, and are loth to seem ignorant of so important a piece of news, as the faults and follies of men, or any bad thing that is talked of in good company. And therefore they do with great care pick up ill stories, as good matter of discourse in the next company that is worthy of them: and this perhaps not out of any great malice, but for want of something better to talk of, and because their parts lie chiefly that way.

6thly, Lastly, Men do this many times out of wantonness, and for diversion. So little do light and vain men consider, that a man's reputation is too great and tender a concernment to be jested withal; and that a slanderous tongue *bites like a serpent, and wounds like a sword*. For what can be more barbarous, next to sporting with a man's life, than to play with his honour and reputation, which to some men is dearer to them than their lives?

It is a cruel pleasure which some men take in worrying the reputation of others much better than themselves, and this only to divert themselves and the company. Solomon compares this sort of men to distracted persons: *As a madman (saith he) who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death; so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, (the LXX render it, so is the man that defameth his neighbour,) and saith, Am not I in sport?* Such, and so bad are the causes of this vice. I proceed to consider, in the

2. Second place, the ordinary, but very pernicious consequences and effects of it; both to others, and to ourselves.

1st, To others; the parties I mean that are slandered. To them it is certainly a great injury, and commonly a high provocation, but always matter of no small grief and trouble to them.

It is certainly a great injury, and, if the evil which we say of them be not true, it is an injury beyond imagination, and beyond all possible reparation. And  
though

though we should do our utmost endeavour afterwards towards their vindication; yet that makes but very little amends, because the vindication seldom reacheth so far as the reproach, and because commonly men are neither so forward to spread the vindication, nor is it so easily received after ill impressions are once made. The solicitous vindication of a man's self is, at the best, but an after game; and for the most part a man had better sit still, than to run the hazard of making the matter worse by playing it.

I will add one thing more, that it is an injury that descends to a man's children and posterity; because the good or ill name of the father is derived down to them; and many times the best thing he hath to leave them, is the reputation of his unblemished virtue and worth. And do we make no conscience to rob his innocent children of the best part of this small patrimony, and of all the kindness that would have been done them for their father's sake, if his reputation had not been so undeservedly stained? Is it no crime, by the breath of our mouth, at once to blast a man's reputation, and to ruin his children, perhaps to all posterity? Can we make a jest of so serious a matter? of an injury so very hard to be repented of as it ought, because, in such a case, no repentance will be acceptable without restitution, if it be in our power? And perhaps it will undo us in this world to make it; and, if we do it not, will be our ruin in the other.

I will put the case at the best, that the matter of the slander is true; yet no man's reputation is considerably stained, though never so deservedly, without great harm and damage to him. And it is great odds but the matter, by passing through several hands, is aggravated beyond truth, every one, out of his bounty, being apt to add something to it.

But, besides the injury, it is commonly a very high provocation; and the consequence of that may be as bad as we can imagine, and may end in dangerous and desperate quarrels. This reason the wise son of Sirach gives why we should defame no man, *Ecclus xix. 8, 9. Whether it be (says he) to a friend or foe, talk not of other mens lives. For he hath heard and observed thee,* (that

(that is, one way or other it will probably come to his knowledge,) *and when the time cometh, he will shew his hatred*; that is, he will take the first opportunity to revenge it.

At the best, it is always matter of grief to the person that is defamed. And Christianity, which is the best natured institution in the world, forbids us the doing of those things whereby we may grieve one another. A man's good name is a tender thing, and a wound there sinks deep into the spirit even of a wise and good man: and the more innocent any man is in this kind, the more sensible is he of this hard usage; because he never treats others so, nor is he conscious to himself that he hath deserved it.

2dly, The consequences of this vice are as bad or worse to ourselves. Whoever is wont to speak evil of others, gives a bad character of himself, even to those whom he desires to please; who, if they be wise enough, will conclude, that he speaks of them to others, as he does of others to them; and were it not for that fond partiality which men have for themselves, no man could be so blind as not to see this.

And it is very well worthy of our consideration, which our Saviour says in this very case, Matth. vii. 2. that *with what measure we mete to others, it shall be measured to us again*; and that many times heaped up and running over; for there is hardly any thing wherein mankind do use more strict justice and equality, than *in rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing*.

Nay, revenge often goes further than words. A reproachful and slanderous speech hath cost many a man a duel, and in that the loss of his own life, or the murder of another, perhaps with the loss of his own soul. And I have often wondered, that among Christians this matter is no more laid to heart.

And though neither of these great mischiefs should happen to us, yet this may be inconvenient enough many other ways; for no man knows, in the chance of things, and the mutability of human affairs, whose kindness and good-will he may come to stand in need of before he dies. So that did a man only consult his own safety and quiet, he ought to refrain from evil-speaking:

speaking: Psal. xxxiv. 12. 13. *What man is he (saith the Psalmist) that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking falsehood.*

But there is an infinitely greater danger hanging over us from God. If we allow ourselves in this evil practice, all our religion is good for nothing. So St. James expressly tells us, chap. i. 26. *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.* And St. Paul puts slanderers and revilers amongst those that *shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 10. And our blessed Saviour hath told us, that *by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned.* To which I will add the counsel given us by the wise man, (Wisdom of Solomon, chap. i. 11.) *Refrain your tongue from backbiting: for there is no word so secret, that shall go for nought; and the mouth that slandereth, slayeth the soul.* I proceed, in the

IV. Fourth place, to add some further arguments and considerations to take men off from this vice. As,

1. That the use of speech is a peculiar prerogative of man above other creatures, and bestowed upon him for some excellent end and purpose; that by this faculty we might communicate our thoughts more easily to one another, and consult together for our mutual comfort and benefit; not to enable us to be hurtful and injurious, but helpful and beneficial to one another. The Psalmist, as by interpreters is generally thought, calls our tongue our *glory*; therewith we *praise God and bless men*. Now, to bless is to speak well of any, and to wish them well. So that we pervert the use of speech, and turn our glory into shame, when we abuse this faculty, to the injury and reproach of any.

2. Consider how cheap a kindness it is to speak well, at least not to speak ill of any. A good word is an easy obligation; but not to speak ill requires only our silence, which costs us nothing. Some instances of charity are chargeable, as to relieve the wants and necessities of others. The expence deters many from this kind of charity. But were a man never so covetous, he might af-

ford another man his good word ; at least he might refrain from speaking ill of him ; especially if it be considered how dear many have paid for a slanderous and reproachful word.

3. Consider that no quality doth ordinarily recommend one more to the favour and good will of men, than to be free from this vice. Every one desires such a man's friendship, and is apt to repose a great trust and confidence in him ; and when he is dead, men will praise him. And, next to piety towards God, and righteousness to man, nothing is thought a more significant commendation, than that he was never, or very rarely, heard to speak ill of any. It was a singular character of a Roman gentleman, *Nescivit quid esset maledicere* : " He knew not what it was to give any man an ill word."

4. Let every man lay his hand upon his heart, and consider how himself is apt to be affected with this usage. Speak thy conscience, man, and say, whether, as bad as thou art, thou wouldst not be glad to have every man's, especially every good man's good word ; and to have thy faults concealed ; and not to be hardly spoken of, though it may be not altogether without truth, by those whom thou didst never offend by word or deed ? But with what face or reason dost thou expect this from others, to whom thy carriage hath been so contrary ? Nothing surely is more equal and reasonable, than that known rule, " What thou wouldst have no man do to thee, that do thou to no man."

5. When you are going to speak reproachfully of others, consider whether you do not ly open to just reproach in the same, or some other kind. Therefore give no occasion, no example of this barbarous usage of one another.

There are very few so innocent and free, either from infirmities or greater faults, as not to be obnoxious to reproach upon one account or other. Even the wisest, and most virtuous, and most perfect amongst men, have some little vanity or affectation, which lays them open to the raillery of a mimical and malicious wit : therefore we should often turn our thoughts upon ourselves, and look into that part of the wallet which men commonly

monly fling over their shoulders, and keep behind them, that they may not see their own faults; and when we have searched that well, let us remember our Saviour's rule, *He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone.*

6. Lastly, Consider, that it is in many cases as great a charity to conceal the evil you hear and know of others, as if you relieved them in a great necessity. And we think him a hard-hearted man that will not bestow a small alms upon one in great want. It is an excellent advice which the son of Sirach gives to this purpose, *Ecclus. xix. 10. Talk not of other mens lives: If thou hast heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold, it will not hurt thee.* I shall, in the

V. Fifth and last place, give some rules and directions for the prevention and cure of this great evil among men.

1. Never say any evil of any man, but what you certainly know. Whenever you positively accuse and indite any man of any crime, though it be in private and among friends, speak as if you were upon your oath, because God sees and hears you. This, not only charity, but justice, and regard to truth, do demand of us. He that easily credits an ill report, is almost as faulty as the first inventer of it: for though you do not make, yet you commonly propagate a lie. Therefore never speak evil of any upon common fame, which, for the most part, is false; but almost always uncertain, whether it be true or not.

Not but that it is a fault, in most cases, to report the evil of men which is true, and which we certainly know to be so; but if I cannot prevail, to make men wholly to abstain from this fault, I would be glad to compound with some persons, and to gain this point of them however; because it would retrench nine parts in ten of the evil-speaking that is in the world.

2. Before you speak evil of any man, consider whether he hath not obliged you by some real kindness? and then it is a bad return to speak ill of him who hath done us good. Consider also, whether you may not come hereafter to be acquainted with him, related to him, or obliged by him whom you have thus injured? and how will you then be ashamed, when you re-

fect upon it; and perhaps have reason also to believe, that he to whom you have done this injury, is not ignorant of it?

Consider likewise, whether, in the chance of human affairs, you may not some time or other come to stand in need of his favour; and how incapable this carriage of your's towards him will render you of it? and whether it may not be in his power to revenge a spiteful and needless word by a shrewd turn? So that if a man made no conscience of hurting others, yet he should in prudence have some consideration of himself.

3. Let us accustom ourselves to pity the faults of men, and to be truly sorry for them; and then we shall take no pleasure in publishing them. And this common humanity requires of us; considering the great infirmities of human nature, and that we ourselves also are liable to be tempted; considering likewise, how severe a punishment every fault and miscarriage is to itself, and how terribly it exposeth a man to the wrath of God, both in this world and the other. He is not a good Christian, that is not heartily sorry for the faults even of his greatest enemies; and if it be so, he will discover them no farther than is necessary to some good end.

4. Whenever we hear any man evil-spoken of, if we know any good of him, let us say that. It is always the more humane and the more honourable part, to stand up in the defence and vindication of others, than to accuse and bespatter them. Possibly the good you have heard of them may not be true; but it is much more probable, that the evil which you have heard of them is not true neither: however, it is better to preserve the credit of a bad man, than to stain the reputation of the innocent. And if there were any need that a man should be evil spoken of, it is but fair and equal that his good and bad qualities should be mentioned together; otherwise he may be strangely misrepresented, and an indifferent man may be made a monster.

They that will observe nothing in a wise man, but his oversights and follies; nothing in a good man, but his failings and infirmities; may make a shift to render a very wise and good man very despicable. If one should

heap together all the passionate speeches, all the forward and imprudent actions of the best man, all that he had said or done amiss in his whole life, and present it all at one view, concealing his wisdom and virtues; the man, in this disguise, would look like a mad man or a fury: and yet, if his life were fairly represented, and just in the same manner it was led, and his many and great virtues set over against his failings and infirmities, he would appear to all the world to be an admirable and excellent person. But how many and great soever any man's ill qualities are, it is but just, that, with all this heavy load of faults, he should have the due praise of the few real virtues that are in him.

5. That you may not speak ill of any, do not delight to hear ill of them. Give no countenance to busy-bodies, and those that love to talk of other mens faults: or, if you cannot decently reprove them because of their quality, then divert the discourse some other way; or, if you cannot do that, by seeming not to mind it, you may sufficiently signify that you do not like it.

6. Let every man mind himself, and his own duty and concernment. Do but endeavour in good earnest to mend thyself, and it will be work enough for one man, and leave thee but little time to talk of others. When Plato withdrew from the court of Dionysius, who would fain have had a famous philosopher for his flatterer, they parted in some unkindness, and Dionysius bade him not speak ill of him when he was returned into Greece. Plato told him, He had no leisure for it; meaning, that he had better things to mind, than to take up his thoughts and talk with the faults of so bad a man, so notoriously known to all the world.

7. Lastly, Let us set a watch before the door of our lips, and not speak but upon consideration: I do not mean to speak finely, but fitly. Especially when thou speakest of others, consider of whom, and what thou art going to speak. Use great caution and circumspection in this matter. Look well about thee, on every side of the thing, and on every person in the company, before thy words slip from thee; which, when they are once out of thy lips, are for ever out of thy power.

Not that men should be fullen in company, and say nothing; nor so stiff in conversation, as to drop nothing but aphorisms and oracles. Especially among equals and friends, we should not be so reserved, as if we would have it taken for a mighty favour that we vouchsafe to say any thing. If a man had the understanding of an angel, he must be contented to abate something of this excess of wisdom, for fear of being thought cunning. The true art of conversation, if any body can hit upon it, seems to be this; an appearing freedom and openness, with a resolute reservedness as little appearing as is possible.

All that I mean by this caution is, that we should consider well what we say, especially of others. And to this end, we should endeavour to get our minds furnished with matter of discourse concerning things useful in themselves, and not hurtful to others. And, if we have but a mind wise enough, and good enough, we may easily find a field large enough for innocent conversation, such as will harm no body, and yet be acceptable enough to the better and wiser part of mankind. And why should any one be at the cost of playing the fool; to gratify any body whatsoever?

I have done with the five things I propounded to speak to upon this argument. But, because hardly any thing can be so clear, but something may be said against it; nor any thing so bad, but something may be pleaded in excuse for it, I shall therefore take notice of two or three pleas that may be made for it:

1. Some pretend mighty injury and provocation. If in the same kind, it seems thou art sensible of it; and therefore thou of all men oughtest to abstain from it. But in what kind soever it be, the Christian religion forbids revenge. Therefore do not plead one sin in excuse of another, and make revenge an apology for reviling.

2. It is alledged by others, with a little better grace, that if this doctrine were practised, conversation would be spoiled, and there would not be matter enough for pleasant discourse and entertainment.

I answer, the design of this discourse is, to redress a great evil in conversation, and that, I hope, which  
mends

mends it, will not spoil it. And however, if mens tongues lay a little more still, and most of us spake a good deal less than we do, both of ourselves and others, I see no great harm in it: I hope we might for all that live comfortably and in good health, and see many good days. David, I am sure, prescribes it as an excellent receipt, in his opinion, for a quiet, and chearful, and long life, to refrain from evil-speaking: Psal. xxxiv. 12. 13. *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and lips from speaking falsehood.*

But granting that there is some pleasure in invective, I hope there is a great deal more in innocence: and the more any man considers this, the truer he will find it; and whenever we are serious, we ourselves cannot but acknowledge it. When a man examines himself impartially before the sacrament, or is put in mind upon a deathbed, to make reparation for injuries done in this kind, he will then certainly be of this mind, and wish he had not done them. For this certainly is one necessary qualification for the blessed sacrament, that we be in love and charity with our neighbours; with which temper of mind this quality is utterly inconsistent.

3. There is yet a more specious plea than either of the former, that men will be encouraged to do ill, if they can escape the tongues of men; as they would do, if this doctrine did effectually take place: because by this means, one great restraint from doing evil would be taken away, which these good men, who are so bent upon reforming the world, think would be great pity. For many who will venture upon the displeasure of God, will yet abstain from doing bad things for fear of reproach from men: besides that this seems the most proper punishment of many faults which the laws of men can take no notice of.

Admitting all this to be true, yet it does not seem so good and laudable a way, to punish one fault by another. But let no man encourage himself in an evil way, with this hope that he shall escape the censure of men. When I have said all I can, there will, I fear, be evil-speaking enough in the world to chastise them that do ill: though we should hold our peace, there will be

bad

bad tongues enough to reproach men with their evil-doings. I wish we could but be persuaded to make the experiment for a little while, whether men would not be sufficiently lashed for their faults, though we sat by and said nothing.

So that there is no need at all that good men should be concerned in this odious work. There will always be offenders and malefactors enough to be the executioners to inflict this punishment upon one another. Therefore let no man presume upon impunity on the one hand; and, on the other, let no man despair, but that this business will be sufficiently done one way or other. I am very much mistaken, if we may not safely trust an ill-natured world that there will be no failure of justice in this kind.

And here, if I durst, I would have said a word or two concerning that more public sort of obloquy by lampoons and libels, so much in fashion in this witty age. But I have no mind to provoke a very terrible sort of men. Yet thus much I hope may be said without offence, that how much soever men are pleased to see others abused in this kind, yet it is always grievous when it comes to their own turn. However, I cannot but hope, that every man that impartially considers, must own it to be a fault of a very high nature, to revile those whom God hath placed in authority over us, and to slander the footsteps of the Lord's anointed; especially since it is so expressly written, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the rulers of thy people.*

Having represented the great evil of this vice, it might not now be improper to say something to those who suffer by it. Are we guilty of the evil said of us? Let us reform, and cut off all occasions for the future; and so turn the malice of our enemies to our own advantage, and defeat their ill intentions by making so good an use of it; and then it will be well for us to have been evil spoken of.

Are we innocent? We may so much the better bear it patiently; imitating herein the pattern of our blessed Saviour, *who when he was reviled, reviled not again; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

We may consider likewise, that though it be a misfortune

tune to be evil spoken of, it is their fault that do it, and not ours; and therefore should not put us into passion; because another man's being injurious to me, is no good reason why I should be uneasy to myself. We should not revenge the injuries done to us, no not upon them that do them, much less upon ourselves. Let no man's provocation make thee to lose thy patience. Be not such a fool, as to part with any one virtue, because some men are so malicious, as to endeavour to rob thee of the reputation of all the rest. When men speak ill of thee, do as Plato said he would do in that case, "live so, as no body may believe them."

All that now remains, is, to reflect upon what hath been said, and to urge you and myself to do accordingly: for all is nothing if we do not practise what we so plainly see to be our duty. Many are so taken with the deep points and mysteries of religion, that they never think of the common duties and offices of human life. But faith and a good life are so far from clashing with one another, that the Christian religion hath made them inseparable. True faith is necessary in order to a good life, and a good life is the genuine product of a right belief; and therefore the one never ought to be pressed to the prejudice of the other.

I foresee what will be said, because I have heard it so often said in the like case, that there is not one word of Jesus Christ in all this. No more is there in the text. And yet I hope that Jesus Christ is truly preached, whenever his will and laws, and the duties enjoined by the Christian religion, are inculcated upon us.

But some men are pleased to say, that this is mere morality. I answer, That this is scripture morality and Christian morality; and who hath any thing to say against that? Nay, I will go yet farther, that no man ought to pretend to believe the Christian religion, who lives in the neglect of so plain a duty, and in the practice of a sin so clearly condemned by it, as this of evil-speaking is.

But because *the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, yea sharper than calumny itself, and pierceth the very hearts and consciences of men, laying us open to ourselves, and convincing us*

of our more secret, as well as our more visible faults; I shall therefore at one view represent to you what is dispersedly said concerning this sin in the holy word of God.

And I have purposely reserved this to the last, because it is more persuasive and penetrating than any human discourse. And to this end, be pleased to consider in what company the Holy Ghost doth usually mention this sin. There is scarce any black catalogue of sins in the Bible, but we find this among them; in the company of the very worst actions and most irregular passions of men. Math. xv. 19. *Out of the heart* (says our Saviour) *proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, false-witnesses, evil speakings.* And, Rom. i. 29, 30. the Apostle ranks *backbiters* with *fornicators*, and *murderers*, and *haters of God*; and with those of whom it is expressly said, 1 Cor. vi. 10. that *they shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

And when he commends the *servants of the last times*, Men (says he, 2 Tim. iii. 2, 3, 4, 5) *shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, without natural affection, despisers, and accusers, &c.* And, which is the strangest of all, they who are said to be guilty of these great vices and enormities, are noted by the Apostle to be great pretenders to religion: for so it follows in the next words; *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.* So that it is no new thing for men to make a more than ordinary profession of Christianity, and yet at the same time to live in a most palpable contradiction to the precepts of that holy religion; as if any pretence to mystery, and I know what extraordinary attainments in the knowledge of Christ, could exempt men from obedience to his laws, and set them above the virtues of a good life.

And now, after all this, do we hardly think that to be a sin, which is in scripture so frequently ranked with murder and adultery, and the blackest crimes; such as are inconsistent with the life and power of religion, and will certainly shut men out of the kingdom of God? Do we believe the Bible to be the word of God; and can we allow ourselves in the common practice of a sin, than which there is hardly any fault of mens lives more frequently

quently mentioned, more severely reprov'd, and more odiously branded in that holy book ?

Consider seriously these texts : Psal. xv. 1. *Who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill ? He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.* Have ye never heard what our Saviour says, that of every idle word we must give an account in the day of judgment ; that by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned ? What can be more severe than that of St. James : *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain ?*

To conclude : the sin which I have now warn'd men against, is plainly condemn'd by the word of God ; and the duty which I have now been persuading you to, is easy for every man to understand ; not hard for any man, that can but resolve to keep a good guard upon himself for some time, by the grace of God, to practise ; and most reasonable for all men, but especially for all Christians, to observe. It is as easy as a resolute silence upon just occasion ; as reasonable as prudence, and justice, and charity, and the preservation of peace and good will among men, can make it ; and of as necessary and indispensable an obligation as the authority of God can render any thing.

Upon all which considerations, let us every one of us be persuad'd to take up David's deliberate resolution, Psal. xxxix. 1. *I said I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue.* And I do verily believe, that, would we but heartily endeavour to amend this one fault, we should soon be better men in our whole lives ; I mean, that the correcting of this vice, together with those that are nearly allied to it, and may, at the same time, and almost with the same resolution and care, be corrected, would make us owners of a great many considerable virtues, and carry us on a good way towards perfection ; it being hardly to be imagin'd, that a man that makes conscience of his words should not take an equal or a greater care of his actions. And this I take to be both the true meaning, and the true reason, of that saying of St. James, and with which I shall conclude, *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.*

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, thro' the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good word and work to do his will, working in you always that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

## Concerning the divinity and incarnation of our blessed Saviour.

### AN ADVERTISEMENT to the Reader.

**T**HE following sermons were preached several years ago in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, in London; and, being now revised and enlarged by the author, are here made public. The true reason whereof was not that which is commonly alledged for printing books, the importunity of friends; but the importunate clamours and malicious calumnies of others, whom the author heartily prays God to forgive, and to give them better minds; and to grant that the ensuing discourses, the publication whereof was in so great a degree necessary, may by his blessing prove in some measure useful.

## S E R M O N XLIII.

### Concerning the divinity of our blessed Saviour.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, December 30. 1679.

JOHN i. 14.

*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.*

The first sermon on this text.

**T**Hese words contain in them three great points concerning our blessed Saviour, the author and founder of our faith and religion.

1. His incarnation : *The Word was made (or became) flesh.*

2. His life and conversation here among us ; *And dwelt among us, ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, he pitched his tabernacle amongst us : he lived here below in this world, and, for a time, made his residence and abode with us.*

3. That in this state of his humiliation he gave great and clear evidence of his divinity. Whilst he appeared as a man, and lived amongst us, there were great and glorious testimonies given of him, that he was the Son of God ; and that in so peculiar a manner as no creature can be said to be : *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, &c.*

I shall begin with the first of these, his incarnation, as most proper for this solemn time, which hath for many ages been set apart for the commemoration of the nativity and incarnation of our blessed Saviour. *The Word was made flesh* ; that is, he who is personally called *the Word*, and whom the Evangelist St. John had so fully described in the beginning of this gospel, he became flesh ; that is, assumed our nature, and became man. For so the word *flesh* is frequently used in scripture for man, or human nature : Psal. lxxv. 2. *O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come* ; that is, to thee shall all men address their supplications. Again, Is. xl. 5, 6. *The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together* ; that is, all men shall behold and acknowledge it ; and then it follows, *All flesh is grass*, speaking of the frailty and mortality of man. And so likewise, in the New Testament, our blessed Saviour, foretelling the misery that was coming upon the Jewish nation, says, Matth. xxiv. 22. *Except those days should be shortened, no flesh should be saved* ; that is, no man should escape and survive that great calamity and destruction which was coming upon them : Gal. ii. 16. *By the works of the law (says the Apostle) shall no flesh (that is, no man) be justified.*

So that, by *the Word's being made (or becoming) flesh*, the Evangelist did not intend that he assumed only a human body without a soul, and was united only to a human body, which was the heresy of Apollinaris and his followers ; but that he became man, that is, assumed the

whole human nature, body and soul. And it is likewise very probable, that the Evangelist did purposely chuse the word *flesh*, which signifies the frail and mortal part of man, to denote to us, that the Son of God did assume our nature, with all its infirmities, and became subject to the common frailty and mortality of human nature.

The words thus explained, contain that *great mystery of godliness*, as the Apostle calls it, or of the Christian religion, *viz.* the incarnation of the Son of God, which St. Paul expresseth by the appearance or manifestation of God in the flesh, 1 Tim. iii. 16. *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh*; that is, he appeared in human nature, he became man; or, as St. John expresseth it in the text, *The Word was made flesh*.

But, for the more clear and full explication of these words, we will consider these two things.

1. The person that is here spoken of, and who is said to be incarnate, or to be *made flesh*, namely, the Word.

2. The mystery itself, or the nature of this incarnation, so far as the scripture hath revealed and declared it to us.

*First*, We will consider the person that is here spoken of, and who is said to be incarnate, or to be *made flesh*, and who is so frequently in this chapter called by the name or title of *the Word*, namely, the eternal and only begotten Son of God; for so we find him described in the text. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, &c.*; that is, such as became so great and glorious a person as deserves the title of *the only begotten Son of God*.

For the explaining of this name or title of *the Word*, given by St. John to our blessed Saviour, we will consider these two things.

1. The reason of this name or title of *the Word*, and what probably might be the occasion why this Evangelist insists so much upon it, and makes so frequent mention of it.

2. The description itself, which is given of him under

der this name or title of *the Word*, by this Evangelist, in his entrance into his history of the gospel.

I. We will inquire into the reason of this name or title of *the Word*, which is here given to our blessed Saviour by this Evangelist; and what might probably be the occasion why he insists so much upon it, and makes so frequent mention of it. I shall consider these two things distinctly and severally.

1. The reason of this name or title of *the Word* here given by the Evangelist to our blessed Saviour. And he seems to have done it in compliance with the common way of speaking among the Jews, who frequently call the Messias by the name of *the Word of the Lord*. Of which I might give many instances; but there is one very remarkable, in the Targum of Jonathan, which renders those words of the Psalmist, which the Jews acknowledge to be spoken of the Messias, *viz. The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, &c.*; I say, it renders them thus: *The Lord said unto his Word, Sit thou on my right hand, &c.* And so likewise Philo the Jew calls him by whom God made the world, *the Word of God*, and *the Son of God*. And Plato probably had the same notion from the Jews; which made Amelius the Platonist, when he read the beginning of St. John's gospel, to say, "This barbarian agrees with Plato, ranking the Word in the order of principles;" meaning, that he made the Word the principle or efficient cause of the world, as Plato also hath done.

And this title of *the Word* was so famously known to be given to the Messias, that even the enemies of Christianity took notice of it. Julian the Apostate calls Christ by this name; and Mahomet, in his Alcoran, gives this name of *the Word* to Jesus the Son of Mary, But St. John had probably no reference to Plato, any otherwise than as the Gnosticks, against whom he wrote, made use of several of Plato's words and notions. So that, in all probability, St. John gives our blessed Saviour this title with regard to the Jews more especially, who anciently called the Messias by this name.

2. We will, in the next place, consider what might probably be the occasion why this Evangelist makes so frequent mention of this title of *the Word*, and insists

so much upon it. And it seems to be this; nay I think that hardly any doubt can be made of it, since the most ancient of the fathers, who lived nearest the time of St. John, do confirm it to us.

St. John, who survived all the Apostles, lived to see those heresies which sprung up in the beginnings of Christianity, during the lives of the Apostles, grown up to a great height, to the great prejudice and disturbance of the Christian religion; I mean the heresies of Ebion and Cerinthus, and the several sects of the Gnosticks, which began from Simon Magus, and were continued and carried on by Valentinus and Basilides, Carpocrates and Menander. Some of which expressly denied the divinity of our Saviour, asserting him to have been a mere man, and to have had no manner of existence before he was born of the blessed virgin; as Eusebius and Epiphanius tell us particularly concerning Ebion: which those who hold the same opinion now in our days may do well to consider from whence it had its original.

Others of them, I still mean the Gnosticks, had corrupted the simplicity of the Christian doctrine, by mingling with it the fancies and conceits of the Jewish Cabalists, and of the schools of Pythagoras and Plato, and of the Chaldean philosophy, more ancient than either; as may be seen in *Eusebius de præparat. evan.*; and, by jumbling all these together, they had framed a confused genealogy of deities, which they call by several glorious names, and all of them by the general name of *Æons* or *Agēs*, among which they reckoned Ζών, and Λόγος, and Μοιρογενής and Πλήρωμα, that is, *the Life*, and *the Word*, and *the Only Begotten*, and *the Fulness*, and many other divine powers and emanations which they fancied to be successively derived from one another.

And they also distinguished between the maker of the world, whom they called the God of the Old Testament, and the God of the New; and between Jesus and Christ; Jesus, according to the doctrine of Cerinthus, as Irenæus tells us, being the man that was born of the virgin; and Christ, or the Messias, being that divine power or spirit which afterwards descended into Jesus, and dwelt in him.

If it were possible, yet it would be to no purpose, to

go about to reconcile these wild conceits with one another, and to find out for what reason they were invented, unless it were to amuse the people with these *high swelling words of vanity*, and a pretence of *knowledge falsely so called*, as the Apostle speaks, in allusion to the name of Gnosticks, that is to say, *the men of knowledge*; which they proudly assumed to themselves, as if the knowledge of mysteries of a more sublime nature did peculiarly belong to them.

In opposition to all those vain and groundless conceits, St. John, in the beginning of his gospel, chuses to speak of our blessed Saviour, the history of whose life and death he was going to write, by the name or title of *the Word*, a term very famous among those sects; and shews, that this *Word of God*, which was also the title the Jews anciently gave to the Messias, did exist before he assumed a human nature, and even from all eternity; and that to this eternal Word did truly belong all those titles which they kept such a canting stir about, and which they did with so much senseless nicety and subtilty distinguish from one another, as if they had been so many several emanations from the Deity. And he shews, that this *Word of God* was really and truly *the Life*, and *the Light*, and *the Fulness*, and *the Only Begotten of the Father*: v. 4. *In him was life, and the life was the light of men*: and, v. 5. *And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not*; and, v. 6, 7, 8, 9. where the Evangelist, speaking of John the Baptist, says of him, that *he came for a witness, to bear witness of the light*: and that *he was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light*: and that *light was the true light which coming into the world enlightens every man*: and, v. 14. *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*; and, v. 16. *And of his fulness we all receive*, &c. You see here is a perpetual allusion to the glorious titles which they gave to their Æons, as if they had been so many several deities.

In short, the Evangelist shews, that all this fanciful genealogy of divine emanations, with which the Gnosticks made so great a noise, was mere conceit and imagination; and that all these glorious titles did really

meet in the Messias, who is the Word, and who before his incarnation was from all eternity with God, partaker of his divine and glory.

I have declared this the more fully and particularly, because the knowledge of it seems to me to be the only true key to the interpretation of this discourse of St. John concerning our Saviour, under the name and title of *the Word*. And surely it is a quite wrong way for any man to go about, by the mere strength and subtilty of his reason and wit, though never so great, to interpret an ancient book, without understanding and considering the historical occasion of it, which is the only thing that can give true light to it.

And this was the great and fatal mistake of Socinus, to go to interpret scripture merely by criticizing upon words, and searching into all the senses that they are possibly capable of, till he can find one, though never so forced and foreign, that will save harmless the opinion which he was beforehand resolved to maintain, even against the most natural and obvious sense of the text which he undertakes to interpret; just as if a man should interpret ancient statutes and records by mere critical skill in words, without regard to the true occasion upon which they were made, and without any manner of knowledge and insight into the history of the age in which they were written.

I shall now proceed to the second thing which I proposed to consider, namely,

II. The description here given of the Word by this Evangelist, in his entrance into his history of the gospel: *In the beginning* (says he) *was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

In which passage of the Evangelist four things are said of the Word, which will require a more particular explication.

1. That *he was in the beginning.*
2. That *he was in the beginning with God.*
3. That *he was God.*
4. That *all were made by him.*
1. That *he was in the beginning; εν αρχη, which is the*

the same with ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, *from the beginning*, 1 John i. 1. where, speaking of Christ by the name of *eternal life*, and of *the word of life*, That (says he) *which was from the beginning*. Nonnus, the ancient paraphrast of St. John's gospel, by way of explication of what is meant by his being *in the beginning*, adds, that he was ἀχρονος, *without time*; that is, before all time: and if so, then he was from all eternity. *In the beginning was the Word*; that is, when things began to be made, he was; not then began to be, but then already was, and did exist before any thing was made; and consequently is without beginning, for that which was never made, could have no beginning of its being. And so the Jews used to describe eternity, *before the world was*, and *before the foundation of the world*; as also in several places of the New Testament. And so likewise Solomon describes the eternity of Wisdom, Prov. viii. 22. 23. &c. *The Lord* (says he) *possessed me 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 he prepared the heavens, I was there: then I was by him as one brought up with him, rejoicing always before him.* And so Justin Martyr explains this very expression of St. John, that he was, or had a being before all ages. So likewise Athenagoras, a most ancient Christian writer: "God, (says he) who is an invisible mind, had from the beginning the Word in himself."

2. That *in the beginning the Word was with God*. And so Solomon, when he would express the eternity of Wisdom, says, *it was with God*: and so likewise the son of Sirach speaking of Wisdom, says, it was μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, *with God*. And so the ancient Jews often called *the Word of God*, "the Word which is before the Lord;" that is, with him, or in his presence. In like manner the Evangelist says here, that *the Word was with God*; that is, it was always together with him, partaking of his happiness and glory. To which our Saviour refers in his prayer, John xvii. 5. *Glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.* And this being *with God* the Evangelist opposeth to his *appearing and being manifested to the world*, v. 10. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world*  
*knew.*

knew him not; that is, he who from all eternity was *with God*, appeared in the world; and when he did so, tho' he had made the world, yet the world would not own him. And this opposition between his *being with God*, and his *being manifested* in the world, the same St. John mentions elsewhere, 1 John i. 2. *We shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.*

3. That *he was God*. And so Justin Martyr says of him, That "he was God before the world;" that is, from all eternity. But then the Evangelist adds by way of explication, *The same was in the beginning with God*; that is, though the Word was truly and really God, yet he was not God the Father, who is the fountain of the Deity, but an emanation from him, the only begotten Son of God, from all eternity *with him*; to denote to us, that which is commonly called by divines, and, for any thing I could ever see, properly enough, the distinction of persons in the Deity; at least we know not a fitter word whereby to express that great mystery.

4. That *all things were made by him*. This seems to refer to the description which Moses makes of the creation, where God is represented creating things by his word, Gen. i. 3. *God said, let there be light, and there was light*: and so likewise the Psalmist, Psal. xxxiii. 6. *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth*. And so St. Peter also expresseth the creation of the world, 2 Pet. iii. 5. *By the word of the Lord the heavens were of old, and the earth made out of water*. And in the ancient books of the Chaldeans, and the verses ascribed to Orpheus, the maker of the world is called *the Word*, and *the divine Word*. And so Tertullian tells the Pagans, that by their philosophers the maker of the world was called *Λόγος*, *the Word*, or *Reason*. And Philo the Jew, following Plato, who himself most probably had it from the Jews, says, that the world was created by the *Word*, whom he calls *the name of God*, and *the image of God*, and *the Son of God*: two of which glorious titles are ascribed to him, together with that of *maker of the world*, by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews: *In these last days* (says he) *God hath spoken to us by his Son, by whom*  
also

also he made the worlds: who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. And to the same purpose St. Paul, speaking of Christ, Colof. i 15. 16. 17. calls him *the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature*; that is, born before any thing was created; as does evidently follow from the reason given in the next words why he called him *the first-born of every creature*: For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible: all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things subsist. From whence it is plain, that by his being *the first-born of every creature*, thus much at least is to be understood, that he was before all creatures, and therefore he himself cannot be a creature, unless he could be before himself. Nay, the Apostle says it expressly in this very text in which he is called *the first-born of every creature*, (or of the whole creation) that *he is before all things*; that is, he had a being before there was any created being, he was before all creatures both in duration and in dignity; for so must he of necessity be, if *all things were made by him*; for as the maker is always before the thing which is made, so is he also better, and of greater dignity.

And yet I must acknowledge, that there seems to be no small difficulty in the interpretation I have given of this expression in which Christ is said by the Apostle to be *the first-born of every creature*, or of the whole creation; because in strictness of speech the first-born is of the same nature with those in respect of whom he is said to be the first-born: and if so, then he must be a creature as well as those in respect of whom he is said to be the first-born. This is the objection in its full strength, and I do own it to have a very plausible appearance; and yet I hope, before I have done, to satisfy any one that will consider things impartially, and without prejudice, and will duly attend to the scope of the Apostle's reasoning in this text, and compare it with other parallel places of the New Testament, that it neither is, nor can be the Apostle's meaning, in affirming Christ to be *the first-born of every creature*, to insinuate that the Son of God is a creature.

For how can this possibly agree with that which follows,

lows, and is given as the reason why Christ is said to be *the first-born of every creature*, namely, because *all things were made by him*? The Apostle's words are these: *The first-born of every creature, (or of the whole creation;) for by him all things were created*: but now, according to the Socinian interpretation, this would be a reason just the contrary way: for if *all things were created by him*, then he himself is not a creature.

So that the Apostle's meaning in this expression must either be, that the Son of God, our blessed Saviour, was before all creatures, as it is said presently after, that *he is before all things*; and then the reason which is added will be very proper and pertinent, *He is before all things, because all things were created by him*. In which sense it is very probable, that the Son of God elsewhere calls himself *the beginning of the creation of God*, Rev. iii. 14. meaning by it, as the philosophers most frequently use the word ἀρχή, the *principle* or efficient cause of the creation: and so we find the same word which our translation renders *the beginning*, used together with the word *first-born*, as if they were of the same importance, Colos. i. 18. *the beginning and first-born from the dead*; that is, the principle and efficient cause of the resurrection of the dead.

Or else, which seems to me to be the most probable, and indeed the true meaning of the expression; by this title of *the first-born of every creature*, the Apostle means, that he was lord and heir of the creation: for the first-born is natural heir; and Justinian tells us, that *heir* did anciently signify *lord*: and therefore the scriptures use these terms promiscuously, and as if they were equivalent. For whereas St. Peter says of Jesus Christ, that *he is Lord of all*, Acts x. 36. St. Pauls calls him *heir of all things*, Rom. iv. 13. and then the reason given by the Apostle why he calls him *the first-born of every creature*, will be very fit and proper, *because all things were created by him*. For well may he be said to be lord and heir of the creation, who *made all things that were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made*.

And this will yet appear much more evident, if we consider, that the Apostle to the Hebrews (who, by several of the ancients, was thought to be St. Paul, where he gives

gives to Christ some of the very same titles which St. Paul in his epistle to the Colossians had done, calling him *the image of God, and the maker of the world*) does, instead of the title of *the first-born of every creature*, call him *the heir of all things*: and then adds, as the reason of this title, that *by him God made the worlds*, God (says he) *hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath constituted heir of all things: who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, &c.* Which is exactly parallel with that passage of St. Paul to the Colossians, where Christ is called *the image of the invisible God*; and where it is likewise said of him, that *he made all things*, and that *by him all things do subsist*. Which the Apostle to the Hebrews, in different words, but to the very same sense, expresseth by his *upholding all things by the word of his power*; that is, by the same powerful word by which all things at first were made: but then, instead of calling him *the first-born of every creature*, because *all things were made by him*, he calls him *the heir of all things, by whom God also made the worlds*.

And indeed that expression of *the first-born of every creature* cannot admit of any other sense which will agree so well with the reason that follows, as the sense which I have mentioned; namely, that he is therefore *heir and lord of the whole creation*, because *all creatures were made by him*; which exactly answers those words of the Apostle to the Hebrews, *whom he hath constituted heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds*.

And now I appeal to any sober and considerate man, whether the interpretation which I have given of that expression of *the first-born of every creature*, be not much more agreeable both to the tenor of the scripture, and to the plain scope and design of the Apostle's argument and reasoning in that text?

I have insisted the longer upon this, because it is the great text upon which the Arians lay the main strength and stress of their opinion, that the Son of God is a creature, because he is said by the Apostle to be *the first-born of every creature*; by which expression, if no more be meant than that he is heir and lord of the whole creation, which I have shewed to be very agreeable both to  
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the use of the word *first-born* among the Hebrews, and likewise to the description given of Christ in that parallel text which I cited out of the epistle to the Hebrews, then this expression of *the first-born of every creature* is nothing at all to the purpose either of the Arians or the Socinians, to prove the Son of God to be a creature: besides that the interpretation which I have given of it makes the Apostle's sense much more current and easy; for then the text will run thus, *who is the image of the invisible God, heir and lord of the whole creation; for by him all things were made.*

So that, in these four expressions of the evangelist, which I have explained, there are these four things distinctly affirmed of the Word.

1. That *he was in the beginning*; that is, that he already was, and did exist, when things began to be created. He was before any thing was made, and consequently is without any beginning of time; for that which was never made, could have no beginning of its being.

2. That in that state of his existence before the creation of the world, he was partaker of the divine glory and happiness. And this I have shewed to be the meaning of that expression, *And the Word was with God*: for thus our blessed Saviour does explain his *being with God* before the world was, *And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

3. That *he was God*: *And the Word was God*; not God the Father, who is the principle and fountain of the Deity. To prevent that mistake, after he had said that *the Word was God*, he immediately adds in the next verse, *The same was in the beginning with God.* He was God, by participation of the divine nature and happiness together with the Father, and by way of derivation from him, as the light is from the sun; which is the common illustration which the ancient fathers of the Christian church gives us of this mystery; and is perhaps the best and fittest that can be given of it. For among finite beings, it is not to be expected, because not possible, to find any exact resemblance of that which is infinite, and consequently incomprehensible; because  
whatever

whatever is infinite, is for that reason incomprehensible by a finite understanding, which is too short and shallow to measure that which is infinite; and whoever attempts it, will soon find himself out of his depth.

4. That *all things were made by him*: which could not have been more emphatically expressed, than it is here by the Evangelist, after the manner of the Hebrews; who, when they would say a thing with the greatest force and certainty, are wont to express it both affirmatively and negatively; as, *He shall live, and not die*; that is, he shall most assuredly live: So here, *All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made*; that is, he made all creatures without exception; and consequently he himself is not a creature, because it is evidently impossible that any thing should ever make itself; but then, if he be, and yet was never made, it is certainly true, that he always was, even from all eternity.

All these assertions are plainly and expressly contained in this description which the Evangelist St. John here makes of the Word: and this according to the interpretation of these expressions by the unanimous consent of the most ancient writers of the Christian church; who, some of them, had the advantage of receiving it from the immediate disciples of St. John: which surely is no small prejudice against any newly invented and contrary interpretation; as I shall hereafter more fully shew, when I come to consider the strange and extravagant interpretation which the Socinians make of this passage of St. John; which is plain enough of itself, if they, under a pretence of explaining and making it more clear, had not disturbed and darkened it.

Now, from this description which the Evangelist here gives of the Word, and which I have so largely explained in the foregoing discourse, these three corollaries or conclusions do necessarily follow.

1. That the Word here described by St. John is not a creature. This conclusion is directly against the Arians, who affirmed that the Son of God was a creature. They grant indeed that he is the first of all the creatures, both in dignity and duration; for so they understand that expression of the Apostle, wherein he is called *the first-born*

of every creature. But this I have endeavoured already to shew not to be the meaning of that expression.

They grant him indeed to have been God's agent or instrument in the creation of the world, and that all other creatures besides himself were made by him; but still they contend, that he is a creature, and was made. Now, this cannot possibly consist with what St. John says of him, that *he was in the beginning*, that is, as hath been already shewn, before any thing was made; and likewise, because he is said to have *made all things*, and that *without him was not any thing made that was made*: and therefore he himself, who made all things, is necessarily excepted out of the condition or rank of a creature; as the Apostle reasons in another case: *He hath put all things under his feet: but when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest, that he is excepted who did put all things under him.* In like manner, if by him all things were made, and without him was not any thing made that was made, then either he was not made, or he must make himself; which involves in it a plain contradiction.

2. That this Word was from all eternity: for if *he was in the beginning*, that is, before any thing was made, he must of necessity always have been; because whatever is, must either have been sometime made, or must always have been; for that which was not, and afterwards is, must be made. And this will likewise follow from his being said to be God, and that in the most strict and proper sense, which doth necessarily imply his eternity; because God cannot begin to be, but must of necessity always have been.

3. From both these, it will undeniably follow, that he had an existence before his incarnation, and his being born of the blessed virgin: for if *he was in the beginning*, that is, from all eternity, which I have shewn to be the meaning of that expression, then certainly he was before his being born of the blessed virgin. And this likewise is implied in the proposition in the text, *And the Word was made flesh*, viz. that Word which the Evangelist had before so gloriously described; that Word which *was in the beginning, and was with God, and was God, and by whom all things were made*: I say, that Word

was incarnate, and assumed a human nature; and therefore must necessarily exist and have a being before he could assume humanity into an union with his divinity.

And this proposition is directly levelled against the Socinians, who affirm our blessed Saviour to be a mere man, and that he had no existence before he was born of the virgin Mary his mother; which assertion of theirs doth perfectly contradict all the former conclusions which have been drawn from the description here given by St. John of the Word; and their interpretation of this passage of St. John, applying it to the beginning of the publication of the gospel, and to the new creation or reformation of the world by Jesus Christ, doth likewise contradict the interpretation of this passage constantly received, not only by the ancient fathers, but even by the general consent of all Christians for fifteen hundred years together; as I shall hereafter plainly shew; for, to establish this their opinion, that our blessed Saviour was a mere man, and had no existence before his birth, they are forced to interpret this whole passage in the beginning of St. John's gospel quite to another sense, never mentioned, nor, I believe, thought of by any Christian writer whatsoever before Socinus. And it is not easy to imagine how any opinion can be loaded with a greater and heavier prejudice than this is.

And this I should now take into consideration, and shew, besides the novelty of this interpretation, and the great violence and unreasonableness of it, the utter inconsistency of it with other plain texts of the New Testament.

But this is wholly matter of controversy, and will require a large discourse by itself: I shall therefore wave the further prosecution of it at present, and apply myself to that which is more practical, and proper for the occasion of this season. So that at present I have done with the first thing contained in the first part of the text, *viz.* the person here spoken of, who is said to be incarnate, namely, the Word; it was he that *was made flesh.*

I should then have proceeded to the second thing which I proposed to consider, *viz.* the mystery itself,

or the nature of this incarnation, so far as the scripture hath revealed and declared it to us, namely, by assuming our nature in such a manner as that the divinity became united to a human soul and body. But this I have already endeavoured in some measure to explain, and shall do it more fully in some of the following discourses upon this text. I shall now only make a short and useful reflexion upon it with relation to the solemnity of this time.

And it shall be to stir us up to a thankful acknowledgment of the great love of God to mankind, in the mystery of our redemption by the incarnation of the Word, the only begotten Son of God; that he should deign to have such a regard to us in our low condition, and to take our case so much to heart, as to think of redeeming and saving mankind from that depth of misery into which we had plunged ourselves, and to do this in so wonderful and astonishing a manner; that God should employ his eternal and only begotten Son, who had been with him from all eternity, partaker of his happiness and glory, and was God of God, to save the sons of men by so infinite and amazing a condescension; that God should vouchsafe to become man, to reconcile man to God; that he should come down from heaven to earth, to raise us from earth to heaven; that he should assume our vile, and frail, and mortal nature, that he might clothe us with glory, and honour, and immortality; that he should suffer death to save us from hell, and shed his blood to purchase eternal redemption for us.

For certainly the greater the person is that was employed in this merciful design, so much the greater is the condescension, and the love and goodness expressed in it so much the more admirable; that the Son of God should stoop from the height of glory and happiness, to the lowest degree of abasement, and to the very depth of misery, for our sakes, who were so mean and inconsiderable, so guilty and obnoxious to the severity of his justice, so altogether unworthy of his grace and favour, and so very unwilling to receive it when it was so freely offered to us: for, as the Evangelist here tells us, *He came to his own, but his own received him not*: to his own creatures, and they did not own and acknowledge their

their maker ; to his own nation and kindred, and they despised him, and esteemed him not. Lord ! what is man, that God should be so mindful of him ? or the son of man, that the Son of God should come down from heaven to visit him, in so much humility and condescension, and with so much kindness and compassion ?

Blessed God and Saviour of mankind, what shall we render to thee for such mighty love, for such inestimable benefits as thou hast purchased for us, and art ready to confer upon us ? What shall we say to thee, O thou preserver and lover of souls, so often as we approach thy holy table, there to commemorate this mighty love of thine to us, and to partake of those invaluable blessings which, by thy precious blood-shedding, thou hast obtained for us ? So often as we there remember, that thou wast pleased to assume our mortal nature, on purpose to live amongst us for our instruction, and for our example, and to lay down thy life for the redemption of our souls, and for the expiation of our sins ; and to *take part of flesh and blood*, that thou mightest shed it for our sakes ; what affections should these thoughts raise in us ? what vows and resolutions should they engage us in, of perpetual love, and gratitude, and obedience to thee the most gracious and most glorious Redeemer of mankind ?

And with what religious solemnity should we, more especially at this time, celebrate the incarnation and birth of the Son of God, by giving praise and *glory to God in the highest*, and by all possible demonstration of charity and *good-will to men* ? And as he was pleased to assume our nature, so should we, especially at this season, *put on the Lord Jesus Christ* ; that is, sincerely embrace and practise his religion, *making no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*. And now that the *sun of righteousness* is risen upon the world, we should *walk as children of the light*, and *demean ourselves decently as in the day*, *not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envy* ; and should be very careful not to abuse ourselves by sin and sensuality, upon this very consideration, that the Son hath put such an honour and dignity upon us. We should reverence that nature which God did not disdain to assume, and

to inhabit here on earth, and in which he now gloriously reigns in heaven, at the right hand of his Father. To him be glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## S E R M O N XLIV.

Concerning the divinity of our blessed Saviour.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, January  
6. 1679.

JOHN i. 14.

*The Word was made flesh.*

- The second sermon on this text.

**I** Proceed now to prosecute the third corollary or conclusion which does necessarily follow from the description which St. John in the beginning of his gospel gives of the Word, and which I have so largely explained in the foregoing discourse. And it was this:

That the Word here described by the Evangelist, had an existence before his incarnation, and his being born of the blessed virgin.

This assertion, I told you, is levelled directly against the Socinians, who affirm our blessed Saviour to be a mere man, and deny that he had any existence before he was born of the virgin Mary his mother. Which position of theirs does perfectly contradict all the former conclusions which have been so evidently drawn from the description here given of the Word: and not only so, but hath forced them to interpret this whole passage in the beginning of St. John's gospel in a very different sense from that which was constantly received, not only by the ancient fathers, but by the general consent of all Christians 1500 years together. For to establish this their opinion of our Saviour's being a mere man, and having no existence before his birth, they have found it  
necessary

necessary to expound this whole passage quite to another sense, and such as, by their own confession, was never mentioned, nor I believe thought of, by any Christian writer whatsoever before Socinus.

For this reason, I shall very particularly consider the interpretation which Socinus gives of this passage of St. John; and, besides the novelty of it, which they themselves acknowledge, I make no doubt very plainly to manifest the great violence and unreasonableness, and likewise the inconsistency of it with other plain texts of the New Testament.

It is very evident what it was that forced Socinus to so strained and violent an interpretation of this passage of the Evangelist; namely, that he plainly saw how much the obvious, and natural, and generally received interpretation of this passage, in all ages of the Christian church down to his time, stood in the way of his opinion, of Christ's being a mere man; which he was so fond of, and must of necessity have quitted, unless he would either have denied the divine authority of St. John's gospel, or else could supplant the common interpretation of this passage, by putting a quite different sense upon it. Which sense he could find no way to support; without such pitiful and wretched shifts, such precarious and arbitrary suppositions, as a man of so sharp a reason and judgment as Socinus, could not, I thought, have ever been driven to: But necessity hath no laws, either of reason or modesty; and he who is resolved to maintain an opinion which he hath once taken up, must stick at nothing, but must break through all difficulties that stand in his way. And so the Socinians have here done; as will, I hope, manifestly appear in the following discourse.

They grant, that by the *Word* is here meant Christ, by whom God spake and declared his mind and will to the world; which they make to be the whole reason of that name or title of *the Word* which is here given him, and not because by him God made the world: for the word by which God made the world, they tell us, was nothing but the powerful command of God, and not a person who was designed to be the Messias. And because, as I have shewed before, the ancient Jews do  
make

make frequent mention of this title of *the Word of God*, by whom, they say, God made the world, and do likewise apply this title to the Messias; therefore, to avoid this, Schlictingius says, that the Chaldee paraphrasts, Jonathan and Onkelos, do sometimes put *the Word of God* for *God*, by a metonymy of the effect for the cause; but then he confidently denies, that they do any where distinguish the *Word* of God from the *person* of God, as they acknowledge that St. John here does; nor do they, says he, understand, by *the Word of God*, the *Messias*, but, on the contrary, do oppose *the Word of God* to the *Messias*. All which is most evidently confuted by that passage which I cited before out of the Targum of Jonathan, who renders those words concerning the Messias, *The Lord said unto my Lord, &c.* thus, *The Lord said unto his Word, Sit thou on my right hand, &c.* where you see both that *the Word of God* is plainly distinguished from God, and that it is the title given to the Messias, which are the two things which Schlictingius doth so confidently deny.

This then being agreed on all hands, that by *the Word*, St. John means the *Messias*, I shall, in the next place, shew, by what strained and forced arts of interpretation the Socinians endeavour to avoid the plain and necessary consequence from this passage of St. John; namely, that the Word had an existence before he was *made flesh*, and born of the blessed virgin his mother.

This then, in short, is the interpretation which they give of this passage; than which, I think, nothing can be more unnatural and violent.

*In the beginning*: This they will by no means have to refer to the creation of the world, but to the beginning of the gospel; that is, when the gospel first began to be published, then was Christ, and not before. *And he was with God*; that is, says Socinus, Christ, as he was the word of God, that is, the gospel of Christ, which was afterwards by him revealed to the world, was first only known to God. But all this being somewhat hard, first to understand by *the beginning*, not the beginning of the world, but of the gospel; and then by *the Word which was with God*, to understand the gospel, which, before it was revealed, was only known to God; they have

have upon second thoughts found out another meaning of these words, *And the Word was with God*; that is, saith Schlietzingius, Christ was taken up by God into heaven, and there instructed in the mind and will of God, and from thence sent down into the world again, to declare it to mankind.

*And the Word was God*; that is, say they, Christ had the honour and title of *God* conferred upon him, as magistrates also have, who, in the scripture, are called *gods*: He *was God*, not by nature, but by office, and by divine constitution and appointment.

*All things were made by him*: This they will need<sup>3</sup> have to be meant of the renovation and reformation of the world by Jesus Christ, which is several times in scripture called a *new creation*.

This, in short, is the sum of their interpretation of this passage; which I shall now examine; and to which I shall oppose three things, as so many invincible prejudices against it.

1. That not only all the ancient fathers of the Christian church; but, so far as I can find, all interpreters whatsoever for fifteen hundred years together, did understand this passage of St. John in a quite different sense: namely, of the creation of the material, and not of the renovation of the moral world. And I add further, that the generality of Christians did so understand this passage, as to collect from it, as an undoubted point of Christianity, that the Word had a real existence before he was born of the blessed virgin:

And thus not only the orthodox Christians, but even the Arians, and Amelius the Platonist, who was a more indifferent judge than either of them, did understand this passage of St. John; without any thought of this invention, that he spake not of the old, but of the new creation of the world by Jesus Christ, and the reformation of mankind by the preaching of the gospel: which, I dare say, no indifferent reader of St. John, that had not been prepossessed and biased by some violent prejudice, would ever have thought of.

And surely it ought to be very considerable in this case, that the most ancient Christian writers, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenæus, Tertullian, and

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even Origen himself, who is called the father of interpreters, are most express and positive in this matter. For Ignatius was the scholar of Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John; and Justin Martyr lived in the next age to that of the Apostles; and Origen was a man of infinite learning and reading, and in his comments upon scripture seems to have considered all the interpretations of those that were before him; so that, if this, which Socinus is so confident is the true sense of St. John, had been any where extant, he would not probably have omitted it; nay, rather would certainly have mentioned it, if for no other reason, yet for the surprising novelty and strangeness of it, with which he was apt to be over-much delighted.

So that, if this interpretation of Socinus be true, here are two things very wonderful, and almost incredible: First, that those who lived so very near St. John's time, and were most likely to know his meaning, as Ignatius, Justin Martyr, &c. should so widely mistake it: And then, that the whole Christian world should for so many ages together be deceived in the ground and foundation of so important an article of faith, if it were true; or, if it were not, should be led into so gross and dangerous an error as this must needs be, if Christ had no real existence before he was born into the world: and which would be necessarily consequent upon this, that no man did understand this passage of St. John aright before Socinus. This very consideration alone, if there were no other, were sufficient to stagger any prudent man's belief of this interpretation.

And as to the novelty of it, Socinus himself makes no difficulty to own it; nay he seems rather to rejoice and to applaud himself in it. Unhappy man! that was so wedded to his own opinion, that no objection, no difficulty could divorce him from it.

And for this I refer myself to his preface to his explication of this first chapter of St. John's gospel; where you shall find these words concerning the passage now in controversy, *Quorum verus sensus omnes prorsus qui quidem extarent explanatores latuisse videtur*: "The true sense of which words (says he) seems to have been hid from all the expositors that ever were ex-

"tant."

“tant.” And upon these words, v. 10. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him*, he hath this expression, *Quid autem hoc loco sibi velit Johannes, à nemine quod sciam adhuc rectè expositum fuit*: “But what St. John means in this place, was never yet, that I know of, by any rightly explained.” And Schlichtingius after him, with more confidence, but much less decency, tells us, that concerning the meaning of those expressions, *in the beginning*, and of those which follow concerning the Word, the ancient interpreters did *ab Apostoli mente delirare*; went “so far from the Apostle’s meaning, as if they had raved and been out of their wits.” Which is so extravagantly said, and with so much contempt of those great and venerable names, who were the chief propagators of Christianity in the world, and to whom all ages do so justly pay a reverence, that nothing can be said in excuse of him, but only that it is not usual with him to fall into such rash and rude expressions. But the man was really pinched by so plain and pressing a text; and where reason is weak and blunt, passion must be whetted, the only weapon that is left when reason fails: and I always take it for granted, that no man is ever angry with his adversary, but for want of a better argument to support his cause.

And yet, to do right to the writers on that side, I must own, that generally they are a pattern of the fair way of disputing, and of debating matters of religion, without heat, and unseemly reflections upon their adversaries; in the number of whom I did not expect that the primitive fathers of the Christian church would have been reckoned by them. They generally argue matters with that temper and gravity, and with that freedom from passion and transport, which becomes a serious and weighty argument: and for the most part they reason closely and clearly, with extraordinary guard and caution; with great dexterity and decency, and yet with smartness and subtilty enough; with a very gentle heat, and few hard words: virtues to be praised where-ever they are found, yea even in an enemy, and very worthy our imitation. In a word, they are the strongest managers of a weak cause, and which is ill founded at the bot-

tom, that perhaps ever yet meddled with controversy; insomuch that some of the Protestants, and the generality of the Popish writers, and even of the Jesuits themselves, who pretend to all the reason and subtilty in the world, are in comparison of them but mere scolds and bunglers. Upon the whole matter, they have but this one great defect, that they want a good cause and truth on their side: which if they had, they have reason, and wit, and temper enough to defend it.

But to return to the business: That which I urge them withal, and that from their own confession, is this, That this interpretation of theirs is perfectly new, and unknown to the whole Christian world before Socinus; and for that reason, in my opinion, not to bragged of; because it is in effect to say, that the Christian religion, in a point pretended on both sides to be of the greatest moment, was never rightly understood by any since the Apostles days, for fifteen hundred years together; and, which makes the matter yet worse, that the religion which was particularly designed to overthrow Polytheism, and the belief of more gods, hath, according to them, been so ill taught and understood by Christians, for so many ages together, and almost from the very beginning of Christianity, as does necessarily infer a plurality of gods: an inconvenience so great, as no cause, how plausible soever it may otherwise appear, is able to stand under, and to sustain the weight of it.

For this the Socinians object to us at every turn, as the unavoidable consequence of our interpretation of this passage of St. John, and of all other texts of scripture produced by us to the same purpose, notwithstanding that this interpretation hath obtained in the Christian church for so many ages. Now, whosoever can believe, that the Christian religion hath done the work for which it was principally designed, so ineffectually, must have very little reverence for it; nay, it must be a marvellous civility in him if he believe it all. All that can be said in this case is, that it pleases God many times to permit men to hold very inconsistent things, and which do in truth, though they themselves discern it not, most effectually overthrow one another.

2. Another mighty prejudice against this interpretation

tion is this, that, according to this rate of liberty in interpreting scripture, it will signify very little or nothing when any person or party is concerned to oppose any doctrine contained in it; and the plainest texts for any article of faith, how fundamental and necessary soever, may, by the same arts and ways of interpretation, be eluded, and rendered utterly ineffectual for the establishing of it. For example; if any man had a mind to call in question that article of the creed concerning the creation of the world, why might he not, according to Socinus's way of interpreting St. John, understand the first chapter of Genesis, concerning the beginning of the Moisaical dispensation, and interpret the creation of the heaven and the earth, to be the institution of the Jewish polity and religion, as by the *new heavens* and the *new earth*, they pretend is to be understood the new state of things under the gospel: and why may not the chaos signify that state of darkness and ignorance in which the world was before the giving of the law by Moses? and so on; as a very learned divine of our own (Dr. Stillingfleet) hath ingeniously shewn more at large.

There is no end of wit and fancy, which can turn any thing any way; and can make whatever they please to be the meaning of any book, though never so contrary to the plain design of it, and to that sense which, at the first hearing and reading of it, is obvious to every man of common sense.

And this, in my opinion, Socinus hath done in the case now before us, by imposing a new, and odd, and violent sense upon this passage of St. John, directly contrary to what any man would imagine to be the plain and obvious meaning of it, and contrary likewise to the sense of the Christian church in all ages down to his time; who yet had as great or greater advantages of understanding St. John aright, and as much integrity, as any man can now modestly pretend to: and all this only to serve and support an opinion which he had entertained before, and therefore was resolved, one way or other, to bring the scripture to comply with it; and if he could not have done it, it is greatly to be feared that he would at last have called in question the divine authority of St. John's gospel, rather than have quitted his opinion.

And, to speak freely, I must needs say, that it seems to me a much fairer way, to reject the divine authority of a book, than to use it so disingenuously, and to wrest the plain expressions of it with so much straining and violence from their most natural and obvious sense; for no doctrine whatsoever can have any certain foundation in any book, if this liberty be once admitted, without regard to the plain scope and occasion of it, to play upon the words and phrases, with all the arts of criticism, and with all the variety of allegory, which a brisk and lively imagination can devise; which I am so far from admiring in the expounding of the Holy Scriptures, that I am always jealous of an over-laboured and far-fetched interpretation of any author whatsoever.

I do readily grant, that the Socinian writers have managed the cause of the reformation, against the innovations and corruptions of the church of Rome, both in doctrine and practice, with great acuteness and advantage in many respects. But I am sorry to have cause to say, that they have likewise put into their hands better and sharper weapons than ever they had before, for the weakening and undermining of the authority of the holy scriptures; which Socinus indeed hath in the general strongly asserted, had he not, by a dangerous liberty of imposing a foreign and forced sense upon particular texts, brought the whole into uncertainty.

3. Which is as considerable a prejudice against this new interpretation of this passage of St. John as either of the former, I shall endeavour to shew, that this point, of the existence of the Word before his incarnation, does not rely only upon this single passage of St. John, but is likewise confirmed by many other texts of the New Testament, conspiring in the same sense, and utterly incapable of the interpretation which Socinus gives of it.

I find he would be glad to have it taken for granted, that this is the only text in the New Testament to this purpose; and therefore he says very cunningly, that this doctrine of the existence of the Son of God, before his incarnation, is too great a doctrine to be established upon one single text. And this is something, if it were true, that there is no other text in the New Testament that does plainly deliver the same sense; and yet this were  
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not sufficient to bring in question the doctrine delivered in this passage of St. John.

That *God is a spirit*, will, I hope, be acknowledged to be a very weighty and fundamental point of religion; and yet I am very much mistaken if there be any more than one text in the whole bible that says so; and that text is only in St. John's gospel. I know it may be said, that, from the light of natural reason, it may be sufficiently proved that God is a spirit. But surely Socinus of all men cannot say this with a good grace; because he denies that the existence of God can be known by natural light, without divine revelation: and if it cannot be known by natural light that there is a God, much less can it be known by natural light what God is, whether a spirit or a body.

And yet, after all, it is very far from being true, that there is but one text to this purpose, which yet he thought fit to insinuate by way of excuse for the novelty and boldness of his interpretation; of which, any one that reads him may see that he was sufficiently conscious to himself; and therefore was so wise as to endeavour, by this sly insinuation, to provide and lay in against it. I have likeways another reason, which very much inclines me to believe that Socinus was the first author of this interpretation; because it seems to me next to impossible, that a man of so good an understanding as he was, could have ever been so fond of so ill-favoured a child, if it had not been his own. And yet I do not at all wonder that his followers came into it so readily, since they had him in so great a veneration; it being natural to all sects to admire their master; besides, that I doubt not but they were very glad to have so great an authority, as they thought him to be, to vouch for an interpretation, which was so seasonably devised for the relief of their cause, in so much danger to be overthrown by a text that was so plain and full against them.

And how little ground there is for this insinuation, that this is the only text in the New Testament to this purpose, I shall now show from a multitude of other texts to the same sense and purpose with this passage of St. John. And I shall rank them under two heads.

1. Those which expressly assert the Son of God to

have been, and to have been in heaven with God, and partaker with him in his glory, before his incarnation and appearance in the world.

2. Those which affirm that the world, and all creatures whatsoever were made by him.

1. Those texts which expressly assert the Son of God to have been, and to have been in heaven with God, and partaker with him in his glory, before his incarnation and appearance in the world.

*No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, the Son of man which is in heaven, John iii. 13.* where the son is said to have *come down from heaven*, in respect of the union of his divinity with human nature, and his special residence in it here below; and yet he is said so have *come down from heaven*, as still to be in heaven: *He that came down from heaven, the Son of man which is in heaven*; that is, in respect of his divinity, by which he is every way present. And *he that came down from heaven* is here called *the Son of man*, by the same figure that his blood is elsewhere called *the blood of God*, Acts xx. 28. the Apostle ascribing that to one nature which is proper to the other. This we take to be the most natural and easy sense of this text, and most agreeable to the tenor of the New Testament.

Again, *What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?* John vi. 62. So that, if he really ascended up to heaven after his resurrection, he was really there before his incarnation.

*Before Abraham was,* (says our blessed Saviour) *I am,* John viii. 58. the obvious sense of which words is, that he had a real existence before Abraham was actually in being.

Again, it is said, John xiii. 3. that *Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God, &c.*

And again, John xvi. 27, 28. *For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.* This was so very plain, that his disciples, who were slow enough of apprehension in other things, did understand this so well, that, upon this declaration

claration of his, they were convinced of his omniscience, which is an incommunicable property of the divinity: for so it immediately follows, v. 29, 30. *His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no parable. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou comest forth from God.* So that either this which I have all along declared must be the meaning of our Saviour's words, or else his disciples were grossly mistaken, and did not understand him at all; and if so, then surely our Saviour, before he had proceeded any further, would have corrected their mistake, and have set them right in this matter. But so far is he from doing that, that he allows them to have understood him aright: for thus it follows, v. 31. *Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?* as if he had said, I am glad that you are at last convinced, and do believe that *I came from God*, and must return to him; and that *I know all things*, which none but God can do. Is it now possible for any man to read this passage, and yet not to be convinced that the disciples understood our Saviour to speak literally? But if his meaning was, as the Socinians would make us believe, then the disciples did perfectly mistake his words; the contrary whereof is, I think, very plain and evident, beyond all contradiction.

Again, John xvii. 5. *And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.* This surely is not spoken of his being with God after his incarnation, and before his entrance upon his public ministry: they have not, I think, the face to understand this expression, *before the world was*, of the new creation; but do endeavour to avoid it another way, which I shall consider by and by.

And a little after, v. 8. *I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.*

Again, 1 John i. 1, 2. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that*

*eternal life* (for so he calls the Son of God) *which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.*

And that he was not only with God before he assumed human nature, but also was really God, St. Paul tells us, Phil. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, οὐχ' ἀρπαγμὴν ἡγήσατο, did not arrogate to himself to be equal with God; that is, he made no ostentation of his divinity; for this I take to be the true meaning of that phrase, both because it is so used by Plutarch, and because it makes the sense much more easy and current, thus: Who being in the form of God, did not assume an equality with God; that is, he did not appear in the glory of his divinity, which was hid under a veil of human flesh and infirmity: but emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, (or in the habit of a man) he became obedient unto death, &c.* So that if his being made in the likeness and fashion of a man does signify, that he was really man by his incarnation; then surely his being in the form of God, when he took upon him the fashion and likeness of man, and the form of a servant or slave, must, in all reason, signify, that he was really God before he became man. For which reason the same Apostle did not doubt to say, that *God was manifested in the flesh*, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

And now I hope I have made it fully appear, that the beginning of St. John's gospel is not the single and only text upon which we ground this great doctrine, as Socinus calls it, and as we really esteem it to be; for you see that I have produced a great many more: to avoid the dint and force whereof, the Socinians do chiefly make use of these two answers.

1<sup>st</sup>, To those texts which say, that *he was in heaven, and came down from heaven*, they give this answer, That our Saviour, some time before his entrance upon his public ministry, they cannot agree precisely when, was taken up into heaven, and then and there had the will of God revealed to him, and was sent down from heaven again to make it known to the world.

This is so very arbitrary and precarious a supposition, that I must confess myself not a little out of countenance  
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for them, that men of so much wit and reason should ever be put to so sorry and pitiful a shift. For can any man imagine, that in so exact a history of our Saviour's life, written by several persons, the relation of so important a matter as this, and of the circumstances of it, should be wholly omitted? That we should have a particular account of his being carried into Egypt in his infancy, and of the time when he was brought back from thence; of his disputing in the temple with the Jewish doctors, and putting them to silence, when he was but twelve years of age; a punctual relation of his being baptised by John; and how after that *he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil*, and was carried by that evil spirit from one place to another: but not one word of his being taken up by God into heaven, and of his coming down again from thence; not the least intimation given either of time, or any other circumstance of so memorable a thing, upon which, according to the Socinians, the authority of his mission, and the divinity of his doctrine, did so much depend: when so many things, of so much less moment, are so minutely and exactly reported; what can be the reason of this deep silence in all the Evangelists concerning this matter? But above all, it is to be wondered, that St. John, who wrote his gospel last, and, as Eusebius tells us, on purpose to supply the omissions of the other Evangelists, should give no account of this thing; and yet, as the Socinians suppose, should so often take it for granted, and refer to it; as when it is said, that *he came forth from God*, and *was sent from God*, and *came down from heaven*, besides several other expressions to this purpose.

Who can believe this? And can it then be reasonable to suppose such a thing, and this without any ground from the history of the gospel, only to serve an hypothesis which they had taken up, and which they cannot maintain, unless they may have leave to make a supposition, for which they have nothing in truth to say, but only that it is necessary to defend an opinion which they are resolved not to part with upon any terms?

This is so inartificial, not to say absurd, a way of avoiding a difficulty, to take for granted whatever is necessary to that purpose, that no man of common ingenuity

nunity would make use of it; and there is no surer sign that a cause is greatly distressed, than to be driven to such a shift. For do but give a man leave to suppose what he pleases, and he may prove what he will, and avoid any difficulty whatever that can be objected to him.

Besides, that according to this device, the Son of God did not first come from heaven into the world, as the scripture seem every where to say, but first was in the world, and then went to heaven, and from thence came back into the world again; and he was not *in the beginning with God*, but was first in the world, and afterwards with God; whereas St. John says, that the *Word was in the beginning*, and then *was made flesh, and dwelt among us*: but they say, that he first *was made flesh*, and then a great while after was *in the beginning with God*. A supposition which is quite contrary to all the texts which I have mentioned.

Nor do the several parts of this interpretation of theirs agree very well together. *In the beginning*, that is, say they, when the gospel began to be published, *was the Word*; and then, that is, *in the beginning, he was with God*; that is, in heaven to receive from God that doctrine which he was to deliver to the world. But if by *the beginning* he meant the first publication of the gospel, he was not then with God, but had been with him, and was come back from him, before he entered upon his public ministry; which they make to be the meaning of *the beginning*. And *in the beginning he was God*: that is, say they, not God by nature, but by office and divine constitution: and yet in this again they fall foul upon themselves; for they say he was not declared to be God till after his resurrection, and his being advanced to the right hand of God: so that he was not God in their sense of *the beginning*; that is, when he entered upon his public ministry, and began to preach the gospel.

2dly, As to some other texts, which speak of his existence before his incarnation, as that he was *glorified with his Father before the world was*; and *before Abraham was, I am*; these they interpret thus, that *he was glorified with his Father before the world was*, and that he was *before Abraham was*, viz. in the divine foreknowledge and decree. But then surely they do not consider, that

that this is nothing but what might have been said of any other man, and even of Abraham himself, that *before he was*, that is, before he had a real and actual existence, he was in the purpose and decree of God ; that is, before he was, God did intend he should be ; which is a sense so very flat, that I can hardly abstain from saying it is ridiculous. For certainly our Saviour did intend, by saying this of himself, to give himself some preference and advantage before Abraham : which this sense and interpretation does not in the least do ; because of any other man, as well as of our blessed Saviour, it may as truly be said, that he was in the foreknowledge and decree of God before Abraham was born.

And I cannot but observe further, that our Saviour does not say, *before Abraham was, I was* ; but *before Abraham was, I AM*. Which is the proper name of God, whereby is signified the eternal duration and permanency of his being. In which sense he is said by the Apostle to the Hebrews to be *the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*, Heb. xiii. 8. And so likewise he describes himself in St. John's vision, Rev. i. 8. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*. And that this is spoken of the Son, you may see in the same chapter, where he says of himself, v. 17. *I am the first and the last*. And so likewise he describes himself again, Rev. xxii. 13. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last*. And that we may not doubt who it is that thus describes his own eternity, he, continuing still to speak in the same person, says, v. 16. *I Jesus have sent mine angel, &c.* After this I shall only observe, that all these expressions are the common description which the scripture gives of the eternity of God, whose being is commensurate to all the several respects of duration, past, present, and to come ; besides, that the attribute of *almighty* is also a part of this description, which is so peculiar a property of God, I mean of him who is God by nature, that the scripture never gives it to any other.

2. I shall, in the next place, produce those texts which do expressly affirm that the world, and all creatures whatsoever were made by him : and this will not only infer  
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his existence before his incarnation, but from all eternity.

And for this, besides this passage of St. John, we have the Apostle to the Hebrews most express, who says, that *by him God made the worlds*, Heb. i. 2. And St. Paul likewise says the same more fully and particularly, Colof. i. 15. 16. calling Jesus Christ, who was the Son of God, *the first-born of every creature*; that is, as I have shewn in my former discourse, the heir and lord of the whole creation: *For by him (says he) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers*; for so he calls the several orders of angels: *all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things*: or, as he is described in St. John's vision, *he is the beginning of the creation of God*; that is, the principle and efficient cause of the creation; or else, he was when all things began to be made; and therefore must be before any thing was created; and for that reason could not be a creature himself; and, consequently, must of necessity have been from all eternity.

Now, these texts must necessarily be understood of the old creation, and of the natural world; and not of the moral-world, and the renovation and reformation of the minds and manners of men by the gospel: for that was only the world here below which was reformed by him, and not things in heaven; not the invisible world, not the several orders of good angels, *which kept their first station*, and have no need to be reformed and made anew; nor the devil and his evil angels; for though, since the preaching of the gospel, they have been under greater restraint, and kept more within bounds, yet we have no reason to think that they are at all reformed, but are devils still, and have the same malice and mind to do all the mischief to mankind that God will suffer them to do.

So that these texts seem, at first view, to be very plain and pressing of themselves; but they appear to be much more convincing, when we consider the groundless interpretations whereby they endeavour to evade the dint and force of them. For can any man that seriously attends to the perpetual style and phrase of the New Testament,

ment, and to the plain scope and drift of the Apostle's reasoning in these texts, be induced to believe, that when St. Paul tells us, that *all things were created by him, that are in heaven, and that are in earth; visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers*: I say, can any man of good sense persuade himself, that by all this the Apostle means no more, than the moral renovation of the world here below, and the reformation of mankind by Jesus Christ, and his gospel which was preached unto them?

But there is yet one text more to this purpose, which I have reserved to the last place, because I find Schlictingius and Crellius, in their joint comment upon it, to be put to their last shifts to avoid the force of it. It is in the epistle to the Hebrews, at the beginning of it; where the Apostle thus describes the Son of God. *God* (says he) *hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath constituted heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds*, Heb. i. 2. From whence he argues the excellency of the gospel above the law; for the law was given by angels, but the gospel by the Son of God; whose pre-eminence above the angels he shews at large in the two first chapters of this epistle.

And to this end he proves the two parts of the description which had been given of him, namely, that God had *constituted him heir of all things*, v. 2. and that *by him he made the worlds*.

1<sup>st</sup>, That God had *constituted him heir over all things*; which is no where said of the angels; but of him it is said, that he was *made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they*, v. 7. The angels are only called God's ministers, for which the apostle cites the words of the Psalmist, Psal. civ. 4. but to Christ he gives the title of *his Son*, and *his first-begotten*, by virtue whereof he is *heir of all things*: for to which of the angels said he at any time, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?* v. 6. And this I will agree with them to be spoken of Christ with respect to his resurrection; by which, as St. Paul tells us, he was *powerfully declared to be the Son of God*, Rom. i. 4. This is the first prerogative of Christ above the angels.

angels. But there is a far greater yet behind; for he proves,

2dly, That he had not only the title of *God* given him, but that he was truly and really *God*, because *he made the world*, v. 8. That the title of *God* was given him, he proves by a citation out of the Psalmist, Psal. xlv. 6. 7. *But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, &c.* And that he was truly and really *God*, because *he made the world*, he proves by a citation out of another psalm, where it is said of him, v. 10, 11, 12. *Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They shall perish, &c.*

Let us now see how Schlictingius and Crellius interpret this text, cited out of the Psalmist by the Apostle, as spoken of Christ. They say \*, that the author of this epistle “ could not have referred to Christ the former  
“ words of this citation, which speak of the creation of  
“ heaven and earth, unless he had taken it for granted,  
“ that Christ is the most high God; especially if they  
“ be understood, as they must necessarily be *by those*  
“ *who take this for granted*, to be spoken in the first  
“ place, and directly, to or concerning Christ. For since  
“ all the words of the psalm are manifestly spoken of  
“ the most high God; but that Christ is that God, is  
“ not signified, no not so much as by one word in that  
“ psalm; it is necessary, that if you will have these  
“ words to be directed to Christ, you must take it for  
“ granted, that Christ is that most high God of whom  
“ the Psalmist there speaks.”

Now, we will join issue with these interpreters, upon this concession, *viz.* that the author of this epistle “ could  
“ not have referred these words, which speak of the  
“ creation of heaven and earth, to Christ, without ta-  
“ king

\* *Ne referre quidem hæc priora verba, de cæli terræque creatione loquentia, ad Christum potuisset autor, nisi pro concessio sumfisset Christum esse summum illum Deum, cæli et terræ creatorem; præsertim si ea, ut necesse foret, primò et directè ad Christum dicta esse censeas. Nam eùm cùm psalmi verba manifestè de Deo loquuntur, Christum autem Deum illum esse ne unico quidem verbo in toto hoc psalmo indicetur; necesse est, ut si verba illa ad Christum directà esse velis, pro concessio sumas, Christum esse Deum illum summum de quo in psalmo sermo est.*

“ king it for granted, that Christ is truly that God who “ made the world.” And if the author of this epistle does affirm these words of the Psalmist to be spoken of Christ, then they must acknowledge Christ to be the true God who made heaven and earth. But the author of this epistle does as evidently affirm these words to be spoken to or of Christ, as he does the words of any other text cited in this chapter: and for this I appeal to the common sense of every man that reads them.

These interpreters indeed are contented, that the latter part of this citation should be spoken of Christ, but not the former. But why not the former as well as the latter, when they have so expressly told us, that “ all “ the words of this psalm are manifestly spoken of God?” What is the mystery of this? Could they not as easily have interpreted the former part, which speaks of the creation of heaven and earth, concerning the moral world, and the new creation or reformation of mankind by Jesus Christ and his gospel, as well as so many other plain texts to the same purpose? No doubt they could as well have done it, and have set as good a face upon it when they had done it. But why then did they not do it? It was for a reason which they had no mind to tell, but yet it is not hard to be guessed at, namely, that, if they had admitted the former words to have been spoken of Christ, they knew not what to do with the latter part of this citation, v. 11. 12. *They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.* What shall perish, and wax old, and be changed? Why, the earth and the heavens, which the Son had made; that is, the moral world, the reformation of mankind, and the new creation of things by the gospel. All these must have undergone the same fate with the natural world, and must not only have been defaced, but utterly destroyed, and brought to nothing. This they would not say; but they did see it, though they would not seem to see it. And we may plainly see by this, that they can interpret a text right when necessity forceth them to it, and they cannot without great inconvenience to their cause avoid it. But when men have once resolved to hold fast an opinion they have

taken up, it then becomes not only convenient, but necessary, to understand nothing that makes against it. And this is truly the present case. But, in the mean time, where is ingenuity, and love of truth?

And thus I have, with all the clearness and brevity I could, searched to the very foundations of this new interpretation of this passage of the Evangelist, upon which the divinity of the Son of God is so firmly established; and likewise of the gross misinterpretations of several other texts to the same purpose in this Evangelist, and in other books of the New Testament. All which interpretations I have endeavoured to shew to be not only contrary to the sense of all antiquity; of which as Socinus had but little knowledge, so he seems to have made but little account; but to be also evidently contrary to the perpetual tenor and style of the Holy Scripture.

Before I go off from this argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing wherein our adversaries in this cause do perpetually glory, as a mighty advantage which they think they have over us in this point of the divinity of the Son of God, and consequently in that other point of the blessed Trinity, namely, that they have reason clearly on their side in this controversy; and that the difficulties and absurdities are much greater and plainer on our part than on theirs.

Here they are pleased to triumph without modesty, and without measure: and yet, notwithstanding this, I am not afraid here likewise to join issue with them, and am contented to have this matter brought to a fair trial at the bar of reason, as well as of scripture, expounded by the general tradition of the christian church: I say by general tradition; which, next to scripture, is the best and surest confirmation of this great point now in question between us, and that which gives us the greatest and truest light for the right understanding of the true sense and meaning of scripture, not only in this, but in most other important doctrines of the christian religion.

I am not without some good hopes, I will not say confidence; (for I never thought that to be so great an advantage to any cause, as some men would be glad to make others believe it is; hoping to help and support a weak argument by a strong and mighty confidence:

But

But surely modesty never hurt any cause; and the confidence of man seems to me to be much like *the wrath of man*, which St. James tells us, chap. i. 20. *worketh not the righteousness of God*; that is, it never does any good, it never serves any wise and real purpose of religion:)

I say, I am not without some good hopes, that I have in the foregoing discourses clearly shewn, that the tenor of scripture and general tradition are on our side in this argument; and therefore I shall not need to give myself the trouble to examine this matter over again.

Now, as to the point of reason, the great difficulty and absurdity which they object to our doctrine concerning this mystery, amounts to thus much, that it is not only above reason, but plainly contrary to it.

As to its being above reason, which they are loth to admit any thing to be; this, I think, will bear no great dispute; because, if they would be pleased to speak out, they can mean no more by this, but that our reason is not able fully to comprehend it. But what then? Are there no mysteries in religion? That I am sure they will not say; because God, whose infinite nature and perfections are the very foundation of all religion, is certainly the greatest mystery of all other, and the most incomprehensible: but we must not, nay they will not for this reason deny, that there is such a being as God. And therefore, if there be mysteries in religion, it is no reasonable objection against them, that we cannot fully comprehend them; because all mysteries, in what kind soever, whether in religion or in nature, so long, and so far as they are mysteries, are for that very reason incomprehensible.

But they urge the matter much farther, that this particular mystery now under debate, is plainly contrary to reason. And if they can make this good, I will confess that they have gained a great point upon us. But then they are to be put in mind, that to make this good against us, they must clearly shew some plain contradiction in this doctrine; which I could never yet see done by any. Great difficulty, I acknowledge, there is in the explication of it; in which the further we go, beyond what God has thought fit to reveal to us in scripture

concerning it, the more we are intangled: and that which men are pleased to call an explaining of it, does in my apprehension often make it more obscure; that is, less plain than it was before; which does not so very well agree with a pretence of explication.

Here then I fix my foot, that there are three differences in the Deity, which the scripture speaks of by the names of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, and every where speaks of them, as we use to do of three distinct persons: and therefore I see no reason, why in this argument we should nicely abstain from using the word *person*, though I remember that St. Jerome does somewhere desire to be excused from it.

Now, concerning these three, I might, in the first place, urge that plain and express text, 1 John v. 7. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.* But upon this I will not now insist, because it is pretended, that in some copies of greatest antiquity this verse is omitted; the contrary whereof is, I think, capable of being made out very clearly. But this matter would be too long to be debated at present.

However that be, thus much is certain, and cannot be denied, that our Saviour commanded his Apostles to *baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*; and that the Apostles, in their epistles, do, in their most usual form of benediction join these three together. And it is yet further certain, that not only the name and title of *God*, but the most incommunicable properties and perfections of the Deity, are in scripture frequently ascribed to the Son and the Holy Ghost; one property only excepted, which is peculiar to the Father, as he is the principle and fountain of the Deity, That he is of himself, and of no other; which is not, nor can be said of the Son and Holy Ghost.

Now, let any man shew any plain and downright contradiction in all this; or any other difficulty besides this, that the particular manner of the existence of these three differences or persons in the divine nature, expressed in scripture by the names of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, is incomprehensible by our finite understandings, and inexplicable by us. In which, I do not see

see what absurdity there is, since our adversaries cannot deny that many things certainly are, the particular manner of whose existence we can neither comprehend nor explain.

Let us now see, whether the opinion of our adversaries hath not greater difficulties in it, and more palpable absurdities following from it. They say, that the Son of God is a mere creature; not God by nature, and yet truly and really God by office, and by divine appointment and constitution; to whom the very same honour and worship is to be given, which we give to him who is God by nature.

And can they discern no difficulty, no absurdity in this? What! no absurdity in bringing idolatry by a back-door into the christian religion, one main design whereof was, to banish idolatry out of the world? And will they in good earnest contest this matter with us, that the giving divine worship to a mere creature is not idolatry? And can they vindicate themselves in this point any other way, than what will in a great measure acquit both the Pagans and the Papists from the charge of idolatry?

What! no absurdity in a God as it were but of yesterday; in a creature-god; in a God merely by positive institution: and this in opposition to a plain moral precept of eternal obligation, and to the fixed and immutable nature and reason of things?

So that, to avoid the shadow and appearance of a plurality of deities, they run really into it, and for any thing I can see, into downright idolatry, by *worshipping a creature besides the Creator, who is blessed for ever*, Rom. i. 25.

They can by no means allow two Gods by nature: no more can we. But they can willingly admit of two Gods; the one by nature, and the other by office; to whom they are content to pay the same honour, which is due to him who is God by nature. Provided Christ will be contented to be but a creature, they will deal more liberally with him in another way than in reason is fit.

And do they see no absurdity in all this: nothing that is contrary to reason and good sense; nothing that

feels like inconsistency and contradiction? Do they consider how often God hath declared, that *he will not give his glory to another?* and that the apostle describes idolatry to be the giving service, or worship, to things *which by nature are no gods?* Gal. iv. 8.

Surely, if reason, guided by divine revelation, were to chuse a god, it would make choice of one who is declared in scripture to be *the only begotten of the Father, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,* much rather than a mere creature, who did not begin to be till about seventeen hundred years ago.

I only propose these things, without any artificial aggravation, to their most serious and impartial consideration; after which I cannot think that these great masters of reason can think it so easy a matter to extricate themselves out of these difficulties. The God of truth lead us into all truth, and enlighten the minds of those who are in error, and *give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth,* for his sake who is *the way, the truth, and the life.*

And thus much may suffice to have said upon this argument, which I am sensible is mere controversy: a thing which I seldom meddle with, and do not delight to dwell upon. But my text, which is so very proper for this season, hath almost necessarily engaged me in it; besides, that I think it a point of that concernment, that all Christians ought to be well instructed in it. And I have chosen rather once for all to handle it fully, and to go to the bottom of it, than in every sermon to be flirting at it, without saying any thing to the purpose against it: a way which, in my opinion, is neither proper to establish men in the truth, nor to convince them of their error.

I shall only at present make this short reflection upon the whole: That we ought to treat the Holy Scriptures as the oracles of God, with all reverence and submission of mind to the doctrine therein revealed; and to interpret them with that candour and simplicity which is due to the sincere declarations of God, intended for the instruction, and not for the deception and delusion of men: I say, we should treat them as the oracles of God, and not like

like the doubtful oracles of the Heathen deities, that is in truth of the devil ; which were contrived and calculated on purpose to deceive, containing, and for the most part intending a sense directly contrary to the appearing and most obvious meaning of the words : for the devil was the first author of equivocation ; though the Jesuits have since made it a lawful way of lying, which their father, of whom they learned it, had not credit and authority enough to do.

And it deserves likewise to be very well considered by us, that nothing hath given a greater force to the exceptions of the church of Rome against the Holy Scriptures being a sufficient and certain rule of faith, than the uncertainty into which they have brought the plainest texts imaginable, for the establishing of doctrines of greatest moment in the Christian religion, by their remote and wrested interpretation of them ; which way of dealing with them, seems to be really more contumelious to those Holy Oracles, than the downright rejecting of their authority ; because this is a fair and open way of attacking them ; whereas the other is an insidious, and therefore more dangerous way of undermining them.

But as for us who do in good earnest believe the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, let us take all our doctrines and opinions from those clear fountains of truth, not disturbed and darkened by searching anxiously into all the possible senses that the several words and expressions of scripture can bear, and by forcing that sense upon them which is most remote and unnatural, and in the mean time wilfully overlooking and passing by that sense which is most obvious and easy to the common apprehension of any unbiassed and impartial reader : This is to use the Holy Scriptures as the church of Rome hath done many holy and good men whom they are pleased to brand with the odious name of heretics, to torture them till they speak the mind of their tormentors, though never so contrary to their own.

I will now conclude this whole discourse with a saying which I heard from a great and judicious man, *Non amo nimis argutam theologiam* : “ I love no doctrines in divinity which stand so very much upon quirk and subtilty.”

And I cannot, upon this occasion, forbear to say, that those doctrines of religion, and those interpretations of scripture have ever been to me the most suspected, which need abundance of wit, and a great many criticisms, to make them out. And, considering the wisdom and goodness of almighty God, I cannot possibly believe, but that all things necessary to be believed and practised by Christians, in order to their eternal salvation, are plainly contained in the Holy Scriptures. God surely hath not dealt so hardly with mankind, as to make any thing necessary to be believed or practised by us, which he hath not made sufficiently plain to the capacity of the unlearned as well as of the learned. God forbid that it should be impossible for any man to be saved, and to get to heaven, without a great deal of learning to direct and carry him thither, when the far greatest part of mankind have no learning at all. It was well said by Erasmus, "That it was never well with the Christian world since it began to be a matter of so much subtilty and wit for a man to be a true Christian."

## S E R M O N XLV.

### Concerning the incarnation of Christ.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, December 21. 1680.

J O H N . i . 14.

*The Word was made flesh.*

The third sermon on this text.

**T**HE last year, about this time, and upon the same occasion of the annual commemoration of the incarnation and nativity of our blessed Lord and Saviour, I began to discourse to you upon these words; in which I told you were contained three great points con-

concerning our Saviour, the author and founder of our religion.

1. His incarnation: *The Word was made (or became) flesh.*

2. His life and conversation here among us: *And dwelt among us; ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, he pitched his tabernacle among us; he lived here below in this world, and for some time made his residence and abode with us.*

3. That in this state of his humiliation, he gave great and clear evidence of his divinity. Whilst he appeared as a man, and lived amongst us, there were great and glorious testimonies given of him, that he was the Son of God; and that in so peculiar a manner, as no creature can be said to be: *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

I began with the first of these, namely, his incarnation: *The Word was made flesh.* For the full and clear explication of which words, I proposed to consider these two things.

*First,* The person here spoken of, and who it is that is here said to be incarnate, or *made flesh*, namely, *the Word.* And this I have handled at large in my two former discourses upon this text. I shall now proceed, in the

*Second* place, to give some account of the nature and manner of this incarnation, so far as the scripture hath thought fit to reveal and declare this mystery to us. *The Word was made flesh*, that is, he who is personally called *the Word*, and whom the Evangelist hath so fully and clearly described in the beginning of his gospel, he became flesh; that is, assumed our nature, and became man; for so the word *flesh* is frequently used in scripture for man, or human nature.

So that, by *the Word's becoming flesh*, that is, man, the Evangelist did not only intend to express to us, that he assumed a human body, without a soul, but that he became a perfect man, consisting of soul and body united. It is very probable indeed, that the Evangelist did purposely chuse the word *flesh*, which signifies the frail and mortal part of humanity, to denote to us the great condescension of the Son of God, in assuming our nature,

ture, with all its infirmities, and becoming subject to frailty and mortality for our sake.

Having thus explained the meaning of this proposition, *The Word was made flesh*, I shall, in a further prosecution of this argument, take into consideration these three things.

1. I shall consider more distinctly what may reasonably be supposed to be implied in this expression of *the Word's being made flesh*.

2. I shall consider the objections which are commonly brought against this incarnation of the Son of God, from the seeming impossibility or incongruity of the thing.

3. And because, after all that can be said in answer to those objections, it may still appear to us very strange; that God, who could, without all this circumstance and condescension, even almost beneath the majesty of the great God, at least, as we are apt to think, have given laws to mankind, and have offered forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, upon their repentance for sins past, and sincere though imperfect obedience for the future: I say, it may seem strange, that, notwithstanding this, God should yet make choice of this way and method of our salvation: I shall therefore, in the last place, endeavour to give some probable account of this strange and wonderful dispensation; and shew, that it was done in great condescension to the weakness and common prejudices of mankind; and that, when it is thoroughly considered, it will appear to be much more for our comfort and advantage, than any other way which the wisdom of this world would have been apt to devise and pitch upon. And in all this I shall all along take either the plain declarations of scripture, or the pregnant intimations of it, for my ground and guide.

I. I shall consider more distinctly what may reasonably be supposed to be implied in this expression of *the Word's being made flesh*; namely, these five things.

1. The truth and reality of the thing; that the Son of God did not only appear in the form of human flesh, but did really assume it. *The Word was made flesh*, as the Evangelist expressly declares. For if this had been only a phantasm and apparition, as some heretics of old did fancy,

fancy, it would in all probability have been like the appearance of angels mentioned in the Old Testament, sudden, and of short continuance; and would, after a little while, have vanished and disappeared. But *he dwelt among us*, and conversed familiarly with us a long time, and for many years together. And the scripture useth all the expressions which are proper to signify a real man, and a real human body; and there were all the signs and evidences of reality that could be: for *the Word* is said to be *made flesh*; and Christ is said to be *of the seed of David according to the flesh*, and to be *made of a woman*; and all this to shew, that he was a real man, and had a real and substantial body; for he was born, and, by degrees, grew up to be a man, and did perform all such actions as are natural and proper to men. He continued a great while in the world, and at last suffered and died, and was laid in the grave. He did not vanish and disappear like a phantasm or spirit, but he died like other men; and his body was raised again out of the grave; and, after he was risen, he conversed forty days upon earth, and permitted his body to be handled; and, last of all, was visibly taken up into heaven.

So that either we must grant him to have had a real body, or we have cause to doubt whether all mankind be not mere phantasms and apparitions: for greater evidence no man can give, that he is really clothed with and carries about him a true and substantial body, than the Son of God did *in the days of his flesh*. It is to me very wonderful, upon what ground, or indeed to what end the heretics of old, Marcion and others, did deny the reality of Christ's flesh. Surely they had a great mind to be heretics, who took up so senseless an opinion, for no reason, and to no purpose.

2. Another thing implied in *the Word's being made flesh*, is, that this was done peculiarly for the benefit and advantage of men: *The Word was made flesh*; that is, became man; for so I have shewn the word *flesh* to be often used in scripture. And this the author of the epistle to the Hebrews takes very special notice of as a great grace and favour of God to mankind, that his Son appeared in our nature, and consequently for our salvation; as it is said in the Nicene creed, "who for us  
" men,

“men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, “and was incarnate, &c.” For verily (says the Apostle, Heb. ii. 16.) *he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*; *ὅτι γὰρ δὴ πρὸς ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται*, *he did not assume the angelical nature*; so our translators understood the phrase; but the word also signifies *to take hold* of a thing which is falling, as well as to *assume* or *take on him*. *He did not take hold of the angels* when they were falling, but suffered them to lapse irrecoverably into misery and ruin; but *he took hold of human nature* when it was falling, and particularly *of the seed of Abraham*; and by *the seed of Abraham*, that is, by himself, in *whom all the nations of the earth were blessed*, he brought salvation, first to the Jews, and then to the rest of mankind. The Apostle chuses to derive this blessing from Abraham, that so he might bring it nearer to the Jews, to whom he wrote this epistle; and might thereby more effectually recommend the gospel to them, and the glad tidings of that great salvation in which they had so peculiar an interest.

And it is some confirmation of the interpretation I have given of that expression, *He took not on him, &c.* that the Evangelist uses the very same word for *taking hold* of one that was ready to sink; for so it is said of St. Peter when he was *ready to sink*, that, Matth. xiv. 31. *Christ put forth his hand, καὶ ἐπιείλητο, and caught hold of him*, and saved him from drowning. And thus the Son of God caught hold of mankind, which was ready to sink into eternal perdition. *He laid hold of our nature*, or, as it is expressed in the same chapter, *he took part of flesh and blood*, that in our nature he might be capable of effecting our redemption and deliverance:

But it is no where said in scripture, not the least intimation given there, that the Son of God ever shewed such grace and favour to the angels; but *the Word became flesh*, that is, became man. He did not assume the angelical nature, but was contented to be clothed with the rags of humanity, and to be *made in the likeness of sinful flesh*, that is, of sinful man.

3. This expression, of *the Word's being made flesh*, may further imply his assuming the infirmities and submitting to the miseries of human nature. This I collect from

from the word *flesh*, by which the scripture often uses to express our frail and mortal nature. The Son of God did not only condescend to be made man, but also to become mortal and miserable for our sakes. He submitted to all those things which are accounted most grievous and calamitous to human nature; to hunger and want, to shame and contempt, to bitter pains and agonies, and to a most cruel and disgraceful death: so that in this sense also he became flesh, not only by being clothed with human nature, but by becoming liable to all the frailties and sufferings of it; of which he had a greater share than any of the sons of men ever had; for never was sorrow like to his sorrow, nor sufferings like to his sufferings; the weight and bitterness whereof was such, as to wring from him, the meekest and most patient endurer of sufferings that ever was, that doleful complaint, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

4. In this expression, *The word was made flesh*, is likewise implied the union of the divinity with human nature in one person. And this the text expresseth in such words, as seem to signify a most perfect, and intimate, and vital union of the divine and human natures of Christ in one person. *The word was made* (or became) *flesh*: which what else can it signify, but one of these two things; either that the eternal Word, and only begotten Son of God, was changed into a man, which is not only impossible to be, but impious to imagine; or else, that the Son of God did assume our nature, and became man, by his divinity being united to human nature, as the soul is vitally united to the body, without either being changed into it, or confounded with it, or swallowed up by it, as the Eutychian heretics fancied the human nature of Christ to be swallowed up of his divinity: which, had it been so, St. John had expressed himself very untowardly, when he says, *The Word became flesh*; for it had been quite contrary, and flesh had become the Word, being changed into it, and swallowed up by it, and lost in it.

The only thing then that we can reasonably imagine to be the meaning of this expression, is this, that the Son of God assumed our nature, and united himself with it, as our souls are united with our bodies; and as the

soul and body united make one person, and yet retain their distinct natures and properties ; so may we conceive the divine and human natures in Christ to be united into one person ; and this without any change or confusion of the two natures.

I say, the divinity united itself with human nature : for though flesh be only mentioned in the text, yet he did not only assume a human body, which was the heresy of Apollinaris and his followers, upon a mistake of this, and some other texts of scripture ; but he assumed the whole human nature ; that is, a human soul united to a real and natural body : for so I have shewn the word *flesh* to be frequently used in scripture, not only for the body, but for the whole man, by an usual figure of speech : as, on the other hand, *soul* is frequently used for the whole man or person. So many souls are said to have gone down with Jacob into Egypt ; that is, so many persons.

But this I need not insist longer upon, our Saviour being so frequently in scripture, and so expressly, said to be a man ; which could with no propriety of speech have been said, had he only assumed a human body : nor could he have been said to have been *made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted*, had he only had a human body, but not a soul : for then the meaning must have been, that he had been *made in all things like unto us*, that is, like to a man, that only excepted which chiefly makes the man ; that is, the soul : and the addition of those words, *sin only excepted*, had been no less strange ; because a human body without a soul, is neither capable of being said to have sin, or to be without it.

And this may suffice to have been spoken in general concerning that great mystery of the hypostatical (as they that love hard words love to call it) or personal union of the divine and human natures in the person of our blessed Saviour. In the more particular explication whereof, it is not safe for our shallow understandings to wade farther than the scripture goes before us, for fear we go out of our depth, and lose ourselves in the profound inquiry into the deep things of God, which he has not thought fit in this present state of darkness and imperfection, to reveal more plainly and fully to us. It  
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ought to be thought sufficient, that the scripture, speaking of the same person, Jesus Christ our blessed Saviour, doth frequently and expressly call him both *God* and *man*: which how it can be so easily conceived upon any other supposition than that of the union of the divine and human natures in one person, I must confess that I am not able to comprehend.

5. And lastly, all this which I have shewn to be implied in this proposition, *The Word was made flesh*, does signify to us the wonderful and amazing condescension and love of God to mankind, in sending his Son into the world, and submitting him to this way and method for our salvation and recovery. *The Word was made flesh*: what a step is here made in order to the reconciling of men to God? from heaven to earth; from the top of glory and majesty to the lowest gulf of meanness and misery! The Evangelist seems here to use the word *flesh*, which signifies the meanest and vilest part of humanity, to express to us how low the Son of God was contented to stoop for the redemption of man. *The Word was made flesh*; two terms at the greatest distance from one another, are here brought together: the Son of God is here expressed to us by one of his highest and most glorious titles, *the Word*; which imports both *power* and *wisdom*; 1 Cor. i. 24. *Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God*, as the Apostle calls him: and human nature is here described by its vilest part, *flesh*; which imports frailty and infirmity. *The Word became flesh*; that is, submitted to that from which it was at the greatest distance: he who was *the power of God, and the wisdom of God*, submitted not only to be called, but really to become a frail and miserable man; not only to assume our nature, but to put on all the infirmities, and, which is the greatest of all, the mortality of it.

And this is the *great mystery of godliness*, that is, of the christian religion, that *God* should be *manifested in the flesh*, and become man, with the most gracious and merciful design, to bring man back again to God; that he should become a miserable and a mortal man, to save us from eternal death, and to make us partakers of everlasting life; that the Son of God should condescend to inhabit our vile nature, to wear rags, and to become a

beggar for our sakes: and all this, not only to repair those dismal ruins which sin had made in it, and to restore us to our former estate; but to better and advance our condition, and by degrees to bring us to a state of much greater perfection and happiness than that from which we fell:

And that he should become man on purpose that he might *dwell among us*, and converse with us, and thoroughly instruct us in our duty, and shew us the way to eternal life by his heavenly doctrine, and, as it were, take us by the hand, and lead us in that way by the perfect and familiar example of a most blameless and holy life; shewing us how God himself thought fit to live in this world, when he was pleased to become man:

That by conversing with us in the likeness and nature of man, he might become a human, and in some sort an equal and familiar, an imitable and encouraging example of innocency and goodness, of meekness and humility, of patience and submission to the will of God, under the sorest afflictions and sufferings; and, in a word, a most perfect pattern of a divine and heavenly conversation upon earth:

And that by this means we might, for our greater encouragement in holiness and virtue, see all that which the law of God requires of us, exemplified in our nature, and really performed and practised by a man like ourselves:

And that likeways in our nature he might conquer and triumph over the two great enemies of our salvation, the world, and the devil; and by first suffering death, and then overcoming it, and by rescuing our nature from the power of it by his resurrection from the dead, he might *deliver us from the fear of death*, and give us the glorious hopes of a blessed immortality: for by assuming our frail and mortal nature, he became capable of suffering, and of shedding his precious blood for us, and by that means of purchasing *forgiveness of sins*, and *eternal redemption for us*:

And further yet, that, by being subject to the miseries and infirmities of humanity, he might, from his own experience, the surest and most sensible sort of knowledge and instruction, learn to have a more compassionate sense  
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of our infirmities, and be more apt to commiserate us in all our sufferings and temptations, and more ready to succour us labouring under them :

And finally, that, as a reward of his obedience and sufferings in our nature, he might in the same nature be *exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high*, there to continue *for ever to make intercession for us*.

II. I shall, in the next place, consider the objections against the incarnation of the Son of God, from the supposed impossibility and incongruity of the thing. I shall mention three, and endeavour, in as few words as I can, to give a clear and satisfactory answer to them.

1. It is objected, That the incarnation of the Son of God, as I have explained it, necessarily supposing an union of the divinity with human nature, is, if not altogether impossible, yet a very unintelligible thing.

Now, that there is no impossibility in the thing, seems to be very evident from the instance whereby I have endeavoured to illustrate it, of the union between the soul and the body of man, which we must acknowledge to be a thing possible, because we are sure that it is ; and yet no man can explain, either to himself, or to any one else, the manner how it is, or can be conceived to be : but, for all that, we are as certain, as we can be of any thing, that it is so.

And is it not every whit as possible for God, if he so please, to unite himself to human nature, as it is for the soul to be united to the body ? And that we are not able to conceive the manner how this is or can be done, ought not in reason to be any prejudice against the truth and certainty of the thing. This indeed may make it seem strange to us, but by no means incredible ; because we do most firmly believe a great many things to be, the manner of whose being we do not at all comprehend. And therefore I take it for an undoubted principle, which no man can gainsay, That to assure us that a thing really is, it is not necessary for us to know the manner how it is, or can be : it is sufficient for us to know, that the thing is not impossible ; and of that we have the very best demonstration that can be, if we be sure that it is.

2. Supposing this thing to be possible, and capable in any measure to be understood, which yet I have shewn

not to be necessary to our firm belief of it; it is further objected, That it seems to be a thing very incongruous, and much beneath the dignity of the Son of God, to be united to human nature, and to submit to so near an alliance with that which is so very mean and despicable; yea to be infinitely more below him, than for the greatest prince in this world to match with the poorest and most contemptible beggar.

But herein surely we measure God too much by ourselves; and because we who are evil have seldom so much goodness as to stoop beneath ourselves for the benefit and good of others, we are apt to think that God hath not so much goodness neither; and because our ill-nature, and pride, and folly, as indeed all pride is folly, will not suffer us to do it, we presently conclude that it doth not become God. But what Pliny said to the Emperor Trajan concerning earthly kings and potentates, is much more true of the Lord of glory, the great King of heaven and earth; *Cui nihil ad augendum fastigium superest, hoc uno modo crescere potest, si seipsum submittat, securus magnitudinis suæ*: "He that is at the top, and can rise  
 " no higher, hath yet this one way left to become great-  
 " er, by stooping beneath himself;" which he may very safely do, " being secure of his own greatness." The lower any being, be he never so high, condescends to do good, the glory of his goodness shines so much the brighter. Men are many times too proud and stiff to bend, too perverse and ill-natured to stoop beneath their own little greatness for the good of others: but God, whose *ways are not as our ways*, and whose *thoughts are as much above our low and narrow thoughts, as the heavens are high above the earth*, did not disdain, nor think it below him to become man for the good of mankind, and, as much as the divinity is capable of being so, to become miserable to make us happy. We may be afraid, that if we humble ourselves, we shall be despised; that if we stoop, others will get above us, and trample upon us: but God, though he condescend never so low, is still secure of his own greatness, and that none can take it from him.

So that in truth, and according to right reason, it was no real diminution or disparagement to the Son of God,

to become man for the salvation of mankind; but, on the contrary, it was a most glorious humility, and the greatest instance of the truest goodness that ever was. And therefore the Apostle to the Hebrews, Heb. v. 4. 5. when he says, that *Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but was appointed of God to this office, as was Aaron*, does hereby seem to intimate, that it was a glory to the Son of God to be made a high priest for the sons of men: for though it was a strange condescension, yet was it likewise a most wonderful argument of his goodness, which is the highest glory of the divine nature.

In short, if God for our sakes did submit himself to a condition which we may think did less become him, here is great cause of thankfulness, but none surely of cavil and exception. We have infinite reason to acknowledge and admire his goodness, but none at all to upbraid him with his kindness, and to quarrel with him for having descended so much beneath himself, to testify his love to us, and his tender concernment for our happiness. Besides, that when we have said all we can about this matter, I hope we will allow God himself to be the best and most competent judge what is fit for God to do; and that he needs not to take counsel of any of his creatures, what will best become him in this or any other case: Job xxxiii.

12. 13. *Behold in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. Why dost thou dispute against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.*

3. If our reason could get over this difficulty, and admit that God might become man; yet it seems very unsuitable to the Son of God, and to his great design of instructing and reforming mankind, to appear in so low and suffering a condition. This, to the heathen philosophers, who, as the Apostle tells us, *by wisdom knew not God*, did not only seem unreasonable, but even ridiculous. So St. Paul tells us, *We (says he, 1 Cor. i: 23.) preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.* To think that so poor and mean a man was fit to give laws to mankind, and to awe the minds of men by the authority of his doctrine; that one who was put to death himself, should be believed by others, when he promised to them life and immortality

mortality in another world, could not but appear very strange and unreasonable.

For answer to this, besides other excellent reasons and ends which the scripture expressly assigns, of our blessed Saviour's humiliation, in his assuming our nature, with the frailties and miseries of it; as, that he might be a teacher, and an example to us; that, by his bitter passion, he might make expiation for sin, and set us a pattern of the greatest meekness and patience under the greatest provocations and sufferings; that, having suffered so grievously himself, he might know how to commiserate and pity us in all our temptations and sufferings; that *by death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage*: I say, besides all this, it was of great use that the great teacher and reformer of mankind should live in so mean and afflicted a condition, to confront the pride and vanity of the world by this consideration, that the Son of God, and the very best man that ever was, was a beggar, and *had not where to lay his head*: and likewise to convince men of these two great truths, That God may grievously afflict those whom he dearly loves; and, That it is possible for men to be innocent and contented in the midst of poverty, and reproach, and sufferings.

Had our blessed Saviour appeared in the person and pomp of a great temporal prince, the influence of his authority and example would probably have made more hypocrites and servile converts, but not have persuaded men one jot more to be inwardly holy and good. The great arguments that must do that, must not be fetched from the pomp and prosperity of this world, but from the great and eternal recompences of the other.

And it is very well worth our observation, that nothing puzzled Cæsar Vaninus, who was perhaps the first, and the only martyr for Atheism that ever was; I say, nothing puzzled him more, than that he could not, from the history of our Saviour's life and actions, written by the Evangelists with so native a simplicity, fasten upon him any probable imputation of a secular interest and design in any thing that he said or did. No doubt but Vaninus,

ninus, before he made this acknowledgment, had searched very narrowly into this matter; and, could he have found any colour for such an imputation, he would have thought it sufficient to have blasted both him and his religion.

You may be pleased to consider further, that it was the opinion of the wisest Jews, that the best men, the children of God, who called God their father, were many times exposed to the greatest sufferings and reproaches, for the trial of their faith, and meekness, and patience; as we see at large in the Wisdom of Solomon; where, speaking of the malice and enmity of the wicked to one that was eminently righteous, he brings them in saying after this manner, chap. ii. 12. 13. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. *Let us lie in wait for the righteous; because he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings: he upbraideth us with our offending the law, and objecteth to our infamy the transgressings of our youth. He professeth to have the knowledge of God; and he calleth himself the child of the Lord, He is grievous unto us even to behold: for his life is not like other mens; his ways are of another fashion. We are esteemed of him as counterfeits: he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness: he pronounceth the end of the just to be blessed, and maketh his boast that God is his father, Let us see if his words be true, and what shall happen in the end of him. For if the just man be the son of God, he will help him, and deliver him from the hands of his enemies. Let us examine him with despitefulness and torture, that we know may his meekness, and prove his patience. Let us condemn him to a shameful death, &c.*

This is so exact a character of our blessed Saviour, both in respect of the holiness and innocency of his life, and of the reproaches and sufferings which he met with from the wicked and malicious Jews, who persecuted him all his life, and at last conspired his death, that whoever reads this passage, can hardly forbear to think it a prophetic description of the innocency and sufferings of the blessed Jesus: for he certainly, in the most eminent manner, was *the Son of God*, being called by the Evangelist, *the only begotten of the Father*.

Or if this was not a prediction concerning our blessed Saviour, yet thus much at least may be concluded from  
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it, that in the judgment of the wisest among the Jews, it was not unworthy of the goodness and wisdom of the divine providence, to permit the best man to be so ill treated by wicked men; and further, that, in their judgment, the innocency and virtues of an eminently righteous man are then set off to the best advantage, and do shine forth with the greatest lustre, when he is under the hardest circumstances of suffering and persecution from an evil world.

Add to this likewise, that the best and wisest of the heathen philosophers do frequently inculcate such doctrines as these: That "worldly greatness and power" are not to be admired, but rather to be despised by a "wise man:" That "men may be very good, and dear to the gods, and yet liable to the greatest miseries and sufferings in this world." That "whoever suffers unjustly, and bears it patiently, gives the greatest testimony to goodness, and does most effectually recommend piety and virtue, as things of greater value than the ease and pleasure of this present life:" Nay further, That "a good man, cast into the hardest circumstances of poverty and misery, of reproach and suffering, is the fittest person of all other to be the minister, and apostle, and preacher of God to mankind:" which are the very words of Arrian, a heathen philosopher, in his discourses on Epictetus. Now, surely, they who say such things, have no reason to object to our blessed Saviour's low and suffering condition, as misbecoming one that was to be the great teacher and reformer of the world.

And as to that part of the objection, That he who so freely promised immortality to others, could not, or however did not save himself from death; this vanisheth into nothing, when we consider that he rescued himself from the power of the grave. And it is so far from being ridiculous, to rely upon his promise of raising us up from the dead, that the objection itself is really so; for can any thing be more reasonable, than to rely upon him for our hopes of immortality, who, by rising from the grave himself, and by conquering the powers of death and darkness, and triumphing openly over them by his visible ascension into heaven, hath given so plain and sensible

fenfible a demonftration to all mankind, that he is able to make good to the uttermoft all the glorious promifes which he hath made to us, of a blessed refurrection to eternal life and happinefs in another world? To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## S E R M O N XLVI.

Concerning the incarnation of Christ.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, December 28. 1680.

J O H N i. 14.

*The Word was made flefh.*

The fourth fermon on this text.

III. **T**HE third and laft thing which I propofed upon this argument, of the incarnation of the Son of God, was, to give fome account of this difpenfation, and to fhew that the wifdom of God thought fit thus to order things, in great condefcenfion to the weaknefs and common prejudices of mankind; and that, when all things are duly weighed and confidered, it will appear much more for our comfort and advantage, than any other way which the wifdom of men would have been moft apt to devife and pitch upon.

And it is the more neceffary to give fome account of this matter, becaufe, after all that hath hitherto been faid in answer to the objections againft it, it may ftill feem very ftrange to a confidering man, that God, who could, without all this circumftance and condefcenfion, have done the bufinefs for which his Son came into the world, and appeared in our nature; that is, could have given the fame laws to mankind, and have offered to us the forgivenefs of our fins, and eternal life, upon our repentance for fins paft, and a fincere endeavour of obedience for the future: I fay, that notwithstanding this, he

he should yet make choice of this way for the redemption and recovery of fallen man, by sending his Son in our nature to accomplish this design.

And, in the handling of this argument, I shall, as I said before, all along take the express declarations, or at least the pregnant intimations of scripture for my ground and guide; it being always safest to take the reasons of the divine counsels and actions from God himself. And, in the

*First* place, I make no manner of doubt to say, that it would be a great presumption and boldness in any man to affirm, that the infinite wisdom of God could not have brought about the salvation of men by any other way, than by this very way in which he hath done it. For why should we take upon us to set limits to infinite wisdom, and pretend to know the utmost extent of it? But since God hath been pleased to pitch upon this way rather than any other, this surely ought to be reason enough to satisfy us of the peculiar wisdom and fitness of it, whether the particular reasons of it appear to us or not.

And yet it cannot be denied to be a very noble argument, and well worthy our consideration, to inquire into the reasons of this dispensation, and to assign them particularly, if we can. For I look upon mysteries and miracles in religion to be much of the same nature; and that a great reverence is due to both where they are certain, and necessary in the nature and reason of the thing; but neither of them are easily to be admitted, without necessity and very good evidence.

*Secondly*, I consider, in the next place, that, in the several revelations which God hath made of himself to mankind, he hath, with great condescension, accommodated himself, both as to the manner and degree of them, to the condition and capacity, and other circumstances of the persons and people to whom they were made.

Particularly we find, that the dispensation of God towards the Jewish nation was full of condescension to the temper, and prejudice, and other circumstances of that people. For the religion and laws which God gave them, were far from being the best and most perfect in themselves: in which sense some understand that passage  
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in the Prophet Ezekiel, where it is said, that God gave them statutes which were not good; that is, very imperfect in comparison of what he could and would have given them, had they been capable of them; and yet such as were very well suited and fitted to their present capacity and circumstances.

*Thirdly*, I observe yet further, that though the christian religion, as to the main and substance of it, be a most perfect institution, being the law of nature revived and perfected; yet, upon a due consideration of things, it cannot be denied, that the manner and circumstances of this dispensation are full of condescension to the weakness of mankind, and very much accommodated to the most common and deeply radicated prejudices of men concerning God and religion; and peculiarly fitted to remove and root them out of the minds of men, by substituting something in the place of them, of as near a compliance with them, as was consistent with the honour of almighty God, and the great design of the christian religion.

It is not easy to give a certain account of the true original of some notions and prejudices concerning God and religion, which have generally obtained in the world, in that variety of religions, and the different ways of worship and superstition which have been in several nations of the earth. But, in history and fact, this is certain, that some notions, and those very gross and erroneous, did almost universally prevail, even among those who did extremely differ in the particular forms and modes of their superstition.

And though some of these were much more tolerable than others, yet God seems to have had great consideration of some very weak and gross apprehensions of mankind concerning religion. And as, in some of the laws given by Moses, God was pleased particularly to consider the hardness of the hearts of that people; so he seems likewise to have very much suited the dispensation of the gospel, and the method of our salvation, by the incarnation and sufferings of his Son, to the common prejudices of mankind, especially of the heathen world, whose minds were less prepared for this dispensation than the Jews, if we consider the light and advantages

which the Jewish nation had above the gentile world that so, by this means and method, he might wean them by degrees from their gross conceptions of things, and rectify more easily their wrong apprehensions, by gratifying them in some measure, and in a gracious compliance with our weakness, by bending and accommodating the way and method of our salvation to our weak capacity, and imperfect conceptions of things.

*Fourthly*, And that God hath done this in the dispensation of the gospel, will, I think, very plainly appear in the following instances: in most of which I shall be very brief, and only insist somewhat more largely upon the last of them.

1. The world was much given to admire mysteries in religion. The Jews had theirs; several of which, by God's own appointment, were reserved and kept secret in a great measure from the people; others were added by the superstition of after ages, and held in equal, or rather greater veneration than the former. And the heathen likewise had theirs; the devil always affecting to imitate God so far as served his wicked and malicious design of seducing mankind into idolatry, and the worship of himself; and therefore the scripture always speaks of the heathen idolatry, as the worship of devils; and not of God. So that almost every nation had their peculiar and celebrated mysteries; most of which were either very odd and fantastical, or very lewd and impure, or very inhumane and cruel, and every way unworthy of the Deity.

But the great mystery of the christian religion, the incarnation of the Son of God, or, as the Apostle calls it: *God manifested in the flesh*, was such a mystery, as, for the greatness and wonderfulness, for the infinite mercy and condescension of it, did obscure and swallow up all other mysteries: for which reason the Apostle, in allusion to the heathen mysteries, and in contempt of them, speaking of the great mystery of the christian religion, says 1 Tim. iii. 16. *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, &c.* Since the world had such an admiration for mysteries, he instanceth in that which was a mystery indeed; a mystery beyond all dispute, and beyond all comparison.

2. There was likewise a great inclination, in mankind

to the worship of a visible and sensible Deity. And this was a main root and source of the various idolatries in the heathen world. Now, to take men off from this, God was pleased to appear in our nature, that they who were so fond of a visible Deity, might have one to whom they might pay divine worship without danger of idolatry, and without injury to the divine nature; even a true and natural image of God the Father, the fountain of the Deity; or, as the Apostle to the Hebrews describes the Son of God, the resplendency or *brightness of his father's glory, and the express character or image of his person*, Heb. i. 2.

3. Another notion which had generally obtained among mankind, was, concerning the expiation of the sins of men, and appeasing the offended Deity, by sacrifice; upon which they supposed the punishment due to the sinner was transferred, to exempt him from it; especially by the sacrifices of men, which had almost universally prevailed in the gentile world.

And this notion of the expiation of sin by sacrifices of one kind or other, seems to have obtained very early in the world; and, among all other ways of divine worship, to have found the most universal reception in all times and places. And indeed, a great part of the Jewish religion and worship was a plain condescension to the general apprehensions of men concerning this way of appeasing the Deity by sacrifice. And the greatest part of the pagan religion and worship was likewise founded upon the same notion and opinion; which, because it was so universal, seems to have had its original from the first parents of mankind, either immediately after the creation, or after the flood; and from thence, I mean as to the substance of this notion, to have been derived and propagated to all their posterity.

And with this general notion of mankind, whatever the ground and foundation of it might be, God was pleased so far to comply, as once for all to have a general atonement made for the sins of all mankind by the sacrifice of his only Son, whom his wise providence did permit, *by wicked hands, to be crucified and slain*. But I shall not at present insist any further upon this, which requires

a particular discourse by itself, and may by God's assistance in due time have it.

4. Another very common notion, and very rife in the heathen world, and a great source of their idolatry, was their apotheoses, or canonizing of famous and eminent persons, who in their lifetime had done great things, and some way or other been great benefactors to mankind, by advancing them after their death to the dignity of an inferior kind of gods, fit to be worshiped by men here on earth, and to have their prayers and supplications addressed to them, as proper and powerful mediators and intercessors for them with the superior gods. To these they gave the titles of *heroes* and *semi-dei*, that is, half-gods; though the notion of a being that is just half infinite, seems to me very hard to be conceived and defined.

Now, to take men off from this kind of idolatry, and to put an end to it, behold one in our nature *exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high*, to be worshipped by men and angels; one that was the truly great benefactor of mankind; one that *was dead, and is alive again, and lives for ever more, to make intercession for us*.

5. To give but one instance more, which I have already intimated: The world was mightily bent upon addressing their requests and supplications, not to the Deity immediately, because their superstition thought that too great a presumption, but by some mediators between the gods and men, who might with advantage, in this humble manner, present their requests, so as to find acceptance. To this end they made use of the demons or angels, and of their heroes, or deified men, whom I mentioned before, by whom they put up their prayers to the supreme gods; hoping, by their intercession, and patronage of their cause, to obtain a gracious answer of them.

In a gracious compliance with this common apprehension, and thereby more easily and effectually to extirpate this sort of idolatry, which had been so long and so generally practised in the world, God was pleased to constitute and appoint one in our nature to be a perpetual advocate and intercessor in heaven for us, to offer up

up our prayers to God his Father, and to *obtain mercy for us, and grace to help in time of need.*

And for ever to take us off from all other mediators; we are expressly told in scripture, that as there is but one God to whom we are to pray, so there is but *one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. by whom we are to offer up our prayers to God; and that we need not look out for any other, since the Apostle to the Hebrews tells us, that *he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him, seeing he lives for ever to make intercession for us*, Heb. vii. 25.

And for this reason the church of Rome is altogether inexcusable in this point, for introducing more mediators and intercessors, more patrons and advocates in heaven for us; and this not only without any necessity; for who can add any virtue and efficacy to the powerful and prevalent intercession of the Son of God? but likewise in direct contradiction to the express constitution and appointment of God himself; who says, *there is but one Mediator between God and men*; and they say there ought to be many more, not only the blessed virgin, but all the saints and angels in heaven. Besides that by this very thing they revive one notorious piece of the old pagan idolatry, which God so plainly designed to extinguish, by appointing *one only Mediator between God and men.*

By this condescension likewise God hath given us the comfortable assurance of a most powerful and a perpetual intercessor at the right hand of God in our behalf. For if we consider Christ as man, and of the same nature with us, *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*; so very nearly allied and related to us, we may easily believe, that he hath a most tender care and concernment for us; that he sincerely wisheth our happiness, and will by all means seek to procure it, if we ourselves, by our own wilful obstinacy, do not hinder it, and *resist the kindness and the counsel of God against ourselves.* For if we be resolved to continue impenitent, there is no help for us. we must die in our sins, and salvation itself cannot save us.

But to proceed: It cannot surely but be matter of greatest consolation to us, that *the man Christ Jesus*, who is now so *highly exalted at the right hand of God*, and

who hath *all power in heaven and earth committed to him*, is our patron and advocate in heaven to plead our cause with God; since we cannot but think, that he who was pleased to become brother to us all, does bear a true affection and good-will to us; and that he who assumed our nature, will heartily espouse our cause, and plead it powerfully for us, and will with all possible advantage recommend our petitions and requests to God.

But then if we consider further, that he did not only take our nature, but likewise took our infirmities, and bore them many years, in which he had long and continual experience of the saddest sufferings to which human nature is subject in this world, and *was tempted in all things like as we are*; this gives us still greater assurance, that he who suffered and was tempted himself, cannot but be touched with a lively sense of our infirmities, and must have learned by his own sufferings to compassionate ours, and to be ready to succour us when we are tempted, and to afford us grace and help suitable to all our wants and infirmities: for nothing gives us so just a sense of the sufferings of others, as the remembrance of our own, and the bitter experience of the like sufferings and temptations in ourselves.

And this the Apostle to the Hebrews doth very particularly insist upon, as matter of greatest comfort and encouragement to us, that the Son of God did not only assume our nature, *but was made in all things like unto us*, and, during his abode here upon earth, did suffer, and *was tempted like as we are*: for *verily* (says the Apostle, Heb. ii. 16. 17. 18.) *he took not on him the nature of angels; but the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God: for in that he himself suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*

And again, exhorting the Jews, who were newly converted to Christianity, to continue *stedfast in their profession*, notwithstanding all the sufferings to which upon that account they were exposed, he comforts them with this consideration, that we have at the right hand of God so powerful an advocate and intercessor for us, as the Son of God, who is sensible of our case, having suffered the  
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same things himself; and therefore we cannot doubt of his compassion to us, and readiness to support us in the like sufferings: *Seeing then* (says he, Heb. iv. 14. 15. 16.) *that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* From whence he concludes, that having such an intercessor, we may with great confidence and assurance address our supplications to God for his mercy and help, in all our wants and weakness, to supply the one, and to assist the other: *Let us therefore* (says he) *come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need; χάριν εἰς ἑὐκαιρὸν βοήθειαν, grace for seasonable relief.*

So that our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, now that he is advanced to heaven, and exalted to the right hand of God, is not unmindful of us in this height of his glory and greatness; but, with the tenderest affection and compassion to mankind, doth still prosecute the design of our salvation; and, in virtue of his meritorious obedience and sufferings, which he presents to God continually, he offers up our prayers to him, and pleads our cause with him, and represents to him all our wants and necessities, and procures for us a favourable answer of our prayers, and supplies of grace and strength proportionable to our temptations and infirmities.

And thus, by virtue of this prevalent intercession of his with God for us, our sins are forgiven and our wants supplied, and our requests granted, and the gracious assistance and supports of God's Holy Spirit are seasonably afforded to us, and we are *kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation.* In a word, all those blessings and benefits are procured for us by his intercession in heaven, which he purchased for us by his blood upon earth.

So that in this method of our salvation, besides many other gracious condescensions which God hath made to the weakness and prejudices of mankind, our blessed Saviour hath perfectly supplied the two great wants concerning which mankind was at so great a loss before, namely, the want of an effectual expiatory sacrifice for  
sin

sin upon earth, and of a prevalent mediator and intercessor with God in heaven.

And he hath, in great goodness and condescension to our inveterate prejudices concerning these things, taken effectual care fully to supply both these wants, having *appeared in the end of the world to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself*; and, in virtue of that sacrifice, *appearing now in heaven in the presence of God for us*, he is become our perpetual advocate, and a most prevalent intercessor with God in our behalf.

For, instead of the various and endless sacrifices of the Jews and Heathens, the Son of God *hath, by one sacrifice for sins, perfected for ever them that are sanctified*: and, instead of the mediation of demons and heroes, to offer up our prayers to God, which were the intercessors made use of among the heathen, we have *one Mediator between God and men*, appointed by God himself, even the Son of God, *who is entered into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us*. And to assure us that he commiserates our case, and hath a true and tender sense of our infirmities and sufferings, the very manner of his intercession for us, as the scripture represents it to us, is a plain demonstration of the thing: for he interceeds for us in heaven, by representing to God his Father his sufferings upon earth, and pleading them in our behalf. So that the very argument which he useth to God for us, cannot but stir up compassion in him towards us; and whilst he represents his own sufferings in our behalf, we cannot think that he is unmindful and insensible of ours.

You see then, that, in this dispensation of God for our salvation, by sending his Son in our nature, things are not only suited in great condescension to our apprehensions, but are likewise, in great compassion to us, every way fitted for our comfort and encouragement. God hath made him our great patron and advocate, who was our sacrifice and propitiation. And surely we have all the reason in the world to believe, that he who *in the days of his flesh humbled himself, and became obedient to the death* for our sakes, will be ready to do us all good offices, now that he is advanced to the right hand of God; that he who died for us upon earth, now that he lives again,

again, will make intercession for us in heaven, and perfect that salvation which he purchased for us upon the cross.

And therefore we find in scripture, that as the purchasing of our salvation is ascribed to the death and sufferings of Christ, so the perfecting of it is attributed to his intercession for us at the right hand of his Father: *Wherefore* (says the apostle to the Hebrews) *he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him, seeing he liveth for ever to make intercession for us.* He died once to purchase these benefits, but *he lives for ever* to procure them for us, and to apply them to us. And now that he is in heaven, he is as intent upon our concernments, and lays our happiness as much to heart, as when he dwelt here among us on earth, and poured out his blood a sacrifice for sin upon the cross. And that, when he lived here below, he suffered, and was tempted as we are; this very consideration gives us the greatest assurance possible, that he is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and hath a lively sense of our sufferings; and consequently, that he doth compassionate our case, and will use all his power and interest for our advantage, for our reasonable support and succour in all our trials and sufferings. But, besides the wonderful condescension of this dispensation, there is likeways, in the

Fifth and last place, a great congruity and fitness in the thing itself; and this method of our salvation, which the wisdom of God hath pitched upon, is in many other respects very much for our real benefit and comfort. For by this means we have a perfect and familiar example of holiness and obedience in our own nature; by which we plainly see, that God requires nothing of us, but what he himself, when he submitted to become man, did think fit to do; for being *made of a woman*, he was of necessity *made under the law*; and by assuming human nature, he became naturally subject to the laws and conditions of his being.

And here likeways is a provision made for the expiation and forgiveness of our sins, in a way not only very honourable to the justice of God, and the authority of his laws, but likeways very effectual to discountenance sin, and to deter men from it; since God did not think

fit to forgive the sins of men without great sufferings, and that in our nature. For though God was willing to save the sinner, yet rather than encouragement should be given to sin, by letting it go unpunished, he was contented to give up the *dearly beloved of his soul to be a sacrifice and propitiation for the sins of the whole world.*

By the same means also we have a most powerful antidote against the fear of suffering, and particularly against the fear of death, one of the greatest slaveries of human nature. So also the Apostle to the Hebrews tells us, chap. ii. 14. 15. that for this cause Christ *himself also took part of flesh and blood, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

Again, we have hereby full assurance of a blessed immortality in another life, because in our nature death and all the powers of darkness were baffled and overcome. The death of Christ, which could not have been without his incarnation, and so likewise his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, are sensible demonstrations to all mankind, of a blessed immortality after death; which is the most powerful motive in the world to obedience and a holy life.

And, lastly, we may, upon this account, promise to ourselves a fair and equal trial at the judgment of the great day, because we shall then be judged by a man like ourselves. Our Saviour and judge himself hath told us, that for this reason *God hath committed all judgment to the Son, because he is the Son of man,* John v. 22. 27. And this in human judgments is accounted a great privilege, to be judged by those who are of the same rank and condition with ourselves, and who are likely to understand best, and most carefully to examine and consider all our circumstances, and to tender our case as if it were their own.

So equitably doth God deal with us, that we shall be acquitted or condemned by such a judge, as, according to human measures, we ourselves should have chosen; by one in our own nature, who *was made in all things like unto us,* that only excepted which would have rendered him incapable of being our judge, because it would

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have made him a criminal like ourselves. And therefore the Apostle offers this as a firm ground of assurance to us that *God will judge the world in righteousness*, because this judgment shall be administered by a man like ourselves: *He hath* (saith he) *appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, &c.*

I shall now only make a practical inference or two from what hath been delivered upon this argument, and so conclude this whole discourse.

1. The serious consideration of what hath been said concerning the incarnation of our blessed Saviour, should effectually prevail with us to comply with the great end and design of the Son of God's becoming man, and *dwelling amongst us*, and of his doing and suffering all those things which are recorded of him in the history of his life and death written by the holy Evangelists; I say, the consideration hereof should persuade us all to comply with the great design of all this, which is the reformation of mankind, and the recovery of us out of that sinful and miserable estate into which we were fallen; because the salvation which the Son of God hath purchased for us, and which he offers to us by the gospel, is not to be accomplished and brought about any other way than by our forsaking our sins, and reforming our lives. *The grace of God, which hath appeared to all men, and brings salvation*, will not make us partakers of it in any other way, nor by any other means, than by *teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world*. God sent his Son Jesus to bless us, by turning us away every one from his iniquities: and unless this change be effectually wrought in us, we are utterly incapable of all the blessings of the gospel of Christ. All that he hath done for us, without us will avail us nothing; unless we be inwardly transformed and *renewed in the spirit of our minds*; unless we become new creatures; unless we make it the continual and sincere endeavour of our lives to *keep the commandments of God*.

For the scripture is most express and positive in this matter, Heb. xii. 14. that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*: 1 John iii. 3. that *every man that hath this hope*

hope in him, that is, in Christ, to be saved by him, must purify himself, even as he is pure. We do not rightly and truly believe that *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*, if we be not also thoroughly convinced, that it is as necessary for us to leave our sins, as to believe this most faithful and credible saying.

The obedience and sufferings of our blessed Saviour are indeed *accounted to us for righteousness*, and will most certainly redound to our unspeakable benefit and advantage, upon our performance of the condition which the gospel doth require on our part, namely, that *every man that names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity*: and the grace of God's Holy Spirit is ready to enable us to perform this condition, if we earnestly ask it, and do sincerely co-operate with it: provided we do what we can on our part, God will not be wanting to us on his. But if we *receive the grace of God in vain*, and take no care to perform the condition, and do neglect to implore the grace and assistance of God's holy Spirit to that purpose, we have none to blame but ourselves; because it is then wholly our own fault, if we fall short of that happiness which Christ hath purchased and promised to us upon such easy and reasonable conditions as the gospel proposeth.

But I no where find that God hath promised to force happiness upon the negligent, and a reward upon *the wicked and slothful servant*. A gift may be given for nothing, but surely a reward does in the very nature of it always suppose some service. None but *a righteous man* is capable of *a righteous man's reward*: and St. John hath sufficiently cautioned us not to think ourselves righteous, unless we be doers of righteousness: *Little children*, (says he, 1 John iii. 7.) *let no man deceive you: he that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous*. This is so very plain a text, that if men were not either very easy to be deceived by others, or very willing to deceive themselves, they could not possibly mistake the meaning of it; and therefore I will repeat it once more: *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous*.

2. The other inference which I would make from the precedent discourse, is this, That with all possible thankfulness

fulness we should acknowledge and adore the wonderful goodness and condescension of Almighty God, in sending his *only begotten Son* into the world in our nature, to be *made flesh*, and to *dwell amongst us*, in order to our recovery and salvation: A method and dispensation, not only full of mercy and goodness, but of great condescension to our meanness, and of mighty virtue and efficacy for our redemption, and deliverance from the guilt and dominion of sin; and upon all accounts every way so much for our benefit and advantage: so that well may we say, with St. Paul, *This is a faithful saying, τοῦτο εἶδος λόγος, a credible word, and worthy of all acceptance*, (that is, fit to be embraced and entertained with all possible joy and thankfulness,) *that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.*

What an everlasting fountain of the most invaluable blessings and benefits to mankind is the incarnation of the Son of God; his vouchsafing to assume our nature, and to reside and converse so long with us? And what are we, that the eternal and *only begotten Son of God* should condescend to do all this for us? That the high and glorious Majesty of heaven should stoop down to the earth, and be contented to be clothed with misery and mortality? that he should submit to so poor and low a condition, to such dreadful and disgraceful sufferings for our sakes? For what are we? vile and despicable creatures, guilty and unworthy offenders and apostates, enemies and rebels. Blessed God! how great is thy goodness? how infinite are thy tender mercies and compassions to mankind? that thou shouldst regard us whilst we neglected thee, and remember us in our low condition, when we had *forgotten thee days without number*; and shouldst take such pity on us, when we shewed none to ourselves; and whilst we were thy declared and implacable enemies, shouldst express more kindness and goodwill to us, than the best of men ever did to their best friends?

When we reflect seriously upon those great things which God hath done in our behalf, and consider that mighty salvation which God hath wrought for us; what thanks can we possibly render? what acknowledgments shall we ever be able to make, I do not say equal, but

in any ways meet and becoming, to this great benefactor of mankind; who, when we had so highly offended and provoked him, and so foolishly and so fatally undone ourselves; when we were become so guilty and so miserable, and so much fitter to have eternally been the objects of his wrath and indignation, than of his pity and compassion, was pleased to send his own, his only Son into the world, to *seek and save us*; and by him to repair all our ruins, to *forgive all our iniquities*, to *heal all our spiritual diseases*, and to *crown us with loving-kindness and tender mercies*?

And what sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving should we also offer up to this gracious and most merciful Redeemer of ours, the everlasting Son of the Father, who debased himself so infinitely for our sakes, and when he took upon him to deliver man, did not abhor the virgin's womb; who was contented to be born so obscurely, and to live all his life in a poor and persecuted condition; and was pleased both to undergo and to overcome the sharpness of death, that he might open the kingdom of heaven to all believers?

Every time we have occasion to meditate upon this, especially when we are communicating at his holy table, and receiving the blessed symbols and pledges of his precious death and passion; how should *our hearts burn within us*, and leap for joy? How should the remembrance of it revive and raise our spirits, and put us into an ecstasy of love and gratitude to this great friend and lover of souls? and, with the blessed mother of our Lord, how should *our souls*, upon that blessed occasion, *magnify the Lord*, and *our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour*?

The holy men of old were transported with joy at the obscure and confused apprehension and remote foresight of so great a blessing, at so great a distance. It is said of Abraham, *the father of the faithful*, that *he saw his day afar off, and was glad*. How should we then be affected with joy and thankfulness, to whom the Son of God and blessed Saviour of men is actually come? He is come many ages ago, and hath enlightened a great part of the world with his glory. Yea, he is come to us, who were in a manner separated from the rest of the world.

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To us is this great light come, who had so long *sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death*; and this mighty salvation which he hath wrought for us, is near to every one of us that is willing to lay hold of it, and to accept it upon those gracious terms and conditions upon which it is offered to us in his holy gospel.

And by his coming he hath delivered mankind from that gross ignorance and *thick darkness which covered the nations*. And we know that the Son of God is come, and 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*, 1 John v. 20. 21. and when it immediately follows, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols*. What can be the meaning of this caution? and what is the connexion of it with the foregoing discourse? It is plainly this, That the Son of God, by his coming, had rescued mankind from the sottish worship of idols; and therefore he cautions Christians to take great heed of relapsing into idolatry by worshipping a creature, or the image and likeness of any creature, instead of God. And because he foresaw that it might be objected to Christians, as in fact it was afterwards by the Heathen, that the worship of Christ, who was a man, was as much idolatry as that which the Christians charged the Heathen withal; therefore St. John, effectually to prevent the force of this plausible objection, though he perpetually, throughout his gospel, declares Christ to be really a man, yet he expressly also affirms him to be God, and *the true God*; and consequently, Christians might safely pay divine worship to him, without fear or danger of idolatry: *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*.

But this I am sensible is a digression, yet such a one as may not be altogether useless.

To proceed then in the recital of those great blessings which the coming of the Son of God hath brought to mankind: He hath rescued us from the bondage of sin, and from the slavery of Satan: he hath openly proclaimed pardon and reconciliation to the world: he hath clearly revealed eternal life to us, which was but obscure-

ly made known before, both to Jews and Gentles; *but is now made manifest by the appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.* He hath purchased this great blessing for us, and is ready to confer it upon us, if we will be contented to leave our sins, and to be saved by him: a condition, without which, as salvation is not to be had, so, if it were, it would not be desirable, it could not make us happy; because our sins would still separate between God and us, and the guilt and horror of our own minds would make us eternally miserable.

And now, surely, we cannot but thus judge, that all the praises and acknowledgments, all the service and obedience which we can possibly render to him, are infinitely beneath those infinite obligations which the Son of God hath laid upon the sons of men, by his *coming into the world to save sinners.*

What then remains, but that at all times, and more especially at this season, we gratefully acknowledge and joyfully commemorate this great and amazing goodness of God to us, in the incarnation of his Son for the redemption and salvation of the sinful and miserable race of mankind? A method and dispensation of the divine grace and wisdom, not only full of mercy and condescension, but of great power and virtue to purify our hearts, and to reform our lives; to beget in us a fervent love of God our Saviour, and a perfect hatred and detestation of our sins, and a stedfast purpose and resolution to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking in his ways all the days of our life: in a word, a method that is every way calculated for our unspeakable benefit and comfort.

Since then the Son of God hath so graciously condescended to be *made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted*, let us aspire to be as like to him as is possible, in the exemplary holiness and virtues of his life. We cannot be like him in his miracles, but we may in his mercy and compassion: we cannot imitate his divine power, but we may resemble him in his innocency and humility, in his meekness and patience. And as he assumed human nature, so let us reassume humanity, which

we have in a great measure depraved and put off; and let us *put on bowels of mercy* towards those that are in misery, and be ready to relieve the poor for his sake, *who being rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.*

To conclude: Let us imitate him in that which was his great work and business here upon earth, and which of all other did best become the Son of God: I mean, in his *going about doing good*, that, by *giving glory to God in the highest*, and by endeavouring, as much as in us lies, to procure and promote *peace on earth, and good-will amongst men*, we may at last be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, through the mercies and merits of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

“ Almighty God, who hast given us thy only begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin, grant, that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit, through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*”

## S E R M O N XLVII.

Concerning the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ, &c.

H E B. ix. 26.

*But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

**A**Mong many other great ends and reasons for which God was pleased to send his Son into the world to dwell amongst us, this was one of the chief, that, by a long course of the greatest innocency and the greatest sufferings in our nature, he might be capable to make a  
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perfect expiation of sin: *But now once in the end of the world, ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων, in the conclusion of the ages, (that is, in the last age of the world, which is the gospel-age,) hath he appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

The general design of God in sending his Son into the world, was to save mankind from eternal death and misery, and to purchase for us eternal life and happiness. So the author of our salvation himself tells us, John iii: 16. *that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Now, in order to the procuring of this salvation for us, the impediments and hindrances of it were to be removed. These were, the guilt, and the dominion of sin. By the guilt of sin we were become obnoxious to the wrath of God, and to eternal condemnation; and by the defilement and dominion of it we were incapable of the happiness of heaven, and the reward of eternal life.

To remove these two great hindrances, two things were necessary; the forgiveness of sins past, in order to our deliverance from the wrath of God, and the eternal torments of the next life; and the reformation of our hearts and lives, to make us capable of eternal life and happiness in another world. And both these, if God had so pleased, might, for any thing we certainly know to the contrary, have been effected by the abundant mercy and powerful grace of God, without this wonderful method and dispensation, of sending his Son in our nature *to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* But it seems the wisdom of God thought fit to pitch upon this way and method of our salvation; and no doubt for very good reasons; amongst which these three seem to be very obvious, and very considerable.

1. To vindicate the honour of his laws, which, if sin had gone altogether unpunished, would have been in great danger of falling into contempt. For if God had proclaimed a general pardon of sin to all mankind, without any testimony of his wrath and displeasure against it, Who would have had any great veneration for his laws; or have believed in good earnest, that the vio-  
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lation of them had either been so extremely offensive to him, or so very dangerous to the sinner?

Therefore, to maintain the honour of his laws, rather than sin should pass unpunished, God would lay the punishment of it upon his only begotten Son, the dearest person to him in the world; which is a greater testimony of his high displeasure against sin, and of his tender regard and concernment for the honour of his laws, than if the sinner had suffered the punishment due to it in his own person.

2. Another reason of this dispensation, and that likewise very considerable, was, that God might forgive sin in such a way as yet effectually to discountenance and discourage it, and to create in us the greatest horror and hatred of it; which could not have been by an absolute pardon, without any punishment inflicted, or satisfaction made to the honour of his justice. For had sin been so easily forgiven, Who would have been sensible of the great evil of it, or afraid to offend for the future?

But when God makes his own Son a sacrifice, and lays upon him the punishment due for the iniquities of us all, this is a demonstration, that God hates sin as much, if it be possible, as he loved his own Son. For this plainly shews what sin deserves, and what the sinner may justly expect, if, after this severity of God against it, he will venture to commit it.

And if this sacrifice for sin, and the pardon purchased by it, be not effectual to reclaim us from sin, and to beget in us an eternal dread and detestation of it; if we sin wilfully after so clear a revelation of *the wrath of God from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to consume the adversaries.* For what could God do more to testify his displeasure against sin, and to discountenance the practice of it, than to make his only Son *an offering for sin, and to give him up to be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities?* In what clearer glass can we at once behold the great evil and demerit of sin, and the infinite goodness and mercy of God to sinners, than in the sorrows and sufferings of the Son of God for our sins and for our sakes?

3. Another reason of this dispensation seems to have been a gracious condescension and compliance of almighty God, with a certain apprehension and persuasion, which had very early and universally obtained among mankind, concerning the expiation of sin, and appeasing the offended Deity, by the sacrifices of living creatures, of birds and beasts; and afterwards by human sacrifices, and the blood of their sons and daughters; by offering to God, as the expression is in the Prophet, *their first-born for their transgression, and the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls.*

And this notion of the expiation of sin by sacrifice, whether it had its first rise from divine revelation, and was afterwards propagated from age to age by tradition; I say, from whence soever this notion came, it hath, of all other notions concerning religion, excepting those of the being of God and his providence, and of the recompences of another life, found the most universal reception; and the thing hath been the most generally practised in all ages and nations, not only in the old, but in the new discovered parts of the world.

And indeed a very great part of the Jewish religion, which was instituted by God himself, seems to have been a plain condescension to the general apprehension of mankind, concerning this way of appeasing the offended Deity by sacrifices; as it was also a figure of that great and efficacious sacrifice which should in due time be offered to God, to make atonement once for all for the sins of all mankind.

And the Apostle to the Hebrews doth very particularly insist upon this condescension of God to them in the dispensation of the gospel. And whereas they apprehended so great a necessity of an High Priest, and of sacrifices, to make expiation for the sins of the people, that it was an established principle among them, that *without shedding of blood there was no remission of sins*, God was pleased to comply so far with these notions and apprehensions of theirs, as to make his own Son both a priest and a sacrifice, to do that once for all, which their own High Priest pretended to do year by year.

And from hence the same Apostle takes occasion to recommend to them the new covenant, and dispensation of the

the gospel, as having a greater and more perfect High Priest, and a more excellent sacrifice, than were the High Priests and the sacrifices under the law; the Son of God *having by one sacrifice of himself obtained eternal redemption for us, and perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

And this apprehension prevailed no less in the heathen world, and proceeded to the sacrifices of men, even of their first-born. And with this apprehension, not to countenance, but to abolish it, God was pleased to comply so far, as to make a general atonement for the sins of mankind by the death of his Son, appearing in our nature to become a voluntary sacrifice for us: God permitting him to be unjustly put to death, and his blood to be shed by the malice of men, in appearance as a malefactor, but in truth as a martyr; and accepting of his death as a meritorious sacrifice and *propitiation for the sins of the whole world*; that, by this wise counsel and permission of his providence, he might for ever put an end to that barbarous and inhumane way of serving God, which had been so long in use and practice among them: the Son of God by the voluntary sacrifice of himself having effected all that at once, and for ever, which mankind, from the beginning of the world, had in vain been endeavouring to accomplish by innumerable and continual sacrifices; namely, the pardon of their sins, and perfect peace and reconciliation with God.

For these ends and reasons, and perhaps for many more as great and considerable as these, which our shallow understandings are not able to fathom, the wisdom of God hath pitched upon this way and method of delivering mankind from the guilt and dominion of sin by the sacrifice of his Son. And to this end it was requisite, that he should appear in our nature, and dwell amongst us for some considerable time, that, by a long course of the greatest innocency, and of the greatest sufferings in our nature, he might be capable of making a perfect expiation of sin.

So that two things were requisite to qualify him for this purpose; perfect innocency and obedience, and great sufferings in our nature, even to the suffering of death. Both these the scripture declares to be necessary qualifications of a person capable to make expiation of sin; and  
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both these were found in the person of our blessed Saviour.

1. Unspotted innocency and perfect obedience. This the scripture testifies concerning him, and the whole course of his life and actions: *He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*, saith the Apostle to the Hebrews, chap. iv. 15. *He always did the things which pleased God*, as he testifies concerning himself, John viii. 29; and *we are sure that his witness is true*. *He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*, as St. Peter tells us of him, 1 Pet. ii. 22. And this was necessary to qualify him for the perfect expiation of sin, whether we consider him as a priest, or as a sacrifice.

As a priest, he could not have been fit to make expiation for the sins of others, had he not been without sin himself. And this, the Apostle tells us, is one great advantage of our High Priest under the Gospel, above the High Priest under the law, who, being a sinner himself, as well as those for whom he offered, had need to offer for himself, before he could make so much as a legal expiation for the sins of others. But a perfect and effectual expiation of sin, so as to purge the conscience from the guilt of it, cannot be made but by an High Priest who is holy and innocent himself: *For such an high priest* (saith the Apostle, Heb. vii. 26. 27.) *became us*, (that is, now under the dispensation of the gospel, when a perfect expiation of sins is to be made, *such an high priest* is necessary,) *who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; who needeth not, as those high priests*, (that is, as the High Priests under the law,) *to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's*. The plain force of which argument is this, that he who will be qualified to make atonement for the sins of others, must be without sin himself.

And then, if we consider Christ as a sacrifice for sin, perfect holiness is necessary to make a sacrifice acceptable and available for the expiation of sin. The necessity of this was typified by the quality of the expiatory sacrifices under the law. The beasts that were to be offered, were to be *without spot and blemish*. To which the Apostle alludes, speaking of the quality and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, Heb. ix. 14. *How much more* (says he)

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shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God? And to the same purpose St. Peter, 1 epist. i. 18. 19. Forasmuch as ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, &c.; hereby intimating, that nothing less than the perfect innocency and holiness of him who was to be a sacrifice for us, could have expiated the guilt of our sins, and purchased eternal redemption for us.

2. Great sufferings likewise in our nature, even to the suffering of death, were requisite to the perfect expiation of sin: I say, even to the suffering of death; for the sacrifices which were to make expiation, were to be slain. And it was a constant maxim and principle among the Jews, and the Apostle, more than once in this epistle, seems to allow and confirm it, That *without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.*

Not that God could not have pardoned sin without satisfaction made to his justice, either by the suffering of the sinner himself, or of a sacrifice in his stead: but, according to the method and dispensation which the wisdom of God had pitched upon, he was resolved not to dispense forgiveness in any other way. For which reason he seems either to have possessed mankind with this principle, or to have permitted them to be so persuaded, That sin was not to be expiated but by blood; that is, either by the death of the sinner, or of the sacrifice.

Now, the life of our blessed Saviour, as well as his death, was made up of sufferings of one kind or other; continual sufferings from his cradle to his cross, from the time he drew his first breath, to his giving up the ghost: and not only continual sufferings, but the greatest that ever were; considering the dignity of the person that suffered, and the nature of the sufferings; considering likewise that these sufferings were not only wholly undeserved on his part, but unmerited also on ours, for whose sake he submitted himself to them: nay, on the contrary, he had obliged to the utmost those for whom and by whom he suffered, and continued still to oblige them, by the greatest blessings and benefits purchased  
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and procured for them by those very sufferings which with so much malice and cruelty they inflicted on him.

Had our blessed Saviour been a mere man, the perfect innocency and unspotted purity of his whole life; his zeal to do the will of God, and his delight in doing it; his infinite pains and unwearied diligence in *going about doing good*; his constant obedience to God in the most difficult instances; and his perseverance in well-doing, notwithstanding the ill usage and hard measure, the bitter reproaches and persecutions he met withal for it, from a wicked and ill-natured world; his perfect submission to the will of God; his invincible patience under the greatest and bitterest sufferings, and his infinite charity to his enemies and persecutors: these must needs be highly acceptable to God, and, if man could merit of God, likely enough to be available for the sins of others.

But our Saviour and our sacrifice being the Son of God in our nature; and he voluntarily assuming it, and submitting to the condition of humanity in its lowest and most miserable state, sin only excepted; and his being contented to live a life of doing good and suffering evil, and at last to be put to death, and slain a sacrifice for us: the dignity of the person who did and suffered all this for us, and his dearness to God, must needs add a mighty value to so perfect an obedience, and such patient sufferings, so as to render them a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

And all this being willingly performed in our nature, and accepted by God as done upon our account, may reasonably be presumed to redound to our benefit and advantage, as much as if we ourselves had performed it in our own persons; nothing being so proper and so available to make an honourable amends and satisfaction to the justice of God for the sins of all mankind, as the voluntary obedience and sufferings of human nature in a person of so great dignity, and dearness to God, as his eternal and entirely beloved Son.

Now, that expiation of sin was made by the sufferings of Christ in our stead, I shall endeavour to make good these three ways.

1. From plain testimonies of holy scripture, declaring  
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this matter to us as clearly and fully as it is possible for words to do it.

2. From the nature and intention of expiatory sacrifices, both among the Jews and Heathens; to which the death of Christ is in the New Testament so frequently compared, and, in point of virtue and efficacy to take away sin, infinitely preferred to them.

3. By vindicating this method and dispensation of the divine wisdom, from the objections which are brought against it; and by shewing, that there is nothing in it that is unreasonable, or any ways unworthy of God.

I. I shall produce some plain testimonies of Holy Scripture, which declare this matter as clearly and fully as it is possible for words to do it, namely, that the Son of God, in order to the effectual expiation of sin, suffered in our stead, and bore the wrath of God for us, and made a perfect atonement for sin, and obtained eternal redemption for us.

This the scripture declares to us in great variety of expressions; as, that *Christ died for us, and for our sins*: that he was *a sacrifice for us, and a propitiation for the sins of the whole world*; that is, of all mankind: that *he bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself*: that *we are justified by his blood, and redeemed by the price of it*. And in very many other expressions to the same purpose.

And this is so evidently the scope and meaning of these expressions, that it cannot be denied, without offering the greatest violence imaginable to the Holy Scriptures. For can any man think that God would have used so many expressions in scripture, the plain and most obvious sense of all which is, that the Son of God suffered for our sins and in our stead, if this had not been his design and meaning? Would not this be in effect to say, that God had written a great book to puzzle and confound, but not to instruct and teach mankind?

I will at present single out some few of those many texts of scripture which might be produced to this purpose: 2 Cor. v. 21. *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin*; that is, he hath made him, who had no sin himself, a sacrifice for our sins. Again, Eph. v. 2. *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath*

given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God. St. Peter to the same purpose tells us, that *Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh*, 1 Pet. iii. 18. Here Christ is said to have *suffered for sin*: and to declare, that the Apostle did not only mean that Christ suffered upon the occasion of our sins, but that he suffered in the place and stead of the sinner, he adds, *the just for the unjust*; that is, the Son of God, who was innocent and had no sin, suffered for us who were sinners; or, as it is elsewhere expressed, *he bare our sins in his own body on the tree*.

It is true indeed, that Christ suffered for our benefit and advantage; which the Socinians would have to be all that is meant in the texts which I have cited: but then it ought to be considered, that Christ's suffering for our benefit and advantage does by no means exclude, nor is any ways inconsistent with his suffering in our stead. For whoever suffers in another man's stead, and to save him from suffering, does undoubtedly suffer for his benefit and advantage, and gives the best demonstration of it that can be. But the manner of the expression, if compared with other parallel texts of scripture, and especially with what is so often said of our Saviour's being a sacrifice, which I shall have occasion further to urge by and by; I say, the manner of the expression, if well considered, will appear to any man that is not contentious, to signify our Saviour's suffering instead of the sinner.

But, not to argue from words and phrases, I will produce two texts which declare this matter so plainly, that the force of them is not to be avoided, without the most shameful wresting and perverting of them. John xv. 12. *This is my commandment, (says our Saviour) That ye love one another, as I have loved you*. How is that? he declares in the next words, v. 13. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend*; that is, that he be contented to die in his stead. And to the same purpose St. Paul, Rom. v. 6. *For when we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*. Now, the question is, Whether, by this expression of Christ's dying for the ungodly, be meant only his dying for the benefit

benefit and advantage of sinners, but not his dying in their stead? This, let the words which immediately follow determine: v. 7. 8. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* And now I appeal to any man of good sense, whether it be not plain, that the Apostle here speaks of Christ's dying for sinners in the same sense as one man is said to die for another: that is, to save another from death; which, what is it else but to die in his stead? He that can deny this, is perverse to the highest degree, and I fear almost beyond the possibility of being convinced.

And the argument from these two texts is so much the stronger, because we do not here reason merely from the phrase and expression, but from the main scope of our Saviour's discourse in the one, and of St. Paul's in the other: for the design of both is, to recommend the superlative love of Christ to us, above the greatest love that ever any man expressed to another. The highest pitch that human affection did ever rise to, was for a man to lay down his life for his friend; but the Son of God laid down his life for his enemies. *Scarcely* (says St. Paul) *would one lay down his life for a righteous man*; that is, for one who is but strictly just and honest, and does no body wrong; but for a good man, that is, for one that is kind and beneficial to all, and hath obliged mankind by great benefits, some one may be found that would lay down his life to save the life of such a person: but the love of Christ hath gone far beyond this; he died for sinners, for those who were neither good men nor righteous: *But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* Now, where doth the force of this argument lie, if not in this, that Christ hath done that for us, who were enemies and sinners, which some very few persons in the world have done for their friend, or for some very eminently good man? And what is that? why they have laid down their lives in their stead. And so Christ hath done for us. This seems to be so very plain, that I do not see how the force of this argument is possible to be avoided.

It is evident then from scripture, that Christ died, not only for our advantage, but in our stead; as truly and really as any man ever did or can die for another, who lays down his own life to save another from death. For if Christ had not died, we had perished everlastingly; and because he died, we are saved from eternal death and misery.

And though this be no where in scripture spoken of by the name or term of *satisfaction*, yet it is said to be the price of our redemption; which surely is the same in effect with satisfaction. For as we are sinners, we are liable, and, as I may say, indebted to the justice of God; and the Son of God, by his death and sufferings in our nature, hath discharged this obligation, and paid this debt for us. Which discharge, since it was obtained for us by the shedding of Christ's blood, and the scripture tells us, that *without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins*; and since God is graciously pleased to accept of it for the debt which we owed to his justice, and to declare himself fully pleased and contented with it; why it may not properly enough be called *payment* or *satisfaction*, I confess I am not able to understand. Men may eternally wrangle about any thing; but what a frivolous contention, what a trifling in serious matters, what barretry in divinity is this?

Not that God was angry with his Son when he thus *laid on him the iniquities of us all*: no; he was always well pleased with him; and never better, than when he *became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, and bore our sins in his own body on the tree*.

Nor yet that our Saviour suffered the very same that the sinner should have suffered, namely, the proper pains and torment of the damned; but that his obedience and sufferings were of that value and esteem with God, and his voluntary sacrifice of himself so well-pleasing to him, that he thereupon entered into a covenant of grace and mercy with mankind, wherein he hath engaged himself to forgive the sins of those who believe and repent, and to make them partakers of eternal life. And hence the blood of Christ, which was shed for us upon the cross, is called *the blood of the covenant*, as being the sanction of that new covenant into which God is entered with mankind;

kind; and not only the sanction and confirmation of that covenant, but the very foundation of it; for which reason the cup in the Lord's supper is called *the new testament* (or, as the word should rather be rendered, *the new covenant*) *in his blood, which was shed for many for the remission of sins.* I proceed now to the

II. Second thing propounded; which was, to shew that the expiation of our sins was made by the sufferings of Christ, from the nature and intention of expiatory sacrifices, both among the Jews and Heathens; to which the death of Christ is in the New Testament so frequently compared, and, in point of virtue and efficacy to take away sin, infinitely preferred to them.

Now, the nature and design of expiatory sacrifices was plainly this, to substitute one living creature to suffer and die instead of another; so that what the sinner deserved to have suffered, was supposed to be done to the sacrifice; that is, it was slain to make an atonement for the sinner.

And though there was no reason to hope for any such effect from the blood of bulls, or goats, or of any other living creatures that were wont to be offered up in sacrifice; yet that both Jews and Heathens did expect and hope for it, is so very evident, that it cannot, without extreme ignorance or obstinacy, be denied.

But this expectation, how unreasonable soever, plainly shews it to have been the common apprehension of mankind in all ages, that God would not be appeased, nor should sin be pardoned, without suffering: but yet so, that men generally conceived good hopes, that upon the repentance of sinners, God would accept of a vicarious punishment; that is, of the suffering of some other in their stead. And very probably, as I said before, in compliance with this apprehension of mankind, and in condescension to it, as well as for other weighty reasons best known to the divine wisdom, God, was pleased to find out such a sacrifice as should really and effectually procure for them that great blessing of the forgiveness of sins, which they had so long hoped for from the multitude of their own sacrifices.

And the Apostle to the Hebrews doth, in a large discourse, shew the great virtue and efficacy of the sacrifice

of Christ, to the purpose of remission of sins, above that of the sacrifices under the law; and that the death of Christ is really and effectually to our advantage all that which the sacrifices under the law were supposed to be to the sinner: *But now once* (saith the Apostle here in the text) *in the end of the world, hath he appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* This is the great virtue and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, that whatever was expected from any other sacrifices, either by Jews or Heathens, was really effected by this.

This was plainly signified by the Jewish passover, wherein the lamb was slain, and the sinner did escape, and was passed by. In allusion whereto St. Paul makes no scruple to call Christ *our passover* or *paschal lamb*, who was slain that we might escape: *Christ our passover* (says he, 1 Cor. v. 7.) *is slain*, or offered *for us*; that is, he, by the gracious appointment of God, was substituted to suffer all that in our stead which the paschal lamb was supposed to suffer for the sinner.

And this was likewise signified by the sinner's laying his hand upon the sacrifice that was to be slain, thereby, as it were, transferring the punishment which was due to himself, upon the sacrifice that was to be slain and offered up. For so God tells Moses, that the sinner, who came to offer an expiatory sacrifice, should do, Lev. i. 4. *He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make an atonement for him.* And the Apostle tells us, that it was an established principle in the Jewish religion, that *without shedding of blood there was no remission of sins.* Which plainly shews, that they expected this benefit of the remission of sins, from the blood of their sacrifices.

And then he tells us, that we are really made partakers of this benefit by the blood of Christ, and by the virtue of his sacrifice. And again, *Christ* (says he, Heb. ix. 28.) *was once offered to bear the sins of many*; plainly alluding to the sacrifices under the law, which did, as it were, bear the faults of the sinner.

And that this expression of *Christ's being offered to bear our sins*, cannot be meant of his taking away our sins by his holy doctrine, which was confirmed by his death, but of his bearing our sins by way of imputation,  
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and by his suffering for them in our stead, as the sacrifice was supposed to do for the sinner: this, I say, is evident beyond all denial, from the opposition which follows after the text, between his first appearance and his second: *Christ* (says our Apostle, v. 28) *was once offered to bear our sins; but unto them that look for him he shall appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.* Why? did he not appear the first time without sin? Yes, certainly, as to any inherent guilt: for the scripture tells us, *he had no sin.* What then is the meaning of the opposition, that at his first coming *he bore our sins*, but at his second coming *he shall appear, without sin, unto salvation*? These words can have no other imaginable sense but this, that at his first coming he sustained the person of a sinner, and suffered instead of us; but his second coming shall be upon another account, and *he shall appear, without sin, unto salvation*; that is, not as a sacrifice; but as a judge, to confer the reward of eternal life upon those who are partakers of the benefit of that sacrifice which he offered to God for us *in the days of his flesh.* I proceed to the

III. Third thing I proposed, and which yet remains to be spoken to, namely, to vindicate this method and dispensation of the divine wisdom, from the objections which are brought against it; and to shew, that there is nothing in it that is unreasonable, or any ways unworthy of God. I shall mention four objections which are commonly urged in this matter, and I think they are all that are considerable.

I. That this method, of the expiation of sin by the sufferings of Christ, seems to argue some defect and want of goodness in God, as if he needed some external motive, and were not of himself disposed to forgive sinners.

To which I think the answer is not difficult, namely; That God did not want goodness to have forgiven sin freely and without any satisfaction; but his wisdom did not think it meet to give encouragement to sin by too easy a forgiveness, and without some remarkable testimony of his severe displeasure against it: and therefore his greater goodness and compassion to mankind devised this way to save the sinner, without giving the least countenance and encouragement to sin.

For God to think of saving us any way, was excessive goodness and mercy ; but to think of doing it in this way, by substituting his dearly beloved Son to suffer in our stead, is a condescension so very amazing, that if God had not been pleased of his own goodness to stoop to it, it had almost been blasphemy in man to have thought of it, or desired it.

2. How can our sins be said to have been forgiven freely, if the pardon of them was purchased at so dear a rate, and so mighty a price was paid for it ?

In answer to this, I desire these two things may be considered. 1<sup>st</sup>, That it is a wonderful grace and favour of God, to admit of this translation of the punishment which was due to us, and to accept of the sufferings of another in our stead, and for our benefit, when he might justly have exacted it of us in our own persons : so that, even in this respect, we are, as St. Paul says, *justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ* : and freely too, in respect of any necessity that lay upon God to forgive us in this or any other way. It was a free act of his goodness to save us, even by the satisfaction and sufferings of his own Son. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It was in effect freely too, notwithstanding the mighty price which was paid for our redemption : because this price was not of our own<sup>e</sup> procuring, but of God's providing ; he *found out this ransom for us*. And will any man say, that a prince who prevails with his son to interceed for the pardon of a rebel, yea and to suffer some punishment, or to pay a fine for the obtaining of it, does not in effect, and in all equitable and grateful construction, forgive him freely ?

3. It is yet further objected, That this seems to be more unreasonable than the sacrificing of beasts among the Jews, nay than the sacrificing of men among the Heathen, and even of their own sons and daughters ; because this is the offering up of the Son of God, the most innocent and the most excellent person that ever was.

To which I answer, That if we consider the manner and the design of it, the thing will appear to be quite otherways.

As to the manner of it, God did not command his Son

Son to be sacrificed ; but his providence permitted the wickedness and violence of men to put him to death ; and then his goodness and wisdom did over-rule this worst of actions to the best of ends. And if we consider the matter aright, how is this any more a reflexion upon the holy providence of God, than any enormities and cruelties which by his permission are daily committed in the world ?

And then, if we consider the end and design of this permission of Christ's death, and the application of it to the purpose of a general expiation ; we cannot but acknowledge, and even adore the gracious and merciful design of it. For by this means God did at once put an end to that unreasonable and bloody way of worship, which had been so long practised in the world ; and, after this one sacrifice, which was so infinitely dear to God, the benefit of expiation was not to be expected in any other way ; all other sacrifices being worthless and vain in comparison of this : and it hath ever since obtained this effect, of making all other sacrifices to cease, in all parts of the world where Christianity hath prevailed.

4. The last objection is, the injustice and cruelty of an innocent person's suffering instead of the offender.

To this I answer, That they who make so great a noise with this objection, do seem to me to give a full and clear answer to it themselves, by acknowledging, as they constantly and expressly do, that our Saviour suffered all this for our benefit and advantage, though not in our place and stead. For this, to my apprehension, is plainly to give up the cause, unless they can shew a good reason why there is not as much injustice and cruelty in an innocent person's suffering for the benefit and advantage of a malefactor, as in his suffering in his stead. So little do men, in the heat of dispute and opposition, who are resolved to hold fast an opinion in despite of reason and good sense, consider, that they do many times in effect, and by necessary consequence, grant the very thing which in express terms they do so stiffly and pertinaciously deny.

The truth of the matter is this : There is nothing of injustice or cruelty in either case, neither in an innocent person's

person's suffering for the benefit of an offender, nor in his stead, supposing the suffering to be voluntary; but they have equally the same appearance of injustice and cruelty. Nor can I possibly discern any reason why injustice and cruelty should be objected in the one case more than in the other; there being every whit as little reason why an innocent person should suffer for the benefit of a criminal, as why he should suffer in his stead. So that I hope this objection, which above all the rest hath been so loudly and so invidiously urged, hath received a just answer.

And I believe, if the matter were searched to the bottom, all this perverse contention about our Saviour's suffering for our benefit, but not in our stead, will signify just nothing. For if Christ died for our benefit, so as some way or other, by virtue of his death and sufferings, to save us from the wrath of God, and to procure our escape from eternal death; this, for ought I know, is all that any body means by his dying in our stead: for he that dies with an intention to do that benefit to another as to save him from death, doth certainly, to all intents and purposes, die in his place and stead.

And if they will grant this to be their meaning, the controversy is at an end: and both sides are agreed in the thing, and do only differ in the phrase and manner of expression; which is to seek a quarrel and an occasion of difference where there is no real ground for it: a thing which ought to be very far from reasonable and peaceable minds.

For the Socinians say, that our Saviour's voluntary obedience and sufferings did procure his exaltation at the right hand of God, and power and authority to forgive sins, and to give eternal life to as many as he pleased. So that they grant that his obedience and sufferings, in the meritorious consequence of them, do redound to our benefit and advantage, as much as we pretend and say they do; only they are loth in express terms to acknowledge that Christ died in our stead: and this for no other reason, that I can imagine, but because they have denied it so often and so long.

But I appeal to the ingenuity of our adversaries, whether this do not in the last issue come all to one; and be  
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not, on their part, a mere controversy about words? For suppose a malefactor condemned to some grievous punishment; and the king's son, to save him from it, is contented to submit to great disgrace and sufferings: in reward of which sufferings, the king takes his son into his throne, and sets him at his own right hand, and gives him power to pardon this malefactor, and, upon a fitting submission and repentance, to advance him to honour. Will not any man in this case allow, that the king's son suffered instead of this malefactor; and smile at any man that shall be so nice, as to grant, that indeed he suffered for him, but yet to deny that he was punished for him; to allow that he bore the inconvenience of his faults, but yet obstinately to stand it out, that the faults of this malefactor were not laid upon him, or in any ways so imputed to him, that he can be said to have suffered in his stead? This is just the case; and the difference in reality, and in the last result of things, is nothing but words.

Thus far have I tried your patience in a contentious argument, in which I take no pleasure; but yet shall be glad, if I may be so happy as, by any thing that hath been said, to contribute towards the putting an end to so unhappy a controversy, which hath troubled the world so long, and raised such a dust, that very few have been able to see clearly through it.

However, I cannot dismiss this argument without making some useful, but very short reflexions upon this great doctrine of our religion, namely, That the Son of God being made a sacrifice for us, and exposed to such bitter sufferings, and so cruel a death, for the expiation of our sins, should create in us the greatest dread and detestation of sin, and for ever deter us from all wilful transgression and disobedience. For if the guilt of our sins was done away upon such hard terms, and cost the dearly beloved Son of God so much sweat and blood, then surely we ought to take great heed, how, by our renewed provocations, we renew his passion, and do what in us lies to *crucify to ourselves the Son of God afresh, and to put him to an open shame.*

If God did so terribly afflict the dearly beloved of his soul for our sakes; if the Son of God was so grievously

*wounded*

wounded for our transgressions, and so sorely bruised for our iniquities; if so fearful a storm of vengeance fell upon the most innocent person that ever was, for our sins, then we have reason to take that kind and merciful admonition of the Son of God to sinners, to *sin no more, lest a worse thing, if it be possible, come upon ourselves.*

In this dispensation of God's grace and mercy to mankind, by the death of his Son, God seems to have gone to the very extremity of things, and almost further than goodness and justice will well admit, to afflict innocency itself, and to save the guilty. And if herein God hath expressed his hatred of sin in such a wonderful way of love and kindness to the sons of men, as looks almost like hatred of innocency, and his own Son; this ought, in all ingenuity and gratitude to our gracious Redeemer, who *was made a curse for us, and loved us to that degree, as to wash us from our sins in his own blood;* I say, this ought to beget in us a greater displeasure against sin, and a more perfect detestation of it, than if we had suffered the punishment due to it in our own persons: for in this case we could only have been displeas'd at ourselves, and our sins, as the just cause of our sufferings; but in the other we ought to hate sin as the unhappy occasion of the saddest misfortune and sorest calamities to the best man that ever was, and to our best friend, for our sins, and for our sakes.

Since then the Son of God hath so graciously condescended to be *made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted;* let us aspire as much as is possible to become like to him. Above all, let us hate and avoid sin, as the only thing in which the Son of God would have no part with us, though he was contented to suffer such bitter things to save us from the defilement and dominion of it, from the punishment and all the dismal consequences of it.

*He had no sin:* but God was pleas'd to lay upon him the iniquities of us all, and to make his soul an offering for sin, and to permit all that to be done to him which was due to us. He was contented to be sacrific'd once for all mankind, that men might for ever cease from that inhumane and ineffectual way of sacrificing one another; whereby, instead of expiating their guilt, they did in-  
 flame

flame it, and by thinking to make atonement for their sins, they did in truth add to the number and heinousness of them.

And let us likeways learn from this admirable pattern, to pity those that are in misery, as Christ also hath pitied us; and to save them that are ready to perish, for his sake who came to seek and to save us that were lost.

Let us, upon all occasions, be ready to open our bowels of compassion towards the poor; in a thankful imitation of his grace and goodness, who for our sakes chose to be a beggar, that we for his sake might not despise the poor, but might have a tender regard and compassion to those whose condition in this world does so nearly resemble that in which the Son of God thought it fittest for him to appear, when he was pleased to become man.

In a word, let us, in the whole course, and in all the actions of our lives, *shew forth the virtues of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light; and hath raised up a mighty salvation for us, that, being delivered from all our spiritual enemies, from sin, and all the powers of darkness, we might serve him who hath saved us: walking in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives.*

Now, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain: to God even our Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth; unto him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and, whilst we were enemies to him, loved us at such a rate, as never any man did his friend: to him who became man, that he might bring us to God; and assumed our frail and mortal nature, that he might clothe us with immortality and life: to him who was pleased to dwell and live amongst us, that he might teach us how to live: to him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and lives for ever to make intercession for us: to him be glory and dominion, thanksgiving and praise, to eternal ages. Amen.

## S E R M O N XLVIII.

Concerning the unity of the divine nature,  
and the blessed Trinity, &c.

1 T I M. ii. 5.

*For there is one God.*

**T**HE particle *for* leads us to the consideration of the context, and occasion of these words ; which in short is this. The design of this epistle is, to direct Timothy, to whom St. Paul had committed the government of the church of Ephesus, how he ought to demean himself in that great and weighty charge. And, at the beginning of this chapter, he gives directions concerning public prayers in the church ; that *prayers and thanksgivings be made for all men*, and for all ranks and orders of men ; especially for *kings, and all that are in authority, that under them Christians might lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.*

And this he tells us was very suitable to the Christian religion, by which God designed the salvation of mankind ; and therefore it must needs be very acceptable to him, that we should offer up prayers and thanksgivings to him in behalf of all men ; *For this* (saith the Apostle) *is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour ; who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

And then it follows in the next words, *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all* : as if he had said, This universal charity of Christians, in *praying for all men*, must needs be very acceptable to him to whom we put up our prayers, God the Father, who sent his Son for the salvation of all men ; and to him likewise by whom we offer up our prayers to God, and is amongst us Christians the only *Mediator between God and men*, in virtue of that price and ransom which he paid  
for

for the redemption of all mankind; I say, for this reason, it must needs be very acceptable to him, that we should pray for all men, because he died for all men; and now that he is in heaven at the right hand of God, interceeds with him for the salvation of those for whom he died. *There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.*

Which words, though they be brought in to prove more immediately, that it is *acceptable to God our Saviour*, that we should put up prayers to him for all men, because he desires the salvation of all men, and hath sent his Son to purchase the salvation of all men by the sacrifice of himself, and, in virtue of that sacrifice, to be the only Mediator between God and us: I say, though this be the immediate scope and design of these words, yet they are likewise a direction to us, unto whom we ought to address our prayers, namely, to God; and by whose mediation and intercession we ought to put up our prayers to God the Father, namely, by his Son Jesus Christ, who is constituted the only *Mediator between God and man.*

There are several propositions contained in this and the following verse. But I shall at present confine myself to the first, namely, That *there is one God*; that is, *but one*; as St. Paul elsewhere expresseth it, *There is none other God but one*, 1 Cor. viii. 4. And Moses lays this as the foundation of the natural law, as well as of the Jewish religion, *The Lord he is one God; there is none else besides him*, Deut. iv. 35. that is, besides Jehovah, whom the people of Israel did worship as the only true God. And this the Prophet Isaiah perpetually declares, in opposition to the Polytheism and variety of gods among the Heathen, Is. xlv. 6. *I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God.* And again, v. 8. *Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God, I know not any.* He, who hath an infinite knowledge, and knows all things, knows no other God. And our blessed Saviour makes this the fundamental article of all religion, and the knowledge of it necessary to every man's salvation: *This (says he) is life eternal, to know thee the only true God.*

The unity of the divine nature is a notion wherein the greatest and the wisest part of mankind did always agree ; and therefore may reasonably be presumed to be either natural, or to have sprung from some original tradition delivered down to us from the first parents of mankind : I mean, that there is one supreme being, the author and cause of all things, whom the most ancient of the Heathen poets commonly called *the father of gods and men*. And thus Aristotle, in his metaphysics, defines God, “ the eternal, and most excellent, or best of all living beings.” And this notion of one supreme being agrees very well with that exact harmony which appears in the frame and government of the world ; in which we see all things conspiring to one end, and continuing in one uniform order and course ; which cannot reasonably be ascribed to any other but a constant and uniform cause ; and which, to a considering man, does plainly shew, that all things are made and governed by that one powerful principle, and great and wise mind, which we call *God*.

But although the generality of mankind had a notion of one supreme God, yet the idolatry of the Heathen plainly shews, that this notion, in process of time, was greatly degenerated, and corrupted into an apprehension of a plurality of gods ; though in reason it is evident enough that there can be no more gods than one ; and that one, who is of infinite perfection, is as sufficient to all purposes whatsoever, as ten thousand deities, if they were possible, could possibly be ; as I shall shew in the following discourse.

Now, this multitude of deities, which the fond superstition, and vain imagination of men had formed to themselves, were by the wiser sort, who, being forced to comply with the follies of the people, endeavoured to make the best of them, supposed to be either parts of the universe : which the Egyptians, as Plutarch tells us, thought to be the same with God ; but then the most considerable parts of the universe they parcelled out into several deities : and as the ocean hath several names, according to the several coasts and countries by which it passeth ; so they gave several names to this one Deity, according to

to the several parts of the world, which several nations made the objects of their worship :

Or else they adored the several perfections and powers of the one supreme God, under several names and titles, with regard to the various blessings and benefits which they thought they received from him.

Thus the Indian philosophers, the Brachmans, are said to have worshipped the sun as the supreme Deity : and he certainly is the most worshipful of all sensible beings, and bids fairest for a deity ; especially if he was, as they supposed, animated by a spirit endowed with knowledge and understanding. And if a man, who had been bred in a dark cave, should all on the sudden be brought out at noon-day to behold this visible world ; after he had viewed and considered it a while, he would in all probability pitch upon the sun as the most likely, of all the things he had seen, to be a Deity. For if such a man had any notion of a God, and were to chuse one upon sight, he would without dispute fix upon the sun, and fall down and worship him.

And Macrobius manageth this as his main plea for the idolatry of the Heathen, that under all the several names of their gods they worshipped the sun : and this diversity of names was but a more distinct conception and acknowledgment of the many blessings and advantages which mankind received from him, and a more particular and express adoration of the several powers and perfections which were in him. And this was the very best defence, and all the tolerable sense which the wisest among the Heathen could make, of the multitude of their deities.

And yet whilst they generally owned one supreme being, that was the principle and original of all things, they worshipped several subordinate deities, as really distinct from one another. Some of these they fancied to be superior to the rest, and to have their residence in heaven, by which Marsilius Ficinus supposes Plato to mean no more but the chief of the angels. These were called *θεοι*, *dii superi*, and *dii caelestes* ; “ superior and heavenly gods.” The scripture terms them *the host of heaven*, meaning the sun, moon, and stars ; which they supposed

to be animated, or at least to be inhabited by angels, or glorious spirits, whom they called *gods*.

Other of their deities were accounted much inferior to these, being supposed to be the souls of their deceased heroes; who, for their great and worthy deeds when they lived upon earth, were supposed after death to be translated into the number of their gods; and these were called *semidei* and *deastri*; that is, “half gods, and a sort of gods.” And as the other were celestial, so these were *δαίμονες ἐπιχθόνιοι*, a kind of terrestrial spirits, that were presidents and procurators of human affairs here below; that is, a middle sort of divine powers, that were mediators and agents between God and men, and did carry the prayers and supplications of men to God, and bring down the commands and blessings of God to men.

But in the midst of all this crowd and confusion of deities, and the various superstitions about them, the wiser Heathen, as Thales, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Tully, Plutarch, and others, preserved a true notion of one supreme God, whom they defined, “An infinite Spirit, pure from all matter, and free from all imperfection:” and all the variety of their worship was, as they pretended in excuse of it, but a more particular owning of the various representations of the divine power and excellencies which manifested themselves in the world, and of the several communications of blessings and favours by them imparted to men. And Tertullian (*adversus Marcionem*, l. 1. c. 10.) observes, that even when idolatry had very much obscured the glory of the sovereign deity, yet the greater part of mankind did still, in their common forms of speech, appropriate the name of God in a more especial and peculiar manner to one, saying, “If God grant, If God please,” and the like.

So that there is sufficient ground to believe, that the unity of the divine nature, or the notion of one supreme God, creator and governor of the world, was the primitive and general belief of mankind; and that polytheism and idolatry were a corruption and degeneracy from the original notion which mankind had concerning God; as the scripture-history doth declare and testify.

And

And this account which I have given of the heathen idolatry, doth by no means excuse it. For whatever may be said by way of extenuation in behalf of some few of the wiser and more devout among them, the generality were grossly guilty both of believing more gods, and of worshipping false gods.

And this must needs be a very great crime, since the scripture every where declares God to be particularly jealous in this case, and that *he will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images*: nay, we may not so much as make use of sensible images to put us in mind of God; lest devout ignorance, seeing the worship which wise men paid towards an idol, should be drawn to terminate their worship there, as being the very Deity itself; which was certainly the case of the greatest part of the heathen world.

And surely those Christians are in no less danger of idolatry, who pay a veneration to images, by kneeling down and praying before them: and in this they are much more inexcusable, because they offend against a much clearer light: and yet when they go about to justify this practice, are able to bring no other nor better pleas for themselves, than the heathen did for their worshipping of images, and for praying to their inferior deities, whom they looked upon as mediators between the gods in heaven and men upon earth.

There is but one objection, that I know of, against the general consent of mankind concerning the unity of God; and it is this, That there was an ancient doctrine of some of the most ancient nations, that there were two first causes or principles of all things; the one the cause of all good, and the other of all the evil that is in the world: the reason whereof seems to have been, that they could not apprehend how things of so contrary a nature, as good and evil, could proceed from one and the same cause.

And these two principles in several nations were called by several names. Plutarch says, that among the Greeks the good principle was called *God*, and the evil principle *Δαίμων*, or *the devil*. In conformity to which ancient tradition, the Manichees, a sect, which called themselves *Christians*, did advance two principles; the one

one infinitely good, which they supposed to be the original cause of all the good which is in the world; the other infinitely evil, to which they ascribed all the evils that are in the world.

But all this is very plainly a corruption of a much more ancient tradition concerning that old serpent the devil, the head of the fallen angels, who, by tempting our first parents to transgress a positive and express law of God, brought sin first into the world, and all the evils consequent upon it; of which the scripture gives us a most express and particular account.

And as to the notion of a being infinitely evil, into which this tradition was corrupted, after idolatry had prevailed in the world; besides that it is a contradiction, it would likewise be to no purpose, to assert two opposite principles, of infinite, that is, of equal force and power; for two infinites must of necessity be equal to one another; because nothing can be more or greater than infinite: and therefore, if two infinite beings were possible, they would certainly be equal, and could not be otherwise.

Now, that the notion of a principle infinitely evil is a contradiction, will be very plain, if we consider, that what is infinitely evil, must, in strict reasoning, and by necessary consequence, be infinitely imperfect, and therefore infinitely weak; and for that reason, though never so malicious and mischievous, yet, being infinitely weak and foolish, could never be in capacity either to contrive mischief, or to execute it.

But if it should be admitted, that a being infinitely mischievous could be infinitely knowing and powerful, yet it could effect no evil; because the opposite principle of infinite goodness being also infinitely wise and powerful, they would tie up one another's hands. So that, upon this supposition, the notion of a Deity must signify just nothing; because, by virtue of the eternal opposition and equal conflict of these two principles, they would keep one another at a perpetual bay; and being just an equal match to one another, the one having as much mind and power to do good, as the other to do evil; instead of being two deities, they would be but two idols, able to do neither good nor evil.

And

And having, I hope, now sufficiently cleared this objection, I shall proceed to shew how agreeable this principle, That *there is but one God*, is to the common reason of mankind, and to the clearest and most essential notions which we have of God. And this will appear these two ways.

1. By considering the most essential perfections of the divine nature.

2. From the repugnancy and impossibility, the great absurdity and inconvenience of supposing more gods than one.

I. By considering the most essential perfections of the divine nature. Absolute perfection, which we ascribe to God, as the most essential notion which mankind hath always had concerning him, does necessarily suppose unity; because this is essential to the notion of a being that is absolutely perfect, that all perfection meets, and is united in such a being: but to imagine more gods, and some perfections to be in one, and some in another, does destroy the most essential notion which men have of God; namely, that he is a being absolutely perfect; that is, as perfect as is possible. Now, to suppose some perfections in one god, which are not in another, is to suppose some possible perfection to be wanting in God; which is a contradiction to the most natural and the most easy notion which all men have of God, that he is a being in whom all perfections do meet and are united: but if we suppose more gods, each of which hath all perfections united in him, then all but one would be superfluous and needless; and therefore, by just and necessary consequence, not only may, but of necessity must be supposed not to be, since necessary existence is essential to the Deity: and therefore if but one God be necessary, there can be no more.

II. From the repugnancy and impossibility, the great absurdity and inconvenience of the contrary. For suppose there were more gods, two, for example; and if there may be two, there may be a million, for we can stop no where: I say, suppose two gods; either these two would be in all perfections equal and alike, or unequal and unlike: if equal and alike in all things, then, as I said before, one of them would be needless and superfluous;

perfluous; and if one, why not as well the other? they being supposed to be in all things perfectly alike; and then there would be no necessity at all, of the being of a God: and yet is granted on all hands, that necessary existence is essential to the notion of a God: but if they be unequal, that is, one of them inferior to and less perfect than the other, that which is inferior and less perfect could not be God, because he would not have all perfection. So that, which way soever we turn the thing, and look upon it, the notion of more gods than one, is by its own repugnancy and self-contradiction destructive of itself.

Before I come to apply this doctrine of the unity of God, I must not pass by a very considerable difficulty, which will most certainly arise in every man's mind, without taking particular notice of it, and endeavouring to remove it, if I can. And it is the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, or of three real differences or distinct persons in one and the same divine nature.

And though this be not a difficulty peculiar only to the christian religion, as by the generality of those who urge this objection against Christians hath been inconsiderately thought; for it is certain, that long before Christianity appeared in the world, there was a very ancient tradition, both among Jews and Heathens, concerning three real differences or distinctions in the divine nature, very nearly resembling the christian doctrine of the Trinity; as I shall have occasion more fully to shew by and by: yet it cannot be denied, but that this difficulty doth in a more especial manner affect the christian religion; the generality of Christians, who do most firmly believe the Trinity, believing likewise, at the same time, more stedfastly, if it be possible, that there is but one God: *To us*, (saith St. Paul, 1 Corinth. viii. 6.) that is, to us Christians, *there is but one God*. But how can this possibly consist with the common doctrine of Christians concerning the Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to each of whom they attribute, as they verily believe the scripture does, the most incommunicable properties and perfections of the divine nature? And what is this less in effect, than to say, that there are three gods?

For

For the clearing of this difficulty, I shall, with all the brevity I can, offer these following considerations; which I hope, to an impartial and unprejudiced judgment, will be sufficient to remove it, or at least to break the main force and strength of it.

1. I desire it may be well considered, that there is a wide difference between the nice speculations of the schools, beyond what is revealed in scripture, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, and what the scripture only teaches and asserts concerning this mystery. For it is not to be denied, but that the schoolmen, who abounded in wit and leisure, tho' very few among them had either exact skill in the Holy Scriptures, or in ecclesiastical antiquity, and the writings of the ancient fathers of the christian church; I say, it cannot be denied, but that these speculative and very acute men, who wrought a great part of their divinity out of their own brains, as spiders do cobwebs out of their own bowels, have started a thousand subtillies about this mystery, such as no Christian is bound to trouble his head withal: much less is it necessary for him to understand those niceties, which we may reasonably presume that they who talk of them did themselves never thoroughly understand; and, least of all, is it necessary to believe them. The modesty of Christians is contented in divine mysteries to know what God hath thought fit to reveal concerning them, and hath no curiosity to be *wise above that which is written*. It is enough to believe what God says concerning these matters; and, if any man will venture to say more, every other man surely is at his liberty, to believe as he sees reason.

2. I desire it may, in the next place, be considered, that the doctrine of the Trinity, even as it is asserted in scripture, is acknowledged by us to be still a great mystery, and so imperfectly revealed, as to be in a great measure incomprehensible by human reason. And therefore, though some learned and judicious men may have very commendably attempted a more particular explication of this great mystery by the strength of reason; yet I dare not pretend to that, knowing both the difficulty and danger of such an attempt, and mine own insufficiency for it.

All that I ever designed upon this argument, was to make out the credibility of the thing from the authority of the Holy Scriptures, without descending to a more particular explication of it than the scripture hath given us; lest, by endeavouring to lay the difficulties which are already started about it, new ones should be raised, and such as may perhaps be much harder to be removed than those which we have now to grapple withal. And this I hope I have in some measure done in one of the former discourses, [Ser. 44.] Nor indeed do I see, that it is any ways necessary to do more; it being sufficient, that God hath declared what he thought fit in this matter; and that we do firmly believe what he says concerning it to be true, though we do not perfectly comprehend the meaning of all that he hath said about it.

For in this, and the like cases, I take an implicit faith to be very commendable; that is, to believe whatever we are sufficiently assured God hath revealed, tho' we do not fully understand his meaning in such a revelation. And thus every man who believes the Holy Scriptures to be a truly divine revelation, does implicitly believe a great part of the prophetic books of scripture, and several obscure expressions in those books, tho' he do not particularly understand the meaning of all the predictions and expressions contained in them. In like manner, there are certainly a great many very good Christians, who do not believe and comprehend the mysteries of faith nicely enough to approve themselves to a scholastical and magisterial judge of controversies, who yet, if they do heartily embrace the doctrines which are clearly revealed in scripture, and live up to the plain precepts of the christian religion, will, I doubt not, be very well approved by the great and just, and by the infallibly infallible judge of the world.

3. Let it be further considered, that though neither the word *trinity*, nor perhaps *person*, in the sense in which it is used by divines when they treat of this mystery, be any where to be met with in scripture; yet it cannot be denied, but that three are there spoken of by the names of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, in whose name every Christian is baptized, and to each of whom the highest titles and properties of God are in scripture attributed;

attributed; and these three are spoken of with as much distinction from one another as we use to speak of three several persons.

So that though the word *trinity* be not found in scripture, yet these three are there expressly and frequently mentioned: and a trinity is nothing but three of any thing. And so likewise, though the word *person* be not there expressly applied to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; yet it will be very hard to find a more convenient word whereby to express the distinction of these three. For which reason I could never yet see any just cause to quarrel at this term. For since the Holy Spirit of God in scripture, hath thought fit, in speaking of these three, to distinguish them from one another, as we use in common speech to distinguish three several persons, I cannot see any reason why, in the explication of this mystery, which purely depends upon divine revelation, we should not speak of it in the same manner as the scripture doth: and though the word *person* is now become a term of art, I see no cause why we should decline it, so long as we mean by it neither more nor less than what the scripture says in other words.

4. It deserves further to be considered, that there hath been a very ancient tradition concerning three real differences or distinctions in the divine nature; and these, as I said before, very nearly resembling the christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Whence this tradition had its original, is not easy, upon good and certain grounds, to say. But certain it is, that the Jews anciently had this notion; and that they did distinguish *the Word of God*, and *the Holy Spirit of God*, from him who was absolutely called *God*, and whom they looked upon as the first principle of all things: as is plain from Philo Judæus, and Moses Nachmanides, and others, cited by the learned Grotius, in his incomparable book *of the truth of the christian religion*, book 5.

And, among the heathen, Plato, who probably enough might have this notion from the Jews, did make three distinctions in the Deity, by the names of *Essential Goodness*, and *Mind*, and *Spirit*.

So that whatever objections this matter may be liable

to, it is not so peculiar a doctrine of the christian religion, as many have imagined, though it is revealed by it with much more clearness and certainty: and, consequently, neither the Jews nor Plato have any reason to object it to us Christians; especially since they pretend no other ground for it, but either their own reason, or an ancient tradition from their fathers: whereas we Christians do appeal to express divine revelation for what we believe in this matter, and do believe it singly upon that account.

5. It is besides very considerable, that the scriptures do deliver this doctrine of the Trinity without any manner of doubt or question concerning the unity of the divine nature; and not only so, but do most stedfastly and constantly assert, that there is but one God. And in those very texts in which these three differences are asserted; as where St. John makes mention of *the Father, the Word, and the Spirit*, the unity of these three is likewise affirmed: *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and these three are one.*

6. It is yet further considerable, that from this mystery, as delivered in scripture, a plurality of Gods cannot be inferred without making the scripture grossly to contradict itself; which I charitably suppose the Socinians would be as loth to admit as we ourselves are. And if either councils, or fathers, or schoolmen, have so explained this mystery, as to give any just ground, or so much as a plausible colour for such an inference, let the blame fall where it is due, and let it not be charged on the Holy Scriptures; but rather, as the Apostle says in another case, *let God be true, and every man a liar.*

7. And lastly, I desire it may be considered, that it is not repugnant to reason, to believe some things which are incomprehensible by our reason; provided that we have sufficient ground and reason for the belief of them: especially if they be concerning God, who is in his nature incomprehensible; and we be well assured that he hath revealed them. And therefore it ought not to offend us, that these differences in the Deity are incomprehensible by our finite understandings; because the di-

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vine nature itself is so, and yet the belief of that is the foundation of all religion.

There are a great many things in nature which we cannot comprehend how they either are, or can be: As the continuity of matter; that is, how the parts of it do hang so fast together, that they are many times very hard to be parted; and yet we are sure that it is so, because we see it every day. So likewise, how the small seeds of things contain the whole form and nature of the things from which they proceed, and into which by degrees they grow; and yet we plainly see this every year.

There are many things likewise in ourselves, which no man is able in any measure to comprehend, as to the manner how they are done and performed: As the vital union of soul and body. Who can imagine by what device or means a spirit comes to be so closely united and so firmly linked to a material body, that they are not to be parted without great force and violence offered to nature? The like may be said of the operations of our several faculties of sense and imagination, of memory and reason, and especially of the liberty of our wills: and yet we certainly find all these faculties in ourselves, though we cannot either comprehend or explain the particular manner in which the several operations of them are performed.

And if we cannot comprehend the manner of those operations which we plainly perceive and feel to be in ourselves, much less can we expect to comprehend things without us; and least of all can we pretend to comprehend the infinite nature and perfections of God, and every thing belonging to him. For God himself is certainly the greatest mystery of all other, and acknowledged by mankind to be, in his nature, and in the particular manner of his existence, incomprehensible by human understanding. And the reason of this is very evident; because God is infinite, and our knowledge and understanding is but finite: and yet no sober man ever thought this a good reason to call the being of God in question.

The same may be said of God's certain knowledge of future contingencies, which depend upon the uncertain

wills of free agents ; it being utterly inconceivable, how any understanding, how large and perfect soever, can certainly know beforehand that which depends upon the free will of another, which is an arbitrary and uncertain cause.

And yet the scripture doth not only attribute this foreknowledge to God ; but gives us also plain instances of God's foretelling such things, many ages before they happened, as could not come to pass but by the sins of men ; in which we are sure that God can have no hand, though nothing can happen without his permission. Such was that most memorable event of the death of Christ, who, as the scripture tells us, was *by wicked hands crucified and slain* : and yet even this is said to have happened *according to the determinate foreknowledge of God* ; and was punctually foretold by him some hundreds of years before. Nay, the scripture doth not only ascribe this power and perfection to the divine knowledge, but natural reason hath been forced to acknowledge it ; as we may see in some of the wisest of the philosophers. And yet it would puzzle the greatest philosopher that ever was, to give any tolerable account how any knowledge whatsoever can certainly and infallibly foresee an event through uncertain and contingent causes. All the reasonable satisfaction that can be had in this matter is this, that it is not at all unreasonable to suppose, that infinite knowledge may have ways of knowing things, which our finite understandings can by no means comprehend how they can possibly be known.

Again, there is hardly any thing more inconceivable, than how a thing should be of itself, and without any cause of its being : and yet our reason compels us to acknowledge this ; because we certainly see, that something is, which must either have been of itself, and without a cause, or else something that we do not see must have been of itself, and have made all other things. And by this reasoning, we are forced to acknowledge a Deity ; the mind of man being able to find no rest, but in the acknowledgment of one eternal and wise mind, as the principle and first cause of all other things : and this principle is that which mankind do by general consent call *God*. So that God hath laid a sure foundation of

our acknowledgment of his being, in the reason of our own minds. And though it be one of the hardest things in the world, to conceive how any thing can be of itself: yet necessity drives us to acknowledge it whether we will or no: and this being once granted, our reason being tired in trying all other ways, will, for its own quiet and ease, force us at last to fall in with the general apprehension and belief of mankind concerning a Deity.

To give but one instance more: There is the like difficulty in conceiving how any thing can be made out of nothing: and yet our reason doth oblige us to believe it; because matter, which is a very imperfect being, and merely passive, must either always have been of itself, or else, by the infinite power of a most perfect and active being, must have been made out of nothing; which is much more credible, than that any thing so imperfect as matter is, should be of itself; because that which is of itself, cannot be conceived to have any bounds and limits of its being and perfection; for by the same reason that it necessarily is, and of itself, it must necessarily have all perfection, which it is certain matter hath not; and yet necessary existence is so great a perfection, that we cannot reasonably suppose any thing that hath this perfection, to want any other.

Thus you see, by these instances, that it is not repugnant to reason, to believe a great many things to be, of the manner of whose existence we are not able to give a particular and distinct account. And much less is it repugnant to reason, to believe those things concerning God, which we are very well assured he hath declared concerning himself, though these things by our reason should be incomprehensible.

And this is truly the case as to the matter now under debate. We are sufficiently assured, that the scriptures are a divine revelation, and that this mystery of the Trinity is therein declared to us. Now, that we cannot comprehend it, is no sufficient reason not to believe it: for, if this were a good reason for not believing it, then no man ought to believe that there is a God; because his nature is most certainly incomprehensible. But we are assured by many arguments that there is a God; and

the same natural reason which assures us that he is, doth likewise assure us, that he is incomprehensible: and therefore our believing him to be so, doth by no means overthrow our belief of his being.

In like manner, we are assured by divine revelation of the truth of this doctrine of the Trinity; and being once assured of that, our not being able fully to comprehend it, is not reason enough to stagger our belief of it. A man cannot deny what he sees, though the necessary consequence of admitting it may be something which he cannot comprehend. One cannot deny the frame of this world which he sees with his eyes, though from thence it will necessarily follow, that either that or something else must be of itself; which yet, as I said before, is a thing which no man can comprehend how it can be.

And, by the same reason, a man must not deny what God says, to be true; though he cannot comprehend many things which God says: as particularly concerning this mystery of the Trinity. It ought then to satisfy us, that there is sufficient evidence, that this doctrine is delivered in scripture; and that what is there declared concerning it, doth not imply a contradiction. For why should our finite understandings pretend to comprehend that which is infinite; or to know all the real differences that are consistent with the unity of an infinite being; or to be able fully to explain this mystery by any similitude or resemblance taken from finite beings?

But, before I leave this argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing which they of the church of Rome are perpetually objecting to us upon this occasion; and it is this: That by the same reason that we believe the doctrine of the Trinity, we may and must receive that of transubstantiation. God forbid: Because of all the doctrines that ever were in any religion, this of transubstantiation is certainly the most abominably absurd.

However, this objection plainly shews how fondly and obstinately they are addicted to their own errors, how mishapen and monstrous soever; insomuch that, rather than the dictates of their church, how absurd soever, should be called in question, they will question the

truth even of Christianity itself; and if we will not take in transubstantiation, and admit it to be a necessary article of the Christian faith, they grow so fullen and desperate, that they matter not what becomes of all the rest; and, rather than not have their will of us in that which is controverted, they will give up that which by their own confession is an undoubted article of the Christian faith, and not controverted on either side; except only by the Socinians, who yet are hearty enemies to transubstantiation, and have exposed the absurdity of it with great advantage.

But I shall endeavour to return a more particular answer to this objection, and such a one as I hope will satisfy every considerate and unprejudiced mind, that after all this confidence and swaggering of theirs, there is by no means equal reason either for the receiving, or for the rejecting of these two doctrines of the Trinity and transubstantiation.

1. There is not equal reason for the belief of these two doctrines. This objection, if it be of any force, must suppose that there is equal evidence and proof from scripture for these two doctrines. But this we utterly deny; and with great reason; because it is no more evident from the words of scripture, that the sacramental bread is substantially changed into Christ's natural body, by virtue of those words, *This is my body*; that it is, that Christ is substantially changed into a natural vine by virtue of those words, John xv. 1. *I am the true vine*; or than that the rock in the wilderness, of which the Israelites drank, was substantially changed into the person of Christ, because it is expressly said, *that rock was Christ*; or than that the Christian church is substantially changed into the natural body of Christ, because it is in express terms said of the church, that *it is his-body*, Eph. i: 23.

But besides this, several of their own most learned writers have freely acknowledged, that transubstantiation can neither be directly proved, nor necessarily concluded from scripture. But this the writers of the Christian church did never acknowledge concerning the Trinity, and the divinity of Christ; but have always appealed to the clear and undeniable testimonies of scripture for the

proof

proof of these doctrines. And then the whole force of the objection amounts to this, That if I am bound to believe what I am sure God says, though I cannot comprehend it; then I am bound by the same reason to believe the greatest absurdity in the world, though I have no manner of assurance of any divine revelation concerning it. And if this be their meaning, though we understand not transubstantiation, yet we very well understand what they would have, but cannot grant it; because there is not equal reason to believe two things; for one of which there is good proof, and for the other no proof at all.

2. Neither is there equal reason for the rejecting of these two doctrines. This the objection supposes, which yet cannot be supposed, but upon one or both of these two grounds; either because these two doctrines are equally incomprehensible; or because they are equally loaded with absurdities and contradictions.

1<sup>st</sup>. The first is no good ground of rejecting any doctrine, merely because it is incomprehensible; as I have abundantly shewed already. But besides this, there is a wide difference between plain matters of sense, and mysteries concerning God; and it does by no means follow, that if a man do once admit any thing concerning God, which he cannot comprehend, he hath no reason afterwards to believe what he himself sees. This is a most unreasonable and destructive way of arguing; because it strikes at the foundation of all certainty, and sets every man at liberty to deny the most plain and evident truths of Christianity, if he may not be humoured in having the absurdest things in the world admitted for true. The next step will be, to persuade us, that we may as well deny the being of God, because his nature is incomprehensible by our reason, as deny transubstantiation, because it evidently contradicts our senses.

2<sup>dly</sup>, Nor are these two doctrines loaded with the like absurdities and contradictions. So far from this, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is delivered in the scriptures, and hath already been explained, hath no absurdity or contradiction, either involved in it, or necessarily consequent upon it. But the doctrine of transubstantiation is big with all imaginable absurdity and contradiction. And their own schoolmen have sufficiently exposed

posed it; especially Scotus: and he designed to do so; as any man that attentively reads him, may plainly discover: for, in his disputation about it, he treats this doctrine with the greatest contempt, as a new invention of the council of Lateran under Pope Innocent III. to the decree of which council concerning it he seems to pay a formal submission, but really derides it as contrary to the common sense and reason of mankind, and not at all supported by scripture; as any one may easily discern that will carefully consider his manner of handling it, and the result of his whole disputation about it.

And now, suppose there were some appearance of absurdity and contradiction in the doctrine of the Trinity as it is delivered in scripture, must we therefore believe a doctrine which is not at all revealed in scripture, and which hath certainly in it all the absurdities in the world, and all the contradictions to sense and reason, and which, once admitted, doth at once destroy all certainty? Yes, say they, why not? since we of the church of Rome are satisfied that this doctrine is revealed in scripture; or, if it be not, is defined by the church, which is every whit as good. But is this equal, to demand of us the belief of a thing which hath always been controverted, not only between us and them, but even among themselves, at least till the council of Trent; and this upon such unreasonable terms, that we must either yield this point to them, or else renounce a doctrine agreed on both sides to be revealed in scripture?

To shew the unreasonableness of this proceeding, let us suppose a priest of the church of Rome pressing a Jew or Turk to the belief of transubstantiation, and because one kindness deserves another, the Jew or Turk should demand of him the belief of all the fables in the Talmud, or in the Alcoran; since none of these, nor indeed all of them together, are near so absurd as transubstantiation: would not this be much more reasonable and equal than what they demand of us; since no absurdity, how monstrous and big soever, can be thought of, which may not enter into an understanding in which a breach hath been already made wide enough to admit transubstantiation? The priests of Baal did not half so much deserve to be exposed by the Prophet for their superstition and folly,

folly, as the priests of the church of Rome do for this senseless and stupid doctrine of theirs with a hard name. I shall only add this one thing more, that if this doctrine were possible to be true, and clearly proved to be so; yet it would be evidently useless, and to no purpose. For it pretends to change the substance of one thing into the substance of another thing that is already, and before this change is pretended to be made. But to what purpose? Not to make the body of Christ; for that was already in being: and the substance of the bread is lost; nothing of it remaineth but the accidents, which are good for nothing, and indeed are nothing, when the substance is destroyed and gone.

All that now remains, is, to make some practical inferences from this doctrine of the unity of the divine nature. And they shall be the same which God himself makes by Moses, Deut. vi. 4, 5. which text is also cited by our Saviour, Mark xii. 29, 30, 31. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* So that, according to our Saviour, the whole duty of man, the love of God, and of our neighbour, is founded on the unity of the divine nature.

1. The love of God: *The Lord our God is one Lord: therefore thou shalt love him with all thine heart, &c. This is the first and great commandment.* And it comprehends in it all the duties of the first table, as naturally flowing from it; as, that we should serve him only, and pay no religious worship to any but to him; for to pay religious worship to any thing, is to make it a God, and to acknowledge it for such; and therefore God being but one, we can give religious worship to none but to him only: And among all the parts of religious worship, none is more peculiarly appropriated to the Deity than solemn invocation and prayer; for he to whom men address their requests, at all times, and in all places, must be supposed to be always every where present, to understand all our desires and wants, and to be able to supply them; and this God only is, and can do.

So likewise from the unity of the divine nature may  
be

be inferred, that we should not worship God by any sensible image or representation ; because God being a singular being, there is nothing like him, or that can, without injuring and debasing his most spiritual, and perfect, and immense being, be compared to him ; as he himself speaks in the Prophet, Is. xlvi. 5. *To whom will ye liken me, saith the Lord, and make me equal?* And therefore, with no distinction whatsoever, can it be lawful to give religious worship, or any part of it, to any but God. We can pray to none but to him, because he only is every where present, and *only knows the hearts of all the children of men*, 1 Kings viii. 39. which Solomon gives as the reason why we should address our supplications to God only, *who dwelleth in the heavens.*

So that the reason of these two precepts is founded in the unity and singularity of the divine nature : and unless there be more gods than one, we must worship him only, and pray to none but him ; because we can give invocation to none, but to him only whom we believe to be God ; as St. Paul reasons, Rom. x. 14. *How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?*

2. The love likewise of our neighbour is founded in the unity of the divine nature, and may be inferred from it ; *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord* ; therefore *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* And the Apostle gives this reason why Christians should be at unity among themselves, Eph. iv. 6. *There is one God and Father of all* ; and therefore we should *keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace* : that is, live in mutual love and peace. The Prophet likewise assigns this reason why all mankind should be upon good terms with one another, and not be injurious one to another, Mal. ii. 10. *Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?*

And therefore, when we see such hatred and enmity among men, such divisions and animosities among Christians, we may not only ask St. Paul's question, *Is Christ divided*, that we cannot agree about serving him ; either all to serve him in one way, or to bear with one another in our differences? I say, we may not only ask St. Paul's question, *Is Christ divided?* but may ask further, *Is God divided?*

divided? Is there not one God? and are we not all his offspring? Are we not all the sons of Adam, who was the son of God? So that, if we trace ourselves to our original, we shall find a great nearness and equality among men. And this equality, that we are all God's creatures and image, and that the one only God is the father of us all, is a more real ground of mutual love, and peace, and equity in our dealings one with another, than any of those petty differences and distinctions, of strong and weak, of rich and poor, of wise and foolish, of base and honourable, can be to encourage men to any thing of insolence, injustice, and inequality of dealing one towards another: because that wherein we all agree, that we are the creatures and children of God, and have all one common father, is essential and constant; but those things wherein we differ, are accidental and mutable, and happen to one another by turns.

Thus much may suffice to have been spoken concerning the first proposition in the text, There is one God. To him, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all honour, and glory, dominion, and power, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## S E R M O N XLIX.

Concerning resolution and stedfastness in religion.

Preached at St. Lawrence-Jewry, June 3. 1684.

The PREFACE to the Reader.

*BEING, I hope, for the remainder of my life, released from that irksome and unpleasant work of controversy and wrangling about religion, I shall now turn my thoughts to something more agreeable to my temper, and of a more direct and immediate tendency to the promoting of true religion, to the happiness of human society, and the reformation of the world.*

*I have*

*I have no intention to reflect upon any that stand up in defence of the truth, and contend earnestly for it, endeavouring, in the spirit of meekness, to reclaim those that are in error. For I doubt not but a very good man may, upon several occasions, be almost unavoidably engaged in controversies of religion; and if he have a head clear and cool enough, so as to be master of his own notions and temper in that hot kind of service, he may therein do considerable advantage to the truth: though a man that hath once drawn blood in controversy, as Mr. Mede expresseth it, is seldom known ever perfectly to recover his own good temper afterwards.*

*For this reason, a good man should not be very willing, when his Lord comes, to be found so doing, and as it were beating his fellow servants. And all controversy, as it is usually managed, is little better. A good man would be loth to be taken out of the world reeking hot from a sharp contention with a perverse adversary; and not a little out of countenance, to find himself in this temper translated into the calm and peaceable regions of the blessed, where nothing but perfect charity and good-will reign for ever.*

*I know not whether St. Paul, who had been taken up into the third heavens, did, by that question of his, Where is the disputer of THIS WORLD? intend to insinuate, that this wrangling work hath place only in this world, and upon this earth, where only there is a dust to be raised; but will have no place in the other. But whether St. Paul intended this or not, the thing itself I think is true, that in the other world all things will be clear, and past dispute. To be sure, among the blessed; and probably also among the miserable, unless fierce and furious contentions, with great heat without light, about things of no moment and concernment to them, should be designed for a part of their torment.*

*As to the following sermons, I am sensible that the style of them is more loose and full of words, than is agreeable to just and exact discourses; but so I think the style of popular sermons ought to be: and therefore I have not been very careful to mend this matter; chusing rather that they should appear in that native simplicity in which, so many years ago, they were first framed, than dressed up with too much care and art. As they are, I hope the candid and ingenuous readers will take them in good part.*

*And I do heartily wish, that all that are concerned in the respective duties treated on in the following sermons, would be persuaded so to lay them to heart, as to put them effectually in practice: that how much soever the reformation of this corrupt and degenerate age in which we live is almost utterly to be despaired of, we may yet have a more comfortable prospect of future times, by seeing the foundation of a better world begun to be laid in the careful and conscientious discharge of the duties here mentioned; that by this means the generations to come may know God, and the children yet unborn may fear the Lord.*

*I have great reason to be sensible how fast the infirmities of age are coming upon me, and therefore must work the works of him whose providence hath placed me in the station wherein I am, whilst it is day; because the night cometh when no man can work.*

*I knew very well, before I entered upon this great and weighty charge, my own manifold defects, and how unequal my best abilities were for the due discharge of it; but I did not feel this so sensibly as I now do every day more and more. And therefore, that I might make some small amends for greater failings, I knew not how better to place the broken hours I had to spare from almost perpetual business of one kind or other, than in preparing something for the public, that might be of use to recover the decayed piety and virtue of the present age, in which iniquity doth so much abound, and the love of God and religion is grown so cold.*

*To this end I have chosen to publish these plain sermons, and to recommend them to the serious perusal and faithful practice both of the pastors and people committed to my charge; earnestly beseeching almighty God, that, by his blessing, they may prove effectual to that good end for which they are sincerely designed.*

## The SERMON.

JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

—*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

The first sermon on this text.

**A**FTER Joshua had brought the people of Israel into the promised land, and settled them in the quiet possession of it, his great desire was, to establish them in the true religion, namely, in the worship of the one true God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and given them the possession of that good land, the land of Canaan.

And now, finding himself weak and declining, being an hundred and ten years old, and fearing, lest, after his death, the people should fall off from the true religion to the worship of idols; he, like a wise and good governor, considers with himself what course he had best to take to keep them firm and stedfast in their religion, and to prevent their defection to the idolatry of the nations round about them.

And to this end he calls a general assembly of *all Israel*, chap. xxiii. 2. that is, of the elders, and heads, and judges, and officers of the several tribes; and, in a very wise and eloquent speech, represents to them in what a miraculous manner God had *driven out the nations before them, much greater and stronger nations than they*, and had given them their land to possess it; and, in a word, had performed punctually all that he had promised to them.

And therefore they ought to *take good heed to themselves, to love God, and to serve him*; and if they did not, he tells them, that it should come to pass, *that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you*, chap. xxiii. 15.

After this, he calls them together a second time, and gives them a brief historical account and deduction of

the great mercies of God to them and their fathers, from the days of Abraham, whom he had called out from among his idolatrous kindred and countrymen, unto that day.

From the consideration of all which, he earnestly exhorts them to renew their covenant with God; and, for his particular satisfaction, before he left the world, solemnly to promise that they would for ever serve God, and forsake the service of idols: *Now therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt: and serve ye the Lord,* chap. xxiv. 14.

And then, in the text, by a very elegant scheme of speech, he does, as it were, once more set them at liberty; and, as if they had never engaged themselves to God by covenant before, he leaves them to their free choice: *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell.*

Not that they were at liberty whether they would serve the true God or not; but to insinuate to them, that religion ought to be their free choice: and likewise, that the true religion hath those real advantages on its side, that it may safely be referred to any considerate man's choice: *If it seem evil unto you;* as if he had said, if, after all the demonstrations which God hath given of his miraculous presence among you, and the mighty obligations which he hath laid upon you, by bringing you out of the land of Egypt, and the house of bondage, by so outstretched an arm; and by driving out the nations before you, and giving you their land to possess: if, after all this, you can think it fit to quit the service of this God, and to worship the idols of the nations whom you have subdued, those vanquished and baffled deities: if you can think it reasonable so to do, but surely you cannot; then take your choice: *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom ye will serve.*

And to direct and encourage them to make a right choice, he declares to them his own resolution, which he hopes will also be theirs; and as he had heretofore been their captain, so now he offers himself to be their example:

example: but whether they will follow him or not, he, for his part, is fixed and immoveable in this resolution; *But as for ME and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

In effect, he tells them, I have proposed the best religion to your choice; and I cannot but think, nay I cannot but hope, that you will all stedfastly adhere to it; it is so reasonable and wise, so much your interest and your happiness to do it. But if you should do otherways; if you should be so weak as not to discern the truth, so wilful and so wicked as not to embrace it: though you should all make another choice, and run away from the true God to the worship of idols, I for my part am stedfastly resolved what to do. In a case so manifest, in a matter so reasonable, no number, no example shall prevail with me to the contrary; I will, if need be, stand alone in that which is so evidently and unquestionably right; and though this whole nation should revolt all at once from the worship of the true God, and join with the rest of the world in a false religion, and in the worship of idols; and mine were the only family left in all Israel, nay in the whole world, that continued to worship the God of Israel, I would still be of the same mind; I would still persist in this resolution, and act according to it: *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

A resolution truly worthy of so great a prince and so good a man: in which he is a double pattern to us.

1. Of the brave resolution of a good man, namely, that if there were occasion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would stand alone in the profession and practice of the true religion: *As for ME, I will serve the Lord.*

2. Of the pious care of a good father and master of a family, to train up those under his charge in the true religion and worship of God: *As for me and MY HOUSE, we will serve the Lord.*

I shall, at this time, by God's assistance, treat of the first of these, namely,

*First*, Of the brave resolution of a good man, that, if there were occasion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would stand alone in the profession and practice of God's true religion: *Chuse you this day* (says Joshua) *whom ye will serve: but as for ME, I will serve*

*the Lord.* Joshua here puts the case at the utmost extremity, that not only the great nations of the world, the Egyptians and Chaldeans, and all the lesser nations round about them, and in whose land they dwelt, who were all long since revolted to idolatry, and pretended great antiquity and long prescription for the worship of their false gods; but he supposeth yet further, that the only true and visible church of God then known in the world, the people of Israel, should likeways generally revolt, and forsake the worship of the true God, and cleave to the service of idols: yet, in this case, if we could suppose it to happen, he declares his firm and stedfast resolution to adhere to the worship of the true God; and tho' all others should fall off from it, that he would stand alone in the profession and practice of the true religion: *But as for ME, I will serve the Lord.*

In the handling of this argument, I shall do these two things.

1. I shall consider the matter of this resolution, and the due bounds and limits of it.

2. I shall endeavour to vindicate the reasonableness of this resolution, from the objections to which this singular and peremptory kind of resolution may seem liable.

I. I shall consider the matter of this resolution, and the due bounds and limits of it.

1. The matter of this resolution. Joshua here resolves, that if need were, and things were brought to that pass, he would stand alone, or with very few adhering to him, in the profession and practice of the true religion. And this is not a mere supposition of an impossible case, which can never happen: for it may, and hath really and in fact happened in several ages and places of the world.

There hath been a general apostasy of some great part of God's church from the belief and profession of the true religion to idolatry, and to damnable errors and heresies: and some good men have, upon the matter, stood alone in the open profession of the true religion, in the midst of this general defection from it.

Elijah, in that general revolt of the people of Israel, when they had *forsaken the covenant of the Lord, and broken down his altars, and slain his prophets, and he only, as he*

he thought, *was left* to stand alone; I say, in this case, when, as he verily believed, he had no body to stand by him, *he was very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts*; and with an undaunted courage stood up for the worship of the true God, and reprov'd Ahab to his face for his defection to the worship of idols, 1 Kings xviii. 18.

And those three brave youths, in the prophecy of Daniel, chap. iii. did, in the like resolute and undaunted manner, refuse to obey the command of the great king Nebuchadnezzar, *to worship the image which he had set up*, when all others submitted, and paid honour to it; telling him plainly, *If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up*, v. 17. 18.

In like manner, and with the same spirit and courage, Daniel withstood the decree of Darius, which forbade men *to ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of the king only*, Dan. vi. 7. and this under the pain of being *cast into the den of lions*: and when all others gave obedience to it, he *set open the windows of his chamber towards Jerusalem, and kneeled down upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime*, v. 10.

In the prevalency of the Arian heresy, Athanasius almost stood alone in the profession and maintenance of the truth. And in the reign of antichrist, the true church of God is represented by a woman flying into the wilderness, and living there in obscurity for a long time; insomuch that the professors of the truth should hardly be found. And yet, during that degeneracy of so great a part of the christian church, and the prevalency of antichrist for so many ages, some few in every age did appear, who did resolutely own the truth, and bear witness to it with their blood: but these did almost stand alone and by themselves, like a few scattered sheep wandering up and down in a wide wilderness.

Thus, in the height of Popery, Wickliffe appeared here in England; and Hierome of Prague, and John Hufs in Germany and Bohemia. And in the beginning

of the reformation, when Popery had quite over-run these Western parts of the world, and subdued her enemies on every side, and antichrist sat securely in the quiet possession of his kingdom; Luther arose, a bold and rough man, but a fit wedge to cleave in sunder so hard and knotty a block; and appeared stoutly against the gross errors and corruptions of the church of Rome; and for a long time stood alone, and with a most invincible spirit and courage maintained his ground, and resisted the united malice and force of antichrist and his adherents; and gave him so terrible a wound, that he is not yet perfectly healed and recovered of it.

So that for a man to stand alone, or with a very few adhering to him, and standing by him, is not a mere imaginary supposition, but a case that hath really and in fact happened in several ages and places of the world. Let us then proceed to consider, in the

2. Second place, the due limits and bounds of this peremptory resolution. In all matters of faith and practice which are plain and evident either from natural reason, or from divine revelation, this resolution seems to be very reasonable: but in things doubtful, a modest man, and every man hath reason to be so, would be very apt to be staggered by the judgment of a very wise man, and much more of many such; and especially by the unanimous judgment of the generality of men; the general voice and opinion of mankind being next to the voice of God himself.

For, in matters of an indifferent nature, which God hath neither commanded nor forbidden, such as are many of the circumstances and ceremonies of God's worship, a man would not be singular, much less stiff and immoveable in his singularity; but would be apt to yield and surrender himself to the general vote and opinion, and to comply with the common custom and practice; and much more with the rules and constitutions of authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical; because in things lawful and indifferent, we are bound by the rules of decency and civility not to thwart the general practice; and by the commands of God we are certainly obliged to obey the lawful commands of lawful authority.

But in things plainly contrary to evidence of sense

or

or reason, or to the word of God, a man would compliment no man, or number of men: nor would he pin his faith upon any church in the world; much less upon any single man, no not the Pope; no though there were never so many probable arguments brought for the proof of his infallibility.

In this case a man would be singular, and stand alone against the whole world; against the wrath and rage of a King, and all the terrors of his fiery furnace: as in other matters, a man would not believe all the learned men in the world against the clear evidence of sense and reason. If all the great mathematicians of all ages, Archimedes, and Euclid, and Appollonius, and Diophantus, &c. could be supposed to meet together in a general council, and should there declare in the most solemn manner, and give it under their hands and seals, that twice two did not make four, but five; this would not move me in the least to be of their mind; nay, I, who am no mathematician, would maintain the contrary, and would persist in it, without being in the least startled by the positive opinion of these great and learned men; and should most certainly conclude, that they were either all of them out of their wits, or that they were biassed by some interest or other, and swayed, against the clear evidence of truth, and the full conviction of their own reason, to make such a determination as this. They might indeed over-rule the point by their authority, but in my inward judgment I should be still where I was before.

Just so, in matters of religion, if any church, though with never so glorious and confident a pretence to infallibility, should declare for transubstantiation; that is, that the bread and wine in the sacrament, by virtue of the consecration of the priest, are substantially changed into the natural body and blood of Christ; this is so notoriously contrary both to the sense and reason of mankind, that a man should chuse to stand single in the opposition of it, and laugh at, or rather pity the rest of the world that could be so servilely blind, as seemingly to conspire in the belief of so monstrous an absurdity.

And, in like manner, if any church should declare, that images are to be worshipped, or that the worship of God is to be performed in an unknown tongue; and that

that the Holy Scriptures, which contain the word and will of God, and teach men what they are to believe and do in order to their eternal salvation, are to be locked up, and kept concealed from the people, in a language which they do not understand, lest, if they were permitted the free use of them in their mother tongue, they should know more of the mind and will of God than is convenient for the common people to know, whose devotion and obedience to the church does mainly depend upon their ignorance; or should declare, that the sacrifice of Christ was not offered once for all, but is, and ought to be repeated ten millions of times every day; and that the people ought to receive the communion in one kind only, and the cup by no means to be trusted with them, for fear the profane beards of the laity should drink of it; and that the saving efficacy of the sacraments doth depend upon the intention of the priest, without which the receiver can have no benefit by them: these are all of them so plainly contrary to scripture, and most of them in reason so absurd, that the authority of no church whatsoever can oblige a man to the belief of them.

Nay, I go yet further, that, being evidently contrary to the doctrine of the gospel, though an Apostle, or an angel from heaven should declare them, we ought to reject them. And for this I have St. Paul's authority and warrant; who, speaking of some that *perverted the gospel of Christ*, by teaching things contrary to it, *Though we, (says he) or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, Though an Apostle, though an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed,* Gal. i. 7, 8, 9. You see he repeats it over again, to express not only his own confident assurance, but the certainty of the thing. And here is an anathema with a witness, which we may confidently oppose to all the anathema's which the council of Trent hath so liberally denounced against all those who shall presume to gainsay these new doctrines of their church; which are in truth *another gospel* than that which our blessed Saviour and his Apostles taught: and yet, on their  
side,

side, there is neither an Apostle, nor an angel from heaven in the case.

To give but one instance more: If Bellarmine shall tell me, as he expressly does, that "if the Pope should declare virtue to be vice, and vice to be virtue, I were bound to believe him, unless I would sin against conscience;" and if all the world should say the same that Bellarmine does, namely, that this infallible declarer of virtue and vice were to be believed and followed: yet I could not possibly be of their mind; for this plain and undeniable reason, Because if virtue and vice be all one, then religion is nothing; since the main design of religion is, to teach men the difference between virtue and vice, and to oblige them to practise the one, and to refrain from the other: and if religion be nothing, then heaven and hell are nothing: and if heaven be nothing, then an infallible guide thither is of no use, and to no manner of purpose; because he is a guide no whither, and so his great office ceases and falls of itself.

And now, lest any should think me singular in this assertion, and that thereby I give a great deal too much to the single judgment of private persons, and too little to the authority of a church, I will produce the deliberate judgment of a very learned man, and a great assertor of the church's authority, concerning the matter I am now speaking of: I mean Mr. Hooker, in his deservedly admired book of *ecclesiastical polity*. His words are these: "I grant (says he) that proof derived from the authority of man's judgment, is not able to work that assurance which doth grow by a stronger proof: and therefore, although ten thousand general councils should set down one and the same definitive sentence concerning any point of religion whatsoever; yet one demonstrative reason alledged, or one testimony cited from the word of God himself, to the contrary, could not chuse but oversway them all; inasmuch as for them to be deceived, is not so impossible, as it is that demonstrative reason or divine testimony should deceive."

And again, "For men (says he) to be tied and led by authority, as it were with a kind of captivity of judgment, and though there be reason to the contra-

“ ry, not to listen to it, but to follow like beasts the first  
 “ in the herd, this were brutish.”

Again, “ That the authority of men should prevail  
 “ with men, either against or above reason, is no part  
 “ of our belief. Companies of learned men, though  
 “ they be never so great and reverend, are to yield unto  
 “ reason; the weight whereof is no whit prejudiced by  
 “ the simplicity of the person which doth alledge it; but  
 “ being found to be sound and good, the bare opinion  
 “ of men to the contrary must of necessity stoop and give  
 “ place.” And this he delivers, not only as his own  
 particular judgment, but that which he apprehended to  
 be the judgment of the church of England.

I have produced these clear and positive testimonies of  
 so learned and judicious a person, and of so great esteem  
 in our church, on purpose to prevent any misapprehen-  
 sion, as if by this discourse I intended to derogate from  
 the authority of the church, and her just and reasonable  
 determinations, in things no ways contrary to plain rea-  
 son or the word of God. And beyond this pitch no ju-  
 dicious Protestant, that I know of, ever strained the au-  
 thority of the church. I proceed now, in the

II. Second place, to vindicate the reasonableness of  
 this resolution, from the objections to which this singular  
 and peremptory kind of resolution may seem liable: As,

1. I may very speciously be said, that this does not  
 seem modest for a man to set up his own private judg-  
 ment against the general suffrage and vote. And it is  
 very true, as I said before, that about things indifferent  
 a man should not be stiff and singular; and in things  
 doubtful and obscure, a man should not be over-confi-  
 dent of his own judgment, and insist peremptorily upon  
 it, against the general opinion. But in things that are  
 plain and evident, either from scripture or reason, it is  
 neither immodesty, nor a culpable singularity, for a man  
 to stand alone in the defence of the truth; because, in  
 such a case, a man does not oppose his own single and  
 private judgment to the judgment of many, but the  
 common reason of mankind, and the judgment of God  
 plainly declared in his word.

If the generality of men should turn Atheists and in-  
 fidels, and should deny the being of God, or his provi-  
 dence;

dence; the immortality of mens souls, and the rewards and punishments of another world; or should deny the truth of the gospel, and of the christian religion: it would not certainly be any breach of modesty for a man to appear single, if no body else would stand by him, in the resolute defence of these great truths.

In like manner, when a whole church, though never so large and numerous, shall conspire together to corrupt the christian religion, so far as to impose upon mankind, under the name of christian doctrines and articles of faith, things plainly contrary to the sense and reason of mankind, and to the clear and express word of God, why must a man needs be thought immodest, if he oppose such gross errors and corruptions of the christian doctrine? And what reason have the church of Rome to talk of modesty in this case, when they themselves have the face to impose upon mankind the belief of things contrary to what they and every man else sees, as they do in their doctrine of transubstantiation; and to require of them to do what God hath expressly forbidden, as in the worship of images, besides a great many other idolatrous practices of that church; to deny the people the free use of the Holy Scriptures, and the public service of God in a known tongue, contrary to the very end and design of all religion, and in affront to the common reason and liberty of mankind?

2. It is pretended, that it is more prudent for private persons to err with the church, than to be so pertinacious in their own opinions. To which I answer, That it may indeed be pardonable in some cases to be led into mistake by the authority of those to whose judgment and instruction we ought to pay a great deference and submission; provided always it be in things which are not plain and necessary: but surely it can never be prudent, to err with any number, how great soever, in matters of religion which are of moment, merely for number's sake. But to comply with the known errors and corruptions of any church whatsoever, is certainly damnable.

3. It is pretended yet further, that men shall sooner be excused in following the church, than any particular man or sect. To this I answer, That it is very true, if the matter be doubtful; and especially if the probabilities

ties be equal, or near equal on both sides: but, if the error be gross and palpable, it will be no excuse to have followed any number of men, or any church whatsoever. For here the competition is not between men and men, but between God and men; and, in this case, we must forsake all men to follow God and his truth. "Thou shalt in no ways follow a multitude in a known error," is a rule which in reason is of equal obligation with that divine law, *Thou shalt in no ways follow a multitude to do evil*; or rather is comprehended in it, because to comply with a known error is certainly to *do evil*.

And this very objection the Jews made against our blessed Saviour, and the doctrine which he taught, that the guides and governors of the Jewish church did utterly differ from him, and were of a contrary mind: *Have any of the rulers (said they) believed on him? What? will you be wiser than your rulers and governors? what? follow the doctrine of one single man against the unanimous judgment and sentence of the great Sanhedrim, to whom the trial of doctrines and pretended prophets doth of right belong?*

But, as plausible as this objection may seem to be, it is to be considered, that, in a corrupt and degenerate church, the guides and rulers of it are commonly the worst, and the most deeply engaged in the errors and corruptions of it. They brought them in at first; and their successors, who have been bred up in the belief and practice of them, are concerned to uphold and maintain them: and so long a prescription gives a kind of sacred stamp even to error, and an authority not to be opposed and resisted.

And thus it was in the corrupt state of the Jewish church in our Saviour's time; and so likewise in that great degeneracy of the christian church, in the times of Popery, *their rulers made them to err*; insomuch that when Martin Luther appeared in opposition to the errors and superstitions of that church, and was hard pressed with this very objection which the Pharisees urged against our Saviour, he was forced to bolt out a kind of unmannerly truth, *Religio nunquam magis periclitatur quàm inter Reverendissimos*: "Religion (says he) is never  
" in greater hazard and worse treated, than amongst  
" the

“ the Most Reverend ;” meaning the Pope and his Cardinals, and all the Romish hierarchy who had their dependence upon them.

4. It is objected, That as, on the one hand, there may be danger of error in following blindly the belief of the church, so, on the other hand, there is as great a danger of schism in forsaking the communion of the church, upon pretence of errors and corruptions. Very true: but where great errors and corruptions are not only pretended, but are real and evident; and where our compliance with those errors and corruptions is made a necessary condition of our communion with that church: in that case, the guilt of schism, how great a crime soever it be, doth not fall upon those who forsake the communion of that church, but upon those who drive them out of it by the sinful conditions which they impose upon them.

And this is truly the case between us and the church of Rome; as we are ready to make good, and have fully done it upon all occasions; and they have never yet been able to vindicate and clear themselves of those gross errors and corruptions which have been charged upon them; and which they require of all their members, as necessary conditions of communion with them. here, and of eternal salvation hereafter.

For we do not object to them doubtful matters, but things as plain as any that are contained in the Bible; as every body would see, if they durst but let every body read it. The worship of images is there as plainly forbidden in the decalogue, as murder and adultery are. The communion in both kinds is as express an institution of our Saviour, as any in all the New Testament; and even as the sacrament of the Lord's supper itself: only that church pretends to a dispensing power, as a privilege inherent in their church, and inseparable from it.

And, to add but one instance more, public prayers and the service of God in an unknown tongue, are as plainly and fully declared against by St. Paul, in a long chapter upon this single argument, as any one thing in all his epistles.

These things are plain and undeniable; and being

so, are a full justification, not only of the church of England, in the reformation which she thought fit to make within herself, from the gross errors and corruptions of the church of Rome; but likewise of particular persons, who have at any time, for the same reasons, withdrawn themselves from her communion, in any of the Popish countries; yea though that single person should happen to be in those circumstances, that he could not have the opportunity of holding communion with any other church that was free from those errors and corruptions, and which did not impose them as necessary conditions of communion.

For if any church fall off to idolatry, every good Christian not only may, but ought to forsake her communion; and ought rather to stand single and alone in the profession of the pure and true religion, than to continue in the communion of a corrupt and idolatrous church.

I know, that some men are so fond of the name of a church, that they can very hardly believe, that any thing which bears that glorious title can miscarry, or do any thing so much amiss, as to give just occasion to any of her members to break off from her communion. What? the church err? That is such an absurdity as is by many thought sufficient to put any objection out of countenance. That the whole church, that is, that all the Christians in the world, should at any time fall off to idolatry, and into errors and practices directly contrary to the Christian doctrine revealed in the Holy Scriptures, is on all hands, I think, denied: but that any particular church may fall into such errors and practices, is, I think, as universally granted; only in this case they demand to have the Roman Catholic church excepted. And why, I pray? Because though the Roman church is a particular church, it is also the universal church. If this can be, and good sense can be made of a particular universal church, then the Roman church may demand this high privilege, of being exempted from the fate of all other churches; but if the Roman Catholic, that is, a particular universal church, be a gross and palpable contradiction, then it is plain, that the church of Rome hath

no more pretence to this privilege, than any other particular church whatsoever.

And, which is yet more, some men talk of these matters at that rate, as if a man who thought himself obliged to quit the communion of the church of Rome, should happen to be in those circumstances that he had no opportunity of joining himself to any other communion, he ought in that case to give over all thoughts of religion, and not be so conceited and presumptuous as to think of going to heaven alone by himself.

It is, without doubt, a very great sin to despise the communion of the church, or to break off from it, so long as we can continue in it without sin: but if things should once come to that pass, that we must either disobey God for company, or stand alone in our obedience to him, we ought most certainly to obey God, whatever comes of it; and to profess his truth, whether any body else will join with us in that profession or not.

And they who speak otherwise, condemn the whole reformation; and do in effect say, that Martin Luther had done a very ill thing in breaking off from the church of Rome, if no body else would have joined with him in that honest design. And yet, if it had been so, I hope God would have given him the grace and courage to have stood alone in so good and glorious a cause, and to have laid down his life for it.

And for any man to be of another opinion, is just as if a man, upon great deliberation, should chuse rather to be drowned, than to be saved either by a plank or a small boat; or to be carried into the harbour any other way, than in a great ship of so many hundred tuns.

In short, a good man must resolve to obey God, and to profess his truth, though all the world should happen to do otherwise. Christ hath promised to preserve his church to the end of the world; that is, he hath engaged his word, that he will take care that there shall always be, in some part of the world or other, some persons that shall make a sincere profession of his true religion.

But he hath no where promised to preserve any one

part of his church from such errors and corruptions, as may oblige all good men to quit the communion of that part; yea, though when they have done so, they may not know whither to resort for actual communion with any other sound part of the christian church, as it happened to some particular persons, during the reign and rage of Popery in these Western parts of the christian church.

The result from all this discourse is, to confirm and establish us all, in this *hour of temptation*, and of the *powers of darkness*, in the well-grounded belief of the necessity and justice of our reformation from the errors and corruptions of the Roman church, and to engage us to *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*: and not only to profess and promise, as Peter did to our Lord, *Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I*: but, if there should be occasion, to perform and make good this promise with the hazard of all that is dear to us, and even of life itself; and whatever trials God may permit any of us to fall into, to take up the pious resolution of Joshua here in the text, that, whatever others do, *we will serve the Lord*.

I will conclude my discourse upon this first particular in the text; with the exhortation of St. Paul to the Philippians, chap. i. 27, 28. *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ, Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.*

And thus much may suffice to have spoken to the first thing in the text; namely, the pious resolution of Joshua, that if there were occasion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would stand alone in the profession and practice of God's true religion: *Chuse you this day whom ye will serve: but as for ME, I will serve the Lord.*

I should now have proceeded to the second thing, and which indeed I chiefly intended to speak to from this text; namely, the pious care of a good father and master of a family, to train up those under his charge in the religion and worship of the true God: *As for me and MY HOUSE,*

*we will serve the Lord.* But this I shall not now enter upon; but defer it to some other opportunity. Consider *what ye have heard, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.*

## S E R M O N L.

### Concerning family religion.

Preached at St. Lawrence-Jewry, July 13. 1684.

JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

—*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

The second sermon on this text.

I Shall now proceed to the *Second* point contained in the text, namely,

The pious care of a good master and father of a family, to train up those under his charge in the worship and service of the true God: *As for me and MY HOUSE, we will serve the Lord.*

And this is the more necessary to be spoken to, because it is a great and very essential part of religion, but strangely overlooked and neglected in this loose and degenerate age in which we live. It is a great part of religion; for, next to our personal homage and service to almighty God, and the care of our own souls, it is incumbent upon us to make those who are under our charge, and subject to our authority, God's subjects, and his children and servants; which is a much more honourable and happy relation, than that which they bear to us.

Our children are a natural part of ourselves, and the rest of our family are a civil and political part; and not only ourselves, but all that we have, and that belongs to us, is God's, and ought to be devoted to his service. And they that have the true fear of God themselves, will  
be

be careful to teach it to others ; to those especially who are under their more immediate care and instruction. And therefore God had so great a confidence concerning Abraham as to this particular, as to undertake for him, that, being so very good a man himself, he would not fail in so great and necessary a part of his duty : *For I know him* (says God of him) *that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.* God passeth his word for him, that he would not only take care to instruct his children, and the rest of his numerous family, in the true religion ; but that he would likeways lay a strict charge upon them to propagate and transmit it to their posterity.

And this certainly is the duty of all fathers and masters of families ; and an essential part of religion, next to serving God in our own persons, to be very careful that all that belong to us do the same. For every man must not only give an account of himself to God, but of those likeways that are committed to his charge, that they do not miscarry through this neglect.

In speaking of this great and necessary duty, I shall do these four things.

1. I shall shew wherein it doth consist.
2. I shall consider our obligation to it, both in point of duty and of interest.
3. I shall enquire into the causes of the so common and shameful neglect of this duty, to the exceeding great decay of piety amongst us.
4. As a motive and argument to us to endeavour to retrieve the practice of this duty, I shall represent to you the pernicious consequences of the neglect of it, both with regard to ourselves, and to the public. In all which I shall be very brief, because things that are plain need not to be long.

I. I shall shew wherein the practice of this duty doth consist. And in this I am sure there is no need to be long, because this duty is much better known than practised. The principal parts of it are these following.

1. By setting up the constant worship of God in our families ; by daily prayers to God every morning and evening, and by reading some portion of the Holy Scriptures.

tures at those times, especially out of the Psalms of David, and the New Testament. And this is so necessary to keep alive and to maintain a sense of God and religion in the minds of men, that where it is neglected, I do not see how any family can in reason be esteemed a family of Christians, or indeed to have any religion at all.

And there are not wanting excellent helps to this purpose for those that stand in need of them, as I think most families do for the due and decent discharge of this solemn duty of prayer; I say, there are excellent helps to this purpose in the several books of devotion calculated for the private use of families, as well as for secret prayer in our closets.

So that, besides the reading of the Holy Scriptures, which are the great fountains of divine truth, we may do well likewise to add to these, other pious and profitable books, which, by their plainness, are fitted for the instruction of all capacities in the most necessary points of belief and practice; of which sort, God be thanked, there is an abundant store: but none that I think is more fitted for general and constant use, than that excellent book so well known by the title of *The whole duty of man*; because it is conveniently divided into parts or sections; one of which may be read in the family at any time when there is leisure for it, but more especially on the Lord's day, when the whole family may the more easily be brought and kept together, and have the opportunity to attend upon these things without distraction.

And, which I must by no means omit, because it is in many families already gone, and in others going out of fashion; I mean, a solemn acknowledgment of the providence of God, by begging his blessing at our meals upon his good creatures provided for our use, and by returning thanks to him for the benefit and refreshment of them: this being a piece of natural religion owned and practised in all ages, and in most places of the world, but never so shamefully and scandalously neglected, and I fear by many slighted and despised, as it is amongst us at this day; and most neglected where there is greatest reason for the doing of it, I mean, at the most plentiful tables, and among those of highest quality; as if great persons were ashamed, or thought scorn to own from whence

whence these blessings come; like the nation of the Jews, of whom God complains in the Prophet, Hof. ii. 8. *She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold. She did not know; that is, she would not acknowledge from whose bounty all these blessings came: or as if the poor were obliged to thank God for a little, but those who are fed to the full, and whose cups overflow, so that they are almost every day surfeited of plenty, were not at least equally bound to make returns of thankful acknowledgment to the great giver of all good things; and to implore his bounty and blessing, upon whom the eyes of all do wait, that he may give them their meat in due season.*

*O crooked and perverse generation! Do you thus reason? Do ye thus requite the Lord, foolish and unwise? This is a very sad and broad sign of the prevalency of Atheism and infidelity among us, when so natural and so reasonable a piece of religion, so meet and equal an acknowledgment of the constant and daily care and providence of Almighty God towards us, begins to grow out of date and use, in a nation professing religion, and the belief of the being and providence of God. Is it not a righteous thing with God to take away his blessings from us, when we deny him this just and easy tribute of praise and thanksgiving? Shall not God visit for this horrible ingratitude? and shall not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Hear, O heavens, and be horribly astonished at this! I hope it cannot be thought misbecoming the meanest of God's ministers, in a matter wherein the honour of God is so nearly concerned, to reprove, even in the highest and greatest of the sons of men, so shameful and heinous a fault, with a proportionable vehemence and severity.*

2. Another, and that also a very considerable part of this duty, consists in instructing those committed to our charge in the fundamental principles, and in the careful practice of the necessary duties of religion; instilling these into children in their tender years, as they are capable of them, *line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little*; and into those that are more grown up, by proper and suitable means of instruction, and by furnishing them with such books as are  
most

most proper to teach them those things in religion which are most necessary by all to be believed and practised.

And in order hereunto, we should take care that those under our charge, our children and servants, should be taught to read ; because this will make the business of instruction much easier ; so that, if they are diligent, and well disposed, they may, after having been taught the first principles of religion, by reading the Holy Scriptures, and other good books, greatly improve themselves, so as to be prepared to receive much greater benefit and advantage by the public teaching of their ministers.

And in this work of instruction, our great care should be, to plant those principles of religion in our children and servants, which are most fundamental and necessary, and are like to have the greatest and most lasting influence upon their whole lives : As, right and worthy apprehensions of God, especially of his infinite goodness, and that *he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity* ; and a lively sense also of the great evil and danger of sin ; a firm belief of the immortality of our souls, and of the unspeakable and endless rewards and punishments of another world. If these principles once take root, they will spread strangely, and probably stick by them, and continue with them all their days.

Whereas, if we plant in them doubtful doctrines and opinions, and inculcate upon them the notions of a sect, and the jargon of a party, this will turn to a very pitiful account, and we must expect that our harvest will be answerable to our husbandry : *We have sown the wind, and shall reap the whirlwind.* But of this I shall have occasion to speak more particularly and fully in the ensuing sermons concerning the good education of children.

And this work of instruction of those that are under our charge, as it ought not to be neglected at other times, so it is more peculiarly seasonable on the Lord's day ; which ought to be employed by us to religious purposes, and in the exercises of piety and devotion, chiefly in the public worship and service of God ; upon which we should take care, that our children and servants should diligently and devoutly attend ; because there God affords the means which he hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of piety and goodness, and to which  
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he hath promised a more especial blessing; there they will have the opportunity of joining in the public prayers of God's church, and of sharing in the unspeakable benefit and advantage of them; and there they will also have the advantage of being instructed by the ministers of God in the doctrine of salvation, and the way to eternal life, and of being powerfully incited to the practice of piety and virtue.

There likewise they will be invited to the Lord's table, to participate of the holy sacrament of Christ's most blessed body and blood; which being the most solemn institution of the christian religion, the frequent participation whereof is, by our blessed Lord, in remembrance of his dying love, enjoined upon all Christians, we ought to take a very particular care, that those who are under our charge, so soon as they are capable of it, be duly instructed and prepared for it; that so, as often as opportunity is offered for it, they may be present at this holy action, and partake of the inestimable benefits and comforts of it.

And when the public worship of that day is over, our families should be instructed at home, by having the scriptures and other good books read to them: and care likewise should be taken, that they do this themselves; this being the chief opportunity that most of them, especially those that are servants, have of minding the business of religion, and thinking seriously of another world.

And therefore I cannot but think it of very great consequence to the maintaining and keeping alive of religion in the world, that this day be religiously observed, and spent as much as may be in the exercises of piety, and in the care of our souls. For surely every one that hath a true sense of religion, will grant, that it is necessary that some time should be solemnly set apart for this purpose, which is of all other our greatest concernment. And they who neglect this so proper season and opportunity, will hardly find any other time for it; especially those who are under the government and command of others, as children and servants, who are seldom upon any other day allowed to be so much masters of their time as upon this day.

3. I add further, as a considerable part of the duty of  
parents

parents and masters of families, if they be desirous to have their children and servants religious in good earnest, and would set them forward in the way to heaven, that they do not only allow them time and opportunity, but that they do also strictly and earnestly charge them to retire themselves every day, but more especially on the Lord's day, morning and evening, to pray to God for the forgiveness of their sins, and for his mercy and blessing upon them; and likeways to praise him for all his favours and benefits conferred upon them from day to day.

And, in order to this, they ought to take care, that their children and servants be furnished with such short forms of prayer and praise as are proper and suitable to their capacities and conditions respectively; because there are but very few that know how to set about and perform these duties, especially at first, without some helps of this kind.

4. And lastly, Another principal part of this duty consists in giving good example to our families. This was David's resolution, Psal. ci. 2. *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.* Take great care to be exemplary to thy family in the best things; in a constant and devout serving of God, and in a sober, and prudent, and unblameable conversation.

One of the best and most effectual ways to make those who are under our care and authority good, is to be good ourselves, and, by our good example, to shew them the way to be so. Without this our best instructions will signify but very little, and the main force and efficacy of them will be lost. We undermine the best instructions we can give, when they are not seconded and confirmed by our own example and practice. The want of this will weaken the authority of all our good counsel, and very little reverence and obedience will be paid to it. The precepts and admonitions of a very good man have in them a great power of persuasion, and are apt strongly to move and inflame others to *go and do likewise*: but the good instructions of a bad man are languid and faint, and of very little force; because they give no heart and encouragement to follow that counsel, which they see he

that gives it does not think fit to take himself. But of this likewise I shall have occasion to speak more fully in the following discourses, concerning the good education of children. And thus much may suffice to have spoken of the first thing which I proposed, namely, Wherein the practice of this duty doth consist. I proceed to the second, namely,

II. To consider our obligation to it, both in point of duty and of interest.

I. In point of duty. All authority over others is a talent intrusted with us by God, for the benefit and good of others, and for which we are accountable, if we do not improve it, and make use of it to that end. We are obliged, by all lawful means, to provide for the temporal welfare of our family, to feed and clothe their bodies, and to give them a comfortable subsistence here in the world: and surely much more are we obliged to take care of their souls, and to consult their eternal happiness in another life; in comparison of which all temporal concerns and considerations are as nothing.

It would be accounted a very barbarous thing in a father or master, to suffer a child to starve for want of the necessaries of life, food and raiment; and all the world would cry shame upon them for it: but how much greater cruelty must it in reason be thought, to let an immortal soul, and one *for whom Christ died*, perish for want of knowledge and necessary instruction for the attaining of eternal salvation?

The Apostle St. Paul thinks no words bad enough for those who neglect the temporal welfare of their families: *He that provideth not (saith he) for his own, especially for those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*; that is, he does not deserve the name of a Christian, who neglects a duty to which, from the plain dictates of nature, a Heathen thinks himself obliged. What then shall be said for them who take no care to provide for the everlasting happiness, and to prevent the eternal misery and ruin of those who are so immediately under their charge, and so very nearly related to them?

We are obliged to procure the happiness of our children, not only by the laws of Christianity, but likewise by all the natural bonds of duty and affection. For our children

children are a part of ourselves; and if they perish by our fault and neglect, it will be a perpetual wound and sting to us: their blood will be upon our heads, and the guilt of it will for ever lie at our doors.

Nay, we are obliged likewise in justice, and by way of reparation, to take all possible care of their happiness: for we have conveyed a sad inheritance to them, in those corrupt and evil inclinations which they have derived from us; and therefore we should, with the greatest care and diligence, endeavour to rectify their perverse natures, and to cure those cursed dispositions to evil which we have transmitted to them. And since God hath been pleased in so much mercy to provide, by the abundant grace of the gospel, so powerful a remedy for this hereditary disease of our corrupt and degenerate nature, we should do what in us lies, that they may partake of the blessing and benefit of it.

And as to other members of our family, whether they be servants, or other relations, of whom we have taken the charge, common humanity will oblige us to be concerned for their happiness, as they are men, and of the same nature with ourselves: and charity likewise, as they are Christians, and baptized into the same faith, and capable of the same common salvation, does yet more strictly oblige us by all means to endeavour that they may be made partakers of it; especially since they are committed to our care, and for that reason we must expect to be accountable to God for them.

So that our obligation in point of duty is very clear and strong; and if we be remiss and negligent in the discharge of it, we can never answer it either to God or to our own consciences: which I hope will awaken us all who are concerned in it, to the serious consideration of it, and effectually engage us for the future, to the faithful and conscientious performance of it.

2. We are hereto likewise obliged in point of interest; because it is really for our service and advantage, that those that belong to us should serve and fear God; religion being the best and surest foundation of the duties of all relations, and the best caution and security for the true discharge and performance of them.

Would we have dutiful and obedient children, dili-

gent and faithful servants? nothing will so effectually oblige them to be so, as the fear of God and the principles of religion firmly settled and rooted in them. Abraham, who, by the testimony of God himself, was so eminent an example of this kind, both of a good father, and a good master of his family, found the good success of his religious care in the happy effects of it, both upon his son Isaac, and his chief servant and steward of his house, Eliezer of Damascus.

What an unexampled instance of the most profound respect and obedience to the commands of his father did Isaac give, when, without the least murmuring or reluctance, he submitted to be bound, and laid upon the altar, and to have been slain for a sacrifice, if God had not, by an angel sent on purpose, interposed to prevent it?

What an admirable servant to Abraham was the steward of his house, Eliezer of Damascus? How diligent and faithful was he in his master's service? so that he trusted him in his greatest concerns, and with all that he had. And when he employed him in that great affair of the marriage of his son Isaac, what pains did he take, what prudence did he use, what fidelity did he shew, in the discharge of that great trust, giving himself no rest till he had accomplished the business he was sent about? God seems purposely to have left these two instances upon record in scripture, to encourage fathers and masters of families to a religious care of their children and servants.

And to shew the power of religion to oblige men to their duty, I will add but one instance more. How did the fear of God secure Joseph's fidelity to his master, in the case of a very great and violent temptation? When there was nothing else to restrain him from so lewd and wicked an act, and to which he was so powerfully tempted, the consideration of the great trust his master reposed in him, and the sense of his duty to him, but, above all, the fear of God, preserved him from consenting to so vile and wicked an action: *How can I (says he) do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*

So that, in prudence, and from a wise consideration of the great benefit and advantage which will thereby redound

ound to us, we ought, with the greatest care, to instil the principles of religion into those that belong to us. For if the seeds of true piety be sown in them, we shall reap the fruits of it; and if this be neglected, we shall certainly find the mischief and inconvenience of it. If our children and servants be not taught to fear and reverence God, how can we expect that they should reverence and regard us? At least we can have no sure hold of them: for nothing but religion lays an obligation upon conscience: nor is there any other certain bond of duty, and obedience, and fidelity. Men will break loose from all other ties, when a fit occasion and a fair opportunity doth strongly tempt them. And as religion is necessary to procure the favour of God, and all the comfort and happiness which that brings along with it: so it is necessary likewise to secure the mutual duties and offices of men to one another. I proceed to the third thing which I proposed, namely,

III. To inquire into the causes of the so common and shameful neglect of this duty, to the exceeding great decay of piety among us. And this may in part be ascribed to our civil confusions and distractions, but chiefly to our dissensions and differences in religion; which have not only divided and scattered our parochial churches and congregations, but have entered likewise into our families, and made great disturbances and disorders here.

1. This may in good part be ascribed to our civil confusions and distractions, which for the time do lay all laws asleep; and do not only occasion a general licentiousness and dissoluteness of manners, but have usually proportionably bad influence upon the order and government of families, by weakening the authority of those that govern, and by giving the opportunity of greater licence to those that should be governed; for when public laws lose their authority, it is hard to maintain and keep up the strict rules and order of families; which, after great and long disorder, are very hard to be relieved and recovered.

2. This great neglect and decay of religious order in families, is chiefly owing to our dissensions and differences in religion; upon occasion whereof, many, under the

pretence of conscience, have broke loose into a boundless liberty. So that, among the manifold ill consequences of our divisions in religion, this is none of the least, that the religious order of families hath been in a great measure broken and dissolved. Some will not meet at the same prayers in the family, nor go to the same church and place of public worship; and, upon that pretence, take the liberty to do what they please, and, under colour of serving God in a different way according to their consciences, do either wholly, or in great measure, neglect the worship of God: nay, it is well if they do not at that time haunt and frequent places of debauchery and lewdness; which they may safely do, being from under the eye of their parents and masters. However, by this means, it becomes impossible for the most careful masters of families, to take an account of those under their charge, how they spend their time on the Lord's day, and to train them up in any certain and orderly way of religion.

And this methinks is so great and sensible an inconvenience, and hath had such dismal effects in many families, as ought effectually to convince us of the necessity of endeavouring a greater union in matters of religion; and to put us in mind of those happy days when God was served in one way, and whole families went to the house of God in companies; and fathers and masters had their children and servants continually under their eye, and they were all united in their worship and devotion, both in their own houses, and in the house of God; and by this means the work of religious education and instruction was effectually carried on, and a steady authority and decent order was maintained in families; men were edified and built up in religion, and *God in all things was glorified.*

And we may assure ourselves, that till we are better agreed in matters of religion, and our unhappy and childish differences are laid aside, and till the public and unanimous worship of God do in some measure recover its reputation; the good order and government of families, as to the great ends of religion, is never likely to obtain and to have any considerable effect: which, I hope, will make all men who heartily love God and religion,

to consider seriously how necessary it is to put an end to these differences ; that in our private families, as well as in the public assemblies of the church, we may *with one mind and with one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, (as St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians, 1 Cor. i. 10.) by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment; that is, so far as is necessary to the keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and to prevent divisions and separations among Christians. I proceed to the fourth and last thing I proposed, and which remains to be very briefly spoken to, namely,*

IV. The very mischievous and fatal consequences of the neglect of this duty, both to the public, and to ourselves.

1. To the public. Families are the first seminaries of religion; and if care be not there taken to prepare persons, especially in their tender years, for public teaching and instruction, it is like to have but very little effect. The neglect of a due preparation of our children and servants at home, to make them capable of profiting by what they hear and may learn at church, is like an error in the first concoction, which can hardly ever be corrected afterwards. So that, in this first neglect, the foundation of an infinite mischief is laid; because if no care be taken of persons in their younger years, when they are most capable of the impressions of religion, how can it be reasonably expected that they should come to good afterwards? And if they continue void of the fear of God, which there hath been no care taken to plant in them, they will almost necessarily be bad in all relations; undutiful children, slothful and unfaithful servants, scandalous members of the church, unprofitable to the commonwealth, disobedient to governors both ecclesiastical and civil; and, in a word, burdens of the earth, and so many plagues of human society: and this evil, if no remedy be applied to it, will continually grow worse, and diffuse and spread itself farther in every age, till impiety and wickedness, infidelity and profaneness

profaneness have over-run all, and the world be ripe for its final ruin : just as it was before the destruction of the old world, when *the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and all flesh had corrupted their way, then the flood came, and swept them all away.*

2. The consequences of this neglect will likewise be very dismal to ourselves. We shall first of all others feel the inconvenience, as we had the greatest share in the guilt of it. We can have no manner of security of the duty and fidelity of those of our family to us, if they have no sense of religion, no fear of God before their eyes. If we have taken no care to instruct them in their duty to God, it is no ways probable that they will make conscience of their duty to us.

So that we shall have the first ill consequences of their miscarriage, besides the shame and sorrow of it : and not only so, but all the evil they commit ever after, will be in a great measure chargeable upon us, and will be put upon our score in the judgment of the great day. It ought to make us tremble, to think with what bitterness and rage our children and servants will then fly in our faces, for having been the cause of their eternal ruin, for want of due care on our part to prevent it. In that day, next to God and our own consciences, our most terrible accusers will be those of our own house, nay, those that come out of our own bowels, and were not only part of our family, but even of ourselves. But this also I shall have a proper occasion to prosecute more fully in the following discourses concerning the education of children, to which I refer it.

Upon all these considerations, and many more that might be urged upon us, we should take up the pious resolution of Joshua here in the text, that *we and OUR HOUSES will serve the Lord* ; and that, through God's grace, we will do all that in us lies, by our future care and diligence, to repair our former neglects in this kind.

I shall only add this one consideration more, to all that I have already mentioned. If children were carefully educated, and families regularly and religiously ordered, what a happy and delightful place, what a paradise would this world be, in comparison of what now it is ?

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I beseech you therefore, brethren, that these things, which I have with so much plainness and faithfulness laid before you, may sink into your hearts before it be too late, and whilst the thing may be remedied; that you may not for ever lament this neglect, and repent of it, when the thing will be past remedy, and there will be no place for repentance. *But I hope better things of you, brethren, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak.*

## S E R M O N L I.

## Of the education of children.

P R O V. xxii. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

The first sermon on this text.

**I** Have on purpose chosen this text for the subject of a preparatory discourse, in order to the reviving of that so shamefully neglected, and yet most useful and necessary duty of catechising children and young persons: but I shall extend it to the consideration of the education of children in general, as a matter of the greatest consequence, both to religion and the public welfare.

For we who are the ministers of God, ought not only to instruct those who are committed to our charge in the common duties of Christianity, such as belong to all Christians; but likewise in all the particular duties which the several relations in which they stand to one another do respectively require and call for from them.

And amongst all these, I know none that is of greater concernment to religion, and to the good order of the world, than the careful education of children. And there is hardly any thing that is more difficult, and which requires

quires a more prudent, and diligent, and constant application of our best care and endeavour.

It is a known saying of Melancthon, that there are three things which are extremely difficult, *parturire, docere, regere*: “to bear and bring forth children, to instruct and bring them up to be men, and to govern them when they arrive at man’s estate.” The instruction and good education of children is none of the least difficult of these. For to do it to the best advantage, does not only require great sagacity to discern their particular disposition and temper, but great discretion to deal with them and manage them, and likewise continual care and diligent attendance to form them by degrees to religion and virtue.

It requires great wisdom and industry to advance a considerable estate; much art, and contrivance, and pains, to raise a great and regular building: but the greatest and noblest work in the world, and an effect of the greatest prudence and care, is, to rear and build up a man, and to form and fashion him to piety and justice, and temperance, and all kind of honest and worthy actions. Now, the foundations of this great work are to be carefully laid in the tender years of children, that it may rise and grow up with them; according to the advice of the wise man here in the text, *Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

In which words are contained these two things.

1. The duty of parents, and instructors of children: *Train up a child, &c.* By *childhood* here, I understand the age of persons from their birth; but more especially from their first capacity of instruction, till they arrive at the state and age which next succeeds childhood, and which we call *youth*; and which is the proper season for confirmation. For when children have been well catechized and instructed in religion, then is the fittest time for them to take upon themselves, and in their own persons, to confirm that solemn vow, which by their sureties they made at their baptism.

*Train up a child in the way he should go*; that is, in the course of life that he ought to lead; instruct him carefully in the knowledge and practice of his whole duty

to God and men, which he ought to observe and perform all the days of his life.

2. Here is the consequent fruit and benefit of good education: *And when he is old, he will not depart from it.* Thus we are to understand according to the moral probability of things: not as if this happy effect did always and infallibly follow upon the good education of a child; but that this very frequently is, and may probably be presumed and hoped to be the fruit and effect of a pious and prudent education. Solomon means, that from the very nature of the thing, this is the most hopeful and likely way to train up a child to be a good man. For, as Aristotle truly observes, moral sayings and proverbial speeches are to be understood only *ἐπι τὸ πᾶν*; that is, to be usually and for the most part true. And though there may be several exceptions made, and instances given to the contrary; yet this doth not infringe the general truth of them. But if in frequent and common experience they be found true, this is all the truth that is expected in them, because it is all that was intended by them.

And of this nature is this aphorism or proverb of Solomon in the text; and so likewise are most of the wise sayings of this book of the Proverbs, as also of Ecclesiastes. And we do greatly mistake the design and meaning of them, whenever we go about to exact them to a more strict and rigorous truth, and shall, upon due consideration, find it impossible to bring them to it.

So that the true meaning of the text may be fully comprised in the following proposition:

That the careful, and prudent, and religious education of children hath for the most part a very good influence upon the whole course of their lives.

In the handling of this argument, I design, by God's assistance, to reduce my discourse to these five heads.

1. I shall shew more generally wherein the good education of children doth consist; and severally consider the principal parts of it.

2. I shall give some more particular directions for the management of this work, in such a way as may be most effectual for its end.

3: I shall take notice of some of the common and more remarkable miscarriages in the performance of this duty.

4. I shall endeavour to make out the truth of this proposition, by shewing how the good education of children comes to be of so great advantage, and to have so powerful and lasting an influence upon their whole lives.

5. And lastly, I shall, by the most powerful arguments I can offer, endeavour to stir up and persuade those whose duty this is, to discharge it with great care and conscience.

*First*, I shall shew more generally wherein the good education of children doth consist; and severally consider the principal parts of it. And under this head I shall comprehend promiscuously the duty of parents; and, in case of their death, of guardians; and of god-fathers and godmothers; though this for the most part signifies very little more than a pious and charitable care and concernment for them; because the children for whom they are sureties, are seldom under their power: and the duty likewise of those who are the teachers and instructors of them: and the duty also of masters of families towards servants in their childhood and younger years: and lastly, the duty of ministers, under whose parochial care and inspection children are, as members of the families committed to their charge: I say, under this head I shall comprehend the duties of all these respectively, according to the several obligations which lie upon each of them in their several relations to them. And I shall reduce them to these eight particulars, as the principal parts wherein the education of children doth consist.

1. In the tender and careful nursing of them.

2. In bringing them to be baptized, and admitted members of Christ's church, at the times appointed or accustomed in the national church of which the parents are members.

3. In a due care to inform and instruct them in the whole compass of their duty to God and to their neighbour.

4. And

4. And more especially in a prudent and diligent care to form their lives and manners to religion and virtue.

5. In giving them good example.

6. In wise restraints from that which is evil, by reasonable reproof and correction.

7. In bringing them to be publicly catechised by the minister, in order to confirmation.

8. In bringing them to the bishop, to be solemnly confirmed, by their taking upon themselves the vow which, by their sureties, they entered into at their baptism.

I. In the tender and careful nursing of children. I mention this first, because it is the first and most natural duty incumbent upon parents towards their children: and this is particularly the duty of mothers. This affection and tenderness, nature, which is our surest guide and director, hath implanted in all living creatures towards their young ones; and there cannot be a greater reproach to creatures that are endued with reason, than to neglect a duty, to which nature directs even the brute creatures by a blind and unthinking instinct. So that it is such a duty, as cannot be neglected without a downright affront to nature; and from which nothing can excuse, but disability, or sickness, or the evident danger of the mother, or the interposition of the father's authority, or some very extraordinary and public necessity.

This, I foresee, will seem a very hard saying to nice and delicate mothers, who prefer their own ease and pleasure to the fruit of their own bodies: but whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, I think myself obliged to deal plainly in this matter, and to be so faithful as to tell them, that this is a natural duty; and because it is so, of a more necessary and indispensable obligation than any positive precept of revealed religion; and that the general neglect of it is one of the great and crying sins of this age and nation; and which, as much as any sin whatsoever, is evidently a punishment to itself, in the palpable ill effects and consequences of it; which I shall, as briefly as I can, endeavour to represent; that, if it be possible, we may in this first

point of education, so fundamental and necessary to the happiness both of parents and children, and consequently to the public good of human society, be brought to comply with the unerring instinct of nature, and with the plain dictate of the common reason of mankind, and the general practice of all ages and nations.

1. The neglect of this duty is a sort of exposing of children; especially when it is not done, as very often it is not, with more than ordinary care and choice. It always exposeth them to manifest inconvenience, and sometimes to great danger; even to that degree, as, in the consequence of it, is but little better than the laying a child in the streets, and leaving it to the care and compassion of a parish. There are two very visible inconveniences which do commonly attend it.

1<sup>st</sup>, Strange milk; which is often very disagreeable to the child, and with which the child to be sure sucks in the natural infirmities of the nurse, together with a great deal of her natural inclinations and irregular passions, which many times stick by the child for a long time after; and, which is worse than all this, it sometimes happens, that some secret disease of the nurse is conveyed to the child.

2<sup>dly</sup>, A shameful and dangerous neglect of the child, especially by such nurses as make a trade of it; of whom there are great numbers in and about this great city; who, after they have made their first and main advantage of the child, by the excessive, not to say extravagant vails, which usually here in England, above all other places in the world, are given at christenings; and then, by the strait allowances which are commonly made afterwards for the nursing and keeping of the child, are often tempted, not to say worse, to a great neglect of the child; which, if it happen to die for want of due care, sets the nurse at liberty to make a new advantage, by taking another child.

Nor can it well be otherwise expected, than that a nurse, who by this course is first made to be unnatural to her own child, should have no great care and tenderness for a child which is not her own.

I have heard a very sad observation made by those who have had the opportunity to know it, that, in several of  
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the towns and villages about London, where this trade of nursing children is chiefly driven, hardly one in five of these children lives out the year. And this surely is a danger, which natural affection, as well as duty, does oblige parents to take all possible care to prevent.

2. This course doth most certainly tend very much to the estranging and weakening of natural affection on both sides: I mean, both on the part of the mother, and of the child. The pains of nursing, as well as of bearing children, doth insensibly create a strange tenderness of affection and care in the mother. *Can a woman* (says God) *forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?* Is. xlix. 15. *Can a woman?* that is, a mother, not a nurse; for the *sucking child* is said to be *the son of her womb*. God speaks of this as a thing next to impossible.

And this likewise is a great endearment of the mother to the child: which endearment, when the child is put out, is transferred from the mother to the nurse, and many times continues to be so for a great many years after; yea, and often to that degree, as if the nurse were the true mother, and the true mother a mere stranger. So that by this means natural affection must be extremely weakened: which is great pity; because, when it is kept up in its full strength, it often proves one of the best securities of the duty of a child.

But because this severe doctrine will go down but very hardly with a great many, I must take the more care to guard it against the objections which will be made to it. Those from natural disability, or sickness; from evident and apparent danger of the mother, or from the interposition of the father's authority, or from plain necessity; or if there be any other that have an equal reason with these, I have prevented already, by allowing them to be just and reasonable exceptions from the general rule, when they are real, and not made pretences to shake off our duty.

But there are, besides these, two objections which indeed are real, but yet seem to have too great a weight with those who would fain decline this duty; and are by no means sufficient to excuse mothers, no not those of the highest rank and quality, from the natural obligation

of it. And they are these; the manifest trouble, and the manifold restraints which the careful discharge of this duty does unavoidably bring upon those who submit themselves to it.

1. For the trouble of it; I have only this to say, and I think no more need to be said about it, that no body is discharged from any duty by reason of the trouble which necessarily attends it, and is inseparable from it; since God, who made it a duty, foresaw the trouble of it when he made it so.

2. As to the manifold restraints which it lays upon mothers; this will best be answered by considering of what nature these restraints are. And they are chiefly in these and the like instances. This duty restrains mothers from spending their mornings and their money in curious and costly dressing; from mispending the rest of the day in formal, and for the most part impertinent visits; and in seeing and hearing plays, many of which are neither fit to be seen nor heard by modest persons, and those who pretend to religion and virtue, as I hope all Christians do, especially persons of higher rank and quality; and it restrains them likewise from trifling away a great part of the night in gaming, and in reveling till past midnight, I am loth to say how much.

These are those terrible restraints which this natural duty, of mothers nursing their children, lays upon them. Now, I cannot but think all these to be very happy restraints: happy surely for the child, and in many respects happy for the father, and for the whole family, which by this means will be kept in much better order; but happiest of all for the mother, who does herein not only discharge a great and necessary duty, but is hereby also hindered from running into many great faults; which, before they will be forgiven, must cost her a deep contrition, and a very bitter repentance.

Perhaps I may have gone further in this unusual argument, than will please the present age. But I hope posterity will be so wise, as to consider it, and lay it to heart: for I am greatly afraid, that the world will never be much better till this great fault be mended. I proceed to the next particular wherein the good education of children doth consist, namely,

II. In bringing them to be baptised, and admitted members of Christ's church, at the times appointed or accustomed in the national church of which the parents are members; I mean, to bring them to the church to be there publicly initiated, and solemnly admitted by baptism. And this the rules of the church of England do strictly enjoin, unless the child be in danger of death; and in that case only it is allowed to administer baptism privately, and in a summary way, without performing the whole office. But then, if the child live, it is ordered that it shall be brought to the church, where the remainder of the office is to be solemnly performed.

I know that of late years, since our unhappy confusions, this sacrament hath very frequently been administered in private: and ministers have been in a manner, and to avoid the greater mischief of separation, necessitated to comply with the obstinacy of the greater and more powerful of their parishioners; who, for their ease or humour, or for the convenience of a pompous christening, will either have their children baptised at home by their minister; or, if he refuse, will get some other minister to do it: which is very irregular.

Now, I would intreat such persons calmly to consider how contrary to reason, and to the plain design of the institution of this sacrament, this perverse custom, and their obstinate resolution in it, is. For is there any civil society or corporation into which persons are admitted without some kind of solemnity? And is the privilege of being admitted members of the christian church, and heirs of the great and glorious promises and blessings of the new covenant of the gospel, less considerable, and fit to be conferred with less solemnity? I speak to Christians; and they who are so in good earnest, will, without my using more words about it, consider what I say in this particular.

III. Another and very necessary part of the good education of children is, by degrees, to inform, and carefully to instruct them in the whole compass of their duty to God, their neighbour, and themselves; that so they may be taught how to behave themselves in all the steps of their life, from their first capacity of reason till they arrive at the more perfect use and exercise of that

faculty; when, if at first they be well instructed, they will be better able to direct and govern themselves afterwards.

This duty God does expressly and very particularly charge upon his own peculiar people, the people of Israel. Speaking of the law, which he had given them, *Thou shalt* (says he, Deut. vi. 7.) *teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* And this God long before promised, that Abraham, *the father of the faithful*, would do: Gen. xviii. 19. *I know Abraham,* (says he) *that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord.*

This work ought to be begun very early, upon the first budding and appearance of reason and understanding in children. So the prophet directs, Is. xxviii. 9. 10. *Whom shall he teach knowledge? whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, &c.*

To this end we must, by such degrees as they are capable, bring them acquainted with God and themselves. And, in the first place, we must inform them, that there is such a being as God, whom we ought to honour and reverence above all things: and then, that we are all his creatures, and the work of his hands; that *it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves*; that he continually preserves us, and gives us all the good things that we enjoy; and therefore we ought to ask every thing of him by prayer, because this is an acknowledgment of our dependence upon him; and to return thanks to him for all that we have and hope for, because this is a just and easy tribute, and all that we can render to him for his numberless favours and benefits.

And, after this, they are to be instructed more particularly in their duty to God and men; as I shall shew more fully afterwards. And because fear and hope are the two passions which do chiefly sway and govern human nature, and the main springs and principles of action, therefore children are to be carefully informed, that there is a life after death, wherein men shall receive from  
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God a mighty and eternal reward, or a terrible and endless punishment, according as they have done or neglected their duty in this life: that God will love and reward those who do his will, and keep his commandments; but will execute a dreadful punishment upon the workers of iniquity, and the wilful transgressors of his laws.

And, according as they are capable, they are to be made sensible of the great degeneracy and corruption of human nature, derived to us by the fall and wilful transgression of our first parents; and of the way of our recovery out of this miserable state by Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent, in our nature, to purchase and accomplish the redemption and salvation of mankind, from the captivity of sin and Satan, and from the damnation of hell.

IV. The good education of children consists not only in informing their minds in the knowledge of God and their duty; but more especially in endeavouring, with the greatest care and prudence, to form their lives and manners to religion and virtue. And this must be done by training them up to the exercise of the following graces and virtues.

1. To obedience and modesty, to diligence and sincerity, and to tenderness and pity, as the general dispositions to religion and virtue.

2. To the good government of their passions, and of their tongue; and particularly to speak truth, and to hate lying, as a base and vile quality; these being, as it were, the foundations of religion and virtue.

3. To piety and devotion towards God, to sobriety and chastity with regard to themselves, and to justice and charity towards all men, as the principal and essential parts of religion and virtue.

1. As the general dispositions to religion and virtue, we must train them up,

1<sup>st</sup>, To obedience. Parents must take great care to maintain their authority over their children; otherwise they will neither regard their commands, nor hearken to and follow their instructions. If they once get head, and grow stubborn and disobedient, there is very little hope left of doing any great good upon them.

2dly, To modesty ; which is a fear of shame and disgrace. This disposition, which is proper to children, is a marvellous advantage to all good purposes. “ They are modest, (says Aristotle) who are afraid to offend ; and they are afraid to offend, who are most apt to do it :” as children are ; because they are much under the power of their passions, without a proportionable strength of reason to govern them and keep them under.

Now, modesty is not properly a virtue ; but it is a very good sign of a tractable and towardly disposition, and a great preservative and security against sin and vice. And those children who are much under the restraint of modesty, we look upon as most hopeful and likely to prove good ; whereas immodesty is a vicious temper, broke loose and got free from all restraint. So that there is nothing left to keep an impudent person from sin when fear of shame is gone ; for sin will soon take possession of that person whom shame hath left. He that is once become shameless, hath prostituted himself. Therefore preserve this disposition in children as much as is possible, as one of the best means to preserve their innocency, and to bring them to goodness.

3dly, To diligence ; *sine qua vir magnus nunquam extitit* : “ Without which (says one) there never was any great and excellent person.” When the Roman historians describe an extraordinary man, this always enters into his character, as an essential part of it, that he was *incredibili industriâ, diligentia singulari* ; “ of incredible industry, of singular diligence ;” or something to that purpose. And indeed a person can neither be excellently good nor extremely bad, without this quality. The devil himself could not be so bad and mischievous as he is, if he were not so stirring and restless a spirit, and did not compass the earth, and go to and fro, seeking whom he might devour.

This is part of the character of Sylla, and Marius, and Catiline, those great disturbers of the Roman state ; as well as of Cæsar and Pompey, who were much greater and better men, but yet gave trouble enough to their country, and at last dissolved the Roman commonwealth, by their ambition and contention for superiority ; this, I say, enters into all their characters, that they were of  
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a vigorous and indefatigable spirit. So that diligence in itself is neither a virtue nor a vice; but may be applied either way, to good or bad purposes: and yet where all other requisites do concur, it is a very proper instrument and disposition for virtue.

Therefore train up children to diligence, if ever you desire they should excel in any kind. *The hand of the diligent* (saith Solomon, Prov. x. 4.) *maketh rich*; rich in estate, rich in knowledge. *Seest thou a man diligent in his business?* (as the same wise man observes, Prov. xxii. 29.) *he shall stand before princes, he shall not stand before mean (or obscure) men.* And again, *The hand of the diligent shall bear rule; but the slothful shall be under tribute,* Prov. xii. 24. Diligence puts almost every thing into our power, and will in time make children capable of the best and greatest things.

Whereas idleness is the bane and ruin of children: it is the unbending of their spirits, the rust of their faculties, and as it were the laying of their minds fallow; not as husbandmen do their lands, that they may get new heart and strength, but to impair and lose that which they have. Children that are bred up in laziness, are almost necessarily bad; because they cannot take the pains to be good: and they cannot take pains, because they have never been inured and accustomed to it; which makes their spirits restive, and when you have occasion to quicken them, and spur them up to business, they will stand stock still.

Therefore never let your children be without a calling, or without some useful, or at least innocent employment, that will take them up; that they not be put upon a kind of necessity of being vicious, for want of something better to do. The devil tempts the active and vigorous into his service, knowing what fit and proper instruments they are to do his drudgery: but the slothful and idle, no body having hired them, and set them on work, lie in his way, and he stumbles upon them as *he goes about*; and they do as it were offer themselves to his service; and having nothing to do, they even tempt the devil himself to tempt them, and to take them in his way.

4thly, To sincerity : which is not so properly a single virtue, as the life and soul of all other graces and virtues ; and without which, what shew of goodness soever a man may make, he is unsound and rotten at the heart. Cherish therefore this disposition in children, as that which, when they come to be men, will be the great security and ornament of their lives, and will render them acceptable both to God and men.

5thly, To tenderness and pity: which when they come to engage in business, and to have dealings in the world, will be a good bar against injustice and oppression ; and will be continually prompting us to charity, and will fetch powerful arguments for it from our own bowels.

To preserve this goodness and tenderness of nature, this so very humane and useful affection, keep children, as much as is possible, out of the way of bloody fights, and spectacles of cruelty ; and discountenance in them all cruel and barbarous usage of creatures under their power : do not allow them to torture and kill them for their sport and pleasure ; because this will insensibly and by degrees harden their hearts, and make them less apt to compassionate the wants of the poor, and the sufferings and afflictions of the miserable.

2. As the main foundations of religion and virtue, children must be carefully trained up to the government of their passions, and of their tongues ; and particularly to speak truth, and to hate lying as a base and vile quality.

1st, To the good government of their passions. It is the disorder of these, more especially of desire, and fear, and anger, which betrays us to many evils. Anger prompts men to contention and murder ; inordinate desire, to covetousness, and fraud, and oppression ; and fear many times awes men into sin, and deters them from their duty.

Now, if these passions be cherished, or even but let alone in children, they will in a short time grow headstrong and unruly ; and when they come to be men, will corrupt the judgment, and turn good nature into humour, and the understanding into prejudice and wilfulness ; but if they be carefully observed and prudently restrained, they may by degrees be managed, and brought under government ; and the inordinacy of them being pruned

pruned away, they may prove excellent instruments of virtue.

Therefore be careful to discountenance in children any thing that looks like rage and furious anger, and to shew them the unreasonableness and deformity of it. Check their longing desires after things pleasant, and use them to frequent disappointments in that kind; that when you think fit to gratify them, they may take it for a favour, and not challenge every thing they have a mind to as their due; and by degrees may learn to submit to the more prudent choice of their parents, as being much better able to judge what is good and fit for them.

And when you see them at any time apt out of fear to neglect their duty, or to fall into any sin, or to be tempted, by telling a lie, to commit one fault to hide and excuse another; which children are very apt to do: the best remedy of this evil will be, to plant a greater fear against a less, and to tell them what and whom they should chiefly fear; *not him who can hurt and kill the body; but him who, after he hath killed, can destroy both body and soul in hell.*

The neglect of children in this matter, I mean in not teaching them to govern their passions, is the true cause why many that have proved sincere Christians when they came to be men, have yet been very imperfect in their conversation, and their lives have been full of inequalities and breaches; which have not only been matter of great trouble and disquiet to themselves, but of great scandal to religion; when their light, which should shine before men, is often darkened and obscured by these frequent and visible infirmities.

*2dly,* To the government of their tongues. To this end teach children silence, especially in the presence of their betters; and as soon as they are capable of such a lesson, let them be taught not to speak, but upon consideration, both of what they say, and before whom. And above all, inculcate upon them that most necessary duty and virtue of speaking truth, as one of the best and strongest bands of human society and commerce: and possess them with the baseness and vileness of telling a lie; for if it be so great a provocation to give a man the  
lie,

lie, then surely to be guilty of that fault, must be a mighty reproach.

They who write of Japan tell us, that those people though mere Heathens, take such an effectual course in the education of their children, as to render a lie and breach of faith above all things odious to them; inso much that it is a very rare thing for any person among them to be taken in a lie, or found guilty of breach of faith. And cannot the rules of Christianity be rendered as effectual to restrain men from these faults which are scandalous even to nature, and much more so to the Christian religion?

To the government of the tongue does likewise belong the restraining of children from lewd and obscene words, from vain and profane talk; and especially from horrid oaths and imprecations; from all which they are easily kept at first; but if they are once accustomed to them, it will be found no such easy matter for them to get quit of these evil habits. It will require great attention and watchfulness over themselves, to keep oaths out of their common discourse; but if they be heated and in passion, they throw out oaths and curses as naturally as men that are highly provoked sling stones, or any thing that comes next to hand, at one another. So dangerous a thing is it to let any thing that is bad in children to grow up into a habit.

3. As the principal and essential parts of religion and virtue, let children be carefully bred up,

1<sup>st</sup>, To sobriety and temperance in regard to themselves; under which I comprehend likewise purity and chastity. The government of the sensual appetite, as to all kind of bodily pleasures, is not only a great part of religion, but an excellent instrument of it, and a necessary foundation of piety and justice. For he that cannot govern himself, is not like to discharge his duty either to God or men. And therefore St. Paul puts sobriety first, as a primary and principal virtue in which men are instructed by the Christian religion, and which must be laid as the foundation both of piety towards God, and of righteousness to men: *The grace of God* (for so he calls the gospel) *that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly*  
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*lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* It first teacheth us to *live soberly*; and unless we train up children to this virtue, we must never expect that they will either *live righteously* or *godly in this present world.*

Especially, children must be bred up to great sobriety and temperance in their diet; which will retrench the fuel of other inordinate appetites. It is a good saying I have met with somewhere, *Magna pars virtutis est bene moratus venter*: "A well-mannered and well governed appetite, in matter of meats and drinks, is a great part of virtue." I do not mean, that children should be brought up according to the rules of a Lessian diet, which sets an equal stint to all stomachs; and is as senseless a thing, as a law would be which should injoin that shoes for all mankind should be made upon one and the same last.

2dly, To a serious and unaffected piety and devotion towards God, still and quiet, real and substantial, without much shew and noise; and as free as may be from all tricks of superstition, or freaks of enthusiasm; which, if parents and teachers be not very prudent, will almost unavoidably insinuate themselves into the religion of children; and, when they are grown up, will make them appear, to wise and sober persons, phantastical and conceited; and render them very apt to impose their own foolish superstitions and wild conceits upon others, who understand religion much better than themselves.

Let them be taught to honour and love God above all things; to serve him in private, and to attend constantly upon his public worship, and to keep their minds intent upon the several parts of it, without wandering and distraction: to pray to God as the fountain of all grace, and the *giver of every good and perfect gift*; and to acknowledge him, and to render thanks to him, as our most gracious and constant benefactor, and the great patron and preserver of our lives: to be careful to do what he commands, and to avoid what he hath forbidden: to be always under a lively sense and apprehension of his pure and all-seeing eye, which beholds us in secret: and to do every thing in obedience to the authority of that great lawgiver, *who is able to save, and to destroy*;

and with an awful regard to the strict and impartial judgment of the great day.

3dly, To justice and honesty . to defraud and oppress no man ; to be as good as their word, and to perform all their promises and contracts ; and endeavour to imprint upon their minds the equity of that great rule which is so natural, and so easy, that even children are capable of it ; I mean, that rule which our blessed Saviour tells us *is the law and the prophets*, namely, that we should do to others as we would have others do to us . we were in their case and circumstances, and they in ours.

You that are parents, and have to do in the world ought to be just and equal in all your dealings ; in the first place, for the sake of your own souls ; and next, for the sake of your children ; not only that you may entangle no curse upon the estate you leave them, but likewise that you may teach them no injustice by the example you set before them : which in this particular they will be apt to imitate as in any one thing ; because of the present worldly advantage which it seems to bring, and because justice is in truth a manly virtue, and least understood by children ; and therefore injustice is a vice which they will soonest practise, and with the least reluctance because they have the least knowledge of it in many particular cases : and because they have so little sense of this great virtue, they should not be allowed to cheat, no not in play and sport, even when they play for little or nothing ; for if they practise it in that case, and be unjust in a little, they will be much more tempted to be so when they can gain a great deal by it.

I remember, that Xenophon, in his *institition of Cyrus* which he designed for the idea of a well educated prince tells us this little, but very instructive story concerning young Cyrus : That his governor, the better to make him to understand the nature of justice, puts this case to him. You see there (says he to Cyrus) two boys playing, of different stature ; the lesser of them hath a very long coat, and the bigger a very short one ; now, (says he) if you were a judge, how would you dispose of these two garments ? Cyrus immediately, and with very good reason as he thought, passeth this sudden sentence, That the taller boy should have the longer garment, and he

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hat was of lower stature the shorter, because this certainly was fittest for them both. Upon which his governor sharply rebukes him to this purpose, telling him, that if he were to make two coats for them, he said well; but he did not put this case to him as a taylor, but as a judge, and as such he had given a very wrong sentence: for a judge (says he) ought not to consider what is most fit, but what is just; not who could make the best use of a thing, but who hath the most right to it.

This I bring, partly to shew in what familiar ways the principles of virtue may be instilled into children; but chiefly to prove, that justice is a manly virtue, and that there is nothing wherein children may be more easily misled, than in matter of right and wrong; therefore children should be taught the general principles and rules of justice and righteousness; because, if we would teach them to do justice, we must teach them to know what justice is. For many are unjust merely out of ignorance, and for want of knowing better, and cannot help it:

4thly, To charity; I mean, chiefly to the poor and destitute; because this, as it is an essential, so is it a most substantial part of religion. Now, to encourage this disposition in children, we must not only give them the example of it, but must frequently inculcate upon them such passages of scripture as these: that *pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction: that as we sow in this kind, so shall we reap: that he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath shewed no mercy; that at the judgment of the great day we shall in a very particular manner be called to an account for the practice or omission of this duty; and shall then be absolved or condemned, according as we have exercised or neglected this great virtue of the Christian religion.*

## S E R M O N LII.

## Of the education of children.

P R O V. xxii. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

The second sermon on this text.

V. **T**HE good education of children consists in giving them good example. This course David took in his family, as appears by that solemn resolution of his, Psal. ci. 2. *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.* Let parents and masters of families give good example to their children and servants, in a constant serving of God in their families; which will nourish religion in those that are under their care; and let them also be exemplary in a sober and holy conversation before those that belong to them.

And let not your children, as far as is possible, have any bad examples to converse with, either among your servants, or their own companions; lest, *by walking with them, they learn their way, and get a blot to their souls.* There is a contagion in example, and nothing doth more silyly insinuate itself and gain upon us, than a living and familiar pattern; therefore, as much as in you lies, let children always have good examples before them.

Especially, let parents themselves be exemplary to them in the best things, because their example is of all other the most powerful, and carries greatest authority with it. And without this, instruction will signify very little, and the great force and efficacy of it will be lost. We shall find it very hard to persuade our children to do that which they see we do not practise ourselves: for even children have so much sense and sagacity, as to understand, that actions are more real than words, and a more certain indication of what a man doth truly and inwardly

ly believe. Example is the most lively way of teaching: and because children are much given to imitation, it is likewise a very delightful way of instruction, and that of which children are most capable; both because it is best understood, and is apt to make the deepest impression upon them.

So that parents, above all others, have one argument to be religious and good themselves, for the sake of their children. If you desire to have them good, the best way to make them so, is, to give them the example of it in being good yourselves. For this reason parents should take great care to do nothing but what is worthy of imitation. Your children will follow you in what you do; therefore do not go before them in any thing that is evil. The evil example of parents is both a temptation and encouragement to children to sin, because it is a kind of authority for what they do, and looks like a justification of their wickedness.

With what reason canst thou expect that thy children should follow thy good instructions, when thou thyself givest them an ill example? Thou dost but as it were beckon to them with thy head, and shew them the way to heaven by thy good counsel; but thou takest them by the hand, and leadeest them in the way to hell by thy contrary example. Whenever you swear, or tell a lie, or are passionate and furious, or come drunk into your family, you weaken the authority of your commands, and lose all reverence and obedience to them, by contradicting your own precepts.

The precepts of a good man are apt to raise and inflame others to the imitation of them; but when they come from one who is faulty and vitious in that kind himself, they are languid and faint, and give us no heart and encouragement to the exercise of those virtues which we plainly see they do not practise themselves. It is the Apostle's argument, *Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?* Thou that teachest thy children to speak a truth, dost thou tell a lie? Thou that sayest they must not swear, dost thou profane the name of God by customary oaths and curses? Thou art unfit to be *a guide of the blind, a light to them that are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes;* be-  
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cause thou thyself *hast* only a form of knowledge and of truth in the law, but art destitute of the life and practice of it. In a word, if you be not careful to give good example to your children, you defeat your own counsels, and undermine the best instructions you can give them; and they will all be spilt like water upon the barren sands; they will have no effect, they will bring forth no fruit.

VI. Good education consists in wise and early restraints from that which is evil, by seasonable reproof and correction: and this also is one way of instruction. So Solomon tells us, Prov. xxix. 15. *The rod and reproof give wisdom.* And though both these do suppose a fault that is past, yet the great end of them is, to prevent the like for the future, and to be an admonition to them for the time to come. And therefore, whatever will probably be effectual for future caution and amendment, ought to be sufficient in this kind; because the end is always to give measure to the means: and where a mild and gentle rebuke will do the business, reproof may stop there without proceeding farther: or when that will not do, if a sharp word and a severe admonition will be effectual, the rod may be spared.

Provided always, that your lenity give no encouragement to sin, and be so managed, that children may perceive that you are in good earnest, and resolved, that if they will not reform, they shall certainly be punished: and provided likewise, that your lenity bear a due proportion to the nature and quality of the fault. We must not use mildness in the case of a wilful and heinous sin, especially if it be exemplary, and of public influence. To rebuke gently upon such an occasion, is rather to countenance the fault, and seems to argue that we are not sensible enough of the enormity of it, and that we have not a due dislike and detestation for it: such cold reproofs as those which old Eli gave his sons, 1 Sam. ii. 23. 24. *Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings, by all this people; (that is, their carriage was such as gave public scandal). Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear; ye make the Lord's people to transgress.*

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Such a cold reproof as this, where the crime was so great and notorious, was a kind of allowance of it, and a partaking with them in their sin: and so God interprets it; and therefore calls it, *a kicking at his sacrifice, and a despising of his offering*, chap. ii. 29. And he threatens Eli with most terrible judgments upon this very account; *because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

So that our severity must be proportioned to the crime. Where the fault is great, there greater severity must be used; so much at least, as may be an effectual restraint for the future. Here was Eli's miscarriage; that in the case of so great a fault as his sons were guilty of, his proceeding was neither proportioned to the crime, nor to the end of reproof and correction, which is amendment for the future: but he used such a mildness in his reproof of them, as was more apt to encourage, than restrain them in their vile courses; for so the text says, that *his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

There are indeed some dispositions so very tender and tractable, that a gentle reproof will suffice. But most children are of that temper, that correction must be sometimes used; and a fond indulgence in this case, is many times their utter ruin and undoing; and, in truth, not love, but hatred. So the wise man tells us, Prov. xiii. 24. *He that spareth his rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes.* Chap. xix. 18. *Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.* And again, chap. xxii. 15. *Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.* Chap. xxiii. 13. 14. *With-hold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.* Again, chap. xxix. 15. *The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame.* He mentions the mother emphatically; because she many times is most faulty in this fond indulgence; and therefore the shame and grief of it doth justly fall upon her.

So that correction is of great use, and often necessary; and parents that forbear it, are not only cruel to their

their children, but to themselves: for God many times punisheth those parents very severely, who have neglected this necessary piece of discipline. There is hardly to be found in the whole Bible a more terrible temporal threatning, than that concerning Eli and his house, for his fond indulgence to his sons, who, when they came to be men, proved such horrible scandals not only to their father, but to the priest's office; and to that degree, as to *make the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred by all the people.* I will recite the threatning at large, for an admonition to parents, that they be not guilty in this kind: 1 Sam. iii. 11. 12. 13. 14. *The Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it, shall tingle. In that day, I will perform against Eli, all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.* I know very well, that this enormous wickedness of Eli's sons was committed by them after they were grown to be men. But this instance is nevertheless to my present purpose; there being hardly any doubt to be made, but that it was the natural effect of a remis and too indulgent education.

Yea, very often God doth correct and remarkably punish fond parents by those very children who have wanted due reproof and correction. Of which the scripture gives us a remarkable instance in Adonijah; upon the mention of whose rebellion against David his father, the text takes particular notice of his father's extreme fondness of him, as both the procuring and meritorious cause of it: *For his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?* And, on the contrary, the wise son of Sirach tells us, that *he that chastiseth his son, shall have joy of him.*

VII. The next thing I shall mention, as a part of good education, is, the bringing of children to be publicly catechised by the minister, to prepare them for solemn confirmation.

It was with a particular respect to this work of public catechizing, and by way of introduction to it, that I at first propos'd to treat thus largely of the good education of children; hoping it might be of good use to handle this subject more fully than it hath usually been done, at least to my knowledge, from the pulpit.

And therefore I shall say something, and that very briefly, concerning the nature, and concerning the necessity and great usefulness of catechizing children.

1. For the nature of it; it is a particular way of teaching by question and answer, accommodated and fitted for the instruction of children in the principles of religion. I do not indeed find, that this particular method is any where enjoined in scripture: but instruction in general is; and I doubt not, but that, upon this general warrant, parents and ministers may use that way of instruction of children, which is most fit and proper to insil into them the principles of religion. It is true, that the word *κατηχῆσθαι*, from whence our word catechism doth come, is used in scripture to signify teaching in general: but it hath since by ecclesiastical writers been appropriated to that particular way of instruction, which hath been long in use in the christian church, and is commonly called *catechizing*.

2. As to the necessity and great usefulness of it; catechizing hath a particular advantage as to children; because they are subject to forgetfulness, and want of attention. Now, catechizing is a good remedy against both these; because, by questions put to them, children are forced to take notice of what is taught, and must give some answer to the question that is asked: and a catechism being short, and containing in a little compass the most necessary principles of religion, it is the more easily remembered.

The great usefulness, and indeed the necessity of it, plainly appears by experience. For it very seldom happens, that children which have not been catechized, have any clear and competent knowledge of the principles of religion; and, for want of this, are incapable of receiving any great benefit by sermons, which suppose persons to be in some measure instructed beforehand in the main principles of religion.

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Besides, that if they have no principles of religion fixed in them, they become an easy prey to seducers. And we have had sad experience of this in our age; and, among many other dismal effects of our late civil confusions, this is none of the least, that public catechizing was almost wholly disused, and private too, in most families: for, had catechizing of children been continued, it is very probable, that this age would have been infested with fewer errors, and with fewer schisms; and that there would not have been so much apostasy from the fundamentals of religion. For it is, I think, a true observation, that catechizing, and the history of the martyrs, have been the two great pillars of the protestant religion.

There being then so great a necessity and usefulness of this way of instruction, I would earnestly recommend the practice of it to parents and masters of families, with respect to their children and servants. For I do not think, that this work should lie wholly upon ministers. You must do your part at home, who, by your constant residence in your families, have better and more easy opportunities of inculcating the principles of religion upon your children and servants. There you must prepare them for public catechizing, that the work of the minister may not be too heavy upon him.

As to the part which concerns ministers, I intend, by God's assistance, so soon as the business can be put into a good method, to begin this exercise. And I do earnestly intreat all that have young children, and servants, to bring such of them as are fit, to be publickly catechized and instructed in the principles of religion: and I shall, as often as shall be thought expedient, spend some time in this work, between afternoon prayers and sermon.

The catechism to be used shall be that appointed in our liturgy; which is short, and contains in it the chief principles of the christian religion. And I shall make a short and plain explication of the heads of it, suitable to the capacity of children. And because this may not probably be of so great advantage to those who are of riper years and understandings; yet, because children are to be instructed as well as men, I must intreat those who

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are like to carry away the least profit, to bring with them the more patience; especially since I shall, for their sakes, in the constant course of my afternoon sermons, more largely and fully explain the chief principles of the christian belief: a work which you know I have some time ago entered upon.

VIII. The last thing I shall mention, and with which the state of childhood ends, is, the bringing of children to the Bishop, to be solemnly confirmed, by their taking upon themselves the vow which by their sureties they entered into at their baptism.

This is acknowledged by almost all sects and parties of Christians to be of primitive antiquity, and of very great use, when it is performed with that due preparation of persons for it, by the ministers to whose charge they belong, and with that seriousness and solemnity which the nature of the thing doth require.

And to that end it were very desirable that confirmations should be more frequent, and in smaller numbers at a time, that so the bishop may apply himself more particularly to every person that is to be confirmed: that by this means the thing may make the deeper impression, and lay the stronger obligation upon them.

One thing more I could wish, both to prevent confusion, and for the ease also of the bishop, that his work may not be endless, that ministers would take care that none may present themselves to the bishop, or be presented by the ministers, to be confirmed a second time; because a great many are wont to offer themselves every time there is a confirmation; which is both very disorderly and unreasonable, there being every whit as little reason for a second confirmation, as there is for a second baptism; and if any persons need so often to be confirmed, it is a sign that confirmation hath very little effect upon them.

*Secondly*, I proceed to the second general head; which was, to give some more particular directions for the management of this work, of the good education of children, in such a way as may be most effectual to its end.

1. Endeavour, as well as you can, to discover the particular temper and disposition of children, that you may suit and apply yourselves to it, and, by striking in with nature,

nature, may steer and govern them in the sweetest and easiest way. This is like knowledge of the nature of the ground to be planted, which husbandmen are wont very carefully to inquire into, that they may apply the seed to the soil, and plant in it that which is most proper for it.

*Quid quæque ferat regio, quid quæque recuset.*

*Hic segetes, illic veniunt felicius uvæ :*

“ Every soil is not proper for all sorts of grain or fruit ;  
 “ one ground is fit for corn, another for vines.” And so is it in the tempers and dispositions of children : some are more capable of one excellency and virtue than another, and some more strongly inclined to one vice than another ; which is a great secret of nature and providence, and it is very hard to give a just and satisfactory account of it.

It is good therefore to know the particular tempers of children, that we may accordingly apply our care to them, and manage them to the best advantage : that, where we discern in them any forward inclinations to good, we may cast in such seeds and principles, as, by their suitableness to their particular tempers, we judge most likely to take soonest and deepest root ; and, when these are grown up, and have taken possession of the soil, they will prepare it for the seeds of other virtues.

And so likewise, when we discover in their nature a more particular disposition, and leaning towards any thing which is bad, we must, with great diligence and care, apply such instructions, and plant such principles in them, as may be most effectual to alter this evil disposition of their minds, that, whilst nature is tender and flexible, we may gently bend it the other way ; and it is almost incredible what strange things, by prudence and patience, may be done towards the rectifying of a very perverse and crooked disposition.

So that it is of very great use to observe and discover the particular tempers of children, that, in our instruction and management of them, we may apply ourselves to their nature, and hit their peculiar disposition. By this means we may lead and draw them to their duty in human ways, and such as are much more agreeable to their temper, than constraint and necessity, which are

harsh and churlish, and against the grain. Whatever is done with delight, goes on chearfully; but when nature is compelled and forced, things proceed heavily: therefore, when we are forming and fashioning children to religion and virtue, we should make all the advantage we can of their particular tempers. This will be a good direction and help to us to conduct nature in the way it will most easily go. Every temper gives some particular advantage and handle whereby we may take hold of them, and steer them more easily: but if we take a contrary course, we must expect to meet with great difficulty and reluctancy.

Such ways of education as are prudently fitted to the particular dispositions of children, are like wind and tide together, which will make the work go on amain: but those ways and methods which are applied cross to nature, are like wind against tide, which makes a great stir and conflict, but a very slow progress. Not that I do, or can expect that all parents should be philosophers, but that they should use the best wisdom they have in a matter of so great concernment.

2. In your instruction of children, endeavour to plant in them those principles of religion and virtue which are most substantial, and are like to have the best influence upon the future government of their lives, and to be of continual and lasting use to them. Look to the seed you sow, that it be sound and good, and for the benefit and use of mankind. This is to be regarded, as well as the ground into which the seed is cast.

Labour to beget in children a right apprehension of those things which are most fundamental and necessary to the knowledge of God and our duty; and to make them sensible of the great evil and danger of sin; and to work in them a firm belief of the next life, and of the eternal rewards and recompences of it. And if these principles once take root, they will spread far and wide, and have a vast influence upon all their actions; and, unless some powerful lust, or temptation to vice, hurry them away, they will probably accompany them, and stick by them as long as they live.

Many parents, according to their knowledge and apprehensions of religion, in which they themselves have

been educated, and too often according to their zeal without knowledge, do take great care to plant little and ill-grounded opinions in the minds of their children and to fashion them to a party, by infusing into them the particular notions and phrases of a sect; which when they come to be examined, have no substance, nor perhaps sense in them: and, by this means, instead of bringing them up in the true and solid principles of Christianity, they take a great deal of pains to instruct them in some doubtful doctrines of no great moment in religion, and perhaps false at the bottom; whereby, instead of teaching them to hate sin, they fix them in schism, and teach them to hate and damn all those who differ from them, and are opposite to them; who yet are perhaps much more in the right, and far better Christians than themselves.

And indeed nothing is more common, and more to be pitied, than to see with what a confident contempt and scornful pity some ill-instructed and ignorant people will lament the blindness and ignorance of those who have a thousand times more true knowledge and skill than themselves, not only in all other things, but even in the practice, as well as knowledge of the christian religion; believing those who do not relish their affected phrases and uncouth forms of speech, to be ignorant of the mystery of the gospel, and utter strangers to the life and power of godliness.

But now, what is the effect of this mistaken way of education? The harvest is just answerable to the husbandry.

*Infelix lolium & steriles dominantur avenæ:*

As they have sown, so they must expect to reap; and, instead of good grain, to "have cockle and tares." *They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind;* as the expression is in the Prophet: instead of true religion, and of a sober and peaceable conversation, there will come up new and wild opinions, a factious and uncharitable spirit, a furious and boisterous zeal, which will neither suffer themselves to be quiet, nor any body that is about them.

But if you desire to reap the effects of true piety and religion, you must take care to plant in children the  
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nain and substantial principles of Christianity, which may give them a general bias to holiness and goodness; and not to little particular opinions, which being once fix'd in them by the strong prejudice of education, will hardly ever be rooted out.

3. Do all that in you lies to check and discourage in them the first beginnings of sin and vice. So soon as ever they appear, pluck them up by the roots. This is like the weeding of corn; which is a necessary piece of good husbandry. Vices, like ill weeds, grow apace; and if they once take to the soil, it will be hard to extirpate and kill them: but if we watch them, and cut them up as soon as they appear, this will discourage the root, and make it die.

Therefore take great heed that your children be not habituated and accustomed to any evil course. A vice that is of any considerable growth and continuance, will soon grow obstinate; and having once spread its roots, it will be a very difficult matter to clear the ground of it. A child may be so long neglected till he be overgrown with vice, to that degree, that it may be out of the power of parents ever to bring him to good fruit. If it once gain upon the depraved disposition of children, it will be one of the hardest things in the world to give a stop to it. It is the Apostle's caution, to *take heed of being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin*; which they who go on in an evil course, will most certainly be. We should observe the first appearances of evil in children, and kill those young serpents as soon as they stir, lest they bite them to death.

4. Bring them, as soon as they are capable of it, to the public worship of God, where he hath promised his more especial presence and blessing. It is in Zion, the place of God's public worship, where *the Lord hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore*. There are the means which God hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of grace in us. This is the pool where the angel useth to come, and to *move the waters*. Bring your children hither; where, if they diligently attend, they may meet with an opportunity of being healed.

And when they come from the church, call them frequently

quently to an account of what they have heard and learned there. This will make them both to attend more diligently to what they hear, and to lay it up in their memories with greater care; and will fix it there, so as to make a deeper and more lasting impression upon their minds.

5. Be careful more especially to put them upon the exercise and practice of religion and virtue, in such instances as their understanding and age are capable of: Teach them some short and proper forms of prayers to God, to be said by them devoutly upon their knees in private, at least every morning and evening. A great many children neglect this, not from any ill disposition of mind, but because no body takes care to teach them how to do it. And, if they were taught and put upon doing it, the habit and custom of any thing will, after a little while, make that easy and delightful enough, which they cannot afterwards be brought to without great difficulty and reluctancy.

Knowledge and practice do mutually promote and help forward one another: Knowledge prepares and disposeth for practice; and practice is the best way to perfect knowledge in any kind. Mere speculation is a very raw and rude thing, in comparison of that true and distinct knowledge which is gotten by practice and experience. The most exact skill in geography is nothing, compared with the knowledge of that man, who, besides the speculative part, hath travelled over and carefully viewed the countries he hath read of. The most knowing man in the art and rules of navigation is no body, in comparison of an experienced pilot and seaman: Because knowledge perfected by practice is as much different from mere speculation, as the skill of doing a thing is from being told how a thing is to be done. For men may easily mistake rules, but frequent practice and experience are seldom deceived. Give me a man that constantly does a thing well, and that shall satisfy me, that he knows how to do it. That saying of our blessed Saviour, *If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself,* is a clear determination of this matter, namely, that they understand the will of God best, who are most careful to do

do it. And so likewise, the best way to know what God is, is, to transcribe his perfections in our lives and actions; to be holy, and just, and good, and merciful, as he is.

Therefore, when the minds of children are once thoroughly possessed with the true principles of religion, we should bend all our endeavours to put them upon the practice of what they know. Let them rather be taught to do well than to talk well: rather to avoid what is evil, in all its shapes and appearances, and to practise their duty in the several instances of it, than to *speake with the tongues of men and angels*. Unto man he said, *Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding*, Job. xxviii. 28. *Hereby* (saith St. John, 1 epitt. ii. 3. 4.) *we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

Xenophon tells us, that the Persians, instead of making their children learned, taught them to be virtuous; and, instead of filling their heads with fine speculations, taught them honesty, and sincerity, and resolution; and endeavoured to make them wise and valiant, just and temperate. Lycurgus also, in the institution of the Lacedæmonian commonwealth, took no care about learning, but only about the lives and manners of their children: though I should think, that the care of both is best; and that learning would very much help to form the manners of children, and to make them both wiser and better men. And therefore, with the leave of so great and wise a lawgiver, I cannot but think, that this was a defect in his institution; because learning, if it be under the conduct of true wisdom and goodness, is not only an ornament, but a great advantage to the better government of any kingdom or commonwealth.

6. There must be great care and diligence used in this whole business of education, and more particularly in the instruction of children. There must be *line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little*; as the Prophet expresseth it, Is. xxviii. 10. The principles of religion and virtue must be instilled and dropt into them by such degrees and in such a measure

as they are capable of receiving them; for children are narrow-mouthed vessels, and a great deal cannot be poured into them at once.

And they must also be accustomed to the practice and exercise of religion and goodness by degrees, till holiness and virtue have taken root, and they be well settled and confirmed in a good course. Now, this requires constant attendance, and even the patience of the husbandman, to wait for the fruit of our labours.

In some children the seeds that are sown fall into a greater depth of earth; and therefore are of a slow disclosure, and it may be a considerable time before they appear above ground. It is long before they shoot and grow up to any height; and yet they may afterwards be very considerable: "Which (as an ingenious author [Sir H. W.] observes) should excite the care and prevent the despair of parents; for if their children be not such speedy spreaders and branchers as the vine, they may perhaps prove

— *proles tardè crescentis olivæ.*"

It is a work of great pains and difficulty, to rectify a perverse disposition. It is more easy to palliate the corruption of nature; but the cure of it requires time, and careful looking to. An evil temper and inclination may be covered and concealed, but it is a great work to conquer and subdue it. It must first be checked and stopped in its course, and then weakened, and the force of it be broken by degrees; and at last, if it be possible, destroyed and rooted out.

7. And lastly, To all these means we must add our constant and earnest prayers to God for our children, that his grace may take an early possession of them; that he would give them virtuous inclinations, and towardly dispositions for goodness; and that he would be pleased to accompany all our endeavours to that end with his powerful assistance and blessing; without which, all that we can do will prove ineffectual. Parents may *plant*, and ministers may *water*, but it is *God that must give the increase*.

Be often then upon your knees for your children. Do not only teach them to pray for themselves, but do you likewise,

likeways, with great fervour and earnestness, commend them to God, and to the power of his grace; which alone is able to sanctify them. Apply yourselves to the Father of lights; from whom comes every good and perfect gift. Beg his holy spirit, and ask divine knowledge and wisdom for them of him, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth no man. Beseech him to season their tender years with his fear, which is the beginning of wisdom. Pray for them as Abraham did for Ishmael, *Oh that Ishmael may live in thy sight!*

Many parents, having found all their endeavours for a long time together ineffectual, have at length betook themselves to prayer, earnest and importunate prayer to God, as their last refuge. Monica, the mother of St. Austin, by the constancy and importunity of her prayers, obtained of God the conversion of her son, who proved afterwards so great and glorious an instrument of good to the church of God: according to what St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, to encourage her to persevere in her fervent prayers for her son, had said to her, *Fieri non potest, ut filius tot lacrymarum pereat*: “It cannot be, (says he) that a son of so many prayers and tears should miscarry.” God’s grace is free; but it is not unlikely, but that God will at last give in this blessing to our earnest prayers and faithful endeavours.

Therefore pray for them *without ceasing*: pray and faint not. Great importunity in prayer seldom fails of a gracious answer. Our blessed Saviour spake two parables on purpose to encourage us herein; not because God is moved, much less because he is tired out with our importunity, but because it is an argument of our firm belief and confidence in his great goodness. And to them that believe, all things are possible, says our blessed Lord, To whom, &c.

## S E R M O N LIII.

## Of the education of children.

P R O V. xxii. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

The third sermon on this text.

**I** Proceed to the next general head which I proposed, namely,

*Thirdly*, To discover some of the more remarkable and common miscarriages in the management of this work. I do not hereby mean gross neglects, for want of care; but mistakes and miscarriages, for want of prudence and skill, even when there is no want of care and diligence in parents and instructors. And I shall, for method's sake, reduce the more considerable and common miscarriages to these three heads.

1. In matter of instruction.
2. In matter of example.
3. In matter of reproof and correction.

I. In matter of instruction. Parents do very often mainly miscarry in not teaching their children the true difference between good and evil, and the degrees of them: As, when we teach them any thing is a sin that really is not, or that any thing is not a sin which in truth is so: or when we teach them to lay more stress and weight upon things than they will bear; making that which perhaps is only convenient, to be in the highest degree necessary; or that which it may be is only inconvenient, or may be an occasion of scandal to some weak Christians, to be a sin in its own nature damnable.

Parents do likewise lay too great a weight upon things, when they are as diligent to instruct them in lesser things, and as strict in injoining them, and as severe in punishing the commission or neglect of them, according as they esteem them good or evil, as if they were *the weightier things*

*things of the law, and matters of the greatest moment in religion.*

Thus I have known very careful and well-meaning parents that have with great severity restrained their children in the wearing of their hair : nay, I can remember since the wearing of it below their ears was looked upon as a sin of the first magnitude ; and when ministers generally, whatever their text was, did in every sermon either find or make an occasion with great severity to reprove the great sin of long hair ; and if they saw any one in the congregation guilty in that kind, they would point him out particularly, and let fly at him with great zeal.

I have likewise known some parents that have strictly forbidden their children the use of some sorts of recreations and games under the notion of heinous sins, upon a mistake, that because there was in them a mixture of fortune and skill, they were therefore unlawful : A reason which I think hath no weight and force in it ; tho' I do not deny, but human laws may, for very prudent reasons, either restrain or forbid the use of these games, because of the boundless expence, both of money and time, which is many times occasioned by them.

I have known others, nay perhaps the same persons, that would not only allow, but even encourage their children to despise the very service of God under some forms, which according to their several apprehensions they esteemed to be superstitious or factious. But this I have ever thought to be a thing of most dangerous consequence, and have often observed it to end either in the neglect or contempt of all religion.

And how many parents teach their children doubtful opinions, and lay great stress upon them, as if they were saving or damning points ; and hereby set such an edge and keenness upon them for or against some indifferent modes and circumstances of God's worship, as if the very being of a church, and the essence of religion, were concerned in them ?

These certainly are great mistakes, and many times have very pernicious effects, thus to confound things which are of so wide and vast a difference, as good and evil, lawful and unlawful, indifferent and necessary. For when children come to be men, and to have a freer and larger

larger view of the world, and shall find, by the contrary practice of very wise and serious persons, that they have quite different apprehensions of these matters, and do not think that to be a sin which their parents have so strictly forbidden them under that notion, and many times punished them more severely for the doing of it than if they had told a lie; this may make them apt to question whether any thing be a sin: and the violence which they offer to their consciences, and the strain that they give them upon such an occasion, by complying with the general practice of others, contrary to the principles of their education, doth many times open a gap for great and real sins.

Besides, that children which are bred up in high prejudices for or against indifferent opinions or practices in religion, do usually, when they are grown up, prove to be men of narrow and contracted spirits; peevish, and froward, and uncharitable; and many times great bigots and zealots, either in the way of superstition or faction, according to the principles which have been instilled into them to bias them either way: and very hardly do they ever quit themselves so clearly of their prejudices, as to become wise, and peaceable, and substantial Christians.

In short, if we carefully observe it, we shall find, that when children have been thus indiscreetly educated, their religion differs as much from that of sober and judicious Christians, as the civil behaviour and conversation of those who have been unskilfully and conceitedly taught how to carry themselves, does from the behaviour of those who have had a more free and generous education.

II. In matter of example. There are many parents whose lives are exemplary in the main, who yet seem to use too great a freedom before their children. It is an old rule, and I think a very good one,

*Maxima debetur pueris reverentia :*

“There is a very great reverence due to children.” There are many things which are not sins, and therefore may lawfully be done, which yet it may not be prudent and expedient to do before all persons. There are some words and actions so trivial and light, that they are not

fit to be said or done before those for whom we have a reverence. There is a certain freedom of conversation which is only proper among equals in age and quality, which if we use before our superiors and betters, we seem to contemn them; if before our inferiors, they will grieve to contemn us.

It ought to be considered, that children do not understand the exact limits of good and evil: so that if in our words or actions we go to the utmost bounds of that which is lawful, we shall be in danger of shewing them the way to that which is unlawful. Children are not wont to be careful of their steps; and therefore we will not venture them to play about a precipice, or near a dangerous place; where yet men that will take care, may go safely enough. And therefore parents should be very careful to keep their children from the confines of evil, and at as great a distance from it as they can. And to this end their words and actions should ever be tempered with gravity and circumspection, that children may not see or hear any thing which may acquaint them with the approaches to sin, or carry them to the borders of vice; lest they should not stop just there, but take a step further than you intended they should go.

III. In matter of reproof and correction. Many religious and careful parents are guilty of two great miscarriages in this part of education.

1. Of too much rigour and severity; which, especially with some sort of tempers, hath very ill success. The first experiment that should be made upon children should be, to allure them to their duty; and by reasonable inducements to gain them to the love of goodness; by praise and reward, and sometimes by shame and disgrace: and if this will do, there will be no occasion to proceed to severity; especially not to great severities, which are very unfuitable to human nature. A mixture of prudent and seasonable reproof or correction, when there is occasion for it, may do very well; but whips are not *the cords of a man*: human nature may be driven by them, but it must be led by sweeter and gentler ways.

Speusippus caused the pictures of joy and gladness to be set round about his school, to signify, that the business of education ought to be rendered as pleasant as  
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may be. And indeed children stand in need of all the enticements and encouragements to learning and goodness. *Metus haud diuturni magister officii*, says Tully: "Fear alone will not teach a man his duty, and hold him to it for any long time;" for when that is removed, nature will break loose, and do like itself: besides that frequent corrections make punishments to lose their awe and force, and are apt to spoil the disposition of children, and to harden them against shame; and after a while they will despise correction, when they find they can endure it.

Great severities do often work an effect quite contrary to that which was intended; and many times those who were bred up in a very severe school, hate learning ever after, for the sake of the cruelty that was used to force it upon them. And so likewise an endeavour to bring children to piety and goodness, by unreasonable strictness and rigour, does often beget in them a lasting disgust and prejudice against religion; and teacheth them, as Erasmus says, *virtutem simul odisse et nosse*; "to hate virtue" at the same time that they teach them to know it. For by this means virtue is represented to the minds of children under a great disadvantage, and good and evil are brought too near together; so that, whenever they think of religion and virtue, they remember the severity which was wont to accompany the instructions about it, and the natural hatred which men have for punishment is by this means derived upon religion itself. And indeed, how can it be expected that children should love their duty, when they never hear of it but with a handful of rods shaken over them?

I insist upon this the more, because I do not remember to have observed more notorious instances of great miscarriage, than in the children of very strict and severe parents. Of which I can give no other account but this, that nature, when it is thus overcharged, recoils the more terribly. It hath something in it like the spring of an engine, which, being forcibly pressed, does, upon the first liberty, return back with so much the greater violence. In like manner the vitious dispositions of children, when restrained merely by the severity of parents,

do break forth strangely as soon as ever they get loose, and from under their discipline.

2. Another miscarriage in this matter is, when reproof and correction are accompanied and managed with passion. This is to betray one fault, and perhaps a greater, in the punishment of another. Besides that this makes reproof and correction to look like revenge and hatred; which usually does not persuade and reform, but provoke and exasperate. And this probably may be one reason of the Apostle's admonition, *Parents, provoke not your children unto wrath*; because that is never likely to have any good effect. Correction is a kind of physic, which ought never to be administered in passion, but upon counsel and good advice.

And that passion is incident to parents upon this occasion, the Apostle tells us, when he says, Heb. xii. 10. that *the parents of our flesh chasten us for their pleasure*; that is, they do it many times to gratify their passion; but *God chastens us for our profit*; not in anger, but with a design to do us good. And can we have a better pattern than our heavenly Father to imitate?

A father is, as it were, a prince and a judge in his family: there he gives laws, and inflicts censures and punishments upon offenders. But how misbecoming a thing would it be, to see a judge pass sentence upon a man in choler? It is the same thing to see a father, in the heat and fury of his passion, correct his child. If a father could but see himself in this mood, and how ill his passion becomes him, instead of being angry with his child, he would be out of patience with himself. I proceed to the next thing I proposed, namely,

*Fourthly*, To make out the truth of the proposition contained in the text, by shewing, how the good education of children comes to be of so great advantage, and to have so good and lasting an influence upon their whole lives.

I confess there are some wild and savage natures, monstrous and prodigious tempers, hard as the rocks, and barren as the sand upon the sea-shore; which discover strong and early propensions to vice, and a violent antipathy to goodness. Such tempers are next to desperate;

but yet they are not utterly intractable to the grace of God, and the religious care of parents.

I hope such tempers as these are very rare, though God is pleased they should sometimes appear in the world, as instances of the great corruption and degeneracy of human nature, and of the great need of divine grace. But surely there is no temper that is absolutely and irrecoverably prejudiced against that which is good. This would be so terrible an objection against the providence of God, as would be very hard to be answered. God be thanked, most tempers are tractable to good education; and there is very great probability of the good success of it, if it be carefully and wisely managed.

And, for the confirmation of this truth, I shall instance in two very great advantages of a religious and virtuous education of children.

1. It gives religion and virtue the advantage of the first possession.

2. The advantage of habit and custom.

1. Good education gives religion and virtue the advantage of the first possession. The mind of man is an active principle, and will be employed about something or other. It cannot stand idle, and will therefore take up with that which first offers itself. So soon as reason puts forth itself, and the understanding begins to be exercised, the mind of man discovers a natural thirst after knowledge, and greedily drinks in that which comes first. If it have not the waters of life, and the pure streams of goodness to allay that thirst, it will seek to quench it in the filthy puddles and impure pleasures of this world.

Now, since children will be busying their minds about something, it is good that they should be entertained with the best things, and with the best notions and principles of which their understanding and age are capable. It is a happy thing to be principled, and, as I may say, prejudiced the better way, and that religion should get the first possession of their hearts. For it is certainly a great advantage to religion to be planted in a tender and fresh soil. And if parents be careless, and neglect this advantage, the enemy will be sure to sow his tares while the husbandman is asleep.

Therefore

Therefore we should prevent the devil, by giving God and goodness an early possession of our children, and by setting him into their hearts betimes. Possession is a great point; and it is of mighty consequence to have nature planted with good seeds, before vicious inclinations spring up, and grow into strength and habit.

I know that there is a spiteful proverb current in the world, and the devil hath taken care to spread it to the discouragement of an early piety, "A young saint, and an old devil;" but notwithstanding this, a young saint is most likely to prove an old one. Solomon, to be sure, was of this mind; and I make no doubt but he made as wise and true proverbs as any body hath done since; him only excepted who was a much greater and wiser man than Solomon.

2. Good education gives likewise the advantage of habit and custom; and custom is of mighty force. It is, as Pliny, in one of his epistles, says of it, *Efficacissimus omnium rerum magister*: "The most powerful and effectual master in every kind." It is an acquired, and a sort of second nature; and next to nature itself, a principle of greatest power. Custom bears a huge sway in all human actions. Men love those things, and do them with ease, to which they have been long inured and accustomed. And, on the contrary, men go against custom with great regret and uneasiness.

And among all others, that custom is most strong which is begun in childhood; and we see in experience, the strange power of education in forming persons to religion and virtue. Now, education is nothing but certain customs planted in childhood, and which have taken deep root whilst nature was tender.

We see likewise in common experience, how dangerous an evil habit and custom is, and how hard to be altered. Therefore the Cretians, when they would curse a man to purpose, wished, that the gods would engage him in some bad custom, looking upon a man after that to be irrecoverably lost. So, on the other side, to be engaged in a good custom, is an unspeakable advantage; especially for children to be habituated to a holy and virtuous course, before the habits of sin and vice have taken root, and are confirmed in them.

We are too naturally inclined to that which is evil: but yet this ought not to discourage us; because it is certain in experience, that a contrary custom hath done much in many cases, even where nature hath been strongly inclined the other way. Demosthenes did, by great resolution, and almost infinite pains, and after a long habit, alter the natural imperfection of his speech, and even, in despite of nature, became the most eloquent man perhaps that ever lived. And this amounts even to a demonstration; for what hath been done, may be done.

So that it is not universally true which Aristotle says, "that nature cannot be altered." It is true indeed, in the instance which he gives, of throwing a stone upward. "You cannot (says he) by any custom, nay, though you fling it up never so often, teach a stone to ascend of itself." And so it is in many other instances, in which nature is peremptory. But nature is not always so; but sometimes hath a great latitude; as we see in young trees; which, though they naturally grow streight up, yet, being gently bent, may be made to grow any way. But, above all, moral inclinations and habits do admit of great alteration, and are subject to the power of a contrary custom.

Indeed children, when they come to be men, should take great care that they do not owe their religion only to custom; but they should, upon consideration and due examination of the grounds of it, so far as they are capable of doing it, make it their choice: and yet, for all that, we must not deny the best religion in the world this greatest advantage of all other. It is certainly a great happiness for children to be inclined to that which, when they come to understand themselves, they would make their choice, if they were indifferent; but an indifferency cannot be preserved in children: and therefore, since they will certainly be biassed one way or other, there is all the reason in the world why we should endeavour to bias them the better way. Parents may often mistake about what is best; but if they love their children, they cannot but wish and endeavour that they may be good, and do what is best.

I come now to the last head I proposed; which was,  
*Fifthly,* To endeavour, by the most powerful arguments

ments I can offer, to stir up and persuade those whose duty this is, to discharge it with great care and conscience.

If the foregoing discourse be true, what can be said to those who are guilty in the highest degree of the gross neglect of this great duty; who neither by instruction, nor example, nor restraint from evil, do endeavour to make their children good? Some parents are such monsters, I had almost said devils, as not to *know how to give good things to their children*; but instead of *bread*, give them a stone; instead of *fish*, give them a serpent; instead of an egg, give them a scorpion; as our Saviour expresseth it.

These are evil indeed, who train up their children for ruin and destruction; in the service of the devil, and in the trade and mystery of iniquity; who, instead of teaching them *the fear of the Lord*, infuse into them the principles of Atheism, and irreligion, and profaneness: instead of teaching them to love and reverence religion, they teach them to hate and despise it, and to make a mock both of sin and holiness: instead of training them up in the knowledge of *the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto salvation*, they do *ædificare ad gebennam*, "they edify them for hell," by teaching them to profane that holy book, and to abuse the word of God, which they ought to tremble at, by turning it into jest and raillery: instead of teaching them to pray, and bless the name of God, they teach them to blaspheme that great and terrible name, and to profane it by their continual oaths and imprecations; and instead of bringing them to God's church, they carry them to the devil's chapels, to playhouses, and places of debauchery, those schools and nurseries of lewdness and vice.

Thus they who ought to be the great teachers and examples of holiness and virtue, are the chief encouragers and patterns of vice and wickedness to their children; and instead of restraining them from evil, they countenance them in it, and check all forward inclinations to goodness; till at last they *make them ten times more the children of wrath*, than they were by that corrupt nature which they derived from them: and hereby *treasure up, both for their children and themselves, wrath*

against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

But I hope there are few or none such here. They do not use to frequent God's house and worship. And therefore I shall apply myself to those who are not so notoriously guilty in this kind, though they are greatly faulty in neglecting the good education of their children. And, for the greater conviction of such parents, I shall offer to them the following considerations.

I. Consider what a sad inheritance you have conveyed to your children. You have transmitted to them corrupt and depraved natures, evil and vitious inclinations you have begotten them in your own image and likeness, so that *by nature* they are *children of wrath*. Now, methinks, parents, that have a due sense of this, should be very solicitous, by the best means they can use, to free them from that curse; by endeavouring to correct those perverse dispositions and cursed inclinations which they have transmitted to them. Surely you ought to do all you can to repair that broken estate which from you is descended upon them.

When a man hath by treason tainted his blood, and forfeited his estate, with what grief and regret doth he look upon his children, and think of the injury which hath been done to them by his fault? and how solicitous is he, before he die, to petition the king for favour to his children? How earnestly doth he charge his friend to be careful of them, and kind to them? that, by these means, he may make the best reparation he can of their fortune, which hath been ruined by his fault.

And have parents such a tenderness for their children in reference to their estate and condition in this world, and have they none for the good estate of their souls, and their eternal condition in another world? If you are sensible, that their blood is tainted, and that their best fortunes are ruined by your sad misfortune; why do you not bestir yourselves for the repairing of God's image in them? why do you not *travel in birth till Christ be formed in them*? why do you not pray earnestly to God, and give him no rest, who hath reprimed, and it may be pardoned you, that he would extend his grace to them also, and grant them the blessings of his new covenant?

All your children are begotten of the bond woman ; therefore we should pray as Abraham did, *O that Ishmael may live in thy sight!* O that these sons of Hagar may be heirs of a blessing !

2. Consider, in the next place, that good education is the very best inheritance that you can leave to your children. It is a wise saying of Solomon, Eccl. vii. 11: that *wisdom is good with an inheritance*: but surely an inheritance without wisdom and virtue to manage it, is a very pernicious thing. And yet how many parents are there, who omit no care and industry to get an estate, that they may leave it to their children, but use no means to form their minds and manners for the right use and enjoyment of it; without which it had been much happier for them to have been left in great poverty and straits?

Doest thou love thy child? This is true love to any one, to do the best for him we can. Of all your toil and labour for your children, this may be all the fruit they may reap, and all that they may live to enjoy, the advantage of a good education: all other things are uncertain. You may raise your children to honour, and settle a noble estate upon them to support it: you may leave them, as you think, to faithful guardians, and, by kindness and obligation, procure them many friends: and, when you have done all this, their guardians may prove unfaithful and treacherous; and, in the changes and revolutions of the world, their honours may slip from under them, and their *riches may take themselves wings, and fly away*: and when these are gone, and they come to be nipped with the frosts of adversity, their friends will fall off like leaves in autumn. *This is a sore evil, which yet I have seen under the sun.*

But if the good education of your children hath made them wise and virtuous, you have provided an inheritance for them which is out of the reach of fortune, and *cannot be taken from them*. Crates, the philosopher, used to stand in the highest places of the city, and cry out to the inhabitants, “ O ye people! why do you toil to get estates for your children, when you take no care of their education?” This is, as Diogenes said, to take care of the shoe, but none of the foot that is to wear it;

to take great pains for an estate for your children, but none at all to teach them how to use it; that is, to take great care to undo them, but none to make them happy.

3. Consider, that, by a careful and religious education of your children, you provide for your own comfort and happiness. However they happen to prove, you will have the comfort of a good conscience, and of having done your duty. If they be good, they are matter of great comfort and joy to their parents. *A wise son* (saith Solomon) *maketh a glad father*. It is a great satisfaction to see that which we have planted to thrive and grow up; to find the good effect of our care and industry, and that the work of our hands doth prosper. The son of Sirach, among several things for which he reckons a man happy, mentions this in the first place, *He that hath joy of his children*, Eccles xxv. 7.

On the contrary, in wicked children the honour of a family fails, our name withers, and in the next generation will be quite blotted out: whereas a hopeful posterity is a prospect of a kind of eternity. We cannot leave a better and more lasting monument of ourselves, than in wise and virtuous children. Buildings and books are but dead things, in comparison of these living memorials of ourselves.

By the good education of your children, you provide for yourselves some of the best comforts, both for this world and the other. For this world; and that at such a time when you most stand in need of comfort, I mean the time of sickness and old age. Wise men have been wont to lay up some *præsidia senectutis*, something to support them in that gloomy and melancholy time, as books, and friends, or the like. But there is no such external comfort at such a time as good and dutiful children. They will then be the *light of our eyes*, and the cordial of our fainting spirits; and will recompense all our former care of them by their present care of us: and when we are decaying and withering away, we shall have the pleasure to see our youth, as it were, renewed, and ourselves flourishing again in our children. The son of Sirach, speaking of the comfort which a good father hath in a well educated son, *Though he die*, (says he) *yet he is as though he were not dead: for he hath left one behind him* that

that is like himself. While he lived, he saw and rejoiced in him; and when he died, he was not sorrowful, Ecclesiastes xxx. 4. 5.

Whereas, on the contrary, a foolish son is (as Solomon tells us) a heaviness to his mother; the miscarriage of a child being apt most tenderly to affect the mother. Such parents as neglect their children, do, as it were, provide so many pains and aches for themselves against they come to be old. And rebellious children are, to their infirm and aged parents, so many aggravations of an evil day, so many burdens of their age. They help to bow them down, and to bring their gray hairs so much the sooner with sorrow to the grave. They do usually repay their parents all the neglects of their education, by their undutiful carriage towards them.

And good children will likewise be an unspeakable comfort to us in the other world. When we come to appear before God at the day of judgment, to be able to say to him, *Lo, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me*; how will this comfort our hearts, and make us lift up our heads with joy in that day?

4. Consider, that the surest foundation of the public welfare and happiness is laid in the good education of children. Families are increased by children, and cities and nations are made up of families. And this is a matter of so great concernment, both to religion and the civil happiness of a nation, that anciently the best constituted commonwealths did commit this care to the magistrate more than to parents.

When Antipater demanded of the Spartans fifty of their children for hostages, they offered rather to deliver to him twice as many men; so much did they value the loss of their country's education. But now amongst us this work lies chiefly upon parents. There are several ways of reforming men, by the laws of the civil magistrate, and by the public preaching of ministers; but the most likely and hopeful reformation of the world must begin with children. Wholesome laws and good sermons are but slow and late ways. The timely and the most compendious way is, good education. This may be an effectual prevention of evil: whereas all after-ways

ter-ways are but remedies, which do always suppose some neglect and omission of timely care.

And because our laws leave so much to parents, our care should be so much the greater: and we should remember, that we bring up our children for the public; and that, if they live to be men, as they come out of our hands, they will prove a public happiness or mischief to the age. So that we can no way better deserve of mankind, and be greater benefactors to the world, than by peopling it with a righteous offspring. Good children are the hopes of posterity; and we cannot leave the world a better legacy than well-disciplined children. This gives the world the best security, that religion will be propagated to posterity, and that the *generations to come shall know God; and the children that are to be born, shall fear the Lord.*

This was the great glory of Abraham, next to his being *the friend of God*, that he was *the father of the faithful*. And the careful education of children, *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, is so honourable to parents, that God himself would not pass it by in Abraham without special mention of it to his everlasting commendation: *I know Abraham, (says God) that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment, Gen. xviii. 19.*

5. Consider yet further the great evils consequent upon this neglect. And they are manifold. But, not to enlarge particularly upon them, they all end in this, the final miscarriage and ruin of children. Do but leave depraved corrupt nature to itself, and it will take its own course; and the end of it, in all probability, will be miserable.

If the generous seeds of religion and virtue be not carefully sown in the tender minds of children, and those seeds be not cultivated by good education, there will certainly spring up briars and thorns: of which parents will not only feel the inconveniences, but every body else that comes near them.

*Neglectis urexda filix innascitur agris.*

If the ground be not planted with something that is good,

good, it will bring forth that which is either useles or hurtful, or both: for nature is seldom barren; it will either bring forth useful plants, or weeds.

We are naturally inclin'd to evil; and the neglect of education puts children upon a kind of necessity of becoming what they are naturally inclined to be. Do but let them alone, and they will soon be habituated to sin and vice. And when they are once accustomed to do evil, they have lost their liberty and choice. They are then hardly capable of good counsel and instruction; or, if they be patient to hear it, they have no power to follow it, being bound in the chains of their sins, and led captive by Satan at his pleasure. And, when they have brought themselves into this condition, their ruin seems to be sealed; and, without a miracle of God's grace, they are never to be reclaimed.

Nor doth the mischief of this neglect end here; but it extends itself to the public, and to posterity. If we neglect the good education of our children, they will, in all probability, prove bad men; and these will neglect their children; and so the foundation of an endless mischief is laid; and our posterity will be bad members both of church and commonwealth.

If they be neglected in matter of instruction, they will either be ignorant or erroneous; either they will not mind religion, or they will disturb the church with new and wild opinions. And I fear that the neglect of instructing and catechizing youth, of which this age hath been so grossly guilty, hath made it so fruitful of errors and strange opinions.

But if, besides this, no care be taken of their lives and manners, they will become burdens of the earth, and pests of human society, and so much poison and infection let abroad into the world.

6. and lastly, Parents should often consider, that the neglect of this duty will not only involve them in the inconvenience, and shame, and sorrow of their childrens miscarriage, but in a great measure in the guilt of it: they will have a great share in all the evil they do, and be in some sort chargeable with all the sins they commit. If the children bring forth wild and sowre grapes, the parents teeth will be set on edge.

The temporal mischiefs and inconveniences which come from the careless education of children, as to credit, health, and estate, all which do usually suffer by the vicious and lewd courses of your children; these, methinks, should awaken your care and diligence. But what is this to the guilt which will redound to you upon their account? Part of all their wickedness will be put upon your score; and possibly the sins which they commit many years after you are dead and gone, will follow you into the other world, and bring new fuel to hell, to heat that furnace hotter upon you.

However, this is certain, that parents must one day be accountable for all their neglects of their children and so likewise shall ministers and masters of families for their people and servants, so far as they had the charge of them.

And what will parents be able to say to God at the day of judgment, for all their neglects of their children in matter of instruction, and example, and restraint from evil? How will it make your ears to tingle, when God shall arise terribly to judgment, and say to you, “Behold, the children which I have given you: they were ignorant, and you instructed them not: they made themselves vile, and you restrained them not. Why did you not teach them at home, and bring them to church, to the public ordinances and worship of God, and train them up to the exercise of piety and devotion? But you did not only neglect to give them good instruction, but you gave them bad example and so, they have followed you to hell, to be an addition to your torment there.

“Unnatural wretches! that have thus neglected, and by your neglect, destroyed those, whose happiness, by so many bonds of duty and affection, you were obliged to procure. Behold, the books are now open, and there is not one prayer upon record that ever you put up for your children; there is no memorial, no note so much as of one hour that ever was seriously spent to train them up to a sense of God, and to the knowledge of their duty; but, on the contrary, it appears that you have many ways contrived their misery, and contributed to their ruin, and helped forward their damnation.

“ damnation. How could you be thus unnatural ? how  
 “ could you thus hate your own flesh, and hate your  
 “ own souls ? How much better had it been for them,  
 “ and how much better for you, that they had never  
 “ been born ? ”

Would not such a heavy charge as this make every joint of you to tremble ? Will it not cut you to the heart, and pierce your very souls, to have your children challenge you in that day ; and say to you, one by one,  
 “ Had you been as careful to teach me the good know-  
 “ ledge of the Lord, as I was capable of learning it ;  
 “ had you been but as forward to instruct me in my du-  
 “ ty, as I was ready to have hearkened to it, it had not  
 “ been with me as it is at this day ; I had not now stood  
 “ trembling here in a fearful expectation of the eternal  
 “ doom which is just ready to be passed upon me. Cur-  
 “ sed be the man that begat me, and the paps that gave  
 “ me suck : it is to you that I must in a great measure  
 “ owe my everlasting undoing ? ” Would it not strike any of us with horror to be thus challenged and reproached by our children in that great and terrible day of the Lord ?

I am not able to make so dreadful a representation of this matter as it deserves. But I would, by all this, if it be possible, awaken parents to a sense of their duty, and terrify them out of this gross and shameful neglect which so many are guilty of. For when I seriously consider how supinely remiss and unconcerned many parents are as to the religious education of their children, I cannot but think of that saying of Augustus concerning Herod, “ Better be his dog than his child. ” I think it was spoken to another purpose ; but it is true likewise to the purpose I am speaking of. Better be some mens dogs, or hawks, or horses, than their children : for they take a greater care to breed and train up these to their several ends and uses, than to breed up their children for eternal happiness.

Upon all these accounts, *train up a child in the way he should go, that when he is old, he may not depart from it ;* that neither your children may be miserable by your fault, nor you by the neglect of so natural and necessary a duty towards them. God grant, that all that are concerned

may lay these things seriously to heart, for his mercies sake in Jesus Christ. To whom, with thee, O Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, both now and ever. *Amen.*

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

### Of the advantages of an early piety.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, in the year 1662.

E C C L E S. xii. 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

**I**N the former discourses, concerning the education of children, I have carried the argument through the state of childhood to the beginning of the next step of their age, which we call *youth*, when they come to exercise their reason, and to be fit to take upon themselves the performance of that solemn vow which was made for them by their sureties in baptism.

To encourage them to set seriously, and in good earnest about this work, I shall now add another discourse concerning the advantages of an early piety. And to this purpose I have chosen for the foundation of it these words of Solomon, in his book called *Ecclesiastes*, or *The Preacher*: *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

It will not be necessary to give an account of the context, any further than to tell you, that this book of the Royal preacher is a lively description of the vanity of the world in general, and particularly of the life of man. This is the main body of his sermon: in which there are here and there scattered many serious reflexions upon ourselves, and very weighty considerations to quicken  
our

our preparations for our latter end, and to put us in mind of *the days of darkness, which will be many*; as the Preacher tells us in the chapter before the text.

Among these is the admonition and advice in the words of the text; which do indeed concern those that are young, but yet will afford useful matter of meditation to persons of all ages and conditions whatsoever; of great thankfulness to Almighty God, from those who, by the grace of God, and his blessing upon a pious education, have entered upon a religious course betimes; and of a deep sorrow and repentance, to those who have neglected and let slip this best opportunity of their lives, and of taking up a firm resolution of redeeming that loss, as much as is possible, by their future care and diligence: and to them more especially who are grown old, and have not yet begun this great and necessary work, it will minister occasion to resolve upon a speedy retreat, and, without any further delay, to return to God and their duty, lest the opportunity of doing it, which is now almost quite spent, be lost for ever.

The text contains a duty, which is, *to remember our Creator*; and a limitation of it more especially to one particular age and time of our life; *in the days of our youth*; not to exclude any other age, but to lay a particular emphasis and weight upon this. *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth*; that is, more especially in this age of thy life; to intimate to us, both that this is the fittest season, and that we cannot begin this work too soon.

And this is further illustrated by the opposition of it to old age: *While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, of which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* This is a description of old age, the evils whereof are continually growing; and which, in respect of the cares and griefs, the distempers and infirmities which usually attend it, is rather a burden than a pleasure.

In the handling of these words, I shall do these three things.

1. I shall consider the nature of the act or duty here enjoined; and that is, *to remember God.*
2. I shall consider what there is in the notion of God

as *Creator*, which is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige us to the remembrance of him.

3. I shall consider the limitation of this duty more especially to this particular age of our lives, *the days of our youth*; why we should begin this work then, and not put it off to the time of old age.

I. I shall consider the nature of the act or duty here enjoined; which is, to *remember our Creator*. For the understanding of which expression, and others of the like nature in scripture, it is to be considered, that it is very usual in scripture, to express religion, and the whole duty of man, by some eminent act, or principle, or part of religion; sometimes by *the knowledge of God*, and by *faith in him*; and very frequently by *the fear*, and by *the love of God*; because these are the great principles and parts of religion: and so likeways, though not so frequently, religion is expressed by *the remembrance of God*. Now, *remembrance* is the actual thought of what we do habitually know. To *remember God*, is to have him actually in our minds, and, upon all proper occasions, to revive the thoughts of him; and, as David expresseth it, to *set him always before us*: *I set the Lord* (says he) *always before me*: that is, God was continually present in his mind and thoughts.

And, in opposition to this, we find wicked men in scripture described by the contrary quality, *forgetfulness of God*. So they are described in Job, chap. viii. 13, *Such are the paths of all that forget God*; that is, of the wicked. And the same description David gives of them, Psal. ix. 17. *The wicked* (says he) *shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God*. And elsewhere he gives the same character of a wicked man, Psal. x. 4. that *God is not in all his thoughts*.

And the course of a religious life is not unfitly expressed by our *remembrance of God*. For to remember a person or thing, is to call them to mind upon all proper and fitting occasions; to think actually of them, so as to do that which the remembrance of them does require or prompt us to. To remember a friend, is to be ready upon occasion to do him all good offices: to remember a kindness and benefit, is to be ready to acknowledge and requite it when there is an opportunity: to remember

an injury, is to be ready to revenge it: and, in a word, to remember any thing, is to be mindful to do that which the memory of such a thing doth naturally suggest to us.

So that to *remember God*, is frequently, and in our most serious and retired thoughts, to consider, that there is such a being as God is, of all power and perfection, who made us and all other things, and hath given us laws to live by, suitable to our natures; and will call us to a strict account for our observance or violation of them, and accordingly reward or punish us; very often in this world, and to be sure in the other.

It is to revive often in our minds the thoughts of God, and of his infinite perfections, and to live continually under the power and awe of these apprehensions, that he is infinitely wise and good, holy and just; that he is always present with us, and observes what we do, and is intimate to our most secret thoughts, and *will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*; as the preacher tells us in the conclusion of this sermon.

The duty then here required of us is, so soon as we arrive at the use of reason, and the exercise of our understandings, to take God into consideration, and to begin a religious course of life betimes; to consecrate the beginning of our days, and the flower and strength of them to his service: whilst our mind is yet soft and tender, and in a great measure free from all other impressions, to be mindful of the being that is above us; and in all our designs and actions, to take God into consideration, and to do every thing in his fear, and with an eye to his glory. *Remember thy Creator*; that is, honour, fear, love, obey, and serve him; and, in a word, do every thing as becomes one that is mindful of God, and hath him continually in his thoughts.

II. I shall, in the next place, consider what there is in the notion of God as our *Creator*, that is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige men to the remembrance of God. The text does not barely require us *to remember God*; but to remember him as the author and founder of our beings: *Remember thy Creator*. And there is certainly some particular emphasis in it; so that God,

considered under the notion of our Creator, is apt to strike us with a particular regard and awe of him : and that upon a threefold account ; as creation is a sensible demonstration to us, 1st, of the being ; 2dly, of the power ; and, 3dly, of the goodness of God.

1. Of his being. The creation is of all other the most sensible and obvious argument of a Deity. Other considerations may work upon our reason and understanding, but this doth, as it were, bring God down to our senses. So often as we look up to heaven, or down upon the earth ; upon ourselves, or into ourselves ; upon the things without us, and round about us ; which way soever we turn our eyes, we are encountered with plain evidences of a superior being, which made us and all other things : every thing which we behold with our eyes, doth in some way or other represent God to us, and bring him to our minds, so as we cannot avoid the sight of him if we would. So the Psalmist tells us, Psal. xix.

1. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth the work of his hands.* And so likewise St. Paul. Rom. i. 20. *The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*

2. As the creation is a demonstration of God's infinite power. And this consideration is apt to work upon our fear, the most wakeful passion of all other in the soul of man ; insomuch that the Atheist would fain ascribe the original apprehension and belief of a deity to the natural fears of men : *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor* : " Fear first made gods ;" and by this means would fain persuade us, that it is so far from being true that God is our Creator, that he is merely the creature of our own vain fear and imagination.

But surely this is very unreasonable. For, if there be a God that made us, there is infinite reason why we should stand in awe of him, and have him always in our mind and thoughts ; because he who made us, and all other things, if we neglect him, and forget so great a benefactor, can as easily make us miserable, or turn us out of being. Therefore *remember thy Creator* ; and despise or forget him at thy utmost peril.

3. As the creation is a demonstration of the goodness of God to his creatures. This consideration of God as our Creator, doth naturally suggest to our minds, that his goodness brought us into being : and that if being be a benefit, God is the fountain and author of it ; that his goodness called us out of nothing, and made us to be what we are ; for *of his good pleasure we are, and were created.* He was under no necessity of doing it ; for he was from eternal ages happy in himself before we were, and would have been so to all eternity, though we had never been ; nor was it possible he could be under any obligation to us before we were.

And he is not only our Creator, as he gave us our beings at first ; but likewise as we are preserved and continued in life by the same goodness which first gave us life and breath ; for *of his goodness we are, as well as were created.*

And can we forget so great a benefactor, and be *unmindful of the God that formed us* ? Can we chuse but remember the founder of our beings, the great patron and preserver of our lives ? And so soon as we arrive at the use of reason, and discover this great benefactor, to whom we owe our lives, and all the blessings of them, can we forbear to do homage to him, and to say with David, *O come, let us worship, and fall down and kneel before the Lord our maker : for he is the Lord our God : it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves ; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture* ? I proceed to consider, in the

III. Third and last place, the reason of the limitation of this duty more especially to this particular age of our lives, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* NOW ; in the days of thy youth. By which Solomon plainly designs two things.

1. To engage young persons to begin this great and necessary work of religion betimes, and as soon as ever they are capable of taking it into consideration : *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.* And the Son of Sirach, much to the same purpose, speaking of one that in good earnest applies his heart to wisdom, describes

describes him in this manner, Ecclus xxxix. 5. *He will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him; which is the same with the expression in the text, of remembering our Creator in the days of our youth.*

2. To engage young persons to set about this work presently, and not to defer it and put it off to the future, as most are apt to do: *Remember NOW thy Creator in the days of thy youth: especially, not to adjourn it to the most unfit and improper time of all other, to the time of infirmity and old age: NOW, in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, &c.*

And how much reason there is, to press both these considerations upon young persons, I shall endeavour to shew, in the following particulars.

1. Because in this age of our lives we have the greatest and most sensible obligation to *remember God our Creator: In the days of our youth*, when the blessing and benefit of life is new, and the memory of it fresh upon our minds. It ought not indeed to be so; but we find it true which Seneca says, *Nil citius senescit quàm gratia*, “Nothing sooner grows old and out of date, than obligation;” and we are but too apt to forget what we have the greatest reason to remember.

In this age of our life, when we begin to come to the free use and exercise of our reason, the first thing we are instructed in; and if we are not taught it, we should, though perhaps more slowly, discover and find it out of ourselves; I say, the first thing we are instructed in, and inquisitive about, is, the author of our beings, and how we came into the world. And when God first appears to our minds, and we come by degrees clearly to understand by whose bounty and blessing it is that we are, and have been preserved thus long, without our own care; principally by the providence of God, and, under him, by those instruments which he hath raised, and preserved for that purpose; when we consider this, we cannot but be strangely surpris'd, both with the novelty of the benefit, and the greatness of it.

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And when we have well viewed ourselves, and looked about us, upon the creatures below us, all of them subject to our dominion and use ; and when we consider seriously in what a noble rank and order of creatures we are placed, and how *fearfully and wonderfully we are made*, not grovelling upon the earth, or bowed down to it, but of a beautiful and upright shape of body, and such a majesty of countenance as if we were all kings of the creation ; and, which is much more excellent than this, that we are endued with minds and understandings, with reason and speech, whereby we are capable, not only of conversing with and benefiting one another, but also of the knowledge, and friendship, and enjoyment of the best and most perfect of beings, God himself : I say, when we first consider this, and meditate seriously upon it, can we possibly ever after forget God ? Shall we not naturally break out into that inquiry which Elihu thinks so proper for man, that he wonders it is not in every man's mouth, *Where is God my maker, who teacheth me more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh me wiser than the fowls of heaven?* Job xxxv. 10. 11.

So that there as a very special obligation upon us to be mindful of God in this age of our lives, when we first come to the knowledge of him, and when the sense of his favours is fresh and new to us ; and not only so, but when the blessing of life is at the very best, and in its verdure and flower ; when our health is in its strength and vigour, and the pleasures and enjoyments of life have their full taste and perfect relish. So Job describes the days of his youth, chap. xxix. 2. 3. 4. *Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me ; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness ; as I was in the days of my youth, &c.*

Indeed, when *the evil days* are once come, and thou art entered upon *the years* in which *thou thyself hast no pleasure*, there might be some sort of pretence then to forget God ; because then life begins to wither and decay, and not only the gloss and beauty, but even the comfort and sweetness of it is gone ; and it becomes an insipid and tasteless thing. *But thou art inexcusable, O man, whoever thou art, if thou art unmindful of God in*  
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the best age of thy life, and when the sense of his benefits ought, upon all accounts, to make the strongest and deepest impressions upon thy mind.

2. The reason will be yet stronger to put us upon this if we consider, that, notwithstanding the great obligation which lies upon us, to *remember our Creator in the days of our youth*, we are most apt at that time, of all other, to forget him. For that which is the great blessing of youth is also the great danger of it; I mean the health and prosperity of it: and though men have then least reason yet they are most apt to forget God, in the height of pleasure, and in the abundance of all things.

Youth is extremely addicted to pleasure, because it is most capable and most sensible of it; and where we are most apt to be transported, there we are most apt to transgress. Nothing does so besot the mind, and extinguish in it all sense of divine things, as sensual pleasures. If we fall in love with them, they will take off our thoughts from religion, and steal away our hearts from God: *For no man can serve two masters; and the carnal mind is enmity against God.*

Besides, that youth is rash and inconsiderate, because unexperienced; and, consequently, not apt to be cautious and prudent, no not as to the future concerns of this temporal life; much less of that which seems to be at so much a greater distance, and for that reason is so very seldom in our thoughts.

3. Because this age is of all other the fittest and best to begin a religious course of life. And this does not contradict the former argument, though it seems to do so; for, as it is true of children, that they are most prone to be idle, and yet fittest to learn; so in the case we are speaking of, both are true, that youth is an age wherein we are too apt, if left to ourselves, to forget God and religion, and yet at the same time fittest to receive the impressions of it.

Youth is *ætas disciplinæ*, “the proper age of discipline;” very obsequious and tractable, fit to receive any kind of impression, and to imbibe any tincture: Now, we should lay hold of this golden opportunity. This age of suppleness, and obedience, and patience for labour, should be plied by parents, before that rigour and

nd stiffness which grows with years come on too fast. Childhood and youth are choice seasons for the planting of religion and virtue; and if parents and teachers sleep in this seed-time, they are ill husbandmen: for this is *be time of plowing and sowing.*

This age is certainly the most proper for instruction: according to that of the prophet, *Is. xxviii. 9. 10. Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, and line upon line, here a little and there a little.* And the sooner this is done, the better; only things must be instilled into them gently, and by degrees.

It is a noted saying of Aristotle, "That young persons are not fit to hear lectures of moral philosophy;" because at that age passion is so predominant and unruly: by which, I think, he only means, that the minds of young persons are least prepared to receive the precepts of morality, and to submit to them; but that he does not hereby intend, that therefore no care ought to be used to form the minds and manners of youth to virtue and goodness. He certainly understood the nature and power of evil habits too well to be of that mind; and consequently must think, that the principles of morality ought, with great care and diligence, to be instilled into young persons betimes; because they, of all other, have the most need of this kind of instruction, and this age is the most proper season for it: and the less their minds are prepared for it, so much the more pains ought to be taken with them, that they may be taught to govern and subdue their passions, before they grow too stiff and headstrong. So that if the seeds of religion and virtue be not planted in our younger years, what is to be expected in old age? according to that of the son of Sirach, *Ecclus xxv. 3. If thou hast gathered nothing in thy youth, how canst thou expect to find any thing in thine age?*

Young years are tender and easily wrought upon, apt to be moulded into any fashion; they are *adum et molle lutum*; like "moist and soft clay," which is pliable to any form, but soon grows hard, and then nothing is to be made of it. It is a very difficult thing to make impressions

pressions upon age, and to deface the evil which hath been deeply imprinted upon young and tender minds. When good instruction hath been neglected at first, conceited ignorance doth commonly take possession, and obstruct all the passages through which knowledge and wisdom should enter into us.

Upon this consideration, the work of religion should be begun betimes; because it is a mighty advantage to any thing to be planted in a ground that is newly broken up. It is just the same thing for young persons to be entered into a religious course, and to have their minds habituated to virtue before vicious customs have got place and strength in us: for whoever shall attempt this afterwards, will meet with infinite difficulty and opposition, and must dispute his ground by inches.

It is good therefore to do that which must be done one time or other, when it is easiest to be done; where we may do it with the greatest advantage, and are likely to meet with the least and weakest opposition. We should anticipate vice, and prevent the devil and the world, by letting God into our hearts betimes, and giving religion the first seisin and possession of our soul. This is the time of sowing our seed, which must by no means be neglected: for the soul will not lie fallow, good or evil will come up. If our minds be not cultivated by religion, sin and vice will get the possession of them; but if our tender years be seasoned with the knowledge and fear of God, this in all probability will have a good influence upon the following course of our lives.

In a word, this age of our lives is proper for labour and conflict; because youth is full of heat and vigour of courage and resolution, to enterprize and effect difficult things.

This heat indeed renders young persons very unfit to advise and direct themselves; and therefore they have need to be advised and directed by those who are wiser and more experienced: but yet this heat makes them very fit for practice and action; for though they are backward at counsel, they are admirable at execution, when the heat is well directed; they have a great deal of vivacity and quickness, of courage and constancy in the way wherein they are set.

Besides that youth hath a great sense of honour and virtue, of praise and commendation, which are of great force to engage young persons to attempt worthy and excellent things: for hope and confidence, strength and courage, with which sense of honour and desire of praise are apt to inspire them, are admirable instruments of victory and mastery in any kind: and these are proper and most peculiar to youth: *I write unto you, young men, (saith St. John) because ye are strong, and have overcome the evil one.*

And, besides the spirit and vigour of youth, young persons have several other qualities which make them very capable of learning any thing that is good. They are apt to believe, because they have not been often deceived: and this is a very good quality in a learner. And they are full of hopes; which will encourage them to attempt things even beyond their strength; because hope is always of the future, and the life of young persons is in a great measure before them, and yet to come. And, which is a good bridle to restrain them from that which is evil, they are commonly very modest and bashful: and, which is also a singular advantage, they are more apt to do that which is honest and commendable, than that which is gainful and profitable; being in a great measure free from *the love of money*, which experience, as well as the apostle, tells us, *is the root of all evil*. Children are very seldom covetous, because they have seldom been bitten by want.

4. This is the most acceptable time of all other, because it is the first of our age. Under the law, the first fruits and the first-born were God's: in like manner we should devote the first of our age and time to him. God is the first and most excellent of beings; and therefore it is fit that the prime of our age, and the excellency of our strength, should be dedicated to him and his service.

An early piety must needs be very acceptable and pleasing to God. Our blessed Lord took great pleasure to see *little children come unto him*; an emblem of the pleasure he takes that men should list themselves betimes in his service. St. John was the youngest of all the disciples, and our Saviour had a very particular kindness and

affection for him ; for he is said to be *the disciple whom Jesus loved.*

It is a good sign that we value God as we ought, and have a true esteem for his service, when we can find in our hearts to give him our good days, and the year which we ourselves have pleasure in ; and that we have a grateful sense of his benefits, and of our mighty obligation to him, when we make the quickest and best returns we can, and think nothing too good to render to him from whom we have received all.

It is likewise an argument of great sincerity, which is the soul of all religion and virtue, when a man devotes himself to God betimes ; because it is a good evidence that he is not drawn by those forcible constraints or driven to God by that pressing necessity which lie upon men in time of sickness and old age. And, on the contrary, it cannot but be very displeasing to God, to be neglected by us when we are in the flower and vigour of our age. When our blood is warm, and our spirits quick, and our parts are at the best, then to think ourselves too good to serve God, what an affront is this to him, who hath deserved so infinitely well of us, and beyond the best and utmost that we can possibly do ?

Besides that there is a peculiar kind of grace and loveliness in the worthy and excellent actions of young persons, great things being hardly expected from them at that age. Early habits of virtue, like new cloths upon a young and comely body, fit very gracefully upon a straight and well-shaped mind, and do mightily become it.

As there is joy in heaven at the conversion of a great and old sinner ; so it cannot but be a very delightful spectacle to God and angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, to see a young person besieged by powerful temptations on every side, to acquit himself gloriously, and resolutely to hold out against the most violent assaults : to behold one, in the prime and flower of his age, that is courted by pleasures and honours, by the devil, and all the bewitching vanities of this world, to reject all these, and to cleave stedfastly to God ; nay, to frown upon all these temptations, and to look down upon them with indignation and scorn ; and to say, Let those

those doat upon these things, who know no better; let them adore sensual pleasures and lying vanities, who are ignorant of the sincere and solid pleasures of religion and virtue; let them run into the arms of temptation, who can forget God their creator, their preserver, and *be guide of their youth*: as for me, I will serve the Lord, and will employ my whole time, either innocently or usefully, in serving God, and in doing good to men, who are made after the image of God. This work shall take up my whole life; there shall be no void or empty space in it; I will endeavour, as much as possibly I can, that there may be no gap or breach in it for the devil and his temptations to enter in. Lord, I will be thine; I have chosen thee for my happiness and *my portion for ever: Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. Lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: but it is good for me to draw near to God; to begin and end my days in his fear, and to his glory.*

5. and lastly, This age of our life may, for any thing we know, be the only time we may have for this purpose; and if we cast off the thoughts of God, and defer the business of religion to old age, intending, as we pretend, to set about it at that time, we may be cut off before that time comes, and *turned into hell, with the people that forget God.*

The work of religion is the most necessary of all other: and must be done one time or other, or we are certainly undone for ever. We cannot begin it too soon; but we may easily delay it too long; and then we are miserable past all recovery. He that would not venture his immortal soul, and put his everlasting happiness upon the greatest hazard and uncertainty, must make religion his first business and care, must think of God betimes, and *remember his Creator in the days of his youth.*

I have now done with the three things which I proposed to consider from these words. The inferences from this whole discourse shall be these two:

1. To persuade those that are young, to *remember God their Creator*, and to engage in the ways of religion and virtue betimes.

2. To urge those who have neglected this first and best opportunity

opportunity of their lives, to repent quickly, and return to a better mind, lest the opportunity be lost for ever and their case become desperate and past remedy.

1. To persuade those that are young, to *remember God their Creator* betimes, and to engage early in the way of religion and virtue. Do not suffer yourselves to be cheated and bewitched by sensual satisfactions, and to be destroyed by ease and prosperity. Let not a perpetual tenure of health and pleasure soften and dissolve your spirits, and banish all wise and serious thoughts out of your minds. Be not so foolish and unworthy, as to think that you have a privilege to forget God when he is most mindful of you; *when the candle of the Lord shineth about your tabernacle*, and you are enjoying the health and strength, and sweetness of life.

No man knows what he does, and what an invaluable treasure he prodigally wastes, when he lets slip this golden season and opportunity of his life; whilst he is yet innocent and untainted with sin and vice, and his mind is clear of all bad impressions, and capable of the best not enslaved to evil, and at liberty to do well.

Consider, that the ways of religion and virtue are no thing so difficult and unpleasant now, as they will be hereafter; and that the longer you forget God, and the more you are estranged from him, the more unwilling you will be to think of him, and to return to him; that your lusts will every day gain more strength, and your hearts by degrees will contract such a stiffness and hardness, that it will be no easy matter to work upon them.

Therefore *remember your Creator in the days of your youth; to day, whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* When will you think of beginning a good course, if not now? You have a great work before you, which cannot be done in a little time, which cannot be begun and finished at once. Your whole life is no more than sufficient for it to do it to the best advantage, and as it ought to be done. Do not then think of crowding it into a corner of your life, much less of putting it off to the very end of it. *When that night comes, no man can work.*

Consider further, if we will deny God the hearty and vigorous service of our best days, how can we expect  
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hat he will accept the faint and flattering devotions of old age? Wise men are wont to forecast and provide some stay and comfort for themselves against the evils and infirmities of that time; that they may have something to lean upon in their weakness, something to mitigate and allay the troubles and afflictions of that dark and gloomy evening; that what they cannot enjoy of present pleasure and satisfaction, may in some measure be made up to them in comfortable reflexions upon the past actions of a holy and innocent, an useful and well-pent life.

But, on the other hand, if we have neglected religion, and forgotten God, days without number; if we have lived an ungodly and vitious life, we have treasured up so much guilt and remorse, so many aggravations of our sorrow and anguish against an evil day; and have foolishly contrived to make our burden then heaviest, when we are least able to stand under it; and have provided and laid in infinite matter for repentance, when there is hardly any space and opportunity left for the exercise of it, and when we shall be utterly disheartened from setting about so vast a work, of which we can see no end, and yet have so very little time for it, that, if we do any thing at all in it, we shall be forced to huddle it up in so much haste and confusion, as will, I doubt, signify but very little, either to our present comfort or our future happiness.

Consider this in time, all ye that forget God in the day of your prosperity, and in the best age of your life; and yet, when the day of affliction, and the infirmities of age come upon you, would be glad then to have God mindful of you, and merciful to you. But if thou wouldst not have him *cast thee off in thine old age, and forsake thee when thy strength fails*, do thou remember him in the days of thy youth, in the prime and vigour of thine age: *for this is the acceptable time, this is the day of salvation.*

Therefore *acquaint thyself with him, and remember him now, in the days of thy youth.* Deser not so necessary a work, no not for one moment. Begin it just now, that so thou mayest have made some good progress in it before *the evil days come: before the sun, and the moon, and*

*the stars be darkened, and all the comforts and joys of life be fled and gone.*

*Be not deceived, O man, whosoever thou art; for God is not mocked. He will not be put off by us with the duties in which we ourselves have no pleasure. Offer up thyself a living sacrifice, and not a carcase, if thou wouldst be accepted. Do not provoke and affront the living God by offering up to him faint spirits, and feeble hands, a dim eyes, and a dead heart. He hath been bountiful to us, in giving us the best blessings of life, and all things richly to enjoy; and do we grudge him the most valuable part of our lives, and the years which we ourselves have pleasure in? Do we thus requite the Lord? Foolish people and unwise! Is the giver of all good things unworthy to receive from us any thing that is good? If we offer up the lame in sacrifice, is it not evil? and if we offer up the blind, is it not evil? Offer it now to thy governor, and try if he will be pleased with thee, and accept of thy person. Hath God deserved so ill at our hands, that we should forget and neglect him? and hath the devil deserved so well of us, that we should be contented to spend the best part of our lives in his service, which is perfect slavery? Was he our creator, or can he make us happy? nay, does he not carry on a most malicious design, to make us for ever miserable?*

2. Let me urge those who have neglected this first and best opportunity of their lives, to repent quickly, and to return to a better mind, lest all opportunity of doing good be lost for ever, and their case become desperate and past remedy. Resolve to redeem, if it be possible, the time which you should have improved. You have squandered away too much already, waste no more of this precious opportunity of life. You have deferred a necessary work too long, delay it no longer. Do not delude yourself with vain hopes, that this work may be done at another time, and in an instant; and that if you can but fashion your last breath into, *Lord have mercy upon me*, this will prevail with God, and make atonement for the long course of a wicked and sinful life. What strange thoughts have men of God and heaven, what extravagant conceits of the little evil of sin, and the great easiness of repentance, that can impose upon themselves at this rate

Bethink yourselves better in time ; *consider, and shew yourselves men.* What will you do in the day of your distress, who have neglected God in your most flourishing and prosperous condition ? what will you say to him in a dying hour, who scarce ever had one serious thought of him all your life ? Can you have the face at that time to bespeak him in this manner : “ Lord, now the world  
 “ and my lusts have left me, and I feel myself ready to  
 “ sink into eternal perdition, I lay hold upon thy mercy,  
 “ to deliver my soul from going down into the pit.  
 “ I have heard strange things of thy goodness, and that  
 “ thou art merciful even to a miracle. This is that which  
 “ I always trusted to, that, after a long life of sin and vanity,  
 “ thou wouldst at last be pacified with a few penitent words  
 “ and sighs at the hour of death. Let me  
 “ not, I pray thee, be disappointed of this hope, and  
 “ put to confusion ?”

Is this an address fit to be made to a wise man, much less to the all wise and just judge of the world ? And yet this seems to be the plain interpretation of the late and forced application of a great and habitual sinner to almighty God in his last extremity, and when he is just giving up the ghost, and going to appear before his dreadful tribunal.

I say again, let no man deceive you with vain words, or with vain hopes, or with false notions of a slight and sudden repentance ; as if heaven were an hospital, founded on purpose to receive all sick and maimed persons ; that when they can live no longer to the lusts of the flesh, and the sinful pleasures of this world, can but put up a cold and formal petition, to be admitted there.

No, no ; as sure as God is true, they shall never see the kingdom of God, who, instead of seeking it in the first place, make it their last refuge and retreat ; and, when they find themselves under the sentence of death and damnation, only to avoid present execution, and since there is no other remedy, do at last bethink themselves of getting to heaven, and fall upon their knees to petition the great judge of the world, that they may be transported thither.

Can any man in reason expect that such a petition will be granted ? I tell you nay ; but except you repent soon-

er, and at a fitter time, and after a better fashion, you shall certainly perish. As much as God desires the salvation of men, he will not prostitute heaven, and set the gates of it wide open to those who only fly to it in extremity, but never sought it in good earnest, nor indeed do now care for it or desire it for any other reason, but to excuse them from going to hell. They have no value for heaven, because they are in no ways fit for it; but yet they think hell to be the worse place of the two.

The ever blessed God is himself abundantly sufficient for his own happiness, and does not need our company to make any addition to it, nor yet is heaven so desolate a place, or so utterly void of inhabitants, that, like some newly discovered plantation, it should be glad to receive the most vile and profligate persons, the scum and refuse of mankind. There are an innumerable company of glorious angels, much nobler creatures than the best of men, to people those blessed regions. *Thousands of thousands continually stand before God, and ten thousand times ten thousand minister unto him.*

We do absolutely stand in need of God to make us happy; but he hath no need of us to help him to be so. God indeed is so good, as to desire our happiness as earnestly as if it were necessary to his own; but he is happy in and from himself; and without him it is impossible we should be happy; nay, we must of necessity be for ever miserable.

To conclude: If we would have God to accept us in a dying hour, and our blessed Saviour to *remember us*, now *he is in his kingdom*, let us think of him betimes, and *acquaint ourselves with him, that we may be at peace, now, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shall say, we have no pleasure in them.*

*O that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!* Which God of his infinite goodness grant that we may all seriously lay to heart, *in this our day*; and may learn betimes *so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*; for his mercies sake in Jesus Christ. To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

# The RULE of FAITH:

O R,

An ANSWER to the treatise of Mr. I. S. intituled,  
*Sure footing, &c.*

To my honoured and learned friend Dr. STILLING-  
FLEET.

S I R,

I Have, with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction, read over your book, which I find in every part answerable to its title, viz. A rational account of the grounds of the Protestant religion. And now I thank you for it, not only as a private favour, but a public benefit. No sooner had I perused it, but I met with a discourse, intituled, *Sure footing in Christianity*. And although I have no small prejudice against books with conceited titles, yet I was tempted to look into this, because it pretended to contain animadversions on some passages in your book which I had so lately read over. Upon perusal of which animadversions, I found, that the author of them had attacked (and in his own opinion confuted) a page or two in your book. This drew me on to take a view of his main discourses; which, because they are in great vogue among some of his own party, and do, with an unusual kind of confidence and ostentation, pretend to the newest and most exact fashion of writing controversy, as being all along demonstrative, and built upon self evident principles; therefore I resolved thoroughly to examine them, that I might discover, if I could, upon what so firm and solid foundations this high and mighty confidence was built.

But, before I had entered upon this undertaking, I met with a letter from the author of *Sure footing* to his answerer, directing him how he ought to demean himself in his answer. In which letter, though there be many things liable to great exception; yet, because I am unwilling to be diverted from the main question, I shall not argue with him  
about

about any of those matters ; only take leave to use the same liberty in managing my answer, which he hath assumed to himself in prescribing laws to me about it : therefore, without taking any further notice of his letter, I address myself to his book.

## P A R T I.

### The explication and state of the question.

#### SECT. I. *The explication of the terms of the question.*

§ 1. **T**HE question he propounds to himself to debate, is, “What is the rule of faith ?” In order to the resolution whereof, he endeavours,

First, To fix the true notion of these two terms, *rule*, and *faith* : which way of proceeding I cannot but allow to be very proper and reasonable ; but I can by no means think his explication of those terms to be sufficient. He tells us, that “a rule is that which is able to regulate or guide him that useth it.” In which description, as in many other passages of his book, he is plainly guilty of that which he taxeth in Mr. Whitby, *p.* 180; that is, the confounding of *a rule* and *a guide*, by making *regulating* and *guiding* to be equivalent words. But for this I am no further concerned, than to take notice of it by the way. The fault which I find in this definition, is, that it doth not make the thing plainer than it was before ; so that no man is the wiser for it, nor one jot nearer knowing what a rule is. He pretends to tell Englishmen what a rule is ; and, for their clearer understanding of this word, he explains it by a word less removed from the Latin, “A rule is that which is able to regulate him that useth it :” just as if a man should go about to explain what a lawgiver is, by saying, “He is one that hath the power of legislation.” Of the two he had much better have said, that “a rule is a  
“ thing

‘ thing that is able to rule him that useth it ;’ though this be nothing but an explication of the same word by itself.

§ 2. Not much better is his explication of the term *faith*, which he tells us, “ in the common sense of mankind is the same with believing.” He declared indeed beforehand, *p.* 4. that he did not “ intend to give rigorous school-definitions of either this or the former word ;” and, to do him right, he hath not in the least swerved from his intention. It were to be wished he had prefaced some such thing to his demonstrations ; for the reader will find, that they are not a whit more rigorous than his definitions : the latter of which doth very much resemble the country-man’s way of defining, who, being asked by his neighbour what an invasion was, after some study, told him very gravely, that “ an invasion was as if he should say an invasion.” In like manner Mr. S. tells, that “ faith (or, which is all one, belief,) is the same with believing ;” which, in my apprehension, is but a country-definition, unless the interposing of those solemn words, “ in the common sense of mankind,” may be thought to mend the matter. This puts me in mind of what Mr. S. says in his transition, (as he calls it,) where he gives the reader an account what feats he hath done in his book: “ He will see, (says he, *p.* 159.) I take my rise at the meaning of the words *rule* and *faith* ; this known, I establish my first principles in this present matter to be these, *viz.* A rule is a rule ; Faith is faith.” This is the right self-evident method he talks so much of, and his principles agree admirably well with his definitions. If he had but proceeded in the same method, and added, That a rule of faith is a rule of faith ; that oral tradition is oral tradition ; and, That to say oral tradition is the rule of faith, is as much as to say, oral tradition is the rule of faith, the whole business had been concluded without any more ado ; and I think no body would have gone about to confute him.

§ 3. Rejecting then his way of definition, as inept and frivolous, and no ways tending to give a man a clearer notion of things ; I shall endeavour to explain a little better, if I can, the meaning of these terms.

A *rule* (when we speak of a rule of faith) is a metaphorical word, which, in its first and proper sense, being applied to material and sensible things, is the measure according to which we judge of the straightness and crookedness of things; and from hence it is transferred by analogy to things moral or intellectual. A moral rule is the measure according to which we judge whether a thing be good or evil; and this kind of rule is that which is commonly called a *law*; and the agreement or disagreement of our actions to this rule, is, suitably to the metaphor, called *rectitude* or *obliquity*. An intellectual rule is the measure according to which we judge whether a thing be true or false. And this is either general or more particular. Common notions, and the acknowledged principles of reason, are that general rule according to which we judge whether a thing be true or false. The particular principles of every science are the more particular rules according to which we judge whether things in that science be true or false. So that the general notion of a rule is, that it is “a measure, by the agreement or disagreement to which we judge of all things of that kind to which it belongs.”

§ 4. *Faith*, though both among sacred and profane writers it be used many times more generally, for a persuasion or assent of the mind to any thing wrought in us by any kind of argument; yet, as it is a term of art used by divines, it signifies that particular kind of assent which is wrought in us by testimony or authority: so that divine faith, which we are now speaking of, is an assent to a thing upon the testimony or authority of God or, which is all one, “an assent to a truth upon divine revelation.”

§ 5. A *rule of faith* is the measure according to which we judge what matters we are to assent to, as revealed to us by God, and what not. And, more particularly, the rule of Christian faith is the measure according to which we are to judge what we ought to assent to, as the doctrine revealed by Christ to the world, and what not.

§ 6. So that this question, “What is the rule of Christian faith?” supposeth a doctrine revealed by Christ to the world; and that that doctrine was intelligibly and entirely delivered by Christ to his Apostles, and sufficient

at confirmation given to it; that this doctrine was in the same manner published to the world by the Apostles, who likewise gave sufficient evidence of the truth of it. All this is necessarily supposed in the question: for it would be vain to inquire, whether this or that be the rule of Christian faith, if such a thing as the Christian faith were not first supposed. When therefore we inquire, what is the rule of Christian faith? the meaning of that inquiry is, by what way and means the knowledge of Christ's doctrine is conveyed certainly down to us, who live at the distance of so many ages from the time of its first delivery? for this being known, we have the rule of faith; that is, a measure by which we may judge what we are to assent to as the doctrine of Christ, and what not. So that, when any question ariseth about any particular proposition, whether this be part of Christ's doctrine, we may be able by this rule to resolve it.

SECT. II. *Mr. S.'s rule of faith.*

1. **T**HE next thing to be considered is, his resolution of this question; by which we shall know what his opinion is concerning the rule of faith; for that being known, the controversy between us will easily be stated.

His opinion in general is, that oral or practical tradition, in opposition to writing, or any other way that can be assigned, is the rule of faith. By oral or practical tradition, he means, *p.* 41. "a delivery down from hand to hand, by words, and a constant course of frequent and visible actions, conformable to those words, of the sense and faith of forefathers."

§ 2. Now, that I may bring the controversy between us to a clear state, I am first to take a more particular view of his opinion concerning the rule of faith, that so I may the better understand how much he attributes to oral tradition, and what to the Scriptures, or written tradition: and then I am to lay down the Protestant rule of faith, that so it may appear how far we agree, and how far we differ. The sum of what he attributes to oral tradition, so far as can be collected out of so obscure

and confuted a discourse, may be reduced to these five heads.

§ 3. 1<sup>st</sup>, That the doctrine of Christian religion was delivered by Christ to the Apostles, and by them published to the world; and that the age which first received it from the Apostles delivered it as they received it without any change or corruption, to their children, and they to theirs, and so it went on solely by this way of oral tradition. This is the sum of his explication of tradition, *disc.* 5.

§ 4. 2<sup>dly</sup>, That this way alone is not only sufficient to convey this doctrine down to all ages certainly, and without any alteration; but it is the only possible way that can be imagined, of conveying down a doctrine accurately from one age to another. And this is the natural result of his discourse about the properties of a rule of faith; for if the true properties of a rule of faith belong to oral tradition, then it is a sufficient means, and if those properties do solely and essentially appertain to it, and are incompatible to any thing else, as he endeavours to prove, then it is impossible there should be any other way.

§ 5. 3<sup>dly</sup>, That it is impossible this means should fail or miss of its end; that is, the doctrine of Christ being once put into this way of conveyance, it can neither cease to descend, nor be at any time corrupted or changed in its descent. This is that which his demonstrations pretend to prove.

§ 6. 4<sup>thly</sup>, That the infallibility of oral tradition, the impossibility of its failing, is a full and self-evident principle. This he frequently asserts throughout his book.

§ 7. 5<sup>thly</sup>, That this way of oral tradition hath *de facto* in all ages been acknowledged by Christians, as the only way and means whereby the doctrine of Christianity hath been conveyed down to them. And this is that which he attempts to prove from the consent of authority.

§ 8. As for the scriptures, he grants them indeed have been written by men divinely inspired, and to contain a divine doctrine, even the same which is delivered by oral tradition. So he tells us, *p.* 117. "It is ce

tain the Apostles taught the same doctrine they writ." ut then he denies it to be of any use without oral tradition, because neither the letter nor sense of it can without that be ascertained. So he saith in his letter to Dr. Lausabon, p. 337. "As for the scriptures, (ascertaining their letter and sense, which is done by tradition,) it is clear they are of incomparable value, not only for the divine doctrine contained in them; but also for many particular passages, whose source or first attestation not being universal, nor their nature much practical, might possibly have been lost in their conveyance down by tradition." Where, though he gives the scriptures very good words, it is to be understood, provided they will be subordinate, and acknowledge that they owe their sense, and their being intelligible and useful, to oral tradition: for if any man shall presume to say, that this book hath any certain sense without oral tradition, or that God can write plainly and intelligibly, and that this book which he hath indited is so written, and doth not depend upon tradition for its sense and interpretation; then the most scurrilous language is not bad enough for the scriptures: then what are those sacred writings, but "ink variously figured in a book?" (*Append. 5. p. 319.*) "unsensed characters, waxen-natured words, not yet sensed, nor having any certain interpreter, but fit to be played upon diversely by quirks of wit; that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing?" (*Ibid. p. 68.*) These, with many other disgraceful terms, he very liberally bestows upon the divine oracles: the consideration whereof, did it not minister too much horror, would afford some comfort; for by this kind of rude usage, so familiar with him towards his adversaries, one may reasonably conjecture, that he doth not reckon the scriptures among his friends.

§ 9. And whereas he saith, that "the scriptures have preserved many particular passages, which, because their source or first attestation was not universal, nor their nature much practical, might possibly have been lost in their conveyance down by tradition;" this is impossible, according to his hypothesis: for if neither the scripture's letter, nor the certain sense of it, as to

the main body of Christian doctrine, could have been secured without oral tradition; that is, if we could not have known, that those passages which contain the main points of Christ's doctrine, either had been written by men divinely inspired, or what the sense of them was but from the consonancy and agreement of those passages with the doctrine which was orally preached by the Apostles: how can we be certain either of the letter or sense of other particular passages, which must necessarily want this confirmation from oral tradition; because "their first attestation was not universal, nor their nature much practical?" Nay, his discourse plainly implies, that we can have no security at all, either of the letter or sense of any other parts of scripture, but only those which are coincident with the main body of Christian doctrine; as is evident from these words, *p.* 116 "Tradition established, the church is provided of a certain and infallible rule to preserve a copy of the scripture's letter, truly significative of Christ's sense, as far as it is coincident with the main body of Christian doctrine preached at first; because sense written in men's hearts by tradition, can easily guide them to correct the alteration of the outward letter." This I perceive plainly is the thing they would be at: they would correct the outward letter of scripture by sense written in their hearts; and then, instead of leaving out the second commandment, they would change it into a precept obliging due worship to images, according to the council of Trent; and a thousand other alterations they must make in the Bible, to make it truly significative of the sense of their church. But surely the outward letter of other passages of scripture, which were not intended to signify points of faith, is equally liable to alterations and yet the church is not by tradition provided of any way to correct these alterations when they happen; because tradition doth, as this corollary implies, only furnish the church with a certain and infallible rule of preserving a copy of the scripture's letter, so far as it is coincident with the main body of Christian doctrine.

§ 10. Again, he tells us, *p.* 117. "Tradition established, the church is provided of a certain and infallible rule to interpret scripture-letter by, so as to arrive

rive certainly at Christ's sense, as far as the letter concerns the body of Christian doctrine preached at first, or points requisite to salvation." So that whatever he may attribute to scripture for fashion's sake, and to avoid calumny with the vulgar, as he says very ingenuously in his explication of the 15th corollary; nevertheless it is plain, that, according to his own hypothesis, we cannot but look upon it as perfectly useless and pernicious. That it is altogether useless according to this hypothesis, is plain; for the main body of Christian doctrine is securely conveyed to us without it; and it can give no kind of confirmation to it, because it receives all its confirmation from it; only the church is ever and anon put to a great deal of trouble to correct the alteration of the outward letter, by tradition, and sense written in their hearts. And as for all other parts of scripture, which are not coincident with the main body of Christian doctrine, we can have no certainty, either that the outward letter is true, nor, if we could, can we possibly arrive at any certain sense of them. And that it is intolerably pernicious according to his hypothesis, is plain; because "every silly and upstart heresy fathers itself upon it," p. 40. and when men leave tradition, as he supposeth all heretics do, the scripture is the most dangerous engine that could have been invented; being to such persons only "waxen-natured words, not sensed, nor having any certain interpreter; but fit to be played upon diversely by quirks of wit; that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing." p. 68. And indeed, if his hypothesis were true, the scriptures might well deserve all the contemptuous language which he useth against them; and Mr. White's comparison of them with Lilly's almanack, (*Apology for tradition*, p. 165.) would not only be pardonable, but proper; and, unless he added it out of prudence, and for the people's sake, whom he may think too superstitiously conceited of those books, he might have spared that cold excuse which he makes for using this similitude, that "it was agreeable rather to the impertinency of the objection, than the dignity of the subject." Certain it is, if these men are true to their own principles, that notwithstanding the high reverence and esteem pretended to

be borne by them and their church to the scriptures, they must heartily despise them, and wish them out of the way; and even look upon it as a great oversight of the divine providence, to trouble his church with a book which, if their discourse be of any consequence, can stand Catholics in no stead at all, and is so dangerous and mischievous a weapon in the hands of heretics.

SECT. III. *The Protestant doctrine concerning the rule of faith.*

§ 1. **H**AVING thus taken a view of his opinion, and considered how much he attributes to oral tradition, and how little to the scriptures; before I assai his hypothesis, I shall lay down the Protestant rule of faith; not that so much is necessary for the answering of his book, but that he may have no colour of objection that I proceed altogether in the destructive way, and overthrow his principle, as he calls it, without substituting another in its room. The opinion then of the Protestant concerning the rule of faith, is this in general, That those books which we call the *holy scriptures*, are the means whereby the Christian doctrine hath been brought down to us. And that he may now clearly understand this together with the grounds of it, which in reason he ought to have done before he had forsaken us, I shall declare it more particularly in these following propositions.

§ 2. *1<sup>st</sup>*, That the doctrine of Christian religion was by Christ delivered to the Apostles, and by them first preached to the world, and afterwards by them committed to writing; which writings, or books, have been transmitted from one age to another down to us. So far I take to be granted by our present adversaries. That the Christian doctrine was by Christ delivered to the Apostles, and by them published to the world, is part of their own hypothesis. That this doctrine was afterwards by the Apostles committed to writing, he also grants, *corol. 29. p. 117.* "It is certain the Apostles taught the same doctrine they writ;" and if so, it must be as certain, that they writ the same doctrine which they taught. I know it is the general tenet of the Papists, that the Scriptures do not contain the entire body of Christian doctrine;

doctrine; but that besides the doctrines contained in scripture, there are also others brought down to us by oral or unwritten tradition. But Mr. S. who supposeth the whole doctrine of Christian religion to be certainly conveyed down to us solely by oral tradition, doth not any where, that I remember, deny that all the same doctrine is contained in the scriptures; only he denies the scriptures to be a means sufficient to convey this doctrine to us with certainty, so that we can by them be infallibly assured what is Christ's doctrine, and what not. Nay, he seems in that passage I last cited, to grant this, in saying, that the Apostles did both teach and write the same doctrine. I am sure Mr. White, whom he follows very closely throughout his whole book, does not deny this in his *Apology for Tradition*, where he saith, p. 171. that "it is not the Catholic position, That all its doctrines are not contained in the scriptures." And that those writings or books which we call *the holy scriptures*, have been transmitted down to us, is unquestionable matter of fact, and granted universally by the Papists, as to all those books which are owned by Protestants for canonical.

§ 3. *2dly*, That the way of writing is a sufficient means to convey a doctrine to the knowledge of those who live in times very remote from the age of its first delivery. According to his hypothesis, there is no possible way of conveying a doctrine with certainty and security besides that of oral tradition: the falshood of which will sufficiently appear, when I shall have shewn, that the true properties of a rule of faith do agree to the scriptures, and not to oral tradition. In the mean time, I shall only offer this to his consideration, that whatever can be orally delivered in plain and intelligible words, may be written in the same words; and that a writing or book which is public, and in every one's hand, may be conveyed down with at least as much certainty and security, and with as little danger of alteration, as an oral tradition: and if so, I understand not what can render it impossible for a book to convey down a doctrine to the knowledge of after ages. Besides, if he had looked well about him, he could not but have apprehended some little inconvenience in making that an essential

essential part of his hypothesis, which is contradicted by plain and constant experience: for that any kind of doctrine may be sufficiently conveyed by books to the knowledge of after ages, provided those books be but written intelligibly, and preserved from change and corruption in the conveyance, (both which I shall be so bold as to suppose possible) is as little doubted by the generality of mankind, as that there are books. And, surely we Christians cannot think it impossible to convey a doctrine to posterity by books, when we consider that God himself pitched upon this way for conveyance of the doctrine of the Jewish religion to after ages: because it is not likely, that so wise an agent should pitch upon a means whereby it was impossible he should attain his end.

§ 4. *3dly*, That the books of scripture are sufficiently plain as to all things necessary to be believed and practised. He that denies this, ought in reason to instance in some necessary point of faith, or matter of practice, which is not in some place of scripture or other plainly delivered. For it is not a sufficient objection to say, *p.* 38. 39. That the greatest wits among the Protestants differ about the sense of those texts, wherein the generality of them suppose the divinity of Christ to be plainly and clearly expressed: because, if nothing were to be accounted sufficiently plain, but what it is impossible a great wit should be able to wrest to any other sense, not only the scriptures, but all other books, and, which is worst of all to him that makes this objection, all oral tradition would fall into uncertainty. Doth the traditional church pretend, that the doctrine of Christ's divinity is conveyed down to her by oral tradition more plainly than it is expressed in scripture? I would fain know what plainer words she ever used to express this point of faith by, than what the scripture useth; which expressly calls him *God, the true God, God over, all blessed for evermore.* If it be said, That these who deny the divinity of Christ have been able to evade these and all other texts of scripture, but they could never elude the definitions of the church in that matter; it is easily answered, That the same arts would equally have eluded both: but there was no reason why they should trouble them-

themselves so much about the latter; for why should they be solicitous to wrest the definitions of councils, and conform them to their own opinion, who had no regard to the church's authority? If those great wits, as he calls them, had believed the sayings of scripture to be of no greater authority than the definitions of councils, they would have answered texts of scripture as they have done the definitions of councils; not by endeavouring to interpret them to another sense, but by downright denying their authority. So that it seems that oral tradition is liable to the same inconvenience with the written as to this particular.

§ 5. And of this I shall give him a plain instance in two great wits of their church, the present Pope and Mr. White, the one, the head of the traditionary church, as Mr. S. calls it; the other, the great master of the traditionary doctrine. These two great wits, the Pope and Mr. White, notwithstanding the plainness of oral tradition, and the impossibility of being ignorant of it, or mistaking it, have yet been so unhappy as to differ about several points of faith; insomuch that Mr. White is unkindly censured for it at Rome; and perhaps here, in England, the Pope speeds no better. However, the difference continues still so wide, that Mr. White hath thought fit to disobey the summons of his chief pastor; and, like a prudent man, rather to write against him here, out of harm's way, than to venture the infallibility of plain oral tradition for the doctrines he maintains, against a practical tradition which they have at Rome, of killing heretics.

Methinks Mr. S. might have spared his brags, *p.* 54. that he " hath evinced from clear reason, that it is far  
 " more possible to make a man not to be, than not  
 " to know what is rivetted into his soul by so oft re-  
 " peated sensations, (as the Christian faith is by oral  
 " and practical tradition); and that it exceeds all the  
 " power of nature, abstracting from the cases of mad-  
 " ness and violent disease, to blot knowledge, thus fix-  
 " ed, out of the soul of one single believer; insomuch  
 " that sooner may all mankind perish, than the regula-  
 " tive virtue of tradition miscarry; nay, sooner may  
 " the sinews of entire nature, by overstraining, crack,  
 " and

“ and she lose all her activity and motion, that is, her-  
 “ self, then one single part of that innumerable mul-  
 “ titude which integrate the vast testification which we  
 “ call tradition, can possibly be violated ;” when after  
 he hath told us, *p.* 116. that “ the city of Rome was  
 “ blessed with more vigorous causes to imprint Christ’s  
 “ doctrine at first, and recommend it to the next age,  
 “ than were found any where else ; and consequently,  
 “ that the stream of tradition, in its source and first  
 “ putting into motion, was more particularly vigorous  
 “ there than in any other see ; and that the chief pastor  
 “ of that see hath a particular title to infallibility, built  
 “ upon tradition, above any other pastor whatsoever :  
 “ not to dilate on the particular assistances of that Bi-  
 “ shop, springing out of his divinely constituted office :”  
 when, I say, after all this quaint reasoning and rum-  
 bling rhetoric, about the infallibility of oral tradition,  
 and the particular infallibility of the Bishop of Rome,  
 built on tradition, we cannot but remember, that this  
 great oracle of oral tradition, the Pope, and this great  
 master of it, Mr. White, who is so peculiarly skilled in  
 the rule of faith, have so manifestly declared themselves  
 to differ in points of faith. For that the Pope, and his  
 congregation general at Rome, have condemned all his  
 books, for this reason, because “ they contain several  
 “ propositions manifestly heretical,” (*Mr. Wb. exetasis,*  
*p.* 9.), is a sign, that these two great wits do not very  
 well hit it in matters of faith ; and either that they do  
 both agree in the same rule of faith, or that one of them  
 does not rightly understand it, or not follow it. And  
 now, why may not that which Mr. S. unjustly says con-  
 cerning the use of scripture, *p.* 39. be upon this account  
 justly applied to the business of oral tradition ? “ If  
 “ we see two such eminent wits among the Papists,  
 “ (the Pope and Mr. White), making use of the self-  
 “ same, and, as they conceive, the best advantages  
 “ their rule of faith gives them, and availing themselves  
 “ the best they can, by acquired skill, yet differ about  
 “ matters of faith ; what certainty can we undertakingly  
 “ promise to weaker heads, that is, to the generality of  
 “ the Papists,” in whom the governors of the church do

do professedly cherish ignorance for the increasing of their devotion?

§ 6. 4thly, We have sufficient assurance that the books of scripture are conveyed down to us without any material corruption or alteration. And he that denies this, must either reject the authority of all books, because we cannot be certain whether they be the same now that they were at first: or else give some probable reason why these should be more liable to corruption than others. But any man that considers things, will easily find, that it is much more improbable that these books should have been either wilfully or involuntarily corrupted in any thing material to faith or a good life, than any other books in the world, whether we consider the peculiar providence of God engaged for the preservation of them, or the peculiar circumstances of these books. If they were written by men divinely inspired, and are of use to Christians, as is acknowledged, at least in words, on all hands; nothing is more credible, than that the same divine providence which took care for the publishing of them, would likewise be concerned to preserve them entire. And if we consider the peculiar circumstances of these books, we shall find it morally impossible that they should have been materially corrupted; because, being of universal and mighty concernment, and at first diffused into many hands, and soon after translated into most languages, and most passages in them cited in books now extant, and all these now agreeing in all matters of importance, we have as great assurance as can be had concerning any thing of this nature, that they have not suffered any material alteration; and far greater than any man can have concerning the incorruption of their oral tradition; as I shall shew when I come to answer the thing which he calls demonstration.

§ 7. 5thly, That *de facto* the Scripture hath been acknowledged by all Christians, in former ages, to be the means whereby the doctrine of Christ hath, with greatest certainty, been conveyed to them. One good evidence of this is, that the primitive adversaries of christian religion did always look upon the Scripture as the standard and measure of the christian doctrine; and, in all their writings against Christianity, took that for granted to be  
the

the christian faith which was contained in those books there having not as yet any philosopher risen up, who had demonstrated to the world, that a doctrine could not with sufficient certainty and clearness, be conveyed by writing from one age to another. But how absurd has this method of confuting christian religion been, if it had been then the public profession of Christians, that the Scriptures were not the rule of their faith? How easy had it been for the fathers, who apologized for and defended christian religion, to have told them, they took a wrong measure of their doctrine? for it was not the principle of Christians, that their faith was conveyed to them by the Scriptures, and therefore it was a fond undertaking to attack their religion that way; but if they would effectually argue against it, they ought to inquire what that doctrine was which was orally delivered from father to son, without which the Scriptures could signify no more to them than an unknown cypher without a key being of themselves, without the light of oral tradition only a heap of unintelligible words, “unsensed characters,” and “ink variously figured in a book;” and therefore it was a gross mistake in them to think they could understand the christian religion, like their own philosophy, by reading of those books, or confute it by confuting them. Thus the fathers might have defended their religion; nay, they ought in all reason to have taken this course, and to have appealed from those defenceless books, to the “true rule of faith, the living voice of the church essential.” But doth Mr. S. find any thing to this purpose in the apologies of the fathers? If he hath discovered any such matter, he might do well to acquaint the world with it, and make them wiser. In the mean time, I shall inform him what I have found, that the fathers never except against that method, but appeal frequently from the slanderous reports and misrepresentations which were made of their doctrine, to the books of Scripture, as the true standard of it.

§ 8. Another evidence that Christians, in all ages since the Apostles times, have owned the Scriptures for the rule of their faith, is, that the fathers, in their homilies, did use constantly to declare to the people what they were to believe, and what they were to practise, out  
of

f the scriptures; which had been most absurd and senseless, had they believed, not the scriptures, but something else, to have been the rule of faith and manners. For what could tend more to the seducing of the people from Mr. S.'s supposed rule of faith, oral tradition, than to make a daily practice of declaring and confirming the doctrines of the Christian faith from the scriptures? Had the ancient fathers been right for Mr. S.'s way, they would not have built their doctrine upon scripture, perhaps not have mentioned it, for fear of giving the people an occasion to grow familiar with so dangerous a book; but rather, as their more prudent posterity have done, would have locked it up from the people in an unknown tongue, and have set open the stores of good wholesome traditions; and, instead of telling them, as they do most frequently, "Thus saith the scripture," would only have told them, "This is the voice of the essential church; thus it hath been delivered down by hand to us from our forefathers."

§ 9. I might add for a third evidence, the great malice of the enemies and persecutors of Christianity against his book, and their cruel endeavours to extort it out of the hands of Christians, and destroy it out of the world, that by this means they might extirpate Christianity: for it seems they thought that the abolishing of this book would have been the ruin of that religion. But according to Mr. S.'s opinion, their malice wanted wit: for, had all the Bibles in the world been burnt, Christian religion would nevertheless have been entirely preserved, and safely transmitted down to us by sense written in mens hearts, with the good help of Mr. S.'s demonstrations. Nay, their church would have been a great gainer by it: for this occasion and parent of all heresy, the scripture, being once out of the way, she might have had all in her own hands; and, by leading the people in the safe paths of tradition, and consequently of science, might have made them wise enough to obey. Well; but suppose the persecutors of Christianity mistook themselves in their design, how came the Christians in those days to be so tenacious of this book, that rather than deliver it, they would yield up themselves to torments and death? And why did they look upon those

who out of fear delivered up their books, as apostate and renouncers of Christianity? And if they had not thought this book to be the great instrument of the faith and salvation; and if it had really been of no greater consideration than Mr. W. and Mr. S. would make it, why should they be so loth to part with a few “ unferrous characters, waxen-natured words, to be played upon diversely by quirks of wit; that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing? why should they value their lives at so cheap a rate, as to throw them away for a few insignificant scrawls, as to shed their blood for “ a little ink variously figured in a book?” Did they not know, that the safety of Christianity did not depend upon this book? Did no Christian then understand that, which, according to Mr. S., no Christian can be ignorant of, *viz.* that not the scriptures but unmissakeable and indefectible oral tradition was the rule of faith? Why did they not consider, that though this letter-rule of hereticks had been consumed to ashes yet their faith would have lain safe, and “ been preserved entire in its spiritual cautes, mens minds, the noble pieces in nature?” *p.* 34. Some of them indeed did deliver up their books, and were called *traditores*; and have some ground to believe, that these were the only tradiditinary Christians of that time, and that the rest were confessors and martyrs for the letter-rule. And if this be not evidence enough, that the scriptures have always been acknowledged by Christians for the rule of faith, shall, when I come to examine his testimonies for tradition, (with the good leave of his distinction between *speculators* and *testifiers*), prove, by most express testimony that it was the general opinion of the fathers, that “ the scriptures are the rule of Christian faith;” and then if his demonstration of the infallibility of tradition will inforce, that as testifiers they must needs have spoken otherwise, who can help it?

SECT. IV. *How much Protestants allow to oral tradition.*

§ 1. **H**AVING thus laid down the Protestant rule of faith, with the grounds of it, all that now remains

remains for me to do towards the clear and full stating of the controversy between us, is, to take notice briefly, and with due limitations,

1. How much the Protestants do allow to oral tradition.

2. What those things are, which Mr. S. thinks fit to attribute to his rule of faith, which we see no cause to attribute to ours; and when this is done, any one may easily discern how far we differ.

§ 2. *First*, How much Protestants do allow to oral tradition.

1<sup>st</sup>, We grant that oral tradition, in some circumstances, may be a sufficient way of conveying a doctrine; but withal we deny, that such circumstances are now in being. In the first ages of the world, when the *creden-  
da* or articles of religion, and the *agenda* or precepts of it, were but few, and such as had the evidence of natural light; when the world was contracted into a few families in comparison, and the age of man ordinarily extended to six or seven hundred years; it is easy to imagine how such a doctrine, in such circumstances, might have been propagated by oral tradition, without any great change or alterations. Adam lived till Methuselah was above two hundred years old, Methuselah lived till Sem was near an hundred, and Sem outlived Abraham: so that this tradition need not pass through more than two hands betwixt Adam and Abraham. But though this way was sufficient to have preserved religion in the world, if men had not been wanting to themselves; yet we find it did not prove effectual: for through the corruption and negligence of men after the flood, (if not before), when the world began to multiply, and the age of man was shortened, the knowledge and worship of the one true God was generally lost in the world. And so far as appears by scripture history, the only record we have of those times, when God called out Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, the whole world was lapsed into polytheism and idolatry. Therefore, for the greater security of religion afterwards, when the posterity of Abraham was multiplied into a great nation, the wisdom of God did not think fit to intrust the doctrine of religion any longer to the fallible and uncertain way of tradi-

on, but committed it to writing. Now, that God pitched upon this way, after the world had sadly experienced the unsuccessfulness of the other, seems to be a very good evidence, that this was the better and more secure way; it being the usual method of divine dispensations, not to go backwards, but to move towards perfection, and to proceed from that which is less perfect to that which is more. And the Apostle's reasoning concerning the two covenants, is very applicable to these two methods of conveying the doctrine of religion: *If the first had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second, Heb. viii. 7.*

§ 3. So likewise, when Christ revealed his doctrine to the world, it was not in his lifetime committed to writing; because it was entertained but by a few, who were his disciples and followers, and who, so long as he continued with them, had a living oracle to teach them. After his death, the Apostles, who were to publish this doctrine to the world, were assisted by an infallible spirit, so as they were secured from error and mistake in the delivery of it. But when this extraordinary assistance failed, there was need of some other means to convey it to posterity, that so it might be a fixed and standing rule of faith and manners to the end of the world. To this end, the providence of God took care to have it committed to writing. And that Mr. S. may see this is not a conjecture of Protestants, but the sense of former times, I shall refer him to St. Chrysostom; who tells us, (*homil. 1. in Matth.*), "that Christ left  
 " nothing in writing to his Apostles; but, instead there-  
 " of, did promise to bestow upon them the grace of his  
 " Holy Spirit, saying, John xiv. *He shall bring all things*  
 " *to your remembrance, &c.* But because in progress of  
 " time there were many grievous miscarriages, both in  
 " matter of opinion, and also of life and manners; there-  
 " fore it was requisite, that the memory of this doctrine  
 " should be preserved by writing." So long then as the Apostles lived, who were thus infallibly assisted, the way of oral tradition was secure, but no longer; nor even then, from the nature of the thing, but from that extraordinary and supernatural assistance which accompanied the deliverers.

§ 4. And

§ 4. And therefore it is no good way of argument against the way of tradition by writing, which he lays so much weight upon, *p.* 40. "That the Apostles and their successors went not with books in their hands, to preach and deliver Christ's doctrine, but words in their mouths; and that primitive antiquity learned their faith by another method, a long time before many of those books were universally spread among the vulgar." For what if there was no need of writing this doctrine, whilst those living oracles, the Apostles, were present with the church; doth it therefore follow, that there was no need of it afterwards, when the Apostles were dead, and that extraordinary and supernatural assistance was ceased? If the preachers now-a-days could give us any such assurance, and confirm all they preach by such frequent, and public, and unquestionable miracles as the Apostles did; then we need not examine the doctrines they taught by any other rule, but ought to regulate our belief by what they deliver to us. But seeing this is not the case, that ought in all reason to be the rule of our faith, which hath brought down to us the doctrine of Christ with the greatest certainty; and this I shall prove the scriptures to have done.

§ 5. So that, in those circumstances I have mentioned, we allow oral tradition to have been a sufficient way of conveying a doctrine: but now, considering the great increase of mankind, and the shortness of man's life in these latter ages of the world, and the long tract of time from the Apostles age down to us, and the innumerable accidents, whereby, in the space of fifteen hundred years, oral tradition might receive insensible alterations, so as at last to become quite another thing from what it was at first, by passing through many hands; in which passage, all the mistakes and corruptions which, in the several ages through which it was transmitted, did happen, either through ignorance, or forgetfulness, or out of interest and design, are necessarily derived into the last: so that the farther it goes, the more alteration it is liable to; because, as it passeth along, more errors and corruptions are infused into it: I say, considering all this, we deny, that the doctrine of Christian religion could, with any probable security and certainty, have

been conveyed down to us by the way of oral tradition; and therefore do reasonably believe, that God, foreseeing this, did in his wisdom so order things, that those persons who were assisted by an infallible spirit in the delivery of this doctrine, should, before they left the world, commit it to writing: which was accordingly done; and by this instrument, the doctrine of faith hath been conveyed down to us.

§ 6. *zdy*, We allow, that tradition, oral and written, do give us sufficient assurance, that the books of scripture, which we now have, are the very books which were written by the apostles and Evangelists; nay farther, that oral tradition alone is a competent evidence in this case: but withal we deny, that oral tradition is therefore to be accounted the rule of faith.

The general assurance that we have concerning books written long ago, that they are so ancient, and were written by those whose names they bear, is a constant and uncontrouled tradition of this, transmitted from one age to another, partly orally, and partly by the testimony of other books. Thus much is common to scripture with other books. But then the scriptures have this peculiar advantage above other books, that being of a greater and more universal concernment, they have been more common and in every body's hands, more read and studied, than any other books in the world whatsoever; and consequently, they have a more universal and better grounded attestation. Moreover, they have not only been owned universally in all ages by Christians, except three or four books of them, which for some time were questioned by some churches, but have since been generally received; but the greatest enemies of our religion, the Jews and Heathens, never questioned the antiquity of them, but have always taken it for granted, that they were the very books which the Apostles writ. And this is as great an assurance as we can have concerning any ancient book, without a particular and immediate revelation.

§ 7. And this concession doth not, as Mr. S. supposeth, make oral tradition to be finally the rule of faith; for the meaning of this question, "What is the rule of faith?" is, What is the next and immediate means where-

whereby the knowledge of Christ's doctrine is conveyed to us? So that although oral tradition be the means whereby we come to know, that these are the books of scripture; yet these books are the next and immediate means whereby we come to know, what is Christ's doctrine, and consequently what we are to believe.

§ 8. Nor doth this concession make oral tradition to be the rule of faith by a parity of reason; as if, because we acknowledge that oral tradition alone can with competent certainty transmit a book to after ages, we must therefore grant that it can with as much certainty convey a doctrine consisting of several articles of faith, (nay, very many, as Mr. White acknowledges, *Rusfw. dial. 4. § 9.*), and many laws and precepts of life: so because oral tradition sufficiently assures us, that this is *magna charta*, and that the statute-book, in which are contained those laws which it concerns every man to be skilful in; therefore, by like parity of reason, it must follow, that tradition itself is better than a book; even the best way imaginable, to convey down such laws to us. Mr. S. faith expressly it is, *p. 23*; but how truly I appeal to experience, and the wisdom of all lawgivers, who seem to think otherwise. Tradition is already defined to us, "a delivery down from hand to hand of the sense and faith of forefathers," *i. e.* of the gospel or message of Christ. Now, suppose any oral message, consisting of an hundred particularities, were to be delivered to an hundred several persons of different degrees of understanding and memory, by them to be conveyed to an hundred more, who were to be conveyed to others, and so onwards to a hundred descents; it is probable, this message, with all the particularities of it, would be as truly conveyed through so many mouths, as if it were written down in so many letters, concerning which every bearer should need to say no more than this, that it was delivered to him as a letter written by him whose name was subscribed to it? I think it not probable, though the men's lives were concerned every one for the faithful delivery of his errand or letter: for the letter is a message which no man can mistake in, unless he will; but the errand so difficult, and perplexed with its multitude of particulars, that it is an equal wager against every one of the messengers,

fengers, that he either forgets or mistakes something in it; it is ten thousand to one, that the first hundred do not all agree in it; it is a million to one, that the next succession do not all deliver it truly; for if any one of the first hundred mistook, or forgot any thing, it is then impossible that he that received it from him should deliver it right; and so the farther it goes, the greater change it is liable to. Yet, after all this, I do not say but it may be demonstrated, in Mr. S's way, to have more of certainty in it than the original letter.

§ 9. *3dly*, We allow, that the doctrine of christian religion hath in all ages been preached to the people by the pastors of the church, and taught by christian parents to their children: but with great difference; by some more plainly, and truly, and perfectly; by others with less care and exactness, according to the different degrees of ability and integrity in pastors or parents; and likewise with very different success, according to the different capacities and dispositions of the learners. We allow likewise, that there hath been a constant course of visible actions, conformable, in some measure, to the principles of Christianity; but then we say, that those outward acts and circumstances of religion may have undergone great variations, and received great change, by addition to them, and defalcation from them in several ages. That this not only is possible, but hath actually happened, I shall shew when I come to answer his demonstrations. Now, that several of the main doctrines of faith contained in the Scripture, and actions therein commanded, have been taught and practised by Christians in all ages, (as the articles summed up in the Apostles creed, the use of the two sacraments) is a good evidence so far, that the Scriptures contain the doctrine of christian religion. But then, if we consider how we come to know that such points of faith have been taught, and such external actions practised in all ages, it is not enough to say, there is a present multitude of Christians, that profess to have received such doctrines as ever believed and practised, and from hence to infer that they were so; the inconsequence of which argument I shall have a better occasion to shew afterwards: but he that will prove this to any man's satisfaction, must make it  
evident

evident from the best monuments and records of several ages, that is, from the most authentic books of those times, that such doctrines have in all those ages been constantly and universally taught and practised. But then, if, from those records of former times, it appear, that other doctrines, not contained in the scriptures, were not taught and practised universally in all ages, but have crept in by degrees, some in one age, and some in another, according as ignorance and superstition in the people, ambition and interest in the chief pastors of the church, have ministered occasion and opportunity: and that the innovators of these doctrines and practices have all along pretended to confirm them out of scripture, as the acknowledged rule of faith; and have likewise acknowledged the books of scripture to have descended without any material corruption or alteration, (all which will sufficiently appear in the process of my discourse,) then cannot the oral and practical tradition of the present church concerning any doctrine, as ever believed and practised, which hath no real foundation in scripture, be any argument against these books, as if they did not fully and clearly contain the Christian doctrine. And to say the scripture is to be interpreted by oral and practical tradition, is no more reasonable, than it would be to interpret the ancient books of the law by the present practice of it; which every one that compares things fairly together, must acknowledge to be full of deviations from the ancient law.

SECT. V. *How much Mr. S. attributes to his rule of faith more than Protestants to theirs.*

§ 1. *Secondly,* **H**OW much more he attributes to his rule of faith than we think fit to attribute to ours.

1st, We do not say, that it is impossible, in the nature of the thing, that this rule should fail; that is, either that these books should cease to descend, or should be corrupted. This we do not attribute to them, because there is no need we should. We believe the providence of God will take care of them, and secure them from being either lost or materially corrupted; yet we think it  
very

very possible, that all the books in the world may be burnt, or otherways destroyed. All that we affirm concerning our rule of faith, is, that it is abundantly sufficient, if men be not wanting to themselves, to convey the Christian doctrine to all successive ages; and we think him very unreasonable that expects that God should do more than what is abundantly enough for the perpetuating of Christian religion in the world.

§ 2. *2dly*, Nor do we say, that that certainty and assurance which we have that these books are the same that were written by the Apostles, is a first and self-evident principle; but only that it is a truth capable of evidence sufficient, and as much as we can have for a thing of that nature. Mr. S. may, if he please, say, that tradition's certainty is a first and self evident principle; but then he that says this, should take heed how he takes upon him to demonstrate it. Aristotle was so wise, as never to demonstrate first principles; for which he gives this very good reason, because they cannot be demonstrated. And most prudent men are of opinion, that a self-evident principle, of all things in the world, should not be demonstrated, because it needs not; for to what purpose should a man write a book to prove that which every man must assent to without any proof, so soon as it is propounded to him? I have always taken a self-evident principle to be such a proposition, as having in itself sufficient evidence of its own truth, and not needing to be made evident by any thing else. If I be herein mistaken, I desire Mr. S. to inform me better.

§ 3. So that the true state of the controversy between us, is, Whether oral and practical tradition, in opposition to writing and books, be the only way and means whereby the doctrine of Christ can with certainty and security be conveyed down to us, who live at this distance from the age of Christ and his Apostles? This he affirms; and the Protestants deny, not only that it is the sole means, but that it is sufficient for the certain conveyance of this doctrine; and withal affirm, that this doctrine hath been conveyed down to us by the books of Holy Scripture, as the proper measure and standard of our religion: but then they do not exclude oral tradition from being one means of conveying to us the certain  
knowledge

knowledge of these books; nor do they exclude the authentic records of former ages, nor the constant teaching and practice of this doctrine, from being subordinate means and helps of conveying it from one age to another; nay, so far are they from excluding these concurrent means, that they suppose them always to have been used, and to have been of great advantage for the propagating and explaining of this doctrine, so far as they have been truly subordinate to, and regulated by these sacred oracles, the Holy Scriptures, which, they say, do truly and fully contain that doctrine which Christ delivered to his Apostles, and they preached to the world. To illustrate this by an instance: suppose there were a controversy now on foot, how men might come to know what was the true art of logic which Aristotle taught his scholars; and some should be of opinion, that the only way to know this would be by oral tradition from his scholars; which we might easily understand, by consulting those of the present age who learned it from those who received it from them, who at last had it from Aristotle himself: but others should think it the surest way to study his *Organon*, a book acknowledged by all his scholars to have been written by himself, and to contain that doctrine which he taught them. They who take this latter course, suppose the authority of oral tradition for the conveying to them the knowledge of this book; and do suppose this doctrine to have been taught and practised in all ages, and a great many books to have been written by way of comment and explication of this doctrine; and that these have been good helps of promoting the knowledge of it. And they may well enough suppose all this, and yet be of opinion, that the truest measure and standard of Aristotle's doctrine is his own book; and that it would be a fond thing in any man, by forcing an interpretation upon his book, either contrary to, or very foreign and remote from the obvious sense of his words, to go about to reconcile this book with that method of disputing which is used by the professed Aristotelians of the present age, and with all that scholastic jargon which Mr. S. learned at Lisbon, and has made him so great a man in the science of controversy, as even to enable him to demonstrate first and self-evident

evident principles: A trick not to be learned out of Aristotle's *Organon*. The application is so easy, that I need not make it.

## P A R T II.

Concerning the properties of the rule of faith; and whether they agree solely to oral tradition.

### S E C T I.

§ 1. **H**AVING thus endeavoured to bring the controversy between us to its clear and true state, that so we might not quarrel in the dark, and dispute about we know not what, I come now to grapple more closely with his book. And the main foundations of his discourse may be reduced to these three heads.

1. That the essential properties of such a way and means as can with certainty and security convey down to us the doctrine of Christ, belong solely to oral tradition. This he endeavours to prove in his first five discourses.

2. That it is impossible that this way of oral tradition should fail. And this he pretends to prove in his four last discourses.

3. That oral tradition hath been generally reputed by Christians in all ages the sole way and means of conveying down to them the doctrine of Christ. And this he attempts to shew in his last chapter, which he calls, *The consent of authority to the substance of the foregoing discourses*. If he make good these three things, he hath acquitted himself well in his undertaking: but whether he hath made them good or not, is now to be examined.

§ 2. First, Whether the essential properties of such a way and means as can with certainty and security convey down to us the knowledge of Christ's doctrine, belong solely to oral tradition?

The true way to measure the essential properties of this or that means, is, by considering its sufficiency for its end: for whatsoever is necessary to make any means sufficient

sufficient for the obtaining its end, is to be reputed an essential property of that means, and nothing else. Now, because the end we are speaking of is the conveyance of the knowledge of Christ's doctrine to all those who are concerned to know it, in such a manner as they may be sufficiently certain and secure, that it hath received no change or corruption from what it was when it was first delivered; from hence it appears, that the means to this end must have these two properties: 1. It must be sufficiently plain and intelligible; 2. It must be sufficiently certain to us; that is, such as we may be fully satisfied concerning it, that it hath received no corruption or alteration. If it have these two conditions, it is sufficient for its end: but if it want either of them, it must necessarily fall short of its end: for if it be not plain and intelligible, it cannot convey this doctrine to our knowledge; if it be not certain, we cannot be assured, that the doctrine which it brings down to us for the doctrine of Christ, is really such.

§ 3. I know he assigns more properties of this means, which he calls *the rule of faith*; but upon examination it will appear, that they either fall in with these two, or do not at all belong to it. As,

1<sup>st</sup>, That "it must be plain and self-evident to all, "as to its existence," p. 11. Nothing can be more frivolous than to make this a property of any thing; because whosoever inquires into the properties of a thing, is supposed to be already satisfied that the thing is.

2<sup>dly</sup>, That it be "evidenceable as to its ruling power," p. 11.; that is, as he explains himself, "that men be capable of knowing that it deserves to be relied on as a rule," p. 3. By which he must either understand the certainty of it; and then it falls in with the second property I mentioned, and is the same with the sixth which he lays down: or else he means more generally, that it is the property of a rule, that men be capable of knowing that it hath the properties of a rule; for I understand not how a man can know, that any thing deserves to be relied on as a rule, otherwise than by knowing it hath the properties of a rule, that is, that it is sufficient for its end. But at this rate a man may multiply the properties of things without end, if the e-

vidence of a thing, as to its existence, be one property and then, that we be capable of knowing that it is such a thing, be another.

§ 4. *3dly*, That it be “ apt to settle and justify un-  
“ doubting persons,” p. 12. What he means here by  
*settling undoubting persons*, I am not able, on the sudden  
to comprehend; because I understand not what unset-  
tles a man besides doubting: for if a man be but so well  
satisfied about any thing as to have no doubt concerning  
it, I do not easily apprehend how he can be settled better  
that is, how his mind can be more at rest than not to  
doubt. But if by *undoubting persons* he means those who  
do not doubt for the present, but afterwards may doubt  
then I perceive what he means by *apt to settle undoubting  
persons*, viz. apt to settle persons when they do doubt  
that is, when they are not undoubting persons. As for  
*justifying undoubting persons*, if he means, that whosoever  
securely relies on this rule, ought of right to be acquitted  
as acting rationally in so doing; this is plainly conse-  
quent upon the two properties I have laid down: for  
if the means of conveying Christ’s doctrine be sufficient-  
ly plain and certain, every man that relies upon it is  
justified in so doing, because he trusts a means which is  
sufficient for its end.

§ 5. *4thly*, That it be “ apt to satisfy fully the most  
“ sceptical dissenters and rational doubters,” p. 12. For  
its aptitude to satisfy rational doubters, that plainly fol-  
lows from the sufficient certainty of it; but why it should  
be a necessary property of a rule of faith, to be apt  
to satisfy the most sceptical dissenter, I can no more  
divine, than I can why he should call a dissenter sceptical,  
which are repugnant terms: for a sceptic is one who  
neither assents to any thing, nor dissents; but is in a  
perpetual suspense, because he looks upon every opinion  
as balanced by a contrary opinion of equal probability,  
without any inclination of the scales either way. But  
if by *the most sceptical dissenter* he means only a sceptic,  
one that doth not believe the doctrine of Christ, nor any  
thing else, then I would fain know what that is which  
in reason is apt fully to satisfy such a person. If any  
thing will, sure a demonstration will: but there is no  
aptitude at all in a demonstration, to satisfy him who  
doubts

doubts whether there be any such thing as a demonstration, and likewise questions the certainty of all those principles from whence any conclusion can be demonstrated. And those who are most sceptical, profess to doubt of all this.

§ 6. 5<sup>thly</sup>, That it be “ apt to convince the most obstinate and acute adversary,” p. 11. 12. If the rule be plain and certain, the most acute adversary may be convinced by it if he will; that is, if he be not obstinate: but if he be obstinate, that is, such a one as will not be convinced, but will persist in his error, in despite of all evidence that can be offered him, then I must profess, that I do not know any kind of evidence that is apt to convince that man who will not be convinced by any reason that can be propounded to him. And that he ought not to have expected this from any rule of faith, though ever so self-evident, he might have learned from the same author, in whom he may find his chief properties of the rule of faith, if he had but had the patience to have considered his explication of them: I mean Dr. Golden, who lays down the second property of the rule of faith, or, as he calls it, “ the means whereby we come to the knowledge of revealed truth,” in these words, *Analys. fid. l. 1. c. 3.*) “ Another (*viz.* condition of this means, &c.) is, That it be apt of its own nature to afford the greatest, true, and rational certainty, to all men, without exception, to whom the knowledge of it shall come; provided they be furnished with the faculty of reason, and have their minds purified from all passion and lust, which do (as he tells us, *cap. 6.*) often hinder the most sagacious persons from understanding the most evident and manifest truth.” Now, suppose obstinacy to be the effect of passion and lust.

If Mr. S. mean that the rule of faith must be apt to conquer obstinacy, and make men lay it aside, I cannot understand this neither; unless he mean, that the rule of faith must be a cudgel, which the traditionary church have been good at, and may use it again when occasion serves: for none but they have a title to it upon a church account; as Mr. S. tells us, *corol. 10.* But, setting this aside, I do not know any thing else that is apt to conquer obstinacy; not the clearest reason, or the strongest

demonstration ; for that, I am sure, is no ways fitted to combat a wilful and unreasonable humour with any probability of success. And if any one doubt of this, if he will but make trial, he may easily be convinced by experience, how unapt obstinate persons are to be convinced by reason. I do not know any thing that ever carried greater evidence than the doctrine of Christ, preached by himself and his Apostles to the obstinate Jews and confirmed by multitudes of unquestionable miracles ; and yet we do not find, by the success of it, that it was so very apt to convince those that were obstinate. And no man can judge of the aptitude of a means to an end, otherways than by the usual and frequent success of it when it is applied. Nor do I think that the doctrine of the gospel was ever intended for that purpose. God hath provided no remedy for the wilful and perverse ; but he hath done that which is sufficient for the satisfying and winning over of those who are teachable and willing to learn. And such a disposition supposeth a man to have laid aside both scepticism and obstinacy

§ 7. 6thly, That it be “ certain in itself,” p. 12.

7thly, That it be “ absolutely ascertainable to us, p

12.

These two are comprehended in the second property I laid down ; so that I have nothing to say against them but that the last looks very like a contradiction, “ absolutely ascertainable to us ;” which is to say, “ without respect to us, without respect to us ;” for *absolutely* seems to exclude *respect*, and *to us* implies it.

Having thus shewn, that the seven properties he mentions are either coincident with those two I have laid down, or consequent upon them, or absurd and impertinent ; it remains, that the true properties of a rule of faith are those two which I first named, and no more.

SECT. II. *That the properties of a rule of faith belong to scripture.*

§ 1. **L**ET us now see how he endeavours to shew, that these properties agree solely to oral tradition. He tells us, there are but two pretenders to this title of being

ing the rule of faith, scripture, and oral tradition: these properties do not belong to scripture, and they do not belong to oral tradition; therefore solely to it. A very good argument, if he can prove these two things: "That these two properties do not belong to scripture, and that they do to oral tradition."

§ 2. In order to the proving of the first, that these properties do not belong to scripture, he premiseth this note, p. 13. "That we cannot by the scriptures mean the sense of them; but the book, that is, such or such characters not yet sensed or interpreted." But why can we not by the scriptures mean the sense of them? He gives this clear and admirable reason, Because the sense of scripture is "the things to be known; and these we confess are the very points of faith of which the rule of faith is to ascertain us." Which is just as if a man would reason thus: those who say the statute-book can convey to them the knowledge of the statute-law, cannot by the statute-book mean the sense of it, but the book; that is, such or such characters not yet sensed or interpreted; because the sense of the statute-book is the thing to be known, and these are the very laws, the knowledge whereof is to be conveyed to them by this book. Which is to say, that a book cannot convey to man the knowledge of any matter; because, if it did, it would convey to him the thing to be known. But let him may farther see what excellent reasoning this is, we will apply this paragraph to oral tradition; for the argument holds every whit as well concerning that: "To speak to them in their own language, who say that oral tradition is the rule, we must premise this note, that they cannot mean by oral tradition the sense of it, that is, the things to be known: for those they confess are the very points of faith of which the rule of faith is to ascertain to us. When they say then, that oral tradition is the rule of faith, they can only mean by oral tradition the words wherein it is delivered, not yet sensed or interpreted, but as yet to be sensed; that is, such or such sounds, with their aptness to signify to them assuredly God's mind, or ascertain them of their faith: for, abstracting from the sense and actual signification of those words, there is nothing imagi-

“ nable left, but those sounds, with their aptness to fi  
 “ nify it.” When he hath answered this argument, I  
 will have answered his own. In the mean while, th  
 discourse, that he who holds the scriptures to be t  
 rule of faith, must needs by the scriptures mean a bo  
 void of sense, &c. because otherwise, if by scripture  
 should understand a book that hath a certain sense in  
 that sense must be the doctrine of Christ, which is t  
 very thing that this book is to convey to us : I say, th  
 discourse tends only to prove it an absurd thing for a  
 man that holds scripture the means of conveying Christ  
 doctrine, to understand by the scripture a book that co  
 veys Christ’s doctrine. This being his own reason p  
 into plain English, I leave the reader to judge wheth  
 it be not something short of perfect science and demo  
 stration. Nay, if it were thoroughly examined, I dou  
 whether it would not fall short of that low pitch of s  
 ence which he speaks of in his preface ; where he te  
 us, that “ the way of science is to proceed from one pie  
 “ of sense to another.”

§ 3. Having premised this, that by the scriptures  
 must only mean dead characters that have no sense u  
 der them, he proceeds to shew, that these dead char  
 ters have not the properties of a rule of faith belongi  
 to them. Which, although it be nothing to the purpo  
 when he hath shewn it, yet it is very pleasant to obser  
 by what cross and untoward arguments he goes abo  
 it ; of which I will give the reader a taste, by one or tw  
 instances.

In the first place, he shews, that it cannot be evide  
 to us, that “ these books were written by men divine  
 “ inspired ; because, till the seeming contradictions  
 “ those books are solved, which to do, is one of the m  
 “ difficult tasks in the world, they cannot be conclud  
 “ to be of God’s inditing,” p. 14. Now, how is th  
 an argument against those who by the scriptures m  
 mean unsensed letters and characters ? I had alwa  
 thought contradictions had been in the sense of worc  
 not in the letters and characters ; but I perceive he ha  
 a peculiar opinion, that the four and twenty letters  
 contradict one another.

The other instance shall be in his last argumen  
 whic

which is this, p. 17. That "the scripture cannot be the rule of faith, because those who are to be ruled and guided by the scripture's letter to faith, cannot be certain of the true sense of it:" which is to say, that unsensed letters and characters cannot be the rule of faith, because the rule of faith must have a certain sense; that is, must not be unsensed letters and characters; which in plain English amounts to thus much, unsensed letters and characters cannot be the rule of faith, that they cannot.

§ 4. And thus I might trace him through all his properties of the rule of faith, and let the reader see how incomparably he demonstrates the falshood of this Protestant tenet, as he calls it, that a senseless book may be a rule of faith. But I am weary of pursuing him in these airy and phantastical combats; and shall leave him to fight with his own fancies, and to batter down the castles which himself hath built. Only I think fit to acquaint him, once for all, with a great secret of the Protestant doctrine, which it seems he hath hitherto been ignorant of, (for I am still more confirmed in my opinion, that he forsook our religion before he understood it) that when they say the scriptures are the rule of faith, or the means whereby Christ's doctrine is conveyed down to them, they mean by the scriptures, books written in such words as do sufficiently express the sense and meaning of Christ's doctrine.

§ 5. And to satisfy him that we are not absurd and unreasonable in supposing the scriptures to be such a book, I would beg the favour of him to grant me these four things, or shew reason to the contrary.

1. That whatever can be spoken in plain and intelligible words, and such as have a certain sense, may be written in the same words.

2. That the same words are as intelligible when they are written, as when they are spoken.

3. That God, if he please, can indite a book in as plain words as any of his creatures.

4. That we have no reason to think that God affects obscurity, and envies that men should understand him, in those things which are necessary for them to know; and which must have been written to no purpose, if we cannot

cannot understand them. St. Luke tells Theophilus, chap. i, 3. 4. that he wrote the history of Christ to him, on purpose to give him a *certain knowledge* of those things which he writ. But how a book which hath no certain sense, should give a man a certain knowledge of things, is beyond my capacity. St. John saith, chap. xx. 31. that he purposely committed several of Christ's miracles to writing, *that men might believe on him*. But now, had Mr. S. been at his elbow, he would have advised him to spare his labour; and would have given him this good reason for it, because, when he had written his book, no body would be able to find the certain sense of it without oral tradition; and that alone would securely and intelligibly convey both the doctrine of Christ and the certain knowlege of those miracles which he wrought for the confirmation of it. If these four things be but granted, I see not why, when the scriptures are the means of conveying to us Christ's doctrine, we may not be allowed to understand by the scriptures, a book which doth in plain and intelligible words express to us this doctrine.

S E C T. III. *Mr. S.'s exceptions against scripture examined.*

§ 1. **A**ND now, although this might have been a sufficient answer to his exceptions against the scriptures, as being incapable of the properties of a rule of faith; because all of them suppose that which is apparently false and absurd, as granted by Protestants, *viz.* that the scriptures are only a heap of dead letters and insignificant characters, without any sense under them; and that oral tradition is that only which gives them life and sense: yet, because several of his exceptions pretend to shew, that the true properties of a rule of faith do not at all appertain to the scriptures; therefore I shall give particular answers to them; and, as I go along, shew, that tradition is liable to all or most of those exceptions, and to far greater than those.

§ 2. First, Whereas he says, p. 13. "It cannot be evident to Protestants from their principles, that the books of scripture were originally written by men divinely

divinely inspired ;" I will shew him, that it may, and then answer the reasons of this exception.

It is evident, from an universal, constant, and uncontroverted tradition among Christians, not only oral, but written, and from the acknowledgment of the greatest adversaries of our religion, that these books were originally written by the Apostles and Evangelists. And this is not only a Protestant principle, but the principle of all mankind, "That an undoubted tradition is sufficient evidence of the antiquity and author of a book," and all the extrinsical argument that can ordinarily be had of a book written long ago.

Next, it is evident, that the Apostles were men divinely inspired, that is, secured from error and mistake in the writing of this doctrine, from the miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it; because it is unreasonable to imagine, that the divine power should so remarkably interpose for the confirmation of a doctrine, and give so eminent an attestation to the Apostles to convince the world, that they were immediately appointed and commissioned by God, and yet not secure them from error in the delivery of it. And that such miracles were wrought, is evident from as credible histories as we have for any of those things which we do most firmly believe. And this is better evidence, that the Apostles were men divinely inspired, than bare oral tradition can furnish us withal; for setting aside the authentic relation of these matters in books, it is most probable, that oral tradition of itself, and without books, would scarce have preserved the memory of any of those particular miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles which are recorded in scripture. And for the probability of this, I offer these two things to his consideration.

1. No man can deny, that memorable persons have lived, and actions been done in the world innumerable, whereof no history now extant makes any mention.

2. He himself will grant, that our Saviour wrought innumerable more miracles than are recorded in scripture. And now, I challenge him to shew the single virtue of oral tradition, by giving an account of any of those persons, or their actions, who lived 1500 or 2000 years ago, besides those which are mentioned in books;

or

or to give a catalogue but of ten of these innumerable miracles wrought by our Saviour, which are not recorded by the Evangelists, with circumstances as punctual and particular as those are clothed withal. If he can do this, it will be a good evidence, that oral tradition singly, and by itself, can do something; but if he cannot, it is as plain an evidence, on the contrary, that if those actions of former times, and those miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles which are recorded in books, had never been written, but intrusted solely to oral tradition, we should have heard as little of them at this day, as we do of those that were not written.

§ 3. Now to examine his reasons for this exception: *1<sup>st</sup>*, He saith, *p.* 13. "It is most manifest, that this cannot be made evident to the vulgar, that scripture was written by men divinely inspired." This reason is as easily answered, by saying, It is most manifest that it can. But besides saying so, I have shewed how it may be made as evident to the vulgar, as other things which they do most firmly, and upon good grounds, believe. Even the rudest of the vulgar, and those who cannot read, do believe upon very good grounds, that there was such a king as William the Conqueror; and the miracles of Christ and his Apostles are capable of as good evidence as we have for this.

*2<sup>dly</sup>*, He says, *p.* 13. 14. "This cannot be evident to the curious and most speculative searchers, but by so deep an inspection into the sense of scripture, as shall discover such secrets that philosophy and human industry could never have arrived to:" As if we could not be assured, that any thing were written by men divinely inspired, unless it were above the reach of human understanding; and as if no man could know that this was our Saviour's doctrine, *Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, that do you likewise unto them*, because every one can understand it. But if there were more mysteries in the scriptures than there are, I hope a man might be satisfied, that they were written by men divinely inspired, without a clear comprehension of all those mysteries. The evidence of the inspiration of any person doth not depend upon the plainness or sublimity of the things revealed to him, but upon the goodness of the arguments which

which tend to persuade us that the person is so inspired; and the argument that is most fit to satisfy us of that, is, if he work miracles. Now, I would gladly know, why a learned man cannot be assured of a miracle, that is, a plain sensible matter of fact done long ago, but "by so deep an inspection into the sense of scripture, as shall discover such secrets that philosophy and human industry could never have arrived to."

§ 4. *3dly*, Because "all the seeming contradictions of Scripture must be solved, before we can out of the bare letter conclude the Scripture to be of God's inditing. To solve which literally, plainly and satisfactorily, (he tells us), the memory of so many particulars, which made them clearer to those of the age in which they were written, and the matter known, must needs be so worn out by track of time, that it is one of the most difficult tasks in the world, p. 14." As if we could not believe a book to be of God's inditing, because there seem now to be some contradictions in it, which we have reason to believe could easily have been solved by those who lived in the age in which it was written; or as if oral tradition could help a man to solve these contradictions, when the memory of particulars necessary for the clear solution of them, is (as himself confesses) worn out by track of time. If Mr. S. can, in order to the solution of the seeming contradictions of scripture, demonstrate, that oral tradition hath to this day preserved the memory of those particulars necessary for that purpose, the memory of which must needs be long since worn out by track of time, then I will readily yield, that his rule of faith hath in this particular the advantage of ours. But if he cannot do this, why doth he make that an argument against our rule, which is as strong against his own? This is just like Captain Everard's friend's way of arguing against the Protestants, That they cannot rely upon scripture, because it is full of plain contradictions, impossible to be reconciled; and therefore they ought in all reason to submit to the infallibility of the church. And, for an instance of such a contradiction, he pitched upon the three fourteen generations, mentioned in the first of St. Matthew; because the

the third series of generations. if they be counted, will be found to be but thirteen. Not to mention now how this difficulty hath been sufficiently satisfied, both by Protestant and Popish commentators, without any recourse to oral tradition; that which I take notice of, is the unreasonableness of making this an exception against the Protestants, when it comes with every whit as much force upon themselves. Suppose this contradiction incapable of any solution by Protestants, (as he affirms) and I should submit to the infallibility of the church, can he assure me that infallibility can make thirteen fourteen? If it cannot, how am I nearer satisfaction in this point, by acknowledging the infallibility of the church? The case is the very same as to Mr. S.'s exception. If I owned oral tradition, I should be never the nearer solving the seeming contradictions of scripture; and consequently I could not in reason conclude it to be of God's inditing. So that, in truth these exceptions, if they were true, would not strike Protestancy, but at Christian religion; which is the general unhappiness of most of the Popish arguments than which there is no greater evidence, that the church of Rome is not the true mother; because it had rather Christianity should be destroyed, than it should appear that any other church hath a claim to it. It was a work very proper for the heretic Marcion, to assau religion this way; who, as Tertullian tells us, (*l. contr. Marcion*;) writ a whole book, which he calle *Antitheses*; wherein he reckoned up all the contradictions (as he thought) between the Old and New Testament; but methinks it is very improer for the Papist who pretends to be the only true Christians in the world to strain their wits, to discover as many contradictions as they can in the scripture, and to prove that there no way of reconciling them; the natural consequence of which is, the exposing of this sacred instrument of our religion, and even Christianity itself, to the scorn of Atheists. Therefore, to be very plain with Mr. S. and Captain Everard, I am heartily sorry to see, that one of the chief fruits of their conversion is, to abuse the Bible.

§ 5. Secondly, He says, *p.* 14. "That Protestants  
" cannot

cannot know how many the books of scripture ought to be; and which of the many controverted ones may be securely put into that catalogue, which not." This he proves, by saying, "It is most palpable, that few, or at least the rude vulgar, can never be assured of it." And if this be good argument, this again a good answer, to say, It is not most palpable. But I shall deal more liberally, and tell him, that we know that just so many ought to be received as uncontroverted books, concerning which it cannot be shewn there was ever any controversy; and so many as controverted, concerning which it appears that question hath been made. And if those which have been controverted, have been since received by those churches which once doubted of them, there is now no farther doubt concerning them, because the controversy about them is at an end. And now, I would fain know, what greater certainty oral tradition can give us of the true catalogue of the books of scripture. For it must either acknowledge some books have been controverted, or not. If not, why doth he make a supposition of controverted books? If oral tradition acknowledge some to have been controverted, then it cannot assure us that they have not been controverted, nor consequently that they ought to be received as never having been controverted; but only as such, concerning which those churches who did once raise a controversy about them, have been since satisfied that they are canonical. The traditionary church now receives the epistle to the Hebrews as canonical: ask, do they receive it as ever delivered for such? What they must, if they receive it from oral tradition, which conveys things to them under this notion, as ever delivered: and yet St. Hierom, speaking not as a speculator, but a testifier, saith expressly of it, (*Com. 2 Esai. chap. 6. 8.*) "that the custom of the Latin church doth not receive it among the canonical scriptures." What saith Mr. S. to this? It is clear from this testimony, that the Roman church, in St. Hierom's time, did not acknowledge this epistle for canonical; and it is as plain, that the present Roman church doth receive it for canonical. Where is then the infallibility of oral tradition? How does the living voice of

the present church assure us, that what books are now received by her, were ever received by her? And if cannot do this, but the matter must come to be tried by the best records of former ages, which the Protestants are willing to have their catalogue tried by, then it seem the Protestants have a better way to know what books are canonical, than is the infallible way of oral tradition; and so long as it is better, no matter though it be not called infallible.

§ 6. Thirdly, He says, *p.* 15. "The Protestants cannot know, that the very original, or a perfectly true copy of these books, hath been preserved." It is not necessary that they should know either of these; it is sufficient that they know that those copies which they have, are not materially corrupted in any matter of faith or practice: and that they have sufficient assurance of this, I have already shewn. And how he doth prove the contrary? By his usual argument, with saying, "It is manifestly impossible." But how do the church of Rome know, that they have perfectly true copies of the scriptures in the original languages? They do not pretend to know this. The learned men of that church acknowledge the various readings as well as we, and do not pretend to know, otherwise than by probable conjecture, as we also may do, which of those readings is the true one. And why should it be more necessary for us to know this, than for them? If they think it reasonable to content themselves with knowing, that no material corruptions have crept into those books, so may we. And that there have not, we know by better arguments than oral tradition, even by the assurance we have of God's vigilant providence, and from a moral impossibility in the thing, that a book so universally dispersed, and translated into so many languages, and constantly read in the assemblies of Christians, should have been materially corrupted, so as that all those copies and translations should have agreed in those corruptions. And this reason St. Austin (*Ep.* 48.) gives of the preservation of the scriptures entire, rather than any other book. If Mr. S. likes it not, he may call St. Austin to account for it.

§ 7. Fourthly, He says, *p.* 15. "The Protestants, ... lea

least the rudeſt vulgar, can have no aſſurance that thoſe books are rightly tranſlated ; becauſe they cannot be aſſured either of the ability or integrity of tranſlators.”

Fifthly, “Nor can they (ſays he, p. 16. 17.) be aſſured, that the tranſcribers, and printers, and correctors of the preſs, have carefully and faithfully done their part in tranſcribing and printing the ſeveral copies and tranſlations of ſcripture aright ; becauſe they only can have evidence of the right letter of ſcripture, who ſtood at their elbows attentively watching they ſhould not err in making it perfectly like a former copy ; and even then, why might they not miſtruſt their own eyes, and aptneſs to overſee ?” I put theſe two exceptions together, becauſe the ſame answer will ſerve them both. The grounds of theſe exceptions, if they have any, are theſe : That no man is to be truſted either for his ſkill or honeſty ; and, That it is dangerous for men to truſt their own eyes. Unleſs both theſe be true, theſe exceptions are of no force : for if we can be aſſured that other men have ſufficient ſkill in any thing which we ourſelves do not ſufficiently underſtand, we may be aſſured that thoſe who tranſlated the Bible had ſkill in the original languages ; becauſe very credible perſons tell us ſo, and we have no reaſon to doubt their teſtimony in this particular, more than in any other matter. So that, if we can have ſufficient aſſurance of mens integrity in any thing, we have no reaſon to doubt of the ſkill of tranſlators, tranſcribers, or printers : and if we cannot have no aſſurance of mens integrity in any thing, then no man can be aſſured there was ſuch a man as Henry VIII. and yet, I hope, the church of Rome makes no doubt of it : nor can any man be aſſured there is ſuch a city as Rome, who hath not ſeen it ; nay, if we have, “ why may he not miſtruſt his own eyes ?”

16. And, which is the ſaddeſt inconvenience of all,” if no body be to be truſted, nor mens own eyes, (and for the ſame reaſon, ſure not their ears) what becomes of the infallibility of oral and practical tradition, which neceſſarily ſuppoſeth a competent underſtanding, a faithful memory, an honeſt mind, in the generality of thoſe who delivered Chriſt’s doctrine down to us ? and by

what means soever a man can be assured of these, by the same he may much more easily be assured of the ability and integrity of translators, transcribers, and printers. But, above all, it supposeth that mens ears and eyes cannot deceive them in those things which they are taught, and see practised.

Is it not very pretty to see what pitiful shifts men that serve an hypothesis are put to; when, to maintain infallibility, they are forced to run to the extremities of scepticism; and, to defend the certainty of oral tradition (which depends upon the certainty of mens senses, and an assurance of the ability and integrity of those who were dead fifteen hundred years before we were born) are glad to take refuge in principles quite contrary; such as these, That we have no assurance, but that whole professions of men "might hap to be knaves," page 16 that we can have no sufficient evidence that any man made his "copy perfectly like the former, unless we stood at his elbow attentively watching him, *ibid* : nay, and if we did so, we have still reason to distrust our senses? In short, all human faith supposeth honesty among men; and that, for matters of fact and plain objects of sense, the general and uncontrolled testimony of mankind is to be credited; and for matters of peculiar skill and knowledge, that the generality of those who are accounted skilful in that kind are to be relied upon; for, as Aristotle well observes, there is no greater sign of an undisciplined wit, (or, to use one of Mr. S. fine phrases, (*in his preface*) of "a man not acquainted with the paths of science,") than to expect a greater evidence for things than they are capable of. Every man hath reason to be assured of a thing which is capable of sufficient evidence, when he hath as much evidence for it as the nature of that thing will bear, and as the capacity he is in will permit him to have; and, as Mr. Whit says well, (*Answer to the Lord Falkland, p. 33*) "fatisfaction is to be given to every one, according to his capacity. It is sufficient for a child to believe his parents; for a clown, to believe his preacher." And this is universally true in all cases where we have no better or equal evidence to the contrary. But such is the unhappiness of the Popish doctrines, that if people

are permitted the free use of the scripture, they would easily discern them to have no probable foundation in it, and to be plainly contrary to it; so that it cannot be for their preachers to tell the people that the scripture is the only rule of faith, lest they should find cause to believe them when they teach doctrines so plainly contrary to that rule.

§ 8. Lastly, He says, *p.* 17. "The Protestants cannot be certain of the true sense of scriptures." Does he mean of plain texts, or obscure ones? Of the true sense of plain texts, I hope every one may be certain; and for obscure ones, it is not necessary every one should. But may be there are no plain texts in the scriptures; then the reason of it must be, (till Mr. S. can shew a better) either because it is impossible for any one to write plainly; or because God cannot write so plainly as men; or because we have good reason to think that he would not write things necessary for every one to believe, so as men might clearly understand him.

But he tells us, *p.* 17. "The numerous comments upon scripture are an evidence that no man can be certain of the true sense of it." I hope not: for if those numerous commentators do generally agree in the sense of plain texts, (as it is certain they do) then this argument signifies nothing as to such texts: and as for those which are obscure, let commentators differ about them as much as they please, so long as all necessary points of faith and matters of practice are delivered in plain texts. He adds, *p.* 17. "There are infinite disputes about the sense of scripture, even in the most concerning points, as in that of Christ's divinity." It are not commentators, both Protestant and Papist, generally agreed about the sense of scripture in that point? And what if some out of prejudice do mistake, or out of perverseness do wrest, the plainest texts of scripture for the divinity of Christ, to another sense? is this any argument that those texts are not sufficiently plain? Can any thing be spoken or written in words so clear from ambiguity, which a perverse or prejudiced mind will all not be able to vex and force to another meaning? God did not write the scriptures for the froward and the contentious; but for those who will read them with a free-

and unprejudiced mind, and are willing to come to the knowledge of the truth. If Mr. S. had been conversant in the writings of the fathers, he could not but have taken notice with what confidence they attempted to prove the divinity of Christ out of scripture, as if that did afford convincing arguments for this purpose. St. Chrysostom (*hom. 32. de consub.*) professes to demonstrate out of scripture, that “the Son is of the same substance with the Father;” and relies upon scripture alone for this, without mentioning any other kind of argument: that it seems St. Chrysostom was not acquainted with the insufficiency of scripture for the conviction of heretics in this point; and that he was either ignorant of the (infallible) way of demonstrating this point from oral tradition, or had no great opinion of it. The same father elsewhere, arguing against heretics about the divinity of Christ, says, (*hom. 7. de Sancto Phoca,*) that “they pervert the scriptures, to strengthen their heresy from thence.” But then he does not (with Mr. S.) blame the scriptures, and say, that this doctrine is not there delivered with sufficient clearness; but contraryways he says, that “the scripture is clear enough, but the corrupt minds of heretics will not see what is there contained.” Had St. Chrysostom been a true Son of the traditional church, he would have laid hold of this occasion to vilify the scriptures, and to shew the necessity of regulating our faith, not by such uncertain records but by the infallible reports of oral tradition.

§ 9. But because Mr. S. lays great weight (in several parts of his book) upon this exception against scripture *viz.* “That Protestants cannot be certain of the true sense of it;” therefore I shall not content myself only to have shewn, that we may be sufficiently certain of the sense of scripture, so far as to understand all necessary matters of faith and practice, and that more than this is not necessary: but shall likewise return this exception upon him, by inquiring into these two things

1. How the traditional church can be more certain of the true sense of scripture than the Protestants?

2. How they can be more certain of the true sense of tradition, than Protestants of the true sense of scripture?

1<sup>st</sup>, How the traditionary church can be more certain of the true sense of scripture than Protestants? They pretend to have an oral tradition of the true sense of it delivered down from father to son. But this only reacheth to those texts which are coincident with the main body of Christian doctrine. As for all other parts of scripture, they are as useles to Papists, as they suppose they are to us; because, wanting the help of oral tradition, they cannot be certain of one tittle of them. And as for those texts, the sense whereof is conveyed down by oral tradition; this sense is, I hope, delivered in some words or other. And have all preachers, and fathers, and mothers, and nurses, the faculty of delivering this sense in words so plain as cannot possibly be mistaken, or wrested to another sense? I am sorry, that, when every one hath this faculty of speaking their thoughts plainly, the Holy Ghost should be represented as not able to convey his mind to men in intelligible words. And does not his own objection rebound upon himself? If the church have a certain sense of scripture orally delivered, whence are the numerous comments of the fathers upon it, and of later writers of their church, and the infinite disputes about the sense of it, in the most concerning points, *viz.* the efficacy of God's grace, the supremacy of St. Peter, the infallibility of a Pope and council by immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost? What a stir is made about the sense of *Dabo tibi claves; Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram, &c. Pasce oves?* Do not they differ about the meaning of these texts among themselves, as much as they do from the fathers, and from the Protestants? some understanding them of St. Peter's supremacy only, others of his infallibility, others of his infallibility only in and with a general council; which yet others do not allow to Pope or council from any immediate assistance, but only from the rational force of tradition, supposing that the Pope and council hold to it. If oral tradition have brought down a certain sense of these texts, why do they not produce it, and agree to it? If it have not, to use a hot phrase of his own, p. 17. "it is perfect phrenzy to say they can be certain of the true sense of scripture."

If he say, they are by tradition made certain of the  
true

True sense of scripture, so far as it concerns the main body of Christian doctrine, and do all agree in it, and that is sufficient; then I ask him, What are those points of faith which make up the body of Christian doctrine? He will tell me, They are those which all Catholics agree to have descended to them from the Apostles, by a constant and uninterrupted tradition. I inquire further, How I shall know what is the certain sense of scripture, so far as it concerns these points? He must answer as before, That that is the true sense which all Catholics agree to have descended to them by tradition; which amounts to this, that all Catholics do agree in the sense of scripture, so far as they do all agree in it. It is to be hoped, that the Protestants, how much soever at present they differ about the sense of scripture, may in time come to as good an agreement as this. This brings to my remembrance a passage or two of Mr. Cressy. The one in his *Appendix*, (*Exomolog. edit. 2. p. 554.*) where he tells us, that “as it is impossible that heretics should agree any other way than in faction, so it is impossible that Catholics should differ in points of faith.” Why so? Were not those Catholics first who afterwards became heretics? and, when they became so, did they not differ in points of belief? Yes. But here lies the conceit: When they began to differ, then they ceased to be Catholics; therefore Catholics can never differ in points of faith. The other passage is where he says, (*Exomolog. c. 53. § 2.*) that “he hath forsaken a church where unity was impossible, &c. and betaken himself to a church where schism is impossible.” This last clause, “That schism is impossible in their church,” cannot possibly be true, but in the same absurd and ludicrous sense in which it is impossible for Catholics to differ in points of belief. For he cannot deny, but that it is possible for men to break off from the communion of their church, which in his sense is schism. But here is the subtilty of it. No schismatic is of their church, because, so soon as he is a schismatic, he is out of it; therefore schism is impossible in their church. And is it not as impossible in the church of England? where Mr. Cressy might have done well to have continued,

ed, till he could have given a wiser reason of forsaking her.

§ 10. But to return to our purpose : Mr. Rushworth acknowledgeth, (*Dial.* 2. § 12.) that the scripture is of itself sufficiently plain as to matters of practice ; for he asks, “ Who is so blind as not to see, that these things “ are to be found in scripture by a sensible, common, “ and discreet reading of it, though perhaps, by a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular word and “ syllable, any of these things would vanish away we “ know not how ? ” So that, for the direction of our lives and actions, he confesseth the scripture to be sufficiently plain, if men will but read it sensibly and discreetly ; and he says, that he is blind that does not see this. But who so blind as he that will not see, that the sense of scripture is as plain in all necessary points of faith ? I am sure St. Augustin (*De doct. Christ.* l. 2.) makes no difference, when he tells us, that “ in those things “ which are plainly set down in scripture, we may find “ all those things in which faith, and manners of life, are “ comprehended.” And why cannot men, in reference to matters of faith, as well as of practice, read the scriptures sensibly and discreetly, without such a rigorous balancing of every word and syllable as will make the sense vanish away we know not how ? If the scripture be but sufficiently plain to such as will use it sensibly and discreetly, I do not understand what greater plainness can be desired in a rule ; nor can I imagine what kind of rule it must be that can be unexceptionably plain to captious cavillers, and such as are bent to play the fool with it.

Well, suppose the scriptures be not sufficiently clear as to matters of faith, and hereupon I have recourse to the church for the true sense of scripture, must I believe the church's sense to be the true sense of such a text, though I see it to be plainly contrary to the genuine sense of the words ? Yes ; that I must, or else I make myself, and not the church, judge of the sense of scripture ; which is the grand heresy of the protestants. But then I must not suppose, much less believe, that the church's sense of such a text is contrary to the genuine meaning of it ; no, although I plainly see it to be so. This is hard again, on the other hand ; especially if that

that be true which is acknowledged both by Dr. Holden and Mr. Cressy, *viz.* that though general councils cannot mistake in the points of faith which they decree, yet they may mistake in the confirmation of them from texts of scripture: that is, they may be mistaken about the sense of those texts. And if Mr. S. think his brethren have granted too much, he may see this exemplified in the second council of Nice, to mention no other; which, to establish their doctrine of image-worship, does so palpably abuse and wrest texts of scripture, that I can hardly believe, that any papist in the world hath the forehead to own that for the true sense of those texts which is there given by those fathers.

§ 11. *2dly*, How the traditionary church can be more certain of the true sense of their traditional doctrines, than the Protestants can be of the true sense of scripture? And this is worthy of our inquiry; because, if the business be searched to the bottom, it will appear, (besides all other inconveniences which oral tradition is much more liable to than scripture,) that the certain sense and meaning of traditional doctrine is as hard to come at as the sense of scripture. And this I will make appear by necessary consequence from their own concessions. Mr. White and Mr. S. say, that the great security of tradition is this, that it is not tied to certain phrases and set forms of expression, but the same sense is conveyed, and settled in mens hearts by various expressions. But, according to Mr. Rushworth, this renders tradition's sense uncertain; for he says, (*Dial.* 2. § 6.) "It is impossible to put fully, and beyond all quarrel, the same sense in divers words." So that if men do not receive tradition in a sensible, common, discreet way, (as Mr. Rushworth speaks concerning reading the scriptures,) but will come to a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular phrase, word, and syllable, the sense of tradition will be in the very same danger of uncertainty, and be liable to vanish we know not how. Dr. Holden (*Analyf. fidei*, l. 1. c. 9.) lays down these two principles. "First, That no truth can be conveyed down from man to man, but by speech; and speech cannot be but by words; and all words are either equivocal in themselves, or liable to be differently understood  
" by

“ by several persons. Secondly, That such is the frame  
“ of man’s mind, that the same truths may be different-  
“ ly apprehended and understood by different persons.”  
And if this be true, then traditional doctrines, if they be  
delivered by speech and words, will be liable to uncertain-  
tainties and ambiguities, as to their sense, as well as  
scripture. Mr. Cressy (*Append. c. 6.*) tells us, that rea-  
son and experience shew, that differences will arise  
“ even about the writings of the fathers, and any thing  
“ but the testimony of the present church.” If this be  
true, tradition wholly falls into uncertainty: for if dif-  
ference will arise about the writings of the fathers, how  
they are to be interpreted, I suppose the writings of  
councils will be liable to the same inconvenience; and  
if the whole present church cannot declare her sense of  
any traditional doctrine, otherways than by a council,  
unless with the Jesuits they will epitomise the church  
into the Pope; and the decrees of a council cannot be  
universally dispersed, or at least never use to be, but by  
writing; and if differences will arise about the interpre-  
tation of that writing, as well as any other, then this  
present infallible authority, which Mr. Cressy magnifies  
so much for ending of differences, leaves all controver-  
sies arising about the sense of tradition as indeterminable  
as ever: and they must for ever remain so, till general  
councils have got the knack of penning their decrees in  
words, which will so infallibly express their meaning,  
to the most captious caviller, that no difference can pos-  
sibly arise about the interpretation of them; or else,  
which will be more suitable to this wise hypothesis, till  
general councils, being convicted by Mr. S.’s demon-  
strations, shall come to understand themselves so well, as  
not to intrust their decrees any more to the uncertain  
way of writing, but for the future to communicate them  
to the world by the infallible way of oral tradition. And,  
to mention no more, Mr. Knott, (*Answer to Chilling-  
worth, c. 2. § 6.*) who agrees with the other thus far, that  
the certain sense of scripture is only to be had from the  
church, speaks to this purpose, That before we can be  
certain that this is the true sense of such a text, we must  
either be certain that this text is capable of no other  
sense, as figurative, mystical, or moral; or if it be, we  
must

must have some certain and infallible means to know in which of them it is taken; which can be known only by revelation. If this be true, then, by a fair parity of reason, before I can be certain that this is the sense of a doctrinal tradition delivered down to me, I must either be certain that the words in which this tradition was expressed, when it was delivered to me, are capable of no other sense, as figurative, mystical, or moral, beside that in which I understand them; or if they be, as certainly they will be, capable of any of these other senses then must I have some certain and infallible means whereby to know in which of these they are taken. And this can no more be known without a revelation, than which is the true sense of such a text of scripture. If it be said, that the sense of a traditionary doctrine may by different expressions, be still farther and farther explained to me till I come certainly to understand the sense of it; this will not help the matter: for if these kinds of cavils be good, that a man cannot be certain of the meaning of any words, till he can by an infallible argument demonstrate, either that they cannot be taken or that they are not taken in any other sense; I say, if this cavil will hold, then every new expression, whereby any one shall endeavour to explain any traditional doctrine is liable to the same inconvenience which those words in which it was first delivered to me were liable to. From all which it is evident, that the traditionary church can be no more certain of the sense of their traditional doctrines than Protestants may be of the sense of scripture.

§ 12. These are his exceptions contained in his second discourse; and of what force they are, hath been examined. But because he foresaw that it might be replied, that these defects might in part be provided against “by history, by the providence of God, by testimonies of councils and fathers, and by the sufficient clearness of scripture as to fundamentals;” he endeavours to shew, that these signify little to this purpose.

1<sup>st</sup>, “Not history; because few are skilled in history; and they that are not, cannot safely rely upon those that are skilled, unless they know certainly, that the historians whom they rely on, had secure grounds, and

and not bare hearsay, for what they writ; and that they were not contradicted by others, either extant or perished," p. 17. 18. How much credit is to be given to uncontrolled history by the learned, and how much to the vulgar to men of skill, I have already shewn. I shall only add now, that if this reasoning be true, it is impossible for any man to be certain, by history, of any ancient matter of fact; as, namely, that there were such persons as Julius Cæsar and William the Conqueror, and that they invaded and conquered England; because, according to him, we cannot know certainly, that the historians who relate these things, and upon whose authority we rely, "had secure grounds, and not bare hearsay, for what they writ." And "that they were not contradicted by others, either extant or perished," is, I am sure, impossible for any man to know: for who can tell now what was contained in those books which are perished? So that if this be requisite to make every historical relation credible, to know certainly that it was not contradicted by any of those books which we do not now what they were, nor what was in them, we can have no certainty of any ancient fact or history. For who knows certainly, that some books that are perished, did not contradict whatever is written in books that are extant? Nay, if this reasoning hold, we can have no certainty of any thing conveyed by oral tradition. For what though the priest tell me this was the doctrine of Christ delivered to him? Unless I know that all others agree with him in this tradition, I cannot rely upon his testimony. Nor then neither, in Mr. Knot's opinion, (*Answer to Chillingworth, c. 1. § 33.*) "because the testimony of preachers or pastors is human and fallible, unless (according to his jargon) a conclusion deduced from premises, one of which is only probable, may be sufficient to bring our understanding to an infallible act of faith, *viz.* if such a conclusion be taken *specificativè*; whereas, if it be taken *reduplicativè*, as it is a conclusion, it can only beget a probable assent:" which is to say, that considered barely as a conclusion, and so far as in reason it can deserve assent, it is only probable; but considered as it serves an hypothesis, and is convenient to be believed with reason or without, so

it is infallible. But to carry the supposition farther. Put the case, that the whole present age assembled in general council, should declare that such a point was delivered to them; yet, according to Mr. S. we cannot safely rely upon this, unless we knew certainly, that those whom they relied on “ had secure grounds, and  
 “ not bare hearsay, for what they delivered; and that  
 “ they were not contradicted within the space of 150  
 “ years, by any of those that are dead;” which is impossible for any one now to know.

But to shew how inconsistent he is with himself in these matters, I will present the reader with a passage or two in another part of his book, where he endeavours to prove, that men may safely rely on a general and uncontrouled tradition. He tells us, *p.* 49. that “ the  
 “ common course of human conversation makes it madness,  
 “ not to believe great multitudes of knowers,  
 “ no possible considerations can awaken in our reason  
 “ a doubt that they conspire to deceive us.” And a little after, *ibid.* “ Nor can any, unless their brains rove  
 “ wildly, or be unsettled even to the degree of madness  
 “ suspect deceit, where such multitudes agree unanimously  
 “ in a matter of fact.” Now, if men be but supposed to write, as well as to speak, what they know and to agree in their writings about matter of fact then it will be the same “ madness, not to believe multitudes of historians, where no possible consideration  
 “ can awaken in our reason a doubt that they have  
 “ conspired to deceive us; and mens brains must rove  
 “ wildly, and be unsettled even to the degree of frenzy  
 “ who suspect deceit where such multitudes unanimously  
 “ agree in a matter of fact.” And this seems to be the great unhappiness of Mr. S.’s demonstrations, that they proceed upon contradictory principles; so that, in order to the demonstrating of the uncertainty of books and writings, he must suppose all those principles to be uncertain, which he takes to be self-evident and unquestionable, when he is to demonstrate the infallibility of oral tradition.

§ 13. *2dly*, He tells us, *p.* 18. “ The providence of God is no security against those contingencies that  
 “ scripture

‘ scriptures are subject to ; because we cannot be cer-  
 ‘ tain of divine providence, or assistance to his church,  
 ‘ but by letter of scripture ; therefore that must first be  
 ‘ proved certain, before we mention the church, or  
 ‘ God’s assistance to her :” As if we pretended there  
 were any promise in scripture, that God would preserve  
 the letter of it entire and uncorrupted, or as if we could  
 not otherways be assured of it ; as if the light of natural  
 reason could not assure us of God’s providence in gene-  
 ral, and of his more especial care of those things which  
 are of greatest concernment to us ; such as this is, that a  
 book containing the method and the terms of salvation  
 should be preserved from any material corruption. He  
 might as well have said, that without the letter of scrip-  
 ture we cannot know that there is a God.

§ 14. 3dly, “ Nor (says he, p. 18. 19.) can testimo-  
 ‘ nies of councils and fathers be sufficient interpreters  
 ‘ of scripture.” We do not say they are. Our prin-  
 ciple is, That the scripture doth sufficiently interpret it-  
 self, that is, is plain to all capacities, in things necessary  
 to be believed and practised. And the general consent  
 of fathers in this doctrine of the sufficient plainness of  
 scripture (which I shall afterwards shew) is a good evi-  
 dence against them. As for obscure and more doubt-  
 ful texts, we acknowledge the comments of the fathers  
 to be a good help, but no certain rule of interpretation:  
 And that the Papists think so as well as we, is plain ;  
 inasmuch as they acknowledge the fathers to differ a-  
 mong themselves in the interpretation of several texts:  
 and nothing is more familiar in all Popish commenta-  
 tors, than to differ from the ancient fathers about the  
 sense of scripture. And as for councils, Dr. Holden and  
 Mr. Cressy (as I said before) do not think it necessary  
 to believe that always to be the true sense of texts which  
 councils give of them, when they bring them to con-  
 firm points of faith. Nay, if any controversy arise a-  
 bout the sense of any text of scripture, it is impossible,  
 according to Mr. Rushworth’s principles, for a council  
 to decide either that, or any other controversy : for  
 (*Dial. 2. § 8.*) he makes it his business to prove, that  
 controversies cannot be decided by words : and if this  
 be so, then they cannot be decided at all, unless he can

prove, that they may be decided without words, and consequently that councils may do their work best in the Quakers way, by silent meetings.

§ 15. 4thly, “Nor can (says he, p. 20. 21.) the clearness of scripture as to fundamentals, be any help against these defects.” Why not?

1. “Because a certain catalogue of fundamentals was never given and agreed to by sufficient authority and yet without this all goes to wreck.” I hope no so long as we are sure that God would make nothing necessary to be believed but what he hath made plain and so long as men do believe all things that are plainly revealed, (which is every one’s fault if he do not men may do well enough without a precise catalogue. But suppose we say, that the articles of the Apostles creed contain all necessary matters of simple belief, what hath Mr. S. to say against this? I am sure the Roman catechism, set forth by the decree of the council of Trent, says (*præfat.*) as much as this comes to; viz. “That the Apostles having received a command to preach the gospel to every creature, thought fit to compose a form of Christian faith, namely to the end, that they might all think and speak the same things, and that there might be no schisms among those whom they had called to the unity of faith but that they might all be perfect in the same sense and the same opinion: and this profession of the Christian faith and hope, so framed by them, the Apostles called *the symbol or creed.*” Now, how this end of bringing men to unity of faith, and making them perfectly of the same sense and opinion, could probably be attained by means of the creed, if it did not contain all necessary points of simple belief, I can by no means understand. Besides, a certain catalogue of fundamentals is as necessary for them as for us; and when Mr. S. gives in his, ours is ready. Mr. Chillingworth had great desire to have seen Mr. Knott’s catalogue of fundamentals, and challenged him to produce it; and offered him very fairly, that whenever he might with one hand receive his, he would with the other deliver his own: but Mr. Knott, though he still persisted in the same demand, could never be prevailed with to bring forth

forth his own, but kept it for a secret to his dying day. But, to put a final stop to this canting demand of a catalogue of fundamentals, which yet I perceive I shall never be able to do, because it is one of those expletive topicks which Popish writers, especially those of the lowest form, do generally make use of to help out a book; however, to do what I can towards the stopping of it, I desire Mr. S. to answer the reasons whereby his friend Dr. Holden (*Analyf. fid. l. 1. c. 4.*) shews the unreasonableness of this demand; and likewise endeavours to prove that such a catalogue would not only be useless and pernicious if it could be given, but that it is manifestly impossible to give such a precise catalogue.

2. He asks, *p. 21.* "Is it a fundamental, that Christ is God? If so, whether this be clearer in scripture, than that God hath hands, feet, &c.?" To which I answer by another question, Is it clear, that there are figures in scripture, and that many things are spoken after the manner of men, and by way of condescension and accommodation to our capacities; and that custom and common sense teacheth men to distinguish between things figuratively and properly spoken? If so, why cannot every one easily understand, that when the scripture saith, *God hath hands and feet*, and that *Christ is the vine*, and *the door*, these are not to be taken properly, as we take this proposition, that "Christ is God;" in which no man hath any reason to suspect a figure? When Mr. S. tells us, that "he percheth upon the specific nature of things," would it not offend him, if any one should be so silly as to conclude from hence, that Mr. S. believed himself to be a bird, and nature a perch? And yet not only the scriptures, but all sober writers, are free from such forced and phantastical metaphors. I remember, that Origen (*l. 4.*) taxeth Celsus's wilful ignorance, in finding fault with the scriptures, for "attributing to God human affections, as anger, &c.;" and tells him, "that any one who had a mind to understand the scriptures, might easily see, that such expressions were accommodated to us, and accordingly to be understood; and that no man that will but compare these expressions with other passages of scripture, need to fail of the true sense of them." But, according to Mr.

S., Origen was to blame to find fault with Celsus, for thinking that the scripture did really attribute human affections to God; for how could he think otherwise, when “the most fundamental point is not clearer in scripture, than that God hath hands, feet, &c.?” How could Origen in reason expect from Celsus, (tho’ never so great a philosopher), that he should be able, without the help of oral tradition, to distinguish between what is spoken literally, and what by a certain scheme of speech? Theodoret (*Hæret. fabul. l. 4.*) tells us of one Audæus, who held that God had a human shape and bodily members; but he does not say, that the reason of this error was because he made scripture the rule of his faith, but expressly because “he was a fool, and did foolishly understand those things which the divine scriptures speak by way of condescension.” So that although Mr. S. is pleased to make this wise objection, yet it seems, according to Theodoret, that men do not mistake such texts, either for want of oral tradition, or of sufficient clearness in the scriptures, but for want of common reason and sense. And if Mr. S. know of any rule of faith that is secure from all possibility of being mistaken by foolish and perverse men, I would be glad to be acquainted with it, and with him for its sake.

SECT. IV. *That scripture is a sufficient rule to the unlearned, and to the most rational doubters.*

§ 1. **I**N his next discourse, he endeavours to shew, that unlearned persons cannot be justified as acting rationally in receiving the scripture for the word of God, and relying upon it as a certain rule; because they are not capable of satisfaction concerning these matters. But I have already shewn that they are, and shall not repeat the same over again. And whereas he says, p. 24. That “several professions all pretend to scripture, and yet differ, and damn, and persecute one another about these differences;” the answer is easy: That they all pretend to scripture, is an argument that they all acknowledge it to be the word of God, and the rule of faith; and that they are generally agreed about the sense of those plain texts which contain the fundamental points of faith, is evident, in that those several profes-  
sions

sions acknowledge the articles contained in the Apostles creed to be sufficiently delivered in scripture: and if any professions differ about the meaning of plain texts, that is not an argument that plain texts are obscure, but that some men are perverse. And if those professions damn and persecute one another about the meaning of obscure texts, the scripture is not in fault, but those that do so.

§ 2. And whereas he pretends, *p.* 25. 26. 27. that “the scripture is not able to satisfy sceptical dissenters and rational doubters, because nothing under a demonstration can satisfy such persons so well concerning the incorruptedness of originals, the faithfulness of translations, &c. but that searching and sincere wits may still maintain their ground of suspense with a “*Might it not be otherwise?*” This hath been answered already, partly by shewing, that the scripture was not intended to satisfy scepticks, and that a demonstration is not sufficient to give satisfaction to them; and partly, by shewing that rational doubters may have as much satisfaction concerning those matters, as the nature of the thing will bear: and he is not a rational doubter that desires more.

But, that he may see the unreasonableness of this discourse, I shall briefly shew him, that all mankind do, in matters of this nature, accept of such evidence as falls short of demonstration? and that his great friends and masters, from whom he hath taken the main grounds of his book, though he manageth them to less advantage, do frequently acknowledge, that it is reasonable for men to acquiesce in such assurance as falls short of infallibility, and such evidence as is less than demonstration. Do not mankind think themselves sufficiently assured of the antiquity and authors of several books, for which they have not demonstrative evidence? Doth not Aristotlé say, that things of a moral and civil nature, and matters of fact done long ago, are incapable of demonstration; and that it is madness to expect it for things of this nature? Are there no passages in books so plain, that a man may be sufficiently satisfied, that this and no other is the certain sense of them? If there be none, can any thing be spoken in plainer words than it may be written? If it cannot, how can we be satisfied

of the certain sense of any doctrine orally delivered! And, if we cannot be so satisfied, where is the certainty of oral tradition? But if books may be written so plainly as that we may be abundantly satisfied, that this is the certain sense of such and such passages, then we may reasonably rest satisfied in evidence for these matters short of demonstration. For was ever the sense of any words so plain as that there did not remain this ground of suspense, that those words might be capable of another sense? Mr. Rushworth (*Dialog. 2. §. 7.*) says, that “disputative scholars do find means daily to explicate the plainest words of an author to a quite different sense.” And that the world might be furnished with an advantageous instance of the possibility of this, Raynaudus, (*De bonis et malis libris*), a writer of their own, hath made a wanton experiment upon the Apostle’s creed; and, by a sinister, but possible interpretation hath made every article of it heresy and blasphemy, on purpose to shew, that the plainest words are not free from ambiguity. But may be Mr. S. can outdo the Apostles, and can deliver the Christian doctrine so clearly that he can demonstrate it impossible for any man to put any other sense upon any of his words than that which he intended. I do not know what may be done: but, if Mr. S. doth this, he must both amend his style, and his way of demonstration.

Is Mr. S. sufficiently assured, that there is such a part of the world as America? and can he demonstrate this to any man without carrying him thither? Can he shew by any necessary argument, that it is naturally impossible that all the relations concerning that place should be false? When his demonstrations have done their utmost cannot “a searching and sincere wit at least maintain his ground of suspense with a Might it not be otherwise?” *p. 27.*; and with an Is it not possible, that all men may be liars, or that a company of travellers may have made use of their privilege, to abuse the world by false reports, and to put a trick upon mankind? or that all those who pretend to go thither, and bring their commodities from thence, may go to some other part of the world, and taking pleasure in abusing others in the same manner as they have been imposed upon themselves

themselves, may say they have been at America? Who can tell but all this may be so? And yet I suppose, notwithstanding the possibility of this, no man in his wits is now possessed with so incredible a folly as to doubt whether there be such a place. The case is the very same as to the certainty of an ancient book, and of the sense of plain expressions. We have no demonstration for these things; and we expect none, because we know the things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain, that any book is so ancient as it pretends to be, or that it was written by him whose name it bears, or that this is the sense of such and such passages in it. It is possible all this may be otherwise; that is, it implies no contradiction: but we are very well assured that it is not; nor hath any prudent man any just cause to make the least doubt of it. For a bare possibility, that a thing may be, or not be, is no just cause of doubting whether a thing be or not. It is possible all the people of France may die this night; but I hope the possibility of this doth not incline any man in the least to think it will be so. It is possible the sun may not rise to-morrow morning; and yet, for all this, I suppose that no man hath the least doubt but that it will.

§ 3. But because this principle *viz.* “That in matters of religion a man cannot be reasonably satisfied with any thing less than that infallible assurance which is wrought by demonstration,” is the main pillar of Mr. S.’s book; therefore, beside what hath been already said, to shew the unreasonableness of this principle, I shall take a little pains to manifest to him, how much he is contradicted in this by the chief of his brethren of the tradition, *viz.* Mr. Rushworth, Dr. Holden, Mr. Cressy, and Mr. White; who, besides Mr. S. and one I. B. are, so far as I can learn, all the public patrons that ever this hypothesis of oral tradition hath had in the world: and if Mr. White, as I have reason to believe, was the author of those dialogues which pass under Rushworth’s name, the number of them is yet less. Now, if I can shew, that this principle, esteemed by Mr. S. so fundamental to this hypothesis, is plainly contradicted by the principal asserters of oral tradition, I shall hereby gain one of these two things; either that these great patrons

patrons of oral tradition were ignorant of the true foundation of their own hypothesis, or that this principle is not necessary for the support of it. Not that I would be so understood as if I did deny, that these very persons do sometimes speak very big words of the necessity of infallibility. But if it be their pleasure to contradict themselves, as I have no reason to be displeas'd, so neither to be concern'd for it; but shall leave it to Mr. S. to reconcile them first to themselves; and then, if he pleases, afterwards to himself.

§ 4. I begin with Mr. Rushworth, of immortal memory, for that noble attempt of his, to persuade the world, that, notwithstanding he was the first inventor of this hypothesis of oral tradition, yet he could prove, that the church had in all ages own'd it, and proceeded upon it as her only rule of faith. He, in his third dialogue, § 3. and 4. when his nephew objects to him, "That perhaps  
 " a Protestant would say, that all his foregoing discourse  
 " was but probability and likelihood; and therefore,  
 " to hazard a man's estate upon peradventures, were  
 " something hard, and not very rationally done," replies thus to him: "What security do your merchants,  
 " your statesmen, your soldiers, those that go to law,  
 " nay, even those that till your grounds, and work for  
 " their livings; what security, I say, do all these go  
 " upon? Is it greater than the security which these  
 " grounds afford? Surely no; and yet no man esteems  
 " them foolish. All human affairs are hazardous, and  
 " have some adventure in them: and therefore he who  
 " requires evident certainty only in matters of religion,  
 " discovers in himself a less mind to the goods promi-  
 " sed in the next life, than to these which he seeks here  
 " in this world upon weaker assurance. Howsoever,  
 " the greatest evidence that can be to him that is not  
 " capable of convincing demonstrations, which the  
 " greatest part of mankind fall short of, is but con-  
 " jectural." So that, according to Mr. Rushworth, it is not reason and discretion, but want of love to God and religion, which makes men require greater evidence for matters of religion than for human affairs; which yet, he tells us, "are hazardous, and have some adven-  
 " ture in them," and consequently are not capable of demonstration.

demonstration. Besides, if demonstrative evidence be an essential property of the rule of faith, as Mr. S. affirms, then this rule cannot, according to Mr. Rushworth, be of any use to the greatest part of mankind, because they are not capable of convincing demonstrations. Again, "do but consider (says he, *ibid* § 6.) how unequal and unjust a condition it is, that the claim of the present church shall not be heard, unless she can confute all the peradventures that wit may invent, and solve all the arguments which the infinite variety of time, place, and occasions, may have given way unto; and then you will see how unreasonable an adversary he is, who will not be content with any satisfaction but such as man's nature scarcely affords." And is it not equally unjust in Mr. S. not to let scripture's claim be heard, unless we can confute every peradventure and Might it not be otherwise, that wit may invent? See, then, how unreasonable an adversary Mr. S. is, who will not be content with any satisfaction but such as, according to Mr. Rushworth, man's nature scarcely affords.

Dr. Holden (I confess) states the matter somewhat cautiously, when he tells us, *l. i. c. 1.* that "it shall suffice for the present to determine, that the wisdom of the Creator hath afforded us such an assurance, especially of truths necessary to salvation, as is suitable to our nature, and best fitted for the safe conduct of our lives in moral and religious affairs." But if we interpret these general expressions by the passages I before cited out of Mr. Rushworth, (as in reason we may, since the Doctor is beholden to him for the best part of his book) then nothing can make more against Mr. S.'s principle.

§ 5. Mr. Cressy, in his *Exomologesis*, c. 19. § 5. says, that "such teachers as approached nearest to the fountain of truth, Christ and his Apostles, had means of informing themselves in apostolical tradition incomparably beyond us." Mr. S. may do well to shew what those means were, which are so incomparably beyond his infallibility and demonstration. The same author (c. 32. §. 4) does very much applaud Stapleton's determination of the question concerning the church's infallibility;

infallibility; which is as follows, “ That the church does  
 “ not expect to be taught by God immediately by new  
 “ revelations, but makes use of several means, &c. as  
 “ being governed, not by Apostles, &c. but by ordi-  
 “ nary pastors and teachers: That these pastors, in ma-  
 “ king use of these several means of decision, proceed,  
 “ not as the Apostles did, with a peculiar infallible di-  
 “ rection of the Holy Spirit, but with a prudential col-  
 “ lection not always necessary: That to the Apostles,  
 “ who were the first masters of evangelical faith, and  
 “ founders of the church, such an infallible certitude  
 “ of means was necessary; not so now to the church,  
 “ &c.” If this be true, that an infallible certitude of  
 means is not now necessary to the church, and that her  
 pastors do now, in deciding matters of faith, proceed  
 only with a prudent collection not always necessary;  
 then it should seem, that a searching wit may maintain  
 his ground of suspense, even against their church also,  
 with a “ Might it not be otherwise?” Again, Mr.  
 Cressy tells us, (*Append. c. 5.*), that “ truth, and our ob-  
 “ ligation to believe it, is in an higher degree in scrip-  
 “ ture than in the decisions of the church, as Bellar-  
 “ mine acknowledges:” which is to say, that we may  
 have greater assurance of the truth of doctrines contain-  
 ed in the scriptures, than we can have of any doctrine  
 from the determination of the church. But if we have  
 the greatest assurance that can be of truths delivered to  
 us by the church, as Mr. S. affirms, then I would fain  
 learn of him, what that higher degree of assurance is,  
 which Mr. Bellarmine speaks of, and whether it be  
 greater than the greatest? Not to insist upon that,  
 (which yet I cannot but by the way take notice of) that  
 Mr. Cressy, by his approbation of this determination  
 of Bellarmine’s, doth advance the scripture above the  
 church, as to one of the most essential properties of the  
 rule of faith, *viz.* the certainty of it.

But the most eminent testimony to my purpose in Mr.  
 Cressy, is that famous passage (*c. 40. § 3. &c.*) which  
 hath given so much offence to several of his own church,  
 wherein he acknowledges “ the unfortunateness (to him)  
 “ of the word *infallibility*;” and tells us, “ that he  
 “ could find no such word in any council; that no ne-  
 “ cessity

necessity appeared to him; that either he, or any other Protestant, should ever have heard that word named, and much less pressed with so much earnestness, as of late it has generally been in disputations and books of controversy: and that Mr. Chillingworth combats this word with too great success; insomuch that if this word were once forgotten, or but laid by, Mr. Chillingworth's arguments would lose the greatest part of their strength; and that if this word were confined to the schools, where it was bred, there would be still no inconvenience: and that, since by manifest experience the English Protestants think themselves so secure, when they have leave to stand or fall by that word, and in very deed have so much to say for themselves when they are pressed unnecessarily with it; since likewise it is a word capable of so high a sense, that we cannot devise one more full and proper to attribute to God himself, &c.:" since all this is so, he thinks he cannot be "blamed, if such reasons move him to wish, that the Protestants may never be invited to combat the authority of the church under that notion." A very ingenuous acknowledgment, and as cross to Mr. S.'s principle as any thing can be. But the word *infallibility* was not so unfortunate to Mr. Cressy, as his untoward explication of the forecited passage in his *Appendix*; which he afterwards published, chiefly by way of vindication of himself, against the learned author of the preface to my Lord Falkland's *Discourse of infallibility*. There (*Append.* 2. § 3.) he tells us, that "there are several degrees of infallibility." And that we may know what degrees of infallibility he thinks necessary to be attributed to the church, this following passage will inform us: "Methinks (he says) if God had furnished his divine and supernatural truth with evidence equal to this, that the sun will shine to-morrow, or that there will be a spring and harvest next year, we are infinitely obliged to bless his providence; and justly condemned, if we refuse to believe the least of such truths, as shewing less affection to save our souls, than the dull plowmen to sow their corn, who certainly have far less evidence for their harvest, than Catholics for their

“ faith; and yet they insist not peevishly upon every  
 “ capricious objection, nor exact an infallible security o  
 “ a plentiful reaping next summer, but, notwithstanding  
 “ all difficulties and contingencies, proceed cheerfully in  
 “ their painful husbandry.” So that, according to thi  
 discourse, whatever degree of assurance the church hath  
 or can give to those who rely upon her, it is plain, tha  
 no further degree is necessary, than what the husband  
 man, when he sows, hath of a plentiful harvest; and tha  
 men are justly condemned, if they refuse to believe th  
 least truth upon such security, which yet, by his own  
 acknowledgment is liable to contingencies: nay far  
 ther, that men are not reasonable, but “ peevish, in  
 “ exacting infallible security, and insisting upon ever  
 “ capricious objection,” such as is Mr. S.’s “ Might i  
 “ not be otherwise?” Now, as to this degree of assu  
 rance, or (as he calls it) infallibility, I cannot bu  
 grant what he says of it to be most true; *viz.* tha  
 “ in a severe acceptation of the word, it is not rigo  
 “ rously infallible; ” that is, (as he explains it), it i  
 not absolutely impossible, nor does it imply a fla  
 contradiction, that the thing whereof we are so assure  
 may be otherwise: but then I utterly deny, that accor  
 ding to any true acceptation of this word, such a de  
 gree of assurance as he speaks of, can be called infalli  
 bility; and withal I affirm, that none of those severa  
 degrees of infallibility which he mentions, exceptin  
 that only which imports an absolute impossibility, ca  
 with any tolerable propriety of speech, or regard to th  
 true meaning and use of the word, have the name c  
 infallibility given to them. For infallibility can signif  
 nothing else but an utter impossibility that one shoul  
 be deceived in that matter as to which he is suppose  
 to be infallible; and to say such a thing is impossible, i  
 to say, that the existence of it implies a flat contradic  
 tion: so that, whosoever asserts degrees of infallibility  
 is obliged to shew, that there are degrees of absolut  
 impossibilities, and of perfect contradictions; and he ha  
 need of a very sharp and piercing wit, that is to fin  
 out degrees, where there neither are nor can be any  
 Indeed, in respect of the objects of knowledge, it is ea  
 sy to conceive how infallibility may be extended to mor  
 object

jects or fewer; but in respect of the degree of assurance, (of which Mr. Cressy speaks) it is altogether unimaginable how any one can be more or less out of all possibility of being deceived in those things wherein he is supposed to be infallible: for no one can be more removed from the possibility of being deceived, than he that is out of all possibility of being deceived; and whoever is less than this, is not infallible; because he only is so, who is out of all possibility of being deceived in those matters wherein he is supposed to be infallible. So that Mr. Cressy's lower degrees of infallibility are no degrees of that assurance which may properly be called infallible, (for that can have no degrees) but of that assurance which is less than infallible. And he needed not have raised all this dust about the degrees of infallibility, had it not been, that, by the means of such a cloud, he might make the more convenient escape out of that strait he was in between the clamour of his own church and the advantage which his adversaries made of his free and open discourse against infallibility. For any one that carefully reads his book, will find, that he understands nothing by the infallibility of the church, but "an authority of obliging all Christians to submit to her decisions;" which is no more, but what every supreme judge hath in civil matters, *viz.* a power to determine those controversies that lie before him as well as he can or will; and when that is done, every one is bound to submit to such determinations: but yet for all this, no man ever dreamed a supreme civil judge to be infallible more than another man. I do not now dispute the extent of the church's authority: but if she have no other infallibility, but what a full authority of decision does suppose, I am sure she hath none at all.

Before I leave Mr. Cressy, I cannot but take notice how unfortunate and disingenuous he is in explaining the meaning of these words of his own, *viz.* "Against this word *infallibility* Mr. Chillingworth's book especially combats, and this with too too great success;" which in his *Appendix*, c. 5. § 6. he interprets thus: "Success, I mean, not against the church, but against his own soul, and the souls of his fellow English Protestants, &c." As if one that had wished well to

“ Cæsar, should have said, “ that Pompey had fought  
 “ against him with too too great success;” and being  
 afterwards challenged by Cæsar’s party, as having said  
 that Pompey had conquered Cæsar, he should explain  
 himself thus: “ Success, I mean, not against Cæsar, but  
 “ against his own life, and the life of his followers.”  
 Can any thing be finer than for any man to say, that by  
 Pompey’s success in fighting against Cæsar, he means  
 that Cæsar had beaten Pompey? Which is no more than  
 if one should take the liberty to interpret white by black

§ 6. Mr. White doth most expressly contradict this  
 principle of Mr. S’s, in these following passages: In his  
 preface to Mr. Rushworth, he says, that “ such a cer-  
 “ tainty as makes the cause always work the same ef-  
 “ fect, though it take not away the absolute possibility  
 “ of working otherwise, ought absolutely to be reckon-  
 “ ed in the degree of true certainty; and that those au-  
 “ thors are mistaken who undervalue it.” So that it  
 seems Mr. S. is mistaken in affirming, that a man can  
 not be certain of any thing so long as there is any pos-  
 sibility that it may be otherwise. In his answer to my  
 Lord Falkland, he says, p. 14. 15. that “ in mora-  
 “ l matters, and such as are subject to human action, we  
 “ must expect such assurance as human actions bear  
 “ If for the government of your spiritual life, you have  
 “ as much as for the management of your natural and  
 “ civil life, what can you expect more? Two or three  
 “ witnesses of men beyond exception will cast a man out  
 “ of, not only his lands, but life, and all. He that a-  
 “ mong merchants will not adventure where there is a  
 “ hundred to one gaining, will be accounted a silly  
 “ factor; and among soldiers, he that will fear danger  
 “ where but one of a hundred is slain, shall not escape  
 “ the stain of cowardice. What then shall we expect in  
 “ religion, but to see a main advantage on the one side  
 “ which we may rest ourselves on; and for the rest  
 “ remember we are men subject to chance and mutabi-  
 “ lity; and thank God he hath given us that assurance  
 “ in a supernatural way, which we are contented withal  
 “ in our civil ventures and possessions; which, neverthe-  
 “ less, God knoweth we often love better, and would  
 “ hazard less than the unknown good of the life to  
 “ come?”

come?" Again, *p.* 30. "If God Almighty hath in .. I  
 sorts and manners provided his church, that she may  
 enlighten every man in his way that goeth the way of  
 a man; then let every man consider which is the fit  
 way for himself, and what in other matters of that  
 way he accounteth evidence. And if there be no in-  
 terest in his soul to make him loth to believe what in  
 another matter of the like nature he doth not stick at,  
 or heavy to practise what he sees clearly enough, I  
 fear not his choice." Once more, directing a man in  
 his search after rational satisfaction in matters of religi-  
 on, he hath this passage, *p.* 46. "Besides this, he must  
 have this care, that he seek what the nature of the  
 subject can yield; and not as those physicians, who,  
 when they have promised no less than immortality,  
 can at last only reach to some conservation of health  
 or youth in some small degree: so I could wish the au-  
 thor to well assure himself, first that there is possibly an  
 infallibility, before he be too earnest to be contented  
 with nothing less. For what if human nature should  
 not be capable of so great a good? Would he there-  
 fore think it fitting to live without any religion, be-  
 cause he could not get such a one as himself desired,  
 though with more than a man's wish? Were it not  
 rational to see, whether, among religions, some one  
 have not such notable advantages over the rest, as in  
 reason it might seem human nature might be content-  
 ed withal? Let him cast his account with the dearest  
 things he hath, his own or friends lives, his estate,  
 his hope of posterity, and see upon what terms of ad-  
 vantage he is ready to venture all these; and then re-  
 turn to religion, and see whether, if he do not ven-  
 ture his soul upon the like, if it be truly reason, or  
 some other not confessed motive, which withdraws  
 him. For my own part, as I doubt not of an infal-  
 libility, so I doubt not but, setting that aside, there be  
 those excellencies found on the Catholic party which  
 may force a man to prefer it, and to venture all he  
 hath upon it, before all other religions and sects in  
 the world. Why then may not one who, after long  
 searching, findeth no infallibility, rest himself on the  
 like, supposing man's nature affords no better?"

Are not these fair concessions, which the evidence and force of truth have extorted from these authors? so that it seems that that which Mr. S. calls *a civil piece of Atheistry*, (*Letter to his answerer, p. 5.*) is advanced in most express words by his best friends; and therefore hope he will (as he threatens me) “be smart with them in opposition to so damnable and fundamental an error.” And whenever he attempts this, I would earnestly treat him to remember, that he hath these two things to prove, 1. That no evidence but demonstration can give a man sufficient assurance of any thing. 2. That a bare possibility that a thing may be otherwise, is a rational cause of doubting, and a wise ground of suspense. Which when he hath proved, I shall not grudge him his infallibility.

SECT. V. *That scripture is sufficient to convince the most acute adversaries, and that is sufficiently certain.*

§ 1. **T**HE last part of this third discourse endeavoured to shew, “That the scripture is not convicted of the most obstinate and acute adversaries.” As for the obstinate, he knows my mind already. Let us see why the most acute adversary may not be convinced of scripture. “Because, (as he objects, *p. 28.*) 1. We cannot be certain that this book is God’s word, because of the many strange absurdities and heresies in the pen letter as it lies; as that God hath hands and feet, &c. and because of the contradictions in it.” To which I have already returned an answer “2. Because (as he saith, *p. 31.*) we cannot be certain of the truth of the letter in any particular text, that it was not foisted in, or some way altered in its significativeness; and if it be a negative proposition, that the particle *not* was not inserted; if affirmative, not left out. And if we pretend to be certain of this, he demands a demonstration for it, *p. 31.* But how unreasonable this demand is, I hope I have sufficiently shewn. And to shew it yet farther, I ask him, How their church knows that the particle *not* was not left out of any text in which it is not found in their copies? I know he hath a ready answer, *viz.* by oral tradition. But this (according

him, *p.* 116.) only reaches to “scripture’s letter, so far  
 “as it is coincident with the main body of Christian  
 “doctrine;” concerning the rest of scripture it is im-  
 possible (according to his own principles) that they should  
 have any security that the particle *not* was not unduly  
 inserted, or left out, by the transcribers. Nay, as to  
 those texts of scripture which fall in with the main body  
 of Christian doctrine, I demand his demonstration, that  
 the particle *not* was not unduly inserted or left out, not  
 only in those texts, but also in the oral tradition of the  
 doctrines coincident with the sense of those texts. If he  
 say, it was impossible any age should conspire to leave  
 out or insert the particle *not* in the oral tradition; so say  
 I it was that they should conspire to leave it out of the  
 written text: but then I differ from him thus far, that I  
 do not think this naturally impossible, so as that it can  
 rigorously be demonstrated; but only morally impossible,  
 so that no body hath any reason to doubt of it; which,  
 to a prudent man is as good as a demonstration. Pyrrho  
 himself never advanced any principle of scepticism be-  
 yond this, *viz.* That men ought to question the credit of  
 all books, concerning which they cannot demonstrate as  
 to every sentence in them, that the particle *not* was not  
 inserted, if it be affirmative; or left out, if it be negative.  
 If so much be required to free a man from reasonable  
 doubting concerning a book, how happy are they that  
 have attained to infallibility? What he saith (*p.* 32.)  
 concerning the *variae lectiones* of scripture, hath already  
 had a sufficient answer.

§ 2. In his fourth discourse he endeavours to shew,  
 (*p.* 33.) that “the scripture is not certain in itself; and  
 “consequently, not ascertained to us.” *1<sup>st</sup>,* “Not  
 “certain, materially considered, as consisting of such  
 “and such characters; because books are liable to be  
 “burnt, torn, blotted, worn out,” *p.* 34. We grant  
 it is not impossible but that any, or all the books in the  
 world may be burnt: but then we say likewise, that a  
 book so universally dispersed, may easily be preserved;  
 tho’ we have no assurance that God will preserve it, in  
 case all men should be so foolish or so careless as to en-  
 deavour to suffer the abolition of it. But it seems the  
 scriptures cannot be a rule of faith, if they be liable to  
 any

any external accidents: and this he tells us, (*p.* 34.)  
 “ Though it may seem a remote and impertinent ex-  
 “ ception, yet to one who considers the wise disposi-  
 “ tions of divine providence, it will deserve a deep con-  
 “ sideration; because the salvation of mankind being  
 “ the end of God’s making nature, the means to it  
 “ should be more settled, strong and unalterable, than  
 “ any other piece of nature whatever.” But, notwith-  
 standing this wise reason, this exception still seems to me  
 both remote and impertinent: for if this which he calls  
 a reason be a truth, it will from thence necessarily fol-  
 low, not only that the doctrine of Christ must be con-  
 veyed by such a means as is more unalterable than the  
 course of nature; but also, by a clear parity of reason,  
 that all the means of our salvation do operate towards  
 the accomplishing of their end with greater certainty  
 than the fire burns, or the sun shines; which they can  
 never do; unless they operate more necessarily than any  
 natural causes. How they can do so upon voluntary a-  
 gents, I desire Mr. S. to inform me.

§ 3. He proceeds by a long harangue to shew, *p.* 34.  
 that “ not only these material characters in themselves  
 “ are corruptible, but in complection with the causes  
 “ actually laid in the world to preserve them entire;  
 “ because either those causes are material, and then  
 “ they are also liable to continual alterations; or spi-  
 “ ritual, that is, the minds of men, and from these we  
 “ may with good reason hope for a greater degree of  
 “ constancy than from any other piece of nature:”  
 which, by the way, is a very strange paradox, that the  
 actions of voluntary agents have a greater certainty and  
 constancy in them than those of natural agents; of which  
 the fall of angels and men, compared with the conti-  
 nuance of the sun and stars in their first state, is a very  
 good evidence.

§ 4. But he adds a caution, *p.* 35. that “ that they  
 “ perfectly unalterable from their nature, and unerrable,  
 “ if due circumstances be observed; that is, if due propo-  
 “ sals be made to beget certain knowledge, and due care  
 “ used to attend to such proposals.” But who can war-  
 rant, that due proposals will always be made to men,  
 and due care used by them? If these be uncertain, where

is the constancy and unerrableness he talks so much of? So that notwithstanding the constancy of this spiritual cause, the mind of man, of preserving scriptures entire; yet, in order to this, (as he tells us, *p.* 36.) “so many  
 “actions are to be done, which are compounded and  
 “made up of an innumerable multitude of several par-  
 “ticularities to be observed, every of which may be  
 “mistaken apart, each being a distinct little action in  
 “its single self; such as is the transcribing of a whole  
 “book, consisting of such myriads of words, single let-  
 “ters, and titles or stops; and the several actions of  
 “writing over each of these so short and cursory, that it  
 “prevents diligence, and exceeds human care, to keep  
 “awake, and apply distinct attentions to every of these  
 “distinct actions.” Mr. Rushworth much undoes Mr. S. in these minute cavils; for he tells us, (*Dial.* 2. § 7.) that “supposing an original copy of Christ’s words,  
 “written by one of the Evangelists in the same lan-  
 “guage, let him have set down every word and syl-  
 “lable; yet men conversant in noting the changes of  
 “meanings in words, will tell us, that divers accents  
 “in the pronounciation of them, the turning of the speak-  
 “er’s head or body this or that way, &c. may so change  
 “the sense of the words, that they will seem quite dif-  
 “ferent in writing from what they were in speaking.” I hope that oral and practical tradition hath been careful to preserve all these circumstances, and hath delivered down Christ’s doctrine, with all the right traditionary accents, nods, and gestures, necessary for the understanding of it; otherwise the omission of these may have so altered the sense of it, that it may be now quite different from what it was at first. But to answer Mr. S. we do not pretend to be assured that it is naturally impossible that the scriptures should have been corrupted or changed, but only to be sufficiently assured that they have not received any material alteration, from as good arguments as the nature of the subject will bear. But if his reason had not been very short and cursory, he might easily have reflected that oral tradition is equally liable to all these contingencies: for it doth as much “pre-  
 “vent diligence, and exceed human care, to keep awake,  
 “and apply distinct attentions to the distinct actions of  
 “speak-

“ speaking, as of writing.” And I hope he will not deny, that a doctrine orally delivered consists of words, and letters, and accents, and stops, as well as a doctrine written; and that the several actions of speaking are as short and cursory as of writing.

§ 5. *2dly*, He tells us, *p.* 38. “ Scripture, formally considered as to its significativeness, is also uncertain :” 1. “ Because of the uncertainty of the letter,” *ibid.* This is already answered. 2. “ Because the certain sense of it is not to be arrived to by the vulgar, who are destitute of languages and arts,” *ib.* True, where men are not permitted to have the scriptures in their own language, and understand no other: but where they are allowed the scriptures translated into their own language, they may understand them; all necessary points of faith and practice being sufficiently plain in any translation of the Bible that I know of. And that eminent wits cannot agree about the sense of texts which concern the main points of faith, *p.* 38. hath been spoken to already.

§ 6. As for the reverence he pretends to scripture in the conclusion of his fourth discourse, he might have spared that, after all the raillery and rudeness he hath used against it. It is easy to conjecture, both from his principles and his uncivil expressions concerning them, what his esteem is of those sacred oracles. Probably it was requisite in prudence to cast in a few good words concerning the scriptures, for the sake of the more tender and squeamish novices of their religion; or, (as Mr. Rushworth’s nephew says frankly and openly, *Dial.* 2. § 14.) “ for the satisfaction of indifferent men, that have been brought up in this verbal and apparent respect of the scripture;” who it seems are not yet attained to that degree of Catholic piety and fortitude, as to endure patiently, that the word of God should be reviled or slighted. Besides, that in reference to those whom they hope hereafter to convert, (who might be too much alienated from their religion, if he had expressed nothing but contempt towards a book which Protestants and Christians in all ages, till the very dregs of Popery, have been bred up to a high veneration of,) it was not much amiss to pass this formal compliment upon the Bible; which the wise of his own religion will easily understand,  
and

and may serve to catch the rest. But let him not deceive himself, *God is not mocked.*

SECT. VI. *That the Properties of a rule of faith do not belong to oral tradition.*

§ 1. **S**Econdly, He comes to shew, p. 41. " that the " properties of a rule of faith belong to oral " tradition." And, first, he gives a tedious explanation of the nature of this oral practical tradition ; which amounts to this, that as, in reference to the civil education of children, " they are taught their own and others names, to write and read, and exercise their " trades ;" so, in reference to religion, " the children " of Christians first hear sounds ; afterwards, by degrees, get dim notions of God, Christ, Saviour, heaven, hell, virtue, vice, and by degrees practise what " they have heard ; they are shewn to say grace, and " their prayers, to hold up their hands, or perhaps eyes, " and to kneel, and other postures. Afterwards they " are acquainted with the creed, ten commandments, " and sacraments, some common forms of prayer, and " other practices of Christianity ; and are directed to " order their lives accordingly ; and are guided in all " this by the actions and carriage of the elder faithful. And this goes on by insensible degrees, not by " leaps from a hundred years to a hundred, but from " month to month, and even less." If this be all that tradition doth, this is nothing but what is done among Protestants, and that with greater advantage ; because we always teach children to say their prayers in a known tongue, so as they may understand them. And we also teach them the creed, and ten commandments, and the sacraments, so many as Christ hath instituted, and no more. So that if this be so infallible a way of conveying the doctrine of Christianity, we have it among us. And we do over and besides instruct them in the scriptures, which are the authentic instrument whereby Christ's doctrine is conveyed to us. But then we do not suppose, as his hypothesis necessarily inforceth him to do, that the Christian doctrine is equally taught and learned by all ; but by some more, by others

others less perfectly, according to the different abilities and diligence of parents and teachers, and the various capacities and dispositions of children: whereas his hypothesis falls, if all, or at least the generality of parents do not instruct their children in the like exactness, and if the generality of children do not receive this doctrine in the same perfection that it is delivered. For if it be taught or received with any variation, it must necessarily be so conveyed; and these variations will grow daily. I had thought he would have told us how all parents do teach their children the whole body of Christ's doctrine, and explain to them every part of it in a hundred or a thousand several expressions signifying the same sense; and not have instanced in two set forms, such as the creed, and ten commandments; for, according to Mr. White, (*Apology*, p. 81.) "that cannot be a tradition on which is delivered down in set words."

§ 2. Having thus explained oral tradition, he comes to shew, that the properties of a rule of faith agree to it. I have already shewed, that the true properties of a rule of faith are but two, *viz.* "That it be plain and intelligible; and, That it be sufficiently certain." The first of these, that oral tradition may deliver a doctrine plainly and intelligibly, I grant him. All the difficulty is about the second property, whether we have sufficient assurance that the doctrine delivered down by oral tradition, hath received no corruption or change in its conveyance? And all that he pretends to prove in this discourse is, That if this rule had been followed and kept to all along, the Christian doctrine neither hath, nor can have received any change; that is, if the next age after the Apostles did truly, and without any alteration, deliver the Christian doctrine to their immediate successors, and they to their heirs, and so on; then, upon this supposition, the doctrine of the present traditionary church must be the very same with that which was delivered to the Apostles. All this is readily granted to him. But that this rule hath always been followed, nay, that it is impossible there should have been any deviation from it, as he pretends, this we deny, not only as untrue, but as one of the most absurd propositions that ever yet pretended to demonstrative evidence.

## P A R T III.

in which Mr. S.'s demonstrations and corollaries are examined.

SECT. I. *Considerations touching his demonstrations in general.*

1. **B**Efore I come to speak particularly to his demonstrations, I shall premise these two considerations: 1. That, according to the principles of the patrons of tradition, no man can, by his private reason, certainly find out the true rule of faith. 2. That, according to Mr. S. the way of demonstration is no certain way to find out the rule of faith. If either of these be made out, his demonstrations lose all their force. If the first be made good, then he cannot demonstrate the infallibility of tradition, nor, consequently, that that is the rule of faith. If the second, then the way of demonstration, which he pretends to take, signifies nothing.

§ 2. 1<sup>st</sup>, No man can, according to the principles of the patrons of tradition, by his private reason, certainly find out what is the rule of faith. Suppose a Heathen to be desirous to inform himself of the Christian faith; in order to which, he is inquisitive after some rule by which he may take a measure of it, and come certainly to know what it is: he inquires of Christians what their rule is, and finds them divided about it; some saying, that the scripture, others, that oral tradition, is the rule. In this case, it is not possible, without a revelation, for this man to find out the rule of faith, but by his own private reason examining and weighing the arguments and pretences of both sides. And when he hath done this, unless he can by his reason demonstrate, that the one is a certain and infallible rule, and the other not so, he hath not (according to Mr. S.) found out the rule of faith. But reason can never do this, according to Mr. S. For, speaking of demonstrating the certainty of tradition, he tells us, *p.* 53. that "tradition hath

“ for its basis man’s nature ; not according to his intellectualuals, which do but darkly grope in the pursuit of science, &c.” And again, speaking how reason brings men to the rule of faith, he uses this comparison, (*Append. 2. p. 183.*) “ She is like a dim-sighted man, who used his reason, to find a trusty friend to lead him in the twilight, and then relied on his guidance rationally, without using his own reason at all, about the way itself.” So that, according to him, the certainty of tradition cannot be founded on demonstration, because it is not founded in the intellectual part of man, which only can demonstrate. Besides, if it were founded in the intellectual part, yet that can never be able to demonstrate the certainty of tradition ; because that faculty, which is dim-sighted, and does but grope darkly in the pursuit of science, is incapable of framing demonstrations. Nor can any man understand how dim-sighted reason should see clearly to chuse its guide any more than its way ; especially if it be considered, what a pretty contradiction it is, to say, that reason, as it is dim-sighted, can see clearly.

But Mr. Cressy is not contented to call every man’s reason *dim-sighted* ; he ventures a step farther, and call it *hood-winked* and *blind* : for he tells us, (*Append. c. 6 § 8.*) that “ private reason is apparently a most fallible guide.” And he pities my Lord Falkland’s case ; because, in the search of the true religion, he did “ betake himself to the casual conduct of blind, human, natural reason,” (*ibid. § 9.*) which afterwards (§ 11) he call “ a guide that two persons cannot possibly follow together ; because no two persons that ever followed any other guide beside authority, did or could think all things to be reasonable that all others thought so and, by consequence, such a guide, that, as long as he continues in that office, there cannot possibly be any church any where : which (says he) is an infallible eviſtion, that this is an imaginary seducing guide since it is impossible, that that should be a guide appointed for any Christian, which neither Christ nor his Apostles, nor any of their followers, ever mentioned ; yea, which formally destroys one of our twelve articles of the Apostles creed, *viz. I believe the Holy Catholic*

“ church.”

“ church.” Thus he does by reason clearly and infallibly evince, that reason cannot be otherwise than a most blind and fallible guide. This it is to talk of things when a man looks only upon one side of them; as if because reason has a blind side, and is uncertain in some things, therefore we ought to conclude her universally blind, and uncertain in every thing; and as if because all men cannot think all things reasonable which any one man thinks to be so, therefore it is to be doubted whether those common principles of reason be true which mankind are generally agreed in. And that Mr. Cressy speaks here of the use of our private reason in the finding out of our rule, is clear from what he says in the next section, *viz.* that “ this hood-winked guide (inquiring into scripture, and searching after tradition) may possibly stumble upon the way to unity and truth; that is, the true Catholic Church.” If this be true, why does Mr. S. pretend, that he can by reason demonstrate the infallibility of tradition, and by this hood-wink’d guide lead men to the true rule of faith? And what a pitiful encouragement would this be to an inquisitive philosopher, who-knowing no other guide but his reason whereby to find out whether scripture or tradition be the rule, to tell him, that, by the help of this hood-winked guide, he might possibly stumble upon the right?

A man may justly stand amazed at the inconsistency of these mens discourses and principles. In one mood they are all for demonstration, and for convincing men in the way of perfect science, which is the true rule of faith. But then, again, when another fit takes them, there is no such thing as science. Human reason grows all on the sudden dim-sighted, and at the next word is struck stark blind; and then the very utmost that it can do towards the bringing of an unprejudiced and inquisitive person to the true rule of faith, is, to leave him in a possibility of stumbling upon it: but if he be a heretic that makes use of private reason for his guide, then “ it is impossible, but that he with his blind guide should fall into the pit,” (*Append. c. 7. § 8.*) I cannot, for my part, imagine how they can reconcile the blindness of human reason with all that noise which they make about science and demonstration: but this I must confess,

fefs, that these kind of discourses which I meet with in Mr. S. and Mr. Cressy, are very proper arguments to persuade a man of the blindness of human reason. And indeed there is one passage in Mr. Cressy which gives me very great satisfaction concerning these matters; where he tells us, *ibid.* that “the wit and judgment of Catholics is, to renounce their own judgment, and depose their own wit.” Now, he that professes to have done this, may write contradictions, and no body ought to challenge him for it. However, it is a very ingenuous acknowledgment, that, when he forsook our church, and turned Papist, he laid aside his judgment and wit; which is just such an heroic act of judgment, as if a man, in a bravery, to shew his liberty, should sell himself for a slave. I am glad to understand, from an experienced person, what charges a man must be at when he turns Roman Catholic, namely, that whoever will embrace that religion, must forfeit his reason.

§ 3. *2dly*, The way of demonstration is, according to Mr. S. no certain way to find out the rule of faith. In his fourth *Appendix* against my Lord of Down, p. 253. 254. one of the eight mines, as he calls them, which he lays to blow up my Lord's dissuasive against Popery, is this: “That the method he takes in dissuading, cannot be held in reason to have power to dissuade, unless it be proper to that effect; that is, not common to that effect and a contrary one. Now, that being most evidently no method or way to such an effect, which many follow and take, yet arrive not at that effect, it is plain to common sense, that my Lord of Down miscalls his book a dissuasive; and that it can have in it no power of moving the understanding one way or other, unless he can first vouch some particularity in the method he takes, above what is in others, in which we experience miscarriage, &c.” If this be true, then his method of demonstration is no way to make men certain of what he pretends to demonstrate; because that is “most evidently no way to an effect which many follow and take, yet arrive not at that effect;” so that “it is plain to common sense, that Mr. S.'s demonstrations can have in them no power of moving the understanding one way or other, unless he can vouch

“some

some particularity in the demonstrations he pretends to bring, above what is in other pretended demonstrations, in which we experience miscarriage." Do not Thomas and Scotus (as Mr. White tells, *Exetasis*, p. 24.) all along pretend to demonstrate? and yet it is generally believed, that, at least where they contradict one another, one of them failed in his demonstrations. Did not Mr. Charles Thynne pretend to have demonstrated, that a man at one jump might leap from London to Rome? and yet I do not think any one was ever satisfied with his demonstration. And Mr. S. knows one in the world, whom I will not name, because he hath since ingeniously acknowledged his error, who thought he had demonstrated the quadrature of the circle; and was so confident of it, as to venture the reputation of his demonstrations in divinity upon it; and some of those divinity-demonstrations were the very same with Mr. S.'s. Since therefore the world hath experienced so much miscarriage in the way of demonstration, before Mr. S.'s demonstrations can be allowed to signify any thing, he must, according to his own law, vouch some particularity in his way and method of demonstration above what is in other mens. He hath not any where, that I remember, told us what that particularity is; wherein his way of demonstration is above other mens: nor can I, upon the most diligent search, find any peculiar advantage that his way has, more than theirs above mentioned; unless this be one, that he pretends to demonstrate a self evident principle, and herein I think he hath plainly the advantage of Mr. Charles Thynne; and unless this may be counted another advantage, that he has so extraordinary a confidence and conceit of his own demonstrations; and in this particular, I must acknowledge, that he clearly excels all that have gone before him. In all other things his way of demonstration is but like his neighbours.

S.E.C.T. II. *Mr. S.'s demonstration à priori.*

§ 1. **I** Come now to examine his demonstrations of this self evident principle, (as he often calls it,) That oral tradition is a certain and infallible way of conveying

ing Christ's doctrine from one age to another, without any corruption or change; which is to say, that it is impossible but that this rule should always have been kept to. That this is not a self-evident principle, need no other evidence, than that he goes about to demonstrate it. But yet, notwithstanding this, I think he had as much reason to call this a self-evident principle, as to call his proofs of it demonstrations.

§ 2. In order to his demonstration *à priori*, he lay these four grounds, which I shall set down in his own words, p. 59, 60. "1. That Christian doctrine was first unanimously settled by the Apostles, in the hearing of the faithful; dispersed in great multitudes over several parts of the world. 2. That this doctrine was firmly believed by all those faithful, to be the way to heaven; and the contradicting or deserting it, to be the way to damnation: so that the greatest hopes and fears imaginable were, by engaging the divine authority; strongly applied to the minds of the first believers, encouraging them to the adhering to the doctrine, and deterring them from relinquishing it; and indeed infinitely greater than any other whatever, springing from any temporal consideration: and that this was in all ages the persuasion of the faithful. 3. That hopes of good, and fears of harm strongly applied, are the causes of actual will. 4. That the thing was feasible, or within their power: that what they were bred to, was knowable by them. Thus put, it follows as certainly, that a great number of the body of the first believers, and after faithful in each age, that is, from age to age, would continue to hold themselves, and teach their children as themselves had been taught, that is, would follow and stick to tradition; as it doth, that a cause, put actually causing, produceth its effect." This is his demonstration, with the grounds of it.

§ 3. To shew the vanity and weakness of this pretended demonstration, I shall assail it these three ways; by shewing, 1. That if the grounds of it were true, they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impossible, which common experience evinceth, and himself must grant to have been. 2. That his main ground

are apparently false. 3. That his demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable instances to the contrary.

SECT. III. *The first answer to his demonstration.*

§ 1. **I**F the grounds of it were true, they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impossible, which common experience evinceth, and himself must grant to have been. For if these two principles be true, "That the greatest hopes and fears are strongly applied to the minds of all Christians," and, "That those hopes and fears strongly applied, are the cause of actual will to adhere constantly to Christ's doctrine," then from hence it follows, that none that entertain this doctrine can ever fall from it; because falling from it is inconsistent with an actual will of adhering constantly to it. For supposing (as he doth) certain and constant causes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine, those who entertain it, must actually will to adhere to it; because "a cause put actually causing, produceth its effect;" which is constant adherence to it. And if this were true, these two things would be impossible: 1. That any Christian should turn apostate or heretic; 2. That any Christian should live wickedly; both which not only frequent and undoubted experience doth evince, but himself must grant *de facto* to have been.

§ 2. *First,* It would be impossible that any Christian should turn apostate or heretic. Heresy, according to him, is nothing else but the renouncing of tradition. Now he tells us, p. 60, that "the first renouncers of tradition must have been true believers, or holders of it ere they renounced it;" and I suppose there is the same reason for apostates. But if all Christians, or true believers (as he calls them) have these arguments of hope and fear strongly applied, and hope and fear strongly applied be the causes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine; it is necessary all Christians should adhere to it, and impossible there should be either apostates or heretics. For if these causes be put in "all the faithful actually causing," (as the grounds of his demonstration suppose,) and "inderecibility be the proper and necessary effect of these causes," as he also saith, p. 75: then

then it is impossible, that where these causes are put, there should be any defection: for a proper and necessary effect cannot but be where the causes of such an effect are put, especially if they be put actually causing; and consequently it is impossible that any single Christian should ever either totally apostatize, or fall into heresy; that is, renounce tradition.

§ 3. And that this is a genuine consequence from these principles, (though he will not acknowledge it here, because he saw it would ruin his demonstration,) is liberally acknowledged by him in other parts of his discourse. For he tells us, *p.* 54. 78. 89. that “it exceeds all the power of nature, (abstracting from the cases of madness, and violent disease,) to blot the knowledge of this doctrine out of the soul of one single believer;” and that “since no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, nor doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate without knowing he doth so, it is a manifest impossibility a whole age should fall into an absurdity so inconsistent with the nature of one single man;” and that “it is perhaps impossible for one single man to attempt to deceive posterity by renouncing tradition.” Which passages laid together, amount to thus much, that it is impossible that tradition should fail in any one single person. And though in the passage last cited he speaks faintly, and with a *perhaps*, as if he apprehended some danger in speaking too peremptorily; yet any one would easily see the last to be as impossible as any of the rest. And he himself elsewhere, being in the full career of his bombast rhetoric, delivers it roundly without fear or wit, *p.* 54. “Sooner may the sinews of entire nature by overstraining crack, and she lose all her activity and motion, that is, herself, than one single part of that innumerable multitude, which integrate that vast testification: which we call tradition, can possibly be violated.”

§ 4. But it may be we deal too hardly with him, and press his demonstration too far, because he tells us he only intends by it to prove, that the generality of Christians will always adhere to tradition. But if he intended to prove no more but this, he should then have brought a demonstration that would have concluded no

more;

more ; but this concludes of all as well as of the generality of Christians. A clear evidence that it is no demonstration, because it concludes that which is evidently false, that there can be no apostates or heretics. Besides, supposing his demonstration to conclude only, that the generality of Christians would always adhere to tradition, this is as plainly confuted by experience, if there be any credit to be given to history. St. Hierom tells us, (*Chron. ad annum Christ. 352.*) that “ Liberius, Bishop of Rome, (for all his particular title to infallibility built upon tradition, as Mr. S. speaks, *corol. 28.*) turned Arian ;” and that “ Arianism was established by the synod of Ariminum ;” which was a council more general than that of Trent (*ibid. ad an. 363*) and that “ almost all the churches in the whole world, under the names of peace and of the Emperor, were polluted by communion with the Arians,” (*ibid. ad an. 364.*) Again, that “ under the Emperor Constantius (Eusebius and Hippatius being Consuls) infidelity was subscribed under the names of unity and faith,” (*ibid. advers. Lucifer.*) ; and “ that the whole world groaned, and wondered to see itself turned Arian,” (*ibid.*) And he uses this as an argument to the Luciferians, to receive into the church those who had been defiled with the heresy of Arius, because the number of those who had kept themselves orthodox was exceeding small : “ For (says he, *ibid.*) the synod of Nice, which consisted of above three hundred Bishops, received eight Arian bishops, whom they might have cast out without any great loss to the church. I wonder, then, how some, and those the followers of the Nicene faith, can think, that three confessors (*viz.* Athanasius, Hilarius, Eusebius) ought not to do that, in case of necessity, for the good and safety of the whole world, which so many and so excellent persons did voluntarily.” It seems Arianism had prevailed very far, when St. Hierom could not name above three eminent persons in the church who had preserved themselves untainted with it. Again, “ Arius in Alexandria was at first but one spark ; but, because it was not presently extinguished, it broke out into a flame, which devoured the whole world,” (*In epist. ad Galat. l. 3.*)

Gregory Nazianzen (*Orat.* 20. § 21.) likewise tells us to the same purpose, that “the Arian heresy seized upon the greatest part of the church.” And, to shew that he knew nothing of Mr. S.’s demonstration of the indefectibility of the generality of Christians, he asks, (*Orat.* 25.) “Where are those that define the church by multitude, and despise the little flock? &c.” And this heresy was of a long continuance; for from its rise, which happened in the 20th year of Constantine, it continued, as Joh. Abbas (*Chron. ad annum octavum Mauri.*) hath calculated it, 266 years. And the Pelagian heresy, if we may believe Bradwardine, one of the great champions of the church against it, did in a manner prevail as much as Arianism; as the said author complains, in his preface to his book, *Causa Dei*, that “almost the whole world was run after Pelagius into error.” Will Mr. S. now say, that, in the height of these heresies, “the generality of Christians did firmly adhere to tradition?” If he say they did, let him answer the express testimonies produced to the contrary: but if they did not, then his demonstration also fails as to the generality of Christians. And if the greater part of Christians may fall off from tradition, what demonstration can make it impossible for the lesser to do so? Who will say it is in reason impossible, that a thousand persons should relinquish tradition, though nine hundred of them have already done it, and though the remainder be no otherwise secured from doing so, than those were who have actually relinquished it? Now, is not this a clear evidence, that this which he calls a demonstration *à priori*, is no such thing? because every demonstration *à priori* must be from causes which are necessary; whereas his demonstration is from voluntary causes. So that unless he can prove, that voluntary causes are necessary, he shall never demonstrate, that it is impossible for the generality of any company of men to err, who have every one of them free will, and are every one of them liable to passion and mistake.

§ 5. From all this it appears, that his whole discourse about the original and progress of heresy, and the multitudes of heretics in several ages, is as clear a confutation of his own demonstration as can be desired. The only

only thing that he offers in that discourse to prevent this objection which he foresaw it liable to is this: "It is not" (says he, p. 65.) to be expected, but that some contingencies should have place, where a whole species in a manner, is to be wrought upon. It sufficeth, that the causes to preserve faith indeficiently entire, are as efficacious as those which are laid for the preservation of mankind; the virtue of faith not being to continue longer than mankind, its only object, does. And they will easily appear as efficacious as the other, if we consider the strength of those causes before explained, and reflect, that they are effectively powerful to make multitudes daily debar themselves of those pleasures which are the causes of mankind's propagation: and, if we look into history for experience of what hath passed in the world since the propagating of Christianity, we shall find more particulars failing in propagating their kind than their faith." To which I answer,

1<sup>st</sup>, That it may reasonably be expected there should be no contingencies in any particulars where causes of actual will are supposed to be put in all; "because (as he says truly) a cause put actually causing, cannot but produce its effect." Suppose, then, constant causes laid in all mankind, of an actual will to speak truth, to the best of their knowledge, were it not reasonable to expect, that there would be no such contingency to the world's end, as that any man should tell a lie? Nay, it were madness for any man to think any such contingency should be, supposing causes actually causing men always to speak truth.

2<sup>dly</sup>, It is far from truth, "that the causes to preserve faith indeficiently entire, are as efficacious as those which are laid for the propagation of mankind." And whereas he would prove the strength of those causes which are laid to preserve faith, because they are "effectively powerful to make multitudes daily debar themselves of those pleasures which are the causes of mankind's propagation;" I hope no body that hath read the innumerable complaints which occur in their own historians, and others of the best and most credible of their own writers, of more than one age, concerning  
the

the general viciousness and debauchery of their priests and monks, which will be over-forward to believe, that all those who debar themselves of lawful marriage, do abstain from those unlawful pleasures.

§ 6. But nothing can be more impudent than what he adds, that “ if we look into histories for experience of “ what hath passed in the world since the first planting of “ Christianity, we shall find far more particulars failing “ in propagating their kind than their faith.” Do any histories confirm it to have been the experience of the world, that the far greatest part of the world did in any age give over propagating their kind? But histories do confirm, that the far greatest part of the Christian world did fall off to Arianism and Pelagianism; and consequently, as he supposeth, did desert and renounce tradition. Did ever whole nations and vast territories of the world either wholly, or for the far greatest part of them, take up an humour against propagating mankind? and yet both history, and the experience of the present age, assures us, that a great part of Asia and of Afric, where the most flourishing churches in the world once were, are fallen off from Christianity, and become either Mahometans or Heathens. In Afric almost all those vast regions which Christianity had gained from Heathenism, Mahometanism hath regained from Christianity. All the north part of Afric, lying along the Mediterranean, where Christianity flourished once as much as ever it did at Rome, is at this time utterly void of Christians, excepting a few towns in the hands of the European princes. And, not to mention all particular places, the large region of Nubia, which had, as is thought, from the Apostles time professed the Christian faith, hath, within these 150 years, for want of ministers (as Alvarez, *Hist. Ethiop.* tells us) quitted Christianity; and is partly revolted to Heathenism, partly fallen off to Mahometanism. So that it seems, that, notwithstanding the argument of hope and fear, the very teachers of tradition may fail in a largely extended church. As for Asia, in the easterly parts of it, there is not now one Christian to four of what there were 500 years ago: and, in the more southerly parts of it, where Christianity had taken the deepest root, the Christians are far inferior in number to the idolaters

idolaters and Mahometans, and do daily decrease. What thinks Mr. S. of all this? Have those Christian nations which are turned Mahometans and Pagans, failed in their faith or not? If they have, I expect from him clear instances of more that have failed in propagating their kind.

§. 7. But besides those who have totally apostatized from Christianity, hath not the whole Greek church, with the Jacobites and Nestorians, and all those other sects which agree with and depend upon these, and which, taken together, are manifoldly greater than the Roman church; I say, have not all these renounced tradition for several ages? And here, in Europe, hath not a great part of Poland, Hungary, both Germanies, France, and Switzerland; have not the kingdoms of Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, and a considerable part of Ireland, in Mr. S.'s opinion, deserted tradition? If I should once see a whole nation fail, because no body would marry, and contribute to the propagating of mankind, and should find this sullen humour to prevail in several nations, and to overspread vast parts of the world. I should then in good earnest think it possible for mankind to fail; unless I could shew it impossible for other nations to do that which I see some to have done, who were every whit as unlikely to have done it. So that whatever cause he assigns of heresy, as pride, ambition, lust, (*p.* 67.) or any other vice or interest, if these can take place in whole nations, and make them renounce tradition, then where is the "efficacy of the causes to preserve faith indefinitely entire in any?" for the demonstration holds as strongly for all Christians as for any.

§ 8. *Secondly*, From these grounds it would follow, that no Christian can live wickedly; because the end of faith being a good life, the arguments of hope and fear must in all reason be as powerful and efficacious causes of a good life, as of a true belief. And that his demonstration proves the one as much as the other, will be evident from his own reasoning: for he argues in this manner, *p.* 62. "Good is the proper object of the will. " Good proposed makes the will to desire that good, and " consequently the known means to obtain it. Now, " infinite goods and harms sufficiently proposed, are of " their own nature incomparably more powerful causes

“ to carry the will, than temporal ones. Since, then,  
 “ when two causes are counterpoised, the lesser, when  
 “ it comes to execution, is no cause as to the subsist-  
 “ ence of that effect; it follows, that there is no cause  
 “ to move the wills of a world of believers to be will-  
 “ ing to do that which they judge would lose themselves  
 “ and their posterity infinite goods, and bring them in-  
 “ finite harm, &c. in case a sufficient proposal or appli-  
 “ cation be not wanting:” which he tells us, *p.* 65. is  
 not wanting; because “ Christianity urged to executi-  
 “ on, gives its followers a new life and a new nature;  
 “ than which a nearer application cannot be imagined.”  
 Doth not this argument extend to the lives of Christians  
 as well as their belief? So that we may as well infer  
 from these grounds, that it is impossible that those who  
 profess Christianity should live contrary to it, as that  
 they should fail to deliver down the doctrine of Christ;  
 because whatever can be an inducement and temptation  
 to any man to contradict this doctrine by his practice,  
 may equally prevail upon him to falsify it. For why  
 should men make any more scruple of damning them-  
 selves and their posterity, by teaching them false doc-  
 trines, than by living wicked lives? which are equally  
 pernicious with heretical doctrines, not only upon ac-  
 count of the bad influence which such examples of fa-  
 thers and teachers are like to have upon their scholars;  
 but likewise they are one of the strongest arguments in  
 the world to persuade them, that their teachers do not  
 themselves believe that religion which they teach; for,  
 if they did, they would live according to it. Why should  
 any man think, that those arguments of hope and fear  
 which will not prevail upon the generality of Christians  
 to make them live holy lives, should be so necessarily  
 efficacious to make them so much concerned for the pre-  
 servation of a right belief? Nay, we have great reason  
 to believe, that such persons will endeavour, as much  
 as may be, to bend and accommodate their belief to  
 their lives. And this is the true source of those innova-  
 tions in faith for which we challenge the church of  
 Rome; which any man may easily discern, who will  
 but consider how all their new doctrines are fitted to a  
 secular interest, and the gratifying of that inordinate ap-  
 petite

petite after riches and dominion which reigns in the court of Rome, and in the upper part of the clergy of that church.

SECT. IV. *The second answer to this demonstration.*

§ 1. **S**ECONDLY, The main grounds of his demonstration are apparently false. For,

1<sup>st</sup>, This demonstration supposeth, that the generality of Christian parents, in all ages, perfectly understood the doctrine of Christ, and did not mistake any part of it; that they remembered it perfectly, and that they were faithful and diligent to instruct their children in it: which is as contrary to experience, as that the generality of Christians are knowing and honest. It supposeth likewise, that this doctrine, and every substantial part of it, was received and remembered by the generality of children as it was taught, and was understood perfectly by them without the least material mistake. So he tells us, *p.* 53. that “the substance of faith comes clad in such plain matters of fact, that the most stupid man living cannot possibly be ignorant of it.” But whether this be reasonable to be supposed or no, may easily be determined, not only from every man’s own experience of the world, but from a more advantageous instance of the experience of the first age of Christianity. Was there ever a more knowing and diligent teacher of this doctrine than our Saviour? and yet his disciples fell into many mistakes concerning it: so that, in order to the certain propagating of it, the wisdom of God thought it requisite to endue even those who had learned this doctrine from himself, with an infallible spirit, by which they might be led into all truth, and secured from error and mistake; which had been unnecessary, had it been impossible for them to mistake this doctrine. The Apostles, who taught the world by an infallible spirit, and with infinitely more advantage than ordinary parents can teach their children; yet in all the churches which they planted, they found Christians very apt to mistake and pervert their doctrine, as appears by their frequent complaints in most of their epistles. Nay, the Apostle chargeth the generality of the Hebrews with such a degree of

dulness and stupidity, that after sitting time and means of instruction, they were still ignorant of the very principles of Christianity. So he tells them, chap. v. 11. 12. that *when for the time they ought to be teachers of others, they had need that one should teach them again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.* And St. Hierom (*advers. Lucifer.*) tells us, that “the primitive churches were tainted with many gross errors, whilst the Apostles were alive, and the blood of Christ yet warm in Judea.” But it may be there have been better teachers since, and children are more apt to learn now than men were then. Who knows how the world may be changed?

§ 2. *2dly*, This demonstration supposeth the hopes and fears which Christian religion applies to mens minds, to be certain and necessary causes of actual will in men, to adhere to the doctrine of Christ; and consequently, that they must necessarily adhere to it. That he supposeth them to be necessary, I have his own word for it; for he tells us, *p.* 74. that “he hath endeavoured to demonstrate the indefectibleness of tradition, as the proper and necessary effect of those causes which preserve and continue tradition on foot;” and what those causes are, he told us before, *p.* 60. that “they are hopes and fears strongly applied.” But I hope, that the indefectibleness of tradition cannot be a necessary effect of the strong application of those hopes and fears, unless those hopes and fears be a necessary cause of that effect. And indeed this is sufficiently implied in his saying, that “they are the causes of actual will in Christians to adhere to tradition.” For if these causes of actual will be constant (as he must suppose) then they are certain, and necessary, and infallible causes of adhering to this doctrine: for whatever is in act, is necessary while it is so; and if it be constantly in act, the effect is always necessary. But what a wild supposition is this, that moral motives and arguments working upon a free principle, the will of man, do necessarily produce their effect? Is it necessary, that the hopes of heaven and the fears of hell should keep Christians constant to the doctrine of Christ? and is it not as necessary, that these arguments should prevail upon them to the practice of it? It is in vain to go about to demonstrate

strate, that all men must be good, who have sufficient arguments propounded to them, when experience tells us the contrary. Nay, it is in reason impossible, that moral arguments should be of a necessary and infallible efficacy; because they are always propounded to a free agent, who may chuse whether he will yield to them or not. Indeed it is always reasonable, that men should yield to them; and if they be reasonable, they will: but so long as they are free, it can never be infallibly certain that they will. And if men be not free, it is no virtue at all in them to be wrought upon by these arguments. For what virtue can it be in any man, to entertain the Christian doctrine, and adhere to it, and live accordingly, if he does all this necessarily; that is, whether he will or no; and can no more chuse whether he will do so or not, than whether he will see the light when the sun shines upon his open eyes, or whether he will hear a sound when all the bells in the town are ringing in his ears; or (to use Mr. S.'s own similitudes, b. 53.) whether he will "feel heat, cold, pain, pleasure, or any other material quality that affects his senses?" We see then how unreasonable his suppositions are; and yet, without these grounds, his demonstration fails: for, if it be possible that Christians may mistake or forget the doctrine of Christ, or any part of it, or be defective in diligence to instruct others in it; or if it be possible that the will of man, which is free, may not be necessarily and infallibly swayed by the arguments of hope and fear: then it is possible that tradition may fail. And is not this a good demonstration, which supports itself upon such principles, as do directly affront the constant experience and the clearest reason of mankind?

§ 3. And here I cannot but take notice, how inconsistent he is to himself in laying the grounds of tradition's certainty. In one part of his book he tells us, b. 53. that "tradition hath for its basis the best nature in the universe, that is, man's; not according to his moral part, defectible by reason of original corruption; nor yet his intellectuals, darkly groping the pursuit of science, &c. but according to those faculties in him, perfectly and necessarily subject to the operations and strokes of nature, that is his eyes,

“ ears, handling, and the direct impression of knowledge, as naturally and necessarily issuing from the affecting those senses, as it is to feel heat, cold, pain, pleasure, or any other material quality.” So that, according to this discourse, the basis of tradition is not man’s nature considered as moral, and capable of intellectual reflection; for in this consideration, it is dark and defectible: but man’s nature, considered as capable of direct sensitive knowledge, as acting naturally and necessarily: which is to say, that tradition is founded in the nature of man, considered not as a man, but a brute; under which consideration, I see no reason why he should call it the best nature in the universe. But now, how will he reconcile this discourse with the grounds of his demonstration, where he tells us, that the stability of tradition is founded in the arguments of hope and fear; the objects of which being future and at a distance, cannot work upon a man immediately by direct impressions upon his senses, but must work upon him by way of intellectual reflection and consideration? For I hope he will not deny, but that the arguments of hope and fear work upon man according to his moral and intellectual part, else how are they arguments? And if a man, according to his moral part, be (as he says) defectible, how can the indefectibility of tradition be founded in those arguments which work upon man only according to his moral part? I have purposely all along, both for the reader’s ease and mine own, neglected to take notice of several of his inconsistencies; but these are such clear and transparent contradictions, that I could do no less than make an example of them.

SECT. V. *The third answer to his demonstration.*

§ 1. **T**Hirdly, This demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable instances to the contrary. I will mention but two.

1<sup>st</sup>, The tradition of the one true God, which was the easiest to be preserved of any doctrine in the world, being short and plain, planted in every man’s nature, and perfectly suited to the reason of mankind. And yet  
this

this tradition, not having passed through many hands, by reason of the long age of man, was so defaced and corrupted, that the world did lapse into polytheism and idolatry. Now, a man that were so hardy as to demonstrate against matter of fact, might, by a stronger demonstration than Mr. S.'s, prove, that though it be certain this tradition hath failed, yet it was impossible it should fail: as Zeno demonstrated the impossibility of motion, against Diogenes walking before his eyes. For the doctrine of the one true God "was settled in the heart of Noah, and firmly believed by him to be the way to happiness; and the contradicting or deserting of this, to be the way to misery." And this doctrine was by him so taught to his children; who were encouraged by these motives, to adhere to this doctrine, and to propagate it to their children, and were deterred by them from relinquishing it. And this was in all ages the persuasion of the faithful." Now, the "hopes of happiness, and the fears of misery, strongly applied, are the causes of actual will. Besides, the thing was feasible, or within their power; that is, what they were bred to, was knowable by them;" and that much more easily than any other doctrine whatsoever, being short, and plain, and natural. "This put, it follows as certainly, that a great number in each age would continue to hold themselves, and teach their children as themselves had been been taught, that is, would follow and stick to this tradition of the one true God, as it doth, that a cause put actually causing, produceth its effect. Actually, I say; for since the cause is put, and the patient disposed, it follows inevitably, that the cause is put still actually causing." This demonstration, which concludes an apparent falshood, hath the whole strength of Mr. S.'s, and several advantages beyond it. For the doctrine conveyed by this tradition, is the most important, being the first principle of all religion; the danger of corrupting it as great, the facility of preserving it much greater, than of the Christian doctrine, for the causes before mentioned: and yet, after all, it signifies nothing against certain experience, and unquestionable matter of fact; only it sufficiently shews the vanity of

Mr. S.'s pretended demonstration, built upon the same or weaker grounds.

§ 2. *2dly*, The other instance shall be in the Greek church, who received the Christian doctrine as entire from the Apostles, and had as great an obligation to propagate it truly to posterity, and the same "fears and hopes strongly applied, to be the actual causes of will;" in a word, all the same arguments and causes to preserve and continue tradition on foot, which the Roman church had: and yet, to the utter confusion of Mr. S.'s demonstration, tradition hath failed among them. For, as speculators, they deny the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son; and, as testifiers, they disown any such doctrine to have been delivered to them by the precedent age, or to any other age of their church, by the Apostles, as the doctrine of Christ.

§ 3. To this instance of the Greek church, because Mr. White hath offered something by way of answer, I shall here consider it. He tells us, (*Apology for tradition, p. 51.*) that "the plea of the Greek church is non-tradition; alledging only this, that their fathers did not deliver the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost; not that they say the contrary: which clearly demonstrates there are no opposite traditions between them and us." But this was not the thing Mr. White was concerned to do, to demonstrate there were no opposite traditions between the Greeks and the Latins, but to secure his main demonstration of the impossibility of tradition's failing, against this instance. For that the Greeks have no such tradition as this, "that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Son," is as good evidence of the failure of tradition, as if they had a positive tradition, "that he proceeds only from the Father;" especially if we consider, that they (*Phoc. ep. 7.*) charge the Latin church with innovation in this matter; and say, that the addition of that clause, "of the procession from the Son also," is a corruption of the ancient faith, and a devilish invention. Why then does Mr. White go about to baffle so material an objection, and I fear his own conscience likewise, by a pitiful evasion, instead of a solid answer? What though there be no opposite traditions between the Greek and Latin church?

yet,

yet if their faith be opposite, will it not from hence follow that tradition hath failed in one of them? I wonder that Mr. White, who hath so very well confuted the infallibility of Popes and councils, and thereby undermined the very foundation of that religion, should not, by the same light of reason, discover the fondness of his own opinion concerning the infallibility of oral tradition, which hath more and greater absurdities in it than that which he confutes. And to shew Mr. White the absurdity of it, I will apply his demonstration of the infallibility of Christian tradition in general, to the Greek church in particular; by which every one will see, that it does as strongly prove the impossibility of tradition's failing in the Greek church, as in the Roman Catholic, as they are pleased to call it. His demonstration is this: (*De fid. & theolog. tract. 1. § 4.*) "Christ commanded his Apostles to preach to all the world; and lest any one should doubt of the effect, he sent his Spirit into them, to bring to their remembrance what he had taught them; which Spirit did not only give them a power to do what he inclined them to, but did cause them actually to do it." I cannot but take notice by the way, of the ill consequence of this; which is, that men may doubt whether those who are to teach the doctrine of Christ will remember it, and teach it to others, unless they have that extraordinary and efficacious assistance of the Holy Ghost, which the Apostles had. If this be true, his demonstration is at an end; for he cannot plead that this assistance hath been continued ever since the Apostles. He proceeds, "The Apostles preached this doctrine; the nations understood it, lived according to it, and valued it as that which was necessary to them and their posterity incomparably beyond any thing else." All this I suppose done to and by the Greeks, as well as any other nation. "These things being put, it cannot enter into any man's understanding, but that the Christian [Greeks] of the first age, being the scholars of the Apostles, could and would earnestly commend the Christian doctrine to their posterity; if so, it is evident that they did. So that the continuance of purity of the faith in the [Greek] church, is founded upon this, that fathers always delivered the

" same

“ same doctrine to their children which they had received from their fathers, and did believe it under this very notion and title as received. Nor could any one [of that church] deliver another doctrine under this title, but he would be convinced of a lie by the rest : and if the whole [Greek] church should endeavour to deliver a new doctrine under that title, [and there is the same reason if they should leave out any article of the old doctrine] that whole age would be in their consciences condemned of perfidiousness and parricide. Now, this is as impossible, as it is that all mankind should conspire to kill themselves.” And he afterwards (*ibid.* § 3.) gives the reason why it is so impossible that tradition should fail, and it is a very bold and saucy one, that “ if the tradition of the Christian faith be not more firm than the course of the sun and moon, and the propagation of mankind, then God hath shewn himself an unskilful artificer.” What is there in all this demonstration which may not be accommodated to the Greek church with as much force and advantage as to the Catholic ? unless he can shew, that it is very possible that all the men in Greece may conspire to kill themselves, but yet absolutely impossible that all the men in the world should do so ; which I am sure he cannot shew, unless he can demonstrate, that though it be possible for a million of as wise men as any are to be found in the world together, to conspire to do a foolish action, yet it is impossible that a hundred millions, not one jot wiser than the other, should agree together to the doing of it.

§ 4. From all this it appears, that Mr. White’s answer to this objection doth not signify any thing to his purpose. For if the procession of the Holy Ghost was part of Christ’s doctrine, then it was delivered by the Apostles to the Greek church ; if so, they could not fail to deliver it down to the next age, and that to the next, and so on ; but it seems they have failed. Where then is “ the force of hopes and fears strongly applied ?” Where are “ the certain causes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine ?” Why is not the effect produced, “ the causes being put actually causing ?” If the Apostles delivered this doctrine, oral tradition is so clear and unmistakeable,

unmistakeable, and “ brings down faith clad in such plain matters of fact, that the most stupid man living (much less the Greeks, that were the flower of mankind) could not possibly be ignorant of it,” *p.* 53, 54; nay, “ it exceeds all the power of nature, to blot knowledge, thus fixed, out of the soul of one single believer,” *ibid.* [much more out of so vast a church]. And since no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate without knowing he did so, it is a manifest impossibility a whole church should in any age fall into an absurdity so inconsistent with the nature of one single man,” *p.* 78. And since “ it is natural for every man to speak truth, and grace is to perfect nature in whatever is good in it, it follows, that one truly Christian heart is far more fixed to veracity, than others not imbued with those heavenly tenets; and consequently that a multitude of such must incomparably exceed, in point of testifying, the same number of others unfortified by Christ’s doctrine,” *p.* 86. And since such a thought cannot enter into the most depraved nature, as to harm another without any good to himself; and yet this must be, if we put Christian fathers misteaching their children unreceived doctrine for received, [and I hope, for the same reason, received doctrines for unreceived], contrary to their knowledge. For supposing sanctity in the [Greek] church, [and why may not we as well as in the Latin?] that is, that multitudes in it make heaven their first love, and look on spiritual goods as their main concern, &c. it follows, that had the fathers [of that church], in any age, consented to mislead their posterity from what themselves [not only] conceived [but knew] to be true, they should do the most extreme harm imaginable to others, without any the least good to themselves; which is perhaps impossible in one single man, more in few, but infinitely in a multitude, especially of good men,” *p.* 89.

§ 5. Thus I might apply the rest of his ranting rhetoric (but that I am weary of transcribing it) concerning “ the natural love of parents to their children,” *p.* 90. 91. (unless we suppose the Greek church destitute of it), which must

must needs engage them to use the proper means to bring them to heaven, and save them from hell: as also concerning "the natural care men have of not losing their credit, by telling pernicious lies." And, not to omit the best part of his demonstration, *p.* 93. (which was therefore prudently reserved to the last place), I must likewise shew, how the principles of each science, arithmetic, geometry, logic, nature, morality, historical prudence, politics, metaphysics, divinity, and, last of all, the new science of controversy, (as he calls it), or the blessed art of eternal wrangling and disputing, (the first principle whereof he tells us, is, "That tradition is certain," do all contribute to shew the certainty of tradition; that is, the impossibility that any part of Christ's doctrine should fail in the Greek church, any more than in the Latin. And surely arithmetic, geometry, natural philosophy, metaphysics, &c. will all stand up for the Greek church in this quarrel; for considering that Greece was the place where the arts and sciences were born and bred, it is not to be imagined, that they should be so disingenuous and unnatural, as not to contribute their best assistance to the service of their country.

§ 6. But it may be the Greeks cannot so justly pretend to oral tradition as the Latins. What if St. Peter, the head of the apostles, thought fit to share scripture and tradition between these two churches, and laying his left hand on the Greek church, and his right on the Latin, was pleased to confer the great blessing of oral tradition upon the Latin church? which being to be the seat of infallibility, it was but fitting that she should be furnished with this infallible way of conveying the Christian doctrine. And therefore it may be, that as the scriptures of the new testament were left in Greek, so oral tradition was delivered down only in Latin. This, I confess, is not altogether without some shew of reason. Mr. S. may do well to take the matter into his deeper consideration; he hath in his time improved as weak improbabilities as these into lusty demonstrations. And if he could but demonstrate this, it would very much weaken the force of this instance of the Greek church: Otherwise (for ought I see) this instance will hold good against him:

and

and whatever he can say for the impossibility of tradition's failing in the Latin church, may all be said of the Greek church; if he will but grant that the Apostles preached the same doctrine to them both; that the arguments of hope and fear which this doctrine contains in it, were applied as strongly to the Greeks as to the Latins. And yet, notwithstanding all this, tradition hath plainly failed in the Greek church. Let him now assign the age wherein so vast a number of men conspired to leave out the article of the procession of the Holy Ghost, and shew, how it was possible a whole age could conspire together to damn their posterity, or how the faith of immediate forefathers might be altered, without any such conspiracy; and we are ready to satisfy him how the doctrine of the Latin church might be corrupted and altered, and to tell him punctually in what age it was done. And until he do this, I would intreat him to trouble us no more with those canting questions, (wherein yet the whole force of his demonstration lies) How is it possible a whole age should conspire to change the doctrine of their forefathers? and, In what age was this done? For if it be reasonable to demand of us, in order to the overthrowing of his demonstration, to assign the particular age wherein the Latin church conspired to change the ancient doctrine; with the same reason we require of him, in order to the maintaining of his demonstration, to name the particular age wherein the Greek church conspired to alter the doctrine of Christ, (which was undoubtedly in the first age truly delivered to them by the Apostles) and also to shew, from the rational force and strength of tradition, how it is more impossible for the whole church to have failed in transmitting the doctrine of Christ down to us, or to have conspired to the altering of it, than for such a multitude of Christians as is the vast body of the Greek church. If Mr. S. or Mr. White shew this, they do something; otherwise I must tell them, that unless they can manage these pretty things they call *demonstrations* better, they must shortly either quit their reason, or their religion; or else return to the honest old *Mumpsimus*, of the infallibility of the church from an extraordinary and immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost: or (to make the business short, and stop

all gaps with one bush) come over to the Jesuits, and acknowledge the Pope's infallibility both in matters of faith and fact; by which means they may reconcile themselves to him, and prevent that direful stroke which threatens them from Rome, and is ready to cut them off from the body of the traditionary church. And thus I have done with his first demonstration; and I take it for a good sign that the Popish cause is at a very low ebb, when such stuff as this must be called demonstration.

SECT. VI. *Mr. S.'s demonstration à posteriori.*

§ 1. **I** Come now to his demonstration *à posteriori*: which although it falls of itself if the demonstration *à priori* fail, yet because it hath some peculiar absurdities of its own, I shall consider it by itself, as well as with relation to the other.

§ 2. Before he comes to lay it down, with the grounds of it, according to his usual fashion, he premiseth something as yielded by Protestants, which, in his sense, no Protestant ever granted. Just so he dealt with us before concerning the scriptures, saying, that by them the Protestants "must mean unsensed letters and characters." But let us see what it is, p. 76. That "this demonstration *à posteriori* seems a needless endeavour against the Protestants, who yield, that those points in which we agree, as the Trinity, incarnation, &c. came down by this way of tradition; and this (he saith) no Protestant ever denied." And then he asks, "Whether the same virtue of tradition would not have been as powerful to bring down other points in which we do not agree, had any such been?" Now, if he speak any thing to his own purpose, he must suppose Protestants to yield, that all those points wherein we are agreed were conveyed down to us solely by oral tradition without writing: but this all Protestants deny. So that that only which would avail his cause against us, is, to shew, that those points wherein we differ, have not only come down to us by oral teaching, but that they are likewise contained in scripture, without which, we say we can have no sufficient certainty and assurance at this distance

distance, that they were the doctrine of Christ, and that they were not either totally innovated, or else corrupted in the conveyance, from what they were at first. And if he can shew this concerning any point in difference, I promise to yield to him.

§ 3. I come to his demonstration, which I shall set down in his own words, with the principles upon which it relies, p. 77. 78. "The effect then we will pitch upon, and avow to be the proper one of such a cause, is, the present persuasion of traditionary Christians, (or Catholics) that their faith hath descended from Christ and his Apostles uninterruptedly, which we find most firmly rooted in their heart: and the existence of this persuasion we affirm to be impossible, without the existence of tradition's ever indeficiency to beget it. To prove this, I lay this first principle, That age which holds her faith thus delivered from the Apostles, neither can itself have changed any thing in it, nor know or doubt that any age since the Apostles had changed or innovated therein. The second principle shall be this: no age could innovate any thing, and withal deliver that very thing to posterity as received from Christ by continual succession." The sum of which is this, That because a present multitude of Christians (*viz.* the Roman church) are persuaded, that Christ's doctrine hath descended to them solely by an uninterrupted oral tradition; therefore this persuasion is an effect which cannot be attributed to any other cause, but the indeficiency of oral tradition. For if neither the present age, nor any age before, could make any change or innovation, then the persuasion of the present age is a plain demonstration, that this doctrine was always the same, and consequently that tradition cannot fail.

§ 4. In answer to this, I shall endeavour to make good these four things.

1. That these principles wholly rely upon the truth of the grounds of his demonstration *à priori*.

2. That these principles are not sufficiently proved by him.

3. That doctrines and practices, which must be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the same pretence to uninterrupted tradition.

4. That it is not the present persuasion of the church of Rome, (whom he calls the traditionary Christians) nor ever was, that their faith hath descended to them solely by oral tradition. If I can now make good these four things, I hope his demonstration is at an end.

SECT. VII. *The first answer to his second demonstration.*

§ 1. **T**HAT these principles wholly rely upon the truth of the grounds of his demonstration *à priori*. For if the doctrine of Christ was either imperfectly taught in any age, or mistaken by the learners, or any part of it forgotten, (as it seems the whole Greek church have forgot that fundamental point of the procession of the Holy Ghost, as the Roman church accounts it,) or if the arguments of hope and fear be not necessary causes of actual will to adhere to tradition, then there may have been changes and innovations in any age, and yet men may pretend to have followed tradition. But I have shewn, that ignorance, and negligence, and mistake, and pride, and lust, and ambition, and any other vice or interest, may hinder those causes from being effectual to preserve tradition entire and uncorrupted. And when they do so, it is not to be expected, that those persons who innovate and change the doctrine, should acknowledge that their new doctrines are contrary to the doctrine of Christ; but that they should at first advance them as pious; and after they have prevailed, and gained general entertainment, then impudently affirm, that they were the very doctrines which Christ delivered; which they may very securely do, when they have it in their power to burn all that shall deny it.

§ 2. I will give a clear instance of the possibility of this in the doctrine of transubstantiation, by shewing how this might easily come in, in the ninth or tenth age after Christ. We will suppose then, that about this time, when universal ignorance, and the genuine daughter of it, (call her devotion or superstition) had overspread the world, and the generality of people were strongly inclined to believe strange things; and even the greatest contradictions were recommended to them under the notion of mysteries; being told by their priests  
and

and guides, that the more contradictory any thing is to reason, the greater merit there is in believing it: I say, let us suppose, that, in this state of things, one or more of the most eminent then in the church, either out of design, or out of superstitious ignorance and mistake of the sense of our Saviour's words used in the consecration of the sacrament, should advance this new doctrine, that the words of consecration, *This is my body*, are not to be understood by any kind of trope (as the like forms in scripture are, as, *I am the vine*, *I am the door*, which are plain tropes) but being used about this great mystery of the sacrament, ought in all reason to be supposed to contain in them some notable mystery; which they will do, if they be understood of a real change of the substance of bread and wine, made by virtue of these words, into the real body and blood of our Saviour. And in all this I suppose nothing, but what is so far from being impossible, that it is too usual for men, either out of ignorance, or interest, to advance new opinions in religion. And such a doctrine as this was very likely to be advanced by the ambitious clergy of that time, as a probable means to draw in the people to a greater veneration of them; which advantage Mr. Rushworth seems to be very sensible of, when he tells (*Dial.* 1. § 4.) that the power of the priest in this particular, is, "such a privilege, as if all the learned clerks that ever lived since the beginning of the world, should have studied to raise, advance, and magnify some one state of men to the highest pitch of reverence and eminency, they could never, without special light from heaven, have thought of any thing comparable to this." I am of this mind, that it was a very notable device; but, I am apt to think, invented "without any special light from heaven." Nor was such a doctrine less likely to take and prevail among the people, in an age prodigiously ignorant, and strongly inclined to superstition, and thereby well prepared to receive the grossest absurdities under the notion of mysteries; especially if they were such as might seem to conciliate a greater honour and reverence to the sacrament. Now, supposing such a doctrine as this, so fitted to the humour and temper of the age, to be once asserted, either by chance, or

out of design, it would take like wild-fire; especially if, by some one or more who bore sway in the church, it were but recommended with convenient gravity and solemnity. And altho' Mr. Rushworth says (*Dial.* 3. § 7.) "it is impossible that the authority of one man should sway so much in the world; because (says he) surely the devil himself would rather help the church, than permit so little pride among men;" yet I am not so thoroughly satisfied with this cunning reason: for tho' he delivers it confidently, and with a *surely*; yet I make some doubt, whether the devil would be so forward to help the church; nay, on the contrary, I am inclined to think, that he would rather chuse to connive at this humble and obsequious temper in men, in order to the overthrow of religion, than cross a design so dear to him, by unreasonable temptations to pride. So that, notwithstanding Mr. Rushworth's reason, it seems very likely that such a doctrine, in such an age, might easily be propagated by the influence and authority of one or a few great persons in the church. For nothing can be more suitable to the easy and passive temper of superstitious ignorance, than to entertain such a doctrine with all imaginable greediness, and to maintain it with a proportionable zeal. And if there be any wiser than the rest, who make objections against it, as if this doctrine were new, and full of contradictions, they may easily be born down by the stream, and by the eminency and authority, and pretended sanctity of those who are the heads of this innovation. And when this doctrine is generally swallowed, and all that oppose it are looked upon and punished as heretics, then it is seasonable to maintain, that this doctrine was the doctrine of forefathers; to which end it will be sufficient to those who are willing to have it true, to bend two or three sayings of the ancients to that purpose. And as for the contradictions contained in this doctrine, it was but telling the people then, as they do in effect now, that contradiction ought to be no scruple in the way of faith; that the more impossible any thing is, it is the fitter to be believed; that it is not praise-worthy to believe plain possibilities; but this is the gallantry and heroical power of faith, this is the way to oblige God almighty for ever to

us,

us, to believe flat and downright contradictions: for “ God requires at the people’s hands (as Mr. Rushworth tells us, *Dial.* 1. § 4.) a credulity of things above and beyond nature; nay, beyond all the fables, be it spoken with respect, that ever man invented.” After this doctrine hath proceeded thus far, and, by the most inhumane severities and cruelties, suppressed dissenters, or in a good measure rooted them out; then, if they please, even this new word *transubstantiation* may pretend also to antiquity, and in time be confidently vouched for a word used by Christians in all ages, and transmitted down to them by those from whom they received the doctrine of the sacrament, as a term of art appendent to it. And when a superstitious church, and designing governors, have once gained this post, and by means of this enormous article of transubstantiation, have sufficiently debauched the minds of men, and made a breach in their understandings wide enough for the entertaining of any error, tho’ ever so gross and senseless; then innovations come in amain, and by shoals; and the more absurd and unreasonable any thing is, it is for that very reason the more proper matter for an article of faith. And if any of these innovations be objected against, as contrary to the former belief and practice, it is but putting forth a lusty act of faith, and believing another contradiction, that tho’ they be contrary, yet they are the same.

§ 3. And there is nothing in all this but what is agreeable both to history and experience. For that the ninth and tenth ages, and those which followed them till the reformation, were thus prodigiously ignorant and superstitious, is confirmed by the unanimous consent of all histories; and even by those writers that have been the greatest pillars of their own religion. And experience tells us, that in what age soever there are a great company of superstitious people, there will never be wanting a few crafty fellows to make use of this easy and pliable humour to their own ends. Now, that this was the state of those ages of the church, will be evident to any from these testimonies. Platina (*in vit. Romani, Papæ* 116. a. C. 900.) writes of Pope Romanus, that he nulled the acts of his predecessor Stéphanus: “ for (says he) these  
“ Popes

“ Popes minded nothing else but how they might extinguish both the name and dignity of their predecessors.” And if so, who can doubt, but that these Popes who made it their business to destroy the very memory of their ancestors, would be very careful to preserve the doctrine of forefathers. But what the care of those times was in this particular, may be conjectured from what Onuphrius says (*in Platin.*) by way of confutation of that passage in Platina, concerning Pope Joan’s reading publicly at Rome, at her first coming thither. “ This (says he) is utterly false; for there was nothing that they were less solicitous about in those times, than to furnish the city with any public teachers.” And the time which Onuphrius speaks of, was much about the beginning of the tenth century. Phil. Burgomensis says (*anno 906*) “ It happened in that age, through the slothfulness of men, that there was a general decay of virtue both in the head and members.” Again (*anno 908*) “ These times, through the ambition and cruel tyranny of the Popes, were extremely unhappy: for the Popes setting aside the fear of God, and his worship, fell into such enmities among themselves as cruel tyrants exercise towards one another.” Sabellicus says (*Ennead. 9. l. 1. anno 900*) “ It is wonderful to observe what a strange forgetfulness of all arts did about this time seize upon men; insomuch that neither the Popes, nor other princes, seemed to have any sense or apprehension of any thing that might be useful to human life. There were no wholesome laws, no reparations of churches, no pursuit of liberal arts; but a kind of stupidity and madness, and forgetfulness of manners, had possessed the minds of men.” And a little after: “ I cannot (says he) but much wonder from whence these tragical examples of Popes should spring; and how their minds should come to be so devoid of all piety, as neither to regard the person which they sustained, nor the place they were in.” Sigonius (*De regn. Ital. l. 6.*) speaking of these times, about the beginning of the tenth century, calls them “ the foulest and blackest, both in respect of the wickedness of princes, and the madness of the people, there are to be found in all antiquity.” Genebrard (*Chron. l. 4.*) speaking of the same time: “ This

(“ says

“ (says he) is called the unhappy age ; being destitute  
“ of men eminent for wit and learning, as also of fa-  
“ mous princes and Popes. In this time there was  
“ scarce any thing done worthy to be remembered by  
“ posterity.” And he adds afterwards, “ But chiefly  
“ unhappy in this one thing, that, for almost an hun-  
“ dred and fifty years together, about fifty Popes did  
“ utterly degenerate from the virtue of their ancestors.”  
He should have added farther, but even to a miracle  
happy in another respect, that, during this long and to-  
tal degeneracy from the piety and virtue of their ances-  
tors, they did not in the least swerve from them in mat-  
ter of faith and doctrine : a thing incredible, were there  
not demonstration for it. Werner (*Fascic. tempor.*)  
gives this character of that time : “ About the year of  
“ our Lord one thousand, there began an effeminate  
“ time, in which the Christian faith began to degene-  
“ rate exceedingly, and to decline from its ancient vi-  
“ gour ; infomuch that, in many countries of Christen-  
“ dom, neither sacraments nor ecclesiastical rites were  
“ observed :—and people were given to soothsaying and  
“ witchcraft ; and the priest was like the people.” It  
seems, by this testimony, that tradition did falter a lit-  
tle in that age ; else the Christian faith could not possi-  
bly have degenerated and declined so very much ; and,  
which threatens Mr. S.’s demonstration most of all, that  
the practical tradition of sacraments, and other ecclesi-  
astical observances, did fail in many Christian countries.  
Gerbert, who lived in that time, gives this short charac-  
ter of the Roman church, in an epistle of his (*ep. 40.*)  
to Stephen, Deacon of that church, “ The world stands  
“ amazed at the manners of Rome.” But most full is  
the complaint of a great prelate of the church concern-  
ing those times : “ In the West, (says he, *Bell. Sacr. l.*  
“ 5. c. 8.) and almost all the world over, especially  
“ among those who are called *the faithful*, faith failed,  
“ and there was no fear of God among them.” It seems  
the argument of fear had lost its force. “ Justice was  
“ perished from among them ; and violence prevailing  
“ against equity, governed the nations. Fraud, deceit,  
“ and the arts of cozenage, were grown universal. All  
“ kind of virtue gave way as an useles thing, and wic-  
“ kedness

“ kedness supplied its place. The world seemed to be  
 “ declining apace towards its evening, and the second  
 “ coming of the Son of man to draw near : for love  
 “ was grown cold, and faith was not found upon earth.  
 “ All things were in confusion, and the world looked  
 “ as if it would return to its old chaos.—All sorts of  
 “ fornication were committed with the same freedom as  
 “ if they had been lawful actions, for men neither blush-  
 “ ed at them, nor were punished for them —Nor did  
 “ the clergy live better than the people : for the bishops  
 “ were grown negligent of the duty of their place, &c.  
 “ In a word, men ran themselves headlong into all vice,  
 “ and all flesh had corrupted its way.” And farther,  
 to shew the great neglect of priests and bishops in the  
 work of teaching and instructing, which is so necessary  
 to the preserving of tradition inviolable, I will add the  
 testimony of one (*Elfric. serm. ad sacerdot.*) who lived in  
 those times ; who tells us, that “ in those days the  
 “ priests and bishops, who ought to have been the pil-  
 “ lars of the church, were so negligent, that they did  
 “ not mind the divine scripture ; nor take any care to  
 “ teach and instruct scholars that might succeed them,  
 “ as we read holy men had used to do, who left many  
 “ scholars perfectly instructed to be their successors.”  
 If they had only neglected the scriptures, all might  
 have been well enough ; but it seems they took no care  
 to instruct people in the way of oral tradition, nor to  
 furnish the church with a new generation of able teach-  
 ers, who might “ deliver down from hand to hand the  
 “ sense and faith of forefathers.” This last testimony  
 the late learned Lord Primate of Ireland, bishop Usher,  
 (in his book *De Christian. eccles. success. &c. c. 2. & 3.*  
 where several of the testimonies I have produced, with  
 many more to the same purpose, may be seen,) cites out  
 of a MS. in Bennet college library in Cambridge ; con-  
 cerning the authority of which MS. there need be no  
 dispute between Mr. S. and me ; because the whole force  
 and effect of this testimony is sufficiently contained in  
 those citations which I have brought out of public and  
 unquestionable books.

§ 4. All these testimonies which I have produced, are,  
 in general, and for the substance of them, confirmed by

two of the greatest props of the Romish church, Bellarmine and Baronius. Bellarmine (*De Rom. Pontif. l. 4. c. 12.*) says of his tenth age, that “there was never any either more unlearned or more unhappy.” Baronius (*Annal. tom. 10. ann. 900.*) speaks more particularly: “What was then the face of the Roman church? How deformed? when whores, no less powerful than vile, bore the chief sway at Rome; and, at their pleasure, changed sees, appointed bishops, and (which it is horrible to mention,) did thrust into St. Peter’s see their own gallants, false Popes, who would not have been mentioned in the catalogue of the Roman Popes, but only for the more distinct recording of so long a succession of times?” And a little after, “Christ was then, it seems, in a very deep sleep;—and, which was worse, when the Lord was thus asleep, there were no disciples to awaken him, being themselves fast asleep. What kind of Cardinals, Presbyters, and Deacons, can we think were chosen by these monsters, when nothing is so natural as for every one to propagate his own likeness?” It is very much that these lewd women, and their favourite Popes, Cardinals, and Bishops, who then swayed the church, should, when they were so careless of their own souls, be so tender of the salvation of posterity; and when they administered all other affairs of the church so extravagantly, should be so careful of the main chance, as to transmit the Christian doctrine entire and uncorrupted to succeeding ages. Yet Mr. S. hath demonstrated this *à posteriori*, which seems so very strange to a man that considers things *à priori*.

§ 5. But it may be this dismal state of the Roman church lasted but a little while; and she did in the same age, before tradition could be interrupted, recover herself out of this degenerate condition. I will therefore inquire a little into the state of succeeding times. And I find, in the thirteenth century, St. Bernard (*in convers. Sancti Pauli, serm. 1.*) complaining, that the degeneracy of the priests was in his days greater than ever: “We cannot (says he) now say, As is the people, so is the priest; for the people are not so bad as their priests.” In the fifteenth century, Nic. de Clemangiis,

Clemangiis, who lived in that time, wrote a book upon this argument, "Of the corrupt state of the church;" by which we may make some judgment, whether in that age it was (as Mr. S. says) impossible, but that the Christian doctrine should be entirely preserved, and faithfully and diligently taught. He says, *c.* 3. there was an universal degeneracy in the church, "from the very head of it to its lowest members." In the same chapter he complains, "Who is there that preaches the gospel to the people? who shews them the way to salvation, either by word or action?" It seems there was a great failure both of oral and practical tradition. Again, speaking of the Pope's taking to himself the collation of all vacant bishopricks and dignities, he says, *c.* 5. one might think the Pope did this, "that the church might be provided of worthier governors, both in respect of their learning and their lives, did not the thing itself declare the contrary; and that ignorant and useles persons, provided they had money, were by Simony advanced to the highest degrees in the church." And, speaking what a vast number of candidates there was usually at Rome, from all parts, waiting for benefices and dignities, he tells us, *c.* 6. that many of these "did not come from their studies, or from schools of learning, to govern parishes, but from the plough, and from the meanest professions; and that they understood Latin and Arabic much at the same rate; and many of them could not read at all. But it may be (says he) their manners were such as might be some excuse for their ignorance. No; though their learning was but little, their virtue was less; for, being brought up in idleness, they followed nothing but debauchery and sports, &c. Hence it comes to pass, that, in all places, there are so many wicked, and wretched, and ignorant priests.—Hence it is, that priests are so contemned by the common people.—Formerly the priesthood was highly honoured by the people, and nothing was more venerable than that order of men; but now nothing is more vile and despicable."—"I make no doubt, but there are now more thieves and robbers, than true pastors in the church," *c.* 9.—Why should any man now

flatter

“ flatter himself with hopes of preferment, because of his virtue or learning? Men do not now, as formerly, rise in the church by such arts,” c. 11.—“ Which of these that are now-a-days advanced to the Pontifical dignity, hath so much as perfunctorily read, or heard, or learned the scriptures; yea, or ever touched any more than the cover of the bible?” c. 13. Again, speaking of the prodigious covetousness of the governors of the church, and the gross neglect of their flocks: “ They would (says he, c. 14.) much more contentedly bear the loss of ten thousand souls, than of ten or twelve shillings. But why do I say more contentedly, when, without the least trouble or disturbance to themselves, they can bear the loss of souls? a thing so far from their care, that it never entered into their thoughts.” Had the heretics of those days but had wit enough, and a little money, they might, it seems, for a small sum, have hired the governors of the church to have renounced tradition, or to have ceased to propagate it, though they had known that in so doing they should have damned all their posterity. He goes on, and tells us, that “ if there were perhaps any one who did not take these courses, the rest would all snarl at him, call him fool, and say he was unfit to be a priest.—So that the study of the scriptures, together with the professors of it, was turned into laughter and scorn by all; but, which is prodigious, especially by the Popes, who preferred their own traditions many degrees before the commands of God.”

desire Mr. S. to take notice in what kind of times tradition was set up against scripture. Again, speaking of the choice of persons to be priests, he tells us, c. 16 that there was no inquiry made into their lives, no question about their manners. As for their learning, (says he,) what need I speak of that, when we see the priests, almost universally, have much ado to read, though but in an hesitating and spelling fashion, drawing out one syllable after another, without understanding either the sense of what they read, or the words?” I am now reconciled to oral tradition, and convinced, that there was great need of it in those ages, in which scarce any of the priests could either write

or read. I omit the particulars of what he says (c. 20. 21. 23.) concerning the common “drunkenness and  
 “incontinency of priests, who [because they made con-  
 “science of marriage] kept whores in their houses;”  
 concerning the dissolute lives of monks; and concern-  
 ing nunneries, which, instead of being “the sanctuaries  
 “of God, were the abominable stews of Venus, and the  
 “receptacles of lascivious young men; insomuch (says  
 “he) that at this day it is the same thing to put a virgin  
 “into a nunnery, and to make her a common strumpet.”  
 And, to shew that he does not speak these things of a  
 few, but with relation to the general corruption of that  
 age, he adds, c. 25. “that wickedness did so abound  
 “in all orders of men, that scarce one among a thou-  
 “sand was to be found who did truly live up to his  
 “profession; and if there was any one that did not  
 “follow these lewd courses, he became ridiculous to  
 “others, and was branded either as an insolent singu-  
 “lar madman, or an hypocrite.” I will conclude this  
 long testimony with the character which he gives (c.  
 27.) of one of the Popes of his time, Clement by name,  
*viz.* That “he did chiefly apply himself to gratify and  
 “oblige all the parasites and buffoons that had any in-  
 “terest in the several courts of princes; and, to this  
 “end, did confer upon these, and upon handsome young  
 “boys, (which he much delighted in,) almost all the  
 “vacant bishopricks, and most of the other church-  
 “dignities.” It is well that oral tradition hath the se-  
 curity of infallibility, otherwise it had in all probability  
 been lost among this lewd sort of people, which yet they  
 gravely call *the holy Roman Catholic church*.

§ 6. To this effect I might have produced testimonies  
 concerning every age from the ninth to the sixteenth;  
 but Mr. Cressy hath saved me that labour; who acknow-  
 ledges, (*Exomolog.* c. 68.) that “these worst times of  
 “the church, when ignorance, worldliness, pride, ty-  
 “ranny, &c. reigned with so much scope; when the  
 “Popes (so wicked, so abominable in their lives) enjoy-  
 “ed so unlimited a power even over secular princes  
 “themselves, and much more over the clergy:” I say  
 he acknowledges, that “these worst times continued du-  
 “ring the space of about six ages before Luther.”

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competent time, one would think, for tradition to have miscarried in, were it not, as Mr. S. says, indefectible. Mr. Cressy indeed tells us, (*ibid.*) that this “ was to him “ an irrefragable testimony of a strange watchfulness of “ divine providence over the church, to preserve it “ from the gates of hell (that is, established and dangerous errors) during these worst times.” And very likely it is that this might appear so to such a Catholic, “ whose judgment (he tells us,) it is to renounce his “ own judgment.” But it will never appear irrefragable to any man that hath his judgment about him, unless Mr. Cressy can prove, that by that phrase, *viz. the gates of hell*, the scripture does not mean gross wickedness of life, as well as dangerous errors in opinion; and likewise, that a general vitiousness and debauchery of manners is not as pernicious to Christianity, and as destructive to the end of it, as established errors in doctrine; and if so, that the providence of God is not equally concerned to preserve the church from things equally pernicious. When he hath proved these three things, then this declamatory discourse of his may signify something, but not before.

§ 7. Now, if this be a true representation of the state of the Roman church in those ages, was not this a very fit time for the devil to play his pranks in? Will any man that reads these testimonies, think it impossible that the doctrine of Christ should have been depraved in this age; or that the most senseless and absurd tenets might then be brought in under the notion of Christian doctrine; when scarce any one knew what the doctrine of Christ was; when a general ignorance of letters, and almost an universal stupidity and madness, had seized upon the minds of men; when there was a horrid depravation of manners, and a general failure of virtue and piety, both in the head and members of the church; when the lives of the Popes were tragically wicked, and no footsteps of piety appeared in them; when, for about 150 years together, in a continued succession of fifty Popes, there was scarce one pious and virtuous man (or woman) sat in that chair; when the whores governed Rome, and put out and put in bishops at their pleasure, and made their own gallants Popes, who would be sure to make a

college of Cardinals of such monsters as themselves; when pretty boys, and parasites, and buffoons, led the head of the church by the nose, and were gratified with the best bishoprics and dignities in the church; when there was a general decay of knowledge, and defection of the Christian faith; when in many countries, neither sacraments nor other ecclesiastical rites were observed; when violence and fraud, and all the arts of deceit and cozenage, and blacker arts than these, were the common study and practice; when intemperance, and all kind of lewdness and debauchery reigned in all sorts and orders of men; when the generality of bishops and priests (who according to Mr. Rushworth, *Dial.* 3. § 3. can only teach the traditionary doctrine) were ignorant in the scriptures, and in every thing else, very few of them being able so much as to read tolerably; and did neglect to teach the people, and to breed up any in knowledge to succeed them in their office; and in the lewdness of their lives did surpass the vilest of the people? Was not such an age a fit season to plant the doctrine of transubstantiation in? Or if any thing more monstrous than that can be imagined, it might then have taken place; for what weeds would not have grown in so rank a soil? Doth Mr. S. think it impossible, that those that were born in the church then should be ignorant of the doctrine of Christ, when scarce any one would take the pains to teach it them; or that it could then have been altered, when so few understood, and fewer practised it? When prodigious impiety and wickedness did overspread the church, from the Pope down to the meanest of the laity, can any one believe, that men generally made conscience to instruct their children in the true faith of Christ? Was it impossible there should be any neglect of this duty, when all others failed; that there should be any mistake about the doctrine of Christ, when there was so much ignorance? unless he be of Mr. Rushworth's mind, who (*Dial.* 3. § 7.) reckons ignorance among the parents of religion. Where were then the arguments of hope and fear? Were they strongly applied, or were they not? Were they causes of actual will in Christians to believe well when they lived so ill? Or is Christianity only fitted to form mens minds to a right belief, but of

no efficacy to govern their lives? Hath Christ taken care to keep his church from error, but not from vice? as the great Cardinal Perron, stooping below his own wit and reason to serve a bad cause, tells us, (*Reply to King James, l. 4. c. 6.*) that “the church sings, and will sing to the end of the world, *I am black, but I am fair*; that is to say, I am black in manners, but fair in doctrine:” As if the meaning of the prophecies and promises of scripture made to the church, were this, that, by the extraordinary care of God’s providence, and peculiar assistance of his Holy Spirit, she should be wicked, but orthodox, to the end of the world. Where were then the vigorous causes imprinting Christ’s doctrine, and continuing it more particularly at Rome than any where else; and of securing that see, and its supreme pastor, in the faith and practice of the Christian doctrine, above any other see or pastor whatsoever? Who is so little versed in history, as not to understand the dismal state of religion in the Romish church in those times? Who does not know what advantages the Bishops of Rome, and their servile clergy, made of the ignorance and superstition of those and the succeeding ages; and by what arts and steps they raised themselves to that power which they held in the church for a long while after; when they could tread upon the necks of princes, and make a great king walk barefoot, and yield himself to be scourged by a company of petulant monks: when they could send any man upon an errand to visit the holy sepulchre, or the shrine of such a saint: and command five or six kings with great armies upon a needless expedition into the holy land, that so, during their absence, they might play their own game the better: when they could mint miracles, and impose upon the belief of the people (without the authority of any ancient books) absurd and counterfeit tales of ancient saints and martyrs, as delivered down to them by tradition; and could bring that popish book the *Legend* almost into equal authority and veneration with the Bible; and persuade the easy people, that St. Denys carried his own head in his hand, after it was cut off, two miles, and kissed it when he laid it down? Any one that shall but reflect upon the monstrous practices of the Roman Bishops and clergy in those

ages, the strange feats they played, and what absurdities they imposed upon the superstitious credulity of princes and people, may readily imagine, not only the possibility, but the easiness of innovating new doctrines as they pleased, under the specious pretences of antiquity, and constant and uninterrupted tradition.

§ 8. And this kind of discourse concerning the possibility of errors coming into the church, is not, as Mr. White ridiculously compares it, (*Apology for tradition*; p. 49.) as if an orator should go about to persuade people, that “ George, by the help of a long staff, and  
 “ a nimble cast of his body, and such like advantages,  
 “ might leap over Paul’s steeple; never considering all  
 “ the while the disproportion of all these advantages to  
 “ the height of the steeple: so (saith he) he that dis-  
 “ courseth at large how errors use to slide into man’s  
 “ life, without comparing the power of the causes of er-  
 “ ror to the strength of resisting, which consists in this  
 “ principle, Nothing is to be admitted but what descends  
 “ by tradition, &c. says no more towards proving an  
 “ error’s over-running the church, than the orator for  
 “ George’s leaping over the steeple.” How vain is this, when it appears from this instance that I have given of the state of the Roman church in the ninth and tenth centuries, and afterwards, that the causes of error were infinitely stronger than the power of resistance? The great causes of error are, ignorance and vice: where ignorance reigns, there is no power; where vice, no will to resist it. And how great the ignorance and viciousness of all orders of men in the Roman church was, is too too apparent from the testimonies I have brought. Where was the strength of resisting error, when for 150 years together the popes were the vilest of men, bishops and priests overwhelmed with ignorance, abandoned to all manner of vice, and most supinely negligent in instructing the people? In such a degenerate state of a church, what strength is there in this principle, “ No-  
 “ thing is to be admitted but what descends by traditi-  
 “ on?” When those who ought to teach what that doctrine is which was delivered to them by tradition, are generally careless of their duty, and ignorant themselves what that doctrine is; when they addict themselves wholly

ly to the satisfying of their ambition, and other lusts, and carrying on designs of gain, and getting dominion over the people; what can hinder men so disposed from corrupting the doctrine of Christ, and suiting it to their own lusts and interests? And what shall hinder the people from embracing those corruptions, when, by the negligence of their pastors to instruct them, and not only so, but also by their being deprived of the scriptures in a known tongue, they are become utterly incapable of knowing what the true doctrine of Christ is? So that in an age of such profound ignorance and vice, and general neglect of instruction, it is so far from being impossible for errors to over-run a church, that the contrary is morally impossible; and George's long staff, and advantageous cast of his body, are more powerful causes to enable him to leap over Paul's steeple, than this principle, "That nothing is to be admitted but what descends by tradition," is to keep errors out of a church in an ignorant and vicious age, when few or none are either able or willing to instruct men in the truth. For suppose this always to have been the principle of Christians, *viz.* "That nothing is to be admitted as the doctrine of Christ, but what is descended to them by tradition;" how shall this principle secure the church from heresy, any more than this, *viz.* "That nothing but truth is to be assented to," doth secure men from error? or more than this, *viz.* "That no man is to do any thing but what is wise and virtuous," does secure the generality of mankind from folly and vice?

S E C T. VIII. *The second answer to his second demonstration.*

§ 1. **T**HE principles upon which this demonstration relies, are not sufficiently proved by him.

His first principle is this, "That age which holds her faith delivered thus from the Apostles, neither can it self have changed any thing in it, nor know or doubt that any age since the Apostles had changed or innovated any thing therein. This proposition (he tells us) needs no proof to evidence it, but only an explanation: for since no man can hold contrary to his knowledge,

“ knowledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change  
 “ or innovate in the case proposed without knowing he  
 “ did so; it is a manifest impossibility a whole age should  
 “ fall into an absurdity so inconsistent with the nature  
 “ of one single man.” But (by his favour) that which  
 he says is no proof, but only an explication, is a proof,  
 if it be any thing; and the force of it is this: “ That  
 “ which is inconsistent with the nature of one single  
 “ man, is manifestly impossible to a whole age; but it  
 “ is inconsistent with the nature of any single man to  
 “ hold contrary to his knowledge, &c. therefore impos-  
 “ sible to a whole age: and consequently, that age  
 “ which holds her faith delivered thus from the Apo-  
 “ stles, neither can itself have changed any thing, nor,  
 “ &c.” So that, in order to the making good of this  
 first principle, Mr. S hath left nothing unproved, but  
 only this proposition, namely, That it is impossible that  
 any one single man that holds his faith to have been de-  
 livered uninterruptedly from the Apostles, should either  
 himself have changed any thing in it, or know or doubt  
 that any age since the Apostles hath changed or innovat-  
 ed any thing therein. And to make out the truth of  
 this proposition, there only remains this to be proved,  
*viz.* That it is impossible for any single man to be mista-  
 ken: for if that be possible, then, contrary to Mr. S. a  
 man may hold that to have been delivered as a doctrine  
 of faith from the Apostles, which was not so delivered.

§ 2. His second principle is this, “ That no age  
 “ could innovate any thing, and withal deliver that  
 “ very thing to posterity as received from Christ by con-  
 “ tinual succession.” He proves it thus: “ Since man  
 “ is a rational creature, he must have some reason or  
 “ motive, good or bad, which he proposeth to himself  
 “ as an end to be atchieved by his action: and what-  
 “ ever his remote end is, his immediate end, in telling  
 “ posterity a late invented thing was held immediately  
 “ before, is to make them believe it. Wherefore, since  
 “ a seen impossibility cannot be a motive to one not  
 “ frantick, and since it is evidently impossible they  
 “ should make posterity believe a thing so universally  
 “ known to be false, as this must needs be, &c. it is  
 “ as impossible this principle should falter, as that the  
 “ foregoing

“ foregoing age should conspire to act without a motive, or that the succeeding age should believe what they know to be otherwise ; that is, should hold both sides of a contradiction in a clear matter of fact.”

The force of which is this, That it is impossible that any man not frantic should attempt to innovate in matter of Christian doctrine, because the immediate end of such an attempt must be to have this new doctrine believed, but it is impossible he should attain this end, and impossible he should not see that it is impossible to attain it : now, a seen impossibility is an end that cannot move any one that is not frantic ; therefore no man that is not frantic can attempt to innovate in matter of Christian doctrine. Thus he hath demonstrated it impossible that there should be any heretics, if a heretic be one that attempts to innovate in matter of Christian doctrine: for if there be any such attempters, they must be frantic ; and if they be frantic, they can be no heretics : for heresy implies a crime, but God will not impute the actions of madmen to them as faults. Again, suppose he that attempts to innovate be mistaken (and I hope Mr. S. will grant that a heretic is fallible) and think that which he delivers as Christ's doctrine to be really so, tho' indeed it be not ; why should such a person think it impossible to make men believe that to be received from Christ which he really thinks was received, and thinks he can make it appear that it was so? And if this be granted, then it is not impossible that man, tho' he be a rational creature, may attempt to innovate. And if so, then his second principle is not proved. If Mr. S. had any regard to the noble science of controversy, (whereof he pretends to be so great a master) he would not bring such trifling sophisms instead of demonstrative proofs ; and nothing less than a demonstrative proof will serve to establish any principle upon which a demonstration is to be built.

S E C T. IX. *The third answer to Mr. S.'s second demonstration.*

§ 1. **D**Octrines and practices which must be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the same

same pretence to uninterrupted tradition. And of this I shall give several instances; one among the Jews, the rest among Christians.

1<sup>st</sup>, I shall instance among the traditionary Jews, whose persuasion in our Saviour's time was, and still is, that their oral doctrine, which they call their *Cabala*, hath descended to them from Moses uninterruptedly. Now, here is the existence of such a persuasion as Mr. S. affirms to be "impossible without tradition's ever-in-deficiency to beget it." And this persuasion of theirs is most exactly parallel with the pretensions of the Romish church, according to Mr. S. For here's a multitude of traditionary Jews, manifoldly greater in proportion to the dissenters in that church, than the Romish church is in comparison to those Christians that dissent from her. Josephus tells us (*Antiq. Jud. l. 13. c. 18.*) that "the richer sort were of the persuasion of the Sadducees, but the multitude were on the Pharisees side." So that the Pharisees had this mark of the true church (as Bellarmine calls it) common to them with the church of Rome, that they were the greatest number, and so they continue to this very day; insomuch that altho' they do not call themselves the Catholics, yet I am sure they call all the Jews that do dissent from them schismatics. Now, that the Sadducees were for the written law against oral tradition, is, I confess, no credit to us; but that our Saviour reprov'd the traditionary doctrines and practices of the Pharisees, because by them they made void the written law, is much more to the discredit of the asserters of oral tradition. Both Romanists and Pharisees own alike a written doctrine; but then they both pretend the true sense and explication thereof to have descended to them by oral tradition. For just as the traditionary Christians do now, so Josephus tells us (*ibid. l. 17. c. 3. & de bell. Jud. l. 1. c. 4. & l. 2. c. 12.*) the traditionary Jews of old, the Pharisees, did pretend by their oral tradition to interpret the law more accurately and exactly than any other sect. In like manner he tells us (*Antiq. l. 18. c. 2.*) that "all things that belonged to prayer and divine worship, were regulated and administered according to their interpretations of the law." And they both agree in this, to *make void*

void the word of God by their tradition; which the Pharisees did no otherwise than Mr. S. does, by equalling oral tradition to scripture; nay preferring it above scripture, in making it the sole rule of faith, and interpreting the scripture according to it. Hence are those common sayings in the Talmud, and other Jewish books: “Do not think that the written law is the foundation, but that the law orally delivered is the right foundation;” which is to say with Mr. S. that not the scripture, but oral tradition, is the true rule of faith. Again, “There is more in the words of the Scribes (*viz.* the testifiers of tradition) than in the words of the written law.” Again, “The oral law excells the written, as much as the soul doth the body;” which accords very well with what Mr. S. frequently tells us, that the scripture without tradition is but a dead letter, destitute of life and sense. Hence also it is, that they required the people (as the traditionary church does now) to yield up themselves to the dictates of tradition, even in the most absurd things; as appears by that common saying among them: “If the Scribes say that the right hand is the left, and the left the right (that bread is flesh, and wine is blood) hearken to them;” that is, make no scruple of whatever they deliver as tradition, tho’ never so contrary to reason or sense. And, lastly, the doctrines of the Pharisees were many of them practical; such were all those which concerned external rites and observances, as *washing of hands and cups*, &c. So that these Pharisaical traditions had also that unspeakable advantage which Mr. S. says renders their traditions unmissakeable, that they were daily practised, and came down “clad in such plain matters of fact, that the most stupid man living could not possibly be ignorant of them.” Therefore, according to Mr. S.’s principles, it was impossible that any age of the Jews should be persuaded that these things were commanded by Moses, and ever since observed, if they had not been so: and yet our Saviour denies these customs to have been of any such authority as they pretended.

§ 2. But I needed not to have taken all this pains to shew the agreement which is between the traditionary Jews and Papists; their own writers so liberally acknowledging

ledging it. Mr. White indeed says (*De fid. & theol. tract.* 1. § 6.) that “ the faith of the Jews was not delivered “ to them orally, but by writing.” Than which nothing can be more inconsistent with his hypothesis : for if the Jewish faith was conveyed to them not orally, but by writing ; then, either the Jewish church had no sufficient rule of faith, or else a writing may be such a rule. But other of their champions make great use of the parallel between the traditionary Jews and the Romish church to confirm from thence their own traditionary doctrines. Cardinal Perron hath a full passage to this purpose (*Rep. to K. James observ. 3. c. 4.*) “ As this (says “ he) is to preserve a sound and entire respect to the “ majesty of the ancient Mosaic scripture, to believe and “ observe not only all the things which are therein actually contained, but also those things which are “ therein contained mediately and relatively, as the “ doctrines of Paradise, &c. which were not contained “ therein but mediately, and by the authority which it “ gave to the disposition of the Patriarchal and Mosaic “ tradition, preserved by heart, and in the oral doctrine “ of the synagogue ; so this is to preserve a sound and “ entire respect to the majesty of the Apostolical scripture, to believe and observe all the things which it “ contains, not only immediately, and by itself, but “ mediately, and by reference to the Apostolical traditions ; to which in gross and generally it gives the “ authority of Apostolical doctrines, and to the church “ the authority of guardian and depositary to preserve “ and attest them.” Voyfin, in his observations upon Raymundus Martin (*Pugio fid. p. 145.*) tells us, that “ as in the old law the great consistory at Jerusalem was “ the foundation of the true tradition ; so (says he) the “ see of Rome is the foundation of our tradition. And “ as the continual succession of the high priests and fathers among the Jews, was the great confirmation of “ the truth of their traditions ; so (says he) with us the “ truth of our Catholic doctrine is confirmed by a continual succession of popes.”

§ 3. From all this it appears, that the Pharisees among the Jews made the same pretence to oral tradition which the Papists do at this day, according to Mr. S.

And

And if so, then Mr. S.'s demonstration *à posteriori* is every whit as strong for the Jews against our Saviour, as it is for the Papists against the Protestants. For we find that, in our Saviour's time, it was then the present persuasion of the traditionary Jews, that their faith, and rites, and the true sense and interpretation of their written law, was descended from Moses and the prophets to them uninterruptedly; which we find was most firm-rooted in their hearts. But the Jews had a constant tradition among them, that the Messiah was to be a great temporal prince: and tho' the letter of the prophecies concerning him might well enough have been accommodated to the low and suffering condition of our Saviour; yet they did infallibly know, that their Messiah was to be another kind of person, from "sense written in their hearts," from the interpretation of those prophecies orally brought down to them, "from the patriarchal and Mosaic tradition preserved by heart, and in the oral doctrine of the synagogue, and from the living voice of their church essential;" that is, the universal consent of the then traditionary Jews. If it be said, that the Jewish tradition did indeed bring down several doctrines not contained in scripture, of paradise, of hell, of the last judgment, of the resurrection, &c. (as Cardinal Perron affirms) but it did it not bring down this point of the Messiah's being a temporal prince; then, as Mr. S. asks us, *p.* 67. so the Jews does him, "By what virtue tradition brought down these other points? and whether the same virtue were not powerful to bring down this, as well as those?" Then he will ask him farther, "Is there not a necessary connexion and relation between a constant cause, and its formal effect; so that if its formal effect be points received as delivered ever, the proper cause must be an ever-delivery? whence he will argue from such an effect to its cause for any particular point, and consequently for this point that is in controversy between Jews and Christians (concerning the Messiah's being a temporal prince) in case it be a point held ever delivered:" but most certain it is, it was so held by the Jews in our Saviour's time, and hath been held so ever since to this day.

I shall not trouble the reader with transcribing the rest of this demonstration; only desire him, as he reads it over, to imagine, instead of Mr. S. a Pharisee demonstrating against one of Christ's disciples, the infallibility of the oral tradition of the Jews: and I doubt not, but he will find this demonstration, and every part of it, changing only the names, as forcibly concluding Christ not to be the Messiah, as it doth infer any point of Popery against the Protestants.

§ 4. Before I leave this instance of the Jewish tradition, I shall briefly consider what Mr. White hath offered by way of answer to it (*Apol. p. 123, &c.*) as, first, that "the matter of these traditions is nothing else but explanations of scripture framed and invented by their own Rabbins." So we say, that the Popish traditions are innovations. But then Mr. White and Mr. S. tell us, that they can demonstrate them to be descended from Christ and his Apostles; because it is the present persuasion of a multitude of Christians that they are so descended. In like manner, if this demonstration be good, the Jews can prove their traditions to be descended from Moses and the prophets. Secondly, he says, that "the form of these traditions is more ridiculous than the canting of gypsies, or the juggling of hocus-pocus; because it consists in inventing the sense of the scripture from the mysteries, and numbers, and changes of letters." This is a gross inexcusable mistake: for tho' the Jews have such a cabala, called *Gemetry*, as this which Mr. White describes; yet that cabala which is argued in this instance, and which our Saviour reproves in the Pharisees by the name of *tradition*, is quite another thing, and, among the Jews writers, known by the name of the *unwritten* or *oral law*; which they say was delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, and by him conveyed to Aaron, and Joshua, and the elders, and successively delivered down from one age to another; and at last by Rabbi Jehudah compiled into one volume, which they call *Mishna*, or *δευτέρωσις*. And this does not consist in the art of numbering, combining, or changing of letters, as Mr. White imagines. But suppose it did so, and were more ridiculous than he conceits it to be, the instance would be so much the more conclusive  
against

against them, if what they affirm be true, that oral tradition is infallible, and that the persuasion of a traditionary church in any age, that such a doctrine descended to them from Christ or Moses, be a demonstration that it did so: for if this be sufficient evidence, it is nothing to the purpose what the doctrine be, either for matter or form; for if it be once demonstrated to have come from Christ or Moses, it is, without any further dispute, to be received as of divine authority. So that Mr. White quite alters the state of the question; which was not, Whether the Jewish cabala be absurd and ridiculous? but, Whether the general persuasion of the Jews in any age, that it descended to them by uninterrupted tradition from Moses, be a demonstration that it did so? If it be, then the Jewish cabala is as demonstratively of divine authority as the oral doctrine of the Papists. Thirdly, he says, "The cabala was a doctrine delivered to few, and that with strict charge to keep it from publicity, and so communicate it again successively to a select committee of a few: wherein (says he) you may see as fair an opportunity for juggling and cozenage, as in our case there is an impossibility." This, I think, is true of the cabala, which it seems Mr. White had only in his view; but is a horrible mistake, if he speaks of the oral law, which was contained in the Mishna, and which this instance only intends. For of this Maimonides (*in præfat. sum. Talmud.*) says expressly, that "in every age, from the time of Moses to Rabbi Jehudah, who compiled the Mishna, the oral law was publicly taught; and that, after Rabbi Jehudah had compiled it into one volume, the Israelites did generally write out copies of it; and it was every where carefully taught, for fear lest the oral law should, by forgetfulness, be lost among the Jews." So that, upon account of the publicness of the doctrine, there is as great an impossibility of juggling and cozenage in the case of the Jews as of the Romish tradition. Besides was washing of hands and cups, which they also pretended to have come down to them from Moses, and to have been constantly practised in every age, a secret thing? was it not a practical tradition, and performed in a sensible matter? If therefore no age can conspire to impose up-

on the next in a plain custom; and if an universal tradition of such a thing cannot come in without such a conspiracy, how could this be the persuasion of any age, that washing of hands, &c. was prescribed by Moses, and practised in all ages, if it had not truly been so?

§ 5. *2dly*, As for instances among Christians, whereof many remain yet upon record; as, namely, the various and opposite traditions about the time of Easter, and concerning the baptism of heretics, and the apostolical tradition (as St. Austin calls it) concerning the admission of infants to the communion; all which have been frequently urged in this controversy, and none of them yet sufficiently answered: I shall, to avoid tediousness, passing by these, insist only upon that of the *chiliasm*; which, in Justin Martyr's time, was the persuasion of all orthodox Christians; that is (in Mr. S.'s dialect) of all the holders to tradition. For if, notwithstanding the persuasion of that age, that this doctrine was descended to them from the Apostles, it was not really so descended; then the persuasion of Christians in any age, that a doctrine was brought down to them from the Apostles, is no demonstration that it was so.

§ 6. To this instance Mr. White answers (*Apol. p. 78. 79. &c.*) by telling us, that Eusebius says, that this tradition sprang from Papias, a good, but a credulous and simple man, who it seems was mistaken in saying, that it was the Apostles doctrine. But, for all this, Justin Martyr says, it was received by all orthodox Christians in his time, as a doctrine descended to them from the Apostles. And if Justin said true, nothing can make more against their demonstration of the infallibility of tradition, than the natural consequence from these two sayings of Eusebius and Justin; which is this, That the mistake of one simple and credulous man may, in an age or two, give occasion to the universal entertainment of a doctrine, as descended down to them from Christ and his Apostles, when there was no such matter. Hath not Mr. White now done his rule of faith great service by this answer? But it is according to his manner, in all his writings, to say any thing to remove a present objection, though never so much to the prejudice

dice of his main hypothesis; than which, I do not know any quality in a writer, which doth more certainly betray the want either of judgment, or of sincerity, or of a good cause.

§ 7. And whereas he says, (*Apol. p. 81.*) that “Irenæus’s testimony proves it to be no tradition: for he sets down the supposed words of our Saviour, which plainly shews it is a story, not a tradition; a tradition being a sense delivered, not in set words, but settled in the auditors hearts by hundreds of different expressions explicating the same meaning:” When I consider this passage of Mr. White, I confess I cannot compliment him, and say, (as he makes his nephew do in the dialogue between them, *Rushworth dial. 4. § 4.*) “I cannot but applaud your discourse, it hath so pleasing and attractive a countenance;” and again, *ibid. § 5.*) “I am not able to oppose what you say by any weighty objection, your arguments being not only strong and nervous, but of so comely and winning a complexion, &c.” I cannot, I say, speak all this of his present argument; but I may deservedly apply to it the last part of his nephew’s compliment, that it is an argument so framed, “as if, without any evidence of its consequence, it would persuade men to believe it.” But to return an answer to this passage: It seems, according to Mr. White, that Irenæus was mistaken in the very nature of tradition: and if so learned a father was ignorant in the common rule of faith, “what can we (to use Mr. S.’s words, *p. 39.*) understandingly promise to weaker heads?” Mr. S. instanceth in the creed and ten commandments, as the principal traditions which parents teach their children; but now Mr. White can shew plainly, that these are no traditions, but stories; because “tradition is a sense delivered not in set words, &c.” As if Christ and his Apostles could deliver no doctrine, unless they expressed the same thing an hundred different ways. But suppose they did so, which no man hath any reason to imagine, because a thing may be expressed as plainly by one way as by an hundred; can no man deliver this tradition who speaks it in any one of those expressions? If one should employ his servant to carry a message, and, be-

cause Mr. White thinks this necessary, should settle the meaning of it in his heart, by telling him the same thing in an hundred several expressions ; and the servant should go and deliver this message in one of those very expressions that his master used to him, and should say, these were his master's very words ; would not this be well enough ?

No ; if he had come to such a philosopher as Mr. White, he would soon have given him to understand, that he was not fit to bring a message, or to be credited in it, who had so little wit as not to know, that a message is a thing not to be delivered in set words. And now, I would intreat Mr. White to reconcile himself in this matter to his friends. Mr. Rushworth says, (*Dial.* 1. § 6.) “ It is impossible to put fully, and beyond all “ quarrel, the same sense in divers words :” which, if it be true, I would fain know what certain course Mr. White can prescribe, “ to explicate the same meaning “ by hundreds of different expressions ;” and, consequently, how tradition can be infallibly conveyed, “ by “ settling the sense of it in the auditors hearts,” by such variety of expressions. Mr. Cressly likewise, a zealous asserter of tradition, does affirm, (*Exomolog.* c. 10. § 4.) that “ the primitive churches were even to excess scrupulous in maintaining the very phrases of traditionary “ doctrines ;” which, according to Mr. White, plainly shews these doctrines “ to be stories, not traditions ; “ because tradition is a sense delivered not in set “ words.” The same author complains, (*ibid.* c. 19. § 2.) that “ few among their learnedest masters of controversy propose the points to be disputed between “ them and the Protestants, in the language of the “ church.” By which, I suppose, he does not mean, that these controvertists were to blame, in that they did not settle the sense of these points by hundreds of different expressions explicating the same meaning, but that they did not keep to the words wherein the church had, in councils, or otherwise, if there be any other way, declared her sense of those points. Again, he says, (*ib.* c. 27. § 2.) that “ St. Paul, referring to the “ doctrine settled by oral instruction, to shew the uniformity of it every where, calls it a form of whole- “ some

“some words.” From whence we may conclude, either that St. Paul did not well to call the traditional doctrine (as Mr. Cressy says he does) *a form of words*; or else, which is more probable, that Mr. White is mistaken in saying, that “a tradition is a sense not delivered in set words.” Furthermore, the same Mr. Cressy tells us, (*ibid.* c. 28. § 1.) that St. Augustine was careful, “not only to deliver traditional truths themselves, but the terms also in which those truths were conveyed to his times.” But now Mr. White could have informed St. Augustine, that this officious care of his was not only superflous, but pernicious to tradition.

§ 8. But to return to Justin’s testimony; to which the sum of Mr. White’s answer is, that “Justin esteemed it not a point necessary to salvation, but rather a piece of learning higher than the common; since he both acknowledges other Catholics held the contrary, and intitles those of this persuasion *κατὰ πάντα ὀρθογνώμονες*, right in all opinions; that is, wholly of his own mind.” It is not material to my purpose, whether or not Justin looked upon this as a point necessary to salvation, so long as it is evident, that he looked upon it as a divine revelation, and part of the Christian doctrine. And yet, it seems he thought it a point of more than ordinary importance, because he joins it with the doctrine of the resurrection; and says, that it was not disowned by any but those who also denied the resurrection. But whereas Mr. White says, that “Justin acknowledges other Catholics to have held the contrary,” I hope to make it evident, from the scope and series of his discourse, that he acknowledges no such thing; but that the plain design of his discourse is, to shew that this doctrine was owned by all true Christians. For when Trypho asks him, whether the Christians did indeed believe that Jerusalem should be rebuilt? &c. he returns him this answer, (*Dial. cum Tryph.* p. 306. edit. Lutet. 1615,) “I am not such a wretch as to speak otherwise than I think. I have told thee before, that myself and many others (as ye all know) are of the mind, that this will come to pass. But that many indeed of those Christians who are [not] of the pure and pious persuasion do not own  
“ this,

“ this, I have intimated to thee.” That the negative particle (though omitted in the copy) ought to be thus inserted, will be clear to any one that considers what follows: for after he had spoken of those who disown this doctrine, he immediately adds, by way of farther description of them, that though they are called Christians, yet in truth they are not Christians, in these words: “ For of these, (*viz.* the disowners of this doctrine) “ who are called indeed Christians, but are atheistical “ and impious heretics, I have shewed thee, that they “ teach in all points, blasphemous, atheistical, and absurd things. But, that ye may know that I do not “ say this for you only, I will, according to my ability, “ compile all these passages which have passed between “ us, into one piece; in which I will by writing make “ profession of this very thing which I now declare to “ you. For I do not chuse to follow men, or the doctrines of men; but God, and such doctrines as are “ from him. And though you may have conversed with “ some who are called Christians, and yet do not acknowledge this; but even dare to blaspheme the God “ of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of “ Jacob; who also say, that there is no resurrection of “ the dead; but that so soon as they die, their souls are “ received into heaven; do not count these men Christians; no more than a man who considers things “ rightly, would own the Sadducees, and such like sects, “ to be Jews, &c.” But I myself, and as many Christians as are thoroughly of the right persuasion, do both “ know, that there shall be a resurrection of the flesh, “ and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which shall be “ built, adorned, and enlarged, &c.” Can any thing be plainer, than that Justin endeavours by this discourse to satisfy Trypho, that this point they were speaking of was a divine doctrine, and owned to be so by all Christians, except such as did only bear the name and title of Christians, but were indeed blasphemous heretics, and deniers of the resurrection? By which character, that he intends to describe the impious sects of the Gnostics, will appear by and by. So that Mr. White must either allow the inserting of the negative particle, which Mr. Mede (*Nov. edit. p. 664.*) proves to have been omitted in the copy,

copy, or else acknowledge, that those who are "Christians only in name, but in truth are impious, blasphemous, and absurd heretics," may properly be said to be of the pure and pious opinion of the Christians. And if only these be the other Catholics, whom Mr. White says Justin acknowledges to have held contrary to the Millenaries, I am contented he should make his best of them. If Mr. White should blame the inserting of the negative particle *not* into Justin's text, as too great a boldness with the fathers; it were easily answered, that the sense evidently requires it: and in such a case it is no boldness, but such a liberty as the most learned of their own interpreters and commentators upon the fathers do frequently take. And as for Mr. S. if he takes offence at this, one may with reason, since the exigency of the sense plainly requires the inserting of it, demand of him (what he unreasonably does of us in relation to all the affirmative propositions of scripture, p. 31.) to demonstrate that the particle *not* was not left out of this clause of Justin by those who transcribed the book. But, besides the exigency of the sense in this place, that the negative ought to have been inserted, will appear by the reference which Justin makes in this passage to something foregoing in the same dialogue. "I have (says he) declared to thee before, that myself and many others are of the mind that this will come to pass. But that many indeed of those Christians who are [not] of the pure and pious persuasion do not own this, I have intimated to thee. For of these, who are called indeed Christians, but are atheistical and impious heretics, I have shewed thee, that they teach in all points, blasphemous, atheistical, and absurd things." In these words he plainly refers to some precedent passage; which, if it can be found, will be a certain key to open to us the sense of this place. I know, that Mr. Mede, (*ibid*) perhaps not observing it, thought that passage to have been fraudulently expunged by the enemies of the Millenary opinion. But it seems to me to be still extant: for I find, towards the beginning of this dialogue, after that Justin had endeavoured to prove at large out of scripture this glorious coming of Christ, and to refute those who applied the texts produced by him to that purpose,

to Hezekiah ; and to Solomon, whose falling off to idolatry he occasionally mentions ; whereupon Trypho objects to him, That many who were called Christians, did also communicate in the idol-feasts : To this, I say, I find Justin returning this answer, *p.* 253. First, he denies not that there are such as these “ who own themselves  
 “ Christians, and confess the crucified Jesus to be both  
 “ Lord and Christ, and yet teach not his doctrines, but  
 “ the doctrines of seducing spirits. But (says he) we  
 “ who are the disciples of the true and pure doctrine of  
 “ Jesus Christ, are from this very thing the more strength-  
 “ ened in our faith, and become more confirmed in the  
 “ hope which by him he hath declared to us. For now  
 “ we see those things visibly and effectually accomplish-  
 “ ed, which he beforehand told us would be done in his  
 “ name. For he said, *Many shall come in my name, &c.*”  
 By which hope, any one that reads the antecedents and consequents, will plainly see that Justin means the hope of the *millennium*, (which he had been speaking of before) and consequently of the resurrection, which he looked upon as having a strict connection with the doctrine of the *millennium*; because, as he tells us afterwards, this doctrine was denied by none but such as also denied the resurrection. And of these men his description runs on in these words: *Πολλοί, &c.* “ Many (saith he) both are  
 “ and have been, that have come in the name of Jesus,  
 “ and taught both to speak and do atheistical and blas-  
 “ phemous things; and are by us denominated from  
 “ those men from whom each of their doctrines and o-  
 “ pinions had its rise, [namely, as it follows, Marcio-  
 “ nites, Valentinians, &c.] and all these in their several  
 “ ways teach men to blaspheme the creator of the uni-  
 “ verse, and the Christ whose coming was foretold by  
 “ him, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.  
 “ But we have no communion with them, as knowing  
 “ them to be atheistical and impious, &c.” This passage in hand, when I compare it with the text before quoted, and consider the words and characters of them both, I cannot but believe it the very same that he refers to in those words, “ I have declared to thee, I have intimat-  
 “ ed to thee, &c.” If so, the matter in controversy is clear, that the doctrine of the *millennium* was universal.

If it be not the same, I could wish to be shewed some other place in this dialogue where Justin makes any such declaration or intimation. In the mean while, by comparison of these places, it is evident there are but two sorts of men that Justin speaks of: First, who believe the *millennium*: “We the disciples τῆς ἀληθινῆς καὶ καθαρᾶς διδασκαλίας, of the true and pure doctrine, &c. viz. myself and many others;” again, “myself, and as many Christians as are thoroughly ὀρθογνώμονες, of the right persuasion.” Secondly, who deny the *millennium*: “Many Christians,” saith Justin. But what Christians? of a right persuasion? “That (saith he) I have signified before. Τὸς γὰρ, &c. For I have shewed thee of them who are called Christians, but are indeed Atheists and impious heretics, that they teach blasphemous, and atheistical, and absurd things.” And true it is, he did shew before, that those who denied the *millennium*, were many in number, and were called Christians, &c. but were teachers of blasphemous and atheistical things, &c. and known to be Atheists and impious, &c.” But he shewed it of none other besides these. So that if this doctrine were likewise denied by “many Christians of the pure and pious persuasion,” then Justin Martyr had foully forgot himself: but if not, then it is plain, that the transcribers have wronged Justin, by leaving out a negative which ought to have been inserted. It is worth observing by the way, how Mr. White pleases himself with false and frivolous criticisms upon the words πολλὰς and ὀρθογνώμονες. False they are, as Mr. White shall know if he desires to hear any more of them; and frivolous they are rendered by my preceeding discourse: for which reason I say no more of them. But I think he may do well hereafter, as Mr. S. warily suggests, p. 68. not to engage himself, nor be hooked by others out of his own infallible way; but leave it wholly to the bird-witted heretics, as Mr. S. calls them, p. 69. to perch upon the specifical natures of words, as he does of things.

§ 9. Besides these instances I have given of doctrines and practices, which Mr. S. cannot deny to have been innovated, I might instance likewise in the chief points of Popery, and shew, that, for all their pretence to tradition, they are really innovations. But because this would

would engage me in tedious disputes about particular points, I will only single out one of their most fundamental doctrines, *viz.* that of transubstantiation; concerning which I shall shew, that notwithstanding it is the universal persuasion of the present Roman church, yet they have not, nor can have, any assurance, that it was the doctrine of Christ, and that it is descended to them by an uninterrupted tradition. I shall not at all contend against the word *transubstantiation*, which is generally acknowledged to be new; but only the thing signified by it, a substantial change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. And this I might shew at large not to have been the doctrine of the ancient fathers. But because Mr. White, and Dr. Holden, and Mr. Cressy, do so frequently and confidently tell us, that nothing is to be reputed a traditionary doctrine, the contrary whereof hath been publicly held by any Catholic who continued afterwards uncensured, and in the communion of the church; therefore I shall content myself at present with one clear testimony, and that of a very eminent person in the church, St. Theodoret, concerning whom Pope Leo (in an epistle to him, at the end of Theodoret's works) gives this testimony, that, "in the judgment of the apostolic see, he was free from all stain of heresy." The passage I intend is in his dialogues, between a Catholic, under the name of *Orthodoxus*, and *Eranistes*, who sustained the person of an heretic. Eranistes maintaining, that the body of Christ was changed into the substance of the divinity, he illustrates it by this similitude. "As (says he, *Dial.* 2.) the symbols of the Lord's body and blood are one thing before the invocation of the priest, but, after the invocation, are changed, and do become another thing; so the body of our Lord, after his ascension, is changed into the divine substance." To which *Orthodoxus* returns this answer. "Thou art caught in thine own net: because the mystical symbols after consecration do not pass out of their own nature; for they remain in their former substance, figure, and appearance, and may be seen and handled even as before." He does not only, in express words, deny the substance of the symbols to be changed; but the oc-

caſion

caſion upon which theſe words are brought in, and the ſcope of them, if they be of any force againſt the heretic's illuſtration, renders them incapable of any other ſenſe. When Mr. S. hath answered this teſtimony, I have more for him.

That which I mainly urge againſt this doctrine, is the monſtrous abſurdities and contradictions contained in it, together with the neceſſary conſequence of them. Several of the abſurdities of it are well brought together by Scotus, who tells us, (*Diſtinct. l. 4. diſt. 10. qu. 1. n. 3.*) that to prove the poſſibility of Chriſt's body being contained under the ſpecies of bread and wine, many things muſt be proved which ſeem to involve a contradiction: As, 1. "That one quantum (or extended body) may be together in the very ſame place with another. 2. That a leſs quantum may be together in the ſame place with a greater;" *i. e.* a body of leſs extension may occupy not only the ſame, but as much room as a body of greater extension does; which is to ſay no more but this, that a body leſs than another may be as great as that other, even whiſt it is leſs than it. 3. "That a greater quantum may be together with every part of a leſs quantum;" *i. e.* a body that is greater than another, may be as little as the leaſt part of that other body which is leſs than it. 4. "That a ſubject may be without quantity;" *i. e.* there may be a body which hath no kind of magnitude. 5. "That a body may be ſomewhere where it was not before, without changing its place;" *i. e.* a body may be removed to another place whiſt it remains ſtill in the ſame place. 6. "That a quantum may be without any quantitative mode;" *i. e.* a body may be extended without any manner of extension. "The poſſibility of all which (he ſaith, and I am very much of his mind) it would be too tedious a work to prove;" and therefore he only attempts to prove the two laſt; which, in all reaſon, is work enough for one man. All theſe ſeeming contradictions, as he modeſtly calls them, are by his own acknowledgment involved in this doctrine. To theſe I might add many more; as, How a thing can be ſaid to be changed into another thing which did exiſt before? How a body can be preſent in a place after the

manner of a spirit? (and yet this they affirm concerning the presence of Christ's body in the sacrament. One might as well say, that snow is black, but not after the manner of blackness, but in the way of whiteness; which is to talk nonsense after the manner of sense.) How the whole body of Christ can be contained under the least sensible part of the species of bread? (as is generally affirmed: nay, and Scotus adds, that the whole body is under every little part in its full proportion; for he says expressly, (*ib. qu. 1. n. 11.*) that "the head and the foot  
 " of the body of Christ are as far distant from one another in the sacrament, as they are in heaven;" as if one should say, that a body, all whose parts lie within the compass of a small pin's head, may yet within that little compass have parts two yards distant from one another: and, lastly, How the sensible species of bread, *e. g.* quantity, whiteness, softness, &c. can exist without any subject? To affirm the possibility of which, as generally they do, is to say, that there may be quantities of white and soft nothings; for this is the plain English of that assertion, "That sensible species may exist without a subject;" which being stripped of those terms of art, *species* and *subject*, that do a little disguise it, it appears to be plain nonsense.

Now, the proper and necessary consequence of this doctrine is, to take away all certainty, and especially the certainty of sense. For if that which my sight, and taste, and touch, do all assure me to be a little piece of wafer, may, notwithstanding this, be flesh and blood, even the whole body of a man; then, notwithstanding the greatest assurance that sense can give me, that any thing is this or that, it may be quite another thing from what sense reported it to be. If so, then farewell the infallibility of tradition, which depends upon the certainty of sense. And, which is a worse consequence, if this doctrine be admitted, we can have no sufficient assurance, that the Christian doctrine is a divine revelation: for the assurance of that depending upon the assurance we have of the miracles said to be wrought for the confirmation of it, and all the assurance we can have of a miracle depending upon the certainty of our senses, it is very plain, that that doctrine which takes away the  
 certainty

certainty of sense, does in so doing overthrow the certainty of the Christian religion. And what can be more vain, than to pretend, that a man may be assured, that such a doctrine is revealed by God, and consequently true, which if it be true, a man can have no assurance at all of any divine revelation? Surely nothing is to be admitted by us as certain, which being admitted, we can be certain of nothing. It is a wonder, that any man who considers the natural consequences of this doctrine, can be a Papist, unless he have attained to Mr. Cressly's pitch of learning; who, speaking of the difficult arguments wherewith this doctrine was pressed, says plainly, (*Exomol. c. 73. § 7.*) "I must answer freely and ingenuously, that I have not learned to answer such arguments, but to despise them." And, if this be a good way, whenever we have a mind to believe any thing, to scorn those objections against it which we cannot solve; then the Christian religion hath no advantage above the vilest enthusiasms; and a Turk may maintain Mahomet and his Alcoran, in opposition to Christ and his doctrine, against all that Grotius, or any other, hath said, if he can but keep his countenance, and gravely say, "I have not learned to answer such arguments, but to despise them."

§ 10. I will add one instance more in another kind, to shew the uncertainty of oral and practical traditions; and that shall be the tradition concerning Pope Joan; than which scarce any thing was ever more generally received in the historical kind. Many and great authors affirm it, as testifiers of the general fame. None ever denied it till the reformers had made use of it to the disadvantage of Popery. Since that time, not only Papists deny it, but several of our own writers cease to believe it. Phil. Bergomenus tells the story thus: "*Anno* 858, John, the 7th Pope, &c. The tradition is, that "this person was a woman, &c." Here is an oral tradition. He concludes thus: "In detestation of whose filthiness, and to perpetuate the memory of her name, the Popes, even to this day, going on procession with the people and clergy, when they come to the place of her travail, &c. in token of abominatiou, they turn from it, and go a by-way; and, being past that

“ detestable place, they return into the way, and finish  
 “ their procession.” Here is one practical tradition.  
 “ And, for avoiding of the like miscarriages, it was de-  
 “ creed, that no one should thereafter be admitted into  
 “ St. Peter’s chair, *priusquam per foratum sedem futuri*  
 “ *Pontificis genitalia ab ultimo Diacono Cardinale attrecta-*  
 “ *rentur.*” Here is another with a witness. Sabellius  
 relates the same, (*Ennead. 6. l. 1.*) and moreover  
 says, that “ this porphyry chair was, in his time, to be  
 “ seen in the Pope’s palace.” He adds indeed, that  
 “ Platina thinks, that this tradition of Pope Joan was  
 “ not faithfully delivered to posterity. But however,  
 “ (says he) such a tradition there is concerning the first  
 “ practical tradition.” Platina says, that “ he may  
 “ not deny it.” For the second, he thinks “ the chair  
 “ rather designed for a stool, for another use, &c.” He  
 concludes, “ These things which I have related are  
 “ commonly reported, yet from uncertain and obscure  
 “ authors: therefore I resolved (says he) briefly and  
 “ nakedly to set them down, lest I should seem too ob-  
 “ stinately and pertinaciously to have omitted that which  
 “ almost all affirm.” It is no wonder, that he says the  
 authors of this report were uncertain and obscure, since  
 so very few writ any thing in that age. But; suppose  
 none had writ of it, so long as he acknowledges it  
 to have been a general oral tradition, attested by a so-  
 lemn and constant practice, it has, according to Mr. S.’s  
 principles, greater certainty that if it had been brought  
 down to us by a hundred books written in that very age.  
 So that here is an oral and practical tradition, continu-  
 ed, we are sure, for some hundreds of years, preserved  
 and propagated by a solemn practice of the Popes, cler-  
 gy, and people of Rome, in their processions, and by a  
 notorious custom at the election of every Pope; and  
 in a matter of so great importance to their religion, (the  
 honour of the see of Rome, and the uninterrupted suc-  
 cession from St. Peter, being so nearly concerned in it,)  
 that, had it been false, they had been obliged, under  
 pain of damnation, not only not to have promoted it,  
 but to have used all means to have discovered the falsity  
 of it. Therefore Mr. S. is bound, by his own princi-  
 ples, either to allow it for a truth, or else to give an  
 account

account when and how it began; which may possibly be made out by "we metaphysicians," (as he styles himself and his scientific brethren, p. 340.) but I assure him it is past the skill of note-book learning, p. 335

S E C T. X. *The fourth answer to his second demonstration.*

§ 1. I T is not the present persuasion of the church of Rome, nor ever was, that their faith hath descended to them by oral tradition as the sole rule of it. And this being proved, the supposition upon which his demonstration is built, falls to the ground.

And for the proof of this I appeal to the decree of the council of Trent (*Decret. primum quartæ sess.*) in which they declare, that because the "Christian faith and discipline are contained in written books and unwritten traditions, &c. therefore they do receive and honour the books of scripture, and also tradition, *pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia*, with equal pious affection and reverence;" which I understand not how those do who set aside the scripture, and make tradition the sole rule of their faith. And consonantly to this decree, the general doctrine of the Romish church is, that scripture and tradition make up the rule of faith. So the Roman catechism (set forth by order of the council of Trent) says (*in præfat.*) that "the sum of the doctrine delivered to the faithful is contained in the word of God, which is distributed into scripture and tradition." Bellarmine (*De verbo Dei, &c. l. 4. c. 12.*) speaks to the same purpose, that "the scripture is a rule of faith, not an entire, but partial one. The entire rule is the word of God, which is divided into two partial rules, scripture and tradition." According to this the adequate rule of faith is the word of God, which is contained partly in scripture, and partly in the tradition of the church. And that scripture is looked upon by them as the principal rule and primary foundation of their faith, and tradition as only supplying the defects of scripture, as to some doctrines and rites not contained in scripture, must be evident to any one that has been conversant in the chief of their controversial di-

vines. Bellarmine (*De verbo Dei non scripto. l. 4. c. 9.*) where he gives the marks of a divine tradition, speaks to this purpose, that that which they call a divine tradition, is such a doctrine or rite as is not found in scripture, but embraced by the whole church; and for that reason believed to have descended from the Apostles. And he tells us farther (*ibid. c. 11.*) that the Apostles committed all to writing which was commonly and publicly preached; and that all things are in scripture which men are bound to know and believe explicitly: but then he says, that there were other things which the Apostles did not commonly and publicly teach; and these they did not commit to writing, but delivered them only by “word of mouth to the prelates and “priests, and perfect men of the church.” And these are the Apostolical traditions he speaks of. Cardinal Perron says (*Reply, observat. 3. c. 4.*) that “the scripture is the foundation of the Christian doctrine, either “mediately or immediately. And that the authority of “unwritten tradition is founded in general on these sentences of the Apostle, *Hold the traditions, &c. 2. Thess. ii. 15.* again, *The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, commit to faithful men, &c.*” 2. Tim. ii. 2. And that “the authority of the church to “preserve, and especially to declare these, is founded “in this proposition, *viz. That the church is the pillar “and ground of truth.*” 1 Tim. ii. 15. So that, according to him, the primary rule of faith is the scripture, “in “which the authority of tradition is founded.” Mr. Knott (*Charity maintained, c. 2. § 1.*) says expressly, “We acknowledge the holy scripture to be a most perfect rule, for as much as a writing can be a rule; we “only deny that it excludes either divine tradition, “though it be unwritten; or an external judge, to keep, “to propose, to interpret it, &c.” So that, according to him, scripture is a perfect rule; only it does not exclude unwritten tradition, &c. By which that he does not understand, as Mr. S. does, a concurrent oral tradition of all the same doctrines which are contained in scripture, but other doctrines not therein contained, is plain from what he says elsewhere (*Reply to Mr. Chillingworth, c. 2. § 170*) “We do not distinguish tradi-  
“tion

“ tion from the written word, because tradition is not  
 “ written by any, in any book or writing ; but because  
 “ it is not written in the scripture or Bible.” Bellarmine  
 (*De verbo Dei, &c. l. 4. c. 2.*) also says the same. And  
 as for the interpreting of scripture, he tells us, that this  
 is not the office of a rule, but of a judge. “ There is,  
 “ (says he, *Charity maintained, c. 2. § 3.*) a great and  
 “ plain distinction between a judge and a rule : for as  
 “ in a kingdom the judge hath his rule to follow, which  
 “ are the received laws and customs ; which are not  
 “ fit or able to declare, and be judges themselves, but  
 “ that office must belong to a living judge : so the holy  
 “ scripture is and may be a rule, but cannot be a judge.”  
 Here he makes the scripture as much a rule for matters  
 of faith, as the laws of the land are for civil matters.  
 And, in his *Reply to Mr. Chillingworth*, he hath a chap-  
 ter of above 150 pages, the title whereof is, *Scripture is*  
*not the only rule of faith* ; which (had he with Mr. S.  
 believed oral tradition to be the sole rule of faith) had  
 been as absurd, as it would be to write a book, to prove  
 that Turks are not the only Christians in the world. Mr.  
 Cressly likewise (not very consistently with himself) lays  
 down this conclusion (*Exomolog. c. 20.*) “ The entire rule  
 “ of faith is contained not only in scripture, but likewise  
 “ in written tradition.”

§ 2. Now, all this is as contrary as can be to Mr.  
 Rushworth's new rule of faith. Therefore Mr. White  
 says (*Tab: d. suffrag. p. 96.*) “ They speak ill who teach  
 “ that some things are known in the church from scrip-  
 “ ture, some by tradition.” And Dr. Holden (in oppo-  
 sition to those who make scripture any part of the rule  
 of faith) advances one of the most wild and unchari-  
 table positions that ever I yet met withal, *viz.* (*Analys.*  
*fid. l. 1. c. 6.*) That “ if one should believe all the ar-  
 “ ticles of the Catholic faith, &c. for this reason, be-  
 “ cause he thought they were all expressly revealed in  
 “ scripture, or implicitly contained, so as they might  
 “ be deduced from thence, and would not have believ-  
 “ ed them, had he not judged that they might be e-  
 “ vinced from scripture : yet this man could be no true  
 “ Catholic ; because (as he tells us afterwards, *c. 8.*)  
 “ we must receive the Christian doctrine as coming to

“ us by tradition ; for only by this means (excluding  
 “ the scriptures) Christ hath appointed revealed truths  
 “ to be received and communicated.” In the mean  
 time, Cardinal Perron (unless he altered his mind) is  
 in a sad case, who believed the authority of tradition it-  
 self, for this reason, because it was founded in scripture.

§ 3. And this fundamental difference about the rule  
 of faith, between the generality of their divines and Mr.  
 S.’s small party, is fully acknowledged by the traditi-  
 onists themselves. Dr Holden says (*L. 1. c. 9.*) that  
 “ their divines who resolve faith according to the com-  
 “ mon opinion, do inevitably fall into the shameful  
 “ circle [ of proving the divine authority of the scrip-  
 “ ture by the church, and the infallibility of the church  
 “ back again by the scripture ] because they dare not  
 “ build their faith upon the natural evidence and cer-  
 “ tainty of tradition.” So that Dr. Holden’s way of re-  
 solving faith, is different from the common opinion of  
 their divines ; which, he says, (*L. 1. c. 3.*) “ does not  
 “ differ from the opinion of those who resolve their  
 “ faith into the private spirits :” and this (according to  
 Mr. White, *Extas. p. 70.*) is the very way of the Calvi-  
 nists, and of the absurdest sects. Nay, Mr. White says  
 farther, *ibid.* that he will be content to “ suffer all the  
 “ punishment that is due to calumniators, if the Roman  
 “ divines (he there speaks of) do not hold the same  
 “ rule of faith with the Calvinists, and all the absurdest  
 “ sects.” So that it seems that the Calvinists, &c. do  
 not in their rule of faith differ from the Papists, but on-  
 ly from Mr. White, Mr. S. &c. Now, the divines he  
 there speaks of, are the censors of doctrines at Rome,  
 according to whose advice his infallible holiness, and  
 the Cardinals of the inquisition, do usually proceed in  
 censuring of doctrines. Concerning these divines he  
 goes on to expostulate in this manner (*ibid. p. 73.*)  
 “ Shall we endure these men to sit as censors and judges  
 “ of faith, who agree with heretics in the very first  
 “ principles which distinguish Catholics from here-  
 “ tics ?” Again, *p. 144.* “ These are thy gods, O  
 “ Rome ! upon these thou dependest, whilst prating  
 “ ignorance triumphs in the Roman college.” And he  
 says the same likewise of the generality of their school-  
 divines,

divines, whom he calls sceptics, because they do not own his demonstrative way: infomuch that he tells us, *p.* 64. that "few sound parts are left uninfected with this plague of scepticism;" that "this is an universal gangrene," *p.* 149. that "there are but few that go the way of demonstration, and these are either wearied out, or else live retiredly, or despair of any remedy of these things," *p.* 67. 68. And indeed all along that book he bemoans himself and his traditionary brethren as a desolate and forlorn party, who have truth on their side, but want company and encouragement. So he tells us, *p.* 101. that "the true scientifical divines dare not profess their knowledge; lest they should be exposed by the sophisters of their church to the derision and scorn, either of their judges, or of the people."

§ 4. So that, upon examination of the whole matter, it appears that Mr. S.'s demonstration proceeds upon a false supposition, that it is the persuasion of their present church that tradition is the sole rule of faith. For there is no such matter; unless Mr. S. mean by their church, a few private persons, who are looked upon by those who have the chief power in their church, as heretical: as we may reasonably conjecture by the proceedings at Rome against Mr. White; many of whose books are there condemned, as "containing things manifestly heretical, erroneous in the faith; rash, scandalous, seditious, and false respectively, &c." (*Exetaf. p.* 7.) and all this done, notwithstanding that the chief subject of those books is the explication and defence of this most Catholic principle, "That oral tradition is the only rule of faith." To sum up then the whole business: If nothing be to be owned for Christian doctrine, (as the traditionists say,) but what is the general persuasion of those who are acknowledged to be in the communion of the Roman Catholic church; then much less can this principle, "That oral tradition is the sole rule of faith," which is pretended to be the foundation of the whole Christian doctrine, be received as descended from Christ and his Apostles; since it is so far from being the general persuasion of that church at the present, that it has been, and still is generally disowned.

ed. But Mr. White has a salvo for this: For altho' he grants, (*Apol. p. 38.*) that very many of their schoolmen maintain, that tradition is necessary only for some points not clearly expressed in scripture; whence (he says) it seems to follow, that they build not the whole body of their faith upon tradition: yet (he tells us) there is a vast difference betwixt relying on tradition, and saying or thinking we do so." Suppose there be; yet I hope, that mens saying that they do not rely on tradition as their only rule, is a better evidence that they do not, than any man's surmise to the contrary is, that they do, though they think and say they do not; which is, in effect, to say, that they do, though we have as much assurance as we can have, that they do not. Besides, how is this rule self-evident to all, even to the rude vulgar, as to its ruling power," (as Mr. S. affirms it is,) when the greatest part even of the learned among them think and say, that it is not the only rule? But Mr. White (*ibid. p. 39.*) endeavours to illustrate this dark point by a similitude, which is to this sense: As the sceptics, who deny this principle, "That contradictions cannot be true at once;" yet in their lives and civil actions proceed as if they owned it; so the schoolmen, though they deny tradition to be the only rule of faith, yet by resolving their faith into the church, which owns this principle, they do also in practice own it, though they say they do not. So that the generality of learned Papists are just such Catholics as the sceptics are dogmatists; that is, a company of absurd people, that confute their principles by their practice. According to this reasoning, I perceive the Protestants will prove as good Catholics as any; for they do not only think and say, that tradition is not the rule of faith; but that they practically rely upon it, Mr. S. hath passed his word for them: for he assures us, *p. 30. & 31.* (and we may rely upon a man that writes nothing but demonstration,) that, "if we look narrowly into the bottom of our hearts, we shall discover the natural method of tradition to have unawares settled our judgments concerning faith; however, when our other concerns awake design in us, we protest against it, and seem per-

"haps

“ haps to our unreflecting selves to embrace and hold  
 “ to the mere guidance of the letter of scripture.” So  
 that, in reality, we are as good Catholics, and as true  
 holders to tradition, as any Papists of them all, at the  
 bottom of our thoughts, and in our settled judgment :  
 however we have taken up an humour to protest against  
 it, and may seem perhaps to our unreflecting selves to be  
 Protestants.

§ 5. Thus much may suffice to have spoken to his two  
 great arguments ; or, as he (good man) unfortunately  
 calls them, demonstrations, *p.* 173. which yet, to say  
 truth, are not properly his, but the author of Rushworth’s  
 dialogues ; the main foundation of which book is the  
 substance of these demonstrations. Only, before I take  
 leave of them, I cannot but reflect upon a passage of Mr.  
 S.’s, wherein he tells his readers, *p.* 163. that they are  
 not “ obliged to bend their brains to study his book  
 “ with that severity as they would do an Euclid ;”  
 meaning perhaps one of Mr. White’s Euclids ; for it  
 does not appear by his way of demonstration, that ever  
 he dealt with any other. As for the true Euclid, I sup-  
 pose any one that hath tasted his writings, will, at the  
 reading of Mr. S.’s, unbend his brains without bidding,  
 and smile to see himself so demurely discharged from a  
 study so absurd and ridiculous.

SECT. XI. *Concerning some other advantages of tradi-  
 tion, &c.*

§ 1. I Should now take into consideration his ninth dis-  
 course, in which he pretends to “ open the in-  
 “ comparable strength of the church’s human authority,  
 “ and the advantages which accrue to it by the super-  
 “ natural assistances of the Holy Ghost ;” but that there  
 is nothing material in it which hath not been answered  
 already. Only, I desire him to explain how the super-  
 natural assistances of the Holy Ghost can, according to  
 his principles, add to our assurance of the certainty of  
 tradition ; because we can have no greater certainty of  
 the supernatural assistance of the Holy Ghost, than we  
 have, that there is an Holy Ghost ; and of this we  
 can have no certainty, (according to Mr. S.) but  
 by

by tradition, which conveys this doctrine to us. And if tradition of itself can infallibly assure us, that there are supernatural assistances of the Holy Ghost, then a man must know, that tradition is infallible, antecedently to his knowledge of any supernatural assistance. And if so, what can any supernatural assistance add to my assurance of the certainty of tradition, which I do suppose to be infallible before I can know of any supernatural assistance? Can any thing be more ludicrous, than to build first all our certainty of the assistance of the Holy Ghost upon the certainty of tradition; and then afterwards to make the certainty of tradition to rely upon the assistance of the Holy Ghost? as if that could contribute to our assurance of the certainty of tradition; which, unless tradition be first supposed certain, is itself wholly uncertain.

§ 2. The conclusion of this ninth discourse is somewhat ecstatical; possibly from a sudden disorder of his fancy upon the contemplation of his own performances, to see what a man he has made himself, (with the help of Rushworth's dialogues) or rather, what his party has made him by the office they put upon him: for it seems (by his telling, p. 165. and 166.) Mr. Cressy, and the rest, are ordained to cajole the fools, leaving him the way of reason and principles; and that himself is chosen out to demonstrate to the wise, or those who judge of things *per altissimas causas*. In the discharge of which glorious office, he declares, that he intends no confutation of those authors which Mr. Cressy and others have meddled with: "yet if any will be so charitable as to judge he hath solidly confuted them, because he hath radically and fundamentally overthrown all their arguments, &c. he shall rejoice, and be thankful." That the intelligent reader (for he writes to none but such, p. 159.) may also rejoice with him, I shall recite the whole passage: for it is thick of demonstration, and as likely as any in his book to have the *altissimas causas* contained in it.

§ 3. "It would require a large volume to unfold particularly how each virtue contributes to shew the errable indeficiency of tradition, and how the principles of almost each science are concerned in demonstrating

“ its certainty. Arithmetic lends her numbering and  
 “ multiplying faculty, to scan the vast number of testi-  
 “ fiers : Geometry her proportions, to shew a kind of  
 “ infinite strength of certitude in Christian tradition, a-  
 “ bove those attestations which breed certainty in hu-  
 “ man affairs : Logic, her skill, to frame and make us  
 “ see the connexions it has with the principles of our  
 “ understanding : Nature, her laws of motion and acti-  
 “ on ; Morality, her first principle, That nothing is  
 “ done *gratis* by a cognoscitive nature ; and that the  
 “ body of traditionary doctrine is most conformable to  
 “ practical reason : Historical prudence clears the im-  
 “ possibility of an undiscernible revolt from points so  
 “ descended, and held so sacred : Politics shew this to  
 “ be the best way imaginable to convey down such a  
 “ law as it concerns every man to be skillful in : Me-  
 “ taphysics engages the essences of things, and the very  
 “ notion of being, which fixes every truth ; so establish-  
 “ ing the scientific knowledge which springs from each  
 “ particular nature, by their first causes or reasons, ex-  
 “ empt from changes or motion : Divinity demonstrat-  
 “ eth it most worthy God, and most conducive to bring  
 “ mankind to bliss : Lastly, Controversy evidences the  
 “ total uncertainty of any thing concerning faith, if this  
 “ can be uncertain ; and makes use of all the rest, to  
 “ establish the certainty of this first principle.” *p.* 93.

A very fit conclusion for such demonstrations as went  
 before. It is well Mr. S. writes to none but intelligent  
 readers ; for were it not a thousand pities, that so man-  
 ly, and solid, and convincing a discourse as this should  
 be cast away upon fools ?

SECT. XII. *Mr. S.'s corollaries considered.*

§ I. **A**S for his corollaries, supposing them to be right-  
 ly deduced from his former discourse, they must  
 of necessity fall with them ; for they signify nothing,  
 but upon this supposition, that his foregoing discourses  
 are true. And yet this being granted, it were easy to  
 shew that most of them are grossly faulty. For, first,  
 several of them are plainly coincident. The second, *viz.*  
 “ None can with right pretend to be a church, but the

“ followers of tradition,” is the very same in sense with the 11th, *viz.* “ No company of men hang together like a body of a Christian commonwealth or church, but that which adheres to tradition.” So likewise the 12th and 14th are contained in the 15th; the 16th and 17th, in the 19th; the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th, in the 21st; and the 32d and 34th, in the 31st. Secondly, Divers of them are manifestly absurd; as the 12th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th; the sum of which is, That there is “ no arguing against tradition from scripture, or the authority of the church, or fathers and councils, or from history and testimonial writings, or from contrary tradition, or reason, or any instances whatsoever;” which is as much as to say, If this proposition be true, “ That tradition is certain,” then it cannot, by any kind of argument, be proved to be false. But is this any peculiar confectary from the truth of this proposition? Doth not the same follow from every proposition, That if it be true, it cannot be proved to be false? Yet no man was ever yet so frivolous, as to draw such a consequence from the supposed truth of any proposition. His 23d also is singularly absurd, That “ there is no possibility of arguing at all against tradition rightly understood, or the living voice of the Catholic church, with any shew of reason.” These are large words. It might have contented a reasonable man to have said, that no good argument could be brought against it; but he is jealous of his hypothesis, and can never think it safe till it be shot-free. Nor will that content him; but it must be also impossible for any one to make a shew of shooting at it. This were, I confess, a peculiar privilege of Mr. S.’s discourses above other mens, if they were, as he says, by evidence of demonstration so secured, that not only no substantial argument could be brought against them, but that even the most subtle schoolman of them all should not be able to come near them with so much as a *Videtur quod non*. But it may be, he means no more by this corollary, than what he said in the 18th, *viz.* That “ no solid argument from reason can be brought against tradition.” If so, then the sense of his 23d corollary must be this, That there is no possibility of arguing at all against tradition

dition with any solid shew, or substantial shadow of reason; which would be a little inconvenient. I will instance but in one more, his 40th; which is this, "The knowledge of tradition's certainty is the first knowledge or principle in controversial divinity, *i. e.* without which nothing is known or knowable in that science:" which is to infer, that because he hath with much pains proved the certainty of tradition, therefore it is self-evident, *i. e.* needed no proof. Nay, it is to conclude the present matter in controversy, and that which is the main debate of his book, to be the first principle in controversial divinity, *i. e.* such a proposition as every one ought to grant before he can have any right to dispute about it. This is a very prudent course, to make begging the question the first principle in controversy; which would it but be granted, I am very much of his mind, that the method he takes would be the best way to make controversy a science; because he that should have the luck or boldness to beg first, would have it in his power to make what he pleased certain.

§ 2. Were it worth while, I might farther pursue the absurdities of his corollaries; for they are not so terrible as he makes shew of, by his telling Dr. Causabon, *p.* 330. that "*Sure-footing*, and its corollaries, may put him out of his wits:" which though intended for an affront to the Doctor, yet it may be mollified with a good interpretation; for if the reading of wild and fantastical stuff be apt to disorder a very learned head, then so far Mr. S.'s saying may have truth in it.

It remains only that I requite his 41st corollary, not with an equal number, but with two or three natural confectaries from the doctrine of his book.

1. No man can certainly understand the meaning of any book whatsoever, any farther than the contents of it are made known to us by a concurrent oral tradition: for the arguments whereby he and Mr. Rushworth endeavour to prove it impossible without tradition to attain to the certain sense of scripture, do equally extend to all other books.

2. The memory of matters of fact done long ago may be better preserved by general rumour, than by public records: for this is the plain English of that assertion,

That oral tradition is a better and more secure way of conveyance than writing.

3. That the generality of Papists are no Christians: for if, as he affirms, tradition be the sole rule of faith, and those who disown this rule be *ipso facto* cut off from the root of faith, *i. e.* unchristianed; and if, as I have shewn, the generality of Papists do disown this rule, then it is plain that they are no Christians.

## P A R T I V.

### Testimonies concerning the rule of faith.

#### SECT. I. *Mr. S.'s testimonies examined.*

§ 1. **T**HUS far, in the way of reason and principles: The rest is note-book learning, which, he tells us, p. 337. he is "not much a friend to:" and there is no kindness lost; for it is as little a friend to him, and his cause, as he can be to it. I shall first examine the authorities he brings for tradition; and then produce express testimonies in behalf of scripture. In both which I shall be very brief; in the one, because his testimonies require no long answer; in the other, because it would be to little purpose to trouble Mr. S. with many fathers; who, for ought appears by his book, is acquainted with none but Father White; as I shall shew hereafter. By the way, I cannot much blame him for the course he uses to take with other mens testimonies; because it is the only way that a man in his circumstances can take: otherwise nothing can be in itself more unreasonable, than to pretend to answer testimonies by ranking them under so many faulty heads; and having so done, magisterially to require his adversary to vindicate them, by shewing that they do not fall under some of those heads, though he have not said one word against any of them particularly: nay, though he have not so much as recited any one of them; for then the trick would be spoiled, and his Catholic reader, who perhaps may believe him in the general, might see reason not to do so, if he should descend to particulars; which,

which, as he well observes, p. 161. would make his “discourse to look with a contingent face.”

§ 2. I begin with his three authorities from scripture; which when I consider, I see no reason why he, of all men, should find fault with my Lord Bishop of Down’s dissuasive, p. 320. for being so “thin and slight in scripture citations.” Nor do I see how he will answer it to Mr. Ruthworth, for transgressing that prudent rule of his, (*Dial.* 2. § 14.) viz. That “the Catholic should never undertake to convince his adversary out of scripture, &c.” For which he gives this substantial reason, *ib.* “Because this were to strengthen his opponent in his own ground and principle, viz. That all is to be proved out of scripture;” which he tells us presently after is no more fit to convince, than “a beetle is to cut withal;” meaning it perhaps of texts so applied as these which follow. *This shall be to you a direct way, so that fools cannot err in it, Is.* xxxv. 8. *This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My spirit which is in thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart from thy mouth, and from the mouth of thy seed, and from the mouth of thy seed’s seed, from henceforth for ever, Is.* lix. 21. *I will give my law in their bowels, and in their hearts will I write it, Jer.* xxxi. 33. From which texts if Mr. S. can prove tradition to be the only rule of faith, any better than the philosophers stone, or the longitude, may be proved from the first chapter of Genesis, I am content they should pass for valid testimonies; though I might require of him, by his own law, before these texts can signify any thing to his purpose, to demonstrate that this is the traditionary sense of these texts, and that it hath been universally in all ages received by the church under that notion; and then to shew how it comes to pass that so many of the fathers, and of their own commentators, have interpreted them to another sense; and, lastly, to shew how scripture, which has no certain sense but from tradition, and of the sense whereof tradition cannot assure us, unless it be the rule of faith; I say, how scripture can prove tradition to be the rule of faith, which can prove nothing at all, unless tradition be first proved to be the rule of faith.

This I take to be as shameful a circle as that wherewith Dr. Holden upbraids the generality of his brethren.

§ 3. I proceed to his authorities from fathers and councils; all which, not one of them excepted, he hath taken out of Mr. White's *Tabulæ suffragiales*, without the least acknowledgment from whom he had them. And that it might be evident that he had not consulted the books themselves for them, he hath taken them with all their faults, and with the very same errors of citation which Mr. White had been guilty of before him: So that, though he is pleased to say of himself, p. 239. that "he is a bad transcriber," yet I must do him that right, to assure the reader that he does it very punctually and exactly.

§ 4. He begins with councils; of which, he tells us, "he will only mention three in several ages."

The first is the first synod of Lateran. One might have expected, after he had told us he would mention three in several ages, he should have produced them according to the order of time, and have begun with the council of Sardica, which was near 300 years before the Lateran. But there was a good reason why the Lateran should be first produced, *viz.* because it is mentioned before the other in Mr. White's book. Well: but what says this synod? "We all confess unanimously, and consequently with one heart and mouth, the tenets and sayings of the holy fathers; adding nothing, subtracting nothing of those things which are delivered us by them: and we believe as the fathers have believed; we preach so as they have taught." The force of which testimony Mr. S. lays upon the word *delivered*, as if that word, where-ever it is met with in councils or fathers, must needs be understood of oral delivery: whereas it is a general word, indifferently used for conveyance, either by writing, or word of mouth. In this place it plainly refers to the writings of particular fathers, out of whom a long catalogue of testimonies against the heresy of the Monothelites had been read just before this declaration of the synod. Now, what signifies this to oral tradition's being the rule of faith, that this synod declares her faith, in opposition to the heresy of the Monothelites, to be consonant in all things to those

those testimonies which had been produced out of the fathers ?

The next is the council of Sardica ; out of an epistle of which council he cites these words : “ We have received this doctrine ; we have been taught so ; we hold this Catholic tradition, faith, and confession.” Which are general words, and indifferently applicable to oral tradition, or writing, or both, But be they what they will, Mr. S. ought not to have been ignorant, that this council was rejected by St. Austin, and other orthodox fathers ; as Binius acknowledges, (*Concil. tom. 1.*) ; and, which is more, that the latter part of this epistle, out of which part Mr. S. cites these words, which contains a confession of faith, is, by Baronius, *anno 347*, and, after him, by Binius, proved to have been surreptitiously added. For though it be found in Theodoret, and mentioned by Sozomen ; yet Baronius thinks, that it was the Arian confession, composed by the false synod of Sardica which sat at the same time ; and that Sozomen lighting upon it, perhaps mistook it for the confession of the orthodox synod of the same name. However that be, he proves out of Athanasius, and from the testimony both of the Eastern and Western bishops, that the council of Sardica “ did not so much as add one word or title, no nor so much as explain any thing in the Nicene faith.” But Mr. White says nothing of this ; and therefore Mr. S. could not, who is no speculator in these matters, but only, as a testifier, delivers down these authorities to us as he received them by hand from Mr. White ; and if the word *tradition* be but in them, they are demonstrative.

As for his testimonies from the second council of Nice, (which he calls the seventh general council) who pretended their doctrine of image-worship to have descended to them by an uninterrupted tradition, and proved it most doughtily by texts of scripture ridiculously wrested, by impertinent sayings out of obscure and counterfeit authors, and by fond and immodest stories (as is acknowledged by Pope Adrian VI. *Quodlibet 6. cited by Espencæus in 2. epist. ad Tim. c. 4.*) of apparitions and womens dreams, &c. for which I refer the reader to the council itself ; which is such a mess of fopperies, that if

a general council of Atheists had met together with a design to abuse religion, by talking ridiculously concerning it, they could not have done it more effectually: I say, as for his testimonies from this council, I shall refer Mr. S. to that Western council under Charles the Great, which a little after at Francfort condemned, and also fully confuted the decisions of this council, calling their pretended tradition of image-worship *putidissimam traditionem*, “a most stinking tradition.”

These are his authorities from councils: “Where (says he) we see general councils relying on the teaching of the fathers or foregoing church, and on the church’s tradition as their rule, &c.” Where does he see any such matter? or where does he see general councils? Was the council of Lateran a general one? Or was the council of Sardica? If it was, let him shew how the second of Nice could be the seventh general council. Mr. White must write more explicitly, and say which are general councils, which not; otherwise he will lead his friends into dangerous mistakes.

§ 4. “After ancient councils, (not so ancient neither) let us (says he) give a glance at fathers.” *Glance* is a modest word, and yet I doubt whether ever the fathers had so much as that from him. Before I speak particularly to his testimonies from the fathers, I shall mind him of what Mr. Rushworth says in general, (*Dial.* 3. § 13.) *viz.* that “he who seeks tradition in the fathers, and to evince it by their testimony, takes an hard task upon him, &c.” Again, *ibid.* “As in other points, so even in this of the resolution of faith, as doctors seem to differ now-a-days, so might the fathers also.” If this be true, Mr. S. is not likely by a few testimonies out of the fathers to prove, that tradition is the sole rule of faith. But let us see what he has done towards it.

He begins with a saying of Pope Celestine to the fathers of the Éphesine council. “Now therefore we must act with a common endeavour to preserve things believed and retained to this very time by succession on from the Apostles.” Binius’s other reading [of *διδοχνης* for *διαδοχνης*] quite spoils the force of this citation which Mr. S. puts upon the word *succession*. But read

read it how he will, why may not the Christian doctrine be said to come by succession from the Apostles, when it is transmitted to us by scripture, as well as when by oral tradition? I am sure the same Celestine, in an epistle to Cyril, commends him for defending the faith by scripture; "This (says he) is a great triumph of our faith, to demonstrate our opinions so strongly, and to over-throw the contrary, by testimonies from scripture." And neither in this epistle, nor the other, does he make any mention of oral tradition.

Next he cites that known place in Irenæus: "But what if the Apostles had not left us in the scriptures, ought we not to follow the order of tradition? &c." This makes clearly against him; for it implies, that now the Apostles have left us the scriptures, we ought to follow them. The other passage he cites out of Irenæus, *lib. 1. c. 3.* is a clear eviſtion that he did not consult the book. For he puts two sayings together, which he had met with in Mr. White, immediately one after the other; and because Mr. White had cited *lib. 1. c. 5.* for the first saying, and brought in the other immediately upon it with an *Et rursus*, "Again, &c." therefore Mr. S. (who is of a right traditionary temper, which is, to take things easily upon trust himself, and require demonstration from others) concluded, that these sayings were in the same place, though in truth they are in several books. As for the testimony itself, there is nothing in it to Mr. S.'s purpose besides the word *tradition*, which Irenæus does often apply to scripture as well as oral tradition; and there is nothing in this place to determine it to oral tradition.

His testimonies out of Origen will do him less stead: for every one that hath been conversant in the writings of that father, knows what he means by the church's tradition preserved by order of succession, *viz.* the mystical interpretation of the scripture, which (he says) were delivered by the Apostles to the governors of the church, and by them down from hand to hand. If this be the tradition Mr. S. contends for, Origen is at his service; if it be not, I assure him he is not for his turn.

Next comes Tertullian, concerning whom (as also Origen) the Papist upon occasion thinks it enough to reply

ply in St. Hierom's word (*Advers. Helvid.*) "As for Tertullian, I have nothing to say of him, but that he is not a man of the church." Whatever he was, these are his words, "If thou beest but a Christian, believe what is *traditum*, delivered." And here's nothing again but the word *delivered*; which (as I have said) is indifferent to written or oral tradition, if the circumstances do not determine it to one, as here they do (very unlikely for Mr. S.) to the scripture. For he disputes here against Marcion, who denied the flesh of Christ; and who, to maintain that, denied his nativity, and expunged the whole history of it out of the gospel\*; "But (saith Tertullian) by what authority dost thou this? If thou be a prophet, foretell something; if an Apostle, preach publicly: if Apostolical, be of the Apostles mind; if no more but a Christian, believe what is delivered." And where delivered, but in those instruments or books of the gospel, out of which (as Tertullian immediately before tells us) Marcion had made bold to expunge this story?

As for his testimonies out of Athanasius, the two first of them prove nothing, but that faith comes down from our ancestors, or was by them delivered to us; which no body denies: nor is there a word in either of them concerning oral, in opposition to written tradition. The third testimony is out of an epistle to Epictetus, to whom Athanasius, writing concerning those who held Christ's body to be consubstantial with his divinity, tells him, this was so gross a conceit, that it needed no solicitous confutation; but that it would be a sufficient answer to say in general, "The orthodox church was not of that mind; our fathers did not think so." From whence Mr. S. infers, that "tradition is held by him a sole sufficient rule of faith, and the only answer to be given why we reject points from faith, &c." But if he had consulted the book, he would not have inferred, that this was "the only answer to be given, &c." for it immediately follows, "But (left from our being wholly silent, the inventers of evil things should take occasion to  
" be

\* *Is opinor consiliis, tot originalia instrumenta Christi delere Marcion ausus est, ne caro ejus probaretur. Ex qua, oro te, autoritate, &c.*

“ be more impudent, it will be good to recite a few passages out of scripture, &c.” And from thence he confutes them at large. It was so gross an error, that he thought it might be sufficient, without bringing particular arguments out of scripture against it, to say, that it was contrary to the ancient faith: but yet, lest they should (if he had said no more) have taken boldness from thence, and thought that nothing more could be said against it; therefore he confutes it from particular texts of scripture. And what, in his opinion, was the sufficient rule of faith, Mr. S. might have seen at the beginning of this epistle, from these words: “ That faith which was professed by the fathers in that council (*viz.* the Nicene) according to the scripture, is to me sufficient, &c.” It seems that scripture was to him the rule and standard whereby to judge even the creeds of general councils.

Mr. S. says he will be shorter in the rest. And so will I: for what is to be said to testimonies brought at a venture; when he that brings them, had he read the books themselves, could not have had the face to have brought them? Such is this out of Clem. Alexand. (*Stromat. l. 7.*) “ As if one of a man becomes a beast, like those infected with Circe’s poison; so he hath forfeited his being a man of God, and faithful to our Lord, who spurns against ecclesiastical tradition, and leaps into opinions of human election.” Mr. S. knows whose way of quoting this is, to pick a bit out of the midst of the text that sounds something towards his purpose, and leave out the rest, which would make it evident to be meant just contrary. Yet I cannot charge this wholly upon Mr. S. whose implicite faith, were it not for his culpable ignorance, might excuse him. But for his seducer, Mr. White, how he can acquit himself of so foul an imputation, I leave it to any ingenuous Papist to judge, when I have nakedly set the whole passage before him. Clement, speaking of heretics who relinquish the scripture, or abuse it, by wresting it to their lusts, says, “ Men who deal in matters of highest importance, must need commit great errors, if they do not take and hold the RULE OF FAITH from truth itself. For such men having once deviated from the right way,

“ do

“ do likewise err in most particulars ; probably because  
 “ they have not the faculty of distinguishing truths and  
 “ falshoods perfectly exercised, to chuse what ought to  
 “ chosen : for, if they had this, they would be ruled by  
 “ the divine SCRIPTURES. [Therefore, as if any of  
 “ mankind should become a beast, in such sort as those  
 “ who were φαρμαχθεῖσιν, bewitched by Circe ; even so  
 “ he hath lost his being a man of God, and abiding  
 “ faithful to the Lord, who hath spurned against the  
 “ tradition of the church, and skipped into the opini-  
 “ ons of human sects, ἀιρέσεων,] (not of human election,  
 “ as Mr. S. blindly following Mr. White, does most  
 “ absurdly translate it) : but he that hath returned from  
 “ his errors, and hearkened to the SCRIPTURES, and  
 “ conformed his life to the truth, is as it were advan-  
 “ ced from a man to a God.” At the same rate he goes  
 on for several pages together, taking the scriptures for  
 an indemonstrable principle, from which all divine doc-  
 trines are to be demonstrated, and for the criterion  
 whereby they are to be tried ; and charges the heretics  
 in such words as we cannot find fitter for our adver-  
 saries : “ As (says he) naughty boys shut out their school-  
 “ master, so these drive the prophecies out of the church,  
 “ suspecting that they will chide and admonish them ;  
 “ and they patch together abundance of falshoods and  
 “ fictions, that they may seem RATIONALLY not to  
 “ admit the scriptures.” Again, speaking of those here-  
 tics affronting the scriptures, he tells us, “ they oppose  
 “ the θεῖα παραδόσις, divine tradition, with human doc-  
 “ trines, δι’ ἐτέρων παραγχερήσεων, by other traditions [de-  
 “ livered from hand to hand] that they may establish a  
 “ sect or heresy.” Again, he says, “ they adulterate  
 “ the truth, and steal the rule of faith, &c. but for O-  
 “ RAL frauds they shall have WRITTEN punish-  
 “ ments.” But enough of this. Whosoever desires to  
 see more of it, let him read on, where these men, to  
 their own shame, have directed us, and see whether any  
 Protestant can speak more fully and plainly in this con-  
 troversy. The whole trust of the Papists is upon the e-  
 quivocal sense of the word *tradition*. Which word is  
 commonly used by the fathers to signify to us the scrip-  
 ture or divine tradition, as Clement here calls it: but  
 the

the Papists understand it of their unwritten tradition; and to this they apply all those passages in the fathers where tradition is honourably mentioned. So Mr. S. deals with us in the testimonies I have already examined: and there is nothing of argument in those few which remain, but from the ambiguity of this word: which I need not shew of every one of them in particular; for whosoever shall read them with this key, will find, that they are of no force to conclude what he drives at.

§ 5. As for his citations out of the council of Trent, by which he would prove it to be the persuasion of their present church, that tradition is the sole rule of faith, I have already shewn, that that council hath declared otherwise, and is otherwise understood by the chief of their own writers. And therefore he did prudently to conceal, in an *&c.* those choaking words, in which the council declares itself to “ receive and honour, with equal pious affection and reverence, the books of scripture and “ unwritten traditions.” And, after a deal of shuffling, what a pitiful account is it that he at last gives of that council’s putting scripture constantly before tradition; because scripture being interpreted by tradition, is of the same authority, “ as if an Apostle or an Evangelist “ were present; and therefore no wonder they honour “ scripture-testimony so as to put it before tradition?” which is to say, that because scripture is subordinate to tradition, and to be regulated by it, therefore it deserves to be put before it. Besides, if scripture and tradition be but several ways of conveying the evangelical and apostolical doctrine, why should he imagine an Evangelist or Apostle to be more present by the scripture than by oral tradition; especially if it be considered, that he supposes scripture to be an uncertain, and tradition an infallible way of conveying this doctrine?

S E C T. II. *The testimonies on the behalf of scripture.*

§ 1. **A**LL that now remains, is, to confirm the precedent discourse, by testimonies of the most eminent persons of the church in several ages. In which I shall not need to be large, being so happily prevented by

that full account which is given of the sense of the ancients in this matter, in the answer to *Labyrinthus Cantuariensis*; which Mr. S. may, if he please, consult for his farther conviction.

§ 2. I begin with the historical account which Eusebius gives of committing the gospel to writing; which is to this purpose (*Hist. eccles. l. 2. c. 14.*) viz. that “ the Romans were not content with the doctrine preached, unless it were also committed to writing; and therefore did earnestly beg of Mark, Peter’s companion, that he would leave them a monument in writing, of that doctrine which had been delivered to them by word of mouth. And this was the occasion of the writing of Mark’s gospel. And when Peter did understand, that this work was published, being suggested by the divine revelation of the Holy Spirit, it is said, he was very much pleased with the ready and earnest desire of those persons; and that, by his authority, he confirmed this writing, to the end that it might be every where read in the church.” As for St. Matthew and St. John, he tells us (*ibid. l. 3. c. 18.*) that “ of all the disciples, they two only have left monuments in writing; of whom it is also reported, that they betook themselves to write, being drawn thereto by necessity. Matthew, after he had preached the word of God to the Jews, and was resolved to go to other nations, wrote his gospel in the language of his country; and thus, by the diligence and pains of writing, did abundantly supply the want of his presence to those whom he left. And when Mark and Luke had published their gospel, it is reported, that John (who always used to preach the word without writing it) being at length wrought upon by the same reason, did betake himself to write.” From this account it is clear, that the Apostle thought it necessary, for the preservation and sure conveyance of the Christian doctrine, that it should be put into writing; and that they judged this a better way to supply the want of their presence, than oral tradition. Therefore the same author tells us (*ibid. c. 31.*) that “ the disciples, who immediately succeeded the Apostles, as they travelled to preach the gospel to those who had not yet heard

“ the

“ the word of faith, did, with great care, also deliver to  
 “ them the writings of the holy Evangelists.” Again  
 (*ibid.* c. 30 ) that “ Ignatius, as he travelled towards  
 “ Rome, where he was to suffer, exhorted the churches  
 “ of every city, to hold fast the tradition of the Apostles;  
 “ which (as also by writing he testified) for the greater  
 “ security, he held necessary to be copied in writing.”

§ 3. That the heretics of old made the same pretence  
 which the Papiſts make now, of oral tradition in oppo-  
 ſition to ſcripture, the ſame Eusebius tells us ; and with-  
 al, that books are a ſufficient confutation of this pre-  
 tence. “ Thoſe (ſays he, *ibid.* l. 5. c. 27.) who were of the  
 “ hereſy of Artemon, ſaid, that all their forefathers, and  
 “ the Apoſtles themſelves, had received and taught the  
 “ ſame things which they alſo did, and had preſerved  
 “ the true teaching unto the time of Victor Biſhop of  
 “ Rome ; whoſe ſucceſſor, Zephyrinus, corrupted it.  
 “ And this (ſaith he) would have great probability,  
 “ were it not firſt of all contradicted by the ſcripture ;  
 “ and next if there did not remain the writings of other  
 “ brethren, much more ancient than Victor’s time,  
 “ &c. in the books of all whom Chriſt’s divinity is ac-  
 “ knowledged.” And afterwards he tells us, that theſe  
 heretics did change and corrupt the ſcriptures, to bring  
 them to their opinions. So M. S. tells us, that the out-  
 ward letter of ſcripture ought to be corrected by tradi-  
 tion, and ſenſe written in mens hearts.

St. Hierom alſo tells us (*Com. in Iſa.* c. 9.) that “ the  
 “ heretics were wont to ſay, We are the ſons of the  
 “ wiſe, who did from the beginning deliver down to  
 “ us the apoſtolic doctrine ;” but he adds, that “ the  
 “ true ſons of Judah adhere to the ſcripture.”

§ 4. That ſcripture is ſufficiently plain in all things  
 neceſſary.

St. Chryſoſtom (*in 2 Theſſ.* c. 2. hom. 4.) “ All things  
 “ in the divine ſcriptures are plain and ſtraight. What-  
 “ ſoever things are neceſſary, are manifeſt.”

St. Auſtin, having ſpoken of the profoundneſs of  
 ſcripture, adds (*Epiſt.* 3.) “ Not that thoſe things which  
 “ are neceſſary to ſalvation are ſo hard to be come at ;  
 “ but (ſaith he) when one hath there attained faith,

“ without which there is no pious and right living,  
 “ there are besides many dark and mysterious things,  
 “ &c.” Again (*ibid.*) “ The manner of speech in scrip-  
 “ ture, how easy is it to all, tho’ few can penetrate to  
 “ the bottom of it? Those things which it plainly con-  
 “ tains, it speaks without disguise, like a familiar friend,  
 “ to the heart of the learned and unlearned.” How  
 will Mr. S. reconcile this with his great exception a-  
 gainst scripture? And what these things are, which are  
 plainly contained in scripture, the same father tells us  
 elsewhere, in these words: (*De doct. Christ. l. 2. c. 9.*)  
 “ Among these things which are plainly set down in  
 “ scripture, all those things are to be found which com-  
 “ prehend faith and good manners.” The same St. Au-  
 stin (as also Clement in the book which Mr. White quot-  
 ed) for the understanding of obscure texts of scripture,  
 directs us not to tradition, but to the plain text, with-  
 out which, he expressly says (*De unitate eccl. c. 5.*)  
 “ there would be no way to understand them.”

§ 5. That scripture is so plain, as to be fit to deter-  
 mine controversies.

Justin sure thought so, when disputing with Trypho,  
 concerning a point wherein the Jew had tradition on his  
 side, he told him, “ he would bring such proofs [to the  
 “ contrary] as no man could gainsay. Attend (says he)  
 “ to what I shall recite out of the holy scriptures;  
 “ proofs which need not to be explained, but only to  
 “ be heard.” Mr. White might have found likewise  
 much to this purpose in his Clement.

But, not to tire my reader in a point which the an-  
 cients abound with, I shall only produce the judgment  
 of Constantine, in that solemn oration of his to the  
 council of Nice (*Theodoret. hist. lib. 1. c. 7.*) where-  
 in he bewails their “ mutual oppositions, especially in  
 “ divine things;” concerning which, they had the doc-  
 trine of the Holy Spirit recorded in writing: “ For  
 “ (says he) the books of the Evangelists and Apostles,  
 “ and the oracles of the old prophets, do evidently  
 “ teach us what we ought to think of the divine Ma-  
 “ jesty. Therefore, laying aside all seditious conten-  
 “ tion, let us determine the matters in question by te-  
 “ rimonies

“ fimonies out of the divine writings.” Not a word of any other tradition but scripture, which was held evident enough in those days, though now Mr. S. tells us, it is not sufficient to decide that controversy about the divinity of Christ.

§ 6. Lastly, That scripture is the rule of faith.

Irenæus, (*l. 3. c. 1.*) “ The method of our salvation we have not known by any other but those men by whom the gospel came to us ; which then they preached ; but afterwards, by the will of God, delivered it to us in the scriptures, to be for the future the foundation and pillar of our faith.”

St. Cyprian the church hath ever held a good Catholic ; yet Mr. S. takes notice, *p. 314.* that he erred in a point of faith ; and perhaps the rather, because Mr. Rushworth had told him, that he was not theirs in this controversy : “ For (says he, *Dial. 3. § 13.*) St. Cyprian seems to think, that the resolution of faith was to be made into scripture, and not into tradition.” But that we may not seem to accept of this courtesy from him, nor yet wholly to despise it, I shall offer this one testimony instead of many, out of that father : who being opposed with an argument from tradition, demands, (*Epist. 74.*) “ Whence have you that tradition ? comes it from the authority of the Lord, and of the gospel, or from the epistles of the Apostles ? for God testifies, that we are to do those things which are written, &c. If it be commanded in the gospel, or contained in the epistles or acts of the Apostles, then let us observe it as a divine and holy tradition.”

Hilary (*ad Constant.*) commends Constantius the Emperor “ for regulating his faith only according to those things which are written.” And to oblige him to deserve this commendation, he adds, “ He who refuses this, is antichrist ; and who dissembles in it, is anathema.”

Optatus, concerning the controversy with the Donatists, (*lib. 5. de schism. Donat.*) asks, “ Who shall be judge ?” and answers himself, “ The Scriptures.” Which he illustrates by the similitude of a father, who delivered his will orally to his children while he was living ;

living; but when he was dying, caused it to be written in lasting tables, to decide all controversies that might happen among them after his death. This passage is large, and it is obvious to apply it.

Basil, maintaining the doxology as it was used in his days, says, (*De Spirit. Sancto, c. 7.*) "Thus we received it from our fathers;" but adds immediately, "This is not enough for us, that it is the tradition of the fathers, for they followed the authority of the scriptures, making its testimonies the principles upon which they built." He has indeed, in the same book, *c. 27.* a passage, much insisted on by the Papists, concerning unwritten traditions; but withal, he says those traditions were secretly conveyed; which makes all the rest of no use to Mr. S.

Chrysoftom (*Hom. 8. in Epist. ad Heb. c. 5.*) having mentioned several heresies, directs how they may be avoided, *viz.* "By attending to the faith delivered, and looking upon all that disagrees from that, as adulate-rate. For (says he) as those who give rules, do not put men upon a curious inquiry after many measures, but bid them keep to the rule given; so is it in opinions. But no body will attend to the scriptures: if we did, we should not only not fall into errors ourselves, but also rescue those that are deceived." Again, (*Hom. 52. in Job.*) "If we would be thoroughly conversant in the scriptures, we should be instructed both in right opinions and a good life." Again, (*Hom. 33. in Act. Apost.*) "Among the many sects of Christians, it will be easy to judge of the right, if we believe the scriptures, because they are plain and true. If any one agree with these, he is a Christian; if he contradicts them, he is far from this rule."

St. Austin (*De bapt. cont. Donat. l. 2. c. 6.*) calls the scripture the divine balance for the weighing of doctrines. Again, "The holy scripture (says he) fixeth the rule of our doctrine." And accordingly himself uses it, both in his dispute with Maximinus, to whom he says, (*contr. Max. l. 3.*) "Neither ought I now to alledge the Nicene council, nor thou that of Ariminum; for neither am I bound to the authority of the  
" one,

“ one, nor thou of the other. Let us both contest with  
 “ the authorities of scripture, which are witnessess com-  
 “ mon to us both;” and also against the Donatists in  
 these words, (*De unitate eccl. c. 16.*) Let them; if they  
 “ can demonstrate their church, not by the talk and ru-  
 “ mours [or oral tradition] of the Africans, not by the  
 “ councils of their own Bishops, not by the books of  
 “ their disputers, not by deceitful miracles, &c. but by  
 “ the prescript of the law, prophets, &c. *i. e.* by all  
 “ the canonical authorities of the holy books.”

Hierom faith, (*Comment. in Agg. c. 1*) “ Of those  
 “ things which, without the authorities and testimo-  
 “ nies of the scripture, men invent of their own heads  
 “ as from apostolical tradition, they are smitten with  
 “ the sword of God.”

Theophilus Alexander, whom Hierom hath trans-  
 lated, calls scripture more than once “ the rule,” and  
 the testimonies of it “ the firm foundations of doctrine.”  
 (*Paschal. l. 3.*) And again faith, (*l. 2.*) “ It comes from  
 “ a demoniacal spirit, that men follow the sophisms of  
 “ human minds, and think any thing divine that wants  
 “ the authority of scripture.”

Theodoret (*Hæret. fabul. l. 5.*) charges all heresies  
 upon the not following of scripture; which he calls the  
 “ inflexible rule of truth.” Again, “ We have learn-  
 “ ed the rule of opinions from the divine scripture.”

After the fathers, I shall produce the testimonies of  
 two eminent persons of later times, Gerson and Lyra.

Gerson, in his book *of the trial of doctrines, part 1. confid. 2.* hath this remarkable passage: “ In the trial of  
 “ doctrines, that which is first and principally to be  
 “ considered, is, Whether a doctrine be conformable  
 “ to the holy scripture? &c. The reason of this is,  
 “ Because the scripture is delivered to us as a S U F-  
 “ F I C I E N T and I N F A L L I B L E R U L E  
 “ for the government of the whole ecclesiastical body,  
 “ and its members, to the end of the world. So that  
 “ it is such an art, such a rule or exemplar, that any  
 “ other doctrine which is not conformable to it, is to  
 “ be renounced as heretical, or to be accounted suspi-  
 “ cious, or not at all appertaining to religion.” A-  
 gain, (*De distinct. verar. vision. à falsis.*) “ It is evi-  
 “ dent

“dent how pernicious the rejection of the holy scrip-  
 “ture is, and how certain a preparatory for the recep-  
 “tion of antichrist.” Once more, (*Serm. in die cir-  
 “cumcis. &c.*) “What mischief, what danger, what  
 “confusion hath happened through contempt of the  
 “holy scripture, (which sure is sufficient for the go-  
 “vernment of the church, else Christ must have been  
 “an imperfect lawgiver,) let us ask experience, &c.”  
 Lyra also writes thus, (*Prolog. de lib. Bib. &c.*) “As  
 “in philosophy, truth is discovered by reducing things  
 “to their first and self-evident principles; so in the  
 “writings delivered by the holy doctors, truth is dis-  
 “covered as to matters of faith, by reducing them to  
 “the canonical scriptures.”

S I R,

*You know how easy it were to swell up a large volume with testimonies to this purpose; especially if I should take the course that Mr. White does, to hale in quotations, though never so impertinent; or use the wretched importunity which Mr. S. does, to persuade them to be pertinent. But these testimonies, which I have nakedly set down, leaving them to speak for themselves, are enough to satisfy an unpassionate reader, such an one as dares trust himself with the use of his own eyes and reason. As for that sort of men which chuse to follow noise rather than light, we must be content to leave them to the blind conduct of those guides, who, having no better means to keep their followers to them, go hallooing in the dark, and fill their ears with the insignificant sounds of infallibility, indefectibility, self-evidence, and demonstration.*

*Concerning the Appendix, wherein you are particularly challenged, I hope for an account very shortly, and so take leave.*

S I R,

*Your affectionate friend,*

Lincolns'-Inn,  
 Feb. 20. 1665.

JOHN TILLOTSON.

*The end of the Third Volume;*







